**THE YORK PLAYS**

**A modernization by  
  
Chester N. Scoville and Kimberley M. Yates**

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**Introduction**

The York plays have long been the subject of performance-oriented modernizations, of which this is merely the latest. One of the earliest, that of Phillips Endecott Osgood in 1928, was designed for performance at stations within an Episcopalian church. Osgood provides a version (which he claims is a translation of "the ancient Norman-Saxon-Latin text" edited by Lucy Toulmin Smith) of the York nativity sequence. The 1951 performance of the abridged York play for the York Festival used the modernized text of J. S. Purvis, who later produced another, more conservative version of the entire text for publication (SPCK,1962). In 1984, Richard Beadle and Pamela King published a modern-spelling version of 22 of the plays; and in 1993 Tony Harrison's *The Mysteries* provided a loose adaptation of the York text. Finally, this modernized text was used for the performance of the entire York Cycle by the PLS and other companies on June 20, 1998, in Toronto.

The process of changing the language of the York plays thus has a long and varied history. Yet despite this heritage, or perhaps because of it, the process remains a subject of suspicion among many scholars. Each version, after all, reflects the assumptions of its adaptors, incorporating them into, and threatening to overshadow, the original. Behind every adaptation, the shadow of Dr. Bowdler lurks. We, of course, had no intention of going to such an extreme, nor did we do so in the end.

A series of definitions may help to approach and define the subject, and to explain why we thought of the process as *modernization* rather than as *translation*. One standard definition of the word "translate" runs as follows: "to turn from one language into another; to change into another language retaining the sense; to render, also, to express in other words; to paraphrase; to make a version from one form of language into another" (*OED*). So far, the definition is ethically neutral, but later, the word takes on a sinister sense: "to change in form, appearance or substance; to transmute; to transform, alter; in industrial use, of a tailor, to renovate, turn, or cut down (a garment); of a cobbler, to make new boots from remains (of old ones)." The concept of translation, therefore, implies a certain level of violence to the text. Interestingly, we noticed in 1998 that those scholars who looked most askance at the prospect of using a modernized text tended to call it a "translation" anyway, despite our protestations to the contrary.

By contrast, the same source defines "modernize" as "(a) to rewrite (an old text) in modern spelling or language; to replace obsolete (words, language or spelling) with modern equivalents (b) to remodel and refashion an ancient building." This is what we set out to do; it is a job of reconstruction and preservation. It is a task for the careful builder, not for the opportunistic scavenger. In treating the text as an ancient and much-loved structure in need of renovation for contemporary use, we were nonetheless aware of the danger facing all reconstructions: namely, that of making false the subject matter; of appearing to make a simulacrum that violated the spirit of the original. This is not, we think, what resulted, however, because of the constraints that we placed on ourselves: namely, to produce a text that would work in performance to convey, as nearly as possible in the present context, the meaning and spirit of the original.

For that is the use of these texts: to be performed. In *Playing God: Medieval Mysteries on the Modern Stage*, John Elliott surveyed the use of modernized or translated versions of Middle English texts for performance. He called for some acknowledgement of responsibility on the part of the makers of these texts:

With the exception of a few school and university productions which have managed to give the plays in their original linguistic forms, it has been assumed, plausibly, that the only feasible way to present the mysteries to modern audiences is some type of modernized version of the text. The question of what kind of translation or adaptation this should be is obviously an important one, as the sound of the language does much to condition the response of both actors and audiences to the plays. By the same token, a translator cannot begin his [or her] work without first making a decision about *the kind of appeal* he [or she] feels the plays to have and *the kind of production style* he [or she] imagines appropriate to them. Every translation is, in this sense, an interpretation. (Elliott 133)

The text we produced was designed, accordingly, with a series of precise yet contradictory goals in mind: it had to reproduce accurately the meaning, rhyme, metre, and alliteration of the original; additionally, it had to be comprehensible to the speaking tongue and listening ear of the late twentieth-century North American actor and audience. Thus, we removed most of the Yorkshire idiom, changed most of the *thees* and *thous* into *yous*, and occasionally rewrote lines and even stanzas in order to preserve the rhyme scheme and metrical patterns of the original. The work was both technical and creative, and was a constant balancing act between opposing needs.

In cases where leaves are missing from the manuscript, we have written compatible verse based on the other cycles, and designed to match the number of missing lines. For instance, Play 7, the Glovers' pageant of *Cain and Abel*, needed much reconstruction of this kind. The original text is in ruinous condition: the two brothers' sacrifices and the murder of Abel are missing from the manuscript, and what remains consists of two different layers of revision in different hands, not entirely connected to each other. In this case, we rearranged the stanzas slightly, so that all the surviving text is used; in addition, we spliced in the appropriate episode from the Towneley plays (highly edited for length), and invented a few stanzas to introduce Cain's servant Brewbarret. The result is not what was played in medieval York, but it works as drama nonetheless, and preserves the spirit of the original as nearly as possible: more nearly, we think, than a fragmentary text would in performance.

Elliott's second question, the kind of appeal that we felt the plays to have, is far more elusive. We would characterize their charm as immediate, emotionally powerful, and frequently intimate. The plays were not originally written in intentionally old-fashioned language; nor were they presented in the idiom of another land. They were of their time and place. Our version attempted to provide the impression of familiarity; to give our audience the impression that they were experiencing something very much like what the original audience would have experienced.

The second kind of appeal we tried to preserve was the beauty of the poetry. The language is tightly and neatly locked into various and recurring patterns. When this poetry is read aloud, it has immense power; it rolls and flows and builds on itself, often providing colour to characterization and punctuation to the development of the plot. We wanted to preserve as much of this poetical power as we could, and therefore we kept the rhyme scheme, alliteration, and the pattern of beats within each line. When we wrote or rewrote lines, we did so in order to recreate the patterns within that play.

We worked, thus, within very tight guidelines: nothing to be cut; additions to be made only as the lacunae in the MS dictated; poetic forms to be retained; archaism and incomprehensible idiom to be interpreted into clear and correct verse; false cognates (such as "in fere" which means "together") to be reworded; jumbled word orderings to be clarified; no changes to be made merely for the sake of elegance if the MS already made sense. Of course, these guidelines rest heavily upon our judgements of what "makes sense" -- and these judgements were made in Canadian terms, for the sake of non-professionals.

We discovered that although our styles were compatible, they were not identical; Yates's is more conservative, Scoville's is more creative. We realized that there was no ultimate version, no perfect text - we could have continued to work at it for years, adjusting editorial standards as we learned and as our aesthetics continued to develop. Any version is exactly that - a version only, one of many, as ephemeral as the performance for which it was designed.

We've come away from the experience with a deep respect for the complexities of the original text. The result of our labour, we hope, will encourage actors and audiences to take a larger interest in the original York plays and in the drama of the Middle Ages. To paraphrase Voltaire, when he introduced his French version of Shakespeare's plays, "Pardon the blemishes of the modernization for the sake of the original; and remember always that when you see a version, you see merely a faint print of a beautiful picture."

- Chester N. Scoville  
Kimberley M. Yates

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# 1. The Barkers' Play: The Fall of the Angels

GOD:

Ego sum Alpha et O: vita, via, veritas, primus et novissimus.

I am gracious and great God without beginning.

I am maker unmade; all might is in me.

I am life and way, unto weal winning.

I am foremost and first; as I bid, shall it be.

The bliss of my gaze shall be blending

And flowing, from hardship protecting;

My body in bliss still abiding,

Unending, without any ending.

Since I am maker unmade, and most am in might,

Eternally endless, and nought is but I,

Created shall be, for my supernal height,

A place full of plenty, my will to apply.

And therein, as well, shall be wrought

Many and manifold deeds

Within this work sheltered, as needs;

And all shall be fashioned of nought.

But with only the worthiest work of my will

My power, with my spirit, inspired shall be.

And in the beginning, my thought to fulfill,

At once, with my blessing, I will that I see,

About all, a bliss sheltering;

And within this bliss do I make here

Nine orders of angels, full clear,

For love, in my worship, to sing.

[Then the angels sing, "Te deum laudamus, te dominum confitemur."]

Here now beneath me an island name I,

And this isle shall be "Earth." Now be, as is right,

Earth wholly, and Hell, and this--Heaven on high,

And those who do well, shall dwell in this height.

This I grant to you, servants mine,

As long as you are steady in thought.

And likewise, all those that are not

Shall be put in my prison to pain.

Of these mights I have made, the most, next to me,

I make you, as master, to mirror my might;

I bid you obedient in bliss here to be.

I name you now "Lucifer, Bearer of Light."

Nothing shall bring to you pain,

For this bliss is your home and your shielding.

You shall have every power at your wielding

As long as you humble remain.

[Then the angels sing "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, dominus Deus Sabaoth."]

SERAPH:

Ah, merciful maker, much is your might;

All this work at a word you have worthily wrought.

Ever praised be that loveliest lord for his light

That made us, thus mighty, who but now were but naught,

In bliss to abide, with his blessing

Everlasting. Let us praise him with love,

Still remaining in Heaven above,

Nevermore having mirth or joy missing.

LUCIFER:

All the mirth that is made is marked here, in me!

The beams of my brightness are burning so bright,

And so seemly in sight myself now I see;

Like a lord am I left here, to dwell in this light!

Much fairer by far than these here-

To my beauty they cannot compare.

I feel I'm so fresh and so fair;

My power surpasses each peer.

CHERUB:

Lord, with lasting love, you shall we praise.

You almighty maker that marked us and made us,

And worthily wrought us to dwell in this place

Where defiling of filth may not foul us nor fade us.

A protecting bliss folds all about us,

And while we are steady in thought

In the worship of him that us wrought,

Of no harm shall we fear us or doubt us.

BAD ANGEL:

Oh, how I am handsome and fair, with figure well fit!

The form of all fairness upon me holds fast.

All this wealth's for my wielding, I know by my wit;

The beams of my brightness compare with the best.

My appearance is shimmering and shining,

So securely in bliss I am brought.

To concern myself, that I need not;

For no pain here shall bring me to pining.

SERAPH:

With all the wit that we wield, we worship your will,

You glorious God, the ground of all grace.

With reverent voices, here let us stand still,

Lord, to be fed with the food of your fair face.

In life that is loyally lasting,

Your grace is so bountifully dealing.

And whoever that food may be feeling-

To see your fair face-is not fasting.

LUCIFER:

Oh, what, how I am worthily wrought with worship like this!

In a glorious glow, my glittering gleams.

I am so mightily made that my mirth may not miss;

I shall abide in this bliss, through my brightness of beams.

By concern I need never be driven;

All might in my hand I am wielding;

Above I shall always be dwelling,

On high, in the highest of Heaven.

There shall I set me, sublimely in sight,

To receive my due reverence, my rightful renown.

I shall be like the One who is highest on height;

Oh, how I am worthy and deft-Oh, Deus! All goes down!

My might and my mirth are unsound;

I am falling, in faith! Help me, friends!

BAD ANGEL:

From Heaven, we fall to our ends;

I think that to woe we are bound!

LUCIFER:

Ah, ah! Help me! Helpless! So hot is it here!

This is a dungeon of dole in which I myself find!

What is my body, once comely and fair?

I am ugliest, loathsome, who once was sublime!

My brightness is black as a coal now;

My misery, endlessly kindling.

It makes me go growling and grinning!

Ah! Fury! I boil in woe now!

DEVIL:

Ah! Ah! I go mad for woe; my wit is all turned now!

All our food is but filth which before us is tossed;

We that were joyous in bliss, in this Hell are we burned now!

Curse you, Lucifer, villain; our light you have lost!

Your deeds to this misery brought us;

To ruin us you worked, with great speed!

For you were our light; you would lead

To the highest of Heaven, you taught us!

LUCIFER:

Horrible woe is me now! Now is it worse than it was!

Now foolishly chide you-I said but a thought!

DEVIL:

Ha! Villain, you ruined us!

LUCIFER:

You lie! Oh, alas!

I knew not this woe should be wrought!

Curse you all, villains, you choke me with smoke!

DEVIL:

This woe you have made us!

LUCIFER:

You lie! You lie!

DEVIL:

You lie! And that you shall buy!

LUCIFER:

Ah, villains! Have at you! Now choke!

CHERUB:

Ah, Lord, praised be your name who to us this light lent

Since Lucifer, our leader, is fallen and marred,

In Hell to be burned for his prideful intent;

For your justice repays a fitting reward

For all that is done in the world.

Through the grace of your merciful might

The cause I can see in plain sight-

The reason to Hell he is hurled.

GOD:

Those fools, for their fairness, into fantasies fell

And envied my might, that marked them and made them.

Therefore, as their works were, in woe they shall dwell;

They are fallen into filth that shall evermore fade them.

They shall never have grace to protect them.

So surpassing in power they thought them,

They would not worship me, who had wrought them.

Thus my wrath shall forever reject them.

But those that do worship, will dwell here in bliss.

Therefore more of my workings, work now I will.

Since their might is destroyed, who intended amiss,

Now after my image, this bliss to fulfil,

Out of Earth now will I make Mankind.

But first, for his sustenance' sake,

Everything for his use will I make,

Everything that he helpful shall find.

And in my first making, to show forth my might,

Since Earth is all void and in darkness does dwell,

I bid, at my blessing, you angels give light

To the Earth, for it darkened much when the fiends fell.

But in Hell it shall always be dark;

To the darkness I give the name "night."

And the "day" I will name this new light;

My creations to come they shall mark.

And now, with my blessing, I part them in two,

That they meet not again, the even and morn,

But, both in their courses, their ways shall they go.

Both the night and the day, your duty perform;

Guide all those I shall make, without ceasing.

This day's work is done, every deal.

And all this work pleases me well;

And with joy do I give it my blessing.

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**2.The Plasterers' Play: The Creation**

GOD:

In altissimis habito.

In the highest Heaven, my home have I.

Eterne mentis et ego.

Without end, ever-lastingly.

Because I wrought these worlds so wide

(Heaven and Air, the Earth also),

My High Godhead I will not hide,

Although some fools have fallen low.

When they agreed, by sin of pride,

To climb too high, to take my throne,

In Heaven they could not abide,

But quickly went to dwell in woe.

And since they wrong have wrought,

I choose to let them go

To suffer sorrow unsought,

Since they have served me so.

Their debt can never turn to gain,

For they agreed to turn their back.

And all their strength is but in vain;

They shall be devils, foul and black.

But those that still with me remain,

Who honour me and are not slack,

Shall dwell in goodness without end

With me, and joy they shall not lack.

For their reward shall be

Solace that shall not slake.

This work seems good to me,

And more now I will make.

Now, since this world is ordered well,

I will make known my power here.

Not by strength, by words I tell,

A firmament I bid appear.

Among the waters, light shall dwell,

To mark the day, the month, the year.

And this is "Heaven," which shall swell

With clouds, and planets bright and clear.

The water shall be sent

To flow both far and near.

And then the firmament

In the centre shall be, here.

The firmament shall never move,

But be the mean, as I do mean,

Over the world a shield to prove,

The two great seas to stay between.

Under the Heavens, and also above,

The waters surely must be seen.

And so I will my power prove

By making creatures of natures clean.

This work does well repay

My will with pleasures keen.

Thus ends the second day

That has this labour seen.

More subtle works I now shall try,

That they may be of use to all.

All the waters under sky

That have been set, both great and small,

Now run together, so say I,

And be one ocean, in one hall,

So that the earth shall soon be dry,

Both valley deep and mountain tall.

You, dryness, "Land" shall be;

That name I shall you call.

And then I name you, "Sea,"

The throng of waters all.

The earth shall flourish, nourishing,

As I will bid, obediently,

Both herbs and every other thing

That grows and waxes worthily.

And also, trees thereon shall spring

With boughs and branches, spaciously,

With flowers fair on high to hang,

And fruit for food, abundantly.

And so this shall I say:

These plants, whose seeds shall be

Encompassed by nature---may

They grow in each country.

And all these things are in my mind;

And they are made by my great might.

And they are cast of various kind,

That they may bear their blossoms bright.

And when we shall in ripeness find

The fruits, most beautiful in sight,

Then the heavens' rains and wind

I soon shall send away in flight.

And from their seeds, then soon

New roots shall rise upright.

The third day now is done.

These deeds have been done right.

Now, since the earth this order has,

And by my will is measured and made,

Suitably to grow with grass

And weeds, that soon are dry and dead,

From my own goodness now shall pass-

My works to guard and keep from dread-

Two lights, one greater and one less,

To stay fast in the firmament.

The great light, to the day

Shall suitably be sent.

The lesser light, I say,

For the night shall it be meant.

Those figures fair their course shall run,

And they shall serve my creatures all.

The greater light I name the "Sun,"

To drive the dark from down and dale.

The herbs and trees I have begun,

All shall he govern, great and small.

If they be closed with cold, each one

With heat from the sun shall soon be hale.

As they have such honours-

From bliss they shall not fall-

So then shall my creatures

Live joyfully, one and all.

Sun and moon, in manner fair,

Now, suitably go, in your degree.

As you have taken your courses clear,

As servants henceforth shall you be.

For you shall mark the seasons here,

That everyone in each country,

From day to day and year to year,

By certain signs shall surely see.

The heavens shall be replete

With stars in great plenty.

The fourth day is complete.

This work well pleases me.

Now, since these works thus well are fit,

And spread abroad in wood and dell,

Within the sea I now shall set

The whales with vigour for to dwell,

And other fish, with fins to flit-

Some with scale and some with shell,

Of many kinds, more varied yet-

In fitting manner to teem and swell.

Some shall be timid and shy,

And some both fierce and fell.

This world thus make will I,

Since I am wisdom's well.

Also, up in the air on height,

I bid now that ordained should be

A host of birds, fair and bright,

Dwelling there in their degree,

With feathers fair to guide their flight

From place to place, thus flittingly,

And also, lightly to alight

Wherever they should like to be.

Now, birds in flight, and fish,

I bid you naturally

To mingle as you wish,

Both by sand and sea.

More of these matters will I mend,

Thus fulfilling all my thought.

Now, various beasts to live in land,

To breed, from the womb forth to be brought.

Among these beasts, I now shall blend

The serpents to be seen unsought,

And snakes upon their bellies shall wind,

To live in earth and return to nought.

So, over every land,

Now, all is made that ought.

Beginning, middle, end,

I, with my word, have wrought.

For as I bid must all things be,

And duly done as I address.

Now beasts are set, in each degree

On earth to wander, great and less;

Now, birds in air, fish in sea.

Beasts on earth of bone and flesh--

Be fruitful, and in great plenty

And goodly, grow, for that is best.

So multiply you shall

Forever in fair process.

My blessing have you all.

The fifth day ended is.

**3. The Cardmakers' Play: The Creation of Adam and Eve**

GOD:

In Heaven and Earth, the fruit is seen

Of five days' work, until the end.

I have them made by methods clean.

I think the span of time well spent.

In Heaven are angels fair and bright.

Stars and planets their courses go.

The moon shines pale to serve the night;

The sun lights up the day also.

In Earth are trees and grass to spring,

Beasts and birds, both great and small,

Fish in flood. And everything

Does thrive; they have my blessing, all.

This work is made now, at my will.

But yet, no beast here can I see

Yet suitable in mind and skill

That for my work might honour me.

A perfect work it would be none

If nought were made to give it care.

I made this world for love alone;

My love in it shall now appear.

To keep my creatures, more and less,

A clever beast now will I make

After my shape, and my likeness,

The which shall worship to me make.

Of earth, out of the humblest,

I shall make man, and this is why:

For to abate his haughtiness,

His pride, and other faults beside,

And so that he may keep in mind

How humble he is when he is born.

For just as feeble I shall him find

When he does unto dust return.

For this reason and cause alone

I shall make man like unto me.

Rise up, you Earth, in blood and bone;

In the shape of man, I bid you be.

From your left rib, I make a mate

For you, and her to you I send,

So that alone you may not wait

Without a sister and a friend.

Take now here the breath of life;

Receive now both your souls from me.

This woman take now as your wife.

Adam and Eve your names shall be.

ADAM:

Ah, Lord, how marvelous is your might!

And that we see on every side,

For here is such a joyful sight,

To see this world so long and wide!

So many things herein I see,

Beasts and birds, both wild and tame,

Yet none is made like unto thee

But we alone. Loved be your name!

EVE:

To such a lord, of such degree,

Be loving, lasting evermore,

That to us such a dignity

Has given, all other things before;

Such wondrous things may we see here

In this great world, so long and broad-

These beasts and birds so many, so dear;

Blessed be he that has us made!

ADAM:

Ah, blessed Lord, since we are made

Now at your will, I beg you tell

Us both, my lord, as I you pray,

What shall we do? And where to dwell?

GOD:

For this cause I made you today:

My name to honour everywhere.

Love me, therefore, every day

For this, my work. I ask no more.

Both wise and clever you shall be,

Now, man, that I have made of nought.

Lordship on Earth now grant I thee,

All things to rule that I have wrought.

In Paradise you both shall dwell;

Of Earthly things you have no need.

You both shall learn of good and ill;

I shall teach you how your lives to lead.

ADAM:

Ah, lord, since we shall do nothing

But love you for your great goodness,

We always shall bow to your bidding,

And fulfill each word, both more and less.

EVE:

And since his sign is set on us

And sets us from all things apart,

We shall not cease to love him, thus

To honour him, in word and heart.

GOD:

With Heaven and Earth I first began,

And six days worked, ere I would rest.

My work is ended now, with man.

All pleases me, but this is best.

My blessing have they from this day.

The seventh day shall my resting be.

Thus will I cease, the truth to say,

From all my work in each degree.

I shall you bring to bliss.

Come forth, you two, with me,

To live in joyfulness.

My blessing with you be.

Amen.

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**4. The Fullers' Play: Adam and Eve in Eden**

GOD:

Adam and Eve, this is the place

That I have given you of my grace

To have your dwelling in.

Herbs, spices, fruit on tree,

Beasts, birds, all that you see

Shall bow to you herein.

This place is Paradise.

Your joys shall here begin.

And if that you are wise,

You shall remain within.

All your will you here shall have,

As you please, to eat or save

Fish, fowl, or meat,

And to take at your own will

All the things that herein dwell.

Your subjects they shall be.

Adam, of more and less,

The lord I grant you be.

This place, that worthy is,

Keep it in honesty.

Look that you tend it skillfully.

All other creatures shall multiply,

Each one in tender hour.

Look that you both save and set

The herbs and trees. For nothing let,

So that you may survive,

Sustaining beast and man

And all the birds alive.

Remain here if you can;

For this you both shall strive.

ADAM:

Ah, Lord, belovëd be your name,

For this is here a joyful home

That you have brought us to,

Full of mirth, of solace, joy-

Herbs and trees, fruit on high,

With spices manifold, too.

Lo, Eve, now are we brought

To rest and peace, we two.

We need to take no thought,

But always good to do.

EVE:

Loving be to such a lord!

To us is given great reward:

To govern great and small,

And made by his own great advice

Among these pleasures all.

Here is a joyful sight!

In this place we shall dwell.

We love you, most of might,

Great God, on whom we call.

GOD:

Then love me, with intentions clear.

To my commandments, give good ear,

And do, obediently.

Of all the fruit in Paradise,

Take you thereof in every wise,

And eat it happily.

But the tree of good and ill-

The day you eat of this,

Yourselves you surely kill.

And you shall lose your bliss.

Man, for your need all things are made.

To you all homage shall be paid

By all beneath the sky.

On Earth I make you lord of all.

All beasts to you shall be as thrall.

Your kind shall multiply.

Therefore this tree alone,

Adam, this prohibit I.

No nearer to it come;

If you do, then you shall die.

ADAM:

Alas, Lord, that we should do so ill.

Your blessed bidding we shall fulfil

Both in thought and deed.

We shall not touch this tree nor bough

Nor yet the fruit that there does grow,

That we our flesh might feed.

EVE:

We do as you command;

We have no other need.

This fruit still shall there stand,

O Lord, which you forbid.

GOD:

Look that you do as you have said.

With all you have, now hold you paid.

For here is wealth at will.

This tree that bears the fruit of life,

Look neither you nor Eve your wife

Should touch, but leave it still.

Because this is the tree

Of knowing good and ill,

This fruit you must let be,

Or speed yourself to kill.

Therefore, this tree that I outtake,

Now guard it truly for my sake,

That nothing shall come near.

For all things at your will shall be;

I outtake nothing but this tree

To feed your flesh. Now hear!

Here shall you lead your life

With pleasures that are dear.

Adam, and Eve your wife,

My blessing have you here.

**5. The Coopers' [Barrel-Makers'] Play: The Fall of Man**

SATAN:

For woe, my wits in rage are rent,

Which wreaks this havoc in my mind!

That God I saw-I knew He meant

To take upon Him such a kind

Of a degree

That He had made; but now I find

That angel's form it will not be!

Since we were bright and fair,

Therefore I thought that He

As an angel might appear;

And that offended me.

The form of man He thought to take;

And then great envy did I know!

But God has made for man a mate;

And straight to her I think to go-

An easy way-

For God's great plan to overthrow,

And then from Him to rob that prey.

My time would well be spent,

If I may thus betray,

His pleasure thus to end.

So now, I shall assay.

In serpent's likeness I will wend,

And strive to feign a flagrant lie.

Eve, Eve!

EVE:

Who is there?

SATAN:

I...a friend.

And for your own good, here am I.

I have you sought.

Of all this fruit that hangs hereby

In paradise, why eat you nought?

EVE:

We eat of them, each one.

We take as we have thought-

Except one tree alone,

Too harmful to be sought.

SATAN:

And why that tree-that I would wit-

Any more than the others nearby?

EVE:

Because the Lord forbids us it-

The fruit thereof, Adam nor I

To come too near.

For if we did, we both would die,

He said, and lose our solace here.

SATAN:

Yah, Eve, now be intent;

Take heed and you shall hear

What all this matter meant

When He spoke so severe.

To eat thereof He forbade you-

This was His plan all along-

Because He wished none other knew

Of the powers that to this belong.

For, Eve, you see,

Whoever eats this, right and wrong

Shall understand, as well as He.

EVE:

Why, what sort of thing are you

That tells this tale to me?

SATAN:

A snake, who knows you too

May also worshipped be.

EVE:

What worship thus to win could we?

To eat thereof-we need it not,

We have the power of mastery

Of all things that on Earth are wrought.

SATAN:

Woman, do way!

To a greater state you may be brought

If you will do as I shall say.

EVE:

We wish to do no harm,

Our God to disobey.

SATAN:

Fear not, feel no alarm;

Eat safely, as you may.

Indeed, no danger therein lies,

But honour, and great gain, I say.

For just as God you shall be wise,

And peer to Him in every way.

Yes, gods you shall be-

On good and ill to cast your eyes,

To be as wise as He-

EVE:

Is this the truth you say?

SATAN:

Oh, yes. You don't trust me?

Would I in any way

Tell ought but truth to thee?

EVE:

Then I will to your teaching trust

And take this fruit for us as food. [Then she should accept the apple]

SATAN:

Bite on boldly, be not distressed;

And take some to Adam to mend his mood-

And also his bliss! [Then Satan goes away]

EVE:

Adam, have here some fruit full good.

ADAM:

Alas, woman, why took you this?

Our Lord commanded us both

To shun that tree of His.

This work will make Him wroth-

Alas, you've done amiss!

EVE:

Nay, Adam, grieve you not at it,

And I shall tell the reason why.

A snake has given me to wit

We shall be like gods, you and I,

If that we eat

Here of this tree; Adam, thereby,

Fail not that honour for to get!

For we shall be as wise

As God that is so great-

Exalted in the skies-

Therefore, take this and eat!

ADAM:

To eat it I would not eschew,

If I were sure of your teaching.

EVE:

Bite on boldly, for it is true;

We shall be gods, and know everything!

ADAM:

To gain that name,

I shall this taste, at your teaching. [And he accepts and eats]

Alas! What have I done? For shame!

Ill counsellor, curse thee!

Ah, Eve, you are to blame;

To this you enticed me-

My body gives me shame;

For I am naked, it seems to me.

EVE:

Alas! Oh, Adam, so am I!

ADAM:

Buried for sorrow, why are not we?

For we've grieved God who sits on high,

Who made me, Man-

Broken His bidding, bitterly.

Alas, that we this thing began.

This deed, Eve, have you wrought,

And made this bad bargain!

EVE:

No, Adam! Blame me not!

ADAM:

Oh no, dear Eve? Who then?

EVE:

Surely, we should blame the snake;

With tales untrue he me betrayed!

ADAM:

Alas; I listened when you spoke

And took as true things you said.

For mercy I bid!

For I now curse that bitter bread;

That wicked deed, I know I did!

Our shape with shock me grieves;

With what shall we be hid?

EVE:

Let's take here these fig leaves,

Since it is thus betid.

ADAM:

Right as you say, so shall it be,

For we are naked, and all bare;

Most gladly would I now hide me

From my Lord's sight, if I knew where.

Would that I were never wrought!

GOD:

Adam, Adam!

ADAM:

Lord?

GOD:

Where are you there?

ADAM:

I hear you, Lord, and see you not!

GOD:

And why? Hold not your tongue;

This work why have you wrought?

ADAM:

Lord, Eve made me do wrong,

And to this pass me brought!

GOD:

Speak, Eve; why have you made your mate

Eat fruit I told you should hang still,

And commanded none of it to take?

EVE:

A snake, Lord, enticed me theretill;

Alas, the day

That ever I did this deed so ill!

GOD:

Ah! Wicked snake, be cursed this day!

By lying in her ear

You made them such dismay;

My curses have you here,

With all the might I may.

And on your belly shall you glide,

And always full of enmity

To all mankind on every side;

And earth shall all your sustenance be

To eat and drink.

And also, Adam and Eve,

In the earth you shall sweat and swink,

And labour for your food.

ADAM:

Alas, when might we sink?

We that had all the world's good,

Most wretched may us think.

GOD:

Now, Cherubim, my angel bright,

Into the world go drive these two.

ANGEL:

All ready, Lord, as it is right,

Since your will is that it be so,

And your liking.

Adam and Eve! Do you two go,

For here you may make no dwelling!

Go forth now, fast, from here;

Of sorrow you must sing!

ADAM:

Alas! For sorrow and care

Our hands may we both wring.

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# 6. The Armourers' Play: The Expulsion

ANGEL:

All creatures! To me, be attent!

From God of Heaven I am sent,

Unto the wretches who wrongly went

To dwell in woe.

The joy of Heaven, that was them lent,

From them does go.

From them is lost both joy and glee.

He bade that they should masters be

Of everything, except one tree

That should them kill.

And thereto went both he and she,

Against his will.

Against his will thus they have wrought.

To grieve great God they cared right nought.

[They would not listen, as they ought];

That well know ye.

And so in sorrow they are caught,

As you shall see.

The fools who fell from faith! Hear now!

Take heed to me before you go!

From God of heaven unto you

I am sent now

To tell you both what kind of woe

Is made for you.

ADAM:

For us is made (Ah! Must I say?)

Dole enduring night and day!

The wealth we would have had for ay

From us is gone.

To mourn for this misdeed, well we may

With each new dawn.

ANGEL:

Adam, yourself made all this woe.

For to the tree you fast did go,

And boldly the fruit did bite, although

My Lord forbad.

ADAM:

Alas! My wife I blame, for so

She to me said-

ANGEL:

Adam! Because you believed her tale,

He sends you word. He says you shall

[Go forth from here, and for your fall]

Live ever in grief;

Awaiting long, in bitter bale,

For his relief.

ADAM:

Alas! Wretches! What have we wrought?

To such a bliss we both were brought;

[Each moment was a joy unsought]

While we were there!

We had enough. Now we have naught.

Alas, for care.

EVE:

Our cares have come, both keen and cold,

With horrid terrors manifold.

Alas! That tyrant to me told,

With all his guile,

That we in hand all wealth should hold.

Alas, the while.

ANGEL:

That "while" you worked but foolishly,

So to grieve God mightily.

And, therefore, you shall pay dearly

Before you go.

You both shall live, as is worthy,

In fear, and woe.

Adam, have this. Look how you think;

[With sorrow you must sweat and swink],

And toil for all your food and drink

Forever more.

ADAM:

Alas! For sorrow why might I not sink,

I am shamed so sore.

EVE:

Sore are we shamed with sorrow severe;

And cruelly must we go from here.

Alas, that ever we came it near,

Unto that tree.

With sorrow now we pay, full dear,

For our ill deed.

ANGEL:

Eve, because you tricked him so,

Labour you shall undergo.

Your babies to bear with pain and woe;

This do I say.

Obedient now shall you go

To man this day.

EVE:

Alas! For woe, what shall I do?

That I may never have rest, I rue!

ADAM:

Nay, this tale is told me, too,

Of labour's name!

Now are we ruined, I and she, too!

Alas, for shame!

Alas, for shame and sorrow sad;

Mourning makes me amazed and mad

To think in heart what help I had,

Who now has none.

On earth to walk, I'll not be glad;

My joys are gone.

Gone are my joys, as I do say.

Alas! In bliss we could not stay.

Placed in Eden at dawn today,

With no travail,

By noon, we cast it all away;

So weep and wail!

So weep and wail, such pain we see.

All animals were friends to me;

Fish and fowl both willingly

With me would go.

And now, all beasts in enmity

Hold me their foe.

A foe on earth, I limp along

To suffer shame and sorrow strong;

All for one deed that I did wrong

Through wicked wile.

I think, indeed, I live too long.

Alas! The while.

Ah, Lord, I ask, what thing is this [That is, the spade-ed.]

That to me is given for my miss?

If I work wrong, who now teaches?

What is the way?

How best to work, so have I bliss,

I must assay.

Alas, for pain! What can this be?

In world unwisely done have we!

The earth, it trembles for this tree,

And groans around!

All this world is wroth with me,

As I have found.

Full well I know my wealth is gone,

The earth, the weather, every one.

Sorrow comes when sin is done,

That I can see.

Never were wretches so pale and wan

As now are we.

EVE:

We are well-deserving in this,

To have this mischeif for deeds amiss.

Placed we were in perfect bliss,

Forever to be.

My saddest sorrow now is this:

Myself to see.

ADAM:

To see us is a shameful sight.

We both, who were in bliss so bright,

Must now go naked, day and night,

Even so.

Alas, but woman's wit was light,

As now I know!

EVE:

Yes, it was so, and grieves me sore.

But if the woman witless were,

Man's mastery should then have been more

Against this guilt!

ADAM:

Nay, at my speech you would not spare!

That has us spilt!

EVE:

If ever I said a word to you,

[And urged you then this woe unto],

You should have taken heed thereto,

And turned my thought!

ADAM:

Be quiet, woman! [The fault's in you,]

So name it not!

For to my bidding you would not be;

Therefore, my plague I now call thee.

Through your advice, outcast are we

In bitter bale!

May God let no man after me

Trust a woman's tale!

For surely I regret full sore

That ever I listened to your lore.

Your counsel casts me now in care,

As know you should!

EVE:

Adam, stop. Speak thus no more.

It does no good.

Too well I know I have done wrong.

In mourning I must limp along.

Alas! The while I live, too long,

I wish to die.

ADAM:

On earth with joy I'll never belong;

With sorrow, I.

With sorrow I must go.

And slain I am by woe.

This tree I take myself, that so

Is sent to me.

May He that made us, now us show,

Where now go we.

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# 7. The Glovers' Play: Cain and Abel

ANGEL:

The lord of life everlastingly-

Unmeasured, I say, is his might-

He shaped the sun, the sands and sea,

And wrought this world with words on height.

His angel, clear as crystals bright,

Here unto you thus I am sent

This day.

Abel and Cain, with mood and might

To me entirely be intent.

To give my message am I meant.

Thus I do say:

Almighty God, of powers most,

When he had wrought this world so wide--

Nothing to him seemed wrought in waste.

And, in his blessed realm to abide,

Nine orders, seen on every side,

Of angels bright he bade there be.

With pride,

Too soon, the tenth part sore was tried.

They fell away, as was worthy.

They haled to Hell, that company,

Therein to abide.

Then he made man in his likeness,

That place of pride thus to restore.

And since he showed man such kindness,

Man must return something therefore.

A tenth to tithe he asks, no more,

Of all the goods he has you sent.

Full true

To offer, look that you prepare,

And to my tidings take intent.

Now, everyone to whom life is lent,

So shall you do.

ABEL:

I thank you, Lord, for your goodness,

That has made me, on Earth, your man.

I worship you with worthiness,

With all the honour that I can.

To keep myself from all works wan,

Fulfilling your commandment,

The tithe

Of all my goods, since I began,

You shall have it, since you it sent.

Come, brother Cain, I would we went

With hearts full blithe.

CAIN:

What? Where to now? In wasteland gone?

You think I wish this town to leave?

You fool yourself, you vagabond;

I do not wish to talk, you see?

ABEL:

Ah, brother dear, let us take heed,

God's bidding gladly to fulfil,

I say.

CAIN:

The devil take you! Away from me!

For I will do just as I will.

What right have you, for good or ill,

To speak this way?

ABEL:

To speak this way to you, I may.

But, brother dear, let's go in haste,

Give God our tithes, duly, this day.

He bids us thus; be not distressed.

CAIN:

Yah, Hell, I think that work a waste!

What he gave us, to give him again?

Now see:

A fickle friendship, by that test,

It seems to me, is his, certain.

If he be most in might and main,

What need has he?

ABEL:

He has no need to have your good.

But it will please him, principal,

If you, with mild mind and mood,

Grudge not to give a tenth of all.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

CAIN:

What? Why now should I tithe, dear brother?

Each year's crop is worse than the other.

Now, by him that us dearly bought,

I think that he will lend me nought.

ABEL:

Dearest brother! Say not so,

But let us forth together go,

As quickly as we may.

I think we must not make delay--

CAIN:

Yeah, yeah, this chatter is a waste!

The devil take me if I make haste.

For if I give away my good,

Then I might go with a tattered hood.

It is better to hold to what I have,

Than go from door to door and crave.

ABEL:

Now, brother, come, in God's own name.

I am afraid we shall earn blame.

Let us go, that we were there.

CAIN:

Oh, go, in the Devil's name, before!

ABEL:

Well, let us both go forth, together.

Blessëd be God, we have good weather.

CAIN:

Lay down your gear upon this hill.

ABEL:

Indeed, dear brother, so I will.

May God in Heaven think it good.

CAIN:

Well, you tithe first. Your wits are wood.

ABEL:

God that shaped both sand and sea,

I pray that you may listen to me,

And take as thanks, if your will it be,

The tithe I give you here, so free.

For I give it, with good intent,

To you, my Lord, who all has sent.

CAIN:

Rise up! Let me, since you have done.

Lord of Heaven, hear my boon:

A tithe I now shall give, you see,

Of grain that newly grows for me.

One sheaf, one...and this makes two,

But neither of these may I forego.

Two, two, now this is three...

This also shall remain with me.

Come on, come on! Four, lo, here!

Better grain grew not this year.

At planting time I sowed good seed;

At harvest, it was choked with weed!

Thistles, briars in great plenty-

And all the nettles that may be.

Four sheaves, four, now this is five-

If I deal out these, I shall not thrive!

Five, and six, and this is seven-

But this is not for God of Heaven.

Seven, seven, now this is eight-

ABEL:

Cain, dear brother, this is not right!

CAIN:

Look! I did already say

I would not give my goods away!

Whew! Eight, eight, and nine, and ten is this.

Ah! Now this one I'll not miss.

ABEL:

Cain, of God you have no dread.

CAIN:

He'll not get more, the Devil me speed!

Not so much, great or small,

That he may wipe his arse withal.

ABEL:

Cain, I say that you should tend

That God of Heaven should be your friend.

CAIN:

My friend he'll be, if that he will.

I did him never any ill.

ABEL:

If you tithe right, then you may find-

CAIN:

Go kiss the Devil's arse behind!

Will you not yet hold your peace?

Of this chattering, now cease!

Now, since that yours has burned just fine,

Now I will set a fire in mine.

Pah! This smoke does me much shame!

Now burn! Burn, in the Devil's name!

Ah! It stinks like the Devil in Hell,

That longer here I may not dwell!

ABEL:

Cain, this tithing is a joke.

Your grain should burn without such smoke.

CAIN:

Oh, go and kiss the Devil's arse!

It is your fault it burns the worse.

I wish it all were in your throat,

Fire and sheaf and every sprout!

ANGEL:

Cain, why does you so rebel

Against your brother dear, Abel?

You need not either chide nor fight.

You will have much if you tithe right;

And be sure, if you tithe untrue,

You will receive then all your due.

CAIN:

Who is that Hob-Over-the-Wall?

Who was it that squeaked so small?

Come on, Abel, let us go.

I think that God is now my foe.

ABEL:

Brother dear, I now must go

Into the field, my beasts unto,

To see if they are well or sick.

CAIN:

No, wait! We have a bone to pick.

I owe you a foul despite,

And it is time I you requite.

ABEL:

Brother, why speak you thus to me?

CAIN:

Thief! Why burned your tithe brightly,

When mine did but smoke,

As if it would us both choke?

ABEL:

God's will I suppose it were,

That mine burned so clear.

If yours smoked, am I to blame?

CAIN:

What? Yeah! And you'll pay for the same!

With this jawbone, as I thrive,

I'll let you stay no more alive!

So, lie there now and take your rest.

Thus are villains chastised best.

ABEL:

Vengeance, vengeance, Lord, I say!

For, without guilt, I die this day.

CAIN:

Yeah, lie there, villain! Lie there! Lie!

And if any of you think I did amiss,

I shall do worse yet than it is.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Ho! Brewbarret! Come hither, I say!

BREWBARRET:

All hail, all hail, out of my way!

CAIN:

Come, boy, and help this churl to haul.

For I must hide him first of all.

BREWBARRET:

What? Lift him? It may not be.

My back is sore, it seems to me.

CAIN:

A plague on that! I must him hide,

Or sorrow is sown.

For never shall I well abide

If this be known.

BREWBARRET:

My shoulder-ah!-is sundered quite.

Therefore I may not lift on height

Or help to carry such a freight

As I see here.

CAIN:

Oh, go on! I shall do this right,

So have no fear.

But go and fetch more sheaves of wheat,

So that we may some supper eat.

For I have wine, but we need bread

To make a meal.

BREWBARRET:

Indeed, I go, now have no dread

In any deal!

GOD:

Now, Angel dear, go you to Cain,

And tell him what to you I say.

Because he has his brother slain,

Now cursed is he, and falls away

From blessings all, and from this day,

Because of wicked deeds he did,

He'll be

A vagabond, and wander ay.

For from me may nothing be hid.

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ANGEL:

It shall be done, Lord, as you bid,

Immediately.

BREWBARRET:

Lo, master Cain, what sheaves bring I!

The very best that carry seed.

Now, to the field, I will me hie,

To fetch you more, if you have need.

CAIN:

Come up, sir knave! The devil you speed!

You will not come unless you're made!

BREWBARRET:

Ow! Master Cain, I broke my toe!

CAIN:

Come up now, sir! I say indeed,

You shall drink before thou go!

ANGEL:

You! Cursëd Cain! Where is Abel?

What have you done with your dear brother?

CAIN:

Why ask me that tale to tell?

For yet his keeper was I never.

ANGEL:

Behold and hear: what have you done?

The voice of his blood cries vengeance

From Earth to Heaven, with great passion!

Be still!

Your deeds have given God grievance;

Take heed! I shall, for this mischance,

These tidings tell.

You shall be cursed upon the ground.

God sends his curse for all to see.

Though you might till the world around,

No fruit you'll get for all your fee.

A son of wickedness to be,

You shall be wandering here and there

For ay.

In bitter pain remain, and be

Outcast, in sorrow and care.

No man shall pity you anywhere:

Thus do I say.

CAIN:

Alas! For sorrow, so I say:

My sin surpasses all mercy!

Ask it from the Lord? But nay,

To have it I am not worthy!

I shall be hidden, speedily;

You cast me, Lord, from kin away,

From land!

Both here and there outcast am I;

What man I may meet from this day,

In fen or forest, will me slay,

With his own hand!

ANGEL:

Nay, Cain, not so. Have you no dread.

Whoever slay you shall punished be

Sevenfold for such a deed.

Therefore a sign now shall you be:

It shall be printed for all to see,

That every man shall know you well.

CAIN:

Then will I even farther flee,

For shame.

Since I am put thus out of well,

That curse I have-now go to Hell!

I give you the same!

ANGEL:

God has sent you his curse down,

From Heaven to Hell, maledictio Dei!

CAIN:

Take it yourself, upon your crown!

Quia non sum custos fratris mei,

Or thine.

ANGEL:

God has sent you his curse down,

And inwardly I give you mine.

CAIN:

The same curse light upon your crown!

And just so might it ever be

For He that sent this greeting down!

The Devil take both Him and thee!

Foul may you fall!

Here is a crooked company;

Therefore, God's curse upon you all!

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# 8. The Shipwrights' Play: The Building of the Ark

GOD:

When first I wrought this world so wide,

Wood and water, sea and sand,

Heaven and Hell I did not hide,

Yet herbs and grasses I began.

In endless bliss for to abide,

And in my likeness, I made man.

As lord and sire on every side

Of all the Earth, I made him then.

A woman also with him wrought I,

That they in law might lead their life.

I bade them grow and multiply,

And fill this world--but not with strife.

Since then they've wrought so woefully,

And sin is flourishing and rife.

I now repent, regretfully,

That ever I made man or wife.

For now they cause me to repent

My work, that I wrought well and true.

They all are disobedient,

And always bent more sin to brew.

But, for their sins they shall be rent,

And ruined wholly, through and through.

No further word to them be sent.

I shall rework this work anew.

Anew I will this world be wrought,

Destroying all that dwells herein.

A flood upon them shall be brought

To waste the earth, and all within.

Except for Noah, I shall spare nought

Till all are sunk, and drowned for sin.

He and his sons, this is my thought,

Their wives also, their lives shall win.

Noah! My servant, steady and clean,

Because you are stable in virtues all,

I wish you to make-hear what I mean-

A work to save yourself withal.

NOAH:

Ah, mercy, Lord, what may this mean?

GOD:

I am the God of great and small.

I come to tell of trouble keen,

And of what marvel shall befall.

NOAH:

Ah, Lord, I love you, ever still,

That unto me-wretch unworthy-

Thus with your word, as is your will,

Deigns to appear thus wonderfully.

GOD:

Noah, as I bid you, thus fulfil.

A ship, I tell you, build on high.

Although you have but little skill,

Take it in hand, for help shall I.

NOAH:

Ah, worthy Lord, I beg, take heed-

I am too old, such things to start.

I cannot work a whole day's deed

Unless great need is, for my part.

GOD:

To do this work you must, indeed,

Or never escape from terrors smart.

I shall help you, and give you speed,

And give you health in mind and heart.

I see such war among man's kin,

That I will now my vengeance take.

They shall be sunken for their sin;

Therefore a ship I wish you to make.

You and your sons shall dwell therein;

They shall be saved, for your sake.

Therefore, boldly now, begin

Your measures and your marks to make.

NOAH:

Ah Lord, your will shall ever be wrought-

For so says every learned clerk-

But of ship-building know I nought.

Of their making I have no mark.

GOD:

Noah, I say, distress you not;

I shall guide you in all your work.

Unto the end I shall see it brought.

Therefore take heed to me, and hark.

Take high trees and cut them clean.

With square, not slanted ends, begin.

Make boards from them and battens between,

Thus, properly, and not too thin.

Look that the seams be carefully seen

And nailed well; leave no gaps within.

Thus I design all that is seen.

Therefore, come now, leave off your din.

Five hundred feet it shall be long,

And eighty wide, all for your bliss.

The height, of fifty feet along.

Be careful to remember this.

I'll give you carefully, ere I gang,

Your measures, not to go amiss.

Be careful that you work not wrong.

I'll guide you sure; be sure of this.

NOAH:

Ah, blissful Lord, that all did build,

I thank you heartily, ever and ay!

Five hundred years I am, quite old;

I think those years as yesterday!

Full weak I was, and all unwell;

My weariness is gone away!

To work this work here in this field

All by myself, I shall assay!

To hew this board I will begin.

But first, I'll measure, end to end.

Now, it must be all equally thin,

So that it neither break nor bend.

Thus shall I join it with a pin,

And set it snugly with cement.

Thus shall I work, apprenticed in

The craft of God, the master hand.

[This work goes well, as I do feel.]

More subtly, no man can do.

It shall be clenched now, every deal,

With nails that are both fine and new;

Thus shall I fasten and bind the hull.

Put here a rivet, and there some glue-

With these, the bow I'll now work well.

This work, I warrant, is good and true.

Full true it is; now, be intent.

But fast my strength begins to fold.

Past me, a hundred winters went

Since I began this, most carefully told.

And in such travail thus to be bent

Is hard for him who is so old.

But He, who to me these messages sent,

Will be my crutch; that makes me bold.

GOD:

Noah, this work is near an end,

And made as I had bid it be.

But in one way you must it mend;

Therefore, this lesson learn from me.

For diverse beasts must there be penned,

And birds also, in their degree.

So they may not their species blend,

Diverse compartments there must be.

And when the ark is ordered so,

With separate stalls and cages here,

Of every kind you shall take two,

Both male and female together to fare.

Your wife, your sons with you shall go,

And also their wives, never fear.

These eight bodies, and no more,

Shall be saved in this manner here.

Therefore, my bidding now obey.

Till all be harboured, work you fast.

After the seventh day, it shall rain

Till forty days be fully past.

Take with you gear that may pertain

To man and beast, their lives to last.

I shall succour you, be certain,

Till all your care away is cast.

NOAH:

Ah, Lord, that every fault may mend,

To praise your wisdom I always will.

I thank you with both heart and hand

That you will save me from troubles ill.

And to this work now I must bend,

With beasts and birds my ship to fill.

Now, may the Master of this craft I tend

Guide all of us, with His good will.

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# 9. The Fishers' and Mariners' Play: The Flood

NOAH:

Ah, Lord that lives eternal life,

I praise you ever with heart and hand,

Who allows me this, by reason rife,

Six hundred years to live on land.

Three seemly sons and a worthy wife

I have, always at my command.

But now my cares are keen as a knife,

Because I know your dread command.

There comes to each country,

Yes, cares both keen and cold.

For God has forewarned me

That the world shall wasted be.

And surely the truth I see,

As our forefathers told.

My father Lamech who, as one might mention,

Here in this world a long time did wend,

Seven hundred years, seventy and seven,

In such a space his time did spend.

He prayed to God, his voice faithful and even,

That He to him a son should send-

And, at the last, there came from Heaven

Such a promise that could greatly amend,

And made him dig and delve

As ordered firmly before.

For he a son should have,

As he always did crave.

And, by the grace God gave,

In the world I then was born.

When I was born, "Noah" he named me,

And said these words with joyful mind:

"Behold," he said, "this one is he

Who shall be a comfort to all mankind."

Sirs, by this you all must see--

My father knew. By grace within,

By certain signs, he well could see

That all this world should sink for sin--

How God would vengeance take,

As certainly is seen,

And an end of those men make

Who would not sin forsake,

And how the rain should slake,

And a world grow once again.

I would to God it wasted were,

So that I should not have to toil.

My seemly sons! And daughters dear!

Now pay attention; listen well.

1 SON:

Father, we are all ready here,

Your bidding eagerly to fulfil.

NOAH:

Go call your mother, then come back here

At once, that the flood may us not kill.

1 SON:

Father, we shall hear

Till your command is done.

NOAH:

All that lives everywhere

Shall, die now, my son, I fear.

1 SON:

Where are you, mother dear?

Come to my father, soon!

WIFE:

What say you, son?

1 SON:

Mother, indeed,

My father intends to flee from here.

He bids you come at once, with speed

To him, so nothing may you mar.

WIFE:

Yeah, son, get you back-take heed-

And tell him I will not come near.

1 SON:

Mother, I would do this deed,

But you must come, or worse it were.

WIFE:

Worse? How could that be?

We're speaking nonsense, son!

1 SON:

Mother, to you I say,

My father is going to flee!

WIFE:

Now, surely, I shall see

At once just what he means!

1 SON:

Father, I've done now as you command;

My mother comes to you this day.

NOAH:

She is welcome; for I understand

This world shall soon be washed away.

WIFE:

Where are you, Noah?

NOAH:

Right here at hand.

Come here, and quickly, I you pray.

WIFE:

Do you think that I'll leave the land

And get on that, in all this fray?

No, Noah, I am not bound

To float now over the hills.

Come, children; let's go into town.

NOAH:

No! Surely then you all will drown!

WIFE:

In faith, Noah, you'd best come down

And go do something else.

NOAH:

Wife, forty days are nearly past

And gone since it began to rain!

Alive no man shall longer last

But we alone; is that not plain?

WIFE:

Now, Noah, in faith, your wits are waste;

This nonsense I'll not hear. In vain

You speak. You're mad; I am aghast.

Farewell; I'm going home again.

NOAH:

Oh, woman, are you mad?

My deeds you do not know;

All that has bone or blood

Shall be overflowed by the flood.

WIFE:

In faith, you were as good

My way to let me go.

Help! Oh, help!

NOAH:

What now? What cheer?

WIFE:

I'll go no nearer at any need.

NOAH:

Help, my sons, to hold her here,

For to her danger she takes no heed.

2 SON:

Be glad, mother, and amend your cheer;

This world is drowned; now, have no dread.

WIFE:

Alas, that I this word should hear.

NOAH:

You're killing us all; ill may you speed!

3 SON:

Dear mother, come with us.

There, nothing shall you grieve.

WIFE:

No; I must go home, I must,

My tasks are numerous.

NOAH:

Woman, why do you thus?

To make us more mischief?

WIFE:

Noah, you might have told me of it!

Morning and evening you were out,

And always at home you let me sit,

Never to know what you were about.

NOAH:

My lady, let me be excused for it.

It was God's will, without a doubt.

WIFE:

What? You think that you're going just yet?

No, by my faith, you're getting a clout!

NOAH:

I pray you, lady, be still;

Thus God would have it wrought.

WIFE:

You should have learned my will,

Whether I would assent theretill.

And Noah, for that same skill,

This bargain shall be dear bought!

Now, at last, I find and feel

Why you have through the forest sought.

You should have told me, us to heal,

When we were to such a bargain brought.

NOAH:

Now, lady, such dread you should not feel,

For to account it cost you nought.

A hundred winters, I know well,

Are gone since I this work had wrought.

And when I made an ending,

God gave me measure fair

Of each and every thing.

He ordered me to bring

Both beasts and birds young,

Of every kind a pair.

WIFE:

Now surely, if we should escape unscathed,

And so be saved, as you say here,

My comrades and my cousins both,

I want them safe with us in there.

NOAH:

Too dangerous, on the flood to float.

Look in, and see, and have no fear.

WIFE:

Alas, to me my life is loath.

I live too long, this news to hear.

1 DAUGHTER:

Dear mother, mend your mood,

For we shall with you go.

WIFE:

My friends are overflowed;

I've left them in the flood.

2 DAUGHTER:

Now thank we God all good,

That thus has saved us so.

3 DAUGHTER:

Mother, of this work you paid no heed,

That all should turn to waters wan.

2 DAUGHTER:

Father, what may this marvel mean?

Why did God make the Earth, and man?

1 DAUGHTER:

So strange a sight was never seen,

Since first that God this world began.

NOAH:

Shut and lock your doors indeed,

For better counsel know I none.

This sorrow is sent for sin,

Therefore to God we pray

That he our ills would end.

3 SON:

May the king of all mankind

Out of this woe us win,

As you are the Lord, and may.

1 SON:

Yea, Lord, as you let us be borne

In this great evil, some help us bid.

NOAH:

My sons, now see, midday and morn,

To these cattle take good heed.

Keep them well with hay and corn;

And women, take up these birds and feed,

So that from us they're not torn

As long as we this life shall lead.

2 SON:

Father, we were best

Your bidding to fulfil.

Nine months now are past

Since we were thus oppressed.

3 SON:

He that of might is most

May amend it when he will.

NOAH:

Oh, children, it grows clear about!

That may you see there where you sit!

1 SON:

Yes, dear father, look thereout;

See if the water's waning yet.

NOAH:

That shall I do, without a doubt,

Thereby the waning we may wit.

Ah, Lord, to you I bend and bow;

The cataracts, I think, are knit!

Behold, my sons, all three-

The clouds are growing clear!

2 SON:

Ah, Lord, of mercy free,

Beloved may you be!

NOAH:

I shall essay the sea,

How deep that it is here.

WIFE:

Loved be that Lord that gives all grace,

That kindly thus our cares would heal.

NOAH:

I'll cast a line and look a space,

How deep the water is, every deal.

Fifteen cubits of height it has

Of covering over every hill!

But, be well comforted in this case;

It is waning! I know it well.

Therefore, a bird of flight

Now quickly I shall send,

To see if he has sight

Of land on which to light;

Then may we know aright

When our mourning shall end.

Of all the birds that one may find,

The raven is boldest, and wise is he.

You are cranky, like all your kind;

Go forth your way, I say now; flee,

And cautiously see, and return on the wind

If you find either land or tree.

Nine months herein we been been pinned,

But when God will, better must be.

1 DAUGHTER:

That Lord that lends us life

To obey all of his laws,

He made both man and wife;

May he help to end our strife.

3 DAUGHTER:

Our cares are keen as a knife;

God grant us now good news.

1 SON:

Father, this bird is gone for long;

I guess that he has found some land

That he can forage for food upon.

That makes him such a failing friend.

NOAH:

Now, son, if he that way has gone,

Since for us all his way he went,

Then may he be, for doing wrong,

Cursed evermore, without an end.

And certainly, to see

When our sorrow shall cease,

Another bird full free

Our messenger shall be.

Now, dove, this order see:

Our comfort to increase.

A faithful bird to send are you,

Above all else in this world wide.

For all our sakes, I pray you go,

And soberly seek, on every side,

Whether the floods be falling now,

That you on the earth may build and abide.

Bring us some sign, that we may know

What will become of us this tide.

2 DAUGHTER:

Good Lord, now on us look,

And cease our sorrow severe,

Since we all sin forsook

And to thy laws us took.

3 DAUGHTER:

For twelve months, less twelve weeks,

Have we been hovering here.

NOAH:

Now children, we may be blithe and glad,

And praise our Lord, of Heaven king!

My bird has done as I him bade;

An olive branch I see him bring.

Blessed be, bird, who was not dismayed,

Who in your strength felt no failing.

More joy in heart I never had;

We shall be saved! Now let us sing!

Come here, my sons, quickly,

For gone is all our strife;

I see here certainly

The Hills of Harmony.

1 SON:

Loved be that Lord surely,

Who to us has lent our life.

[Then Noah and his sons should sing.]

WIFE:

Now all the sorrows we were in,

And all our trials, are no more.

But Noah, where are all our kin

And company we knew before?

NOAH:

All are drowned-leave off your din-

For all their sins they paid, full sore.

A better life let us begin,

So that we grieve our God no more.

He was grieved in great degree

And greatly vexed in mind

For sin, as all may see,

Dum dixit, "Penitet me."

And sorry then was he

That ever he made mankind.

That makes us now to toil and truss;

But, children, he said-I know well when-

"Arcum ponam in nubibus."

He set his bow to show us then

A covenant between him and us,

In knowledge to all Christian men

That, when the world is ended, thus

He'll never waste it, with water, again.

Thus has God, most of might,

Set his sign full clear

Up in the air, on height.

The rainbow, as is right,

Is clearly seen in sight

All seasons of the year.

2 SON:

Sir, now, since God, our sovereign sire,

So certainly has set his sign,

Then we may see the world's empire

Shall last forever; that is plain!

NOAH:

No, son, that we must not desire,

For if we do we work in vain.

For it shall all be burned with fire,

And never be the world again.

WIFE:

Ah, sir, our hearts are sore

For these words that you say here;

This mischief must be more?

NOAH:

Be not afraid therefore;

You shall not live so long

By many a hundred year.

1 SON:

Father, how shall our lives be led

Since none are in this world but we?

NOAH:

Sons, with your wives you shall be set,

And you shall multiply your seed.

Your children shall each other wed

And worship God, in good degree.

Beasts and birds shall all be bred,

And so, a world shall begin to be.

Now, hard work you shall taste

To win your bread and wine,

For all this world is waste.

These beasts must be unbraced;

Now let us go in haste,

With God's blessing, and mine.

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# 10. The Parchmentmakers' and Bookbinders' Play: Abraham and Isaac

ABRAHAM:

Great God, who all this world has wrought,

And wisely knows both good and ill,

I thank him loyally in my thought

For all the love he lends me still.

From barrenness he has me brought;

A hundred years I did fulfil

And now You grant me strength, that I might

Arrange my works by Your own will.

For in this earthly life

There are none to God more bound

Than I and than my wife;

What friendship we have found!

God told me, once upon a tide,

When I was seated beneath a tree;

He said my seed should be multiplied.

Just as the gravel in the sea,

Or as the stars are strewn so wide,

So said he that my seed should be,

And bade I should be circumcised

To fulfil the law he taught to me.

He sends us riches fine

As in this world we thrive;

As far as the sun does shine,

He makes an end to strife.

Abram first named was I;

Since then, he set a syllable more;

And my wife was named Sarai,

But then was named Sarah.

But Sarah was uncertain then

That ever our seed should bounty yield,

Because she was herself barren,

And even then we both were old.

But she did as a wise woman,

Who wished a family to build.

Her servant secretly she sent

Unto my bed, my will to wield.

Soon after that befell,

When God our deed would requite,

She brought forth Ishmael,

A son seemly to my sight.

Then afterward, as we grew old,

My wife again feared for the same;

Our God then tidings to us told,

When we were in our house at home.

He said that have a son we would,

And Isaac should be that son's name,

And his seed should spring, manifold.

If I were glad, who could find blame?

Because I trusted this tiding

That God told to me then,

The ground and the beginning

Of the truth at that time began.

To God I now owe much to yield,

Who so would tell me His intent,

And, even though we both were old,

A seemly son to us He sent.

Now he is grown; he's strong and bold.

But my strength long ago was spent.

Therefore, he shall be my shield.

I love Him who this loan has lent,

For he may stop our strife

And defend us from all ill.

I love Him as my life,

With all my heart and will.

ANGEL:

Abraham! Abraham!

ABRAHAM:

I am here.

ANGEL:

A message now to you I bring.

God will test your will and cheer,

And whether you'll bow to His bidding.

Issac, your son, whom you hold dear,

Whom you love more than anything,

Take him to the Land of Vision, and there

Make of your son a burnt offering.

I shall show you then

The sacrificial place.

God wills this deed to be done;

And therefore now make haste.

ABRAHAM:

Lord God, who lends ever-lasting light,

This is a fearsome care to feel:

To have a son seemly in my sight,

Isaac, whom I love so well-

He is of age, if I reckon right,

Thirty years and more, some deal,

And now, to death I must him smite;

God has said so, I know well,

And bade me now arise

To the Land of Vision,

And there make sacrifice

Of Isaac, my own son.

And that is a journey of three days,

By the quickest speed that I can go.

If God bade me myself to slay,

I surely could not tell Him no.

But to my son I will nothing say,

But take him and my servants two,

And, with our ass, go on our way.

As God has said, so shall we do.

Isaac, son, I do believe

To wilderness we now must go,

An offering to God to give,

For God has me commanded so.

ISAAC:

Father, I am ever at your will,

As I should be, without deceit.

All people gladly should fulfil

God's commandment, as is meet.

ABRAHAM:

Son, you give me good counsel

(Though some truth is no blessing sweet).

Let us go; let us do well.

I pray God send us safe home again.

ISAAC:

Children, lead forth our ass

With wood for us to burn.

As God commanded has,

To work we now shall turn.

1 SERVANT:

At your bidding we shall be bound,

Wherever in the world you wend.

2 SERVANT:

What, must we cart things out of town,

To go off to some foreign land?

1 SERVANT:

Just now, from Heaven, God sent down

To them some solace, I understand.

2 SERVANT:

It's good sense to fulfil it, then,

And cheerfully do as He has planned.

1 SERVANT:

But what they mean to do

I have no knowledge clear.

2 SERVANT:

No point for me and you

To ask such questions here.

ABRAHAM:

No, there is no point in any degree

For you to pass judgement on our deeds.

For as God commanded, work will we.

To his commands we must take heed.

1 SERVANT:

All those that will His servants be,

To them He'll give success and speed.

ISAAC:

Children, with all the might in me,

I love that lord of all indeed.

To worship Him: certain

My will is bent thereto.

2 SERVANT:

God give you power, then,

Right here so for to do.

ABRAHAM:

Son, if our Lord God on high

Wished for my body as offering,

I would be glad for Him to die,

For all our hope in Him does hang.

ISAAC:

Father, indeed, just so would I,

Rather than to live too long.

ABRAHAM:

Ah, son, you say this well. Now I

Pray God for grace, to make you strong.

Children, wait here still;

No farther must you go,

For here I see the hill

That we must walk unto.

ISAAC:

Now keep our ass and all our gear

Till our return, and guard them well.

ABRAHAM:

My son, it behooves you this wood to bear

Until you come upon that hill.

ISAAC:

Father, that's no harm, for here

Our God's commandment we fulfil.

For, injury we need not fear;

He guards us when we work His will.

ABRAHAM:

Ah, son, that was well said.

Lay down that wood just here,

Until our altar is laid.

And, son, be of good cheer.

ISAAC:

Father, I see here wood and fire,

But what shall our burnt offering be?

ABRAHAM:

Surely, son, God our sovereign sire

Shall ordain that in good degree.

For, son, if we do His desire,

A great reward therefore get we.

In Heaven we will have our hire,

For that to us was His prophecy.

Therefore, son, let us pray

To God, both I and you,

That we may make this day

Our offering, as is due.

Great God, that all this world has wrought,

And worthily governs good and ill,

Now grant me strength so that I might

Your commandments here fulfill.

And if my flesh groan or grieve ought,

Before my soul fully assent theretill,

To burn all that which here I've brought,

I shall not spare, though it should me kill.

ISAAC:

Lord God, great in power,

To whom all people pray,

Grant both me and my father

To work thy will, always.

But, father, now I must know this thing:

Whereof should our offering be made?

ABRAHAM:

My son, I must leave this lingering:

Yourself that bitter blow must abide.

ISAAC:

Why, father, does God wish that I be slain?

ABRAHAM:

Yes, truly, son, so has he said.

ISAAC:

And I shall not groan there-against;

To work his will I am well paid.

Since it is his desire,

I shall be glad to be

Bludgeoned and burned in fire;

Therefore, mourn not for me.

ABRAHAM:

No, son, this deed must needs be done.

My lord God I will not gainsay,

Nor make any mourning or moan

To make an offering of you this day.

ISAAC:

Father, since God, our Lord alone,

Agreed to send, when you did pray,

A son to you, when you had none,

And wishes now that he go his way,

Therefore, be willing me to kill

As an offering in this place.

But first, I shall you tell

My counsel in this case.

I know, because of nature's kind,

My flesh will quake in mortal dread.

I am afraid that you shall find

My strength resists your covenant.

Therefore it's best that you should bind

Me fast in bands, both foot and hand,

Now, while I am in might and mind,

Safely you'll keep God's command.

For, father, when I am bound

My strength may not avail.

Here shall no fault be found

To make your covenant fail,

For you are old and all unwell,

And I am strong and bold in thought.

ABRAHAM:

To bind him who should be my help!

Without God's will, that I would not.

But, lo, no effort shall avail;

So God shall have what he has sought.

Farewell, my son; you shall I yield

To him that all this world has wrought.

Now, kiss me heartily, I thee pray.

Isaac, I take my leave for ay-

I shall you miss.

My blessing you have entirely,

And I beseech God Almighty

To give you his.

Thus do we both assent

After your words wise.

Lord God, see our intent;

Receive your sacrifice.

This is to me a peerless pain,

To see my own dear child thus bound.

I had much rather my life decline

Than see this sight thus of my son.

It is God's will; it must be mine.

Against his word I've never gone.

To God's command I must encline,

So that in me no fault is found.

Therefore, my son so dear,

If anything you'd say,

Your death is drawing near.

Farewell, for ever and ay.

ISAAC:

Now, my dear father, I would you pray,

Hear these three things; grant me this boon,

Since I from this must pass away.

I see my hour is come so soon.

In word, in deed, or in any way

That I have trespassed, or evil done,

Forgive me, father, ere I die this day,

For his love that made both sun and moon.

Here, since we two must part,

First, of God I ask mercy

And you, in mind and heart,

This day before I die.

ABRAHAM:

Now my great God Adonai

That all this world has worthily wrought,

Forgive the son in his mercy,

In word, in work, in deed and thought.

Now, son, as we have learned,

Our time we may not waste.

ISAAC:

Now, farewell, all this Earth;

My flesh grows faint for fear.

Now, father, wait no more,

But take your sword in haste.

ABRAHAM:

No, no, son, no, I beg; as yet

I have done nothing; have no fear.

Your words have made my cheeks all wet,

And change, my child, all of my cheer.

Therefore, lie down, hands and feet;

Now, you may know your hour is near.

ISAAC:

Ah, dear father, life is sweet.

I am destroyed with death's dread fear.

As I am here your son,

To God I commend me till.

Now I am laid here bound;

Do with me what you will.

For, father, I ask no more respite,

But hear one word. As I advise,

I beg you now, before you smite,

Lay down this kerchief on my eyes.

Then your offering may be made right,,

If you will do thus, in this wise.

And here to God my soul I plight,

And all my body in sacrifice.

Now, father, nothing is missing.

Now smite as fast as you may.

ABRAHAM:

Farewell, in God's dear blessing,

And mine, forever and ay.

To that peerless prince I pray

Mine offering here to have it.

My sacrifice this day,

I pray you, Lord, receive it.

ANGEL:

Abraham! Abraham!

ABRAHAM:

Lo, here, yes!

ANGEL:

Abraham, stop, and hold you still.

Kill not your son. Harm him not thus.

Take this sheep upon the hill;

It is sent to you from the King of Bliss,

Who faithful always to you has been.

He bids you make an offering of this

Here at this time, and save your son.

ABRAHAM:

I love that Lord with heart entire,

That in his love this gift has lent:

To save my son, my darling dear,

And sent this sheep for this intent:

That we shall offer it to Him here.

So shall it be, as You have meant.

My son, be glad, and make good cheer;

God has to us good comfort sent.

He wishes not that you be dead,

But all his laws to keep,

And, see, son, in your stead,

To us God sent a sheep.

ISAAC:

To make our offering at his will,

All for our sake he has it sent.

To love that Lord I think is well,

That to his servants thus has meant.

This death I would have taken still,

And gladly, Lord, to your intent.

ABRAHAM:

Ah, son, your blood he would not spill;

Therefore this sheep to us He sent.

And I am so glad, son,

Of our luck in this place.

But let us go home again,

And worship God, for his grace.

ANGEL:

Abraham! Abraham!

ABRAHAM:

Lo, here, indeed.

Listen, son: some salving of our sore.

ANGEL:

God says you greatly shall succeed

For this good will in which you were.

Since you for him would do this deed-

To kill your son, and not to spare-

He means to multiply your seed

On every side, as he said ere;

He also pledges this:

Your seed also shall rise,

Through the help of him and his,

Over all your enemies.

So love him; this is his behest,

And loyally live by all his law,

For in your seed all may be blessed

That shall be born, by night or day.

If you in him will place your trust,

He will be with you, ever and ay.

ABRAHAM:

If we but knew, it would be best,

How to work his will each day.

ISAAC:

Father, that shall be gained

Through wiser men than we.

To do it we'll not disdain,

Indeed, after our degree.

ABRAHAM:

Now, son, since we this well have sped,

That God has granted me your life,

It is my will that you should wed,

And take a woman for your wife.

So shall your seed spring and be spread

In the laws of God, through all your life.

I know where she is located

Whom you shall wed, and without strife:

Rebecca, that damosel,

Whose father now is gone:

The daughter of Batuel,

Who was my brother's son.

ISAAC:

Father, as you please my life to spend,

I shall assent unto the same.

ABRAHAM:

One of my servants I now shall send

Unto that girl to bring her home.

The swiftest way we now shall wend.

My children, you are not to blame

If you think a long time we did spend.

Gather our gear, in God's great name,

And go we home tonight

Even unto Barsabee.

God that is most of might

Guide us, and with you be.

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# 11. The Hosiers' Play: Moses and Pharaoh

PHARAOH:

Now, peace! I bid that no man pass,

But keep the course that I command.

And take good heed to him that has

Your life all wholly in his hand.

King Pharaoh my father was,

Who led the nobles of this land.

I am now a man, as age will ask,

And in his stead shall ever stand.

All Egypt is my own

To lead, and by my law.

I will my might be known,

As it should, and held in awe.

Therefore, as king I order, "Peace!"

To all the people in this empire.

None must assert himself, unless

He do only as we desire.

Your chattering I bid you cease;

Attend to me, your sovereign sire,

Who most your comfort may increase,

Or, take your life, at my desire.

1 COUNSELLOR:

My lord, if any there were

That would not do your will,

And we knew which they were,

At once we should them kill.

PHARAOH:

Throughout my kingdom, I would know, then,

And could give thanks to those that tell,

If any have so wicked been

That would attempt our power to quell.

2 COUNSELLOR:

My lord, there is a group of men

Who have much power, and who dwell

Nearby: the Jews, here in Goshen,

Who are named the children of Israel.

They multiply so fast,

That, truly, we believe

Them likely, if they last,

Your lordship to aggrieve.

PHARAOH:

What the devil? What tricks have they begun?

Have they the strength to make affrays?

1 COUNSELLOR:

Those felonious folk, sir, first were found

In King Pharaoh your father's days.

They come of Joseph, Jacob's son-

That was a prince worthy of praise!-

And since then have flourished, every one;

And now they may destroy our ways.

They shall confound us clean

Unless they quickly cease.

PHARAOH:

What the devil does it mean,

That they so fast increase?

2 COUNSELLOR:

How they increase we'll tell you then:

As our elders before us found,

They numbered only sixty and ten

When first they entered in this land.

Since then, they've stayed here in Goshen

Four hundred years, we understand;

Now they are numbered, of mighty men,

Well more than three hundred thousand,

Not counting woman and child

And servants, their cows to feed.

PHARAOH:

So might we be beguiled;

But it shall not be, indeed!

For, with cunning we shall them quell,

So that they shall no further spread.

1 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, we have heard our fathers tell

That, with good words, the clerics said

That in their midst a man should dwell

Who may us overthrow instead.

PHARAOH:

Damn them to the Devil of Hell!

Such a destiny we shall not dread.

We shall force the midwives to spill them -

When our Hebrews are born,

All that are male, to kill them -

They shall be overborne.

For of that man I have no awe.

To them such bondage shall we bid:

To dig and delve, to bear and draw,

And every such ignoble deed.

Thus shall the lads behold the law,

As wretches ever their lives to lead.

2 COUNSELLOR:

Surely, lord, this is a subtle saw;

Thus shall the folk no further spread.

PHARAOH:

Yes; help to hold them down,

And no treason will we find.

1 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, we are always bound

In bondage them to bind.

MOSES:

Great God, that all this ground began,

And governs ever in good degree,

That made me, Moses, born to man,

And saved me then out of the sea -

King Pharaoh had commanded then

No sons of Hebrews spared should be;

Against his will my life began.

Thus has God shown his might in me.

Now I am here to keep,

Set under Sinai's side,

The bishop Jethro's sheep,

And fortune to abide.

Ah, mercy, God, great is your might;

What may this sudden marvel mean?

Yonder I see a wondrous sight,

Where even now no sign was seen.

A bush I see there, burning bright,

And yet the leaves remaining green.

Is it a work of man, this sight?

I will not rest until I've seen.

GOD:

Moses, come not too near,

But still in that place dwell,

And take heed to me here,

And listen to what I tell.

I am the Lord, who well can make

Your life, as I wish, long to last;

And the same God that in old days spoke

Unto your elders, ere they passed.

Both Abraham and his son Isaac

And Jacob, I said, should be blessed,

And multiply, as prosperous folk,

So their seed should not be oppressed.

And now the King, Pharaoh,

Binds all their children fast.

If I permit him so,

Their seed should soon be past.

A messenger I make of you

To him that them so injured has,

To warn him with words sound and true

So that he let my people pass,

That they to wilderness may go

And worship me, as custom was.

And if his answer should be no,

His song full soon shall be "alas."

MOSES:

Ah, Lord, since, by your leave,

The Egyptians love me not,

Gladly they would me grieve

If I this message brought.

Therefore, Lord, let some other try

Who has more more force to make them fear.

GOD:

Moses, be not afraid, I say,

My bidding to boldly bear.

If they with evil should defy,

I shall protect you from all care.

MOSES:

Nay, Lord, for they will not trust me

For all the oaths that I can swear.

To tell such tidings new

To folk of wicked will,

Without a token true?

They will not attend theretill.

GOD:

And if they will not understand

Nor take heed how I have you sent,

Before the king cast down thy wand,

And it shall seem a great serpent.

Then, take the tail up in your hand,

And lift it without worriment.

In the first state as you it found,

So shall it turn, by mine intent.

Hide your hand in your shirt,

And as a leper's it shall be like,

Then, all whole and without hurt;

Your signs shall be such like.

And if he will not free them then,

To let my people pass in peace,

I shall send vengeance nine or ten

To pursue him sorely, ere I cease.

But the Jews that dwell now in Goshen

Shall not be harmed, but shall have peace;

While they obey my laws, I then

Their comfort ever shall increase.

MOSES:

Ah, Lord, loved be your will

That makes your folk so free;

All this I shall them tell

As you tell unto me.

But to the king, Lord, when I come,

And he ask me what is your name,

And I stand still then, deaf and dumb,

How shall I be without blame?

GOD:

I say this: ego sum, qui sum.

I am he that I am the same.

And though you might not speak, yet from

All sin I'll guard you, and all shame.

MOSES:

I understand this thing

With all the might in me.

GOD:

Be bold in my blessing;

Your armor I shall be.

MOSES:

Ah, Lord of life, teach me your lore,

That I these tales may truly tell.

Unto my people I will fare:

The chosen children of Israel,

To tell them comfort of their care,

And of their danger that they in dwell.

God maintain you and me evermore,

And may all mirth among you swell.

1 YOUTH:

Ah, Moses, master dear,

Our mirth is all mourning

In our oppression here,

As slaves beneath the king.

2 YOUTH:

Moses, mourning we are in;

There is none us mirthful makes.

But since we all are of one kin,

Teach us some comfort in this case.

MOSES:

End now all this grief you're in;

From foes, God will defend your ways.

Out of this woe he shall you win

To please him in a plentiful place.

I shall go to the king

And strive to make you free.

3 YOUTH:

God send us good tiding,

And always with you be.

MOSES:

King Pharaoh! To me be intent.

PHARAOH:

Why? What tidings can you tell?

MOSES:

From God of Heaven I am sent

To fetch his folk of Israel;

To wilderness he would they went.

PHARAOH:

Yah! Go you to the Devil of Hell!

I find no force what you have meant,

For in my power they must dwell.

And, liar, for your sake,

They shall be put to pain.

MOSES:

Then God will vengeance take

On thee, and on all thine.

PHARAOH:

Why, curse you, lad! Out of my land!

Think you with tricks our law to sway?

Whence comes this warlock with his wand

That thus would steal our folk away?

2 COUNSELLOR:

This is Moses; we understand

Against all Egypt he is ay.

Your father great fault in him found;

Now he'll destroy you if he may.

PHARAOH:

Nay, nay; that dance is done.

That scoundrel learned too late.

MOSES:

God bids you grant my boon,

And let me go my way.

PHARAOH:

God bids me? False scoundrel, what lies!

What token tells me his intent?

MOSES:

Yes, sir, he said you would despise

Both me and all his commandment.

"In your presence cast, in this wise,

My wand," he said, by his assent,

And then you would be well advised:

It shall turn into a serpent.

And in his holy name,

Here shall I lay it down.

Lo, sir; see here the same.

PHARAOH:

Ah! Dog! The Devil you drown!

MOSES:

He said that I should take the tail,

That I may prove his power plain;

And soon, he said, it should not fail

To turn into a wand again.

Lo, sir, behold.

PHARAOH:

Now, ill-hail!

He's cunning, this one; yet I ordain

These boys shall stay here in their jail.

These tricks for them shall nothing gain.

But worse, both morn and noon,

Shall they fare, for your sake.

MOSES:

May God send vengeance soon;

May his wrath on you awake.

1 EGYPTIAN:

Alas! Alas! This land is torn;

On life we cannot now depend!

2 EGYPTIAN:

Such great misfortune comes this morn,

No medicine may it amend.

1 COUNSELLOR:

We rue the day that we were born,

Sir King; our bliss is at an end.

PHARAOH:

Why cry you so? What is this scorn?

1 EGYPTIAN:

Such care we cannot comprehend:

Our water, that was ordained

For man and beast as food,

Throughout all Egypt's land

Is turned into red blood.

Now ugly and defiled is it,

That was so fair and fresh before.

PHARAOH:

This wonder does amaze my wit,

Among all works that ever were.

2 EGYPTIAN:

No, lord, there is another yet

That suddenly afflicts us sore:

For toads and frogs come, without let;

Their venom kills us, more and more.

1 EGYPTIAN:

Lord, these gnats, by morn and noon,

Bite us full bitterly;

And we fear all is done

By Moses, our enemy.

1 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, while these Hebrews live, believe

We'll not escape from this sorrow.

PHARAOH:

Go, say we must no longer grieve

(But nonetheless, they shall not go).

2 EGYPTIAN:

Moses, my lord has given leave

To lead your folk away, and so

We shall from plagues have some reprieve.

MOSES:

These words deceive, too well I know,

That soon this shall be seen.

With confidence I say:

If malice he does mean,

More plagues shall him assay.

1 EGYPTIAN:

Lord, alas, in pain we die;

We dare not look out of the door!

PHARAOH:

What devil makes you so to cry?

2 EGYPTIAN:

We fare now worse than ever before!

Great flies, over all this land they fly,

And with their biting hurt us sore.

1 EGYPTIAN:

Lord, our beasts lie dead and dry

Upon the dungheap and the moor:

The ox, the horse, the ass

Fall down dead, suddenly!

PHARAOH:

With that, no man harm has

A half as much as me.

2 COUNSELLOR:

Yes, lord, poor men indeed have woe

To see their cattle dead and lost.

The Jews in Goshen fare not so;

It seems their lives in comfort last.

PHARAOH:

Go; say we give them leave to go

Until these perils all have passed

(But before too far they go

We'll rope them in, four times as fast!).

2 EGYPTIAN:

Moses, my lord gives leave

Your people to remove.

MOSES:

He shall have more cause to grieve

If this is not the truth.

1 EGYPTIAN:

Ah, Lord! We cannot lead this life!

PHARAOH:

Why? Is there grievance grown again?

2 EGYPTIAN:

Such ash, lord, does upon us drive;

It causes boils where it does rain.

1 EGYPTIAN:

Like lepers it makes men and wives,

And then we're torn by hail, and rain;

Our vines in the mountains cannot thrive;

They are threshed, and thunder-slain.

PHARAOH:

How do they in Goshen,

The Jews? Well, can you say?

2 EGYPTIAN:

This has not harmed those men;

They feel no such affray.

PHARAOH:

No? Devil! And sit they so, in peace,

And we, each day in doubt and dread?

1 EGYPTIAN:

My lord, this care will ever increase

Until Moses has leave them to lead.

1 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, if they went, then it would cease;

So we should save us and our seed.

We are otherwise lost, with no release.

PHARAOH:

Let him go forth; the Devil him speed

(His folk should not go far,

Though he were raving mad).

2 COUNSELLOR:

Things shall be worse than they are,

But their going is not so bad.

2 EGYPTIAN:

Ah, Lord! New harm is come to hand!

PHARAOH:

No! Devil! Will it no better be?

1 EGYPTIAN:

Wild worms are laid over all this land;

They leave no fruit nor flower on tree.

Against that storm may nothing stand.

2 EGYPTIAN:

Lord, there is more, it seems to me;

For three days now it has been found:

Such gloom that none can rightly see.

1 EGYPTIAN:

My lord, great pestilence

Is likely long to last.

PHARAOH:

Oh, comes that in our presence?

Then is our pride all past.

2 EGYPTIAN:

My lord, this vengeance lasts too long,

And must, until Moses has his boon.

1 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, let them go, or we do wrong;

No help is in delay; act soon!

PHARAOH:

Go; say we give them leave to be gone,

In the Devil's name, since it must be done

(For it may be we'll come upon

Them all, to slay them tomorrow ere noon).

1 EGYPTIAN:

Moses, my lord has said

Your passage shall be clear.

MOSES:

To go, I am well paid.

My friends, be of good cheer;

For at our will we now shall go,

To dwell within the Promised Land.

1 YOUTH:

That felonious fiend, the King Pharaoh,

Will be enraged, when on each hand

This is known; he'll soon follow,

And all his armies he will send.

MOSES:

Be not afraid; from every foe

God will protect you; he is your friend.

Therefore, come forth with me.

Be silent, and fear not.

2 YOUTH:

My Lord, loved may you be;

From bale you have us brought.

3 YOUTH:

Such friendship never before we found,

But still, misfortunes may befall.

The Red Sea is right near at hand;

There we must wait, and be made thrall.

MOSES:

I shall make us a way, with my wand,

For God has said, save us he shall.

On either side, the sea shall stand,

Until we have gone, just like a wall.

Therefore, have no dread;

Try always your God to please.

1 YOUTH:

May the Lord to dry land lead;

Now let us go at ease.

1 EGYPTIAN:

King Pharaoh, the folk are gone.

PHARAOH:

Now tell me, is there any news?

2 EGYPTIAN:

The Hebrews all are gone, each one.

PHARAOH:

What do you say to that?

1 EGYPTIAN:

It's true.

PHARAOH:

Harness the horses! See it done;

This outrage they shall swiftly rue.

We shall not cease before they're slain;

Right to the sea we shall pursue.

Go; load our chariots now,

And quickly follow me.

2 EGYPTIAN:

Lord, to your will we bow;

At your bidding shall we be.

2 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, to your bidding we are bound;

Our bodies boldly for to bid

We'll not abide, but ding them down

'Till all be dead, without dread.

PHARAOH:

Heave up your hearts to great Mahound;

He will be near us in our need.

Ah! Help! By the Devil, I drown!

1 EGYPTIAN:

Alas! We all die for this deed!

1 YOUTH:

Now we are won from woe,

And saved from out of the sea;

Cantemus domino;

To God a song sing we.

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# 12. The Spicers' Play: The Annunciation and Visitation

DOCTOR:

Lord God, great marvel it is to mean

How man was made without a miss,

And set where he should ever have been:

Without care, abiding in bliss-

And how he lost that comfort clean,

And was put out from Paradise-

And since, what sorrows sore were seen

Sent unto him, and to all his-

And how they lay a long space

In hell, locked out of light

Until God granted them grace

And help, by his great might.

Then, it is needful now to tell

How prophets all God's counsels explain,

As the prophet Amos did foretell

While he in this life did remain.

Deus pater deposuit salutem fieri in medio terre.

He said, "God, the father of Heaven and Hell,

Ordained on Earth mankind to mend,"

And to atone with Godhead as well.

He said His son that He would send,

To take kind of man's kin

In a maiden full mild.

So were many saved of sin

And the foul fiend beguiled.

And so that the fiend should be misled

And vexed, and to truth give no intent,

God made that maiden to be wed

Before His son to her he sent.

So was the Godhead enclosed and clad

In wedding-clothes where he went;

And that our bliss should so be bred,

Full many matters may be meant.

Quoniam in semine tuo benedicentur omnes gentes.

God Himself said this thing

To Abraham, as his bequest:

"Of your seed up shall he spring

In whom all folk be blessed."

To prove these prophets ordained are,

As I say unto old and young,

He moved our mischiefs for to mar,

For thus prayed Isaac for this thing:

"Rorate celi desuper."

"Lord, come down," at your liking,

Make dew to fall from Heaven so far,

For then the Earth shall spread, and spring

A seed that us shall save,

That now in bliss are bent;

Of clerks whoso will crave,

Thus in these things is meant:

The dew to God the Holy Ghost

May be compared, in man's mind-

The Earth unto the maiden chaste,

Because she comes of earthly kind.

These wise words were not wrought in waste

To waft and wend away like wind,

For this same prophet soon, in haste,

Said furthermore, as folks may find:

Propter hoc dabit Dominus ipse vobis signum.

Lo, he said thus: "God shall give

Hereof a sign to see"

To all that loyally live,

And this their sign shall be:

Ecce virgo concipiet, et pariet filium.

Lo, he says that "a maiden", one

Here on this earth, among us all,

"will clear conceive and bear a son,"

And call him by name Emanuell.

His kingdom that ever is begun

Shall never cease, but endure and dwell.

On David's seat he shall remain

His dooms to deem, and truth to tell.

Zelus Domini faciet hoc.

He says, "the love of our Lord

All this shall ordain then."

That means peace and accord

To make with earthly man.

More of this maiden he tells me:

This prophet says for our succour

Egredietur virga de Jesse -

"A wand shall be bred of Jesse's bower."

And of this same also says he:

"Upon that wand shall spring a flower,"

Whereon the Holy Ghost shall be

To govern with great power.

That wand means unto us

This maiden, even and morn.

And the flower is Jesus

That of that blessed was born.

The prophet Joel, a gentle Jew,

Sometimes has said the same thing.

He likens Christ even as he knew

Like to the dew in his coming:

Ero quasi ros; et virgo Israell germinabit sicut lilium.

"The maiden of Israel," all new,

He says, "shall bear one, and forth bring

As the lily flower, full fair of hue."

This means so to old and young:

That the High Holy Ghost

Came, our mischief to mend,

Into Mary, maiden chaste,

When God his son would send.

This lady is to the lily like;

That is because of her clean life.

For in this world was never such like:

In one to be maiden, mother and wife.

And her son, king on Heaven's peak,

As oft is read, by reason rife,

And her husband, both master and meek

In charity, to stint all strife-

This passed all worldly wit,

How God ordained them then.

In her, in one are knit

Godhead, maidenhead, and man.

But of this work, great witness was

With our forefathers, as all folk can tell.

When Jacob blessed his son Judas

Among the two, this tale did tell:

Non auferetur septrum de Juda, donec veniat qui mittendus est.

He says, "the scepter shall not pass

From Judah, land of Israel,

Before he comes, who ordained was"

To send the devil's force to hell.

Et ipse erit expectacio gencium.

"Him shall all folk abide,"

And stand unto his story.

By these sayings signified

Is Christ, God's son in glory.

For how he was sent, see we more,

And how God would his place purvey.

He said, "Son, I shall send before

My angel, to prepare your way-"

Ecce mitto angelum meum ante faciem tuam, qui preparabit viam tuam ante te.

Of John the Baptist he spoke this, for

On Earth he was ordained always

To warn the folk who then were there

Of Jesus' coming, and thus to say:

Ego quidem baptizo in aqua vos, autem baptizabimini spiritu sancto.

"After me, shall come to you

A man of might the most.

And he shall baptize you

In high Holy Ghost."

Thus of Christ's coming may we see

How Saint Luke speaks in his gospel:

"From God in heaven is sent," says he,

"An angel named Gabriel

To Nazareth in Galalee,

Where this maiden mild did dwell,

That with Joseph should wedded be;

Her name is Mary." Thus does he tell.

How God his grace conveyed

To man in this manner

And what the angel said,

Take heed, all that will hear.

[Then he [the angel] sings "Ave Maria"]

ANGEL:

Hail Mary, full of grace and bliss!

Our Lord God is with thee,

And has chosen thee for his.

Of all women blessed must thou be.

MARY:

What manner of greeting is this,

That secretly comes to me?

For in my heart a care it is,

The sign that I here see.

[Then the angel sings "Ne timeas, Maria"]

ANGEL:

No, dread you not, mild Mary,

Anything that may befall.

For you have found, most sovereignly

With God, a grace surpassing all.

In the chastity of your body

Conceive and bear a child you shall;

This message I bring you. Now see:

His name Jesus shall you call.

Much of might then shall he be:

He shall be God, and called God's son.

The seat of David, his father free,

Shall God give him to sit upon.

As King, forever reign shall he,

In Jacob's house for all time to stay;

Of his kingdom and dignity

Shall no man earthly know or say.

MARY:

Now, God's angel meek and mild,

How should it be, I you pray,

That I should now conceive a child

Of any man, by night or day?

I know no man who has defiled

My maidenhood, the truth to say;

Without the will for workings wild

In chastity I have been always.

ANGEL:

The Holy Ghost shall in you alight,

And highest virtue you shall hold.

From holy birth of you, so bright,

The son of God he shall be called.

Look, Elizabeth, your cousin, might

Conceive no child, because too old:

This is the sixth month now, full right,

For her, that barren had been told.

MARY:

Now, angel, blessed messenger,

Of God's will I hold myself well paid;

I love my Lord with heart full clear,

For all the grace he has for me laid.

As God's own handmaid, behold me here,

To do his will all ready made;

Be it done to me, in joyous cheer-

Through all your words, as you have said.

Now God, that all our hope is in

Through the might of the Holy Ghost,

Save you, madam, from guilt of sin-

Direct you past all works of waste.

Elizabeth, my own cousin,

It seemed to me I wanted most

To speak with you of all my kin,

And therefore come I thus in haste.

ELIZABETH:

Ah, welcome, mild Mary,

Mine own cousin so dear;

A joyful woman too am I,

Now that I see you here.

Blessed are you alone, I see,

Of every woman most revered,

And the fruit of your body

Blessed is, both far and near.

This is a joyful tiding,

That I may now here see

The mother of my lord the king

In this way come to me.

As soon as the voice of your greeting

Came to my ears, and unto me,

The child inside my womb so young

Made great mirth unto thee.

MARY:

Now Lord, blessed are you for aye,

For all the grace you have me lent;

Lord, I love you, God indeed;

The messenger to me you have sent.

I thank you now, by night and day,

And pray with good intent

You take me to your pay;

For you my will is meant.

ELIZABETH:

Blessed are you, most worthy maid,

To God, through chastity.

You trusted, and yourself held paid

At his will for to be.

All that for you is said

From my lord so free.

Such grace for you is laid,

As is fulfilled indeed.

MARY:

To his grace myself I will take

With perfect chastity,

Who made me thus to go

Among his maidens free.

My soul shall loving make

Unto that lord I see.

My sprit makes joy also

In God, who sets me free.

[Then she sings "Magnificat"]

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# 13. The Pewterers' and Founders' Play: Joseph's Trouble about Mary

JOSEPH:

Of great mourning may I complain,

And walk full wearily by this way.

For now I know, I better had been

At ease and rest by reason aye.

For I am of great eld,

Weak and all unwell,

As all men see it may.

I may not bustle or build

Either in woods or field;

For shame, what shall I say?

That now, thus-wise in mine old days

Have wed a young wench for my wife--

I cannot cross two passageways!

Now Lord, how long shall I lead this life?

My bones are as heavy as lead,

And may not stand in stead,

As you may see full right.

Now, Lord, guide my poor head,

Or soon drive me to dead.

You may best stop this strife.

Full bitterly may I bemoan

The way I in the temple went.

It was for me a bad bargain;

For pity may I ever repent.

For there came the command

That single men should stand,

Assembled by assent.

And each one a dry wand

On high held in his hand--

And I knew not what it meant!

Among all others, the one bore I;

It flourished fair, and flowers spread;

And they told me, for this, that I

With a wife should soon be wed!

The bargain I made there,

I now regret full sore;

I am discomforted.

It casts me now in care,

For I might evermore

The single life have led!

Her works have made my cheeks all wet.

I am beguiled! How, I know not.

My young wife is with child full great!

That gives me now, sorrow unsought.

That reproof has almost slain me-

For if any man arraign me

As to how this thing was wrought-

To lie, if I should pain me,

The law stands hard again' me.

To death I must be brought!

Yet vile it seems, on the other side,

My wife with any man to defame.

Whichever of the two I bide

Holds no escape without great shame.

The child, I know, is not mine.

That reproof gives me pain,

And makes me flee from home.

I stake my life herein:

She is a clean virgin

For my part, without blame.

But...well I know through prophecy

A maiden clean should bear a child...

But it is not her, certainly!

Therefore I know I am beguiled.

And why would not some young man take her?

For sure I think I must forsake her.

Into some woods wild,

Thus I think to steal away.

God shield that wild beasts should slay

That bird, so meek and mild.

Of my wending I'll no one warn.

Nevertheless, it is my intent

To ask her who got her that bairn;

I would know that before I went.

All hail! God be herein!

MAID 1:

Welcome, by God's dear might.

JOSEPH:

Where is that young virgin,

Mary, my bird so bright?

MAID 1:

Surely, Joseph, you see her there,

And know she is not far away.

She sits at her book, full fast in prayer

For you and us, and for all they

With any need.

But now to tell her will I say

Of your coming, with all speed.

Have done, and rise up, dame,

And to me, take good heed:

Joseph, he is come home.

MARY:

Welcome, as God me speed!

Dreadless to me he is, full dear;

Joseph, my spouse, welcome are ye.

JOSEPH:

I thank you, Mary...say, what cheer?

Tell me the truth, how is it with thee?

...Who has been there?

Your womb is big, it seems to me;

You are with child! Alas, for care!

Ah, ye maids, shame on ye,

That let her learn such fare!

MAID 2:

Joseph! Do not believe

In her a weak affair!

JOSEPH:

Believe no harm? Dear wench, away!

Her..sides...show me she is with child!

Whose is't, Mary?

MARY:

Sir, God's and yours.

JOSEPH:

Nay, nay,

Now know I well I am beguiled.

And reason why?

By me your flesh was never defiled,

And I reject it here, thereby.

Say, maidens, how is this?

Tell me the truth, I advise;

Unless you do, know this:

You surely shall pay the price!

MAID 2:

You can threaten as much as you can.

I have nothing to tell you, still.

For truly, here came never no man

To weigh down the body, with no ill,

Of this sweet wight.

For we have stayed here with her still,

And never away from her, day or night.

Her keepers have we been,

And she, here in our sight.

Came here no man between

To touch that bird so bright.

MAID 1:

No, no man ever in this place came,

And to that ever witness will we...

Except an angel, once a day.

With bodily food, feed her did he.

No other came.

Wherefore, we know not how it be

Unless the Holy Ghost conveyed--

For truly we know this:

With her is come his grace.

For she did never amiss,

And ever witness will we.

JOSEPH:

Then I see well your meaning is,

The angel has made her with child.

Nay, some man in an angel's likeness

With some foul trick has her beguiled;

And that perceive I!

Therefore, you need no words so wild

To carp at me deceivingly!

Whe, why lie to me so

And feign such fantasy?

Alas, I am full woe!

For sorrow, why might I not die?

For me, this is a woeful case.

Reckless I rave, my wits are all fled.

I dare look no man in the face.

Wretched for sorrow--why am I not dead?

Loathsome is my life!

In the temple and in other stead

Into scorn every man will me drive.

Was never a man so woe?

For pity, my heart is rife!

Alas, why wrought you so,

Mary, my wedded wife?

MARY:

To my witness, great God I call,

That in his mind wrought never amiss-

JOSEPH:

Whose is the child you are withal?

MARY:

Yours, sir, and the King's of Bliss.

JOSEPH:

Oh yea, and how then?

Nay, wondrous tidings then is this-

Excuse them well, these women can!

But Mary, all that you see

Will know your works are wan.

Your womb shall still betray

You, that you have met with man.

As you would thrive, say whose it is.

MARY:

Sir, it is yours, and God's own will.

JOSEPH:

Nay, I have nought to do with this!

Name it no more to me, be still!

You know as well as I

That fleshly, you and I

Did never such deeds so ill.

Look you did no folly

Before me, privily,

Your fair maidenhead to spill.

But who is the father? Tell me his name.

MARY:

None but yourself.

JOSEPH:

Let be, for shame!

I did it never, you foolish dame, by book and bell!

Blameless, I would bear this blame if once you tell.

For I wrought never, in word or deed,

A thing to mar thy maidenhead,

To touch me till.

Now, for such care is little need;

As though my own, I would it feed

If all be still.

Therefore, the father tell me, Mary.

MARY:

But God and you, I know of none.

JOSEPH:

Ah, such sayings make me sorry.

With great mourning may I complain.

Therefore, be not so bold;

Such tales should not be told,

But hold you still as stone.

You are young, and I am old;

I could not, even if I would.

Those games for me are gone.

Therefore, tell me in privacy-

Whose is the child within you now?

For certain, none shall know but we.

I fear the law as much as thou.

MARY:

Now great God, of his might,

Who accomplishes all things right,

Meekly to you I bow.

Rue on this weary wight,

That, in his heart, might light

The truth to trust and know.

JOSEPH:

Who had your maidenhead, Mary? Can you bring it to mind?

MARY:

Forsooth, I am a maiden clean.

JOSEPH:

No, you're speaking now against kind!

Such a thing no man could mean.

A maiden to be with child?

These words from you are wild!

She is not born, I ween!

MARY:

Joseph, you are beguiled.

With sin was I never defiled.

God's word in me is seen.

JOSEPH:

God's word? Oh, Mary, God us help!

But surely that child was never ours two.

But even if women should need much help,

Still, they would let no man know of their woe.

MARY:

Truly it is God's hand,

[The maker of sea and sand.]

From this I shall never go.

JOSEPH:

Ah, Mary, take away your hand.

Further will I understand;

Yet I trust it is not so.

The truth from me you may retain;

The child-bearing you cannot hide.

But sit here till I come again.

I...have an errand here beside.

MARY:

Now great God show you this,

And mend you of your miss

Of me, what so betide.

As he is king of bliss,

Send you some sign of this,

In truth that you might bide.

JOSEPH:

Now, Lord God, that all things may

At your own will both do and dress,

Show me now some ready way

To walk here in this wilderness.

Before I pass this hill,

Do with me what God will,

Either more or less.

Here shall I bide full still

Till I have slept my fill,

My heart so heavy is.

ANGEL:

Awaken, Joseph, and better keep

Your Mary, who is your fellow good.

JOSEPH:

Ah, I am weary, leave, let me sleep.

I have walked and wandered in this wood.

ANGEL:

Rise up! And sleep no more!

You make her heart full sore,

Who loves you as she should!

JOSEPH:

Whe, now this is hardly fair!

For I am caught both here and there,

And nowhere rest I could....

Say-what are thou?! Tell me this thing!

ANGEL:

I am called Gabriel; from Heaven, God's angel;

I have taken your Mary into my keeping.

And I am sent here for this bidding to tell:

In loyal wedlock, lead you!

Leave her not, I forbid you!

No sin must you mention,

But to her, fast, now speed you,

And of her, nought fear you.

It is God's son of Heaven.

The child that shall be born of her,

It is conceived of the Holy Ghost;

It brings us joy and bliss forever,

And to mankind, of all, the most.

Jesus his name you'll call,

For such will him befall

As you shall see, in haste.

His people save he shall

From evils and trials all

Which now ensnare them fast.

JOSEPH:

Angel, is this truth you say?

ANGEL:

Yea, and for a token right:

Go forth to Mary, your wife always;

Bring her to Bethlehem tonight.

There shall a child born be;

God's son of Heaven is he,

And of all men most in might.

JOSEPH:

Now, Lord God, full well is me

That ever I this sight should see!

I never was so light!

But...since I would have her refused,

And blamed the one who ever was clear,

I must pray her to hold me excused,

As some men do, with full good cheer.

Say, Mary, wife,...how fare you?

MARY:

The better, sir, for you.

Why stand you there? Come near.

JOSEPH:

My back fain would I bow,

And ask forgiveness now.

I hope you will me hear.

MARY:

Forgiveness, sir? Let be, for shame-

Such words should all good women lack.

JOSEPH:

Yea, Mary, I am to blame

For words that some time past I spoke.

But gather now all our gear,

And such poor weeds as we wear,

And put them in a pack.

To Bethlehem I must it bear,

For little things cause women care;

Help up now, on my back.

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# 14. The Tile Thatchers' Play: The Nativity

JOSEPH:

Almighty God in Trinity,

I pray, oh Lord, for your great might:

Unto your simple servant see

Here, in this place where we are set

Alone, alas.

Lord, grant us good harbour this night

Within this place.

For we have sought both up and down,

Through diverse streets in this city.

So many people have come to town

That we can nowhere harboured be,

There is such press.

Indeed, I can no succour see

But to board us with these beasts

And if we here all night abide,

Exposed we shall be, in this shed.

The walls are down on every side;

The roof is rent above our heads.

As I hope for peace too,

Say Mary, daughter, what's your advice?

What shall we do?

For in great need we now are led,

As you yourself the truth may see.

For here are neither cloth nor bed,

And we are weak, and all weary,

And need to rest.

Now gracious God, for your mercy,

Advise us best.

MARY:

God will advise full well, you'll see;

Therefore, Joseph, be of good cheer.

For born in this place He will be

Who shall save us from sorrows severe,

Both even and morn.

Sir, you know well, the time is near

He will be born.

JOSEPH:

Then we shall need to stay here still

Here in this same place all this night.

MARY:

Yea sir, in truth,, it is God's will.

JOSEPH:

Then I wish we had some light,

Whatever befall.

It grows full dark within my sight

And cold withal.

I will go get us light to see

And try some fuel with me to bring.

MARY:

May Almighty God you govern and lead

As he is sovereign of every thing

By his might and main;

And lend me grace by his loving

Myself to ordain.

Now in my soul great joy have I;

I am all clad in comfort clear.

Now will be born of my body

Both God and man together here.

Blessed must he be.

Jesus my son that is so dear,

Now born is he.

Hail, my lord God, hail prince of peace;

Hail, my father, and hail, my son;

Hail, sovereign Lord, all sins to cease;

Hail, God and man on earth to run;

Hail, through whose might

All this world was first begun:

Darkness and light.

Son, as I am a simple subject of thine

Permit, sweet son, I pray to you

That I might take thee in these arms of mine,

In this poor weed to cover you.

Grant me your bliss,

As I am your mother chosen to be

In faithfulness.

JOSEPH:

Ah, Lord God, but the weather is cold!

The frostiest freeze that ever I felt.

I pray, God help those that are old;

Especially those that are unwell

So may I say.

Now good God, be now my help,

As best you may.

Ah, Lord God, what light is this,

That comes shining thus suddenly?

I cannot say, as I have bliss.

When I come home unto Marie

Then shall I ask her.

Ah, now come I, God praised be.

MARY:

You are welcome sir.

JOSEPH:

Say Mary, daughter, what cheer with thee?

MARY:

Right good, Joseph, as was always.

JOSEPH:

O Mary, what sweet thing is that on your knee?

MARY:

It is my son, the truth to say,

That is so good.

JOSEPH:

I'm glad I lived to see this day,

To see this food.

I marvel much at this, His light

That shines so brightly in this place.

In truth, it is a wondrous sight.

MARY:

This has he ordained of grace,

My son so young:

A star to be shining out a space

At his birthing.

For Balaam told full long before,

How a star should rise full high

And of a maiden should be born;

A son that shall our saving be

From cares keen.

It is my gracious son indeed,

Whom Balaam had foreseen.

JOSEPH:

Now welcome, flower fairest of hue.

I honour you with main and might.

Hail, my maker; hail, Christ Jesu;

Hail, royal king, root of all right;

Hail, saviour;

Hail, my lord, gleamer of light;

Hail, blessed flower.

MARY:

Now, lord that all this world shall win

To you, my son, this do I say:

Here is no bed to lay you in.

Therefore my dear son, I do pray,

Since it is so,

That here in this crib I might you lay

Between these beasts two.

And I shall wrap you, my own dear child,

With such poor clothes as we have here.

JOSEPH:

O Mary, behold these beasts so mild:

They offer praise in their manner,

Like they were men.

In truth, it seems well by their cheer,

Their lord they ken.

MARY:

Their lord they know, I witness well.

They worship him with might and main.

The weather is cold, as you can tell

They want to warm him where he's lain

With their warm breath;

And breathe on him as it is plain

To warm him with.

O, now sleeps my son; blessed must he be

And lies full warm, these beasts between.

JOSEPH:

O now is fulfilled, indeed I see

What Habbacuk in mind did mean,

And preached by prophecy:

He said our Saviour should be seen

Between the beasts to lie,

And now I see the same in sight.

MARY:

Yea sir, indeed this same is he.

JOSEPH:

Honour and worship both day and night,

Everlasting lord, be done to thee,

Always as worthy;

And Lord, to your service I promise me

With all my heart wholly.

MARY:

You merciful maker most mighty,

My God, my Lord, my son so free,

Your hand-maiden in truth am I;

And to your service I promise me

With all my heart entire.

Your blessing now I beseech,

Now grant all those who are here.

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# 15. The Chandlers' Play: The Shepherds

SHEPHERD 1:

Brother in haste, take heed and hear

What I will speak and specify:

Since we walk thus far over here,

What moves my mood, now tell will I:

Our forefathers, faithful in fear

Hosea and Isaiah, know I

Proved that a prince without peer

Should descend in a lady, thereby

Mankind thus to purify,

To heal the forlorn.

And in Bethlehem close hereby

Is that same boy to be born.

SHEPHERD 2:

Ere he be born in that burg nearby

Of Bethlehem, brother, I have heard say

A star would shine out and signify

Delightful gleams as bright as day.

This text was shown to my own eye

By men who are witty and learned in our way.

With blessed blood, he shall us buy.

He should come here by way of a maid

And once I heard my father say:

When he of her was born,

She'd be as clean a maid

As ever she was before.

SHEPHERD 3:

Ah, merciful Maker, much is your might

That thus your servants may see;

Might we once look upon that light,

Gladder brothers no men might be.

I have heard say, by that same light

The children of Israel shall be made free,

The force of the fiend will fall in fight,

And all of his power excluded should be.

Wherefore brother, I counsel that we

Fly fast over these fells

To try to find our sheep

And speak of something else.

SHEPHERD 1:

Hey, Hud!

SHEPHERD 2:

Hey, how?

SHEPHERD 1:

Listen to me.

SHEPHERD 2:

Whoah, man, you go mad out of might!

SHEPHERD 1:

Hey, Coll!

SHEPHERD 3:

What care has come into thee?

SHEPHERD 1:

Step you forth and stand by me right,

And tell me then,

If ever you saw such a sight.

SHEPHERD 3:

I? Nay, truly, nor never no man.

SHEPHERD 2:

Say fellows what - have you found any feast?

It fits I should have my part, indeed!

SHEPHERD 1:

Hey, Hud, behold in the east

A wondrous sight then you shall see

Up in the sky.

SHEPHERD 2:

Hey, tell me men, among us three

What makes you stare so steadily?

SHEPHERD 3:

As long as we have herdsman been

And kept these cattle in this rough-

So wondrous a sight was never seen

SHEPHERD 1:

Hey! No, Colle, it comes new enough!

That can we find.

This star with piercing rays so keen

What think you two that it might mean?

SHEPHERD 3:

Ah, now is come the time foretold,

By ancient fathers from of old,

That in the winter's night so cold,

A maid should bear a flower bold.

Now it's fulfilled.

For now in her these words unfold,

And God is born of maid on mold.

SHEPHERD 2:

Beloved be God, the most in might,

That gives us grace to see this sight.

We praise him now as it is right

And kneel we here this holy night.

Almighty Lord,

We thank you for this star so bright

That through thick darkness sends such light.

[The angels sing "Gloria in excelsis Deo"]

SHEPHERD 2:

Well, this is a wondrous note on high

I think I heard the angels' song.

Did you hear heavn'ly lullaby?

What can it mean that thus is sung?

What, shall we try?

SHEPHERD 3:

It means some marvel among us

Full hardly now say I.

SHEPHERD 1:

What it should mean? That know not ye

For all that you can gape and moon:

I can sing it as well as he

And as a test it shall be soon

Proved, ere we pass

If ye will help, sing on! Let's see

For it was thus:

[And then they sing]

SHEPHERD 2:

Ha ha! This was a merry note!

By the death that I shall die,

I have so cracked my throat,

My lips are nearly dry

SHEPHERD 3:

You boast, my boys.

Now, what it was, to know would I

That made this noble noise.

SHEPHERD 1:

An angel brought us tidings new:

A babe in Bethlehem is born,

Of whom did speak our prophesies true.

And bade us meet him there this morn.

That mild of mood-

I would give him both hat and horn,

If I could find that noble food.

SHEPHERD 3:

Him to find, we have no doubt,

And I shall tell the reason why:

Yonder star will point him out.

SHEPHERD 2:

Yeah, you say the truth, let's go thereby

Him to honour,

And making mirth with voices high

With song we seek our saviour.

[And then they sing.]

SHEPHERD 1:

Brothers, be all blithe and glad

Here's the burg where we should be

SHEPHERD 2:

In that same place are we now had;

Therefore I will seek and see.

Such chance of weal, herdsmen ne'er had;

Lo, here is the house-and here is he.

SHEPHERD 3:

Yes, indeed, this is the same,

Look, where that lord is laid,

Between two beasts so tame,

Just as the angel said.

SHEPHERD 1:

The angel said that he should save

The world, and all that live therein.

Therefore, if I should something crave,

To worship him I will begin,

Since I am but a simple knave,

Although I come of courteous kin.

Lo, here such baubles as I have,

A simple brooch with a bell of tin

At your bosom to be.

And when you shall wield all,

Good son, forget not me,

If any good befall.

SHEPHERD 2:

Oh son, that shall save both sea and sand,

See to me, since I have sought.

I am too poor to cross your hand

As my heart would, and as I ought.

Two cobble-nuts upon a band-

See, little babe, what I have brought.

And when you're lord of all the land,

Do good again, forget me not.

For I have heard declared,

By cunning clerks and clean,

That bounty asks reward,

Now you know what I mean

SHEPHERD 3:

Now look on me, my lord so dear,

Although I shove not forth with these

You are a prince without a peer

I have no present which could please.

But look, a horn spoon I have here,

And it will harbour forty peas.

This will I give you with good cheer;

Such novelty may not displease.

Farewell you sweet swain

God grant us long life so,

We take us home again,

And making mirth we go.

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# 16: The Masons' and Goldsmiths' Play: Herod and the Magi

HEROD:

The clouds clapped in clearness that these climates enclose

(Jupiter and Jove, Mars and Mercury amid),

Rushing over my realm in rows, make me rejoice,

Blending brutal blasts to blow when I bid.

Saturn, my subject, that subtly lies hid,

Listens at my liking and lays himself low.

The roof of the red sky of clouds I do rid.

Thunderbolts thickly by the thousands I throw

When I like.

Venus his voice to me owes,

That princes to play on him pick.

The prince of planets, proud in his light,

Shall brace forth his beams to make blithe my body.

The moon at my messages musters his might,

And Kaisars in castles great kindness give me.

Lords and ladies attend me lovingly,

For I am fairer of face, and fresher on fold

(The sooth I shall say), times seven and sixty

Than glorious gules, that gayer is than gold

In price.

How think ye these tales that I told?

I am worthy, witty, and wise.

1 SOLDIER:

All kings to your crown may clearly commend

Your law and your lordship as lodestar on height.

What traitor untrue that will not attend,

You shall lay him down low, far from brightness and light.

2 SOLDIER:

What faker, in faith, that does you offend,

We shall set him some soreness, that sot, in your sight.

HEROD:

In wealth shall I work you to dwell, ere I wend,

You warriors worthy, both witty and wight.

But you know well, cunning knights in counsel,

That my region so royal is ruled well, at rest.

I am aware of no one in this world that does dwell

That forges any felony; with force they're bound fast.

Arrest ye those ribalds who unruly are running!

Be they kings or caitiffs, for care make them cursed,

Yea, and work them to wail for woe, ere day's waning.

What brat that is brawling, his brain look you burst,

And ding ye him down!

1 SOLDIER:

Sir, what fool in faith you will feeze,

That sot full soon myself shall him seize.

2 SOLDIER:

We shall have no doubt to do him dis-ease,

But with countenances cruel we shall crack here his crown.

HEROD:

My son that is seemly, how seem to you these saws?

How comely these knights do converse in this case.

SON:

Father, if they like not to listen to your laws,

As traitors untrue you must teach them their place;

For, father, for unkindness you give them no cause.

HEROD:

Fairness befall you, my fair son, so handsome of face.

And, knights, I command, whoever towards dole draws,

Like chevaliers those churls you shall chastise and chase;

And dread you no doubt.

SON:

Father, I shall fell them in a fight,

What rank ones that rob you of your right.

1 SOLDIER:

With dints to death we indict

Him who listens not to your laws, that lout!

1 KING:

Ah, Lord that lives, everlasting light,

I love thee ever with heart and hand-

Thou, who has made me see this sight

Which my kindred hoped to understand.

They said, a star with beams so bright

Out of the east should stably stand;

And that it should mark the wondrous might

Of the one who should be lord in land--

Who people from sin should save.

And surely I shall say,

God, grant me grace to have

Your guidance on the way.

2 KING:

Almighty God, who all has wrought,

I honour thee as is worthy-

Thou, who with brightness has me brought

Out of my realm, rich Araby.

I shall not cease till I have sought

What stunning thing this shall signify.

God, grant me luck so that I might

Have grace to get good company,

And my comfort increase

With thy star, shining sheen.

For surely, I shall not cease

Till I know what it mean.

3 KING:

Lord God, that all good has begun,

And all may end, both good and ill,

That made for man both moon and sun,

And established yon star to stand stone still:

Till I the cause may clearly expound,

God guide me with his worthy will--

I think I have some fellows found,

My yearning faithfully to fulfill.

Sirs, God save thee and thee,

And keep you ever from woe.

1 KING:

Amen, so mote it be;

God save you, sir, also.

3 KING:

Sirs, with your will, I would you pray

To tell me some of your intent:

Whither you go forth on this way,

And, from what countries you both went?

2 KING:

Full gladly, sir, I shall you say.

A sudden sight to us was sent:

A royal star that rose ere day,

Before us, in the firmament.

That made us leave our homes,

The matter for to prove.

3 KING:

Surely, sirs, I saw the same

That makes us thus to move;

For, sirs, I have heard tell, certain,

It means some marvels shall betide.

Further knowledge I would gain;

That makes me on this road to ride.

1 KING:

Sir, your fellowship to attain

We would be glad. Now side by side,

God grant us, ere we come again,

Encouragement this wintertide.

Sir, here is Jerusalem

To search before we go.

Beyond is Bethlehem;

There shall we seek also.

3 KING:

Sirs, you must well understand

(For wisdom now we all do need),

Sir Herod is king of this land,

And makes the laws, his land to lead.

1 KING:

Sir, since he now is near at hand,

Unto his help we must take heed.

If in his blessing we may stand,

Then we may without fear proceed.

2 KING:

To have leave of the lord

Is reasonable, indeed.

3 KING:

To that let us accord,

And go, with all good speed.

MESSENGER:

My lord, Sir Herod, king with crown!

HEROD:

Peace, dastard, in the devil's despite!

MESSENGER:

My lord, some news has come to town!

HEROD:

What? Vile villain, would you fight?

Go, beat this boy, and ding him down!

2 SOLDIER:

Lord, messengers no man should spite;

It may be for your own renown.

HEROD:

That would I hear. Tell on, then, quite.

MESSENGER:

My lord, I saw this morn

Three kings, speaking together

Of a babe that is born;

And they agreed to come hither.

HEROD:

Three kings, indeed?

MESSENGER:

Sir, so I say,

For I myself saw them come here.

1 COUNSELLOR:

My lord, do question him, I pray!

HEROD:

Say, fellow, are they far or near?

MESSENGER:

My lord, they will be here today;

I know it well, and never fear.

HEROD:

Let me be dressed in rich array,

And every man make merry cheer,

That no sign should be seen

But of friendship and goodwill,

'Till we know what they mean:

Whether good or ill.

1 KING:

The lord that lends everlasting light

Which has us led out of our land,

Keep thee, sir king and comely knight,

And all thy folk that here do stand.

HEROD:

Mahound, my god, the most in might,

That has my health all in his hand,

May he save you, sirs seemly in sight.

Now, give us news to understand.

2 KING:

Some shall we say to you, sire:

A star stood us before

That made us soon enquire

Of one that is new-born.

HEROD:

New-born? That burden I think bad;

And surely, unwise men you were

To leap over land to look for a lad.

Say, when did you lose him? Not long before?

All wise men will think you mad;

Therefore, mention this no more.

3 KING:

Yes, surely, such heartening have we had,

We will not cease 'till we come there.

HEROD:

This would be a wondrous thing.

Say, what babe might this be?

1 KING:

Indeed, he shall be king

Of Jews and of Jewry.

HEROD:

King? In the Devil's name, dogs, you lie!

New well I see you rant and rave.

By any shimmering of the sky

How should you know either king or knave?

SON:

Nay, he is king, and none but he;

That you shall know if that you crave.

And he is judge of all Jewry,

To speak or spoil, to slay or save.

HEROD:

Such tricks may greatly grieve:

To witness that which never was.

2 KING:

Now, lord, we ask but leave

By your power to pass-

HEROD:

Where to go, in the Devil's name?

To look for a lad, here, in my lands?

False villains! Unless you get you home

You shall be beaten and bound in bands!

2 COUNSELLOR:

My lord, to defeat this foul defame

Let all this wrath run off now; and

With sober mind ask them their aim.

Thus shall you clearly understand

Their mind and their meaning;

And take good heed thereto.

HEROD:

I thank thee for this thing;

So, surely, shall I do.

Now, kings, to catch all care away,

Since you are come from kith and kin:

Against our law, now, nothing say

On pain of losing life and limb.

And so that you the truth will say,

I grant you leave to pass herein.

And if your words please me, I may

Myself go with you. Now, begin.

1 KING:

Sir king, we all accord

And say a babe is born

That shall be king and lord,

And heal those that are torn.

2 KING:

Sir, you need wonder at no thing

Of this same matter that gives us news;

For Balaam said a star should spring

From Jacob's kin; that is, the Jews.

3 KING:

Isaiah says a maiden young

Should bear a babe, among the Hebrews,

Who of all countries shall be king,

And govern all that on Earth grows;

Emmanuel is his name,

That is, "God's son of Heaven,"

And indeed this is the same

That we here to you mention.

1 KING:

Sir, the proven prophet Hosée

Did prophecy in town and tower.

A maiden of Israel indeed, said he,

Shall bear one like to the lily flower.

He means, a child conceived shall be

Without the seed of man's succour,

And his mother, a maiden free,

And he, both son and saviour.

2 KING:

What the fathers said before,

No man has the power to curse.

HEROD:

Alas, I am no more;

This waxes worse and worse.

1 COUNSELLOR:

My lord, be ye nothing distressed;

This fix to an end shall well be brought.

Bid them go forth, and kindly request

The truth of this that they have sought,

To tell it to you-thus you shall test

Whether their tales be true or not.

Then, you shall quickly them arrest,

And make all waste that they have wrought.

HEROD:

Now surely, this is well said.

This eases all my pain.

Sir kings, I hold me paid

Of all your purpose plain.

Go forth, your mission to fulfill,

For Bethlehem is here at hand.

And ask now keenly of good and ill

Of him that should be lord in land.

And, come again then me untill,

And tell me truly how it does stand.

To honour him would be my will;

Thus you must surely understand.

2 KING:

Surely, sir, we shall you say

The truth of that same child,

In all the haste we may.

2 COUNSELLOR:

Farewell! You are beguiled.

HEROD:

Now surely this is a clever plot.

Now shall they truly take their way

And tell me of that trivial tot,

And all their counsel they shall say.

If it be true, then I shall not

Hold off for gold; I shall them slay.

But let us go and play somewhat

Elsewhere, until return they may.

I think that shall avail;

Yet none must know. For these

Three kings we must not fail

To murder as we please.

[Then Herod exits, and the three kings enter again to make their offerings.]

1 KING:

Ah, sirs, for sorrow what shall I say?

Where is our sign? I see it not.

2 KING:

No more do I. Now dare I say

That in our going some wrong is wrought.

3 KING:

Unto that prince I advise we pray

Who to us sent his sign unsought,

To let us know a certain way

That we may find him as we ought.

1 KING:

Ah, sirs! I see it stand

Above where he is born!

Lo! Here is the house at hand;

We have not failed this morn.

HANDMAID:

Whom seek you, sirs, on journeys wild,

With talking and traveling to and fro?

Here dwells a woman with her child;

Her husband also, and no more.

2 KING:

We seek a ruler and a child;

His certain sign has told us so.

And his mother, a maiden mild;

Here we hope to find the two.

HANDMAID:

Come near, good sirs, and see;

Your way to its end is brought.

Behold, sirs; hear and see

The same that you have sought.

1 KING:

Loved be that lord by night and day

Who has us guided courteously

To travel many a difficult way,

And come to this pure company.

2 KING:

Let us make now no more delay,

But bring us forth our treasury

And ordained gifts of good array,

To worship him; this is worthy.

3 KING:

He is worthy to wield

All worship, wealth, and win.

Brother, we do yield

To you; you shall begin.

1 KING:

Hail, the fairest on earth, shield of mankind;

From the fiend and his forces faithfully us defend.

Hail, the best that shall be born, to unbind

All the people that down to Hell's pains did descend.

Hail; mark us as your men and keep us in mind

As your might is on earth, our misease to amend.

Hail, pure one, that comes to us of a king's kind

To be king of this land, as we do comprehend.

And since it shall be in this wise,

Yourself I have sought soon, I say you,

With gold that is greatest of price;

Please accept now this present, I pray you.

2 KING:

Hail, food that your folk fully may feed;

Hail, flower fairest, that never shall fade;

Hail, son that is sent of that very same seed

That shall save us from the sin that our fathers had.

Hail, mild one, for you marked us for favour indeed;

Of a maiden unblemished your mother you made;

Into her, through the grace of your Godhead,

Like a gleam in a glass you did glide and were glad.

And since you shall sit and shall deem,

To Hell or to Heaven to give us,

Incense does your honour beseem.

My son, see to your subjects and save us.

3 KING:

Hail, babe that is best for our bales to beat;

Beaten and bound shall you be for our debt.

Hail, faithul friend; we fall to your feet;

Your Father's folk from the fiend may you get.

Hail, man that is made, your own men to meet,

As you and your mother with joy are thus met.

Hail, duke that drives death under his feet;

When your deeds are done, die you must yet.

And since your body buried shall be,

This myrrh I will give to your graving.

This gift is not of great degree,

Yet receive it, and see to our saving.

MARY:

Sir kings, you travel not in vain.

As you have sought, here you may find;

For I conceived my son certain

Without the sin of man in mind,

And bore him here without any pain

Where pain is the part of all womankind.

God's angel in his greeting plain

Said he should comfort all humankind;

Therefore, have no doubt at all

Here for to have your boon;

I shall witness fill well

To all that is said and done.

1 KING:

For solaces certain now may we sing;

All is performed for which we prayed.

But, good babe, give us thy blessing,

For a good fortune before you is laid.

2 KING:

Let us return to Herod the king;

To hear of this he shall be repaid,

And shall come himself and make offering

Unto this child, for so he said.

3 KING:

I suggest we rest somewhat

For to maintain our might,

And then do as we ought

Unto the king and knight.

ANGEL:

Now, courteous kings, to me be attent,

And turn away quickly, yourselves to defend.

From God himself thus am I sent

To warn you as your faithful friend.

Herod the king in malice has meant

To destroy you all; your lives he will end.

And so, to avoid that man malevolent,

By other ways God shall you send

Even to your own country.

And if you ask him a boon,

Your protector shall he be

For this that you have done.

1 KING:

Ah, Lord, I love you fervently.

Sirs, God has kindly warned us three;

His angel here now heard have I,

And how he said.

2 KING:

Sir, so did we.

He said Herod is our enemy,

And readies himself our killer to be,

With feigned falsehood. Therefore I

Suggest that from his force we flee.

3 KING:

Sirs, fast I suggest we go

Each to his own country;

May the source of wisdom show

Us the way, and with you be.

# 17. The Hatmakers, Masons, and Labourers' Play: The Purification

PRIEST:

Almighty God, in Heaven so high,

The maker of all Heaven and Earth,

He ordained here all things evenly

For man; he meant to mend his mirth.

In number, weight, and measure fine

God created here all things, I say.

His laws he bade men should not defy,

But keep his commandments, and obey.

Upon the mount of Sinai fair,

And on two tables, you to tell,

God gave his laws to Moses there,

To give to the children of Israel,

So Moses should them guide thereby,

And teach them loyally to know God's will-

And so that they should not deny,

But keep his laws stable, and still.

For a punishment he ordained therefore:

To stone all those that keep it not

Utterly to death, both less and more.

No mercy must for them be sought.

Therefore, keep well God's commandment,

And lead your life by His laws,

Or else you surely shall be rent,

Both less and more, each one in these rows.

This is his will, in Moses' law:

That you should bring your livestock good

And offer it here, your God to know,

And from your sins to turn your mood.

Such beasts as God has ordained here,

Unto Moses he spoke, as I you tell,

And bade him boldly, with good cheer,

To say to the children of Israel

That after diverse sickness severe

And after diverse sins also

Go bring your beasts to the priest, even here,

To offer them up in God's sight, lo!

The woman who has borne her child,

She shall come here on the fortieth day

To be purified, where she was defiled,

And bring with her a lamb, I say,

And two turtledoves for her offering, and

She shall take them up to the priest that day,

Who shall offer them up with his holy hand;

There should no man to this say "nay."

The lamb is offered for God's honour, sure

To be given only in sacrifice, while

The priest's own prayer shall purchase a pure

Renewal for the woman that was defiled.

And if it should happen that she is poor

And has no lamb that she can bring,

Two turtle-doves to God's honour

She shall bring with her for her offering.

Lo, here am I, priest present each day,

To receive all offerings hither brought,

And for the people to God to pray,

That health and life to them be wrought.

ANNA THE PROPHETESS:

Here in this holy place, I say

It is my purpose always to be,

To serve my God both night and day,

With prayer and fasting constantly.

For I've been a widow for sixty year

And four, the honest truth to tell,

And here I've waited with full good cheer

For the redemption of Israel.

And so, for my holy dedication,

Great grace to me has God now sent:

To tell by prophecy for man's redemption

What shall befall, by God's intent.

I tell you all here in this place,

By God's power in prophecy,

That one is born to our solace,

Here to be present, certainly,

Within this place.

Of his own mother, a maiden free,

Of all virgins the most chaste, truly,

The well of meekness, blessed may she be,

Most full of grace.

And Simeon, that old senior,

Who is so seemly in God's sight,

He shall see, and do honour,

And in his arms he shall alight,

That worthy lad.

From the Holy Spirit he shall truly

Take strength, and answer when he shall be

Brought forth to this temple and place holy

To do that deed.

SIMEON:

Ah, blessed God, now be my shield;

Defeat my misery, night and day.

In heaviness my heart is held,

Unto myself, lo, thus I say.

For I am weak, and all unwell;

My joy is gone and passed away,

Wherever I go, in forest or field,

So feeble I am that I stumble, I say.

I say that I stumble wherever I fare;

In hair, and in hue, and in hide, I say,

I wish that out of this life I were.

Thus I wax worse and worse each day,

And my misery grows in all that it may,

Unless you, O Lord, my mourning should cure;

Cure it, for it would well me repay.

So happy to see him: if I were,

Now, surely then should my joy begin,

If I might see him. Of him to tell,

That one is born without sin,

And for mankind here to dwell.

Born of a woman and maiden free,

As witnessed David and Daniel,

Without sin or villainy,

As said also Ezekiel.

And Malachi, that wise prophet as well,

Has told us of this babe so bright,

That he should come with us to dwell

In our temple, like a beam of light.

And other prophets prophesied

And of this blessed babe did tell,

And of his mother, a maiden bright,

In prophecy the truth they tell:

That he should come and harrow Hell,

Like a giant, quickly to glide

And fiercely the devils' malice to quell

And throw their power all aside.

The worthiest one in the world so wide,

His powers so great no tongue can tell;

He sends all succor on every side,

As redemption for Israel.

Thus say they all,

Those patriarchs and prophets clear:

"A babe is born as saviour here,

Knit in our flesh for all our cheer,

Both great and small."

Yes, well were I for ever and ay

If I might see that babe so bright,

Before I'm buried here in clay.

Then would my body mend in might

Right faithfully.

Now, Lord, please grant me your grace

To live here in this world a space

That I might see that infant's face

Before I die.

Ah, Lord God, I think I may endure;

We believe that babe shall find me here.

Now surely, with age I am so poor

That ever it abates my cheer.

Yet if nature fails for the age in me,

God yet may lengthen my life, surely,

Till I that babe and food so free

Have seen with sight.

For truly, if I knew release,

Then nothing could cause my heart unease.

Lord, lend me grace, if you please,

And make me light.

When will you come? Let see, have done;

Nay, come at once, and tarry not,

For surely, my life-days are nearly done,

For age to me great woe has wrought.

Great woe is wrought to the heart of a man

When he must lack what he would have;

I hope to have no health again

Until I have seen that which I crave.

Ah, think you these two eyes shall see

That blessed babe before they go out?

Yea, I pray God that it might be;

Then I were put all out of doubt.

ANGEL:

Old Simeon, God's servant right,

Good news to you I bring, I say.

For the Holy Spirit most of might

Says that you shall not die away

Until you've seen

Jesus, the babe that Mary bore

For all mankind, to slake their care.

He shall make comfort for less and more,

By morn and even.

SIMEON:

Ah, Lord, great thanks to you I say,

That grace to give to me aright,

Before I am buried here in clay,

To see that seemly beam so bright.

No man on Earth so well can be,

Compared to my solace and mirth today:

To see upon that Mary's knee

Jesus, my joy and saviour ay,

Blessed be his name.

Lo, now I can see, the truth to tell,

The redemption of Israel,

Jesus, my lord Emmanuel,

Without blame.

MARY:

Joseph, my husband and my peer,

If you will to me take intent,

I will show you in this manner

What I will do. Thus have I meant:

Full forty days, now, came and went

Since that my babe Jesus was born.

Therefore, I would him now present

As Moses' law told us before,

Here in this temple, before God's sight,

As other women do, as I see.

So I think it good and right

To do the same now, cheerfully,

After God's law.

JOSEPH:

Mary, my spouse, and maiden pure,

This custom that you mention to me

Is for those women, rich and poor,

Who have conceived with sin, fleshly,

To bear a child.

The law is written for them, quite plain,

That they must be purified again,

For, in man's pleasure for certain,

They were before defiled.

But Mary, my lady, you need not do so,

For this cause to be purified, lo,

In God's temple.

For surely you are a pure virgin

In every thought, your heart within;

Nor ever wrought you fleshly sin,

Nor any ill.

MARY:

That I my maidenhead have kept still,

That is only through God's will,

You may be sure.

Yet to fulfil the law truly

That comes down from the Almighty,

And as an example of humility,

I would offer.

JOSEPH:

Ah, Mary, blessed will you be ay;

You always wish to do God's will.

As you have said, Mary, so I say;

I will gladly consent theretill

Without a doubt.

Therefore, let us prepare our way

And make our offering to God today,

Just as you yourself do say,

With hearts devout.

MARY:

To do so, I am ready here.

But one thing, Joseph, is amiss.

JOSEPH:

Mary, my spouse and maiden clear,

What is your trouble? Tell me this.

MARY: Both beast and birds we must needs have:

A lamb and two dove-birds also.

But we have no lamb, nor may not crave.

Therefore, Joseph, what do you now

Advise we did?

If we do not as custom is,

Then blameworthy are we; and this

Is what I fear shall be amiss,

Which God forbid.

JOSEPH:

Ah. Good Mary, the law is this:

The rich must offer both lamb and bird

(The two white turtledoves, that is);

Two doves alone are well preferred

For the poor's offering.

And, Mary, we have these dove-birds two,

As well befits. Now let us go;

They are in this basket, lo,

For us to bring.

And if we have not everything-

The lamb and birds that rich men have-

Remember, we are offering

Our baby, Jesus, as we vouchsafe

Before God's sight.

He is our lamb, Mary, so fear not;

For wealth and power, none better is sought.

Well indeed you have him brought,

Our offering good.

He is the lamb of God, I say,

That all our sins shall take away

From this world here.

He is the lamb of God, indeed,

Defending us from all misdeeds,

Born of your womb, he has us freed,

For our good cheer.

MARY:

Joseph, my spouse, what you say is true.

Let us go forth on our way.

JOSEPH:

Let us go, Mary, and do our due,

And meekly make offering today.

Lo, here is the temple, on this hill,

And also the priest, ordained by skill,

Power having.

And, Mary, let us go there quickly,

And let us both kneel there devoutly,

And offer up to God, meekly,

Our due offering.

MARY:

Unto my God, highest in Heaven,

And to this priest ordained by skill,

Jesus my baby, I offer him,

Here with my heart and my good will,

Right heartily.

Now, pray for us to God on height,

O priest, present here, with his might,

That this deed may, in his sight,

Be deemed worthy.

JOSEPH:

Lo, sir, and two dove-birds are here.

Receive them with your holy hands.

We have no more to give, I fear,

For we have neither rents nor lands,

Truly.

But, good sir, pray to God in thought

To accept these things, that we have brought,

That we have offered as we ought

Here, heartily.

PRIEST:

O God, and granter of all grace,

Blessed be your name, both night and day.

Accept this offering in this place,

That is given to you alway.

Ah, blessed Lord, say never "nay,"

But let this offering be curative

To all such folk living here on clay,

Who humbly thus to you will give.

This baby, lord, here in your sight,

Born of a maiden's womb undefiled-

Accept him, Lord, as a special gift

Given to us all, both elder and child,

So specially.

If this babe, born and offered here,

May defend us, then we need not fear,

But always shall his grace declare,

Here, eagerly.

Ah, blesséd babe! Now, welcome be,

Born of a maiden in chastity.

You are our shield, our joy and glee,

I say truly.

Welcome, our wit and our wisdom;

Welcome our joy, all and sum;

Welcome, redemptor omnium,

To us, heartily.

ANNA:

Welcome, blesséd Mary, and maiden ay;

Welcome, most humble in your array;

Welcome, bright star that shines like day,

All for our bliss.

Welcome, the blesséd beam so bright;

Welcome, the source of all our light;

Welcome, the one who pleasure has plight

To all of us.

Welcome, blesséd babe so free;

Welcome, our welfare bodily;

And welcome, joy of all, truly,

Both great and small.

Babe, welcome to your place secure;

Babe, welcome now for our succour;

And, babe, welcome, with all honour,

Here in this hall.

ANGEL:

Old Simeon, I say to thee,

Dress yourself in your array;

Come to the temple, where you shall see

Jesus, that babe that Mary bore.

Come now; be bold.

SIMEON:

Ah, Lord, I thank you heartily;

Now, I am light as leaf on tree.

My age is gone; I say truly,

Because of that which is told to me,

I am not old.

Now I will to the temple go

To see the babe that Mary bore;

He is my health in well and woe,

And keeps me ever from great care.

Hail, blesséd babe that Mary bore,

And blesséd be your mother, Mary mild,

Whose womb you yielded, fresh and fair,

And she a virgin undefiled.

Hail, babe, the Heavenly Father's child,

Chosen to cheer us in our mischance.

No Earthly tongue can tell undefiled

How great is your power, in every chance.

Hail, most worthy, deliverance

And shield for us, from every ill;

Without your shield we get grievance,

And for our deeds we all should spill.

Hail, O wildflower virginal,

The scent of your goodness ascends to us all.

Hail, best fortune to great and small

For our good.

Hail, rose royal, the reddest of hue,

Hail, flower unfading, always new,

Hail, kindest in comfort that ever man knew

Or could.

And humbly I ask you, here as I kneel,

To suffer your servant to take you in his hands,

In my arms to hold you, that I may be healed:

Where I'm balefully bound, to break all my bonds.

Now, come to me, lord of all lands;

Come, mightiest over the sea and the sands;

Come, joy of all the streets and all strands

Everywhere.

Come embrace me, best babe that is born;

Come embrace me, mirth of every morn;

Come embrace me, or else I am lorn

For my years.

I thank you, Lord God, for your great grace,

For sparing me a little space

This babe in my arms to embrace

As the prophecy tells.

I thank you, who my life has lent;

I thank you, so benificent;

This babe, who to my arms was sent,

With mirth my sadness quells.

My sadness now is quelled with mirth;

My strength is now renewed and fresh.

By grace you gave this gift of worth,

Thus fittingly, here to touch your flesh

Most seemly in sight.

In helping thus, a friend never fails;

Your mercy every man avails,

Both in forests and in dales;

Thus marvelous and much is your might.

Ah, babe, you shall be blesséd for ay,

For you are my saviour, I say,

And you shall rule me from this day,

For all my life.

Now, blessed be your name,

For you save us from shame

And protect us from blame

And from all strife.

Now, I care no more for my life

Since I have seen this royal one thrive:

My strength, and also my ender of strife,

I say.

Now, send your servant away in peace;

For my eyes have seen the prophecies,

The salvation for all on land and seas

Forever and ay.

Salvation, lord, you ordained, I say,

Here before the face of your people.

And your light you have shone today

To be seen by all the folk that were feeble

For evermore,

And your glory for the children of Israel,

Who with you in your kingdom forever shall dwell

When the damned shall be driven to Hell

Then, with great care.

JOSEPH:

Mary, my spouse and maiden mild,

In my heart I marvel here greatly

To hear what these folks say of our child.

They talk of such great mastery

That he shall do.

MARY:

Yes, surely, Joseph, I marvel too,

But I shall ponder it in my mind.

JOSEPH:

God give him grace here well to do,

For he is of a noble kind.

SIMEON:

Mary, I'll tell the truth to you:

He was put here to save us from woe,

To redeem the many, to rescue also,

As I say.

But the sword of sorrows your heart shall fill

When truly you see your son suffer ill

For the good of all wretches; that shall be his will

Here, in faith.

But be comforted again you may,

And in heart be glad-the truth I do say-

For his might is so much that no tongue can say "nay"

Here to his will.

For this babe as a giant so swiftly shall glide,

And the mightiest masters shall fall on each side

For the sake of all people within this world wide,

Be they good or ill.

Therefore, babe, protect us that we shall not spill,

And farewell, the maker of all at your will;

Farewell, star steadiest; let us be still

In truthfulness.

Farewell, the royalest rose that is reigning;

Farewell, the babe best in bearing;

Farewell, God's son, grant us your blessing

To end our distress.

# 18. The Marshals' Play: The Flight into Egypt

JOSEPH:

Maker, who is most in might,

To your mercy I make my moan.

Lord, keep this humble man in sight;

I have no help but you alone.

For all this world I have forsaken,

And to your service myself I have taken,

With wit and will

For to fulfil

Your commandment.

On this my heart is set,

By the grace you have to me lent;

No man shall keep me from that.

For all my trust, Lord, is in thee

That made me, man, in your likeness.

Oh, mighty maker, remember me

And look upon my lowliness.

I grow as weak as a twig. I'm frail;

My feet and hands now feebly fail.

Whatever it mean,

My eyes now seem

Heavy as lead.

Therefore, I think it best

To make this place my bed-

To sleep, and take my rest.

MARY:

Now, lovely Lord that lives today,

My God, my Lord, my son so dear,

To your Godhead I heartily pray

With all my heart, wholly, entire.

As a mother you did me embrace;

I ask you now to grant your grace

To all mankind

That has a mind

To worship you.

Take care your souls to save,

My gracious son, Jesu;

This gift from you I crave.

ANGEL:

Awaken, Joseph, and be attent!

My words shall stop your sorrow sore.

Be glad; your luck is different;

Therefore I bid you, sleep no more.

JOSEPH:

Ah, mighty Lord, what has this meant?

But what are you, with voice so deep.

That speaks to me thus, in my sleep?

Appear to me,

And let me see

Just what you are.

ANGEL:

Joseph, now, have no dread;

For quickly you shall hear;

Therefore, to me take heed.

For I am sent to thee:

Gabriel, God's angel light

Is come, to bid you flee

With Mary and her boy so bright.

For Herod the king will now destroy

Every newborn baby boy;

He wishes gone

Each Jewish son

Less old than two.

'Till he is dead and gone,

In Egypt stay must you,

'Till I call you again.

JOSEPH:

Everlasting Lord, loved must you be,

That your sweet messenger you would send.

But Lord, why does the king hate me?

I never did the king offend.

What is this fury that makes him kill

Small, helpless babes that never did ill

In word or deed-

At all, indeed,

By night or day?

Since he would be our end,

Dear Lord, I you pray

That you will be our friend,

For though his madness might be great,

Against his power, you can defend.

I pray you, Lord, to guide us straight;

Your help to us I pray you send.

For into Egypt go we will,

Your bidding gladly to fulfil,

As fitting it is.

Now, King of Bliss,

Thy will be done.

Mary, my daughter dear,

I think of you alone.

MARY:

Ah, Joseph, dear, what cheer?

JOSEPH:

My cheer has fled forever this day.

MARY:

Alas! What news has come? Tell me.

JOSEPH:

Now, surely-this is hard to say-

There is no choice, but we must flee

From this our home where we are known;

With all due speed we must be gone,

Both you and I.

MARY:

Dear Joseph, why?

Conceal it not;

Who has us thus reviled?

Or, what wrong have we wrought,

For which we are exiled?

JOSEPH:

Us, do harm? No, no, my wife,

You know too well it is not so.

You must give up that young boy's life

Unless you flee fast from his foe.

MARY:

His foe? What is this thing you've said?

Who would wish my dear son dead?

I shrink; I fear!

Who may my care

And sorrow end?

I wish at once to flee;

For all the world to gain,

His death I would not see.

JOSEPH:

I tell you, he has threatened been

With death by Herod-hard harms to have.

With that child if we are seen,

There is no salve that may him save.

I tell you now, he slays all

Male children, great and small,

In his mad rage,

Within the age

Of two year.

And, for your son's sake,

He will murder our dear-

If the king should him take.

MARY:

Dear Joseph, who told you this?

How did you hear of this dreadful deed?

JOSEPH:

An angel bright that came from bliss

These tidings told to me, indeed-

And awakened me from my sleep

That comely child from cares to keep,

And bade me flee

With him and thee

Into Egypt.

And surely, I have great fear

To make even a short trip

Before we're safely there.

MARY:

Why do they hate him so,

To make for him this strife?

Ah, why should I let go

My sweet son's only life?

Herod ought to be ashamed

To make war on these babes unblamed

That never did ill,

This one to kill,

Though he knows not why.

I would be lost, I make my moan,

If my dear son should die,

When I have but him alone.

JOSEPH:

Now, dear Mary, have done; let be!

I pray you, leave off your din

And get you ready at once to flee

Away with him, his life to win,

That no mischief should him find,

Nor any mishap of any kind

In road or street,

That none us meet

To slay him.

MARY:

Alas, Joseph, for care,

Why should I forgo him,

My dear babe that I bore?

JOSEPH:

That sweet son if you would save,

Then quickly pack up all our gear,

And such small baggage as we have.

MARY:

Ah, dear Joseph, I cannot bear-

JOSEPH:

Bear harm? I know, your strength is small.

But, God knows, I must care for all,

For bed, and back,

And all the pack

That belongs to us.

I must put on a smile;

This baggage bear I must,

Even if I complained the while.

But God grant that I not forget

Any tools that we should with us take.

MARY:

Alas, Joseph, for grievance great,

When shall all my sorrow slake?

For I do not know where to go.

JOSEPH:

To Egypt-I told you long ago.

MARY:

But where is that place?

I should love to know this.

JOSEPH:

How should I know?

I know not where it stands.

MARY:

Joseph, I ask pardon now.

Help me out of this land.

JOSEPH:

Now, surely, Mary, I gladly would

Help, if I can in any way.

And with every ounce of strength I should

Flee with him, and you, away.

MARY:

How can that fiend be so crazed,

To make us go such lonely ways?

He does great sin.

From kith and kin

He makes us flee.

JOSEPH:

Dear Mary, stop your tears.

MARY:

Oh Joseph, woe is me

For my sweet son so dear.

JOSEPH:

I pray you, Mary, keep him warm

And set him down in gentle style,

And if you wish to rest your arm

Give me him; let me bear him a while.

MARY:

I thank you of your great good deed;

Now, good Joseph, to him take heed,

That food so free.

To him now see

Here, for this tide.

JOSEPH:

Let me and him alone,And, if you but badly ride,

Hold on tightly to the mane.

MARY:

Alas, Joseph, for woe.

No one was ever so distraught.

JOSEPH:

Stop this, Mary, and say not so,

For you shall have no cause for that.

For know this well: God is our friend.

He will be with us until the end.

In all our need

He will us speed;

This I know well.

I praise my Lord over all;

Such a strength I think I feel,

I can go where I shall.

Before, I was heavy; now, I am light.

My limbs I may move easily.

I praise my maker, most in might,

That such a grace has granted me.

No man may do us harm;

I have our help here, in my arm.

He will us defend

'Till our journey's end

From treachery.

Let us go with good cheer.

Farewell, and have good day;

God bless all people here.

MARY:

Amen, as He best may.

# 19. The Girdlers and Nailers Play: The Slaughter of the Innocents

HEROD:

Poor good men hereabout!

On pain of limb and land,

Cease your shouting loud

And still as stone now stand;

To my speaking, record!

You ought to give renown

And humbly bow down

To me, your lovely lord.

You ought, in field and town,

To bow at my bidding,

With reverence and renown,

As is right for such a king,

The lordliest alive.

Whoever is not bound,

By almighty Mahound,

To death I shall him drive.

So bold no man must be

To ask for help or favour

But of Mahound and me;

This world is in our power

To rule between us two.

The source of wealth are we,

And my chief help is he;

What can you say hereto?

1 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, for what you wish to do,

All folk in line will fall

To pay attention to you;

None will object at all.

You know that, certainly;

And if they wish not so,

We soon would work them woe.

HEROD:

Yes, fair sirs; so should it be.

2 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, to tell the truth,

Full well we understand

That Mahound is God in sooth,

And you are lord of every land.

Therefore, as God me speed,

I advise that we should hear

With pleasure may you cheer.

HEROD:

You say quite well, indeed.

But I am annoyed now, so

That blithe I may not be.

For three kings, as you know,

Have come through this country,

And said they sought a swain.

1 COUNSELLOR:

That deed I think they'll rue;

For, had their tales been true,

They'd come this way again!

2 COUNSELLOR:

We heard them to you say

That if they found that child

They'd tell you right away.

But surely, they're beguiled!

Such tales, let's not believe;

We all know this is true:

No man shall never live

To have mastery of you!

1 COUNSELLOR:

They're too ashamed, certainly,

To meet you any more.

HEROD:

But why should they so eagerly

Say all these things before:

To say a boy was born,

The most of might and main?

They will be back again,

Although the devil had sworn.

However their search went,

Their intentions still were bad,

Because they always meant

To seek that puny lad,

And make known what was said!

2 COUNSELLOR:

No, lord, they learned too late;

Our bliss will never abate!

And therefore, lord, be glad!

MESSENGER:

May Mahound without peer,

My lord, save you and see.

HEROD:

Messenger, come near,

And a blessing on you be.

What news? Can you tell any?

MESSENGER:

Yes, lord; since I was here

I have gone everywhere;

And seen marvels, full many.

HEROD:

Tell the marvels - but I mean

The ones that will be mirth for me.

MESSENGER:

Lord, even as I have seen,

The truth you soon shall see,

If you will, readily:

I saw, between two towns,

Three kings, with perfect crowns,

Riding full royally.

HEROD:

Ah! Boy, you spoke out of turn!

MESSENGER:

Sir, there is no help for it.

HEROD:

Oho! By sun and moon,

Then we'll hear news tonight.

Do you think that they will come soon,

Here, into my sight,

With any news at hand?

MESSENGER:

Nay, lord, their business is done.

HEROD:

Why? Where have they gone?

MESSENGER:

Each one to his own land.

HEROD:

How say you lad? Let be!

MESSENGER:

I say, forth have they passed.

HEROD:

What? Forth? Away from me?

Messenger;

Yes, lord, in faith, full fast.

For I heard and took heed

Just how they went, all three,

Into their own country.

HEROD:

Ah! Dogs! The devil you speed!

MESSENGER:

Sir, more of their meaning

Yet well I understood:

How they made offering

Unto that noble lad

That recently is born.

They say he will be king,

And rule each earthly thing.

HEROD:

Alas. Then I am lorn.

Fie on them! Traitors! Fie!

Will they beguile me thus?

MESSENGER:

Lord, by their prophecy,

They named his name "Jesus."

HEROD:

Fie on you, lad! Lies, lies!

2 COUNSELLOR:

Unless you leave, quickly,

You'll die here painfully:

Proclaiming him in this wise!

MESSENGER:

To blame me thus is wrong,

For that is how things are.

HEROD:

You lie, you traitor strong!

Never come me near!

Upon my life and limb

I'll catch that traitor, aye!

I'll make him hang on high,

Both you, you knave, and him!

MESSENGER:

I am not worthy of blame,

But farewell, all this heap.

1 COUNSELLOR:

Go, in the devil's name,

Or I will make you leap,

And pay for this ado!

HEROD:

Alas, for great sorrow:

No man can tell my woe.

What the devil is best to do?

2 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, amend your cheer,

And don't let this annoy.

For you shall surely hear

That lad how to destroy;

We'll tell you, if we can.

HEROD:

You can't come even near;

For it is past two year

Since all this trouble began.

1 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, you'd need not fear or doubt

Though it were four or five.

Just gather a great rout

Of the keenest knights alive,

And tell them, ding to dead

All boy infants they have found

In Bethlehem and all around;

Let them seek in every stead.

2 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, spare none - your heart relieve -

That are still within two years;

That brat shall then perceive

All his gladness turn to tears,

When he painfully shall bleed

HEROD:

For sure you've spoken well;

As you've said, every deal

I shall order done, indeed.

Sir knights, courteous to the end,

Though this business is all new,

You shall find me your friend

If at this time you are true.

1 SOLDIER:

What say you, lord? Let's see.

HEROD:

To Bethlehem must you wend,

To bring a shameful end

To that brat who'd master me.

All around the town you'll need

To inquire and to spy,

For there is a chance indeed

That he'll end this Jewry,

And that surely would be shame.

2 SOLDIER:

We'd be disgraced, I say,

If he should get away,

For we would be to blame.

1 SOLDIER:

Full soon he shall be caught,

Of that I make my vow.

1 COUNSELLOR:

Seize him, as you ought,

And let me tell you how

To work when there you've come.

Because you know him not,

To death they must be brought:

Male children, every one.

HEROD:

Yes, all within two year,

No matter how they plead.

2 SOLDIER:

Lord, as you tell us here,

We understand indeed.

We surely shall not rest.

1 SOLDIER:

Come, fellows, follow me.

Well, children we can see,

[And still at mother's breast.]

1 WOMAN:

Curse you, you thieves, I say;

You've slain my seemly son!

2 SOLDIER:

These brats shall dearly pay

In this grief that's begun;

So, let go of him, fast.

2 WOMAN:

Alas, for woe, I die;

But save my son shall I,

While my own life shall last.

1 SOLDIER:

Ah! Dame, the devil you speed;

I will return your blow!

1 WOMAN:

To die I'm not afraid,

I let you surely know,

To save my son so dear.

1 SOLDIER:

To arms! For we have need;

But if we do this deed,

These girls will kill us here.

2 WOMAN:

Alas, this loathsome strife,

No joy I'll ever meet;

The knight upon his knife

Has slain my son so sweet,

And I had but him alone.

1 WOMAN:

Alas, I've lost my life!

There was never so woeful a wife

Who ever made such moan,

But surely, I'd be loth

If they thus, unharmed, rode.

1 SOLDIER:

The devil take you both,

False witches; are you mad?

2 WOMAN:

No, false villains, you lie!

1 SOLDIER:

If you are mad or wroth,

You'll not escape unscathed;

Let's go, immediately!

1 WOMAN:

Alas that we were made

In this world, women to be;

Our children - with pain we've paid,

Thus in our sight to see

Them piteously killed.

2 WOMAN:

And yet, it's all for naught;

The one that they have sought

They'll never come near till.

1 SOLDIER:

Let's go to the king;

Of all this fighting keen,

I shall hold back nothing

Of all that we have seen.

2 SOLDIER:

No, surely, nor shall I.

We have done his bidding

However their hands they wring;

We'll say so, truthfully.

1 SOLDIER:

Mahound, our god of might,

Save you, Sir Herod the King.

1 COUNSELLOR:

Lord, listen to your knight;

He will tell you now tiding

Of the sport, where they have been.

HEROD:

If they have done well

And all their promise held,

Then rejoicing shall be seen.

2 SOLDIER:

As you told us, lord, each one,

In countries where we've come -

HEROD:

Sir, by Moon and Sun,

You are welcome home

And worthy to have reward.

Have you got us this brat?

1 SOLDIER:

Where we found a few, or a lot,

We'll swear that none was spared.

2 SOLDIER:

Lord, they are dead, each one;

What would you we did more?

HEROD:

I only wanted the one

The kings spoke of before:

The master; did you catch

That one? Now, quickly say!

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, we had no way

To recognize the wretch.

2 SOLDIER:

To death we have them brought

About all Bethlehem town.

HEROD:

You lie! Your news is nought;

May the devils of Hell you drown!

That boy may well have fled;

Your effort's been for naught!

Until that lad is caught

I shall never rest in bed.

1 COUNSELLOR:

We will go with you then

To ding that dastard down.

HEROD:

To arms, every man

That holds true to Mahound.

Where they a thousand score,

They'd curse this bad bargain.

Come after as you can,

For we will go before.

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# 20. The Spurriers' and Lorimers' Play: Christ with the Doctors in the Temple

JOSEPH:

Mary, we may now speak between

Ourselves of joys, and talk of some

Of the solemn sights that we have seen

In that city where we come from.

MARY:

Surely, Joseph, the joys within

My heart I make you do not know,

Since that our son with us has been

And seen there solemn sights also.

JOSEPH:

We should go home, say I,

With all the speed we may,

Because of company

That will go on our way.

For good fellowship we have found,

And always forward will we find.

MARY:

Ah, sir! Where is our beautiful son?

I think our wits are wasted as wind.

Alas! In sorrow I am bound;

What ails us both, to be so blind?

To go too fast we have begun,

And left that lovely lad behind.

JOSEPH:

Mary, amend your cheer,

For, surely, when all is done,

He'll come with people here

And will overtake us soon.

MARY:

Overtake us soon? Sir, surely nay,

Such blabbering may me not beguile.

For we have travelled all this day

From Jerusalem, many a mile.

JOSEPH:

I thought he'd been with us. Away

From both of us? How could he while-

MARY:

It helps us not, such things to say.

My son is lost! Alas, the while

That ever we went there, out

With him in company.

We looked too late about,

And, therefore, woe is me!

For he has gone some way that's wrong,

And none is worthy to blame but we.

JOSEPH:

I advise we get along

And hurry back to that city,

To enquire and ask all men among,

For surely, homeward bound is he.

MARY:

Of sorrows sore shall be my song,

'Till I my beautiful son may see.

He is but twelve years old.

What way so ever he wends-

JOSEPH:

Woman! We may be bold

To find him with our friends.

1 DOCTOR:

Masters, to me be attent

And read your reasons all in rows.

And, all you people here present,

Each one, let's see what wit he shows.

I wish to know, before we went,

By scholarship if we could know

If any to whom life is lent

Might here allege against our law.

Either in more or less

If we a fault might feel,

Duly we'll make redress

By judgement, every deal.

2 DOCTOR:

That was well said, I say truly.

To name such notes there was a need;

For masters in this land are we,

And have the laws loyally to lead,

And doctors also in our degree

Who judgement have of every deed.

Lay forth our books at once; let's see

What matter were best for us indeed.

3 DOCTOR:

We shall ordain so well,

Since scholarship we know,

Defects shall no man feel,

Neither in deed nor saw.

JESUS:

My lords, may love be to you lent,

And joy unto this gathering be.

1 DOCTOR:

Son, hence away I would you went,

For other tasks in hand have we.

2 DOCTOR:

Son, whoever has you sent,

They were not wise, I say to thee;

On other tales we are intent

Than now with babes jesting to be.

3 DOCTOR:

Son, if you'd like to hear

How to live by Moses' law,

Come listen; sitting near,

You shall hear our every saw,

For in some mind it may you bring

To hear our reasons read by rows.

JESUS:

From you I need to learn nothing,

For I know both your deeds and saws.

1 DOCTOR:

Now, hear this babe with his boasting;

He thinks he knows more than we knows!

Well, no, surely, son, you are too young

By scholarship to know our laws.

JESUS:

I know as well as you

How all your laws were wrought.

2 DOCTOR:

Come sit, and we shall know,

For surely I think not.

It were a wonder if any might

Unto our reasons right should reach.

And you say you have some insight,

Our laws truly to tell and teach?

JESUS:

The Holy Spirit on me did alight,

And as a doctor anointed me,

And has given me power and might

The Kingdom of Heaven for to preach.

1 DOCTOR:

Whence ever may this boy be

That shows these novelties new?

JESUS:

I was before you, surely,

And shall be after you.

1 DOCTOR:

Son, of your sayings, as I have weal,

And of your wit is a wondrous thing.

But nevertheless, I fully feel

It may well fail in its working.

For David judges of every deal,

And says thus of children young:

"Out of their mouths," he knew full well,

"Our Lord has performed much loving."

But, son, not even yet

Should you presume so large,

For where masters are met,

Children's words are not to charge.

And, although you eager had been,

Although you wished to learn the law,

You are neither of might nor main

To know it as a scholar may know.

JESUS:

Sirs, I tell you for certain,

The whole truth shall be all my saw,

And power has plainer and plain to say,

And answer as I owe.

1 DOCTOR:

Masters, what may this mean?

Marvel, I think, have I,

Where ever this boy has been,

To speak thus cunningly.

2 DOCTOR:

As wide in the world as we once went,

We never found such wonders there.

For, surely, I think this boy is sent

Full sovereignly, to ease our care.

JESUS:

Sirs, I shall prove to all present

All the sayings I said before.

3 DOCTOR:

Well, what call you the First Commandment,

And the greatest, in Moses' lore?

JESUS:

Sirs, since you are set in a row,

And have your books out spread,

Let's see, sirs, in your saws

How right that you can read.

1 DOCTOR:

I read that this is the first bidding

That Moses taught us here untill:

To honor God over every thing,

With all your mind and all your will,

And all your heart on him shall hang,

Early and late, aloud and still.

JESUS:

You need no other books to bring,

But always try this to fulfil.

The second may we prove

And clearly know to be:

Your neighbours shall you love

As yourself, certainly.

This commanded Moses to all men

In his Ten Commandments clear;

In these two sayings, we see then,

Hangs all the law that we shall hear.

Whoever those two fulfils, then,

With strength, and might, in good manner,

He truly fulfils all the ten

That follow after those two here.

Then, God we should honour

With all your might and main,

And love well every neighbour

Just as yourself, certain.

1 DOCTOR:

Now, son, since you have told us two,

Where are the eight? Now, can you say?

JESUS:

The third bids that, wherever you go,

You shall keep holy the Sabbath day.

Then is the fourth: for well or woe,

To honour your parents every day.

The fifth commands you never to

Slay man or woman by any way.

The sixth, truly to see,

Commands all humankind

That they shall try to flee

All filth of fleshly sin.

The seventh forbids you for to steal

Your neighbour's goods, both more and less;

This fault we may find such a deal

Among folks now, a wonder it is.

The eighth teaches you to be loyal,

Here for to bear no false witness.

Your neighbour's house, while you have weal,

The ninth bids you take not by distress.

The tenth bids you not covet.

These are the Commandments Ten,

For whoso will truly set.

2 DOCTOR:

Behold how he alleges our laws,

And learned never a book to read.

Quite subtle sayings I think he says,

And also true, if we take heed.

3 DOCTOR:

Yes-let him now go on his ways;

If he should stay, I say indeed,

The people quickly shall him praise

Well more than us, for all our deeds.

1 DOCTOR:

No, no, then wrong we'd do;

Such speaking will we spare.

As he came, let him go,

And trouble us no more.

MARY:

Ah, dear Joseph, what now? Indeed

Of our great woe is no remedy.

My heart is heavy as any lead

Until my beautiful son I see.

Now we have sought in every street,

Both up and down for three days, three,

And whether he is alive or dead

Yet know we not, so woe is me!

JOSEPH:

Unease had never a man more,

But mourning may not amend.

I advise we farther fare,

'Till God some succour send.

That temple if he were about,

I would we knew, this very night.

MARY:

Ah, sir! I see what we have sought!

In world was never so seemly a sight.

Look where he sits-you see him not?-

Among such masters, much in might.

JOSEPH:

Now, blessed be He that us here brought,

For never was there a man so light!

MARY:

Ah, dear Joseph, as joy we feel,

Go forth and fetch your son and mine;

This day is gone, nearly every deal,

And we have need to go again.

JOSEPH:

With men of power I mix full ill;

Then I must lose these labours of mine.

I cannot speak with them, you know well;

They are so bright in furs so fine.

MARY:

To them your errand for to say

Truly you must not such fear feel;

They will respect you in every way,

Because of your age; you know that well.

JOSEPH:

When I come there, what shall I say?

I've no idea, as I do tell.

Surely, Mary, you'll have me shamed today,

For I can neither bend nor kneel.

MARY:

Let us go together, that would be best,

Unto that worthy one indeed.

And if I see, as I may rest,

That you will not, then I must needs.

JOSEPH:

Go on, Mary, and do your best;

I come behind, as God me speed.

MARY:

Ah, dear son Jesus,

Since we love you alone,

Why did you do this to us,

And make us make such a moan?

Your father and I between us two,

Son, for your love, have been pleased ill;

We have sought you to and fro,

Weeping sorely, as people will.

JESUS:

Why ever should you seek me so?

Many times it has been told you 'till:

My Father's business, for weal or woe,

Thus am I sent here to fulfil.

MARY:

These words, as joy I feel,

I cannot understand.

I shall think on them well,

To see what must follow then.

JOSEPH:

Now, truly, son, your face to see

Has saved us both from all our sore.

Come forth, now, son, with your mother and me;

At Nazareth I would we were.

JESUS:

Then fare you well, you lords so free,

For with my family now will I fare.

1 DOCTOR:

Now, son, whereever you may be,

God make you a good man evermore.

No wonder if this wife

At his finding should be glad.

He shall, if he should live,

Prove to be a handsome lad.

But, son, keep secret, for good and ill,

The new things we have named here now.

And if you like to stay here still

And dwell with us, welcome are you.

JESUS:

I thank you, sirs, for your good will,

But I think no longer to dwell with you.

My family's thoughts I will fulfil,

And to their bidding obediently bow.

MARY:

Full well are us this tide;

Now may we make good cheer.

JOSEPH:

No longer we'll abide.

Farewell, all people here.

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# 21. The Barbers' Play: The Baptism

JOHN:

Almighty God, true Lord, I say,

Mankind's falsehood is full amazing;

For though I teach them day by day,

And tell them, Lord, of your coming,

Who all has wrought -

Men are so dull, that my preaching

Still serves as naught.

When I have, lord, in the name of thee,

Baptized these folks in clear water,

Then I have said that after me,

Shall come the one of more power

Than I at most;

He'll give a baptism more entire,

In fire and Holy Ghost.

Thus, I come as a messenger right,

As his fore-runner, in certain.

In bearing witness to that light,

Which shall be lit in every man,

Who is coming

Into this world. Now, whoever can

May understand.

These folks wondered at my behavior,

And what I was, they quickly spied.

They asked if I were prophet or savior;

And I said no, but testified

High apart-

I said I was a voice that cried

In the desert.

"Be ready," I said constantly,

"To meet our Lord, God, Son of Man;"

That is, that all clean you must be:

In words, in works already done

Before our Lord,

With perfect life, that everyone

Will be restored.

For if we are clean in living,

Our bodies are God's temple then,

In which he will make his dwelling.

Therefore, be clean, both women and men.

This I have said.

God will make within you then

His dwelling-stead.

And if you still set all your delight,

In pleasure, and delight in this life;

Then He will turn from you aright,

Because of sin, both man and wife.

From you, he'll flee.

With any man whose sins are rife,

God will not be.

ANGEL 1:

John, pay attention to what I say;

I bring you tidings wondrous good:

My lord Jesus shall come this day

From Galilee unto this flood

You "Jordan" call,

And take his baptism, mild of mood;

Today he shall.

John, of this message now be glad;

Thank him heartily, both loud and still.

JOHN:

Thanks be forever...I'm scared and sad;

I am not worthy to fulfill

This deed you've meant.

ANGEL 2:

John, you should be, with heart and will,

Obedient,

To do this bidding which we mean.

But in this baptism, John, be attent:

The heavens opened shall be seen;

The holy ghost shall down be sent;

You'll see in sight.

The father's voice, with great intent,

You'll hear full right.

That forthwith thus shall say to him:

"This is my son, who's pleased me right."

JOHN:

My lord, your pardon for my whim.

I will be subject day and night,

As well I ought,

To please Jesus my Lord, as much I may,

In deed, speech, and thought.

But I know baptism is taken by one,

To wash and cleanse himself of sin;

And I know, of sins, that he has none

In him without, and none within.

Why needs he then

Baptism by me, or anyone,

Like one in sin?

JESUS:

John, mankind's lot is frailty;

And to mankind, myself I've knit.

Two arguments to you I'll show,

So you can see with kindly wit,

The reason why I've ordained so.

The first is this:

Mankind may not unbaptized go

To endless bliss.

And since I have become mankind,

So men may me their mirror make,

And have my doings in their mind;

Also, baptism, I will take.

Therefore, you see,

I shall be baptized for their sake,

Full openly.

Another reasoning I will tell:

My will is this, that from this day,

The virtue of my baptism will dwell

In baptism-water, forever and aye,

For man to taste.

Therein, through my grace, take may they

The holy ghost.

JOHN:

Almighty lord, great is your grace.

Thank you for this favor you did.

JESUS:

Come, baptize me John, in this place.

JOHN:

Lord, by your grace, that I forbid,

That it be so;

For Lord, methinks there were more need,

You baptized me.

From the place I yearn for most of all,

From thence you come, my Lord, I guess.

How should I then, a lowly thrall,

Give you baptism, that righteous is?

And has been ever?

For you're the root of righteousness,

Which forfeits never.

What rich man goes from door to door,

To beg from him who has right naught?

Lord, you are rich, and I am poor;

You may bless all, since all you've wrought.

From heaven comes all,

That helps on earth, if truth be sought;

From earth, but small.

JESUS:

You say full well, John, certainly;

But suffer now, for your heavenly good,

So righteousness not only be

Fulfilled in word, but in deed as it should,

Through baptism clear.

Come, baptize me in my manhood,

Publicly here.

First I shall take, then I shall preach;

For so I must in man fulfill

All righteousness, as man's true leech.

JOHN:

Lord, I'm ready at your will,

And will be aye

Your subject lord, both loud and still,

In what I may.

Ah, lord, I tremble where I stand;

I'm so afraid to do this deed.

Forgive me lord, that all ordained;

To touch you lord, I have great dread,

For doings dark.

Now help me lord, though your godhead

To do this work.

Jesus, my lord, of might the most,

I baptize you here in the name

Of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost;

In doing this deed, Lord, set no blame

This day on me.

And bring all those back to your home,

Who trust in thee.

[Then the two angels sing "Veni Creator Spiritus"]

JESUS:

John, for mankind's profit, you know well,

I take this baptism certainly.

All the dragon's powers as well,

Through my baptism ruined be:

This is certain.

And saved is mankind, soul and body,

From endless pain.

Each man who trusts, and baptized is,

Is saved, and he shall come to bliss;

He who trusts not, to pains endless,

Shall soon be damned. Trust what I preach.

But we'll go now,

Where there's most need the folks to teach.

Both I and thou.

JOHN:

I love you lord, as sovereign leech,

Who've come to salve men of their sores.

As you command, I shall go preach,

And show to all mankind this lore,

Who ere were thrall,

Now sirs, that babe who Mary bore,

Be with you all.

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# 22. The Smiths' Play: The Temptation

DEVIL:

Make room, I say, and let me gang!

Who makes here all this throng?

Get you gone, high may you hang

Upon a rope!

I fear I've waited far too long

To do a jape.

For since the first time that I fell

For my pride from Heaven to Hell,

Ever have I made my power to swell

Among mankind,

That I in dole might make them dwell,

There to be pained.

And surely, all that have come to light

Have come to me, by day and night;

And as I've planned, against my might

None may defend;

Miserable is mankind's plight

Without an end!

But of some man, some folk have said

How he shall suffer, and be dead,

And with his death to Heaven's stead

They shall be brought--

A tale told by an empty head:

I trust it not!

For I know all, and I have seen

The nobody that these men mean--

How he has in great trouble been

Since he was born;

And suffered trials hard and keen

Both even and morn.

And now, it is so brought about:

The object of their love, that lout,

To wilderness has wandered out,

Alone! It's true;

To mar him now I have no doubt,

Between me and you.

Until now, he's protected been,

That by no means might I get in

His heart; now he's alone, I'll win

That heedless man,

And make him soon assent to sin,

If that I can.

He has fasted; that mars his mood.

Forty days, and without food.

If he be man of bone and blood

He hungers ill;

With gluttony I think it good

To know his will.

For thus will I of doubts be rid,

If Godhead be within him hid,

If he will do as I him bid

When I come near.

Never a deed he ever did

Would grieve him more!

Thou! Wise man, and so well-read!

If thou possess, at all, Godhead,

Bid now that these stones be bread,

Here, on this ground.

Then they may feed thee in this stead--

And those around!

For thou hast fasted long and lean;

I wish now that some food were seen

For auld acquaintance, us between.

Yourself knows how!

There shall no man know what I mean

But I and thou.

JESUS:

My Father, who all sorrow can slake,

Honour evermore to thee I make!

And gladly I suffer, for thy sake,

Such villainy--

And thus temptations for to take

From my enemy.

Thou curséd wight, thy wits are wood.

It is written, it is understood,

A man feeds not his health and mood

With bread alone;

God's own words are spiritual food

For men, each one.

If I have fasted long, yet still

I feel no hunger yet so ill

That I will break my Father's will

In any degree.

Thy bidding I will not fulfil;

That warn I thee.

DEVIL:

Ah! Such words no devil knows!

He's not hungry, I suppose.

Well, since thy Father, against all foes

May guard thee quite,

Let's see if thou alone may pose

Upon that height,

Upon that pinnacle perfectly.

Aha! Now we go well, I see!

I shall try some vainglory

To make him fall.

If indeed God's son is he,

Know I shall!

Now, listen to me a little space.

If thou be God's son, full of grace,

Show some sign here, in this place

To prove thy might.

Let's see! Fall down upon your face,

Here in my sight!

For it is written, we understand,

How God shall angels to thee send,

And they shall keep you in their hand

Wherever you go,

That thou shall on no stones descend

To hurt your toe.

And since thou can with peril flirt,

And fall, and do thyself no hurt,

Then tumble down, here, to the dirt,

To ease us both.

I warn thee, this deed nought avert!

I shall be wroth!

JESUS:

Let be, thou warlock, thy words vain.

For it is written, clear and plain,

"Thy God to tempt take thou no pain;

Make no discord;

No quarrel shall you ever maintain

Against thy Lord."

And therefore, know thou yet again,

That all thy tricks shall nothing gain.

Be subject to thy sovereign

By night and day.

DEVIL:

What! This effort is in vain,

For all I say!

He proves to be a noble prize;

Therefore I must myself advise.

Now, since I may not in this wise

Make him my thrall,

I will attempt in covetise

To make him fall.

For sure, I shall not leave him yet.

Who is my master, that would I wit.

Myself ordained thee there to sit,

As thou knowst well.

It is as I have ordained it,

Yea, every deal.

Thus may thou see, since it is so,

That I am master of us two.

And yet, I grant thee, ere I go,

Without fail,

That if thou will assent me to,

It shall avail.

For all this world is mine to own:

Forest and field, tower and town.

If thou to me will but bow down

In word and heart--

As friend and guide to thee alone,

I'll take thy part.

Behold now, sir, and thou shalt see

Great kingdoms, and a great country.

All this will I give to thee

For evermore,

If but thou fall and honour me,

As I said ere.

JESUS:

Cease of thy saws, thou Satanas!

I grant nothing that thou asks.

To the pain of Hell I bid thee pass

Forever, so!

Thy misery shall ever last;

So swiftly, go!

No other power shall be thy meed,

For written it is, as all may read,

Thy Lord thou ought to dread indeed

And honour ay,

And serve Him in both word and deed

By night and day.

And since thou dost not as I tell,

I choose to let thee no more dwell;

I command thee, go to Hell

And keep thee there,

With fellowship of devils fell,

Forever more!

DEVIL:

Ah! I dare not look, alas!

It is worse now than it was!

He shows me now what might he has;

High may he hang!

Follow quickly! I must pass

To pains strong!

1 ANGEL:

Ah, mercy, Lord, what may this mean?

I marvel you endure this fiend;

This foul abuser, bold and keen,

Deceiving still--

When you his wickedness, I ween,

May waste at will!

I fear you are discomforted,

My Lord, by this fiend who has fled.

JESUS:

My angel dear, now, have no dread;

He does not grieve!

The Holy Ghost, indeed, me led;

Thus now believe.

For when the fiend shall these folk see,

Assailing them in each degree,

Their mirror may they make of me,

To stand still.

For overcome they shall not be,

Unless they will.

2 ANGEL:

Ah, Lord, what great humility

In you, in whom lies all mercy!

For evil, by your will worthy,

You may redress;

Yet three temptations patiently

You take express!

JESUS:

My blessing have they, with my hand,

Who patiently such trials withstand,

And all those who refuse to bend

Unto their foe.

I know my time is soon at hand;

Now I shall go.

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# 23. The Curriers' Play: The Transfiguration

JESUS:

Peter, my own disciple dear,

And James and John, my cousins two:

Take heartfelt heed, for you shall hear;

I'll only tell these things to you.

And you shall see sundry sights here,

Which none shall see but you also.

Therefore, come forth and gather near;

To yonder mountain I will go.

There you will see a sight,

Which you have yearned for long.

PETER:

My lord, we are full light,

And glad; with you we're going.

JESUS:

Long you've coveted to ken,

My Father, for I set him before.

You knew full well, which time and when,

As we were going to Galilee's shore.

"Show us your father," you asked me then

"That would suffice us with no more."

I said to you, and to all men,

"Who sees me, sees my father there."

Such words I spoke, my friends,

In truth, to make you bold;

You could not comprehend

The tales that I then told.

Another time, to make increase

In truth, and teach you more of this,

I said, "Quem dicunt homines

Esse filium hominis?"

I asked you whom the people chose

As Son of Man, without a miss;

You answered, saying "Some, Moses,

And some say that Elijah he is,

And some say John Baptist."

Then more, I questioned yet;

I asked you if you guessed

Who I was, by your wit.

You answered, Peter, to your credit,

And said that I was Christ, God's son.

Though by yourself, you guessed it not;

My father had this grace begun.

Therefore be bold, and bide you now,

Until you have my father found.

JAMES:

Lord, to your bidding we will bow,

Obediently as we are bound.

JOHN:

Lord, we will work your will

Always with true intent.

We love God, boldly, still,

Who such a gift has lent.

PETER:

Full glad and blithe we ought to be,

And thank our master, great in might,

Who says we shall these sights now see,

Which no one else shall have in sight.

JAMES:

He told us of his father free;

Of this, we're eager for more, all right.

JOHN:

All that he's promised, fulfill will he;

Therefore inquire no more we might.

But as to us he grants,

So we'll understand.

Behold, here now advance

New tidings in hand!

ELIJAH:

Lord God, I love you lastingingly,

And highly, both with heart and hand;

That I, Elijah your prophet, can be

Thus summoned in this stead to stand.

Dwelling in Paradise was I,

Since I left this earthly land.

I came, Christ's name to clarify,

At God, his Father's, own command,

In order to bear witness

In word to man and wife

That this God's own son is,

And lord of lasting life.

MOSES:

Lord God, that of all wealth is well,

With will and wit, we worship thee;

Who unto me, Moses, would tell

This great point of your mystery,

And lovingly let me out of hell,

That I this solemn sight should see,

When your dear darlings who there dwell

Have not your grace in this degree.

Our fathers would be fain

To see this solemn sight,

Which in this place so plain

Is mustered through your might.

PETER:

Brothers, what can this brightness be?

Such marvels before have never been.

It mars my might, I may not see;

So wondrous a sight was never seen.

JAMES:

Where this may lead, that know not we.

How weak I grow in every limb!

Before there was one; now there are three.

I think our master stands between.

JOHN:

That our master is there,

We may truly believe.

Before, he was full fair,

But not as we now perceive.

PETER:

His clothing is as white as snow;

His face shines as bright as the sun.

To speak with him, I have great awe;

So fair before was never one.

JAMES:

The other two, I'd like to know,

And learn what works them here have won.

JOHN:

Why don't we ask them in a row,

And gather how this game's begun?

PETER:

If you have come indeed,

To clarify Christ's name,

Now tell us here, all three,

For we would do the same.

ELIJAH:

It is God's will we make you wise

Of all his worthy works on high.

I have my place in Paradise;

Enoch, my brother, is nearby.

As messenger from heaven's bliss,

I'm called to teach this company,

To witness that God's son is this;

Equal in power, almighty is he.

To death we were not brought;

Alive again we'll come

When Antichrist is fought,

Before the day of doom.

MOSES:

Friends, if you would ask my name,

Moses, then, you may rightly know.

Two thousand years after Adam came,

God gave to me his holy law.

Since then, in hell has been our home,

Until Christ comes. Alas, this you know,

Oh, Adam's kin; this man's the same

Who shall us from that dungeon draw!

He shall bring those to bliss,

Who now are bound in pain;

This mirth we may not miss,

For God's son is this same..

JESUS:

My dear disciples, dread you not.

I am your sovereign, certainly.

This wonder-work that here is wrought,

Is of my father almighty.

These men both are hither brought,

Elijah and Moses, as you see,

And, for your sake, thus they are sought,

To tell you that his son is me.

Of this, both heaven and hell

Bear witness to this deed.

And you on earth shall tell

My name where there is need.

PETER:

Ah, beloved be ever, my lord Jesus,

That all this solemn sight did send,

That condescend to be seen thus,

So your great might we'd understand!

Here is a full fair dwelling for us,

A lovely place in which to land;

Ah, lord, let us no further fuss,

For we will make with heart and hand

A tabernacle unto thee,

Forthwith, if you'll abide;

Another shall to Moses be,

And to Elias the third.

JAMES:

Yes, surely, that were well to do,

But we ought not such things to plan.

They need but say, to have it soon,

If he such service should command.

He gives his men, both morn and noon,

Their harbour in heaven, not on land.

Therefore, we'd best abide this boon;

Who counsels otherwise is mad.

JOHN:

Such signs as he will send,

May mend all our mischief;

And where he wants to wend,

We'll go there, with his leave.

[Now clouds descend, the Father in a cloud]

FATHER:

You feeble in faith, folk afraid:

Of us together, be not in fear.

I am your God, that goodly made

Both Earth and air, with clouds clear.

This is my son, as you have said,

As he has shown by his signs here.

Of all his works, I am well-paid.

Therefore, of him take heed and hear:

Where he is, there am I;

He is mine, and I am his.

Who trusts in this, steadfastly,

Will bide in endless bliss.

JESUS:

Peter, peace be unto thee;

And also to you, James and John.

Rise up, and tell me what you see,

And no more let your wits be gone.

PETER:

Ah, lord, what may this marvel be?

Where has that glorious gleam all gone?

We saw here plainly persons three;

And now our lord is left alone.

This marvel moves my mind,

And makes my flesh afraid.

JAMES:

That brightness left me blind,

So hard a blow it made.

JOHN:

Lord God, our maker almighty,

This matter must ever be meant:

We saw two bodies stand nearby,

Who said his father had them sent.

PETER:

Then came a cloud in the sky;

On them were sunbeams in descent;

But all this now seems fantasy.

We don't know how away they went.

JAMES:

That cloud stunned us clean,

That came shining so clear.

Such a sight was never seen,

On any side around here.

JOHN:

No, but the noise hurt us still more,

That we heard here so hideously high.

JESUS:

Friends, be not afraid therefore,

And I'll tell you the reason why:

My father knew well that you were

Still feeble in faith, and that is why

He came to give witness everywhere,

And to say that his son am I.

And also in this stead,

As witness to the same,

A quick man, and a dead

Came to make clear my name.

PETER:

Lord, why did you not let us see

Your father's face in his fairness?

JESUS:

Peter, you're asking above your degree.

That grace may not be granted, I guess.

In his godhead, so high is he,

As all your prophets say express,

That long in life he shall not be,

Who sees the godhead as it is.

Here, you've seen in sight,

Some points of mystery;

As much as any human might,

On earth, be suffered to see.

And therefore, now we'll go again,

To all our men, to mend their cheer.

JAMES:

From questions, our fellows will not refrain

On how we've fared, together here.

JESUS:

This vision, a secret must remain.

Permit no living man to hear

'Till the Son of Man has suffered pain,

And risen from dead; then tell it clear.

For all who believe this thing,

Of my father and me,

They shall have his blessing,

And mine; so must it be.

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# 24. The Capmakers' Play: The Woman Taken in Adultery/The Raising of Lazarus

1 JEW:

Leap forth! Let us no longer stand,

But quickly see our gear arrayed.

This woman that we with folly found,

Let's hasten, fast, to see her flayed.

2 JEW:

We will bear witness, and expound

How we found her all unarrayed,

Against the laws of this our land,

Where she was with her lover laid.

1 JEW:

Yes, and he a married man-

That was a wicked sin.

2 JEW:

She shall curse that bargain

With sorrow; let's begin.

1 JEW:

Ah! False stud-mare, and stinking sty,

How dare you steal so still away

To do such vile adultery,

That so against the law does lay?

2 JEW:

Her whoredom she shall dearly buy,

For as we saw, so shall we say.

And also, her working is worthy-

She shall be doomed to death this day.

1 JEW:

The masters of the law

Are even here, at hand.

2 JEW:

Let's tell them what we saw-

Her faults, as we them found.

1 JEW:

God save you, masters of might and main,

Who scholarship do understand.

3 JEW:

Welcome friends, but will you deign

To say what you do with that woman?

2 JEW:

Ah, sirs, we shall you tell, certain,

Of awful sorrow since she began.

We have her taken with vileness plain;

Herself can not deny it then.

4 JEW:

What has she done? Folly

In fornication and sin?

1 JEW:

No, no-in adultery

Full bold, and stays therein.

3 JEW:

Adultery! Name it not, for shame!

It is so foul, curse it do I.

Is it true, what they say of you, dame?

2 JEW:

What? Sir, this she cannot deny.

We would be worthy of much blame

To grieve her, unless she were guilty.

4 JEW:

Now, surely, this is a foul defame,

And great grief must she get, thereby.

3 JEW:

Yeah! Sir, you spoke rightly there,

By law; wise words you've said.

There is no remedy therefore

But to stone her 'till she's dead.

1 JEW:

Sir, since you tell the law this tide,

And know the ways of this country,

Judge her in public; do not hide,

And after your words, work shall we.

4 JEW:

Be not so fast, good sirs; abide,

For something else occurs to me.

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For I suggest, by God almight,

That we should take this wretched blight

Who was taken thus, tonight,

In foul adultery,

To this new prophet, in his sight;

Thus will we tempt him with her plight,

And see if he will judge her right,

Or else unlawfully.

3 JEW:

That is well said, good sir, as I say.

So may we catch him in this way.

For, if he's merciful today,

He acts against the law,

And if he says to punish her sore,

He acts against the very lore

That he has been preaching heretofore:

That towards mercy we should draw.

[Then between them they lead the woman before Jesus, and [one] says]

4 JEW:

Master, this woman that is here

Lives near a man, who was wedded this year;

And with that married man, we fear,

They saw her do amiss.

The Law of Moses bids us stone

All those who are thus unclean.

Therefore, to come to you we mean;

Now, judgement give on this.

[Jesus, while writing in the earth, says]

JESUS:

Now, of you four, whichever one

Is without sin, let him go on

And cast at her the first stone

At once; let him begin.

4 JEW:

Come on, now, master, something say;

Shall she be stoned now? Yea or nay?

Or is there mercy, as you say,

To forgive her sin?

3 JEW:

Master? Why sit you so still?

What write you, if it be your will?

Do you write that we should kill

This woman found in blame?

What write you, master? Now let me see-

Ah! Alas, and woe is me!

Here no longer dare I be,

For dread of worldly shame!

2 JEW:

What's wrong, good fellow, I you pray?

I will see soon and assay.

Alas, I wish I were far away,

Far beyond France!

The Sybils may stand him beside;

No longer here dare I abide

Against this woman for to chide;

I'll flee when there's a chance.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3 JEW:

Ah! He writes my misdeeds, all my sin!

I advise you here, leave him alone.

4 JEW:

Oh! Here will new tricks begin;

Give my regards, for I am gone.

1 JEW:

Well, since they are not bold,

No longer stay will I.

2 JEW:

Sh! Let no tales be told.

Let's go forth quietly.

JESUS:

Woman, where are those strong men

Who accused you here so eagerly?

What person has condemned you then?

WOMAN:

Lord, no man has condemned me.

JESUS:

For my part, your life shall not end.

Of all your sins I make you free;

Do not assent to sin again.

WOMAN:

Ah, Lord, loved always must you be!

All earthly people here

Love him and his high name,

Who, me in this manner

Has saved from sin and shame.

1 APOSTLE:

Ah, Lord, we love you utterly,

And all your lore, both loud and still,

To grant your grace to those guilty,

And spare them that your folk would kill.

JESUS:

I shall tell you the reasons why.

I knew it was my Father's will,

And, I wished to make them aware thereby,

To know that they've done greater ill.

And evermore of this same

Example shall be seen:

Whoever shall others blame,

Let himself first be clean.

2 APOSTLE:

Ah, master, here may we see also

How humilty may much amend:

To forgive gladly, wherever we go,

All people that ourselves offend.

JESUS:

He who will not forgive his foe,

And be humble in heart and hand,

To the Kingdom he cannot go

That ordained is, without an end.

And more soon shall we see

Here, before we farther fare,

How that my Father free

Will show His might still more.

MESSENGER:

Jesus, true prophet, I say,

My ladies, Martha and Mary,

If you think fit, they would you pray

To come forth unto Bethany.

He whom you have loved always

Is sick, Lord, and like, Lord, for to die.

If you would come, cure him you may,

And comfort all that company.

JESUS:

I tell you that sickness

Is not to death alone,

But joy of God's goodness

In that place shall be shown,

And God's Son shall be glorified

By sickness and by signs clear.

Therefore, brothers, no longer abide;

Two days fully have we been here.

We will go sojourn here beside,

In Judea, with the people there.

1 APOSTLE:

Ah, Lord, you know that, on that side,

The Jews await you far and near

To stone you until dead,

Or put to peerless pain.

And you to that same stead

Wish now to go again?

JESUS:

You have enough skill to forecast

That day is now twelve hours long,

And while the light of day may last

It is good that we move along.

For when the day is gone and past,

Soon then you may go all wrong.

Therefore, take heed and toil fast,

While the light of life is you among.

And to you I say more:

How Lazarus, our friend,

Sleeps now, and I therefore

With you to him will wend.

2 APOSTLE:

We will do as you have said,

But if he sleeps, he shall be saved.

JESUS:

I tell you, Lazarus is dead,

And, for you all, great joy I have.

You knew that I was not in that stead

At the time that he was put in the grave.

His sisters both pray, with bowed head,

And for comfort they call and crave;

Therefore, let's go together

To make their joys the more.

1 APOSTLE:

Since he must needs go thither,

Let's go die with him there.

MARY:

I curse all but God's will alone,

That I should live to see this sight!

For I may mourn and make my moan;

The world saw never such a plight.

The one I loved most is from me gone:

My dear brother Lazarus tonight

Is dead, and I think I'll be slain,

For now my mind fails, and my might.

My joy is gone forever;

No medicine mend me may.

Ah, death, do your endeavor,

And have me hence away.

MARTHA:

Alas, for sorrow, now I rave,

And feebly go by wood and field.

Would God I buried were in grave,

That death had all my sorrow sealed!

For healing in heart may I never have,

Unless He helps, who all may wield;

Of Christ I will some comfort crave,

For he may be my help and shield.

To seek, I shall not cease

Until I my sovereign see.

Hail, peerless prince of peace,

Jesus, my master so free.

JESUS:

Martha, what mean you to make such cheer?

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MARTHA:

Lazarus, my brother, now is dead;

He would not have died had you been here.

[Have mercy, Lord, upon my head.]

JESUS:

Martha, your joy you shall regain;

Your brother shall rise and live again.

MARTHA:

Lord, I know that he shall rise

And come before the great assize,

For at the dreadful Day of Doom

You must attend him when he comes

To decide what doom you will him give:

Then must he rise; then must he live.

JESUS:

I tell you all, man, maiden, wife:

I am the rising; I am the life,

And whoever believes in me,

That I always was, and ever shall be,

One thing I shall him give:

Though he be dead, yet shall he live.

Say now, woman, believe you this?

MARTHA:

Yes, indeed, my lord of bliss,

Or I'd be worth reproof from you,

For all you say is ever true.

JESUS:

Go tell your sister, Magdalene,

That I am coming; be certain.

MARTHA:

Sister, leave this sorrowful band;

Our lord comes. He is here at hand,

And his apostles with him also.

MARY:

Ah, for God's love, let me go!

Blessed be he that sent me grace

That I may see you in this place!

Lord, great sorrow may all see

Of my sister here, and me.

We are heavy as any lead

For our brother who thus is dead.

Had you been here, and had him seen,

Dead he never would have been.

JESUS:

Hither to you come we are

To make you comfort of your care.

But look that no feebleness or sloth

Bring you out of steadfast faith;

Then I shall do as I have said.

Where have you his body laid?

MARY:

Lord, if it be your will,

I think he must smell ill;

For it is now the fourth day gone

Since he was laid beneath this stone.

JESUS:

I told you, just now, where you stood,

Your faith always should be good.

If that you can fulfil,

All shall be done as you will.

[And Jesus wept.]

[1 APOSTLE:

See, he does weep and moan;

His love he does not hide.]

2 APOSTLE:

Then let us take this stone,

And set it to the side.

JESUS:

Father, who is in Heaven on height,

I thank you ever over all things,

Who willingly hears me, day and night,

And takes heed unto my asking:

Therefore, vouchsafe of your great might,

So that these people, old and young,

Who stand and wait to see that sight,

May have both faith and understanding,

This time, before I pass,

How that you have me sent.

Lazare, veni foras!

Come from your monument!

LAZARUS:

Ah, peerless prince, full of pity,

Worshipped be in every way

Who thus has shown such might in me,

Both dead and buried; this is the fourth day.

By certain signs here, men may see

How you are God's true son, and they

Who truly put their trust in thee

Shall never die; this dare I say.

Therefore, you people here,

Honour him with all your might.

To all his laws adhere;

Then he will lead you to his light.

MARIA:

Here may we find a faithful friend

Who has recovered us from our care.

MARTHA:

Jesus, my lord so reverend,

Of this we thank you evermore.

JESUS:

Sisters, I may no longer stand;

To other folk now I must fare,

To Jerusalem my way does bend,

For things that must be fulfilled there.

Therefore, I tell you right,

My men, to come with me.

You that have seen this sight,

My blessing with you be.

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# 25. The Skinners' Play: The Entry into Jerusalem

JESUS:

Attend to me and now take heed,

My dear disciples that be here,

And I will explain what will be indeed:

My time to pass hence now draws near

And by this cost

To save man's soul from sorrows severe

Which ill was lost.

From heaven when I did descend,

To ransom him I did promise;

That prophesy now finds its end,

For now my Father's will it is

That sent me hither.

Peter, Phillip, both I bless:

Now go together,

Toward that castle before you there;

Go with good hearts and tarry not.

But obediently do my commandments with care;

Just as I charge, be sure it is wrought:

There you will find

An ass for the feast, as if you had sought.

You will unbind

The ass and her foal, and bring them to me

That I may ride upon her for a space

So that the clear meaning of prophesy

May be fulfilled right here in this place:

"Daughter Zion,

Behold your meek Lord's face;

An ass he rides upon."

If any man should you gainsay,

Tell him your Lord has need of them

And shall restore them this same day

To whoever may them claim.

Do thus this thing.

Go forth and be obedient

In my blessing.

PETER:

Jesus, master, whatever you will,

And as you wish, we like to do.

That beast which you desire still,

Just as you will, shall come to you

Just as you please.

Certainly Lord, now go we two;

Be at your ease.

PHILIP:

Lord, we wish to please aright

Both night and day to do your will.

We go now brothers, with all our might,

My Lord's desire to fulfill.

For prophesy

Now bids us do for him by skill

As he does say.

PETER:

Why brother Philip, I see it clear:

Just as he said, we should soon find.

I think those beasts that stand right here

Are just the ones we should unbind.

Therefore, freely

Let us go their master find,

Asking meekly.

PHILIP:

These beasts are common; this I know.

Therefore, there's no need to ask leave,

And our master breaks no law.

We may take them at will; I believe

Nothing prevents.

Well I know our time is brief;

Let us go thence.

PORTER:

Say, who are you, to take mastery here,

To take these beasts before my eyes?

You seem too bold; you do not appear

To have business here. I now advise

Such folly to cease,

Or else your demise

May be lacking in ease.

PETER:

Sir, with your leave, we heartily pray

That we this beast might have.

PORTER:

To what intent first you shall say,

And then I may grant what you crave

In good season.

PHILIP:

Our master, sir, whom all shall save,

Asks with reason.

PORTER:

And who do you two "master" call,

And dare such privilege for him claim?

PETER:

Jesus, King of Jews and all

From Nazareth, prophet by name.

This is he:

Both God and man without blame.

This we believe.

PORTER:

Sirs, of that prophet I have heard,

But, tell me first plainly, where is he?

PHILIP:

He comes at hand, I give my word.

We left that Lord at Bethany.

He waits us there.

PORTER:

Sir, take this beast with heart full free,

And forth you fare.

And if you wish me to do so,

I shall announce his coming there

To the chief of the Jews, that they may go

Assemble themselves to meet this heir.

What is your need?

PETER:

Your meaning is both well and fair;

Do now this deed,

And soon these beasts we shall return,

Restoring both, as reason will.

PORTER:

Now shall all men these tidings learn;

I shall not hide, but go to tell

To this city.

I am sure that they will all

Come meet that free.

Because I'd have them forewarned be

Both old and young in every state,

His coming I want them to see,

To show them now, without debate,

Just where they stand:

The citizens and chief of state

Of all this land.

He that is ruler of all that is right,

Who freely shaped both sand and sea,

Save you, my well-dressed lords so bright,

And keep you in your dignity

And all honour.

1 CITIZEN:

Welcome porter, what novelty?

Tell us this hour.

PORTER:

Sirs, of news I can you tell.

And trust it fully, for it's true:

Here comes the son of Israel,

At hand the prophet called Jesu,

Lo, this same day,

Riding an ass. These tidings new

I tell today.

2 CITIZEN:

And is that prophet Jesu near?

I've heard great wonders of him told.

He does great works in lands around here;

He heals the sick, both young and old,

And to the blind restores their sight.

The deaf and dumb, I'm also told,

He cures them right.

3 CITIZEN:

And once he fed five thousand men with five

Small loaves of bread, and each one had enough;

Water turned to sweet wine belive,

And corn - he quickly grew the stuff

Where none had grown!

And dead men too, he does revive:

Lazar was one.

4 CITIZEN:

In our temple he would preach

Against the people that lived wrong.

And also new laws he would teach

Against the old we've used so long.

And there said he

That old should waste away, and new be strong.

Now we shall see.

5 CITIZEN:

Certainly, with Moses he could deal,

And all the prophets in a row.

He taught them so that all could feel

Just what they say, and clearly know

When they are dim.

What the prophets prophesied, we know

Pertains to him.

6 CITIZEN:

Emmanuel also, by rights

They call him; now explain I will:

He is the one Isaiah cites,

Clear prophesy of God's own will.

For he says there:

"Lo, a maiden that never knew ill

A child should bear."

7 CITIZEN:

David spoke of him, I've seen

And left witness, you know, each one -

He said the fruit of his body clean

Should royally reign upon his throne

And therefore he

Of David's line and he alone

Our king shall be.

8 CITIZEN:

Sirs, I think you say right well,

And good examples forth you bring.

Since thus we feel what he does tell,

Let us meet him as our king

And "King" him call.

What is your counsel in this thing?

Now say you all.

1 CITIZEN:

In reason's face I'll argue not,

For well I know he is our king.

Whoever to offend has sought

Is most unwise to do such thing.

Porter, come near,

What do you know of this coming?

Tell us all here.

And then we will go to meet him, free,

And honour him, with due accord,

In ways that are worthy of our city,

And recognize him as sovereign lord

In whom we trust.

PORTER:

Sirs, I shall tell all as it occurred:

Listen you must.

Of his disciples, two this day

Came where I stood and there we met,

And on their master's behalf did pray

Our common ass that they might get,

Just for a while.

Upon whose back their master would sit

Space of a mile.

And all this matter they me told,

Exactly as I say to you.

And, as they wished, the ass they hold;

They shall, I trust, return it soon,

As they promised.

Consider now, what you will do?

This I think best.

2 CITIZEN:

Truly, as for me, I say,

We should prepare to go on down

To meet that goodly man this day,

And greet him in such great renown

As his worth is.

And therefore sirs, in field and town

Fulfill you this.

PORTER:

Yes, and children you should take,

Although they may in age be young.

You'll fare the better for their sake

Through blessing of so good a king,

There is no doubt.

3 CITIZEN:

I thank you for the news you bring;

His praise we'll shout.

And I am willing now to meet

This man as seemly as I can,

And eagerly I'll see this sweet

To honour him as his sworn man.

Since truth I see,

King of Jews we'll call him then:

Our king is he.

4 CITIZEN:

Our king is he - no lies, no less!

Our law agrees to this full well.

The prophets all bore full witness

Mysteriously of him they tell,

And thus they write:

"Great joy shall be among yourselves

Through God's great might."

5 CITIZEN:

He is the same, there is no other,

Was promised us full long before!

For Moses said, as our own brother,

That God a prophet would restore.

Therefore, now see

What you will do and speak no more;

Our king is he.

6 CITIZEN:

Of Judah comes this king they wrote

Of Jesse, David, Solomon;

Also, of his mother's kin take note:

Just so his genealogy goes on.

It's plain to me.

I shall do honour as well as I can

Full willingly.

7 CITIZEN:

By your sharp wits and this intent

I am made glad in heart and thought.

And now to meet him I am bent;

I am prepared, and I jest not.

But with these same

I go to him who joy has brought,

With mirth and game.

8 CITIZEN:

Your arguments now seem so clear

I cannot disagree with you,

For now that I this counsel hear

I covet him with fervent mood.

Just once to see-

I trust that, once this thing I do,

Better I'll be.

1 CITIZEN:

Go we then with procession,

To meet that comely as we owe;

With branches, flowers and orison,

Singing praises in a row.

Our children shall

Go sing before, that men may know.

2 CITIZEN:

This grant we all.

PETER:

Jesu, Lord and master free,

As you commanded we have done.

We bring the ass, as you can see;

What is your will? Show us the way,

And tarry not,

And then we shall without delay

Fulfill your thought.

JESUS:

I thank you brothers, mild of mood.

Your clothes upon this ass please lay,

And lift me up with kind hearts good

That I might sit on her today

In my blessing.

PHILIP:

Lord, we do your will always;

We grant this thing.

JESUS:

Now my brothers, have good cheer.

Pay close attent, for I will ride

Into that city you see so near.

You shall follow together inside

As I have said.

PHILIP:

Lord, as you like, we are satisfied

And grant this glad.

[Then they sing.]

BLIND MAN:

Ah, Lord, that all this world has made,

Both sun and moon, night and day,

Why is this joyful music played?

From where it comes I cannot say,

Or what it means.

If any man should walk this way,

Now tell me, please.

POOR MAN:

Good man, what causes you to cry?

Where do you go? Now tell me here.

BLIND MAN:

Ah, sir, for blind am I

And ever was, from tender year

Since I was born.

I heard a voice with noble cheer

Right here before.

POOR MAN:

Man, tell me now what I can do.

BLIND MAN:

Thanks, sir; I'd gladly know

The meaning of this mirth from you.

What may it mean? What does it show?

How does it stand?

POOR MAN:

Jesus, the prophet full of grace

Comes here at hand,

And willingly the citizens

Are meeting him with melody.

The fairest procession, now they stand,

That ever was seen here in Jewry.

He is right near.

BLIND MAN:

Sir, help me quickly to the street

That I may hear

That noise, and that I might through grace

Crave my sight of him; for I would.

POOR MAN:

Lo, he's here at this same place.

Cry fast on him, look you be bold;

Call out loudly.

BLIND MAN:

Jesus, Son of David called,

Mercy on me!

Alas, I cry; he hears me not!

He does not pity my despair.

He turns his ear; where is his thought?

POOR MAN:

Cry somewhat louder; do not spare.

He may you spy.

BLIND MAN:

Jesus, healer of all cares,

Give me good eyes!

PHILIP:

Cease man, please, do not cry so.

The noise of the crowd is drowning thee.

Be still and listen as they go:

Here passes the prophet of mercy.

You do amiss.

BLIND MAN:

Ah, David's son, to you I cry,

My king of bliss!

PETER:

Lord, have mercy, let him go,

He cannot cease of his crying.

He follows us both to and fro;

Grant the boon he is asking

And let him wend.

We'll get no rest until this thing

Comes to an end.

JESUS:

What do you wish to you I did?

Before these folk, tell openly.

BLIND MAN:

Lord, my sight is from me hid;

I cry mercy, grant it to me!

This I would have.

JESUS:

Look up with blithe cheer now and see,

Your faith you saves.

BLIND MAN:

Worship and honour ever to thee!

With all the service that can ever be done

The king of bliss, praised may he be!

So soon my sight for me he's won!

And by great skill.

I was before as blind as stone;

I see at will.

LAME MAN:

Ah, lucky those who ever had life,

Whether old or young it were,

Who freely wield their limbs without strife,

Following all this mirth I see here.

Go, continue!

For I am set in sorrows severe,

And ever new.

Oh Lord, that shaped both night and day,

For mercy, have a mind on me

And help me Lord, as well you may,

And heal this mutilated knee.

I cannot rise.

For I am lame as men may see -

Have been always.

For well I know through rumours rife,

Both deaf and dumb, you grant them grace,

And to the dead you've given life;

Therefore, Lord, grant me in this place

My limbs to wield.

JESUS:

Rise man; cast your crutches off a space

Here in this field.

And look in truth steadfast you be;

Have good intent in following.

LAME MAN:

Lord, see my crutches, where they flee

As far as I can let them fling

With my right hand!

May we have no other meeting;

Now I can stand.

For I was crippled in limb, and lame,

And I have suffered such sorrows 'till now;

Eternal Lord, praised be your name!

I am as light as bird on bough!

Ever be blessed!

For you such grace have shown me now,

As pleased you best.

ZACCHAEUS:

Since first this world was made from nought,

And all things set in equity,

Such wondrous things were never wrought

As right now men with eyes can see.

What can it mean?

I cannot say what it may be:

Comfort or teen.

And chiefly of a prophet new -

That much is good - and now of late

Both day and night they now pursue,

And follow him through street and gate.

He brings new law.

Our old laws, now they hate,

And keep his saw.

Men from death to life he raises;

To dumb and blind gives speech and sight.

Therefore our people greatly praises,

Following him both day and night

From town to town.

They call him prophet now by right

Of his renown.

And yet I marvel at this thing

Since, prince of tax-collectors, I

Could not of him have knowing,

Although I've frequently been nigh,

Early and late.

For I am low, and of men high

Full is the gate.

But since no better may befall,

I think the best thing now to do

(For I am short, as know you all)

Is therefore yonder tree go to

And climb a limb.

Whether he comes or passes through,

I shall see him.

Ah, noble tree, you sycamore,

I bless the man who planted you;

Now I can see both here and more

And nothing is hidden from my eyes two.

Now in this tree

I will bide in heart and thought

Till I him see.

Until the prophet come to town

Here I will bide, whatso befall.

JESUS:

Zacchaeus, brother, come on down.

ZACCHAUS:

Lord, at your will I quickly shall,

And tarry not.

To you on knees Lord, here I fall

For sins I wrought.

Welcome prophet, trustworthy and true

And all the people to you who belong.

JESUS:

Zacchaeus, this service new

Shall make you clean of all the wrong

That you have done.

ZACCHAEUS:

Hear Lord, despite this heavy throng

My confession:

I'm shamed with sin, but ought to mend,

So now, forsake my sins I will.

Half my money's yet unspent:

To all the poor I'll give their fill,

And gladly then.

Whom I beguiled, to him I will

Make good again.

JESUS:

This clear confession shall you cleanse;

You may be sure of lasting life.

And to your house without offense

Is granted peace, freedom from strife.

Farewell, Zacchee.

ZACCHAEUS:

Now, now sings each man and wife:

Blessed might thou be.

JESUS:

My dear disciples, behold and see:

Into Jerusalem we ascend.

The son of man betrayed shall be,

And sold into his enemies' hand.

With scorn and spite,

Their spit upon his face they'll spend

And smartly smite.

Peter, take this ass and go,

And lead it where you ere it took.

I mourn, I sigh, I weep also,

Jerusalem, on you to look.

So may you rue

That ever you your king forsook,

And were untrue.

For stone on stone shall none be left

But down to ground shall all be cast.

Your game, your glee - all from you reft,

And all for sins that now are past.

You are unkind.

Against your king you have trespassed;

Keep this in mind.

PETER:

Porter, you may have this ass again.

At hand my Lord comes, on his feet.

PORTER:

Behold where all the burgesses bain

Come with worship, him to meet.

Therefore I do

Allow him passage on this street

And praise him too.

1 CITIZEN:

Hail, prophet proven without peer.

Hail, prince of peace shall ever endure.

Hail, king comely, courteous, clear.

Hail, sovereign seemly, salvation sure.

To bow we choose;

Hail, lord lovely, who cares can cure.

Hail, king of Jews.

2 CITIZEN:

Hail, flourishing flower that never shall fade.

Hail, violet vernant with sweet odour.

Hail, mark of mirth, our medicine made.

Hail, blossom bright, hail our succour.

Hail, king comely.

Hail, mighty man, you we honour

With heart freely.

3 CITIZEN:

Hail, son of David, doughty indeed.

Hail, rose ruddy; hail, beryl clear.

Hail, well of wealth, friend in our need.

Hail, healer of our sores and tears;

We worship thee.

Hail, worthy one with solace; here

Welcome be.

4 CITIZEN:

Hail, blissful babe in Bethlehem born.

Hail, boon to all our bitter bales.

Hail, being who brought both even and morn.

Hail, trustworthy teller of true tales.

Hail, comely knight.

Hail, of mood that most prevails;

Save those bound tight.

5 CITIZEN:

Hail, diamond set in jewellery light.

Hail, gentle jasper of Jewry.

Hail, lovely lily, learned with light.

Hail, soothing ointment, moist and dry

To all who need.

Hail, bairn most blessed of mild Mary.

Hail, all our meed.

6 CITIZEN:

Hail, conqueror; hail, most of might.

Hail, ransomer of sinful all.

Hail, pitiful one; hail lovely light.

Hail, welcome to us shall.

Hail, king of Jews.

Hail, comely creature that we call.

Our mirth renews.

7 CITIZEN:

Hail, sun shining with bright beams.

Hail, lamp of life shall never waste.

Hail, fair lantern that lovely gleams.

Hail, text of truth, the true to taste.

Hail, king and sire.

Hail, maiden's babe that honoured her most;

You we desire.

8 CITIZEN:

Hail, dread doomsman that all shall deem.

Hail, quick and dead, your praise we shout.

Hail, most fit for worship you seem.

Hail, whom all shall dread and doubt.

We welcome thee;

Hail, and welcome all about

To our city.

[Then they sing.]

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# 26. The Cutlers' Play: The Conspiracy

PILATE:

Under the royalest ruler of revenue and renown,

Now am I regent, and rule all this region in rest.

To obey all my bidding my bishops are bound,

And bold men that in battle burst open breasts.

To me entrusted is the care of this turreted town,

For traitors I shall taint, the truth for to trust.

The dubbing of my dignity may not be done down

Neither by duke nor knights doughty, my deeds are so dressed.

My desire must daily be done

By them that are greatest of men.

Few against me ever moan;

Therefore I shall better their boon.

But he that grieves me with his groan,

Beware! For brutal I am.

Pontius Pilate of three parts then, in my proper name:

I am a perilous prince to meet where I appear.

First among philosophers-there I founded my fame;

Therefore I feel perfectly, I have no peer.

He shall bitterly bemoan, who abides in my blame

(Though all my face be as bright as a blossom on briar),

For soon his life shall he lose, or he shall be left lame,

That bows not to me lowly, or likes not to hear.

And thus, since we stand in our state

As lords with all pleasure in land,

Do let us know if you spot

Either, sirs, strife or debate

That needs to be handled full hot,

Since all your help hangs in my hand.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, for to certify the truth in your sight,

To you as our sovereign seemly, we do seek.

PILATE:

Why? Is there any miscreant who musters his might,

Or malice by mean men we need to make meek?

ANNAS:

Yes, sir, there is a rank man whose rule is not right,

For through his rumour in this realm, he has raised a great reek.

PILATE:

I hear well you hate him; your hearts are on height,

To hear if I will help his fortune to break.

But why are you utterly wroth?

Be calm, and reveal now your reason.

CAIAPHAS:

To us, sir, his lore is full loath.

PILATE:

Beware that you wax not too wroth.

ANNAS:

Why, sir, to escape without scathe

We seek for your succour this season.

PILATE:

Well, if that wretch in our ward has wrought any wrong,

Since we are warned, we would well understand.

But if his word is lawful, allege not too long,

For we shall leave him, if we like, with love to the end.

1 CLERK:

But if that false liar has your furtherance for long,

Then feel I well that our folk must lack for a friend.

Sir, the strength of his sayings is always so strong,

That unless he is suppressed, he brings us to an end.

For, he makes folk him to call

Great God's son. Thus grieves us that boy.

And he says that to be seated he shall

In high Heaven, for there is his hall.

PILATE:

Well, friends, if that power to him should fall,

It seems you should not him destroy;

Perhaps he is the same that you said should descend,

Your people and you then all for to succour-

CAIAPHAS:

Ah, soft, sir, and cease!

For Christ, when he comes, shall have no known kin,

But of this wretch's kindred we know the increase.

He likens himself to God, everlasting, without end,

To lift up the burden, to bind or release.

PILATE:

His saying should make you your mood to amend.

ANNAS:

No, for such evil, from malice we may not cease,

For he says he shall judge us, that dote,

And that, to us, is insult and spite.

PILATE:

To harass him now is your note;

But yet the law lies in my lot.

1 CLERK:

And if you will, sir, think this thought:

That he is a blameworthy blight.

For in our temple has he taught, times more than ten,

Where tables full of treasure lay to tell and to try

Of our chief money-changers. But, cursedly then,

He cast them over, that criminal, and thought nothing thereby.

CAIAPHAS:

Look, sir, this is a perjury to print with the pen;

Therefore, make that apostate, we pray you, to comply.

PILATE:

How mean you?

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, to kill him for subverting men.

PILATE:

Then should we make him to mourn, through might arbitrary.

Enough, sirs; suggest it no more-

But what in your temple was shown?

1 SOLDIER:

Ha! There, sir, he beat out of score

Those who stood there, just selling their store.

PILATE:

Then he thought they were guilty before,

And made the cause well to be known.

But what taught he that time? Such tales as you tell?

1 SOLDIER:

Sir, that our temple is the tower of his enthroned sire;

And, thus, to pray in that place our prophets compel

To him, that has power over prince and empire.

And, they make the domus domini, those who dealing there dwell,

A den of iniquity as often as they desire.

PILATE:

Well, is he not a madman whose acts serve you well,

Since you plan to destroy him, though blameless, with ire?

Your rancour is running now raw.

CAIAPHAS:

No, no, sir, we conduct ourselves right.

PILATE:

Indeed, you are overly cruel, you know.

CAIAPHAS:

Why, sir? He would destroy our law;

We hate him as much as we owe.

In this you should maintain our might.

Because, on our Sabbath day, the sick he makes safe,

And will not cease, at our order, to sink so in sin.

2 SOLDIER:

Sir, he cures all that come recovery to crave

In but a brief moment; this knows all our kin.

But he keeps not our holy days (Bad luck may he have!),

Therefore, let him hang, and that by the neck-

PILATE:

Ah, ho, now, sir, and hold in.

For though you get giddy, to bring him guiltless to grave,

Without grounds you gain nothing, such grief to begin;

And let your alleging be loyal,

Without any trifles to tell.

ANNAS:

For certain, our words do we seal.

PILATE:

Then profitably may we appeal.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, if his faults were not real,

We would not with him trouble ourselves.

For he perverts all our people that listen to his preaching,

And for that point you should press him, his power to impair.

2 CLERK:

Yes, sir, and also, that criminal says he's our king,

And for that cause, our commoners are all cast in care.

PILATE:

If it be so, that boast to bale will him bring,

And make him boldly to curse the bones that him bore.

For that wretch, from our wrath there is no escaping

Before there is vengeance on him.

1 CLERK:

So we would it were,

For thus you should sustain your weal,

If you wisely decide to agree.

PILATE:

Know this: that this work shall be well,

For that knave shall be taught how to kneel.

2 CLERK:

And so that our force he may feel,

Together for that, beg do we.

JUDAS:

Ingenti pro inuria-him, Jesus, that Jew,

Unjust to me, Judas, I judge to be loath.

For, at supper as we sat (the truth to pursue),

With Simon the Leper, my old plan came to waste.

To him there brought one a box, my ruin to brew,

Who eagerly to his bare feet to bow was in haste.

She anointed them with an ointment that noble was and new,

But for that work that she wrought, I grew wonderly wroth.

For this (to disclose) was my skill:

Of his pennies, the purser was I,

And whatever was trusted me till,

The tenth part I stole, and would still.

But now, I have not what I will;

That bargain with harm he shall buy!

That same ointment, I said, might well have been sold

For silver coins, in a sum of three hundred, and then

Have been given to the poor, as plain pity would.

But, for the poor, their misfortune did not cause me pain,

I just wanted the tenth part (the truth to behold).

That thirty coins of three hundred, I needs must decline!

And because I miss this money, I mourn in this road;

Therefore, to make mischief for this master of mine,

Therefore, fast forth will I flit

The princes of priests until,

And sell him at once before I sit,

For thirty coins, in a knot knit.

And thus he shall understand it:

That, of anger, avenge me I will.

Now, open, porter, the portal of this proud place,

So that I may pass to your princes, for your good to act now.

PORTER:

Get off, you glowering rascal! God give you ill grace;

Your glaring is so ghastly you make my guts growl.

JUDAS:

Good sir, be helpful this time, and hinder not my haste,

For I have tidings to tell.

PORTER:

Yes, some treason, I'd vow,

For I feel, by the figure of your false face,

It is a folly to fasten affection on you.

For Mars, he has made there his mark,

By all the laws of my lore,

And says you are wicked of work,

And both a strong thief and a stark.

JUDAS:

Sir, thus at my beard if you bark,

For you things shall seem very sore.

PORTER:

Say, beetle-browed briber, why blow you such boast?

For falsehood in your face, in faith, I can find.

You are encumbered with cursedness, and come to this coast

To mar men of might; it is marked in your mind.

JUDAS:

Sir, I mean you no malice; it is mirth I move most!

PORTER:

Look, you unhanged miscreant, I think you unkind;

You look like a wretch who his livelihood has lost.

Unless you go now, I shall harm you, you'll find.

JUDAS:

Ah, good sir, be attent to my talking this tide,

For tidings of truth I can tell.

PORTER:

Say, wretch, let your talking abide;

You chatter like a churl who can chide.

JUDAS:

But sir, if the truth should be tried,

Of mirth are these matters I tell,

For through my deeds your leaders from harm may be drawn.

PORTER:

What? Think you that harm on our dukes shall alight?

JUDAS:

No, sir, I said not. If I am called to council, the cause shall be known

Among that comely company, to clerk and to knight.

PORTER:

Abide here, good fellow, before more boasts are blown,

And I shall bustle to the bench where banners are bright

And say unto our sovereigns, before more seed is sown,

That such a man as yourself sues to their sight.

My lord, now, of wisdom the well,

I come for a case to be heard.

PILATE:

Well, speak on, and spare not to tell.

CAIAPHAS:

Yes, and if it concerns us ourselves,

Since you bear of beauty the bell,

Blithely we shall bow at your word.

PORTER:

Sir, in a word, there comes as I speak

A man hilt-full of ire, for hasty he is.

PILATE:

What comes he for?

PORTER:

I know not; he is clad in a cloak.

He comes with a keen face, uncomely to kiss.

PILATE:

Go get him; of his grievance enquiry we'll make,

So that no careless talk shall be going amiss.

PORTER:

Come on at once to my lord, if all haste you like,

But so speak your language that you stop not their bliss.

JUDAS:

May that lord, sirs, sustain your weal

That flower is of fortune and fame.

PILATE:

Welcome. Your words are but well.

CAIAPHAS:

Say, do you hear me, knave? Can you not kneel?

PILATE:

Look, here may men fault in you feel.

Leave off, sir, your scorning, for shame.

But good fellow, be not afraid to stand at the bar.

JUDAS:

To be brought before you, sirs, busy have I been,

And always for your honour.

ANNAS:

Know you something to fear?

JUDAS:

Of a work, sir, that has angered you, I know what I mean.

But I would make a bargain, to end the threat here.

PILATE:

And can you?

JUDAS:

To assert these things otherwise, mad I would seem.

ANNAS:

You know of some encumberance that should cause us care?

Well, cousin, you are cruel.

JUDAS:

My cause, sir, is keen.

For if you will bargain or buy,

Jesus at this time will I sell you.

1 CLERK:

My blessing you'll soon have thereby!

Look, here is a sport for to spy.

JUDAS:

To you, quickly give him shall I,

If you will deal with me, I tell you.

PILATE:

What is your name?

JUDAS:

Judas Iscariot.

PILATE:

You are a just man,

Who should wish Jesus justified by our judgement.

But in what way bought shall he be? Bring forth your bargain.

JUDAS:

Only some money; with this, I'm content.

PILATE:

What shall we pay?

JUDAS:

Sir, thirty pence in full, no more then.

PILATE:

Say, are you pleased with this price he presses us to present?

2 CLERK:

Or else contrary to our consciences, perceive since we can

That Judas knows him culpable.

PILATE:

I call that consent.

But Judas, this knot now to knit:

Will you to this covenant accord?

JUDAS:

Yes, at a word.

PILATE:

Welcome is it.

2 SOLDIER:

Now look-an eager counterfeit.

1 SOLDIER:

To know, dear sir, no man permit,

How this villain trifles with his lord.

PILATE:

What? Dwells he with that dotard who to vex us all strives?

1 SOLDIER:

That has he done, sir, and does, no doubt, to this day.

PILATE:

Then would we know why this knave thus cursedly contrives.

2 SOLDIER:

Question him, since you can best find if he gainsay.

PILATE:

Speak, man; to sell your master, what misdeed has he moved?

JUDAS:

Of just that much money he made me delay;

What I get here from you shall but right be reproved.

ANNAS:

I think that you mock us, with our rule thus to play.

For that, to the fiend you'll belong-

1 SOLDIER:

-for when, of a wretch, he has need-

1 CLERK:

-to whom we work, knowingly, wrong-

2 CLERK:

-until him we hastily hang.

CAIAPHAS:

Your language you lay out too long!

But, Judas, we trust you indeed,

For truly you must teach us, onto that villain to latch,

Or, out of land, through a trick, that lowlife may leap.

JUDAS:

I shall show you a sign, that you quickly may snatch

Him where he stands in the throng, without any slip.

1 SOLDIER: We know him not.

JUDAS:

Take care then that criminal to catch

The which I shall kiss.

2 SOLDIER:

That becomes you well, I say, you creep.

But yet, to warn us wisely, always you must watch.

When you go ahead, we shall follow with a heap

Of good men; and so, now, get busy.

JUDAS:

Yes, yes, a chance shall I spy us

As soon as the sun sets; you'll see.

1 SOLDIER:

Go on, you thing of treachery.

2 SOLDIER:

Yes, and a wicked man.

1 CLERK:

Why, what is he?

2 CLERK:

A villain, sir, unless truth should belie us.

He is loaded with lies. The truth for to trust,

I think it but folly in his faith to trust now.

PILATE:

Abide in my blessing; stop arguing thus,

For it is best for us all in such strife for to bow.

And Judas, for our profit, we pray you make haste.

JUDAS:

Yet I have not a penny for my efforts to show.

PILATE:

You shall have all your pay soon enough for your taste,

So that you shall be pleased, our lordship to love.

And therefore, Judas, amend all this moan,

And take there your silver hereby.

JUDAS:

Yes, now is my great grief all gone.

1 SOLDIER:

Be quick, then.

JUDAS:

Yes, let me alone,

For fast shall that traitor be done;

And therefore, jocund and jolly am I.

PILATE:

Judas, to hold all your vow, our good in mind keep.

And for our part, we promise, support you shall have.

JUDAS:

I shall give you his body, in care for to clap.

ANNAS:

And more comfort in this case we covet not to crave.

1 SOLDIER:

When we can reach that reckless one, his ribs we shall rap,

And make that wretch, before we rest, from running, to rave.

PILATE:

No, sirs, although you scourge him, you must break not his shape.

For if the sot be innocent, we must his life save.

Therefore, when you shall go to get him,

To his body brew no distress.

2 SOLDIER:

We mean from escape to prevent him.

But, sound in your sight, we shall set him.

PILATE:

Go on, get you forth, till you fetch him,

Together, with joy, to your place.

# 27. The Baxters' Play: The Last Supper

JESUS:

Peace be, by both night and day,

Unto this house, and all that are here.

Here I will hold, as I did say,

The Paschal feast, with my friends dear.

MARK:

Master, we have well arrayed

A seemly service for your supper.

Our lamb is roasted, and ready made;

To Moses' law we did adhere.

JESUS:

That is, each man that has

People at his own post

Shall roast a lamb at Pasch,

For him and all his host.

ANDREW:

Master, the custom well we know

That with our elders ever has been:

How every man with guests does owe

To roast a lamb, and eat it clean.

JESUS:

I thank you truly for your saw;

You say as you yourself have seen.

Therefore, sit down, all in a row,

And I shall part it you between.

Therefore, I will that you

Eat thereof, every one,

With the remnant given to

Poor people, who have none.

Here I make an end to Moses' law,

In certain parts, but not in all:

My command should otherwise be thought

Like those that men should cunningly call.

But the lamb of Paschal that here is brought,

Which all Jews use, both great and small,

Henceforward I allow it not

To Christian folk, whatever befall.

Instead, there shall be set

A new law, us between;

But whoever thus shall eat

Behoves to be washed clean.

For that new law, if you wish to hear,

You need in heart to be clean and chaste.

Mark, my own disciple dear,

Bring us some water here, in haste.

MARK:

Master, it is already here,

And here a towel, clean as is best.

JESUS:

Come forth with me, all of you here;

My words must not be said in waste.

Set forth your feet; let's see.

They must be washed, and soon.

PETER:

Ah, Lord, by you, I say,

That deed must not be done.

I can't make my members worthy or meet

For such a sovereign service to see.

JESUS:

Peter, unless you let me wash your feet,

You'll get no part of bliss with me.

PETER:

Ah, mercy, Lord and master sweet;

Out of that bliss if I would be,

Wash on, my Lord, and get me wet,

Both head and hand, I pray indeed.

JESUS:

Peter, you do not know

Where all this work will lead.

But soon it shall be shown

To you, and to you all, indeed.

Your Lord and master: thus you call

Me, and so I am. All wealth I wield.

Yet here I kneel unto you all,

To wash your feet, as you have felt.

Example from me take you shall:

Ever to serve, when young or old;

To be humble, either in cottage or hall;

And each to give shelter to others, as well.

For if you all are true

And loyal in love, each one,

You shall find others new

To grieve with, when I am gone.

JAMES:

Now, since our master says he shall

Go, and will not tell us whither,

Which of us shall be principal?

Let's decide, while we are together.

JESUS:

I know your will, both great and small

And your high hearts I hear: whether

To one or the other such luck should fall,

That you might speak when you come thither,

Where it must so betide

On such matters for to dwell.

But first you must abide

Many trials, fierce and fell.

Here shall I set you for to see

This young child, for example, here.

Both simple and gentle in heart is he,

And free from malice, glad of cheer.

So simple and gentle unless you be,

[You cannot come to Heaven near.

Pride is your foe, and so is greed.

An example you shall quickly hear,

For this to you I say:

That one of you, my friends,

Did his own Lord betray,

And for gold my life shall end.

And now, I say, the sop of wine

That I shall give secretly to one of you

Shall be the token and the sign

That I know of the deed that he shall do.]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[As Jesus blesses the bread and wine, the disciples say the following--ed.]

PETER:

My dear Lord, I pray you the truth to tell:

Which of us is he that that treason shall do?

What traitor is he, that his Lord would sell?

Pronounce his name, Lord, that would work us woe.

MARK:

If there is one that would sell you so,

Good master, tell us now openly his name.

What traitor is he, who from you would go,

And with false treason fulfil his great shame?

ANDREW:

It is just dreadful, such treason to think,

And still more dreadful to do that bad deed!

For that false treason to Hell he shall sink,

A life of endless pain to lead.

JAMES:

It is not I, Lord! For fear, I have dread.

It never occured to me, that sin to fulfil.

If I sold you, and made you bleed,

In doing that treason my soul I should kill.

THOMAS:

Gold, silver, and treasure do soon pass away,

But without an end, ever does last your grace.

Ah, Lord, who is it that will sell you for money?

For he that sells his own Lord, too great is his trespass!

JAMES:

That traitor that does this horrible menace,

Both body and soul, he is lost and lorn:

Damned to Hell's pit, far from your face,

Among all foul fiends to be rent and torn.

PETER:

Too bad a merchant, that traitor he is;

And for that money he may mourning make.

Alas, what causeth him to sell the King of Bliss?

For his false winnings, the Devil him take!

THOMAS:

For his false treason the fiends so black

Shall bear his soul deep down into Hell's pit.

He shall have no rest, but evermore wake

Burning in hot fire, in prison ever shut.

JUDAS:

The truth would I know, certainly,

And therefore, good sir, the truth to me tell.

Which of us here may that traitor be?

Am I that person who must you now sell?

JESUS:

You say so yourself; now heed your words well.

Why do you ask me if you shall do that treason?

Remember your own mind; you know it quite well.

You are an adult, and you know how to reason.

[So, Judas, I tell you thus

Between us two alone:]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Quod facis, fac cicius.

What you must do, do soon.

THOMAS:

Alas! Such sorry men as we

Did never walk in the world, indeed.

Our master says to us that he

By one of us has been betrayed.

JAMES:

Ah-I think, since you sit next to his knee,

We wish you to ask him again, with all speed.

JOHN:

Domine, quis est qui traduit te?

Lord, who shall do that awful deed?

Alas, our joy is past;

This false promise is cursed.

I may no longer last;

For pain, my heart may burst.

JUDAS:

It is time for me to get along,

For now begins a note that's new:

My fellows mutter themselves among

That I should all this bargain brew-

And what they're thinking is not wrong.

The prince of priests I shall go to,

And they shall teach him, before too long,

That all his sayings he sore shall rue.

For I know where he goes

To pray, with all his men.

I'll tell that to the Jews,

And they shall catch him then.

JESUS:

I tell you now, my friends so free:

Heed these words that I shall say.

The Devil is angry with you and me,

And he will harm you if he may.

But, Peter, I have prayed for thee,

So that you shall not fear his affray.

So, comfort all this company

And lead them, when I have gone away.

PETER:

Ah, Lord, where will you go?

I shall go where you lead;

Where you go, I also

Shall go, in life and deed.

ANDREW:

No earthly fear shall me withdraw,

But I shall live with you and die.

THOMAS:

Surely, now, so say we all,

Or else of woe we'd be well worthy.

JESUS:

Peter, to you I say this now,

So that you shall speak no fantasy:

This very night, before the cock-crow,

You shall three times my name deny,

And say you knew me never,

Nor any friends of mine.

PETER:

Alas, Lord, I would rather

Be put to endless pain.

JESUS:

Just as I say, so shall it be.

You need no other recourse to crave.

All that ever was written of me

Must be fulfilled, for knight or knave.

I am the shepherd; the sheep are ye,

And when the shepherd shall injuries have,

The flock shall flee, and eagerly,

And seek some succour, themselves to save.

You shall, when I am alone,

Be in misery and discord.

But when I rise again,

Then your joy shall be restored.

You have all been eager my pain to defeat;

Therefore, your shield I shall always be.

And because you did, in cold and heat,

My commandments, in every country,

In the Kingdom of Heaven shall be your seat,

Even as my Father has said to me.

With spiritual food there shall we eat,

And on twelve seats, then sit shall ye,

For truly you took care

In the world with me to dwell;

There shall you sit before

The twelve tribes of Israel.

But you shall be bewildered soon,

In danger more than you have seen

From the time to come, when I am gone

And you have turned away in pain.

And look that you have swords, each one,

And whoever has none, you between,

Must sell his coat and buy him one;

Thus bid I that you them obtain.

Satchels I bid you have,

And stones to stop all strife,

Your own selves for to save,

In the lengthening of your life.

ANDREW:

Master, we have here two swords

To save ourselves in peril severe.

JESUS:

It is enough. You need no more;

From harms I'll guard you, everywhere.

But rise up now, for we will go;

By now, our enemies ready are.

My Father said it should be so;

His bidding I shall not forbear.

Be sure to learn this law

That you have heard from me.

All those who it well know

Forever blessed shall be.

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# 28. The Cordwainers' Play: The Agony in the Garden and the Betrayal

JESUS:

Behold, my disciples, that grave are and dear,

My flesh shivers and shrinks for the doubt of my deed.

My enemies soon will be drawing full near me,

With all their might, if they may, to mar me indeed.

But since through your wandering and watching you're weary,

I counsel you sit now, and rest in your need.

Don't be heavy in heart, but hold you right here,

And stay awhile still in this stead now with me.

Be witty and wise in your fears,

So that you awaking may stay.

And look that now promptly you pray,

To my father, that you fall not into error.

PETER:

Yes Lord, at your bidding we'll willingly bide,

You are cure of our ills and you bid for the best.

JOHN:

Lord, all our help and our health, naught to hide:

In you - our faith and our food - is all holiness.

JAMES:

What way does he will, in this world wide?

Where will he walk, eastward or west?

PETER:

Yea sirs, I shall say you, sit down on each side,

And let us right now and right here take our rest.

My limbs are heavy as any lead.

JOHN:

And I must sleep, down must I lie.

JAMES:

In faith fellows, right so must I;

I can no longer hold up my head.

PETER:

Our Lord, of his truth, his life he shall lose,

Shall unkindly be crucified, nailed to a tree...

JESUS:

Obeying my counsels, your eyes please unclose:

Avoid the temptation for naught that may be,

But pray fast.

JOHN:

Lord, teach us a prayer to attend thus,

That somewhat might mirth us or mend us.

JAMES:

From unfaithful temptation defend us,

In the life of this world while we last.

JESUS:

I'll teach you and comfort you, keep you from care.

You shall be brought, mark my words, from bale to bliss.

PETER:

Yes, but Lord, we would know more of this prayer,

Of this prayer so precious, let us not miss.

We humbly beseech thee.

JOHN:

For my fellows and me gathered here,

Some prayer that is precious to hear.

JAMES:

To you father in heaven, in power no peer,

Some solace of succor to send thee.

JESUS:

Pray thus:

Pater noster qui est in coelis,

Father ours, who are in heaven,

Santificetur nomen tuum.

Hallowed be your name.

Adveniat regnum tuum,

Let your kingdom come,

Fiat voluntas tua,

Let your will be done,

Et in terra sicut in coelo.

On the earth just as in heaven.

Panem nostrum quotidianum,

Our daily bread,

Da nobis hodie;

Give us today;

Et dimitte nobis debita nostra,

And forgive us our debts,

Sicut et dimittemus debitoribus nostris.

As we forgive our debtors.

Et nos inducas in tentationem,

Lead us not in temptation

Sed libera nos a malo.

But deliver us from evil.

Amen.

You know it draws near me, I'll not name that hill;

You know full and well all the ways I have went.

Restore me and strengthen me with a voice still,

I pray you wholeheartedly, give your attent.

Imbue me in manhood with strength of your will.

My flesh is full drenched now with dread.

For this task of my manhood,

I sweat now water and blood.

These Jews have intent in their minds full of malice,

Pretending to take me without any trespass;

But Father, you know, I meant never amiss:

In my word, nor in work, never unworthy was.

As you are pain's help, and protector of bliss,

And help and salvation you have in your hands,

Attend to your manhood, you mender of miss,

And if it may be, let this pain overpass.

And Father, if you see it may not,

Be it worthily wrought,

Just as you will.

Ever meekly and still,

With worship always be so.

Unto my disciples I'll go now again,

Kindly to comfort them, caught in their cares.

What? Are you fallen asleep now, each one?

And my passion you keep in your minds no more?

What? Will you leave me thus lightly and let me alone?

In sorrow and sighing that sinks in full sore?

To whom may I move me and make now my moan?

I wish you'd awaken, if you will yet some more.

Come Peter, sit up now, let's see -

You're strongly settled in this struggle;

Might you not, for the space of an hour,

Stay awake now mildly with me?

PETER:

Yes Lord. With your leave, we'll learn right here,

With awareness to guard you from doubting.

JESUS:

Wake up and pray fast, each one who is near,

To my Father, to keep you from sleeping.

For the evil one's drawing near here,

So you'll tarry this time in his tempting,

And unguarded, I'll fall into fear;

But bide by your will in my blessing.

Again to the mountain I'll go;

Yet once more to where I was ere,

But look you don't fall into care;

Not much longer shall here be my dwelling.

Oh Father, who formed everything and its food:

I feel in my terror my flesh would full fain

Be turned from this tournament and taken to you.

For God's manhood's bewildered in body and mood.

But if you say truly that your son will,

Without surfeit of sin, innocently be slain,

Let it worthily be done, just as you will;

For Father, your bidding I'm willingly obeying.

Now I'll go briskly again,

To my disciples so dear.

What, sleeps now everyone here?

I'm afraid that you'll fail your friend.

But yet, I will leave you and let you alone,

And return where I was once again.

To my Father of might, now I make all my moan;

As the salver of sores, now some succor me send:

The passion they purpose to put me upon;

My flesh is in dread and it wants to defend.

On this earth, at your will, Father let it be done.

Remember I'm human, help me my mood mend;

Show me some comfort in this case.

Father, death I shall taste, and I will not defend;

Yet, if your will be, spare me a space.

Take heed Father, soon they'll do all their delight;

With raps full rude on the rood I'll be rent.

ANGEL:

To the Maker unmade, that most is in might,

Be love everlasting in light that is lent.

Thy father in heaven the highest in height,

To sober thy sorrows has me to thee sent.

For deeds that man's done shall be your sacrifice;

Assaulted with torments you'll be - but attend -

Your pain will be for the best.

Through that, man's miss shall be mended.

Then shall thou, without end,

Reign in thy realm full of rest.

JESUS:

Now, though my flesh is afraid, I am fain

That my anguish and troubles were near at an end.

To my disciples I'll go once again,

Kindly to comfort distress in their minds.

Do you sleep again safely? Now to you I say:

Wake up quickly, and let us go hence;

Forthwith I'll be taken, with treason betrayed.

My flesh is afraid and it wants to defend.

Full cruelly my deeds they'll indict;

As soon as I'm taken,

By each I'll be forsaken,

You'll say you never saw me in sight.

PETER:

No, truly, I shall never my sovereign forsake!

If I should, wretchedly, let me here die!

JOHN:

No, they'll never us into fools like that make!

We'd rather die first all at once -

JAMES:

In faith fellows, so should I!

JESUS:

Yes, but when the time comes, the men shall me take.

Despite your heartfelt promise, you'll hide yourselves high.

Like freshly sheared sheep, far away you will shake:

None of you will be bold enough then to stand by.

PETER:

No, truly, while I may give aid,

I shall warn and wake,

And if all these forsake,

I shall never faintly fade.

JESUS:

Ah Peter, of such boasting, I suggest you let be

For all your keen carping, full keenly I know,

That for fear of my enemies you will deny me:

Three times, and sincerely, before the cock crow.

For fear of my foes, you'll want only to flee,

And for doubt of your deeds, to withdraw.

ANNAS:

Sir Caiaphas of your counsel, do soon let us see.

In loyalty we're obliged to look to our law;

And therefore, sir, hastily I pray you,

Since in council agreed we, each one,

That Jesus, that traitor, be taken -

Do tell us soon sir, I pray you.

CAIAPHAS:

Certainly, soon I shall say you:

I discern by my wit that this work will go well.

Let us justly adjourn to Judas the gent.

For he knows his master's movements full well,

And best, I will warrant, knows which way he is went.

ANNAS:

As wisely said, I certify, as ever I can tell.

Now sir, to your saying, I soberly consent.

Let's take all our knights, as steadfast as steel,

And forthwith let Judas lead them to where Jesus went.

CAIAPHAS:

Full well sir. Now Judas, dear neighbor, come reach us.

Look Judas, in mind we have meant

To take Jesus - it's all our intent.

Now you must lead us and teach us.

JUDAS:

Sirs, I shall show you the way at your will,

But look that you have many mighty men,

Both strong and keen, to hold him stock still.

ANNAS:

Yeah, Judas, but by what sign shall we know him then?

JUDAS:

Sirs, a signal that time I shall give of my will.

But look, by your truth, you no lenience extend.

The man I shall kiss, that corpse you shall kill.

Beware that he does not escape - I shall show you all then.

CAIAPHAS:

Nay Judas. We intend that this page will not pass.

Sir knights in high -

1 KNIGHT:

Lord, we are here.

CAIAPHAS:

Call out your fellows, come here.

And go justly with gentle Judas.

1 KNIGHT:

Come fellows, by your faith, come forth fast,

And hear from Sir Caiphas, he commands me to call.

2 KNIGHT:

I curse him for life, whoever is last.

3 KNIGHT:

Go we hence then on high in haste to the hall.

4 KNIGHT:

Lord, your worthy will I would know - what was't?

CAIAPHAS:

To take Jesus, that saintling, together you shall.

1 KNIGHT:

Lord, to that purpose I'd rather we passed.

ANNAS:

Yeah, but look you be ready and well-armed all.

The most gentle of Jewry shall guide you.

CAIAPHAS:

Cause each knight in degree,

Armed and harnessed to be,

To protect you and willingly bide you.

ANNAS:

Yeah. And therefore Sir Caiphas, hie you.

Your worship you'll win in this case,

Because you're the lord the most lovely in face,

Under Sir Pilate, that lives in this empire.

Yon braggart that calls himself a sire,

With treasure and harm we shall test him.

The pain of that wretch, Sir Pilate shall brew.

Do trot on for that traitor apace, in haste.

CAIAPHAS:

Now sirs, since you say that my power is best,

And you have this assignment to work at my will,

Now certainly, I shall not rest,

But solemnly your will shall fulfill. Right soon.

Full tightly shall that traitor be taken;

Sir knights, hie you now, each one.

For certain will that wretch be slain;

Sir Anna, I pray you, have done.

ANNAS:

Full ready quick I shall be bound,

For on this journey, go I will.

As you're a lord of great renown,

You must spare him not to spill.

The devil him speed!

We're going with our knights all here.

Lo, all arrayed and armoured clear!

Sir knights, be now of full good cheer;

When you see him, take heed!

1 JEW:

Good heed of him, lord, we shall take,

He shall curse the day that he was born.

And all his kin shall come too late.

He'll not escape without the scorn,

Of all us here.

2 JEW:

We'll seek him out both even and morn,

Early and late, with full good cheer,

Is our intent.

3 JEW:

From sty and street we'll spare not one;

Not field, nor town, thus have we meant,

And bound in cord.

CAIAPHAS:

Malchus!

MALCHUS:

Ay! And I think I should have reward;

It would be right and fair.

For lo - I bear light for my lord.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, stop your speech, and let us speed

A space, and let all speaking spare.

And Judas, go guide now before,

And wisely you show them the way.

For truly, soon we shall say:

He'll trouble us no more.

JESUS:

Now will this be drawing near,

Which proves the truth of what I've said.

CAIAPHAS:

Go fetch forth the freak for his forfeit.

JUDAS:

Hail master in faith, and fellows here.

With great gracious greeting on ground you are graced.

I would ask you a kiss, master, and your will were,

For all my love and my liking upon you is laid.

JESUS:

Full heartily, Judas; have it right here.

For with this kissing is man's son betrayed.

1 KNIGHT:

Stand traitor, you're under arrest now I say!

CAIAPHAS:

Knights! Now fall on before!

2 KNIGHT:

Yes master, move you no more,

But lightly now let us alone.

3 KNIGHT:

Alas, he is lost in the glare of this light -

JESUS:

Tell me whom you seek, do explain now to me.

1 JEW:

One Jesus of Nazareth, as he's called aright.

JESUS:

Behold, over here - I am he whom you seek.

1 KNIGHT:

Stand wretch! So miserably are you to die,

I'll not be upset if you blanch and turn weak.

1 JEW:

Hey! Out! I am shaken in body and might!

2 JEW:

And I'm afraid, by my faith; I'd rather just flee.

For such a sight I've never seen.

3 JEW:

That light it shone so bright,

I never saw such a sight.

I wonder what it can mean?

JESUS:

Tell me whom you seek, I say.

1 JEW:

Jesus of Nazareth - we'd take him now.

JESUS:

And I am truly he.

MALCHUS:

And that shall I assay.

For you shall die, wretch, if he be thou.

PETER:

And by my faith, I intend you to flay!

MALCHUS:

Hey! Ouch! All my duties are done.

PETER:

Nay! Traitor, truly, I'll trap you somehow!

JESUS:

Peace, Peter, I bid thee;

Meddle and move you no more.

You know perfectly well, if my will it were,

I could have great power and plenty

Of angels full many to muster my might.

So put up your sword full goodly again,

For he that avenges, although he be right,

Will be answered with vengeance, which renders it vain.

You, the man who was unfairly hurt in the fight -

Come hither now safely, and I shall be saying,

In the name of the father, of heavenly height,

Of your hurts be now whole and together again.

Your veins have their virtue - be once more at avail.

MALCHUS:

What! Hail! I hope I am whole!

Now at any who bother, I rail,

To touch you for doing this travail.

1 JEW:

My fellows, for your faith, let's resume where we were,

For I have a hold on this man.

1 KNIGHT:

And I have a lock on him now - draw near.

3 KNIGHT:

By the boons that he's granted, this game he will ban.

JESUS:

Like a heinous thief, you hurl me down here.

I taught in your temple - why moved you not then?

Now, let darkness on earth have all power!

1 JEW:

Lay your hands quickly on this wretch!

3 JEW:

We have. Hold this hawk in your hand.

MALCHUS:

Yes fellows, in faith, he is fast.

4 JEW:

To Sir Caiaphas he must be passed.

Farewell, for now we will wend.

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# 30. The Tapiters' and Couchers' Play: Christ before Pilate I: The Dream of Pilate's Wife

PILATE:

You cursed creatures, that cruelly are crying,

Restrain yourselves from striving for the strength of my strokes.

Make your complaints in my presence-in order applying-

Or else this blade your brains will soon burst and break.

This blade the bone breaks

Of whoever much brawling brews.

That wretch may not worm away from wrack;

Nor his sleight-of-hand may not him slake.

Let that traitor not trust in my truce.

For Sir Caesar was my sire, and I certainly his son-

That excellent emperor, exalted in height,

Who all this wild world with its people, had won-

And my proud mother was Pila, who proud was in sight.

Of Pila the proud, Atus her father was by right.

This "Pila" was added to "Atus";

Now, folk, read you it right?

For thus, briefly, have I showed you in sight

Why I am acknowledged "Pil-Atus."

Lo, Pilate I am, proved a prince of great pride.

I was put into Pontus, the people to oppress.

And since then, Caesar himself, with senators by his side,

Remitted me these realms, the ranks to redress.

And yet, I am granted the grounds, as I guess,

To justify and judge all the Jews.

Ah, love; here, lady? No less?

Lo, sirs; my worthy wife, that she is,

So seemly, lo, certain she shows.

PROCULA:

There was never a judge in Jewry of so jocund a generation,

Nor of so joyful a genealogy, to gentry enjoined

As you, my duke doughty: deemer of damnation

To those princes and prelates that your precepts purloined.

Whoever your precepts so pertly purloined,

With dread into death you shall send him.

Now I swear, he untruly is enthroned

Who against your behests has moaned;

All to rags shall you rip him and rend him.

I am Dame Precious Procula, of princes the prize,

Wife to Sir Pilate here, prince without peer.

The well of all womanhood I am, witty and wise.

Conceive now my countenance, so comely and clear.

The color of my complexion is clear,

And in richness of robes I am arrayéd.

There is no lord in this land, as I hear,

In faith, that has a friendlier peer

Than you, my lord-though I myself say it.

PILATE:

Well, you may say it safely, for I will certify the same.

PROCULA:

Gracious lord, great thanks now; your good word is my gain.

PILATE:

Yet, to comfort my flesh, I must kiss you, madam.

PROCULA:

To fulfil your command, my fair lord, I am fain.

PILATE:

Ho, ho! Good fellows, I am eager again

By these lips to be kissed, very much

(In bed, she is never restrained!).

PROCULA:

Yes, sir, there's no need to refrain;

All ladies love both to be both kissed and touched.

BEADLE:

My liberal lord, oh, leader of laws,

Oh, shining show, who all shame eschews,

I beseech you, my sovereign, assent to my saws

As you are gentle judge, and justice of Jews.

PROCULA:

Now, listen how this churl here chatters of Jews.

Worthless boy, I bid you go away.

BEADLE:

Madam, I do that which is due.

PROCULA:

Unless you stop talking, that you shall rue,

For a worthless wretch you are, I say.

PILATE:

Now cheer yourself, madam; your mood now amend,

For it seems it were fitting to see what he says.

PROCULA:

He has never told news that did not me offend;

But with legal deceits he makes me go my ways.

PILATE:

Indeed, I must now dismiss you, for that is the law.

PROCULA:

Oh, lord, this lad with his laws!

Do you think it worthwhile, his preaching to praise?

PILATE:

Yes, love; he knows all our custom,

I know well-

BEADLE:

My lord, will you see now the sun in your sight?

For his so-stately strength he now dims, in his beams.

Behold, over your head, he descends from his height

And glides to the ground, with his glittering gleams.

To the ground he goes with his beams

And the night is approaching now soon.

You must not pay attention to dreams,

But let my lady here, as great as she seems,

Quickly go off to her room.

For you must, sir, this same night, judge of life and of limb.

It is not lawful for my lady, by the law of this land,

In this place to remain when the daylight grows dim.

For she may totter in the street unless she strongly can stand.

Let her take her leave while there's light.

PILATE:

Now, my wife, you must go, I command.

PROCULA:

I will remain here, sir, at hand.

PILATE:

Look, this man has advised us both right.

PROCULA:

Your commandment to go, I prepare to obey.

My lord, by your leave, no more I'll prevent you.

PILATE:

It would be a disgrace if you slunk thus away,

Or went off from this place before with wine you had wet you.

You shall go forth with joy when with wine you have wet you.

Get a drink; what are you doing? Be done!

Come, seemly one, beside me, and sit you.

Look, now it is here, all that that I said you.

Yes, say it now soberly and soon.

PROCULA:

It will make me glad, lord, if you clearly begin.

PILATE:

Now I assent to your counsel so comely and clear.

Now, drink, madam, and leave off this din.

PROCULA:

If it please you, my lord, I need not be taught here.

I need not to study this lore.

PILATE:

Give some to your maiden, madam.

PROCULA:

In your hand, hold this now; have some; here.

MAID:

Great thanks to my lady so dear.

PILATE:

Now farewell, and walk on your way.

PROCULA:

Now farewell, the friendliest, against foes to defend.

PILATE:

Now farewell, the fairest figure that ever did feed,

And farewell, you, maiden, indeed.

MAID:

My lord, I commend me to your royalty.

PILATE:

Fair lady, here is one who will lead;

Sir, go with this worthy person with speed,

And what she bids you do, look that obedient you be.

BOY:

I am proud and ready to pass on apace,

To go with this gracious one, her good self to guide.

PILATE:

Be attent to my order; deviate in no trace.

Come back and tell me if any tidings betide.

BOY:

If any tidings to my lady betide

I shall at once, sir, come back to say.

This seemly one shall I show to one side

At once, sir; no longer we abide.

PILATE:

Now farewell, and walk on your way.

My wife now is gone, though it was not her will.

And she goes to her rest as if bothered by naught.

It is time now, I tell you, to attend me until.

And make this quick, my good man, for to bed I were brought.

And look I be richly arrayed.

BEADLE:

As your servant I have soberly it sought,

And this night, sir, annoying shall be nought,

I dare say, fron your being lovingly laid.

PILATE:

I command you to come near, for I will go to my couch.

Have me in your hands, handily, and heave me from hence.

But look that you vex me not with your handling, but tenderly me touch.

BEADLE:

Ah! Sir, you wiegh much.

PILATE:

Yes; I have wet me with wine.

Now, lay me down and cover me here

For I will secretly sleep for a time..

Look that no man or minion of mine

With no noise may come anywhere near.

BEADLE:

Sir, whatever warlock awakens you with words full wild,

That boy, for his brawling, were better to be unborn.

PILATE:

Yes, whoever chatters, him chastise be he churl or child,

For, if he escapes unscathed it would be to us great scorn;

If unscathed he escaped it were scorn.

Whatever ribald readlily shall roar,

I shall meet with that minion in the morn,

And for his late lewdness teach him to be torn.

BEADLE:

Ah! So, sir, sleep now, and say no more.

PROCULA:

Now we are at home. Do help if you may,

For I will make ready to go to my rest.

MAID:

You are weary, madam, for walking your way;

Do get you to bed, for that I think best.

BOY:

Here is a bed, arranged with the best.

PROCULA:

Do help me, and then go away.

MAID:

Madam, everything is now duly dressed.

BOY:

With no stalking or strife you'll be stressed.

PROCULA:

Now hold you your peace, all this chatting and cry.

DEVIL:

Out! Out! Harrow!

Into bale am I brought! This bargain may I ban!

Unless I work some wile, then woe have I won!

This gentleman Jesus, ah! Curse me he can;

By all the signs, I see that he must be God's son.

If he be slain, our solace will cease.

He will save man's soul from our claws,

And deprive us of our lands and laws.

I will resolutely, with no pause,

Go to Pilate's wife, steathily, and try this at least.

Oh, woman, be wise and aware, and know with your wit

Unjustly shall be judged a gentleman, Jesus,

Before your husband in haste, and by scoundrels shall be hit.

If that good man today to death should be condemned thus

For his preaching, then Sir Pilate and you

Must needs be especially annoyed:

Your strength and your efforts destroyed,

Your riches lost-you'll not avoid

Vengeance, that dare I avow.

PROCULA:

Ah! I am torn with a dream, full fearfully to dread.

Say, child, rise up rapidly, and rest no more now.

You must rush to my lord, and to him bow your head;

Commend me to his reverence, as soon I will do.

BOY:

Oh, what, must I get up so early this tide?

Madam, by the annoying of Heaven,

Such business is a bother to mention;

And it's getting towards midnight full even.

PROCULA:

Go get, boy, I bid you no longer abide.

And say to my sovereign, this same is the truth that I tell him:

All naked this night as I napped,

With pain and with guile was I trapped,

With a dream that with speed me enwrapped

Of one Jesus, a just man the Jews would undo.

Say, "Take heed to that true man; with pain be not trapped,

But as a judge, duly, be addressing,

And in good faith, let that man be freed."

BOY:

Madam, I'm addressed to that deed.

But first I will nap in this need,

For he has need of a morning sleep who midnight is missing.

ANNAS:

Sir Caiaphas, you know well this captive we have snatched

Who, oftentimes in our temple has taught untruly.

Our minions with their might at midnight him matched,

And have driven him to his doom, for his deeds unruly.

Therefore I counsel that, by custom, we go

To Sir Pilate, our prince, and pray him

That he for our rights will arraign him,

This liar, for his falsehoods to flay him.

For once we tell him the truth it will vex him, I know.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir Annas, this sport you have speedily espied,

As I am pontifical prince of all priests.

We will press on to Sir Pilate, and present him with pride

With this scoundrel, that has hewed our hearts from our breasts,

Through the telling of his tales untrue.

And therefore, sir knights-

SOLDIERS:

Lord!

CAIAPHAS:

Sir knights, that are courteous and kind,

We charge you, that that churl be well chained.

Get going, and quickly him bind,

And tug him with ropes so his lies he shall rue.

1 SOLDIER:

Sir, your sayings shall be served shortly, and soon.

Yeah, come fellows, by your faith; let us bind this liar fast.

2 SOLDIER:

I am ready for this deed; come on now, have done.

Let us pull on with pride, till his power has passed.

1 SOLDIER:

Tie him fast; make it hold at his hands.

2 SOLDIER:

This same is the one that so carelessly boasted,

And that he was God's son, he granted.

1 SOLDIER:

He is hurled from the highness he haunted.

Look, he's frightened of us; he stares where he stands.

2 SOLDIER:

Now is the bastard bound, for all the boasts that he's blown;

On the Last Day, he said, no lordlings might bruise him.

ANNAS:

Yes; he believed that this world had been wholly his own.

As you are strongest today, to his doom you shall draw him,

And then we shall know how he tries to excuse.

1 SOLDIER:

Here, you folks, stand aside; make us way.

We must step to this star of estate.

2 SOLDIER:

We must quickly go in by this way;

For he that comes to court, to courtesy must use him.

1 SOLDIER:

Just rap on those ranks; let's arise with this fellow.

Come on, Sir Coward; why cower you behind?

BEADLE:

What brawlers are you, that play tricks and bellow?

1 SOLDIER:

Ah, good sir, be not angry, for words are like wind.

BEADLE:

Troublemakers, go back with your gauds.

2 SOLDIER:

Be patient with us, I beseech you,

And more of this matter we'll teach you.

BEADLE:

Why, you ignorant knaves, if I catch you,

I shall fell you, by my faith, for all your false frauds.

PILATE:

Now, fellow, be damned! What churls are so chattering?

BEADLE:

My lord, ignorant knaves. They cry and they call.

PILATE:

Go quickly, at once, and those bastards get battering,

And put them in prison, on the pain that may fall.

But speedily ask them if any sport they can spell,

Yes, and find out what people they be.

BEADLE:

My lord, who loves tranquillity,

I obey, and at once, cheerfully.

PILATE:

And if they talk any tidings, come quickly to tell.

BEADLE:

Can you talk any tidings, by your faith, my fellows?

1 SOLDIER:

Yes, sir: Sir Caiaphas and Annas are both come together

To Sir Pilate of Pontus, the prince of our laws,

And they have caught a foul wretch, outlawed altogether.

BEADLE:

My lord, my lord!

PILATE:

How?

BEADLE:

My lord, get up now at once where you lie.

Sir Caiaphas to your court has been carried,

And Sir Annas; but a traitor made them tarry.

That wizard has cursed very many;

They have brought him in bonds, to pay for his lies.

PILATE:

Are these charges for certain, in truth, that you say?

BEADLE:

Yes, lord, the princes now stand, and for strife they are stunned.

PILATE:

Now, then, I am light as a deer, and eager for day.

Go bid them come in, and the boy they have bound.

BEADLE:

Sirs, my lord gives his leave in for to come.

CAIAPHAS:

Hail, prince that is peerless in price;

You are the leader of laws in this land;

Your help has been always at hand.

ANNAS:

Hail, strong in your office to stand;

All this doom must be given by your lawful advice.

PILATE:

Who is there? My prelates?

CAIAPHAS:

Yes, lord.

PILATE:

Now, welcome indeed.

CAIAPHAS:

We thank you, my sovereign. But we ask you all the same:

We awoke you, but be not more wroth than you need,

For we brought you a captive; he looks like a lamb.

PILATE:

Come in, you both, and to the bench get you.

CAIAPHAS:

No, sir, lower is good enough for us.

PILATE:

Ah, Sir Caiaphas, now be courteous.

ANNAS:

Nay, good lord, it may not be thus.

PILATE:

Say no more, but come sit down humbly beside me as I said you.

BOY:

Hail, O seemliest sire under the sun sought!

Hail, dearest duke, and most mighty of men!

PILATE:

Now, welcome, good sir, and what word have you brought?

Has my lady come down with some sickness again?

BOY:

Sir, that comely one commends her to you

And says, naked all night as she napped,

With trouble and toil was she trapped,

With a dream that at once her enwrapped

Of one Jesus, the just man the Jews will undo.

She beseeches you as her sovereign, that good man to save;

Doom him not to death, for vengeance may fall.

PILATE:

What? I think this is he, that to me hauled you have.

CAIAPHAS:

Yes, sir, the same and the self. But this is some spell;

With witchcraft this trick he has wrought.

Some devilish slave he has sent

And instructed your wife, ere he went.

PILATE:

Enough! To death he'll not wrongly be sent;

That is both true and certain. The truth should be sought.

ANNAS:

Yes, through phantoms and falsehoods and crafts of the fiend

He has made many wonders where he walked far and wide.

Therefore, my lord, it is fitting his life now should end.

PILATE:

Be you ever so angry, you both must abide

Till the traitor is caught in a lie.

And therefore, be still; speak no more.

I will certainly send himself for,

And see what words he has in store.

Beadle, go bring him; for him, pity have I.

BEADLE:

This order to obey, I am eager in heart.

Say, Jesus, the judges and the Jews have me enjoined

To bring you before them, even bound as you are.

Those lords: your destruction they've long had in mind.

But first I shall worship you with my wit and my will.

This reverence I do you hereby;

For men that were miser than I,

They worshipped you wholly, on high,

And with solmenity sing Hosanna still.

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, who is leader of laws in this place,

All beadles to your bidding should be obedient and bain;

And yet this boy here before you boldly bowed down his face

To worship this warlock. I think we work all in vain.

2 SOLDIER:

Yes, and in your presence he asked him for peace;

Kneeling on knees to this knave,

He asked him his servant to save.

CAIAPHAS:

Look, lord, such heresy among them they have,

It is sorrow to see; none can make it cease.

It is no honour to you, who are so much in might,

To permit such offences that falsely are feigned;

Such spites in special should be eschewed in your sight.

PILATE:

Sirs! Do not speak in this way, but be well restrained;

That courtesy, I guess, had some cause.

ANNAS:

In your sight, sir, the truth I will say.

As you are a prince, take heed, I you pray.

Such a villain unloyal, I dare to say,

Might cause many lords of our land to break laws.

PILATE:

Say, knave, who gave you leave thus to honour that lad,

And give him solace in my sight, in the way that I saw?

BEADLE:

Ah, gracious lord, grieve not, for a good cause I had.

You commanded me to go, as you very well know,

To Jerusalem, on a long trip.

And there, this seemly one on an ass was set,

And many men humbly him met;

As a God on that ground they did greet

Him, and sang psalms on his way, with loyal worship.

"Hosanna," they sang, "O son of David."

Rich men with their robes, they ran to his feet,

And poor folk fetched flowers, and did

Make such mirth and melody, this man for to meet.

PILATE:

Now, good sir, by your faith, what is "Hosanna" to say?

BEADLE:

Sir, construe it we may by the language of this land, I believe.

I think it means, as I conceive

(Your prelates in this place can prove),

"Our saviour and sovereign, save us, we pray."

PILATE:

Well, sirs, now how think you? The truth I have said.

CAIAPHAS:

But, lord, this lad is deceived, by this light.

If his sayings were searched, and soberly assayed-

Save your reverence, his reasons do not reckon up right.

This villain misleadingly tells us.

BEADLE:

Sirs, truly the truth I have told

Of this man who a prisoner you hold.

ANNAS:

I say, villain, your tongue you should hold,

And not against your masters dispute thus.

PILATE:

Do cease of your speaking, and I shall examine him here.

ANNAS:

Sir, doom him to death or put him away.

PILATE:

Sir, are you done?

ANNAS:

Yes, lord.

PILATE:

Then sit down, with calmness and care.

No man who is loyal shall I ever destroy.

But step forth and stand up on height

And listen to my bidding, now, boy.

And, for the record, give us an "oy."

BEADLE:

I am here at your hand, to halloo a "hoy;"

Now proclaim all your order; I'll shout it out right.

PILATE:

Cry "Oyez."

BEADLE:

Oyez!

PILATE:

Again, by your faith.

BEADLE:

Oyez!

PILATE:

Yet louder, that every person may hear.

Cry peace in this crowd, upon pain thereupon;

Bid them cease all their noise, swiftly, all here,

And leave off their arguing and stand still as a stone.

Call Jesus, descendent of Jacob, the Jew.

Come quickly and appear.

To the bar draw near,

To your judgement here,

To be judged for your deeds undue.

1 SOLDIER:

Well, look at this hooligan's misconduct here;

This scoundrel to my lord does not care to bow.

2 SOLDIER:

Say, beggar, why fight us? Go on to the bar.

1 SOLDIER:

Step on the stand; it's strong enough, now.

2 SOLDIER:

Step on the stand and stay still.

1 SOLDIER:

Sir Coward, to court you must go-

2 SOLDIER:

-to learn of our laws, so you'll know.

1 SOLDIER:

Get going, and bad luck to you.

2 SOLDIER:

Say, warlock, you're lacking in will.

BOY:

Oh, Jesus ignoble! Your joy is in jokes.

You cannot be courteous. You! Villain, I call you;

It would be right to rig you up, rip you with ropes.

Why don't you fall flat here, foully fall you,

For fear of my father so free?

You know not his wisdom, I guess;

All your hope in his hands as it is,

How soon he might save you from this.

Obey him, you villain, I say.

PILATE:

Now, Jesus, you are welcome indeed, as I mean.

Be not afraid, but boldly come up to the bar.

The elders who accuse you, I surely have seen

(To work on this warlock? His wits are not here.).

Come, priest, on your oath, and appear,

And sir prelates, your points must you prove.

Why do you this fellow accuse?

This matter to me you must move,

And quickly, in haste, let us hear.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir Pilate of Pontus, prince of great price,

We trust you will trust that our tales will be true,

And doom him to death, with your lawful device.

For cursedness this knave has in mind. If you knew,

In heart you would hate this man too.

For if it were not so

(We meant not to misdo;

Agree, sir, you must thereto),

We would not have him taken to you.

PILATE:

Sir, your tales I'd believe, but they are not to the point.

What cause can you find now, this man for to kill?

ANNAS:

Our Sabbath he keeps not; he does freely assent

To work, unwisely, and that I know well.

He works when he will; I know that,

And therefore, in heart, him we hate.

It befits you, to preserve your estate,

To kill this wretch for his foul life.

PILATE:

To kill men for their manner of living is not lawful.

Your laws are their own; to your laws it belongs

To settle this business with punishments awful,

And woe you may work him by law, if he is wrong.

Therefore, take him yourselves right along,

And, if your own laws that way lead,

Then doom him to death for his deed.

CAIAPHAS:

No, no, sir. Such a thing must we dread.

We are not allowed to bring life to an end.

PILATE:

What? Then you want me to do it? May the Devil you draw!

So many are his foes, so few are his friends.

To deprive him of life belongs to no law,

Nor no cause can I logically perceive

Why that he should lose his life.

ANNAS:

Ah, good sir, the trouble is rife;

Everywhere he has stirred such a strife

Among lawbiding folk; this believe.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, lame men and wounded he healed in all haste;

The deaf and the dumb he delivered from dole

By witchcraft, I warrant-his wits must waste-

For the marvels he deals in, they follow that fool;

Our folk he frightens altogether.

ANNAS:

The dead he raises, I own.

One Lazarus who low laid alone

He made to rise up, flesh and bone,

And openly thus proved his power.

PILATE:

Now, good sirs, I say, just what is your will?

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, to death for to do him; to death him to draw.

PILATE:

Ah, because he does good things, I must have him killed?

Get a job as a jester; where learned you such a law?

This touches no treason, I tell you.

You prelates, so praised to the skies,

You should be both clever and wise

And expound the law just where it lies;

Our matters you must move thus among you.

ANNAS:

Misplease not your person, O prince without peer;

It touches on treason, this tale I shall tell:

This vagrant did readily bid to forbear

The tribute to the emperor. Thus would he compel

Our people thus his words to apply.

CAIAPHAS:

The people, he says, he shall save,

And "Christ" makes them call him, that knave,

And says he will the high kingdom have.

Now judge whether he ought to die.

PILATE:

To die he deserves if he does thus indeed.

But I will see for myself what he says.

Speak, Jesus, and take now your turn, with all speed.

These lords both allege that you violate our laws;

They accuse you, cruelly, and keen.

Therefore, as a chieftain, I charge you:

If you are Christ, you must tell me-

If "God's Son" you do not scruple to call you-

For this is the matter I mean.

JESUS:

You say so yourself. I am truly the same,

Here dwelling in the world to work all my will.

My Father is faithful to end all your fame;

Without trespass or trouble I am taken you till.

PILATE:

Well, bishops? Why blame you this boy?

I think it is truth that he says.

You allege all the malice you may

With your traps and your wiles to shut him away,

Unjustly this man to destroy.

CAIAPHAS:

Not so, sir. If his saying is literal truth,

He dooms all our people, in prison to bind.

ANNAS:

Sir, doubtless we judge him deserving of death,

This fool that you favour. Great faults we can find

This day for to doom him to die.

PILATE:

You villain, you lie, by this light!

No, you rascal, you reckon not right.

CAIAPHAS:

Consider, with main and with might,

And wreak not your wrath wrongfully.

PILATE:

I like not your language; you presume much with me.

CAIAPHAS:

Ah, mercy, lord, humbly, no malice we meant.

PILATE:

Well, think it forgotten. And now, candidly,

Talk on that "traitor," and tell your intent.

That man is subtle, you say.

Good sirs, where learned he such lore?

CAIAPHAS:

In faith, we cannot find where.

PILATE:

Did his father keep some wiles in store

And teach this lad of his ways?

ANNAS:

No, no, sir, we know that he was but a wright;

No subtlety he showed that any man saw.

PILATE:

Then you mean, in pure malice, to destroy him by might,

And to curse and convict for no cause that you know.

I marvel you do so amiss.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, from Galilee, and all the land through,

Great numbers of folk to him did go,

This warlock inciting to woe,

And of all his work bear witness.

PILATE:

What? Has he been to Galilee, that troublesome lad?

ANNAS:

Yes, born and bred there, that foul man.

PILATE:

Now, in all truth, my friends, I surely am glad,

For now all our strife shall certainly end.

Sir Herod is king of that land;

His power is sufficient, and best

To free him or rob him of rest.

And therefore, to go with your guest,

Take with you our manliest men.

CAIAPHAS:

As wit and as wisdom, your will shall be wrought.

Here are the men; they are eager to the king for to go.

PILATE:

Now, sirs, I say to you, since the truth shall be sought,

Unless he quickly is sent, it may hurt us all. So,

I say to you, knights-

SOLDIERS:

Lord!

PILATE:

Sir knights, who are cruel and keen,

That warlock you bind painfully;

And be sure to beat him eagerly.

Now, take up that traitor, you between.

To Herod in haste with this man go, quickly.

Commend me with courtesy to his great might.

Say, the doom of this boy, to judge him to die,

Is bestowed on him duly, as the law says is right;

Or, his life, if it please him, to grant.

Say, if I can assist any way,

I am his own servant, always.

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, we shall go there today.

Come here with this traitor flagrant.

PILATE:

Good sirs, I bid you be not too bold,

But remember our tribute truly to entreat.

2 SOLDIER:

My lord, we shall go; to your wish we shall hold,

And perform it all wisely, with will and with wit.

PILATE:

So, sirs, I think it is fitting.

1 SOLDIER:

May Mahound, good sirs, honour you with might-

2 SOLDIER:

-and save you, sir, seemly in sight.

PILATE:

Now, with a vengeance, walk on with that wight,

And briskly be off in your flitting.

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# 31. The Liststers' Play: Christ Before Herod

KING:

Peace, you brawlers and brats, in this broadness embraced;

And folks over-friendly, from forwardness refrain.

Your tongues, from treating of trifles, restrain;

Or this brand that is bright will burst in your brain.

Plead for no places, but kneel in this plain.

Draw no commotions, but address you in dread

Of dashes.

Travail not as traitors, trusting in tricks,

Or by blood Mahound bled, with this blade you shall bleed!

Thus I shall batter your bones in this breadth.

Yes! And lash all your limbs with lashes.

Dragons so dreadful shall lurk in their dens;

When we writhe in wrath, or in rage we're wrapped up.

With weapons we've joined against giants ungentle,

And swans that are swimming, for our sweet life are swept up,

And judged down, for the joy of our gentry engendered.

Who chides our estate, we shall chop him in chains,

And the ranks that are running to us shall be reverent.

Thus I bid you to cease, before any bale be.

That no brother so bold may boast for his blows;

And you that love your lives, listen to me:

As a lord who is learned, to lead you in laws.

And you of my men, and of my company,

Since we've come from one kin, as each of you knows,

And assembled together in this city,

It suits us to seriously set all our sayings.

1 DUKE:

My lord, we shall keep to your call,

And stir to no stead, unless you summon us.

No grievances here, great or small.

KING:

Yeah, but look that to no faults you fall.

2 DUKE:

Loyally, my lord, so we shall.

No more is there need now to name it.

1 DUKE:

Monsignor, demean you to honor in mind what I mean:

Be bound now to bed-ward, for so I hold best.

All the commoners, this court have avoided clean.

Every man, as is reason, has gone to his rest.

Wherefore I would counsel, my lord, that you call for a drink.

KING:

Certainly, I shall assent as he says,

Now that all men have gone on their ways.

Lightly, without any delays,

Give us wine worthily, and then we shall wink,

And see no disturbance be done.

[Then the king drinks.]

1 DUKE:

My lord, unlace you to lie;

Here none shall come to cry.

KING:

Now speedily look that you spy,

That no noise be near here this midnight.

1 DUKE:

My lord, your bed is new made, you need not abide.

KING:

Yeah, but if heartily you love me, lay me down softly;

For you know very well I am tenderly hided.

1 DUKE:

How lie you, my good lord?

KING:

Right well, by this light.

All whole at my desire.

Wherefore, I pray to Sir Satan our sire,

And Lucifer, lovely of limb:

He save you all sirs, and give you good night.

1 SOLDIER:

Sir knight, we have been warned to wend;

We must know of this warlock, what is the king's will?

2 SOLDIER:

Sir, here is Herod, right here at our hand,

And our intent, quickly to tell him we will.

1 SOLDIER:

Who is here?

1 DUKE:

Who is there?

1 SOLDIER:

We are knights of this land.

We've come to your council, this churl to kill.

1 DUKE:

Sirs, if your message may not mirth amend,

Stalk forth in the street, or stand here stone still.

2 SOLDIER:

Yes, certainly sir, of mirth we do mean

The king shall have matters to meddle in.

We are bringing a boy here between,

Who will bring us great worship, we believe.

1 DUKE:

Well sirs, so that no harm is seen,

Attend him, and we shall go tell him.

My lord, yonder a bound boy is brought in in blame.

Hasten and hurry; they hover at your gate.

KING:

What?! Must I rise now, in the devil's name,

To stickle with strangers in the stalls of estate?

Have here my hand, hold now.

See where my slippers are sitting.

1 DUKE:

My lord, with good will shall I hold you;

No wrong would I do but unwitting.

But now lord, we can tell you of uncouth tidings.

KING:

Yeah, but look that you tell only tales that are true.

1 DUKE:

They are bringing you yonder a boy bound in a band;

This bodes either jokes, or bale's on the brew.

KING:

Then raise up the harrow, hastily at hand.

1 DUKE:

My lord, there's some news I need note unto you.

KING:

Why? Do you hope that in haste he will hang?

1 DUKE:

We don't know their will or their leaning.

But a message full blithely they bring:

KING:

Now, do let us hear what they're saying.

2 DUKE:

Lo sirs, you may carp with the king.

And manfully tell him your meaning.

1 SOLDIER:

Lord, wealth and worship be with you always.

KING:

What would you?

2 SOLDIER:

A word lord, if your will it were.

KING:

Well, say on then.

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, it's our job, fools to flay,

Whom, you, would offend.

KING:

Well, good for the both of you, pair.

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, when you hear what we say,

Your heart it will rend.

KING:

Yes, but say what you have on hand there.

2 SOLDIER:

A present from Pilate, lord - prince of our way.

KING:

Peace in my presence and name him no more.

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, he would worship you fain.

KING:

I conceive you are full foes of him.

2 SOLDIER:

My lord, he would honor you main.

And therefore he sends you this swain.

KING:

Go quick with that scoundrel again,

And tell him I hold him worth not one borrowed bean.

1 DUKE:

Ah, my lord, with your leave, they have journeyed far;

To try of your ways was no folly.

2 DUKE:

My lord, if you send this wretch on, it grief were

On this ground: he's gotten to grow great villainy.

KING:

You imply that this nothing would my might mar?

1 DUKE:

Nay lord, but in this world he makes great mastery.

KING:

Go in. Let us see what the sayings are.

If they're not to our pleasure, they'll both pay for it high.

2 SOLDIER:

My lord, we are worthy of blame

If we bring any message amiss.

KING:

Why then, can you name his name?

1 SOLDIER:

Sir, Christ we have called him at home.

KING:

Ah! So this is the self and the same!

Now sirs, you are welcome with this.

In faith, I'm delighted he's found;

His wonders to see and to tell.

Now this game is correctly begun.

2 SOLDIER:

Lord, in all loyalty, this we like well.

KING:

Yes, but do you hold heartily, that this harlot is he?

1 SOLDIER:

Take heed my lord, and in haste you'll hear how.

KING:

Yes. But why was this message made out to me?

2 SOLDIER:

I trust since it touches on treason somehow.

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, he's called culpable in our country,

On perilous points, as Pilate proves now.

2 SOLDIER:

My lord, when Pilate learned he was gotten in Galilee,

He said that this lordship belonged unto you.

And thus till he know what your will is therefore,

He'll not speak any further to spill him.

KING:

Then he knows that our might is more?

1 SOLDIER:

Certainly sir, as we said there before.

KING:

Now sirs, then our friendship therefore

We shall grant him: no grievance we will him.

And sirs, as you should be, you're welcome to go,

At your will; I will warrant your coming.

For I've coveted kindly, that comely to know;

For men call him both wise and cunning.

2 SOLDIER:

My lord, if he told all the truths he may know,

You saw never such wonders, by sea or by sand.

KING:

Now go on back, both, and let the boy blow.

His ear, I'll have (hopefully) hastily at hand.

1 SOLDIER:

Jerusalem and the Jews may have joy,

And heal in their hearts for to hear him.

KING:

Say, bien-veniew in bon fay

Ne plaisieur and a parle remoy?

2 SOLDIER:

Nay, lord - there's no playful chat in this boy.

KING:

No sir? With your leave we shall teach him.

1 Son:

My lord, see these knights that know and are keen?

How'd they come to your court without any call?

KING:

Yes son, and they muster great masteries, what may this mean?

1 DUKE:

My lord, since your might is far more than their all,

They seek you as sovereign, as is certainly seen.

KING:

Now, certainly since you say so, assay him I shall;

I'm more eager for this one, than for any fifteen;

Yes, and whoever first found him - may fair things befall.

1 SOLDIER:

Lord, we loyally lead you no lie;

This life that he leads will lose him.

KING:

Well sirs, draw you aside.

And good sirs, will you now bring him nigh.

For if all of his sleights be sly,

Yet before he may leave, we'll well use him.

Oh, my heart hops for joy,

To see now this prophet appear!

We shall have a good game with this boy;

Take heed, for in haste you shall hear.

I believe we shall laugh and have liking,

To see how this scoundrel alleges our laws.

2 DUKE:

Hark cousin, you've come here to carp with a king;

Pay attention, be cunning, and say what you know.

1 DUKE:

Yeah, and see you don't sound like a sot in your saying,

But seriously, soon you should set your sayings so.

KING:

Why, that's just why I've sought him to see;

Look sir, you be to our abode bound.

1 DUKE:

Kneel down to the king on your knee.

2 DUKE:

No, it's needless, it just will not be.

KING:

Look sirs - he makes him no more meek to me,

Than as if to a man of his town.

1 DUKE:

Wow! You blockhead, learn now not to flout,

Before some more charges they bring.

KING:

No, dreadless, without a doubt,

He knows not the course of a king.

And he's here in our hall - now play, or we end -

Say first in beginning withall, where were you born?

Come fellow, for faith now let us fall in.

The first of your wonders: who fed you before?

Deign you not? Lo, he deafens with this din.

Where'd you scrape up this scoundrel? His language is lorn.

1 SOLDIER:

Lord, to great and to lesser his wonders have been

Before mustered among us, both midday and morn.

2 SOLDIER:

My lord, it would be too many to tell

All his miracles; he works them so quickly.

1 SOLDIER:

Come on, man, mumbling may nothing avail.

Go tell the king all, from the top to the tail.

KING:

Do bring us that boy into bale;

We loyally leave him not lightly.

1 DUKE:

This fool says he may judge men after their deeds;

He makes many marvels and masteries with them.

2 DUKE:

Five thousand fair folk, all at once he did feed,

Five loaves and two fishes he gave them.

KING:

How many folk did you say that he fed?

2 DUKE:

Five thousand, my lord, that came to his call.

KING:

Yeah boy? How'd you bake so much bread?

1 DUKE:

Just five loaves, as I wager he said.

KING:

Now by the blood that Mahound once bled,

This is a great wonder after all.

2 DUKE:

Now lord, he then two fishes blessed,

And gave them out, forgetting none.

1 DUKE:

Yes lord, and twelve full baskets left,

Of overflow, when all were done.

KING:

Of another such meal, no man may say.

2 DUKE:

Excepting, my lord, he who musters this might.

KING:

But say sirs, are these things true that you say?

2 SOLDIER:

Yes lord, and more wonderful still has been shown to our sight.

One Lazarus, a lad who in our land lay,

Lay locked in death's lair from limb and from light.

And his sisters came rushing in rueful array,

And because of their roaring, he raised him full right,

And out of his grave got him going,

Ever forth, without evil.

KING:

Now these lies are lasting too long.

1 SOLDIER:

Why lord, do you mean that the wording is wrong?

With our people, this lad is still living among.

KING:

Well, in there (hope I) be deeds of the devil.

Why do you hasten to hang,

One so newly annoying to you?

2 SOLDIER:

My lord, since he calls himself king,

And claims to be king of the Jews.

KING:

But say, was he king in his kin long ago?

1 SOLDIER:

No. He calls himself king, so his cares he may heal.

KING:

Then it's no little wonder that now he is woe,

To be cursed with such wrong, since he seems to work well.

But he'll sit by myself, since you have said so

Come near, king, to court - Say - can you not kneel?

We shall have some good sport and some games ere you go.

How's this suit you, lord - Not a word! What's the deal?

I fault in my reverence, inutile moi;

I am in features, fairer by far.

Show me your judgement. Uta! Oy, oy!

As far as I see, things getting worse are.

Servicia primet

Such wretches and scoundrels as you,

Respicias timet

What the devil and his dame should I do?

Carp on, you churl; I can be your cure.

Say, can you hear me? Oy man, are you mad?

Now tell me in faith, how fared you before?

Forth friend - by my faith, you are a fond lad.

1 DUKE:

My lord, he's astonished; your shouting's so sore.

He would rather have just stood stone still where he stood.

KING:

If the boy is abashed of Herod's big bluster,

That's the best kind of sport, by Mahound's blood.

2 DUKE:

My lord, I trust it's your sword that may flay,

And delay him.

KING:

Now I loyally leave you,

Therefore I shall wave it away,

And softly now with a sceptre assay.

Now sir, be pert I pray,

For none of my grooms shall grieve you.

Si loqueris tibi laus

Paritur quoque prospera dantur

Si loqueris tibi fraus

Fell, fex et bella parantur.

My men, go attend him with main,

And look how that it would seem.

1 DUKE:

Dukus fayff sir and sover-rain,

2 DUKE:

Sir udins amangidre demain.

KING:

Go, answer them gravely again.

What the devil? Do we dote or dream?

1 SOLDIER:

No. We get not one word, I'd willingly bet,

He's erased of his wits; his words are all gone.

KING:

Now, since he comes as a knave, and as knave he is clad,

Why do you call him a King?

1 DUKE:

Nay lord, he's none,

But a rascal is he.

KING:

Well by the devil, I am hard pressed.

One might as well stir up a stick or a stone.

1 SON:

My lord, this faker's so foully afraid;

Never looked he on lords for so long all alone.

KING:

No son - this rascal sees us so richly arrayed,

He takes us for angels, each and every one.

2 DUKE:

My lord, he's aghast of all this gay gear.

KING:

Great lords ought to be gay;

No man shall do harm to you here.

Therefore, name it, now that you're near;

For by the great god, if you cause me to swear,

You'll have never known dolor before today.

Now quickly carp on, churl, of all of your kin.

1 DUKE:

No, it's useless; to you he will ever name none.

KING:

He'll pay for this ere he is done.

2 DUKE:

Oh, leave him, my lord.

KING:

Let me alone!

1 DUKE:

Now lord, if you're able, be troubled no more;

It's unfair to fight a fond fool.

But go to your council and find comfort there.

KING:

You speak truth. We shall see whether wisdom they rule,

For our sorrows are certainly sad.

2 SON:

What sort of devil ails him?

My lord, I can make you be glad.

Opportunely, our master is mad;

He lurks - lo, he looks like a lad -

He is crazy, or else his wits fail him.

3 SON:

My lord, you've attempted as much as you may;

You could know him no further, if he were Mahound;

Since this seems to be so, let us now assay.

KING:

Look well, my good sirs; to our bidding, you're bound.

1 DUKE:

My lord, how should he doubt us? He dreads nothing you say.

KING:

Now go forth, may the devil him drown!

Since he has framed falsehoods and raises foul fray,

Roar loud on him rudely; let no whispers be found!

1 SON:

My lord, since you say, I'll enforce myself so.

Fellow: no feigning, and fear not therefore;

But now tell us some trifles between us two,

And none of these men will be meddling more,

And therefore, some reason display.

For your credit, do say something now!

Can you hear anything that I say?

You mumbling nothing! I may

Help you, and preserve you from troubles somehow!

2 SON:

Lightly look up, lad, and bow to my lord here.

From bale to bliss, he can easily you borrow.

Speak boldly, come now to conclude here.

Say something, you saintling, for sorrow!

Why stand you as still as a stone here?

Spare not, but speak in this place here.

You wretch - it may gain you some grace here.

3 SON:

My lord, this fake's so afraid of your face here,

At this point, no answers he's naming for nobody here.

Good sir, for Belial's black blood and his bones,

Say something - or things will get worse here.

1 SON:

No. Not a word in this place he condones.

2 SON:

Let's all shout at him all at once.

ALL SONS:

Oyay! Oyay! Oyay!

KING:

Oh, you make a foul noise for the nonce.

3 SON:

Needless, my lord - we have got no more near.

1 SON:

My lord, all this muteness amends not a mite.

To mess with a madman's a marvel to me.

Command your knights to clothe him in white;

Let him go as he came to your country.

KING:

Lo sirs, we shall keep you no longer tonight.

My son has said how it should be.

1 DUKE:

Lord, fools who are feeble are fit for this fee.

KING:

What, in a white garment to go,

Thus gaily girt in a gown?

2 DUKE:

No lord, as a fool whose wits are slow.

KING:

How say you sirs, should it be so?

ALL SONS:

Yes lord.

KING:

Well, then there is no more.

But boldly now bid them be bound.

Sir knights, we'll endeavor to make you be glad;

Our counsel has warned us wisely and well.

White clothing is fitting for this foolish lad.

Fully, all of his folly, in faith, we feel.

1 DUKE:

With good will, for his white weeds we'll wend;

Well enough we're aware just what weeds he will wear.

2 DUKE:

Look, here's a garment right here to hand,

Fashioned for fools who go forth for to fare.

1 SOLDIER:

Well, this is a tunic of joy,

Just as should be good for the boy.

1 DUKE:

He shall be arrayed like a royal.

And thus shall be found in his folly.

2 DUKE:

Well, thank them boy - accursed you be!

1 SOLDIER:

No, we get not a word, I am swearing.

2 SOLDIER:

What, do you think he is wiser than we?

Let's leave off and let the king see

How he's been forced and is faring.

My lord, have a look if you're paid,

For now we have gotten his gear.

KING:

Why, is this ribald arrayed?

My blessings, good sirs, you bear.

Go, make a cry in my court and graciously write,

All the deeds we have done in this same degree.

Who finds himself grieved, let him soon tell it right,

If we find no default, he deserves to go free.

1 DUKE:

Oyay! If any man, of this wretch, can any worse state,

(Works will bear witness against those who work wrong)

Go bold to the bar now, his bales to abate,

For my lord, by my faith, will not delay long.

My lord, there appear to be none who'd impair his estate.

KING:

Well then, he ought to go free.

Sir knights, then make ready to goodly be going;

Repair with your present; to Pilate you'll say,

That we grant our full friendship for him to be knowing.

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, with your leave, we shall take our leave here.

We'd like now no longer in here to abide.

2 SOLDIER:

My lord, if any danger he should fear,

We'll come again with good cheer.

KING:

Nay, good sirs, you'll find us not here,

Our leave we shall take at this tide,

And readily array us for rest,

For these notes have annoyed us enough.

1 DUKE:

Yes, certainly lord, this I hold best;

This ungodly groundling has grieved you.

2 DUKE:

Look you bear word as you ought,

How well we've behaved us this while.

1 SOLDIER:

Well, a wise man would deem that we dote,

Unless we make an end of this note.

KING:

Go forth, the devil is in your throat!

We find in him no fault to file.

Why should we flay or condemn him?

We find nothing in rolls of record;

And since he is dumb, now to deem him -

Would this be good law for a lord?

No, wretches - unloyally, you've learned all too late -

Go teach your lords what lessons you learned here.

Repair with your present; to Pilate you'll say:

We grant this one our power all plain to appear,

And also our grievance: forgive we always;

And we grant him our grace with every good cheer,

Concerning this man, should he brawl or debate.

Bid him work as he will; he has nothing to fear;

Go tell him this message from me.

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, with your leave, let him be.

Too long we have led him already.

2 SOLDIER:

What, you sirs - lord, will you see?

KING:

What, fellows? Will you not then attend what I tell you?

You may deal with that yeoman, not me!

2 SOLDIER:

Lord, he shall fare in an unpleasant way.

KING:

Good sirs, patience is virtue, I deem.

Fare softly, for so it will seem.

1 SOLDIER:

Now, since we do as you deem,

Adieu sir.

KING:

Dance on, in the devil's way.

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# 32. The Cooks' and Waterleaders' Play: The Remorse of Judas

PILATE:

Peace burghers, I bid you, that bide here about me.

Look you stir with no strife, but stand there stone still;

Or, by the Lord who lent me life, I'll learn you to laud me.

All shall bide in my bale, who will work not my will.

Now stop with your speaking so stout;

Or with this sword, without a doubt,

To the death I shall drive you today.

Sir Pilate of Pontius, as prince I am proven;

As ruler most royal, in richest array.

No bairn in this burgh above me is moving,

But all seek me as sovereign, in certain I say,

To know.

Therefore, take heed to your lord's estate,

That none jangle or jostle my gate,

Till I've spoken and said my speech so.

For I'm the loveliest wrapped and laid,

With features full fair in my face.

My forehead is both shining and broad;

And my eyes glitter like gleams in the glass.

And this hat here, that holds to my head,

Is even alike to gold wire.

My cheeks are both ruddy and red;

My colour, like crystal so clear.

There's no prince who is royal in robes;

I'm most mighty of all to behold.

Nor no king, but who comes at my call,

No groom who dares grieve me for gold.

Sir Caiaphas, for counsel you clergy are known;

Your counsels are known as cunning and clear.

And Sir Annas, your answers all ought to be shown;

You are one, and able and ought to be near,

In parliament plain.

And now as prince peerless, on this point I'll inquire:

What do you Jews say of Jesus, that swain?

What title do you have unto him,

If you loyally look to your laws?

Say why so soon you have sent for to spill him?

ANNAS:

Sir, you are prince, and the lord of this lay.

Untrue is that traitor of whom you now tell us;

Now certain and soon, the truth I shall say:

It's that liar Jesus whom Judas did sell us.

He mars our men in all that he may;

Miracles many he's mustered among us,

That faker so false.

He does many dark deeds on our Sabbath day.

This un-cunning kook casts about him to quell us.

From man unto man he'll compel us,

And undo both you and ourselves.

Yourself, he'll undo,

If he holds forth in this space;

And all of Jewry too,

If you grant him that grace.

PILATE:

Of this answer, Sir Annas, I'll accept nothing;

I hold it mere malice, from the top to the tail.

Sir Bishop, therefore at my bidding,

Do tell me now truly, the text of this tale.

Determine it truly and tight,

And loyally lead it by law.

Be it falsehood or felony, I will deny it;

So just tell me the truth, for love or for awe.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir Pilate, the tales that this traitor does show,

Make us heavy in heart, even wholly to hear them.

Through his wiles, this warlock intends them to know;

With light lies he instructs them each time he is near them.

Full tight he will take them unto him.

Thus he goes forth with these gauds,

And his speech is out-spread: yes, it is better to spill him,

This faker so fell with false frauds.

PILATE:

Your answers are hideous and hateful to hear.

If I had not heard him and for myself seen,

You might have yet made me to trust you entire;

But I find no fault - he is clever and clean.

As clever and clean, I can clear him.

No fault can I find to refuse him;

I hope yet in haste that you'll hear him,

If he comes back again - then accuse him.

1 SOLDIER:

Because of his wonders, our faith has fierce grown.

This harlot makes heavy our hearts with hate's ire.

He says for himself that he is God's son,

And shall sit on the right hand beside his own sire!

2 SOLDIER:

These tales are true which we tell;

In rainbows this ribald truth reads.

He says he shall heave us to heaven or hell

To deem us one day all after our deeds.

PILATE:

To deem us?! In the devil's name, say where? Say where, by the devil!

What dastards, you think you are wiser that we?

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, by your leave, we intended no ill;

He has mustered these marvels to more than just me.

My sovereign lord, this would-be saint says,

He shall cast down our temple; not a brick shall remain;

And dress it up duly within three days,

As well as it was, full goodly again.

ANNAS:

Yes sir, and on our own Sabbath day,

He works all these workings as well.

PILATE:

Well, fie on that cheater for aye,

For these are dark deeds of the devil.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, of a note more obnoxious we've had recent news,

That grieves me more that anything:

He claims for him clearly, a Kingdom of Jews,

And calls himself, our comeliest king.

PILATE:

King? In the devil's name, fie on this dastard!

Will this mad magician overthrow us so quickly?

A beggar of Bethleham, born as a bastard?

By Lucifer now, if I latch on that lad I'll not loose him so lightly!

ANNAS:

Sir, the harlot is at Herod's hall, even here at your hand.

PILATE:

I sent him that warlock, the devil him harry.

CAIAPHAS:

It belongs to your lordship, by the law of this land,

As sovereign, yourself to sit this inquiry.

ANNAS:

Sir, more trifles, this traitor has told to us truly,

Which would trouble you quickly, if they should be told.

PILATE:

By the bones of Belial, that boy shall pay the penalty,

And bring on his back a great burden of gold.

1 SON:

My lord that is leader of laws in this land,

You sent him yourself to Herod the king,

And said: "The doom of this dog is wholly in your hands:

To doom or release him, as is your liking."

And thus you commanded your knights for to say,

For Sir Herod will search him full sore.

So that he will wend by no wiles away -

Therefore my good lord, you need move you no more.

CAIAPHAS:

Now certainly, this was well said.

But sir, will you cease now, and shall we see a sign?

PILATE:

Sir Caiaphas and Annas, right so now I think;

Sit, in Mahound's blessing - let's call for the wine.

You knights of my court - I command all to drink.

JUDAS:

Alas, for woe that I was wrought!

Or ever I came from kind or kin!

I curse the bones that forth me brought,

Accursed the womb that I bred in!

So I may bid,

For I so falsely did to him,

Who always to me great kindness did.

This purse, with his pennies, about I bore;

There was no one trusted as much as me.

I know he trusted no man more;

And I betrayed him treacherously,

With a false trick.

Innocent, I sold his blessed body,

To the Jews to be slain.

To slay my sovereign, assented I;

I told them the time of his taking.

Shamelessly, myself thus forewent I,

So soon to assent that he be slain.

Now I think I know how he might pass this pain;

I will look to obtain the best remedy.

Unto the Jews, I will go again,

To save him - perhaps he'll pass free;

This is my will.

Lord, may wealth and worship with you be.

PILATE:

What tidings, Judas, to us do you tell?

JUDAS:

My tidings are troubling, I tell you.

Sir Pilate, therefore I now pray:

My master, whom I came to sell you,

Good lord, let him go on his way.

CAIAPHAS:

Nay! Necessarily Judas, that we deny!

What mind or matter has moved you thus?

JUDAS:

Sir, I have sinned grievously,

Betraying that righteous blood of Jesus,

The master mine.

CAIAPHAS:

But good sir, what is that to us?

The peril and plight are all thine.

Yours is the wrong; you wrought it,

You contracted us truly to take him;

And the bargain is ours; we bought it.

Lo, we are all set to slay him.

JUDAS:

Alas, I shall rue this full ill,

If you assent this man to slay.

PILATE:

Why? What would you have us do with him still?

JUDAS:

Let him go, my good lord, I pray;

And here from me is your payment plain.

CAIAPHAS:

Nay, we'll not do so;

We bought him so he should be slain.

To slay him, yourself you assented.

You're aware of this wonderfully well;

What right do you have to repent it?

You're shaping some trouble for yourself.

ANNAS:

Give way Judas, it's all for naught.

These words, I warn you, are in waste.

To sell him, when you then us sought,

You were against him then the most,

Of anyone.

CAIAPHAS:

We'll be avenged on him in haste,

Regardless of whether you will, or none.

PILATE:

These words that you utter are needless.

You harlot unhanged, now hear what I say:

Spare us your speaking; it's heedless;

Or walk out that door in the devil's way.

JUDAS:

Why will you not let him pass?

And have again from me your pay?

PILATE:

I tell you traitor, I will it not!

JUDAS:

Alas, then I am lorn!

Both bone and blood!

Alas, the time while I may say,

That I gave consent to spill his blood!

To save his blood sirs, I say you:

Take you there your payment whole.

Spare now to spill him, I pray you,

Or else great bale you're brewing for my soul.

PILATE:

Nay! Now Judas, you shall hear again:

We will it not! What devil are thou?

When you came first, you were full fain

For this money. What ails you now,

To repent?

JUDAS:

Again sirs, here I give it to you.

Now save him that he be not shent

PILATE:

To destroy him, you, yourself have shamed;

Forever you'll loathe this life that you lead,

As a false fool, yourself, you have famed;

May the devil drown you for your devilish deed.

JUDAS:

I know my trespass and my guilt.

I shudder in horror in my own eyes.

I have great woe that he be spilt.

If I could save him in any wise,

I were well then.

Save him sirs - to your service,

I will bind me to be your man.

Your bondsman lord, to ever be;

Forever now I will bind me.

Sir Pilate, you may trust in me,

Full faithful you shall find me.

PILATE:

Find you faithful? May foul you befall!

Before you come into our company,

By Mohammed's blood, you'd sell us all!

Your "faithful" service, we'll not need.

You are unknown.

False tyrant, for your treachery,

You're worthy to be hanged and drawn!

Hanged and drawn should you be, knave!

You have the right, by all good reason;

Your master's blood, you bid us save,

And you were the first to do him treason!

JUDAS:

I cry for mercy lord, on me rue:

This cursed one that wrong has wrought.

Have mercy on my master true,

Whom I have in your power brought.

I cry you sore.

PILATE:

Judas, go jesting and name this not,

Nor move this matter any more.

ANNAS:

No more on this matter may move you,

You meaningless mumbling shell.

Our point here expressly reproves you,

Of felony and falsehood so fell.

CAIAPHAS:

He grouches not to grant his guilt;

Why shun you not to show your shame?

We bought him so he should be spilt;

Together we agreed the same;

Yourself also.

You were not faint then to him defame,

You said he was a traitor false.

PILATE:

Yeah. And as a false traitor,

Yourself you did fully defile him.

Oh, that was the trick of a traitor,

So quickly to go to beguile him.

1 SOLDIER:

What, now you'd have us let him go,

You cursed creep, who wrought such wrong?

We will not lose our bargain so,

And lightly just let him be going.

Why should we?

If we let that scoundrel live for long,

It will be found in faith, folly.

2 SOLDIER:

This dolt so foolish shall not find us;

We all know full well how it was.

When first on treachery, his mind was,

He prayed, good lord, "let him not pass"!

PILATE:

Nay, certainly, he'll not pass free,

For whom our pennies have paid.

JUDAS:

Take it again, that which you paid me,

And save him from that bitter trade:

Then I were fain.

ANNAS:

It serves of naught, what you have said:

And therefore, take it tight again.

PILATE:

Tight again, traitor, you take it;

We will not feel it here in our fold.

Little saintling, you'll not thus soon forsake it;

For I'll search him myself, whom thus you have sold.

CAIAPHAS:

Forsake it? In faith, not this he shall;

For we will hold onto him that we have.

For that, this payment's your chain and ball.

No other covenant there now crave,

Nor mercy none.

JUDAS:

Since you assent him to slay,

Vengeance I cry on you each one!

To each I cry, "the devil undo you"!

And that I might both hear and see.

Hard vengeance I wish now unto you,

For the sorrow unsought you see in me.

CAIAPHAS:

Why, fie on you, traitor attainted this tide!

In treason you tricked him who trusted you true.

Be going on your way wretch, no longer abide.

If you remain, these responses full sorely you'll rue.

Say, do you not know who am I?

Now, in my notion, if I ever reach you,

In certainty lad, for the truth I would teach you,

To lords to speak courteously.

PILATE:

Go your way, gadling, and grieve us no more.

Leave off your talk; by the devil be hung.

JUDAS:

That which you gave me, now take it there.

There with your mastery, divide it among,

And claim it clean.

I loath all my life; I am living too long.

My treacherous trick now torments me with teen.

This for my treason I take unto me.

I ask there no mercy, for none I may get.

Therefore in haste now I go to undo me.

Alas for this harshness, as long as I meat get.

Thus scant, and yet worthy reward for my deed:

I'll work my wreak with heart and will;

To spill myself now I will speed;

Full poor my service I've fulfilled,

So well away.

That ever I wished in wit or will,

That trusty true one to betray.

Alas, who may I move to,

Since I may take no other reed?

Myself in haste I shall undo,

And take me now unto the deed.

CAIAPHAS:

Have done now, Sir Pilate - let's see what you say,

As touching this money that we here have.

Which Judas in wrath has thrown away,

And crabbedly cursed us, that cursed knave:

How say you thereby?

ANNAS:

Sir, since he's slung it, we should it save.

CAIAPHAS:

Quick, trust it to our treasury.

PILATE:

No sir, not so.

CAIAPHAS:

Why sir, how then?

PILATE:

This shall not encumber us, nor come in our cupboard then.

CAIAPHAS:

To further our treasury, it shall certainly not.

PILATE:

See to it yourself, for certain and skill;

It is the price of blood that we bought.

To some other point, I purpose it till,

And this I devise:

To buy a spot of earth, wait I will;

To bury any pilgrim who dies.

Pilgrims and palmers to put there.

Sir Caiaphas and Annas, assent you thereto?

And bodies of felons shall be buried there.

ANNAS:

As you deem lord, so we will do.

KNIGHT:

Hail, peerless Sir Pilate, the prince of this empire;

Hail, gayest on ground in gold where you glide;

Hail, loveliest lord of limb and of life;

And these seemly sovereigns who sit here beside.

PILATE:

What would you?

KNIGHT:

One word, and I'll wend.

PILATE:

You are welcome indeed.

Deliver now lightly, without any let;

We have no time all day to attend unto thee.

KNIGHT:

A place very near here, to mortgage I'd set.

PILATE:

What title have you? Is it your own and free?

KNIGHT:

Lord, free to my freedom so falls it;

This tale is full true that I tell you.

And Calvary hill all men call it,

I would take just a mortgage, I would not sell you.

PILATE:

What would you borrow, good sir, let me see?

KNIGHT:

If it likes you, your lordship, to lend it,

I would thirty pence that you lent unto me.

CAIAPHAS:

Why yes, my good man, that you shall have.

PILATE:

Show us your deeds, and have here your money.

KNIGHT:

Have them here, my good lord, but look you them save.

PILATE:

Certainly, we shall save them full soundly,

Or we've not duly done our endeavor.

Now fast, freak, for your faith, find yourself on your feet:

From this place, my good man, I forbid you forever!

KNIGHT:

Now sorrow for such succor I've sought;

All my treasure through treason is taken.

I've lost it untruly through treason.

Therefore now on my way I will wend,

For you do me no right for no reason,

I curse you all now to the fiend!

PILATE:

Certainly, we are now served in all;

This place is purchased properly.

The Field of Blood you shall it call:

Forthwith I bid each one I see.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, as you command, we'll call it so.

But my lord, with your leave, we may linger no longer,

But fast let's go forth to resume with our foe.

That ungodly scoundrel has brewed us great anger.

ANNAS:

Give way, Sir Bishop; be not abashed;

For lost is our liking, he leapt out so light.

CAIAPHAS:

Nay sir, he'll not travel so quickly and that you may trust;

For they win us no worship - the works of that wight,

But great anger.

Forthwith, let's address us his death to indict,

And allow us this knave for to live here no longer.

PILATE:

Sir Caiaphas, through counsel, we command our knights,

To watch on that warlock, which way that he wends:

Address you now duly to that wretch you indict,

And cease not to seek him wherever he lands,

And leave him not lightly.

2 SOLDIER:

In faith, we shall fetch him full far from his friends.

PILATE:

Now walk on in this waning and wend your way sprightly.

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# 33. The Tilemakers' Play: Christ Before Pilate 2: The Judgement

PILATE:

Lords who are limited to my allegiance,

Handsome men all, and shining on show;

I charge as your chief that you chat by no chance,

But look to your lord here, and learn from my law.

As a duke, I may damn you to draw.

Many bold boys are about me;

Any knight or knave I may know,

That foolishly thinks he will flout me,

I shall hear him,

In name of the devil, that dastard, to doubt me,

Yeah, he who works any works without me,

I shall charge him in chains to cheer him.

Therefore, you lusty folks in this place wrapped,

Do stop all your stalking and talking forestall.

Any traitor with tales on his tongue who is trapped,

To the fiend, for his flattery, foully will fall.

What overblown brats are brawling,

Or un-softly are singing for sales,

Those criminals carping and calling,

Ungently will land my my jails.

Therefore:

Talk not, and treat of no tale.

Any who groan, grimace, or wail,

I myself shall hurt them full sore.

ANNAS:

You will make the case worse for what men disobey you;

Any lad who likes not your lordship, you'll teach him,

As prince without peer, full promptly to pay you,

Or as doughtiest duke, with dents you will reach him.

CAIAPHAS:

Yeah, in faith, you've the force here to fear him;

Through your manhood and might he'll be marred.

No chivalrous chieftain may cheer him,

If that churl, with a charge, you have charred.

Wasted!

He'll be painfully flayed by your guard.

ANNAS:

Yeah! With bruises from beatings, ill-scarred,

From the time that your troubles he's tasted.

PILATE:

Now it seems to me certain, that who's seriously sought you,

Will find your praise profitable, you prelates of peace.

Thanks for your good words; to harm shall come not you,

If you always tell truth, and for no traitor cease.

CAIAPHAS:

If not, it were pity to appear here on high.

But look now, my lord - your knights have come in.

ANNAS:

Yes lord, by your leave, it's no lie;

I can tell they bring news, by the sound of their din:

Full sad.

PILATE:

See - they're bringing that brat in a band.

We shall hastily hear it at hand,

What mishap before Herod he's had.

1 SOLDIER:

Hail, loveliest lord that ever law led yet;

Hail, seemliest under silk, on every side;

Hail, stateliest on steed in strength in this stead yet;

Hail, liberal, hail, lusty, to all lords allied.

PILATE:

Welcome. What tidings this tide?

Let no language now lightly defeat you.

2 SOLDIER:

Sir Herod, sir, there's naught to hide:

As his good friend, he graciously greets you,

Forever.

In what manner so ever, he meets you,

Full soon, by himself, he will seat you,

And says that you shall not dissever.

PILATE:

I thank him sincerely, and send him the same.

But what marvelous matters this minion befell?

1 SOLDIER:

For all the lord's language, his lips, sir, were lame.

Despite all our questions, no speech would he spell,

But dumb as a door did he dwell;

Therefore no fault he could find,

For his deeds, to deem him to quell,

Nor in bondage severely to bind;

And thus,

He's sent Jesus back to yourself, and assigned,

That we as your knights should be cleanly inclined,

And tightly return him to you for to truss.

PILATE:

Sirs, hark: do you hear what we now have on hand?

See how these knights carp for all the king cared?

Sir Herod, they say, finds no fault in my land;

He offers his friendship, so friendly he fared.

Moreover sirs, he spoke - and not spared -

Full gently to Jesus this Jew.

And then, to these knights, he declared,

That faults in him, he found but few,

To die.

He's been tested - I tell you it's true,

And this death he has deemed quite undue.

And so sirs, sincerely say I.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir Pilate, our prince, we prelates now pray you:

Since Herod no further this liar would flay,

Receive in your hall this advice I shall say you:

Let us bring him to bar: at his beard we shall bray.

ANNAS:

Yeah - for if now he should wend by his wiles away,

I'll wager he'll work us some wonder.

Our many he'll mar, if he may;

With his sayings he sets them asunder,

With sin.

From his bluster comes many a blunder;

While you have him in hand, hold him under.

We'll all curse today, if his freedom he win.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, there's no time to tarry, this traitor to taste.

He's set against Caesar himself, and he says

That all men in this world, they work in waste,

Who take him his tribute - he's taught this outrage!

And further, he feigns such arrays,

And says that himself, he's God's son!

And our law alleges and lays:

Any wretch in which falsehood is found,

Must die.

PILATE:

Without guilt, execution we'll shun.

ANNAS:

Sir, witness of these ways may be won,

That will tell of these things without guile.

CAIAPHAS:

I can rouse up a rabble, I reckon, full right;

I'll press thirty men from this place, ere I pass,

Who will witness, I warrant, the words of this wight:

What wickedness ever this wretch wrought has.

Simon, Yarus and Judas,

Dathan and Gamaliel,

Naphtahlim, Levi, and Lucas,

And Amos, these matters can meddle well.

They're picked.

Truly these tales they can tell,

Of this liar that false is and fell,

And expound on his laws, which are wicked.

PILATE:

Yeah, tush for your tales, they touch not the intent.

I warrant these witnesses walk in your wage.

For hatred, against him their hearts they have bent,

And propose by due process to put down this page.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, in faith, it's not in us to craftily cage;

These men are trustworthy and true; that we tell you.

PILATE:

Your swearing, sirs, swiftly assuage.

No more on this matter will dwell you.

I charge.

ANNAS:

Sir, despise not this speech that we spell you.

PILATE:

If you feign like frauds, I shall fell you,

For I like not your language so large.

CAIAPHAS:

Our language is too large; your lordship relieve us.

Yet, both of us beg you to bring him to bar.

The points we put forth, in your presence, receive us;

You'll hear how disordered this harlot's acts are.

PILATE:

Yeah, but mind that witty and wise your words are.

ANNAS:

Yes sir, dread you not; for nothing we doubt him.

PILATE:

Fetch him now forth; he's not very far.

Go beadle, hasten about him.

BEADLE:

I'm willing,

My lord, now to lead him, or lout him,

Unclothe him, clap him, or clout him;

What you bid me, I'm always fulfilling.

Knights, you're commanded this caitiff to care for;

Now bring him to bar, as my lord bidden had.

1 SOLDIER:

Is this your message?

BEADLE:

Yes sir.

1 SOLDIER:

Then move you no more.

For lightly we'll leap now, and lead forth this lad.

2 SOLDIER:

Step forth now; your case has gone bad.

I warrant something evil's happed

1 SOLDIER:

Oh man, your mind is full mad;

Too bad in our clutches you're clouted and clapped.

2 SOLDIER:

You'll be lashed, and lushed, and lapped.

1 SOLDIER:

Yeah, routed, and rushed, and rapped,

And your name with "oyays" shall be noised.

2 SOLDIER:

Behold here, my sovereign, the man for whom you sent.

PILATE:

Well, stir not from that stead, but stand still there.

If he's shaped any shrewdness, with shame he'll be shent.

I'll endeavor with faith to find out this affair.

CAIAPHAS:

Aye! Ow! I cannot stand, so I stare!

ANNAS:

Yah! A curse on this treacherous fiend!

PILATE:

Gentlemen, what grief makes you roar?

Are you mad, or witless, I mean?

What ails you?

CAIAPHAS:

Ow, such a sight we've seen!

ANNAS:

Yay, alas, we're conquered clean!

PILATE:

Why, are you fond? Or your force fails you?

CAIAPHAS:

Ah, sir, did you not see this sight, how that the shafts shook,

And those banners, to this wretch, they bowed down on each side?

ANNAS:

Yeah, right - those cursed knights, by craft let them crook,

To worship this unworthy warlock they tried.

PILATE:

Was it duly done thus indeed?

CAIAPHAS:

Yes, yes sir, ourselves we just saw.

PILATE:

Why, spit on them, ill may they speed!

Say dastards, may the devil you draw,

How dare you?

On all sides, these banners should blow;

Yet, you let them laud this layman low?

Oh, liars, with falsehood, how fare you?

3 SOLDIER:

We beseech you and the seigneurs beside you who sit;

Be not at our governance grievous and shrill.

It lay not in our lot, these lances to let,

And this work we have wrought - it was not of our will.

PILATE:

You're lying - you hear me? - full ill!

You would know, if you'd just seen them fold!

4 SOLDIER:

Sir, our strength could not stable them still.

They hailed him despite our firm hold,

We unwitting.

5 SOLDIER:

Despite all our force, in faith, they did fold,

With worship to this warlock bold;

Though it seemed to us, truly, unfitting.

CAIAPHAS:

You unfriendly fakers, full false is your fable!

To seat him, with subtleties, you have been seized.

4 SOLDIER:

You may say what it seems, but those standards won't stable;

Anyone who tries force will be hardly appeased.

ANNAS:

By the nose of the devil, you're accursed and diseased!

You hen-heart, ill-hap to you ever be sent!

PILATE:

For one whack, you have whined and you've wheezed;

Yet, not one lash to this wretch has been lent.

Foul fall you!

3 SOLDIER:

Sir, with no wiles we went.

PILATE:

With shame you should surely be bent,

For faint-hearted cowards I call you!

4 SOLDIER:

My lord, since you will not our language believe,

Bring in all the biggest who bide in this land.

Properly, in your presence, their power to perceive,

And watch what they do, when they have them in hand.

PILATE:

You are the most frightened I've ever found.

Fie on your faint hearts in fear!

Stir now, no longer there stand.

Go beadle, this message make clear,

Through the town:

The boldest men to face fear,

And the strongest, these standards to steer;

Bid these blithely here to be bound.

BEADLE:

My sovereign, full soon, with your saying I'll go.

I shall bring to these banners, right big men and strong.

There's a big band of bruisers in this place I know,

That are great and gruff; to those goons I'll be going.

Say all you laddies, both lusty and long,

You must pass to Sir Pilate apace.

1 SOLDIER:

To work not his will would be wrong.

We are ready; we'll run in a race,

For fame.

BEADLE:

Then tarry you not, but turn in a trace,

And follow me fast to his face.

2 SOLDIER:

Lead us there; we like this game.

BEADLE:

Lord, here are the biggest bairns that bide in this burg.

Most stately and strong, if their strength should be strained.

Believe me, I lie not, I've looked the land through, sir,

These are the most-endowed men who remained.

PILATE:

You are certain? Your wits have not waned?

BEADLE:

Sir, I am certain. I say what I know.

PILATE:

In your tale, be not tainted or stained.

BEADLE:

Why, no sir. Why should I be so?

PILATE:

Well then,

Let us try, before fear makes them go,

To what game we have summoned them so.

Sir Caiaphas, tell them, you can.

CAIAPHAS:

You lusty lads, now take good care.

Take hold of these shafts that so brightly here shine.

If yon banners should bow by the breadth of a hair,

You'll be punctually put to perpetual pain.

1 SOLDIER:

I shall hold this as even as a line.

ANNAS:

Any who rattle - he rends!

2 SOLDIER:

I certainly say, as for mine,

When it settles, or sadly descends,

Where I stand;

When it wobbles or wrongly it wends,

If it bursts, or splinters, or bends;

Forthwith, you may hack off my hand.

PILATE:

Sirs, watch now these ones, that no wiles be wrought.

They are burly and broad; their boasts they have blown.

ANNAS:

To mention that now sir, in need we are not;

He who cursedly quits himself, soon will be known.

CAIAPHAS:

Yeah, that wretch to the death will be drawn,

If he faults, he will foully fall.

PILATE:

Now knights, since the cock has been crowing,

Let us hasten him hence to this hall,

His ways.

Step solidly up on this stall;

Make a cry, and keenly now call,

Exactly as Annas there says.

ANNAS:

Oyay! Jesus, you Jew of gentle Jacob's kin:

The lowest man in Nazareth, now summoned is your name.

Each creature you accuses. We command you to come in,

And answer to your enemies; defend now your fame.

[And the beadle shall recite after Annas: "Let jesus be judged"]

CAIAPHAS:

Away, out! We are shaken with shame!

Everything has gone wrong now I mean!

ANNAS:

For all their boast, yon boys are to blame!

PILATE:

Such a sight was never yet seen;

Come sit.

My comfort was caught from me clean;

I stood up, I could not me abstain,

From worshipping in work and wit!

CAIAPHAS:

Greatly we marveled, what move you in mind,

So rudely in reverence of this one to rise.

PILATE:

I was past all my power, though I pained me and pined;

I did not as I would, in no manner or wise.

But sirs, hear my speech, I advise:

Quickly on his way let him wend.

This is the doom I devise.

For in faith, I'm afraid to offend,

In sights.

ANNAS:

Then our law has been brought to an end,

If to his tales you truly attend.

He enchanted and charmed our knights.

CAIAPHAS:

By his sorcery, sir - yourself the truth saw -

He's charmed our chevaliers with mischief enchanted.

To royally reverence him, we rose on row;

Surely, we can't by this dastard be daunted?

PILATE:

Why? Tell me what harms this man here has haunted?

I perceive to convict him, no cause.

ANNAS:

To all men, as God's son, himself he has granted,

And he likes not to live by our laws.

PILATE:

Say man,

Can you conceive how serious a clause

This cleric accusing you now draws?

Speak, and excuse yourself if you can.

JESUS:

A mouth has each man who is made on mould,

In wealth and in woe to wield at his will.

If he governs it well, as God has showed,

For spiritual speech, he need never spill.

And whatever man should govern it ill,

Great misfortune he shall shape;

From every tale that you me tell,

You shall account, there's no escape.

PILATE:

Sirs mine,

You are truly mad in your mind.

In the defendant no fault I can find,

And no reason to put him to pine.

CAIAPHAS:

We've not come without a good cause to accuse him;

This you ought to know of, it's what we've come for.

PILATE:

Now I see clearly, you'd rather refuse him,

Until he's been doomed and is sentenced to die.

So take him yourself, therefore;

And do as your laws allow here.

Set his death by your store.

ANNAS:

Oh, Sir Pilate, without any peer,

Do way.

You know it yourself, without any fear,

It falls not to us, nor our fellows in here,

To slay any man - this you yourself say.

PILATE:

Why should I deem him to death, undeserving in deed?

Wholly, I've heard why in hearts, you him hate.

He's faultless, in faith, so God may me speed;

I grant my good will, he may go through that gate.

CAIAPHAS:

No sir, you know well he did state,

He is king, he has claimed, with a crown.

Any man who steps stout to that state,

You sir, ought to deem be dinged down,

And dead.

PILATE:

Sir, truly, that touches on treason.

Before I leave, he'll regret saying that reason,

Before I stalk, or stir from this stead.

Sir knights that are comely, take this criminal in keeping:

Stripe him with scourges, and scathe him with scorn.

Twist him and wring him, 'till for woe he is weeping

Then bring him before us, as he was before.

1 SOLDIER:

He may curse the day that he was born;

Soon he shall be served as you've said us.

ANNAS:

And rip off those weeds that are worn.

2 SOLDIER:

Already sir, we have arrayed us;

Have done.

Let us hasten to see this wretch flayedm, just

As Pilate has properly prayed us.

3 SOLDIER:

We shall seriously set to him, son.

4 SOLDIER:

Let's gather his gear, God give him ill grace.

1 SOLDIER:

They are quickly snatched off - you take care of his trashes.

3 SOLDIER:

Now knot him with this cord.

2 SOLDIER:

I'm keen on this case.

4 SOLDIER:

He's bound fast - now beat him with bitter brashes.

1 SOLDIER:

Go on, leap, harry harder, you lordlings, with lashes.

We'll endeavor, this faker to flay him.

2 SOLDIER:

Let's drive him to distraction with bashes.

All in red, with our blows, we'll array him,

And rend him.

3 SOLDIER:

For my part, I am pressed to repay him.

4 SOLDIER:

Yeah, send him sorrow, assay him.

1 SOLDIER:

Hold him there, give me time to attend him.

2 SOLDIER:

Swing on his neck, so that swiftly he'll sweat.

3 SOLDIER:

Sweat may this swain, for the weight of our snaps.

4 SOLDIER:

Rush on this ribald, attack fiercer yet.

1 SOLDIER:

Attack him, I tell you, with routs and with raps.

2 SOLDIER:

For all our annoyance, this lazy one naps.

3 SOLDIER:

We have to awake him, with wind of our whips.

4 SOLDIER:

Now fling on this flatterer with flaps.

1 SOLDIER:

I shall heartily hit on his hip,

And haunch.

2 SOLDIER:

Unscathed from this scrape, he'll not skip.

3 SOLDIER:

Yet still he won't lift up a lip,

To pray us to pity his paunch.

4 SOLDIER:

To pity his paunch, he proffers no prayer.

1 SOLDIER:

Lord, how do you like this game, now that our lore must hear you?

2 SOLDIER:

Lo, I pull at his pockets, now I'm a proud player.

3 SOLDIER:

Thus, your cloak we shall clout, to cleanse you, and clear you.

4 SOLDIER:

And strong in this strife I shall steer you.

1 SOLDIER:

Thus, with chops, this churl we'll chastise.

2 SOLDIER:

I trust that this trace it will tire you.

3 SOLDIER:

All your untrue teachings, thus, taste I.

You red herring!

4 SOLDIER:

I hope I be hardy and hasty.

1 SOLDIER:

I know better - no weapons will waste I.

2 SOLDIER:

He swoons, or he swelters, I'm swearing.

3 SOLDIER:

Let's loosen him lightly, now lay on your hands.

4 SOLDIER:

If he dies for this deed, now undone are we all.

1 SOLDIER:

Now the wretch is unbound and unbraced are his bands.

2 SOLDIER:

Fool! How fare you now? May foul you befall!

3 SOLDIER:

Now, since he once as our king, himself called,

We shall crown him kindly with a briar, there.

4 SOLDIER:

Aha! But first, this purple and pall,

As his worthy weeds, he shall wear.

For scorn!

1 SOLDIER:

I am proud at this point to appear.

2 SOLDIER:

Let us clothe him in this clothing clear,

As a lord, who his lordship has lorn.

3 SOLDIER:

It was long since you met with such men as you met this morn.

4 SOLDIER:

Do set him on seat, now my courtesy fails!

1 SOLDIER:

Now ring round, with respect we'll present this thick thorn.

2 SOLDIER:

Look, it holds to his head so his brain out hales.

3 SOLDIER:

Thus we'll teach him to temper his tales.

His brain begins to bleed.

4 SOLDIER:

Yeah, his blunder has brought him to these bales.

Now reach out, and give to him this reed,

So round.

For his scepter it serves indeed.

1 SOLDIER:

Yeah, this is good enough in this need;

Let's graciously greet him on this ground.

Ave, royal roy, and rex judeorum;

Hail, comely king that no kingdom has kenned;

Hail, un-doughty duke, your deeds are doom;

Hail, man un-mighty your many to mend;

3 SOLDIER:

Hail, lord without land in which to lend;

Hail king, hail knave, incompetent man;

4 SOLDIER:

Hail, freak without force to defend;

Hail stranger, that can't even stand,

To strive.

1 SOLDIER:

Come on, harlot, heave up your hand,

And we, who your worship are working with wand,

Thank us, may ill you thrive.

2 SOLDIER:

Let's lead him in lightly, and linger no longer;

To Sir Pilate our prince, our pride we will praise.

3 SOLDIER:

Yeah, he'll sing before sleep, of his sorrow and anger,

For dishonest deeds he has done in his days.

4 SOLDIER:

Now quickly, lets wend on our ways;

We must carry, there's no time to tarry.

1 SOLDIER:

My lord, will you listen to our lays?

Here now the boy that you bade us go bury

With bats, is.

2 SOLDIER:

We're encumbered, his corpus to carry;

Many watchers were wondering and wary.

See - his flesh all be-flapped where the fat is.

PILATE:

Well, bring him before us - he's bruising all blue.

I suppose now, his sayings he'll cease evermore.

Sirs, behold now on high, and ecce homoo:

He is bound and beaten and brought you before;

Which, seems to me, still suits him full sore,

For, in guilt on this ground, he is grieved.

If you like, now please listen, I've lore:

Pay heed to the plan I've perceived;

It may move you to mercy the more,

And grace.

To doom him to death I deplore;

According to custom therefore,

I would see him set free from this place.

CAIAPHAS:

Barrabas the robber, in prison lies low.

By custom we ask you, release him today.

PILATE:

Barrabas the robber? You would have it so?

You want that foul rebel still raging to slay?

Shouldn't I rather release

This Jesus?

ALL:

Barrabas, we say!

Barrabas! Barrabas!

PILATE:

Now cease!

Nothing's heard when you're howling so loud.

ALL:

Not this man! Barrabas!

PILATE:

Peace, peace!

You clamor and cry in a crowd.

If this is your will, so it be.

For Jesus now, what is your mind?

His evil deeds done, show to me,

For in him, no fault can I find.

He has only done good for mankind.

CAIAPHAS:

Away with him now! Let him die!

PILATE:

Shall I scourge him again, and unbind?

ALL:

No! Crucify, crucify!

If you loose him, you're not Caesar's friend!

PILATE:

On you is his blood then, say I.

CAIAPHAS:

His blood is on us. Make an end.

ALL:

Crucify!

PILATE:

Then properly by process I will prove,

I've no force, from these fellows, this man to defend.

BEADLE:

Here is all, sir, for which you send.

Will you wash while the water is hot?

[Then he washes his hands]

PILATE:

Now the bonds of Barrabas, unbend;

With grace, he is freed from this date;

As you will.

BARRABAS:

You men I see, of high estate:

May God increase your comely state,

For grace you grant me of your will.

PILATE:

Hear the judgement of Jesus, all Jews in this stead:

Crucify him on a cross, and on Calvary, him kill.

I damn him today to die this same death.

Therefore hang him on high, upon that great hill,

And on each side of him, I will

That a thief you will hang on each post;

To my mind, this is reason and skill:

That the midst, since his malice is most,

You'll allot him.

Give him torment; some pain he should taste.

My words, I will no longer waste;

But rest not, till to death you have brought him.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir, we see in our sight that this sadly you've said.

Now, you knowledgeable knights, this man's in your care;

The life of this loser, in your liking, is laid.

1 SOLDIER:

Let us alone, my lord; learn us no lore.

Sirs, set to him seriously and sore:

See that his corpse all in cords is cast.

2 SOLDIER:

Let's bind him in bands therefore.

3 SOLDIER:

Here's one; full long will this last.

4 SOLDIER:

Lend a hand here.

5 SOLDIER:

I pull till my power is past.

Now he is fettered full fast.

Let's steer now, we may not long stand here.

ANNAS:

Draw him fast hence, deliver, have done!

Go - see him to death without longer delay.

For he must be dead, necessarily, by noon,

So tomorrow mirth moves us, as much as it may.

It is truly our great Sabbath day.

No dead bodies, unburied should be.

6 SOLDIER:

We can well see the truth that you say.

We'll force him full fast to his tree,

Thus talking.

4 SOLDIER:

Farewell, now quickly wend we.

PILATE:

Now certainly, you are a manly company,

Who forth in this wild evil waning are walking.

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# 34. The Shearmen's Play: The Road to Calvary

1 SOLDIER:

Peace, lads and gentlemen who in this place stand!

Stir not once in this place, but stand stone-still,

Or, by the lord that I believe in, I shall make your neck bend.

Unless you are silent when I speak, your speech I shall spill

Smartly, and soon.

For I am sent from Sir Pilate, with pride

To lead this lad our laws to abide.

He gets no better boon.

Therefore, I command you all, on every side,

On pain of imprisonment, that no man appear

To succor this traitor, by time nor by tide,

[Nor any come forward to amend his cheer]:

Not one of this press!

Nor not once be so hardy for to enquire,

But help me wholly, all who are here,

This captive's care to increase.

Therefore, make room, and rule yourselves right,

That we may with this new-condemned wight

Easily go on our way.

He napped not all last night,

And today his death is in sight.

Let us see who shall dare say nay!

Because tomorrow shall prove

To be our dear Sabbath day,

We wish that no evil be moved,

But mirth, in every way.

We have been busy, all this morn,

To clothe him and also to crown him with thorn,

As befits a carnival king.

But now, I believe, our fellows show scorn;

They said that they would be here this morn

This faker forth to bring.

To nap now is no good-

Hey! How! High may he hang!

2 SOLDIER:

Peace, man, for Mahound's own blood,

Why make you such a crying?

1 SOLDIER:

What? Don't you know as well as I,

This fellow is going to Calvary,

And there to be done on a cross?

2 SOLDIER:

Since judgement is given that he must die,

Let us call to us more company,

Or we'll be too few, to our loss.

1 SOLDIER:

Our gear must all be well-arrayed,

And our fellows assembled soon;

For Sir Pilate had said

He must be dead by noon.

Where is Sir Wymond, do you know ought?

2 SOLDIER:

He went to see that a cross should be wrought

To carry this cursed knave.

1 SOLDIER:

I wish it would be quickly here brought,

For afterwards, other gear must be sought

That we shall need to have.

2 SOLDIER:

We'll need to have ladders and ropes

To yank him until he rave,

And nails, and other japes,

If we ourselves will save.

1 SOLDIER:

To wait too long I an but loth;

Unless Wymond comes, I take an oath

We'll all be blamed, all three.

Hey! How! Sir Wymond Full-of-Sloth!

2 SOLDIER:

Hey! How! Sir Wymond, how!

3 SOLDIER:

I'm here! What say you both?

Why do you shout for me?

I have been to see them make

This cross, as you may see,

From that place over the lake-

They call it the King's Tree.

1 SOLDIER:

Now, certainly, I thought the same,

That piece of wood, none will us blame

To cut it for the "king."

2 SOLDIER:

This fellow's called himself "king" at home,

And since this tree has such a name

It is a fitting thing

That his back on it may rest,

For scorn and for mocking.

3 SOLDIER:

I thought that it seemed best

For our business, this to bring.

1 SOLDIER:

It is well-knotted, I say to you.

In length and breadth if it be true,

Then this time was well-planned.

3 SOLDIER:

To worry on that there is no need;

I took the measure myself, indeed,

For the foot and the hand.

2 SOLDIER:

And look how it is bored:

Evenly, at every end.

This work will well accord;

There's no need to amend.

3 SOLDIER:

Nay, I have arranged even more;

Yea, these thieves are sent before

That beside him shall hang.

And ladders also are ordered there,

With good stout rungs, as a craftsman's care

Demands-some short, some long.

1 SOLDIER:

For hammers and nails

Let's see who'll go along.

2 SOLDIER:

Here are spikes that shall not fail;

Of iron and steel strong.

3 SOLDIER:

Then all is as it needs to be.

But which of you shall carry this tree,

Since I have brought it hither?

1 SOLDIER:

By my faith, bear it shall he

That thereupon soon hanged shall be,

And we shall teach him whither.

2 SOLDIER:

Upon his back it shall be laid,

For soon must we come thither.

3 SOLDIER:

Look that our gear be well-arrayed,

And let us all go together.

JOHN:

Alas, for my master who most is of might!

Whom yesterday evening, with lanterns alight,

Before the bishop was brought.

Both Peter and I, we saw that sight,

And then we went on our ways, took flight,

When the Jews their horrors wrought.

In the morning the trial sped;

Falsehoods and lies they sought,

And doomed him to be dead,

That them offended not.

Alas, for sorrow, what shall I say?

My worldly wealth is gone away,

In woe forever shall I wend.

My master, who broke the law in no way,

Is doomed to be dead today,

Even in his enemy's hands.

Alas, that my master mild,

Who all men's misdeeds may amend,

Should so falsely be defiled,

With no friends him to defend.

Alas for his mother, and others more;

My mother, and her sisters also,

Sit together with sighings sore.

They know nothing of all this woe;

Therefore to warn them will I go,

Since I can do no more.

Since he so soon shall die,

And they unknowing were,

Then worthy of blame were I.

I will go fast, therefore.

But in my heart great dread have I

That his mother for sorrow shall die,

When once that sight she spies..

But still, I must not fail, surely,

To warn that careworn company

Before indeed he dies.

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God save you, every sister here!

Dear lady, if your will it were,

I must tell news of pain.

MARY:

Welcome, John, my cousin dear!

How fares my son since you were here?

That would I know, and plain.

JOHN:

Ah, dear lady, by your leave,

From truth I'll not refrain;

Against God's will no man should grieve.

MARY:

Why John-is my son slain?

JOHN:

No, my lady, I said not so.

But remember that he told us two,

And them that with us were,

How he with pain one day must go,

And afterwards shall come us to

To amend our sighing sore.

There is no use instead

To worry yourself therefore-

MARY MAGD:

Alas this day! For dread,

Good John, name this no more!

Speak to me privately, I you pray,

For I fear that if we too much say

She will but run and rave.

JOHN:

The truth I must indeed now say:

He is doomed to die today;

No sorrow can him save.

MARY JACOBI:

Good John, tell unto us two

What you from her will crave,

And we will gladly go

And ensure that it you have.

JOHN:

Sisters, your mourning may not amend.

But if you wish, before his end,

To speak with my master free,

Then you must arise and with me wend

And greet him when his path does bend

Outside this same city.

If you wish to come that near,

Come fast and follow me!

MARY:

Ah, help me, sisters dear,

That I my son may see.

MARY MAGD:

Lady, lean upon me thus,

And we shall go, our leave to take.

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Since your son must go from us,

I shall never you forsake.

Alas, the time and tide;

I know well the day is come

That once was specified

By the prophet Simeon in prophecy:

The sword of sorrow now should run

Throughout your heart, utterly.

MARY JACOBI:

Alas, this is a sorrowful sight:

He that ever was lovely and light

And lord of high and low,

Oh, doleful now is this his plight.

In the world is not so woeful a sight,

So sorrowful to know.

They that he loved the most

In word and also deed

Now have they this great haste

To death him thus to lead.

JESUS:

Daughters of Jerusalem city,

See, and mourn no more for me.

But think about this thing:

For yourselves now mourn must ye,

And for the sons that born shall be

To you, both old and young.

For such a fate must fall,

That you shall give blessing

To barren bodies all,

That no babes forth can bring.

For surely, you shall see such a day

That with sore sighing shall you say

Unto the hills' great height,

"Fall on us, mountains, if you may!

And cover us from that fierce affray

That on us soon shall alight!"

Turn home, the town untill,

Since you have seen this sight.

It is my father's will;

All that is done is right.

MARY SALOME:

Alas, this is a curséd case.

He that all healing in his hand has

Shall, blameless, here be slain.

Ah, Lord, please let me clean your face-

Behold how he has shown his grace;

He shows his might and main!

This sign shall bear witness

Unto all the people plain,

How God's son, here guiltless,

Is put to peerless pain.

1 SOLDIER:

Hey, why do you stand hereabout?

These birds with their whimpering and their shout

Refuse to keep it down!

2 SOLDIER:

Go home, you bitch, and take your clout,

Or by this lord you love, this lout,

You'll pay for it full dear.

MARY SALOME:

This sign shall vengeance call

On you, all that are here!

3 SOLDIER:

Go, get you home withal,

Or you'll pay for it here.

JOHN:

Lady, your weeping grieves me sore.

MARY:

John, help me now and evermore.

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# 35. The Pinners' Play: The Crucifixion

1 SOLDIER:

Sir knights! Take heed, quickly draw nigh!

We must not delay this deed to do.

You know yourselves, as well as I,

How lords and leaders of our law

Have judged, as one, this fool should die.

2 SOLDIER:

Sir, their judgement well we know.

Since we have come to Calvary

Let each man help as he should now.

3 SOLDIER:

We all are ready, lo,

This duty to fulfil.

4 SOLDIER:

Let's hear what we must do,

And then go straight theretill.

1 SOLDIER:

It may not help to take too long

If we shall any honour win.

2 SOLDIER:

He must be dead, they said, by noon.

3 SOLDIER:

Well, then, it's time that we begin.

4 SOLDIER:

Let's ding him down, and then have done,

So he won't vex us with his din.

1 SOLDIER:

He'll hang and learn his lesson soon,

With grief for him and all his kin.

2 SOLDIER:

The foulest death of all

He'll die because of sin.

3 SOLDIER:

That means, "cross" him we shall?

4 SOLDIER:

We will; so let's begin.

1 SOLDIER:

Then to this work we must take heed,

So that our working be not wrong.

2 SOLDIER:

To tell us this there is no need;

But let us haste to make him hang.

3 SOLDIER:

And I have gone for gear, with speed:

Both nails and hammers, large and strong.

4 SOLDIER:

Then we may boldly do this deed.

Let's kill this traitor, then; come on!

1 SOLDIER:

Good luck to young and old

Who've done in this man's wise!

2 SOLDIER:

We need not to be told

Such liars to chastise.

3 SOLDIER: Since everything is well arrayed,

The wiselier now work may we.

4 SOLDIER:

The cross on ground is stoutly made,

And bored just as it ought to be.

1 SOLDIER:

Look the lad on length be laid,

And fastened then upon this tree.

2 SOLDIER:

For all his feats, he shall be flayed;

The proof of that you soon shall see.

3 SOLDIER:

Come forth, thou cursëd knave;

Thy comfort soon shall cool.

4 SOLDIER:

Thy wages thou shalt have.

1 SOLDIER:

Go on! Now work we well!

JESUS:

Almighty God, my Father free,

Let these things be called to mind:

Thou bade I should obedient be,

For Adam's plight for to be pained.

Here, I take death willingly,

So that from sin I save mankind.

I thee beseech, especially,

That with my death, your grace they find.

From the devil them defend,

So that their souls be safe

In bliss without an end.

I have nought else to crave.

1 SOLDIER:

Well, hark, sir knights, for Mahound's blood;

Of Adam's kind is all his thought!

2 SOLDIER:

This warlock's wits are warped as wood;

This doleful death dismays him not!

3 SOLDIER:

Remember thou, with mind and mood,

The wicked works that thou hast wrought!

4 SOLDIER:

He might have done himself some good,

Not to say the things he thought.

1 SOLDIER:

Those sayings shall rue him sore,

For all his yammering, soon.

2 SOLDIER:

Bad luck to them that spare

Till he to death be done!

3 SOLDIER:

Have done at once, boy; on the ground!

Now bend thy back beneath this tree!

4 SOLDIER:

Behold! Himself has laid him down,

In length and breadth as he should be!

1 SOLDIER:

This tainted traitor, make him bound,

Go fast and fetter him, you three.

And since he thinks to wear a crown,

Just like a king here hang shall he.

2 SOLDIER:

I won't waste any time

Before his right hand's fast.

3 SOLDIER:

The left hand, then, is mine;

Let's see who bears him best.

4 SOLDIER:

Well, then, I'll take the traitor's feet;

Down to the hole I'll stretch this "king."

1 SOLDIER:

And to his head will I take heed,

And with my hands I'll help him hang.

2 SOLDIER:

Now since we four must do this deed,

Though there's no profit in the thing,

Let no man spare with utmost speed

An ending to it soon to bring.

3 SOLDIER:

We have no time to spare,

But we are well arrayed.

4 SOLDIER:

This boy here in our care

Will find his deeds repaid!

1 SOLDIER:

Tell me, sir knights, have we done aught?

2 SOLDIER:

Well, I believe I've got this hand;

Right to the hole I have it brought

Obediently, without a band.

1 SOLDIER:

Then strike on, hard, by him thee bought!

2 SOLDIER:

This nail, I think, will stoutly stand;

Through bone and flesh it shall be caught.

My work is good, you understand.

1 SOLDIER:

Sir, what is your report?

The sun has nearly sunk.

3 SOLDIER:

His arm's a foot too short;

The sinews must have shrunk.

4 SOLDIER:

Perhaps the holes were bored too wide.

2 SOLDIER:

Then he'll feel some bitter pain!

3 SOLDIER:

Indeed, the drill was misapplied;

That makes this work a bad bargain.

1 SOLDIER:

Why chatter so? Let's get him tied,

And stretch him; we'll not work in vain.

3 SOLDIER:

You boss us like an overlord;

Come help to haul, you son of Cain.

1 SOLDIER:

Indeed, that shall I do

(As quickly as a snail).

3 SOLDIER:

And I'll attach him to,

With skill and with a nail.

This work will hold; it won't be beat.

His hands are fastened end to end.

4 SOLDIER:

Go we all four, then, to his feet;

Our time efficiently we'll spend.

2 SOLDIER:

Let's see what mirth may make pain sweet;

For that, my back now I would bend.

4 SOLDIER:

Ah, this work is all unmeet!

This drilling ill we must amend.

1 SOLDIER:

Ah, peace, man, by Mahoun;

Let's waste no time on wonder.

A rope shall tug him down

Though all his sinews go asunder.

2 SOLDIER:

I know well how this cord to knit

To cool the comfort of this sot.

1 SOLDIER:

Well, bind him hard, and get him set;

How much it hurts him, matters not.

2 SOLDIER:

Tug on, you both, a little yet.

3 SOLDIER:

I shall not shirk, no matter what.

4 SOLDIER:

And I'll be ready here, to hit.

2 SOLDIER:

Now pull!

4 SOLDIER:

Whoa! Far enough we've got!

1 SOLDIER:

All right, drive in that nail,

So no fault may be found.

4 SOLDIER:

This effort would not fail

If four bulls here were bound!

1 SOLDIER:

These cords had much increased his pains

Before he to the drillings got.

2 SOLDIER:

Yea, burst apart are bones and veins

On every side, as I had thought.

3 SOLDIER:

Well, now his magic nothing gains;

His chattering shall with pain be bought.

4 SOLDIER:

I'll go and tell our sovereigns

Of all our works and how we've wrought.

1 SOLDIER:

No, sirs, another thing

Falls first to you and me.

They said we should him hang

On high, that men might see.

2 SOLDIER:

That deed will make us all too sore;

We know that we commanded were--

1 SOLDIER:

No use is it to argue more;

This villain must be hanged right here.

2 SOLDIER:

The mortice is prepared therefore...

3 SOLDIER:

So fasten your fingers on, all here.

4 SOLDIER:

Upon that hill, and just us four?

We'll never raise this in a year!

1 SOLDIER:

Now, man, why say you so?

You only lift things light?

2 SOLDIER:

He means, there must be more

To lift him up on height.

3 SOLDIER:

Now surely, I think we will not need

To call to us more company.

I think we four can do this deed,

And haul him up that hill we see.

1 SOLDIER:

It must be done by us, indeed.

No more; let's do this speedily.

I'll lift this part and take the lead;

On ground he must no longer be.

Therefore to work we bend,

And bear him to that hill.

4 SOLDIER:

Well, I'll bear up this end,

And attend his toes un-till.

2 SOLDIER:

We two shall see to either side,

Or else this work will go all wrong.

3 SOLDIER:

We are ready.

4 SOLDIER:

Sirs, abide,

And let me get a grip that's strong.

2 SOLDIER:

Why spend your time on talk this tide?

1 SOLDIER:

Lift up!

4 SOLDIER:

Let see!

2 SOLDIER:

Oh! Lift along!

3 SOLDIER:

From all this harm he'd surely hide

If he were God.

4 SOLDIER:

The devil him hang!

1 SOLDIER:

My shoulder's out of joint;

My pain is far too great.

2 SOLDIER:

Well, I am nearly spent

With bearing up this weight.

3 SOLDIER:

This cross and I must separate

Or else my back will splinter soon.

4 SOLDIER:

Stop the din; put down the freight.

This deed by us can not be done.

1 SOLDIER:

Let's see if we may now abate

Our work by thinking, everyone.

For sturdy men should honour get,

Not waste the day with jests alone.

2 SOLDIER:

Well, sturdier men than we

I think you will not find.

3 SOLDIER:

This work is not for me;

I have no second wind.

4 SOLDIER:

At such a loss we never were.

I guess this churl some spells has cast.

2 SOLDIER:

My burden made me very sore;

Upon that hill? I shall not last!

1 SOLDIER:

Lift up, and soon we'll get him there.

So, clamp on your fingers, fast.

3 SOLDIER:

And, lift!

1 SOLDIER:

Good, ho!

4 SOLDIER:

A little more.

2 SOLDIER:

And stop!

1 SOLDIER:

And now?

2 SOLDIER:

The worst is past.

3 SOLDIER:

He weighs a wicked weight.

2 SOLDIER:

So did we all four say

Ere he was heaved on height

And raised in this array.

4 SOLDIER:

He made us slow as any stones,

So awkward was he for to bear.

1 SOLDIER:

Let's raise him nimbly, and at once,

And set him in this mortice here,

And let him fall in all at once.

For surely, that pain has no peer!

3 SOLDIER:

Heave up!

4 SOLDIER:

And drop! And all his bones

Have shattered into pieces here.

1 SOLDIER:

This falling felt more ill

Than all the hurts he had.

Now every man can tell

The least bone in this lad.

3 SOLDIER:

I think this cross will not abide

Nor stand still in this mortice yet.

4 SOLDIER:

The mortice-hole is over-wide;

That makes it wave instead of set.

1 SOLDIER:

It must be fixed on either side

So that it shall no further flit.

Let's take these wedges for this tide

And fix the base; then all is fit.

2 SOLDIER:

Here are wedges arrayed

For that, both great and small.

3 SOLDIER:

Where are our hammers laid

That we should work withal?

4 SOLDIER:

We have them even here, at hand.

2 SOLDIER:

Give me this wedge; I'll hammer it.

4 SOLDIER:

Here is another ready, then.

2 SOLDIER:

Bring it here; I'll make this fit.

1 SOLDIER:

Lay on then, hard.

2 SOLDIER; I know that, man!

I'll drive both with one sturdy hit.

Now, this cross will stably stand.

Although he squirm, they will not split.

1 SOLDIER:

Well, sir, how like you now

This work that we have wrought?

4 SOLDIER:

We pray you, tell us how

You feel. Or faint you ought?

JESUS:

All men that walk by path or street,

My sufferings take heed unto.

Behold my head, my hands, my feet,

And fully feel, before you go,

If any mourning may be fit,

Or torment, equal this unto.

My father that all pain may quit,

Forgive these men who these things do.

What they do, know they not.

Therefore, father, I crave

Their sins be punished naught.

But see their souls to save.

1 SOLDIER:

Well, hark! He chatters like a jay.

2 SOLDIER:

I think he patters like a pie.

3 SOLDIER:

Well, he's been doing this all day,

Discussing mercy; who knows why?

4 SOLDIER:

Is this the same that did us say

That he was son of God on high?

1 SOLDIER:

He was; that's why this price he'll pay;

That's why he's ordered thus to die.

2 SOLDIER:

Va, qui destruis templum!

3 SOLDIER:

His words were thus, certain.

4 SOLDIER:

And, sirs, he said to some

He might raise it again.

1 SOLDIER:

To manage that he has no might,

For all the spells that he could cast.

For though he thought his words were bright,

Despite his cunning, he's nailed fast.

What Pilate judged is done this night,

Therefore I think that we should rest.

2 SOLDIER:

This thing must be reported right

Throughout the world, both east and west.

3 SOLDIER:

Let him hang there still

And make moues at the moon.

4 SOLDIER:

Then we can go at will.

1 SOLDIER:

No, good sirs, not so soon.

For here's another thing to note:

This garment would I from you crave.

2 SOLDIER:

No, no, sir, we will cast by lot

To see which man this thing shall have.

3 SOLDIER:

Then let's draw straws to win this coat.

Come, gather round--all sides to save.

4 SOLDIER:

The short straw wins, just as it ought,

Whether it fall to knight or knave.

1 SOLDIER:

Fellows, you must not fight;

This mantle here is mine.

2 SOLDIER:

Let's go then, and good night.

This is a waste of time!

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# 36. The Butchers' Play: The Death of Christ

PILATE:

Cease, citizens; see what I say:

Entirely to my talking attend.

Devoid all this din here today,

Follow me, as is befitting a friend.

Sir Pilate, a prince past compare.

My name now full namely I name.

As doomsman, dependably fair;

Full even with Jews, without blame

Am I.

Who causes oppression,

Does any transgression,

By my discretion,

Shall be deemed duly to die.

To die, I shall deem them to death:

Those rebels that rule them unright.

Those now to yon hill who pay heed,

May see there the truth in their sight:

Their cruel execution this night,

Who like not our laws now to hear.

Lo, thus by my main and my might,

These churls I shall chastise and cheer

By laws.

Each felon false,

So shall hang by the neck;

Transgressors also,

Should know they'll be knit to the cross.

To know I shall knit them on cross;

I'll wreck them with shame as they hap.

Their lives thus to lose it's no loss,

Such truants with troubles to trap.

Thus loyally the laws I unwrap,

And punish them pitilessly.

Of Jesus it is a mishap,

That hung on that hill should he be,

For guilt.

His blood to spill:

This was your will.

You've had your fill.

To speed him, with spite he was spilt.

CAIAPHAS:

To spill him, we spoke in great speed,

For falsehoods he followed, in faith;

With frauds all our folks he did feed,

And laboured to learn them his lay.

ANNAS:

Sir Pilate, of peace we you pray;

Our laws would have likely been lorn.

He would not save our dear Sabbath day;

And that - to escape it - was scorn,

By law.

PILATE:

Sirs, before your sight,

With all my might,

I examined him right;

And in him then no cause I saw.

CAIAPHAS:

You know well, the cause in this case:

It touched upon treason untrue.

The tribute, to take or to trace,

He forbade, our bale to brew.

ANNAS:

Of jests always jangled that Jew,

And cursedly called himself King.

To doom him to death was his due;

For treason it touches, that thing.

Indeed!

CAIAPHAS:

Yet principal,

And worst of all,

He would be called,

God's Son. For that, foul may he speed!

PILATE:

He speeds now to spill in a space,

So wonderfully wrought is your will.

His blood shall your bodies embrace

To this end, you've taken yourselves.

ANNAS:

From now on, we'll happily fulfill

This; to our credit we'll take it full fain.

Yon loser now likes it full ill.

We've turned all his tricks into pain,

I trow

CAIAPHAS:

He was called King.

Ill joy him wring;

Yeah, let him hang,

Full mad at the moon he'll moo now!

ANNAS:

To moo at the moon thus he meant:

To hell with you, traitor, in faith!

Who trusts now your tales to attend?

You saggard, yourself you did say,

The temple you'd cast down today!

By the third day, though every stone falls,

You'd raise it again, you did say.

Look how it feels to be false.

Foul fall!

For presumption,

Reward you've won.

If you'll come down,

I shall "a comely King" you call.

CAIAPHAS:

I call you a coward again,

That marvels and miracles made;

Who mustered among many men,

But wretch, you spoke there without heed!

You saved them from sorrows, they said,

Now save yourself, let us see;

If you're truly God's son, as you said,

Deliver you down from that tree!

Anon!

If you are found

To be God's son

We shall be bound

To follow you truly, each one!

ANNAS:

Sir Pilate, your pleasure we pray;

Attend to our talking this tide,

And wipe yonder writing away;

It's not for the best that it bide.

It's more fitting, you set it aside,

And write what he said in his lies,

When he was imprinted with pride:

"Jews' King am I, recognize"

Full plain.

PILATE:

Quod scripsi, scripsi.

That same wrote I;

I stand thereby.

What gadfly will grouch there against?

JESUS:

Mankind, that of miss here has meant,

To me, all attention now take:

On rood I am ragged and rent,

You sinful souls, for your sake.

For your miss, amends I will make.

My back, now to bend will obey;

This pain, for your trespass, I take.

Who could you more kindness display,

Than I?

Thus, for your good,

I shed my blood.

Man, mend your mood.

Full bitter your bliss I must buy.

MARY:

Alas, for my sweet son, I say,

That doleful, to death is thus done.

Alas, for full lovely he lay,

In my womb, this worthiest one.

Alas, that I should see my son,

My son, once so seemly to see.

Alas, that this bright blossom,

Untruly is tugged to that tree.

Alas!

My lord, my lief,

With full great grief,

Hangs like a thief.

Alas, he did never trespass.

JESUS:

Woman, away with your weeping.

For me, you may nothing amend.

My father's will I am working,

For mankind my body I bend.

MARY:

Alas, that you don't wish to stay,

How can I but weep for my woe?

My comfort, to care, turns today.

Alas, why should we twin thus in two,

Forever?

JESUS:

Woman, instead of me,

John, your son shall be.

John, to your mother see;

For my sake make this your endeavor.

MARY:

Alas son, sorrow and sight;

I wish I were closed in clay.

A sword of sorrow me smites;

To death I have come this day.

JOHN:

Oh mother, such things do not say,

I pray, in this crowd, be at peace.

For with all the might that I may,

Your comfort I'll ever increase.

Indeed,

Your son am I.

On me rely;

From this place by,

I pray that away you will speed.

MARY:

My bidding - to stand or to steer -

How can I, such sorrow to see?

My son that is worthy and dear,

Now so doleful a death here dies he.

JOHN:

Dear mother, let go of this grief;

Your mourning may not this amend.

MARY CLEOPHAS:

Dear mother, have faith now and see;

For succour to you he will send,

This tide.

JOHN:

Fair mother, fast

Away let us cast.

MARY:

Until he has passed,

I shall willingly stay at his side.

JESUS:

With bitterest bale I have bought

Mankind. Thus your misses I mend.

Look on me now and cease not:

How, willing, my body I bend.

No man in this world would have mind,

The sorrow I suffer for your sake.

Be taught now through kindness, mankind;

True attention to me, now take,

And trust.

For foxes, their dens have they;

Birds have their nests to pay;

But the son of man this day,

Has nowhere his head now to rest.

THIEF ON LEFT:

If you are God's son so free,

Why do you hang on this hill?

Save yourself now, let us see,

And us too, that speed now to spill.

THIEF ON RIGHT:

Man, stop your speaking, be still!

Doubtless, your god you dread not.

Deserving, we've come to this hill,

For wrongs we have unwisely wrought.

But this:

No ill did he,

To die this way.

Remember me,

When you have come into your bliss.

JESUS:

In truth son, to you I say:

Because from your folly you'll fall,

With me you'll dwell this very day,

In paradise, placed principal.

Eloy, eloy,

My God, my God full free,

Lamma sabbacthane?

Why have you forsaken me,

In care?

When I did never ill,

This death to so fulfill;

But be it as you will.

Ah, I thirst sore.

SERVANT:

A drink I'll prepare you, indeed;

A draft that is daintily done.

Full fast I shall spring for to speed,

I hope I shall hold for that one.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir Pilate, that most is in might,

Hark - "Healing" I heard that one cry.

He's going to that worthy wight,

In haste now to help him on high,

In his need.

PILATE:

If he does so,

He shall have woe.

ANNAS:

He is our foe,

Who would dress him to do such a deed!

SERVANT:

That deed, if he dress him to do,

For certain, he'll rue it full sore;

Nonetheless, if he likes it not - lo -

Pretty soon he'll recover that care.

Now sweet sir, if your will it were,

A draft of a drink I have dressed;

To suffer expense you may spare,

To imbibe it now boldly is best.

But why?

Vinegar and gall,

Are mixed in with all.

Drink it you shall -

Your lips, I can see, are full dry.

JESUS:

Your drink will not harm me up here.

Understand that of this I'll have none.

Now father, who formed all men here,

To your might most, I make moan;

In this place, all your will I have done.

Thus ragged, and rent on this rood,

With cruelty to death I am done.

Forgive them, by grace that is good,

For they do not know what it was.

My father, here are my bones;

Now are all things done.

To you, my spirit soon,

I commend: in manus tuas.

MARY:

Now dear son, Jesus so gentle,

Since my heart is as heavy as lead,

Please say something to me ere you wend -

Alas, now my dear son is dead!

Full ruefully rent is my head!

Alas, for my darling so dear!

JOHN:

Ah mother, now hold up your head.

Sigh not here with these sorrows severe,

I pray.

MARY CLEOPHAS:

It gives her pain,

To see his pain.

Lead her away;

This morning, no one comfort may.

CAIAPHAS:

Sir Pilate, perceive, I now pray,

That to keep well our customs you can.

Tomorrow's our dear Sabbath day;

To mirth, now must move every man.

Yon warlocks now all wax full wan,

And must quickly buried all be.

Deliver them dead sir, and then,

We'll issue to said solemnity,

Indeed.

PILATE:

It shall be done,

In words but one.

Sir knights, go yon,

To those harlots, handily take heed:

Kill all those crooks with your knife;

Deliver them when they are dead.

SOLDIER:

My lord, I shall cut off their life,

Those wretches shall never bite bread.

PILATE:

Longinus, step forth in this stead;

This spear, now take hold in your hand.

To Jesus, go forth where you're led;

You'll stray not; but stiffly will stand,

A space.

In Jesus' side,

Shove it this tide.

No longer bide,

But promptly now go to that place.

LONGINUS:

Oh, maker unmade, full of might,

Oh Jesus, so noble and gentle,

You've suddenly sent me my sight!

Lord, loving to thee must be lent!

On rood, you are ragged and rent;

Mankind you now mend of his miss.

Spitefully spilled and now spent;

This blood, lord, will bring us to bliss,

Full free.

Ah, mercy, my succour,

Mercy, my treasure,

Mercy, my Saviour;

Your mercy's remembered in me.

CENTURION:

What wonderful working is this?

The weather is waxing full wan.

I trust, a true token it is,

That mercy's extended to man.

Conceive this full clearly, I can.

No crime in this corpse could they know;

Yet doleful, they still doomed the man,

To lose thus his life by their law:

Not right.

I say truly,

God's son was he,

This man I see,

Who was done to the death here tonight.

JOSEPH:

May that loyal lord, ever-lasting in land,

Sir Pilate, full pressed in this place,

Save you, sir, by the sea and by sand,

And these worthy men on this dais.

PILATE:

Joseph the Loyal, no less;

You are welcome to me in this space.

Tell truly, before you decease,

Your worthy will here, what it is?

Anon!

JOSEPH:

I pray to thee:

On high, give me

Jesus' body.

I'd give it a grave all alone.

PILATE:

Sir Joseph, I grant your request;

I will not begrudge him his grave.

Deliver, have done, get him dressed,

And be sure, sir, our Sabbath to save.

JOSEPH:

With heart and both hands that I have,

I thank you in faith, for my friend.

God keep, may you no comfort crave

Now swift on my way I will wend.

On high.

To do that deed,

May he give speed,

Who these arms spread,

So man with his blood he might buy.

NICODEMUS:

Well met sir. In mind I was grieved

For Jesus, who was judged so unjust.

You laboured for licence and leave,

To return his dead body to dust?

JOSEPH:

Full mildly I meant, since I must,

And to do so, I now must address.

NICODEMUS:

I would that together we went;

And nothing at all will stop us.

Here's why:

Our friend was he,

Faithful and free.

JOSEPH:

Therfore, go we

To bury that body on high.

All mankind may mark in their mind,

To see here this sorrowful sight.

No falseness in him could they find,

Who was done to a death so unright.

NICODEMUS:

He was a full worthy wight,

Now blemished and battered with blood.

JOSEPH:

Yes, and because he had mustered his might,

Full falsely they felled this fair food.

I've seen -

His back and sides,

Have great wounds wide.

Now forth this tide,

We'll take him down us between.

NICODEMUS:

Between us, we take him down,

And lay him at length on the land.

JOSEPH:

This reverent one, rich in renown;

Let us hold him and wash him by hand.

A grave here, I've recently ordered,

Which never held none; it is new.

NICODEMUS:

To this corpse it's most comely accorded;

To dress him with all the deeds due

This land.

JOSEPH:

A sudary,

I've brought with me.

Wind him, shall we,

And soon we shall set him in sand.

NICODEMUS:

In sand let us set him and go.

Quickly, let's lay him alone.

Now, saviour of me and of more,

Do keep us in cleanness each one.

JOSEPH:

To your mercy, now I make my moan:

As Saviour, by sea and by sand.

Guide me out of temptation alone,

To lead loyal life in this land,

With ease.

NICODEMUS:

I've ointments - see?

For this body.

I anoint thee,

With the myrrh and with aloe of these.

JOSEPH:

This deed is now done and complete;

Well-wrought is the work of all this.

My King, on my knees here I kneel,

That I might behold you in bliss.

NICODEMUS:

He told me with love to be his,

One night when I came very near.

Have mind Lord, and mend me of miss.

We've done all our deeds now, full dear,

This tide.

JOSEPH:

May this lord good,

Who shed his blood,

Now mend your mood,

And bring me to his bliss to abide.

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# 37. The Saddlers' Play: The Harrowing of Hell

JESUS:

Man on earth, attend to me

And keep thy maker in thy mind,

And think how I endured for thee

With peerless anguish to be pained.

The covenant of my Father free

Have I fulfilled, as folk may find.

Therefore busy shall I be;

Those redeemed I shall unbind.

The fiend beguiled them then,

Though fruit of earthly food.

I have them got again

Through buying, with my blood.

And so, I shall that place restore

From which the Devil fell for sin.

For mankind shall dwell evermore,

In bliss that never fails, within.

All that in the world my workers were,

Out of their woe I shall them win,

And some sign I shall send before

Of grace, to make their joy begin.

A light now they shall have,

To show them I shall come soon.

My body lies in the grave

'Till all these deeds are done.

My Father ordained in this wise

After his will I should descend,

For to fulfil the prophecies,

And, as I spoke, my solace to send.

My friends who trust me, my allies,

Now from their foes I shall defend,

And, on the third day, right up rise,

And so to Heaven I shall ascend.

After, I shall come again

To judge both good and ill

To endless joy or pain.

Thus is my Father's will.

[Then they shall sing.]

ADAM:

My brethren, harken to me here!

Such hope of help never before we had;

For thousand and six hundred year

Have we been here, within this stead.

Now I see a sign of solace clear,

A glorious gleam to make us glad.

Therefore, I think our help is near,

And soon shall cease our sorrows sad.

EVE:

Adam, my husband right,

This means solace, surely.

We both saw such a light

In Paradise, openly.

ISAIAH:

Adam, we shall well understand.

I, Isaiah, as God did intend,

I preached in Naphtali, that land,

And Zebulun, until the end.

I spoke of folk in darkness, and

I said a light should soon descend.

I taught this as a living man.

Now I see God this same light does send.

Of Christ now comes this light

Who died to save us now.

My point is proven right.

But Simeon, what say you?

SIMEON:

Of great marvels is my tale,

For in the temple his people me found.

I had delight with him to deal,

And held him gently in my hand.

I said, "Lord, let your servant loyal

Pass now in peace to long life," and

"Now that I see the way you heal

I wish no longer to live on land."

This light you have conveyed

To people in this place.

The same that I to them said,

I see fulfilled apace.

JOHN BAPTIST:

A voice crying out, I made folk understand

The ways of Christ I best I can.

I baptised Him, with my own hand,

Even in the flood of the River Jordan.

The Holy Spirit from Heaven did descend

Like a white dove, down on Him, then.

The Father's voice, my joy to lend,

Was made to me, even as man:

"This is my Son," He said,

"In whom I am well pleased."

His light on us is laid;

He comes our cares to ease.

MOSES:

Of that same light, learning have I.

To me, Moses, he manifested his might-

And also unto another, Eli,

Where we were on a hill, on height.

White as snow was his body,

And his face like the sun in our sight.

No man on Earth was so mighty,

Long to look upon that light.

That same light now I see,

Shining on us, certain.

Therefore, I say truly,

We soon shall pass from pain.

RIBALD:

Help, Beelzebub, to bind these boys!

Such uproar never was heard in Hell.

BEELZEBUB:

Why roar you, Ribald? What are these toys?

What has happened? Can you tell?

RIBALD:

What? Hear you not this ugly noise?

These wretches that in Limbo dwell,

They make mention of many joys

And make great mirth among themselves.

BEELZEBUB:

Mirth? No, no, that point has passed;

More happiness they'll never have.

RIBALD:

They cry on Christ full fast,

And say He shall them save.

BEELZEBUB:

Yea? If he save them not, we shall,

For they are speared in a special space.

While I am prince and principal,

They'll never pass out of this place.

Call up Astoreth and Anaball

To give their counsel in this case,

Baal-Berith, and Belial,

To harm them that such goodness makes.

To Satan, our lord, also speak,

And bid them bring also

Lucifer, lovely to see.

RIBALD:

All ready, lord. I go.

JESUS:

Atollite portas, principes,

Open up, you princes of pains severe,

Et elevamini eternales,

Your endless gates that you have here!

SATAN:

What knave is there, that commotion makes

And calls himself king of us in here?

DAVID:

I taught while living, in each place,

He is a king of virtues clear,

A lord great in might

And strong in every strife,

In battles fierce to fight,

Of honourable life.

SATAN:

Honour? In the devil's way! For what deed?

All Earthly men to me are thrall!

The lad that you call "lord" indeed

Had never yet harbour, house, nor hall.

RIBALD:

Hark, Beelzebub, I have great dread,

For hideously I heard him call.

BELIAL:

Ho, fasten our gates, a curse you speed,

And set forth watches on this wall-

And if he call, or cry

To make us more debate,

Lay on him then, hardily,

And make him go his gait.

SATAN:

Tell me what boys dare be so bold,

For dread to make such noise and fray!

RIBALD:

It is the Jew that Judas sold

To death, only the other day.

SATAN:

Oh, this tale in time is told.

This traitor has crossed our will, alway.

He shall be here, and in my hold.

Let him leave not, I you pray.

BEELZEBUB:

Nay, nay, he will not go

Away; I'll be aware.

He plans to overthrow

All Hell, ere he go far.

SATAN:

No, liar, in that he shall fail.

For all his noise, I him defy.

I know his plans from top to tail;

He lives on guile and trickery.

That is how he brought out of our jail,

Just lately, Lazarus of Bethany.

Therefore, I gave to the Jews counsel

That they, by all means, make him die.

I entered into Judas

That agreement to fulfil.

Therefore, for hire, he has

Forever to stay here still.

BEELZEBUB:

Sir Satan, since we hear you say

That you and they were of one assent,

And know he took Lazarus away

That to us had come for government,

Think you that you now harm him may,

To show the power he has meant?

If he now deprives us of our prey,

We'd wish to be told when they went.

SATAN:

I bid you, be not abashed,

But boldly make you bound

With tools that you can trust

To ding that dastard down.

JESUS:

Principes, portas tollite,

Undo your gates, you princes of pride,

Et introibit rex gloriae,

The king of bliss comes now inside.

SATAN:

Out! Harrow! What scoundrel is he

That says his kingdom shall be cried?

DAVID:

That may you in my Psalter see,

For that detail I prophecied.

I said that he should break

Your bars and bands by name,

And on you, vengeance wreak.

Now you shall see the same.

JESUS:

This place shall stand no longer stuck.

Open up, and let my people pass!

RIBALD:

Out! Behold, our wall has broke,

And burst are all our bands of brass;

Tell Lucifer all is unlocked.

BEELZEBUB:

What, then, is Limbo lost? Alas!

Make Satan help revenge to wreak;

This work is worse than ever it was.

SATAN:

I bade you should be bound

If he made masteries more!

Go, ding that dastard down

And set him sad and sore!

BEELZEBUB:

Yes, set him sorely, that is soon said-

But come yourself, and serve him so!

We may not abide his bitter affray;

He would us harm though we were more!

SATAN:

What? Liars, why should you be flayed?

Have you no strength to make him go?

At once, look that my gear be arrayed,

I shall to that foul scoundrel go!

Ho! My good man, abide

With all your boast and jeer,

And tell me at this tide

What masteries you make here?

JESUS:

I make no masteries. But these are mine;

Them I will save, I tell you now.

You had no power them to pain.

As my thralls for their good-that is how

They have here sojourned, not as thine

But in thy ward, as well you know.

SATAN:

And what the Devil have you ever done?

You never came near them till now.

JESUS:

Now is the time certain

My Father ordained before-

When they should pass from pain,

And dwell in mirth evermore.

SATAN:

Your father I knew well by sight.

He worked with wood, his food to gain.

And Mary, I think, was your mother-right?

That's all that there is to all your kin.

Who made you to be so great of might?

JESUS:

You wicked Devil! Let be your din;

My Father lives in Heaven on height,

With bliss that shall never dim.

I am his own Son.

His wishes I shall fulfil.

And we shall dwell as one,

And sunder when we will.

SATAN:

God's son? Then you should be very glad.

No property need you to crave!

But, you have lived like any lad,

In sorrow, like a simple knave.

JESUS:

That was for heartfelt love I had,

For every soul, for it to save.

And, in order to make you confused and mad,

And, by that reason, thus duly to have

My Godhead here, I hid

In Mary, mother mine,

So it should not be spied

By thee nor none of thine.

SATAN:

Ah! This I wish told in every town!

So-since you say that God is your sire,

I shall to you prove, by right reason,

You are arguing His people into the mire.

To break His bidding they were bound.

And, because they followed my desire,

From Paradise He put them down,

In Hell, here, to have their hire.

And you, day and night,

Have taught, all people among,

To do reason and right.

And here you work all wrong.

JESUS:

I work no wrong. That you shall know,

If I my people from woe shall win.

My prophets plainly preached even so;

All this business that I begin.

They said that I should die, and go

To Hell-that I should enter in,

And save my servants from this woe,

This pit where damned souls sit for sin.

And each true prophet's tale

Must be fulfilled in me;

I have them brought with bale,

And in bliss shall they be.

SATAN:

Now, since you wish to allege the law,

You shall be convicted before we twin

In two, for each witness that you draw

Is also against you, before you begin.

Soloman said, for he foresaw,

That whoever enters Hell within

Shall never come out, thus scholars know.

And therefore, fellow, leave this din.

Job, your servant, also

Thus, in his time, did tell

That neither friend nor foe

Should find a release from Hell.

JESUS:

He spoke the truth, that you shall see,

That in Hell may be no release.

But, of that place, then preach did he

Whose sinful care shall ever increase.

And, in that jail ever shall you be

Where sorrows severe shall never cease.

And, because my folk from this are free,

They now shall pass to the place of peace.

They were here with my will,

And so they forth shall go,

And you yourself shall fulfil,

Without end, all their woe.

SATAN:

Oh, then I see how you mean, among

Your malice, some temperace to mix as well.

Since you say not all shall gang,

But some shall always with us dwell.

JESUS:

You know that well; else it would be wrong.

The cursed ones: Cain, who slew Abel,

And all those that hasted themselves to hang,

Like Judas and Achitophel,

Daithan, and Abiram,

And all of this assent-

Also, tyrants every one

Who me and mine torment.

And all that wish not to accept my law

That I have left on Earth just now

(That is, my coming for to know,

My sacrament to accept also,

And my death and rising to construe)-

Such disbelievers are not true.

Unto my doom I shall them draw,

And judge them harshly, I tell you.

But all who love to hear

My law, and believe in me,

Shall never have harms here,

But joy, as is worthy.

SATAN:

Now, here is my hand; I'm well repaid.

This point well profits us. And how?

If this be true, what you have said,

We shall have more than we have now.

This law that you of late have laid,

I'll teach men to reject, I vow.

If they believe, they are betrayed,

For I shall twist them anyhow.

I shall walk on every side,

And make them sin, I know.

JESUS:

No, fiend, you shall be tied,

So not far shall you go.

SATAN:

Tied? That's hateful to expound!

No, good fellow, you'll be hit!

JESUS:

Michael, my angel, make him bound;

Tie down that fiend; he shall not flit.

And, Devil, I command you go down

Into your cell where you shall sit.

SATAN:

Out! Hey! Harrow! Help, Mahoun!

Now I go mad; I lose my wit.

BEELZEBUB:

Satan, we said before,

Now you shall feel your fit.

SATAN:

Alas, for dole and care!

I sink into Hell's pit!

ADAM:

Ah, Jesus, Lord, much is your might.

Yet you humble yourself in this way here,

To help us all, as you said that night

When we transgressed, I and my peer.

Here we have lived without any light

Four thousand and six hundred year.

Now I see, by this solemn sight,

How your mercy has made us clear.

EVE:

Ah, Lord, we were worthy

More torments still to taste,

But mend us with mercy

As you in might are most.

JOHN BAPTIST:

Ah, Lord, I love you utterly,

That you would make me messenger

Your Earthly coming for to cry

And teach your faith to people there-

And then, before you, for to die

And bring good news to people here,

How they should have your help quickly.

Now I see all your points appear

That David, prophet true,

Oftentimes told unto us.

Of this coming he knew,

And said it should be thus.

DAVID:

As I have said, still say I so:

Ne derelinquas, domine,

Animam meam in inferno.

You shall not leave my soul astray

In deepest Hell where the damned must go,

Nor allow me never your saints to see:

The sorrow of them that stay in woe

And full of filth, and may not flee.

ADAM:

We thank his great goodness;

He fetched us from this place.

Make joy now, great and less!

ALL:

We praise God for His grace!

[Then they shall sing.]

JESUS:

Adam, and my friends all here,

From all your foes come forth, with me.

You shall be set in solace and cheer

Where you shall never sorrows see.

And Michael, my own angel clear,

Recieve these souls all unto thee

And lead them now as you shall hear:

To Paradise, with joy and glee.

To my grave, return I will,

To rise up from the dead;

And thus I shall fulfil

All things that I have said.

MICHAEL:

Lord, we shall go as you say;

To joy I shall these people send.

But, so these devils no trick can play,

Lord, bless us with your holy hand.

JESUS:

My blessing have you all this day.

I shall be with you where you wend.

And all who love my law loyally,

They shall be blessed, without an end.

ADAM:

To you, Lord, be praising;

You rescued us from woe.

For solace we shall sing

Laus tibi cum gloria.

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# 38. The Winedrawers' Play: The Resurrection

PILATE:

Lords and ladies, listen to me:

I order you in each degree,

As chief doomsman in this country,

For learned counsel.

At my bidding you ought to be,

And humbly kneel.

Sir Caiaphas, highest clergy here,

Your counsel let us quickly hear:

Since by your leave we caused to die

Jesus this day.

That we maintain, and stand thereby

This work, always.

CAIAPHAS:

Yes sir, we shall maintain that deed;

It was all done by law, indeed.

You know yourself, undoubtedly,

As well as we.

His sayings are now upon him seen,

And always shall be.

ANNAS:

The people, sir, in this same stead,

Wholeheartedly before you said

He was deserving to be dead.

And this they swore!

We were by righteous counsel led:

Name it no more.

PILATE:

To name it seems a needful thing.

Since he has gone to burying;

We haven't heard from old or young,

Any tiding.

CAIAPHAS:

The Centurion, sir, the news will bring

Of everything.

We left him there, a man most wise.

If any rebels should arise,

Our righteous judgement to despise,

Or to offend,

He'll seize them for the next assize,

To make an end.

CENTURION:

Ah, blessed Lord, Adonai,

What may these marvels signify,

That we've seen here before our eye

So openly,

Today, when that man came to die?

Jesus is he.

It is a misty thing I mean;

Such wondrous sight I've never seen.

To our priests and princes, instantly,

Without delay,

I must describe this troubled scene.

What will they say?

God save you sirs, on every side,

Worship and wealth in all the world wide,

With much mirth may you always bide,

Both day and night.

PILATE:

Centurion, be welcome at this tide,

Our comely knight.

You have been missed among us here.

CENTURION:

By grace of God, may you ever prosper.

PILATE:

Centurion, good friend old and dear,

What is your will?

CENTURION:

You have done wrong, I greatly fear,

And wonder ill.

CAIAPHAS:

Wonder ill? Tell why, I pray?

Declare it to this whole array.

CENTURION:

Then sirs, to you I truly say,

(I'll mince no word):

I mean the righteous man, today,

Whom you've slaughtered.

PILATE:

Centurion, you'll cease this rot.

You are a man in law well taught:

If we, by any witness, thought

Us to excuse,

To always hold our side you ought,

And not refuse.

CENTURION:

Maintaining truth's a worthy way.

I tell you, when I saw him die,

The son of mighty god, I say,

Was hanging there.

I still say so, and stand thereby

Forevermore.

CAIAPHAS:

Well, sir, this reasoning you may rue;

You should not name this thing anew,

Unless there is some token true

That you can tell.

CENTURION:

Such wondrous things you never knew

As just befell.

ANNAS:

We pray you, do relate these things.

CENTURION:

Each element, and everything,

In its own manner made mourning,

In every stead.

All knew by countenance their king;

That he was dead.

For woe the sun waxed pale and wan;

The moon and stars their shining ban;

The earth, it trembled, and like man,

Began to speak.

The stones that never stirred 'till then,

Asunder creak.

And dead men rose, both great and small -

PILATE:

Centurion, beware withal!

You know that clerks "eclipses" call

These sudden sights:

When this occurs, both sun and moon shall

Lack their lights.

CAIAPHAS:

Yes, and dead men rising bodily

Could well be done through sorcery.

This counts as nothing we can see

To worry us.

CENTURION:

All that I tell, the truth it be,

I'll ever trust.

In all the deeds that you did work,

Not only did the sun turn murk;

But how was the veil rent in your church?

This I would know.

PILATE:

These tales you tell will quickly irk,

If out they go.

ANNAS:

Centurion, such speech withdraw.

Of all these words, we're not in awe.

CENTURION:

Since you'll not credit what I saw,

Sirs, have good day.

God grant you grace that you may know

The truth always.

ANNAS:

If you're afraid, then make good speed;

For we shall stand by all our deeds.

PILATE:

Such wondrous things he says, indeed,

As none before.

CAIAPHAS:

To mention this, we have no need:

Never say more.

Now watch that no man make ill cheer;

No harm of this may yet come here.

But doubting men must cause us fear.

The folk may tell

Of all these things that we've heard here.

Advise you well,

And take heed of this tale quickly;

For Jesus did say openly,

A thing that would grieve all Jewry,

And so it may:

That he would rise up bodily,

On the third day.

If this be so (as I may speed),

Then we must dread this latter deed,

More than the first, if we take heed,

Or look thereto.

To mention this, we have most need,

And had best do.

ANNAS:

Well, even if he did say so,

He cannot simply rise and go.

But if his men take his corpse, though,

And steal away,

It would be for us, and more also,

A troubled day.

For they could then claim, every one,

That he rose by himself alone.

Therefore, guard him from now on,

With trusty knights,

Until three days have come and gone,

And three full nights.

PILATE:

For certain sirs, right well you say.

This very point I shall purvey,

And now attend to, if I may.

He shall not rise;

And none shall carry him away,

In any wise.

Sir knights, so bold in every deed,

The chosen chiefs of chivalry,

Your force inspires trust in me:

Both day and night,

Go forth and guard Jesus' body

With all your might.

Whatever things that happen may,

Keep him well to the third day.

And let no man take him away,

Out of that stead;

For if they do, I truly say,

You shall be dead.

1 SOLDIER:

Lords, we promise true and plain:

We'll watch that tomb with might and main.

No tricks those traitors may maintain,

To steal him so.

Sir knights, take useful gear again,

And let us go.

2 SOLDIER:

Yes sir. We are already bound;

We'll guard him for our own renown.

On every side, let us sit down,

Together near.

If any come, we'll crack his crown

Whoever's here.

[THEN JESUS ARISING [Later hand: Then an angel sings the Resurgens.]]

1 MARY:

Alas, I wish that I had died.

No one has suffered as much as I;

My sorrow is always for that sight,

I had to see.

How Christ, my master, most in might,

Is dead from me.

Alas, that I should see his pain,

And loss of him I must maintain.

Of each ill he was medicine,

And friend to all,

Support and help to all who deign

On him to call.

2 MARY:

Alas, who can my grief abet?

When I remember his wounds wet -

Jesus, loving, sweet, who yet

Did never ill,

Is dead and graved now under grit:

Unfairly killed.

3 MARY:

Unfairly killed; the Jews each one

That lovely Lord to death have done,

Although he never hurt anyone,

In any stead.

To whom shall I now make my moan,

Since he is dead?

1 MARY:

Since he is dead, my sisters dear,

Mildly let us all draw near,

With these annointments fair and clear,

That we have brought,

To wash the many wounds severe

The Jews have wrought.

2 MARY:

Let's go together, sisters free.

We all desire that corpse to see.

But I know not what best may be.

Help we have none,

And who here now, of us three,

Will move the stone?

3 MARY:

On our own, we can't do so,

For it is huge, and heavy also.

1 MARY:

Sisters, a child, where we go-

Making mourning!

I see it sit where we go to,

In white clothing.

2 MARY:

Sisters, for certain, nothing to hide,

That heavy stone's been pushed aside!

3 MARY:

You're right! Whatever this thing may betide,

Near we will wend.

To seek that lovely one beside,

Who was our friend.

ANGEL:

You women, mourning in your thought:

Here in this place, whom have you sought?

1 MARY:

Jesus, who to death was brought;

Our Lord so free.

ANGEL:

Women, certainly, here he is not.

Come near and see.

He is not here, the truth to say.

The place is void, wherein he lay;

The shroud is all that's left today.

That on him was laid.

He is risen, and took his way,

Just as he said.

Just as he said, so done has he.

He is risen through great authority.

He shall be found in Galilee,

In flesh of his.

Now go to his disciples free,

And tell them this.

1 MARY:

My sisters dear, since it is so,

That he is risen from below -

The angel told both me and you.

Our Lord so free -

Away from here I'll never go,

Until I see.

2 MARY:

Mary, time we can no longer spend;

To Galilee now we must wend.

1 MARY:

Not till I see my faithful friend,

My Lord and leech.

Therefore, dear sisters, you extend,

And go and preach.

3 MARY:

What we have heard, this we shall say;

Mary, our sister, have good day.

1 MARY:

Now may true God, as well he may,

Man most of might,

Be guide to you sisters, well on your way,

And rule you right.

Alas, now what will happen to me?

My wretched heart will break in three.

When I think on that body free,

How it was spilt.

Both hands and feet were nailed to a tree,

Without guilt.

Without guilt he was put to pain;

From trespass he was free of stain.

He suffered wounds and much disdain,

All for my miss.

It was for my deeds he was slain,

And not for his.

How could I make such kindness known,

Unless I loved him as my own?

For love of me he suffered wounds;

Died, and was buried.

There's not a thing until we meet

May make me merry.

1 SOLDIER:

What?! Out, alas, what shall I say?

Where is the corpse that herein lay?

2 SOLDIER:

What ails you man? Is he away,

Whom we attend?

1 SOLDIER:

Rise up and see!

2 SOLDIER:

Harrow! For ay!

We are dead men!

3 SOLDIER:

What the devil is this? What ails you two?

Thus to raise such cry and hue?

1 SOLDIER:

Why is he gone?

3 SOLDIER:

Alas! Where is he that here lay?

4 SOLDIER:

Whoa! How the devil did he get away?

3 SOLDIER:

What? So away from us he went,

That traitor that to his grave was sent?

And we were here to pay attent;

What have we done?

For this, our bodies will be rent,

Every last one.

1 SOLDIER:

Alas, what shall we do this day,

Now that this warlock has gone his way?

And safely sirs - I dare well say,

He rose alone.

2 SOLDIER:

When Pilate hears of this outrage

We must be slain.

3 SOLDIER:

Come on you fellows, use your head,

4 SOLDIER:

There's nothing for it; we're all dead.

2 SOLDIER:

When Jesus stirred out of this stead,

No one saw then.

1 SOLDIER:

Alas, too bad it's on my head,

Among all men.

As soon as Pilate of this knows:

That we were sleeping when he rose,

To forfeiture we'll be exposed,

All that we have.

2 SOLDIER:

We must make lies; we need to pose

Ourselves to save.

3 SOLDIER:

Yes, as I live, I think that's so.

4 SOLDIER:

And I approve this plan also.

2 SOLDIER:

I'll say, a hundred men and more:

Armed, each one,

Came and took away that corpse;

We were near slain!

1 SOLDIER:

No. I think no choice as good

As tell the truth, just as it stood.

He really rose, in main and mood,

And went his way.

Despite Sir Pilate's rage, I would

This dare to say.

2 SOLDIER:

To Pilate you dare go the way,

And news like this to him you'll say?

1 SOLDIER:

That's my advice. If he must slay,

We die but once.

3 SOLDIER:

Now he who wrought this woe today,

I curse his bones!

4 SOLDIER:

Sir knights, let us be going hence.

Sir Pilate we must now attend.

I trust that we shall not part friends,

When there we pass.

1 SOLDIER:

I'll tell him every word to the end,

Just as it was.

Sir Pilate, prince without a peer;

Sirs Caiaphas and Annas near;

And all you lords together here,

To name by name:

God save you on all sides from fear,

From sin, and shame.

PILATE:

You are welcome, our knights keen;

In merry mirth now you may mean.

Therefore, some tales tell us between,

How you have wrought.

1 SOLDIER:

Our mighty watch, undoubtedly,

Has come to naught.

CAIAPHAS:

To naught? Alas, stop speaking so!

2 SOLDIER:

The prophet Jesus, whom you know,

In spite of us, did rise and go,

With main and might.

PILATE:

For this, the devil himself you draw!

False traitor knight!

Miserable cowards, I you call!

How could he escape you all?

3 SOLDIER:

Sir, what we could do was too small,

When that man went.

4 SOLDIER:

We were so afraid, we must needs fall,

And shake for dread.

ANNAS:

You lacked the strength to stop one man?

Traitors, you should've bound him in bands,

And anyone else who there did stand,

And stopped them soon.

1 SOLDIER:

That deed all men on sea and sand

Could not have done.

2 SOLDIER:

We were so stunned, every one,

When he pushed aside the stone;

So astonished, we dared move none,

And so unnerved.

PILATE:

What? He rose himself, alone?

1 SOLDIER:

Yes sir, I'm sure.

4 SOLDIER:

Never heard the like, since we were born,

Nor all our fathers who came before:

Such melody, midday or morn,

As was made there.

CAIAPHAS:

Alas, now all our laws are lorn

For evermore.

2 SOLDIER:

When he arose, good heed I took:

The earth then trembled, quaked, and shook,

And then my consciousness forsook,

Till he was gone.

3 SOLDIER:

I was afraid, I could not look;

Strength had I none.

I might not stand, I was so stark.

PILATE:

Sir Caiaphas, you cunning clerk:

If we have really missed the mark,

We shall both pay.

What shall come of all this work?

Your counsels say.

CAIAPHAS:

What's truly best to do I shall:

And this will benefit us all.

Your knights must all their words recall,

How he is gone.

We'd not, whatever might befall,

Have this thing known.

ANNAS:

Now Sir Pilate, since it is so-

From dead, he's risen (this we know)-

Tell your knights to say, wherever they go,

That he was pried

By twenty thousand men and more,

And they nearly died.

And to this end, from the treasury,

Reward them for their loyalty.

PILATE:

I'm pleased with all this plan I see,

And further thus:

Sir knights, well-famed in chivalry,

Pay heed to us:

And listen to what you shall say,

To every man both night and day:

Ten thousand men in good array

Fought you, until,

By force of arms, they bore him away,

Against your will.

This you shall say in every land.

In payment of this covenant,

A thousand pounds you'll have in hand,

As your reward.

And friendship, sirs, you understand,

Will not be spared.

CAIAPHAS:

Each one, your rank we shall amend,

If credence to this tale you lend.

1 SOLDIER:

To whatsoever land we're sent,

By night or day,

Whereso we come, whereso we wend,

So shall we say.

PILATE:

Yes. Wherever you stay, in each country,

Of our doing in each degree,

Let no man any wiser be,

Or question more.

And of that sight, which you did see,

Never say more.

For we shall maintain you always,

And to the people we shall say,

It interferes with our land's ways,

To think such things.

So they'll believe, both night and day,

These lies we sing.

Thus shall the truth be bought and sold,

And treason shall as truth be told;

And therefore, in your hearts you'll hold

This counsel clean.

Farewell now all, both young and old

And all between.

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# 39. The Winedrawers' Play: Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalen

MARY:

Alas, in this world was there ever one

Walking thus, with so much woe?

Come, dreadful death; draw near; be done

And mar me, as you always do.

Locked in the earth is my light, my sun;

So, unglad on the ground I go.

Jesus of Nazareth was that one:

The Jews killed him, as if their foe.

My wits are wasted in sorrow indeed;

I wallow, I walk, now woe is me.

That lovely one now low is laid;

The Jews have nailed him to a tree.

My doleful heart is always in dread,

For gone to ground is all my glee.

I spurn the places where I would speed;

Now, help me, God, in persons three.

Oh, loveliest one in every land,

As you shaped both day and night,

Bright-shining sun, and moon in your hand,

Grant me the grace to have a sight,

Or a message from him where I stand.

JESUS:

You, willful woman in this way,

Why do you weep as if you were mad,

As if on the field you'd fall down fey?

Hush now, and do no more of this deed.

Who are you seeking on this long day?

Tell me the truth, if in Christ you believe.

MARY:

Jesus my Lord, the true God, I say,

Who suffered for sins his sides to bleed.

JESUS:

A secret I'll tell, if you'll me hear:

The truth of him whom you have sought.

You faithful one, now have no fear;

He is near, whom mankind bought.

MARY:

Sir, I would look both far and near,

To find my lord-I see him not.

JESUS:

Woman, weep not; amend your cheer;

I know myself where he was brought.

MARY:

Sweet sir, if you bore him away,

Tell me the truth, and there me lead,

Where he's been put, without delay;

I shall seek him again with speed.

Therefore, good gardener, do tell me;

I pray you, for the prophet's sake,

These tidings that I ask to see,

For they would make my sorrows slake.

If I might find God's own body,

Which Joseph from the cross did take,

I should take him unto me,

And all my woes would me forsake.

JESUS:

What would you do with that body bare,

Which buried was, with baleful cheer?

You cannot save him from his sore;

His pains were so sad and severe.

But he shall recover mankind from care;

What was clouded, he shall make clear,

And cause the people well to fare,

Who formerly were filled with fear.

MARY:

Ah, might I ever with that man meet,

Who is, I know, so great in might,

I would wipe dry what now is wet;

I only mourn the worldly sight.

JESUS:

Mary, of mourning amend your mood,

And behold my wounds so wide.

Thus for man's sins I shed my blood;

These bitter bales I did abide.

Thus I was raised upon the rood

With great nails, a spear in my side;

Believe it well, it turns to good,

When men on earth their flesh shall hide.

MARY:

Ah, Rabbi, I have you sought,

My master dear, all this long day!

JESUS:

Go forth, Mary, and touch me not,

But take good heed of what I say:

I am he whom all things wrought,

Whom you call Lord and God very;

With bitter death, mankind I bought.

Now I am risen, as see you may.

And, therefore, Mary, speak now with me,

And let go all of your regret.

MARY:

My lord Jesus, it's you, I see-

Your wounds, they are still so wet!

JESUS:

Come not near me, my love, let be.

Mary, my own daughter sweet,

Up to my father in trinity,

Forth I'm going, but not yet.

MARY:

Ah, mercy, comely conqueror,

Through your might you have overcome death.

Mercy, Jesus, man and savior,

Your love is still sweeter than honeyed mead.

Mercy, mighty comforter,

For before I was lost indeed.

Welcome, lord, all my honor,

My joy, my love, in every stead.

JESUS:

Mary, in your heart now write

My armor that is rich and good:

My jerkin covered all in white,

Like the body of man, with matter good.

In hue as flesh, in kind perfect,

Of maidens' very flesh and blood.

When they began to pierce and smite,

My head, as any mail-coat, stood.

My breastplate spread on every side:

That was my body on the tree.

My helmet sheltered far and wide:

The strength thereof no man could see.

The crown of thorns which made me bleed:

It denotes my dignity.

My diadem says, without dread,

That dead I shall never be.

MARY:

Ah, blessed body that bale would beat;

Dearly have you bought mankind.

These wounds have made your body wet,

With blood that once was locked inside.

Nailed you were, through hands and feet,

And all for was our sin and pride.

With sorrow, as sinners, we must you greet.

How can evil be put aside?

To see this wonderful food

Thus ruefully requite,

Rigged up and rent on a rood,

This is a sorrowful sight.

And all is for our good,

And not for his own plight.

Spilled thus is his blood

For us sinners unright.

JESUS:

To my God and my father dear,

To him I quickly shall ascend.

For now I shall not long dwell here;

I have done as my father planned.

And therefore, everyone must hear

How, on Earth, their lives they may mend;

All who love me I will draw near,

To my father's bliss that never shall end.

MARY:

All for joy I am glad to sing!

My heart is glad and filled with glee,

And all for joy of your rising,

Who suffered death upon a tree.

Now you are crowned, of love the King;

No living man more true or free.

Your love surpasses everything;

Lord, blessed you must ever be.

JESUS:

To Galilee, now you shall wend,

Mary, my own daughter dear.

Go to my worthy brethren

Where they are gathered there.

Tell them each word, to the end,

That you have spoken with me here.

May my blessing on you land,

And on all that we leave here.

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# 40: The Woolpackers' and Woolbrokers' Play: The Supper at Emmaus

PILGRIM 1:

Lord, who lent me this life now to lead,

In my ways now guide me, distraught and alone.

When others have mirth, comfort at need,

Then, as in mourning, do I make my moan.

For, doubtlessly, now may we dread us.

Alas! They have stolen our guide;

With pain made him suffer; he died,

That lord, who alive used to lead us.

PILGRIM 2:

He led us full loyally, that lord. Now alas,

My lord, for his loyalty, from life has been torn.

PILGRIM 1:

Say, who comes here chattering?

PILGRIM 2:

Sir, I, Cleophas.

Await me, dear brother; great sorrow I've borne.

But tell me now, where are you bound?

PILGRIM 1:

To Emmaus, this castle beside us.

There may we both harbor and hide us.

Therefore, let us not wait in town.

PILGRIM 2:

We shall not wait in town, but do as you would.

But let us take time now to talk of some tales,

And to speak of the soldiers, and Jesus so good,

How they beat that body that is cure of all ills.

With buffets they beat him. Then, gone

To sir Caiaphas' hall, they did him call;

Then, before Pilate, into his hall,

On the morning then after, at dawn.

PILGRIM 1:

At dawn did the justices doom him to die;

Both priests and prelates to Pilate made press,

And like curséd, keen criminals, against Christ did cry;

Against that loyal lord, they bore false witness.

They spit in his face, thus to scorn him;

To ruin him, nothing they spared;

But stripping him, his back they bared,

And with scourges fast flying they tore him.

PILGRIM 2:

They tore him so harshly; his blood vessels burst,

That his hide was soon hidden in wounds that were grim.

A crown of thorns on his head, they fiercely did thrust.

It is sorrow to think of what they did to him,

With merciless binding and beating.

Than on his back, bear did he

A cross, unto Calvary.

That sweet one was drenched in his sweating.

PILGRIM 1:

For all the sweat that he sweated, they beat him in spite,

And lashed him down, ruefully, with ropes, on a cross.

Then they heaved him up high, to hang on a height,

Though the man did no sin. They honoured him thus,

Who was ever the truest in kind

(I feel that my heart will soon surely break,

Of these pitiful pains when we here do speak);

Such a true friend in him did we find.

PILGRIM 2:

A true friend did we find him, faithful, and free

Of his heart; he wished harm to no woman or man.

It was sorrow, indeed, when we did see

The malicious sharp spear, that into his heart ran.

His body in pains thus was tied;

Into his heart harshly they thrust;

When his pitiful pains were past,

That sweet thing--how swiftly he died!

PILGRIM 1:

He died swift in swooning, that sweet.

Alas for that loved one that laid is so low.

With grisly groaning on ground may we weep,

For so comely a body I never did know.

With dole unto death they did him

For his wise works that for them he made;

These false folk, when their plans they laid,

That unnatural deed then they did him.

PILGRIM 2:

An unnatural deed they did, those criminals keen,

And pained him like beasts, unreasoning, blind--

JESUS:

What are these marvels that you two mean,

Making such mourning with mouth and mind,

Walking thus wild in these ways? [streets]

PILGRIM 2:

Why, are you a pilgrim who's been

In Jerusalem? Have you not seen

What dole has been done in these days?

JESUS:

In these days, sir? What dole was there done?

Of that deed I would know, if it your will were,

And therefore I pray you, tell me, now, soon,

Were there riots at hand? Now, let me here!

PILGRIM 1:

Why? Heard you no cry, rumour, breath,

At Jerusalem where you have been,

When Jesus the Nazarene

Was wretchedly done unto death?

PILGRIM 2:

To the death did they do him, who was to us dear,

Through the plotting of princes that were in that place.

And so, like wild creatures, we two thus walk here,

Both breathless, like pilgrims that must hold their peace.

In mourning our master, thus mourn we;

Like beasts all bewildered, thus walk we;

In speaking of Jesus, thus talk we;

Away from our enemies, turn we.

PILGRIM 1:

We turn from our enemies, being attent

How they murdered that man that we two have named.

How ruefully with ropes, on a rood they him rent,

And nailed him thereto; in a fit they him maimed.

Then, upright, so crudely, they raised him,

And then, greatly to pain him withal,

In a mortise-hole fast let him fall.

To pain him they put him and forced him!

PILGRIM 2:

They forced him to pain him, that peerless of peace.

Thus on that man who was wise they worked such great wonder;

And yet, with that sorrow they would not cease!

They shook him, and shattered his limbs all asunder;

His bones thus they broke; so they burst him.

And a blind knight, when yet he'd not died,

With a spear-point in at the side

To the heart, full cruelly he thrust him!

PILGRIM 1:

They thrust him so cruelly, there then was no doubting;

Thus with pain was that dear one done unto death.

His back and his body were swollen with beating.

A sorrowful sight. I tell you the truth.

But...often enough we heard say---

And we believe as we've heard tell---

That he was to ransom Israel.

But now, this is the third day.

PILGRIM 2:

These last days, our wits were all wild with fear;

For, some women we know, with all certainty, said

That they saw in their sight, a solace so dear;

How all was a gleaming glow where he was laid.

They called us (and long may they thrive),

For surely they saw it in sight---

A vision of angels so bright,

Who told them their Lord was alive.

PILGRIM 1:

Alive! And they said he was here, in this land.

These women this told us, as fast as they might.

Then some of us ran off, and soon did they find

That true was what they had said, who'd had that sight.

For when they looked there where he lay,

They found there that that one had flown;

His tomb was but bare bricks and stone.

Then knew they that he was away.

PILGRIM 2:

Away is that one who once was our guide.

JESUS:

Ah, fools that are faulty, whose faith fails in strife,

To place you in heaven, such must he abide.

Unless you keep faith, what good is your life?

To the prophets he proved it and preached;

And to Moses also did he say

That he must for our sake die one day.

And Moses proclaimed this in speech,

And spoke it and said it to all of this land.

PILGRIM 1:

Ah, more of this talking, we pray, tell to us.

PILGRIM 2:

Yes, sir, by your words do we well understand

That you speak of our master whom we two discuss.

PILGRIM 1:

Yes, good sir, now hear what I say:

Do you see this castle beside here?

We have planned for this night to abide here;

Abide with us, sir pilgrim, we pray.

We pray you, sir pilgrim, to stay and not go.

JESUS:

Yes, sir, I must leave---

PILGRIM 1:

No, sir, night is too near.

JESUS:

And I have far to walk.

PILGRIM 2:

I am sure that is so.

PILGRIM 1: We pray you, sir, heartily, tonight stay you here.

JESUS: Thank you for this kindness you did me.

PILGRIM 1:

Go in sir, seriously, soon

PILGRIM 2:

Sir, danger doubt not, have done.

JESUS:

Sir, I must needs do as you bid me.

You bid me; obedient I'll bide as seems best.

PILGRIM 1:

Lo, here's a good seat sir, I say to you.

PILGRIM 2:

With such goods as we've got, we'll gladden our guest

PILGRIM 1:

Sir, of this poor pittance, partake now, we pray to you.

PILGRIM 2:

[If you please sir, a blessing is just what we need;

We'll bow our heads now to the heavenly Lord.]

JESUS:

Now bless I this bread that is brought to the board;

Find it in faith, my friends, you to feed.

PILGRIM 1:

[What the -- ? How?] Entirely were we intent -

Oh, I trust that some trouble betides us!

Say, where is that man?

PILGRIM 2:

Away he has went -

Right now, he was sitting beside us.

PILGRIM 1:

Beside us both, we saw him sit,

And I can't perceive by what point he could pass.

PILGRIM 2:

No, by the works that he wrought, it's well-shown to our wits,

It was Jesus himself, I know who it was.

PILGRIM 1:

It was Jesus who wisely thus wrought,

That raised was and ruefully rent on the rood.

From bale and bitterness, he has us bought;

He was bound and beaten and bursting with blood.

PILGRIM 2:

He was drenched in his blood, so sore did he get

When the wicked Jews beat him (they wrathful were ever)

With scourges attacking, and sharp thorns on his head;

Such a tale of torment to tell I heard never.

PILGRIM 1:

I have never heard tell of such pitiful pain

As our sovereign suffered, hanging on high.

Now he has risen, with might and with main,

I tell it for sure, I saw him with my eye.

PILGRIM 2:

We saw him in sight; this is our intent

By the bread that between us we bade him to break:

Such wonderful ways as we have went,

For Jesus so gentle, was none like to take.

PILGRIM 1:

Never was seen such a wonderful deed

By sea or by sand, in this world so wide;

Let us remember, and duly take heed;

Quick, let's go preach it on every side.

PILGRIM 2:

On every side quickly now preach we -

We'll go to Jerusalem these tidings to tell,

To our fellows from sorrows now reach we!

More of this matter we can't stay to tell!

PILGRIM 1:

We cannot stay here to tell more at this tide,

For the process of plays that presses tonight.

May He bring to bliss all of those on each side,

That Sovereign Lord, who most is in might.

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# 41. The Scriveners' Play: The Incredulity of Thomas

PETER:

Alas, that we for woe were wrought:

Never have men had so much thought.

Since our dear Lord to death was brought

By the Jews fell.

Out of this place, we dare move not;

But here ever dwell.

JOHN:

Here have we dwelled with pains strong.

Life we loathe, we live too long,

For since the Jews did us that wrong,

Our Lord brought low,

We never dared come them among:

Nowhere to go.

JAMES:

The wicked Jews hate us full ill;

With bitter pain, they would us kill.

Therefore I say we should dwell still,

Here where we stand.

Until our Lord, Christ, to us will

Some succor send.

JESUS:

Peace and rest be with you.

PETER:

Ah, brothers dear, what can we know?

What was that sight we saw just now,

Shining so bright,

That vanished thus, we know not how,

Out of our sight?

JOHN:

Out of our sight, now is it sought.

It maddens us, the light it brought.

JAMES:

What it may be, sirs, I know not,

But certainly,

It must have been vanity in our thought;

Naught else could it be.

JESUS:

Peace unto you evermore might be:

Dread you not, for I am he.

PETER:

In God's name, benedicite!

What may this mean?

JAMES:

It's a spirit, in truth, it seems to me:

A haunting fiend.

JOHN:

A spirit it is, I think you're right.

All that appeared here to our sight,

It makes us mad in main and might,

So we are flayed.

It is the same that brought the light,

Made us afraid.

JESUS:

What think you madmen in your thought?

What mourning in your hearts is brought?

I am Christ, so dread you not.

Here you may see:

This same body, which you bought,

Upon a tree.

I have come with you to meet.

Behold and see my hands and feet.

Go on, here grope my five wounds wet:

Here all that is.

This was done your sins to beat,

And bring to bliss.

These pains for you I've undergone;

I feel them greatly, every one.

And see - I do have flesh and bone.

Touch me now.

For substance has a spirit none -

That you must know.

To make you recognize me clear,

I'll show a few examples here.

Bring you forth unto me near,

Some of your meat -

If anything, among you here,

You have to eat.

JAMES:

Ah, loving Lord, that shall last aye,

Lo, here is meat that you eat may.

A honeycomb, the truth to say;

Roast fish also.

Do eat of these, we pray,

With full good will.

JESUS:

Now that you have brought me meat,

To make your truth steadfast and great,

And so despair you will forget,

And trust in me;

With you in here now I will eat.

This you shall see.

Now have I done - you have seen how,

Boldly eating here with you.

Steadfastly look you trust me now,

Again as then;

And take the remnant soon to you,

That here is left.

For you thus was I rent and raised;

Therefore, some of my pain you taste,

And nowhere speak - my word you waste.

This you shall learn,

And into you, the holy ghost,

Receive you here.

Be now true, and trust in me,

And here I grant your powers be:

He whom you bind, bound shall he be,

At your command.

Whoever you loosen, loosed he will be

Evermore in heaven.

THOMAS:

Alas, for sight and sorrows sad,

Mourning makes me amazed and mad.

On ground now, may I go un-glad,

Both even and morn.

That noble from whom salvation I had,

His life has lorn.

Lorn I have, that lovely light,

That was my master most in might;

So doleful was his death's dark night,

As never no man.

Such woe was wrought that worthy wight

With wide wounds wan.

Wan were his wounds and wondrous wet;

With blows full hard was he beaten, that sweet -

All nailed through his hands and feet.

Alas, for pain!

That blessed, the best who bale might beat,

Of life was slain.

Alas, for sorrow, myself I rend,

When I think of that noble one's end.

I found him ever a faithful friend,

Truly to tell.

To my brothers, now I will wend,

Where they do dwell.

Such woeful men, were never none.

All our joy and comfort's gone;

In mourning may we make our moan,

In every land.

God bless you brothers, blood and bone,

Where you now stand.

PETER:

Welcome Thomas, where have you been?

Know you well, undoubtedly,

Jesus our lord, we have just seen!

The ground he used

THOMAS:

Alas for pain! What do you mean?

I think you're confused!

JOHN:

Thomas, the truth it is to say:

Jesus our Lord is risen again.

THOMAS:

Go way! It's all a trick or play

Of fools unwise,

He, whom they so fully did slay,

How should he rise?

JAMES:

Thomas, truly, he's alive,

Who suffered the Jews his flesh to rive.

He let us feel his wide wounds five:

Our lord today.

THOMAS:

I don't believe, so might I thrive,

A word you say.

PETER:

Thomas, we saw his wounds wet -

How he was nailed through hands and feet;

Some honey and fish, with us, he did eat;

That body free.

THOMAS:

I lay my life, it was some spirit,

You thought was he.

JOHN:

No, Thomas, you have gone wrong,

Because he bade us, every one,

To feel him directly, blood and bone,

His flesh to tell.

Of such things Thomas, have spirits none

You know that well.

THOMAS:

What, dear fellows, let be this affair.

Until I see his body bare,

And then my finger put in there,

Within his hide,

And feel the wound the spear did tear,

Right in his side,

Till then, I'll buy no tales between.

JAMES:

Thomas, that wound we have seen.

THOMAS:

Yeah, you don't know what you mean.

Your wit, it wants.

You must think it no sin, to thus me tease,

And mock with taunts.

JESUS:

Peace brothers, be unto you;

And Thomas, some heed of me take:

Put forth your finger now,

My hands you see,

How I was nailed for man's sake,

Upon a tree.

Behold, my wounds are bleeding -

Here in my side put your hand;

Feel my wounds here, understand

That this is I

And be no more misbelieving,

But know truly.

THOMAS:

My lord, my God, full well is me!

Ah, blood of price, blessed must you be!

Mankind on earth, behold and see,

This blessed blood.

Mercy now lord, I ask thee,

With might and mood.

JESUS:

Thomas, since you have seen this sight,

That I am risen, as I promised aright,

Therefore you believe. But every wight,

Blessed be forever,

That wholly believes in my rising right,

And saw it never.

My brothers, go forth together from here:

My rising in every country clear,

Everywhere, both far and near,

Preached shall be.

And my blessing I will give you here,

And my many.

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# 42. The Tailors' Play: The Ascension

PETER:

Almighty God, how stands it now?

My world was never this wild before.

But He appears - I don't know how -

And vanishes when he will fare.

And yet all this may help us now,

And all his workings, less and more.

Ah, King of comfort, good art thou,

And true, and lovely is your lore.

JOHN:

The missing of my master true

Who cannot stay here lastingly

Makes me forlorn each day anew

From longing for his company.

His peer in goodness I never knew

Or might, or wisdom, yet any.

PETER:

We lose him sore; we may it rue

For he loved us full faithfully.

But yet in all my sorrowing

A word that Christ said comforts me

Our heaviness and deep mourning

To joy should all be turned, said he

That joy, he said in promising,

Could by no power taken be.

Therefore, above each other thing

That joy I long to know and see.

MARY:

Good Peter, when my son was slain

And laid in grave, you were in fear

Of whether he would rise again.

But now you know through seeing clear:

Some things he said would come; they came.

Some yet will; but each thing you hear -

Whether it has come or nay -

We ought believe together here.

JESUS:

Almighty God, my father free,

On earth your bidding I have done

And clarified the name of thee;

To yourself now clarify your son.

As you gave unbridled power to me

Over all flesh, grant now this boon:

That I might with you living be,

In endless life, and dwelling soon.

This is the life that has no end

To know you, father, most in might,

And me, your son, whom you did send

To die for man to ease his plight

Mankind was yours, and you their friend

And they looked after me, alright

I died for man, his miss to mend,

I was done to death by means of spite.

And I have taught your will to he

Who would to all my lore incline;

And they have learned obediently -

None of them will waste their time.

For nothing else, you gave them me,

And they are yours as well as mine.

Part them not from our company,

Since thine are mine and mine are thine.

Since they are ours, if they need aught,

Do help them, if it be your will;

And as you know that I them bought,

For lack of help, don't let them spill.

From life to take them, I pray not,

But only keep them out of ill;

And also all who make their thought

On earth, my teachings to fulfill.

My tidings are taken by my many,

To teach the people where they fare.

On earth they shall live just like me

And suffer sorrows, sad and sore.

Despised and hated they shall be,

As I have been, by less and more;

And suffer death in different degrees -

But none, for steadfastness, will spare.

Therefore father, bless these men

In faith and trust, so that they may

Be one, as we are in heaven,

In will and work, both night and day.

And know that I, the son of men,

Am the way, the truth and life always.

So too, each willing man again

May win eternal life today.

But you, my apostles, gathered here,

That long have gone about with me:

Poor in faith you've lately been,

And wondrous hard of heart you be.

Worthy of reproof, I mean.

You've seen already, and yet shall see

As much again as you have seen:

My power proved to posterity.

When I was dead and lay in grave,

That I should rise, you were in doubt;

And some did my uprising crave,

While I was lying under clout,

So deep in earth. But since I have

Been walking forty days about;

I've broken bread, your faith to save;

I've come among you, in and out.

And therefore, have you no more doubt

Of my uprising, day and night;

Your misbelief leaves all folk out.

For you know well: as man of might,

No death has power over me;

I shall be endless living light.

But so a figure clear you'll see

I show myself, within your sight,

How man, by nature's course, will rise,

Although he's rotted unto naught,

Out of his grave. In his same wise

To the day of doom he shall be brought,

Where I shall sit as true justice,

To deem man after what he's wrought:

The wicked with their enemies,

The good to bliss, shall all be brought.

Another argument is this:

In a tree through guile man was betrayed,

And therefore man, to mend that miss,

Bought mankind on a tree in trade,

Thus confounding him and his

Who happily forged that false fraud.

One man brings all again to bliss;

In endless pain the Fiend is paid.

And third in reasoning, I tell:

That just as I go, as well will seem,

So, clothed in flesh and blood, I shall

Return at doomsday, when I deem

The good in endless bliss to dwell,

My foes away from me to flee,

Eternally to boil in hell.

Each living man, now hear and heed!

But travelling into all the land

The gospel truly preach shall ye

To every living woman and man

Who know that, if they baptized be,

That they shall, as you understand

Be saved, and of all thralldom free.

Who thinks not so, he lacks faith and

For want of truth, then damned is he.

But other tokenings indeed,

Shall follow those believing right:

In my name, devils, cruel and keen,

Shall be cast out from every wight;

You'll speak in tongues, and snakes unclean

Destroy. And if, by day or night

You poisoned be, undoubtedly

To hurt you, it shall have no might.

You will, on sick folk, your hands lay,

And health they'll soon enjoy and wield.

You shall have this power always,

My people, both in town and field.

And mind you well, so shall they

That work my will in youth or eld:

A place for them I shall purvey,

In bliss eternally to dwell.

Now my journey is brought to an end,

The time which I was so long lent

Now to my father up I wend

And your father, that down me sent

My God, your God, and all man's friend

Who to his teaching will consent,

To sinners by their sins condemned

Who'll ways amend and will repent.

But since I speak these words here now,

To you, your hearts have heaviness.

All is fulfilled on your account:

I must go hence; needful is this.

You shall not know, unless I mount,

Comforter of the comfortless.

And if I go, you shall find how

I'll send him down, of my goodness.

Fulfilled, my father's will now be.

Therefore, farewell to each one here.

I'll go prepare a place for thee,

To dwell in endless joy up there.

Father, send down a cloud for me -

I come to you my father dear.

The father's blessing, most mighty

I give to all whom I leave here.

[THEN THE ANGEL SINGS "ASCENDO AD PATREM MEUM".]

MARY:

Almighty God, the most in might,

This is a wondrous sight to see:

My son who thus is ravished right,

Wending in a cloud from me.

My heart is both heavy and light:

Heavy that this twinning must be,

And light, that he keeps his word aright,

And in great power ascends from me.

He's left us all his teachings clean

This comforts me in all my care

But unto whom shall I me mean?

At such a loss I was never, ere.

To dwell among these Jews so keen,

Despising me they will not spare -

JOHN:

Although he's not in presence seen

Yet he is salve of all despair.

But lady, since he undertook

That I should serve you as your son

You need do nothing now but look

What earthly thing you would have done

I'd be to blame if I forsook

To work your will, noon, mid-day, one,

Or any day or time of week.

MARY:

With few words I will thank you John.

My motherhood, John, you shall have

And as my son, I shall you take.

JOHN:

That grace, dear lady, I would crave.

MARY:

My son's proverbs I'll never forsake.

Unseemly it would be to strive,

Or speak contrary to what he spake

But John, until I'm in my grave,

You'll never see my sorrow slake.

JAMES:

Since our worthy master went

From us lady, as his will,

We thank him that has to us lent,

You now to live with us here still.

I say for me, with full consent,

Your every wish I will fulfill..

ANDREW:

So will we all, with great intent

For this cause, lady, give no ill.

1 ANGEL:

You men of the land of Galilee

Why wonder ye to see him ascend?

This Jesus, whom from you you see

Up-taken, you shall understand:

Come down again just so shall he

With bleeding wounds in feet and hands.

Those who lived well, full glad may be;

Those who lived ill, with dread shall stand.

2 ANGEL:

You that have been his servants true,

Remaining with him night and day,

Such teaching as with him you knew,

Look now you preach it forth all ways.

Your reward in heaven is each day new,

And all who serve him well he'll pay.

Those who disbelieve shall rue

Their ever-increasing pain, for aye.

JAMES:

Praise the eternal Lord of might,

That thus, in all our great un-ease,

Gives comfort with his angels bright.

Now should the Jews their malice ease,

Who saw for themselves this wondrous sight

Wrought now under their noses. These

Matters we'll preach both day and night,

Our God more than ever to pray and please.

ANDREW:

Now the Jews may be all confused,

If they rethink this inwardly.

How falsely they have him accused,

And innocent killed, through their envy;

Their falsehood, which they long have used,

Now is proven openly.

With their delusions disabused,

They should be stirred to ask mercy.

PETER:

They won't do that, Andrew, let be.

For they are full of pomp and pride.

There's no avail to you or me,

Nor none of us, with them to chide

To stay, I can no profit see;

Therefore, let us no longer bide,

But into various lands go we

To preach through all this world so wide.

JOHN:

That is our charge, for that is best

That we remain no longer here

For here we get no place of rest

Lingering with Jewish power so near

To overthrow us they will cast

Therefore, come forth my lady dear

And go with us. I am full pressed

To wend with you with full good cheer.

My absolute trust now ever I feel

In you, to work after your counsel.

JAMES:

My lady, that trust you will ever feel

In whatever or any that may us avail

Our comfort is your cares to heal

While we may live we shall not fail

MARY:

My brothers dear, I trust it well

My son shall reward all your travail.

PETER:

To Jerusalem we go again

And see what things shall now befall.

Our Lord and master most of main

Protect you and be with you all.

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# 43. The Potters' Play: Pentecost

PETER:

Brothers, give heed now to my dream:

Then with stability we'll understand.

To heaven our master has gone on a beam,

To rest there on his father's right hand.

Alive we are left, an eleven-man team,

To teach his laws true to this land.

But we must be even in number, I deem,

Or else our work will worthless stand.

We need a new number, it is not fit,

Ourselves "eleven" for to call.

Twelve may be asunder split,

And divided into teams equal.

Our Lord commanded us, more and less,

To live our lives just as he led.

He bade us preach, and bear witness

That he redeems both quick and dead.

In him, the prophets' proofs express

That all who trust in his godhead

Of sins shall have forgiveness.

So we say to unlearned and well-read.

And since we in this way

His counsel convey,

We must be sure that we say

Each the same that he said.

JOHN:

Alone he said that each should wend

In all this world, his will to work

And by his counsels being kenned

He said he'd make a holy kirk;

But first, he said he would us send

His messenger, that we right work -

His holy ghost, on us to lend,

To make us masters of matters dark.

Recall: he said to us,

When his ascent we saw,

"Cum venerit paracletus

Docebit vos omnia."

JAMES:

Yes, certainly, he told us so,

And many other things we deem:

"Nisi ego abiero,"

He would say often us between.

He said, I swear, "Unless I go,

The holy ghost shall not be seen;

Et cum assumptis fuero,

Then I shall send you comfort clean."

Thus he told what we must,

And how our deeds we should unfold;

So shall we truly trust,

He will fulfill what he's foretold.

4 APOSTLE:

He promised us from harm to hide,

To hold in health both head and hand.

Consider what he said that tide:

From all our foes he shall defend.

But thus in bale, behold we bide,

Until that messenger he send:

By Jews beset on every side,

So we may neither walk nor wend.

5 APOSTLE:

We dare not walk indeed,

Ere comfort comes to fill.

Our hope in time of need,

Is just to sit stock-still.

MARY:

Brothers, why among yourselves

Do you make mourning constantly?

My son, who is the well of wealth,

Commanded you, "work zealously."

For this day is day ten, to tell,

Since he said we would favour feel.

Leave off sad language, do not dwell

On fear which is never real.

But pray with heart and hand,

That we his help may have;

Soon he shall it send:

The message that will save.

1 DOCTOR:

Hark master; for Mahound's sweet pain,

How these mobsters madden now.

Their master, whom our men have slain,

Makes them believe his tales somehow.

2 DOCTOR:

This scoundrel says he lives again:

That matter may they never vow,

For as they heard his preaching plain:

He was away; they know not how.

1 DOCTOR:

They don't know where he went,

Therefore they fail in full;

Yet they say, shall be sent

Great help through his counsel.

2 DOCTOR:

He'll send them neither cloth not clout;

He was nothing but a wretch alway.

But call our men and make a shout,

So yonder fools we can best flay.

1 DOCTOR:

Nay, nay, they will die for this doubt.

I want no uproar made today.

But quietly wait - they will come out -

We'll mar them then, if we may.

2 DOCTOR:

Certainly, I assent to your will.

Yet, I wish they didn't know.

Those churls then, we shall kill,

Unless they live as we allow.

[An angel is then to sing "Veni Creator Spiritus" [later hand]]

MARY:

Honour and bliss be ever new,

With worship in this world alway

To my sovereign son, Jesu.

Our lord alone, shall last for aye.

Now we may trust his tales are true,

By deeds that here are done today;

As long as you his paths pursue

From fiends he defends, in fierce affray

For his high Holy Ghost,

On you he does send.

Taste mirth and truth most,

And sins amend.

PETER:

All wrongs to mend, now we have might,

This is the mirth our master meant.

I could not look, it was so bright!

Oh, praise the Lord that this has lent!

Now he fulfills his promise right:

To us, his Holy Ghost he's sent.

Just like the sun, it seemed in sight,

And suddenly, then it was sent.

JOHN:

It was sent for our weal,

To give joy and make well.

Its force I can feel:

I could fell folk full fell.

JAMES:

We have force now to fight in the field,

And favour of all folk in here.

With wisdom in this world to wield,

By knowing of all clergy clear.

4 APOSTLE:

Our strength is our virtue revealed,

And each language, we know it to hear.

To that Lord we ought promptly to yield;

He has cared for us mightily here.

5 APOSTLE:

"This is the year of grace;"

That manifests among

The angels in this place,

Who say thus in their song.

PETER: In their singing they said thus

And told this tale between them so:

"Veni creator spiritus

Mentes tuorum visita."

They prayed the spirit come to us

And mend our mind with this mirth low

That they learned of our Lord Jesus,

For he said that it should be so.

JOHN:

He said he should us send

His Holy Ghost from heaven

Our minds with mirth to mend

Now all he said is given.

3 APOSTLE:

Just as he said that it would come,

So was it showed unto our sight:

"Tristicia implevit cor vestrum."

First sorrow filled our hearts' dark night;

"Sed convertitur in gaudium."

Then he said we would be light.

Now, what he promised, all and sum,

Is true among us, through his might.

4 APOSTLE:

His might with main and mood,

May comfort all mankind.

1 DOCTOR:

Hark, by Mahound's sweet blood,

These men have lost their mind!

They carp the cant of every country

And learn the language of every land

2 DOCTOR:

They speak our speech as well as we

And in each need, they understand

1 DOCTOR:

And aren't they all from Galilee,

That take this hardiness in hand?

They must be drunk, this company,

On new-brewed wine, I take my stand.

2 DOCTOR:

Now certainly, that was well-said:

Wine makes all their minds to mar;

Yonder traitors should be flayed,

Before they fly so very far.

4 APOSTLE:

Hark brother, now wait well about,

For over there we find no friend.

The Jews with strength are stern and stout,

And they are ready us to rend.

PETER:

Our master has put all perils out;

Against the fiend's falsehood he'll defend.

Go to your doors, and have no doubt,

To yonder warlocks we will wend.

JOHN:

To fear we have no need;

We won't avoid our debt.

From naming all his creed,

We'll not be stopped by threat.

PETER:

You Jews, that in Jerusalem dwell,

Your tales are false, as you shall find.

That we are drunk, we hear you tell,

Because, you think, we've lately pined.

A prophet proved, whose name was Joel,

A gentle Jew, of your own kind:

He speaks thus in his special spell,

And of this matter tells his mind:

For he did prophesy -

Foretold this far before -

This, you cannot deny,

Consider this, therefore:

"Et erit in novissimus diebus, dicit dominus,

effundam de spiritu meo super omnem carnem."

JAMES:

Listen wretches, thus you hear

How your elders wrote alway

The Holy Ghost we've taken here

Just as your own prophets say.

4 APOSTLE:

It's through the might of our master dear

That all we do is done today.

He gives us might and power clear

To counter all that you can say.

1 DOCTOR:

These men have greater might

Through what today they've known.

2 DOCTOR:

Let's get us out of sight

And let them be alone.

PETER:

Now, my brothers, we all must go

To teach the faith to foe and friend.

Our tarrying may lead to woe;

And therefore, I suggest we wend

To our lady, ere we go.

JOHN:

With loving words, we'll to her tend.

My lady, take it not as blow:

I may no more with you life spend.

MARY:

Now Peter, since it must be so,

That you are going diverse ways,

You will not come to any woe,

As long as Jesus with you stays.

But John and James, my cousins two,

Look you are not too long away.

JOHN:

In weal and woe, your will we do,

Or we do wrong: just as you say.

JAMES:

Lady, this will be done;

At your bidding are we.

MARY:

The blessing of my son

Be with both you and me.

# 44. The Drapers' Play: The Death of the Virgin

GABRIEL:

Hail, mighty Mary, God's mother so mild.

Hail to you, root of all rest; hail to you royal.

Hail, flower and fruit, neither faded nor defiled.

Hail, salve to all sinful; now tell you I shall:

Your son to yourself has me sent

As messenger: truly he says

No longer than three days

Are left in this life that is lent.

And therefore he bids you, look that you blithe be

For into great bliss will that noble you bring,

Where you'll sit with himself, all solace to see,

And be crowned as his queen, and he himself king.

In mirth that ever shall be new

He sends me worthily with this:

A palm from out of Paradise

In token that it shall be true.

MARY:

I thank my seemly son for all this message here.

Forever to him is due all loving,

That in this worthy way would send this good cheer,

Into heavenly bliss my bones for to bring.

But good sir, please tell me your name.

GABRIEL:

Gabriel. Once willingly did I bring

The good word of his bearing;

In truth lady, I am the same.

MARY:

Now, Gabriel, who truly by my son was sent,

Thank you for these tidings you bring now to me.

And loved is that Lord, for the gift which he lent:

That I might be chosen his handmaid to be.

Dear son, I beseech thee:

Great God, grant me grace,

The apostles to have in this place,

That they might my pallbearers be.

GABRIEL:

Now, food fairest of face, most faithful and free,

Your asking your son does grant of his grace

And says, all together in sight you shall see

All his apostles appear in this place

To work all your will at your wending

And soon all your pains shall be past,

And thou shall have life that will last

Evermore, without any ending.

JOHN:

Mary, my mother so mild and meek,

Chief chosen for chastity, tell me what cheer?

MARY:

John, son, I tell you in truth, I am weak.

The call of my son I have heard; just now he was here

Doubtless, he said I shall die.

Within three days of this,

I'll be biding in bliss

Together with God the most high.

JOHN:

Ah, with your leave, lady, say it is not

And tell me no tidings to twin us in two

For if, blessed bird, to the bier you are brought,

Evermore in this world will my woe be for you.

Therefore, let it cease and be still.

MARY:

No, John, son, myself now I see:

As God wills it must be

Therefore, be it done as his will.

JOHN:

Ah, worthy one, when you are gone, I shall be full woe,

Unless God give my brothers some word of your wending.

MARY:

Yes, John my son, certainly, it shall be so.

They all shall come quickly here, at my ending.

The messenger promised me this:

That soon shall my penance be past,

And I'll go to life that will last,

Obediently biding in bliss.

PETER:

Oh God omnipotent, the giver of all grace

Benedicite Dominus! A cloud full clear

Enveloped me in Judah; I was preaching in that place.

And now I have much marvelling, how I come to be here.

JAMES:

Ah! Cease! Of this assembling I cannot say

How, and in what manner, that now we are met.

Either mirth or mourning very well mean it may,

For suddenly in sight, here soon I was set.

ANDREW:

Ah, brother, by my memory and my wits, so were we;

For I know that truly in various lands we were lent.

And how this assembly takes place, I can't see;

Unless to us each, God a message has sent

JOHN:

Ah, fellows, let be this uproar

For as God wills, it must needs be.

Peerless in power is he;

He is able to do this and more.

For Mary, that worthy, shall depart soon; I mean,

Into that infinite bliss that her bairn us bought.

That we in her sight all together be seen

Before she dissevers, her son she besought.

And thus has he wrought at her will:

When she shall be brought on a bier

That we may keep company near

This time, to attend her until.

MARY:

Jesus, my darling, so worthy and dear,

I thank you, my dear son, for your great grace

That all this fair fellowship now I have here,

That they may give comfort to me in this case.

This sickness is sad and severe.

My maidens, now take care of me.

Cast water from there, above me.

I faint, so feeble, I fear.

1 MAID:

Alas, for my lady that gleamed so light

That ever I lived for so long in this land

That I of this lady should see such a sight.

2 MAID:

Alas, help, she dies in our hand!

Ah, Mary, of me have a mind;

Remember, please, before you go;

Some comfort on us two to show;

You know that we are of your kind.

MARY:

What ails you women, excessively to weep?

Your din is annoying, I need now to die.

You should, when you saw me slip into sleep,

Have left off your fussing and let me lie.

John, cousin, make them stop and be still.

JOHN:

Ah, Mary, that mild is of mood,

When your son was raised on rood,

To tend you was his only will.

Therefore your bidding I'll do willingly.

If there's anything, mother, that I amend may

I pray thee, mildest of mood - tell me,

And dearest lady; I shall do it every day.

MARY:

Ah John, son, if only all this pain were past.

With good heart, all of you who are here,

Pray for me faithfully, my dears,

For now the time comes very fast.

1 JEW:

Ah, food fairest of face, most faithful to find,

Oh, maiden and mother so mild and meek,

Because you are courteous and come of our kind,

Our sins to forgive, please your son do beseech

With mercy, to mend all our miss.

2 JEW:

Since fair lady, you come of our kin

Please help us now, most true virgin,

That we may be brought into bliss.

MARY:

Jesus, my son, for my sake I ask this.

As gracious and great, please grant me my grace:

Those who come of my kind and repent of their miss,

Now specially them speed and spare them a space.

And be their defender, if your will it be,

And when I die and come to thee,

I pray me then for your mercy:

The fiend, please do not let me see.

And also, blessed bairn, if your will it be,

I sadly beseech you, my son, for my sake,

Men that are beset by storms or by sea,

Who wisely and willingly my worship awake,

And then name my name in that need,

That you let them not perish or spill.

Of this boon, my son - at your will

Now grant me, especially indeed.

Also, my blessed bairn, grant me this boon:

All that are hurt or in need and name me by name,

I pray, my son, for my sake, that you'll succour them soon

In afflictions so sharp - please shield them from shame.

And women also, when they are in birthing,

Now especially give good speed;

And if they perish in that need,

Them to heavenly bliss, you'll willingly bring.

JESUS:

Mary my mother, through the might now of me,

To make now your mind with mirth to be mending,

Your asking these holy requests I shall heed.

But mother, the fiend must needs be at your ending,

In figure full foul to alarm you.

My angels shall then be about you,

And therefore, dear dame, do not doubt you,

For, doubtless, this death will not harm you.

And therefore, my mother, come mildly to me,

For soon after you, my messanger I'll send

You'll sit with myself, all will have solace to see

You in pleasure eternal, and life without end.

In this bliss you shall ever abide.

For mirth you will never be missing,

But evermore bide in my blessing,

Wielding all this at my side.

MARY:

I thank you, sweet son; I am certainly weak;

I may not now move me for mercy, almost.

To you, son who made me, your maiden so meek,

Through your grace, my good son, I give you my ghost.

My simple soul I send

To heaven, the highest in height,

To Jesus, my son most in might.

Take it now in your hand at the end.

JESUS:

My lovely angels, lighter than leaven,

Into the earth, I will that you wend:

Bring me my mother to highest of heaven,

With mirth and sweet melody, her mood to amend.

For here shall her merriment never be marred.

Mildly my mother right beside me

Shall sit next the high Trinity.

And never shall we be apart.

1 ANGEL:

Lord, at your bidding I go willingly;

That flower unfaded, with pleasure shall get,

2 ANGEL:

And just as you wish, Lord, labour shall we,

On every side solaced, that maiden to set.

3 ANGEL:

Let us fly to her fast, her in force to defend,

To bring now that lady into this bliss bright.

Both body and soul of her shall ascend,

To royally reign with this regency right.

4 ANGEL:

To bliss that lady to bring;

Now Gabriel, let us quickly be wending,

This maiden's mirth to be amending,

A seemly song let us sing.

[With one devil

and they sing the antiphon which is called "Ave Regina Celorum"]

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# 45. The Weavers' Play: The Assumption of the Virgin

THOMAS:

In wailing and weeping, in woe I am weighed,

In sight and in sorrow, in sighing full sad.

My lord and my love, lo, full low is he laid:

That makes me to mourn now, distracted and mad.

What harling and what hurling that headsman he had!

What breaking of branches were burst all about him!

What bruising with beating of bandits full bad!

I learn thus to loyally love him and laud him,

That comely to ken,

God's son Jesus.

He died for us;

That makes me thus

To mourn among many men.

Among men may I mourn for the malice they meant

To Jesus, the gentlest of Jews' generation.

Of wisdom and wit were the ways that he went

That drew all those doomsmen's dire indignation;

For doubtless, full dear was his due domination.

Unkindly they kidded, their king for to ken

With comfort of cruelty and cold recreation.

For he mustered his miracles 'mongst many men,

And to the people he preached

But the Pharasees fierce

All his reasons reverse,

And to the headsman rehearse

That untrue were the tales he did teach.

He taught full true, but the tyrants were enraged

For reproof of their pride, their purpose was pressed

To mischief; with malice their minds were engaged.

Accusals of cursedness caitiffs then cast.

Their rancour was raised, no wretch might it rest

They took him with treason, that teller of truth.

They fed him with fists, and fierce made him fast.

To wreak him, to rip him; there reigned no ruth.

Unduly they doomed him:

They dushed him, they dashed him;

They lushed him, they lashed him;

They pushed him, they pashed him;

All sorrow it seemed that that they said him.

It seemed every sorrow they said in their saying;

They skipped and they scourged him; he escaped not with scorns.

Though as leader and lord in their law lay no claiming

They crowded and thrust down a crown of thick thorn.

Each tugged at that turtledove, tattered and torn:

That blessed body was blue and bruised from the beating;

Yet the headsmen to hang him, with huge hideous horns,

Like brigands or bribers were bellowing and bleating:

"Crucify him" they cried.

Soon Pilate in parliament

On Jesus gave judgement.

To hang him the harlots then went

And no deed of that doom they denied.

Denied not that doomsman to deem him to dead,

That friendly fair food that never offended.

They hied them in haste then to hang up their head.

What woe that they wrought him, no words can invent it

His title - they took them no time to attend it -

Like traitor attainted they tied him and tugged him,

Shrank not from his shouts as his body they bent it.

They raised him on rood as full cruelly they lugged him.

They pierced him with a spear,

That his blood royal

To earth did fall

In redemption of all

That his law like to hear.

To learn, he that likes, of this law that is real,

May find in our friend here a full faithfull feast.

He would hang thus on high to allow us to heal,

And buy us with blood from the bonds of the beast.

Then all our company's cares were downcast,

But that lord would not leave us alone for so long.

He rose on the third day, his ranks right to rest.

In flesh and full fiercely that figure strong

To my brothers did appear.

They told me of this,

But I believed amiss

To rise in the flesh from abyss

Methought it surpassed his power.

But the power of that prince was preciously proved,

When that sovereign showed himself to my sight.

To make test of his manhood my mind was all moved,

But that reverent reduced me by reason and right.

The wounds full wide of that worthy wight,

He told me to touch them, my truth now to test.

And so I did doubting, and bowed to his might;

I bent my back low and obeyed him, the best.

And soon he ascended.

My fellow men

Were parted then.

If they came again

My mood were much mended.

Amend shall my mirth when again we shall meet.

My fellows to find I shall seek till they're found.

I shall stop in no stead but in stall and in street

I shall get me some guides for to greet them on ground

Oh Sovereign, how soon I am set here so sound!

To the vale of Jehosophat in Judea I'm bent,

But now shall I stop and sit here on the ground,

For I'm weary of walking the ways that I went,

So winding and wild.

So now I divest.

And here shall I rest.

I hold it is best

To be on this bank and abide.

*Song One:*

*Surge proxima mea (first version, see Beadle app. 1)*

ANGEL 1:

Rise Mary, O maiden and mother so mild.

ANGEL 2:

Rise, lovely lily, your prayer is full pleasing.

ANGEL 3:

Rise, chieftan of chastity, cheer up your child.

ANGEL 4:

Rise, ripe rose redolent, all rest in your reigning.

ANGEL 5:

Rise, dove of that doomsman whom all is deeming.

ANGEL 6:

Rise, turtledove, tabernacle, temple betrothed.

ANGEL 7:

Rise, seemly in sight, of your son to be seeing.

ANGEL 8:

Rise, greeted goodly in grace for to grow.

ANGEL 9:

Rise up from this ground.

ANGEL 10:

Come chosen child.

ANGEL 11:

Come Mary mild.

ANGEL 12:

Come flower undefiled.

ANGEL 8:

Come up to the king to be crowned.

*Song Two:*

*Veni de libano (first version, see Beadle app. 1)*

THOMAS:

Oh glorious God, what gleams are these gliding?

I move in my mind, what may this all mean?

I see a bird borne, with bliss to be biding

With angels in company, comely and clean.

Many strange sights I am certain I've seen,

But this mirth and this melody madden my mind!

MARY:

Thomas, do banish the doubts that have been

For now I fare forth for my fair son to find

I tell you this tide

THOMAS:

Who, me, sovereign lady?

MARY:

Yes, you, certainly.

THOMAS:

Where go you, I pray?

MARY:

To bliss; with my bairn I shall bide.

THOMAS:

To bide with your bairn in bliss unabating?

Hail gentlest of Jesse the Jew's generation!

Hail wealth of this world, whom the world is awaiting.

Hail highest, enhanced now to high habitation.

Hail dear worthy; dear is thy due domination.

Hail flower fresh flourished; your fruit is fulfilling.

Hail, seat of our saviour and site of salvation.

Hail, happy to hold to, your help is full healing.

Hail, peerless in pleasance;

Hail, precious and pure;

Hail, salve that is sure;

Hail, care's certain cure;

Hail, boon to our bail in obedience.

MARY:

Go to your brothers in bale still abiding

And say in what wise to wealth I am wending

Without tarrying, tell them all of this tiding,

And much to their mirth will this news be amending.

For Thomas, to me were all they attending,

When I drew to the death, all but you.

THOMAS:

But I, Lady? Now on my way I am wending;

To immediate obedience my bones I shall bow

But, aye alas!

Where was I then,

When that trouble began?

An unhappy man,

Both now and ever I was!

Unhappy, unlucky I'm held in my name;

What dreary destiny drew me from that need?

MARY:

Thomas, cease of your sorrow; I'm soothly the same.

THOMAS:

That I know well, worthy mother indeed.

MARY:

Then spare not a space; to my speeches take heed:

Go say then truly, you saw me ascending.

THOMAS:

Now doubtless, dear worthy, I dare not, for dread

For the tales that I tell, they are not attending

For any spell that is spoken.

MARY:

I shall show you

A token true,

Full fresh of hue:

My girdle new - take them this token.

THOMAS:

I thank you as reverent root of our rest.

I thank you as steadfast stock for to stand.

I thank you as trusty tree for to test.

I thank you as buxom bough to the band.

I thank you as glossiest leaf in the glade.

I thank you as beauteous branch for to bear.

I thank you as flower that never will fade.

I thank you as fruit that has fed us all here.

I thank you forever.

If they impede me,

Now shall they heed me.

Thy blessing will lead me,

No doubt I shall do my endeavor.

MARY:

Thomas, obey then this thing I am bidding

He bids you his blessing who bides up above

In sight of my son, who up there is sitting.

I shall kneel to that comely one with crown.

Anyone who despairs, in dale or down,

In peril with pitiful plaint who will pray me

I'll soon ask my sovereign son for to say me

He'll grant them their grace.

Be it man in his mourning,

Or woman in birthing -

All these to be helping

That prince I shall pray in that place.

THOMAS:

I thank you, the goodliest, grounded in grace.

I thank you, the loveliest lady, and higher.

I thank you, the fairest in figure and face.

I thank you, the dearest to do our desire.

MARY:

Farewell; now I pass to that peerles empire.

Farewell my dear Thomas, I can no more reside here.

THOMAS:

Farewell now, the belle of all beauties that bide here

Farewell, oh fair food!

Farewell, key of counsel.

Farewell, all this world's wealth.

Farewell, our hope and our health;

Farewell now, both gracious and good.

*SONG 1:*

*VENI ELECTA*

THOMAS:

Since I've met with that maiden, my mirth now amends.

I shall go now in haste to recall this delight

To my brothers; to bear them this blessing, my back I will bend,

And tell them for certain the truth of this sight.

Through hills and through valleys I'll never alight

Till I find all that fellowship, faithful and dear.

I'll run without rest, searching thoroughly and right

Lo - the many I meant, I meet them right here! I say,

God save you all here.

Say brothers, what cheer?

PETER:

What are you doing here?

You might as well get on your way.

THOMAS:

Why dear brother? What new troubles abound?

PETER:

Thomas, I tell you, there's anger between us.

THOMAS:

I am sorry, dear friends, who faithful are found.

JAMES:

Yes, but in fact, little kindness have seen us.

ANDREW:

His brag and his boast he is busy to bid us,

But should any cares come, he prefers not to know.

We could run mad and rave, before mercy he did us,

For the friendship he's shown us, by my little toe!

THOMAS:

Sirs, I marvel, I say you;

What moves in your mind?

JOHN:

We can well find

That you are unkind.

THOMAS:

Now peace then, and prove it, I pray you.

PETER:

By not coming to court here, unkindness you've shown us.

Our truth has oft turned us to anger and pain.

This year you've been absent, no mercy we've known, as

Now you shall know: Mary's gone on her way,

And dead in her grave she is buried today,

Mary, that maiden and mother so mild.

THOMAS:

Very well I know this.

JAMES:

Thomas, do go away.

ANDREW:

There's no good in asking, he's raving and wild.

THOMAS:

Sirs, with her I have spoken

Later than ye.

JOHN:

That may not be.

THOMAS:

Yes, kneeling on knee.

PETER:

Then quick, can you tell us some token?

THOMAS:

Lo: this token full trusty, she gave me to take you.

JAMES:

Ah, Thomas! Where got you that girdle so good?

THOMAS:

Sirs, my message's meaning more mirthful will make you,

For I found her in flesh on the way to fair food.

When I met with that maiden, it mended my mood.

This sign she has sent you, so seemly to see

ANDREW:

Oh Thomas, unsteadfast, here staring you stood,

And that makes your mind merely mad for to be.

But hearken and hear now:

Let us look where we laid her,

If anyone's disarrayed her.

JOHN:

Let's go grope where we graved her

To see if she's missing, all those who are here now.

PETER:

Behold! Turn your heads here and look now you must!

That glorious good one is gone from her grave!

THOMAS:

Lo. No attention you paid to my talking to trust.

JAMES:

Ah Thomas, untruly now trespassed we have;

Mercy full kindly we cry and we crave -

ANDREW:

Mercy, for foully we've faulted in faith -

JOHN:

Mercy we pray you, we will not deprave -

PETER:

Mercy, for deeds that we did you today.

THOMAS:

Our savious so sweet

Forgives you all,

And so I shall.

This lovely small

Token I've brought, your troubles to beat.

PETER:

It is welcome indeed from that worthy wight,

For once it enwrapped that maid without sin.

JAMES:

It is welcome indeed from that lady so bright,

The womb that it wrapped held redemption therein.

ANDREW:

It is welcome indeed from that healer of sin,

For she bound it about her with blossoms so bright.

JOHN:

It is welcome indeed from that key of our kin,

For it wrapped round that reverent lady full right.

PETER:

Now kneel we each one

Upon our knee

JAMES:

To that Lady free -

ANDREW:

Blessed might she be.

Amen, for she is the loveliest Lady alone.

THOMAS:

Now brothers, be busy, go forth now and seek.

To India I turn, to travel and teach.

PETER:

To the ranks of the Romans so royal I'll speak;

When I pass from this place to my people I'll preach.

JAMES:

And for the Samaritans, sadly I'll search,

To show them the wisdom they work not in waste.

ANDREW:

To Achaia in Greece I will goo be the leech;

I'll go there to help them, and heal them in haste.

JOHN:

This covenant accords:

Since you do so,

So must I also:

To Asia I'll go,

He leads you, the Lord of all Lords.

THOMAS:

The Lord of all Lords in all lands he shall lead you.

While you travel in trouble the truth for to teach

With the fruits of our faith in those fields he shall feed you,

For that labour is lovely, each man for to leech;

Now I pass from your presence, the people to preach

To lead them and teach them the law of our Lord.

As I said, we must sunder, and sadly go seek

Out each country, to cleanse and to knit in one cord

Of our creed.

That noble food

Who died on rood

Both might and mood:

Commands now: prepare you to lead.

*SONG 4:*

*SURGE PROPERA MEA*

*SONG 5:*

*VENI DE LIBANO*

*SONG 6:*

*VENI ELECTA*

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# 46. The Hostelers' Play: The Coronation of the Virgin

JESUS:

My angels that are bright and sheen,

With my message, take you the way.

Go to Mary, my mother clean,

That lady brighter than the day.

Greet her well when you are seen,

And to that maiden you shall say,

Of Heaven she's my chosen queen,

In joy and bliss that shall last for aye.

I will tell you what I have thought,

And why to her you now shall wend:

I want her body to me brought,

To bide in bliss without an end.

From her did come my flesh and bone,

And thus, an unkind thing it is,

That she should live there all alone,

When I am here so high in bliss.

And now to her, I send you forth,

Full friendly for to fetch her here.

There is nothing I love more,

Than that in bliss we may be near.

1 ANGEL:

Oh blissful Lord, now most in might,

We are ready with all our might,

Your bidding to fulfill.

We'll fetch your mother, that maiden free,

Chosen chief of chastity,

Just as it is your will.

2 ANGEL:

Of this message, we are full fain.

We are ready with might and main,

Both by day and night.

Heaven and earth now glad may be,

That noble nurturer now to see,

In whom you did alight.

3 ANGEL:

Lord Jesus Christ, our governor,

We are all bound by your bidding.

With joy and bliss and great honour,

We shall to you your mother bring.

4 ANGEL:

Hail, oh daughter of holy Anne,

Who did conceive through the Holy Ghost;

You brought forth both God and man,

Who then destroyed the fiend's black boast.

5 ANGEL:

Hail, root of Jesse's branch, who brought

That blessed flower, our Saviour;

Who first made mankind out of naught,

And brought him up to heaven's tower.

6 ANGEL:

Of you alone, he would be born,

Into this world of wretchedness;

To save mankind, who were forlorn,

And bring them out of great distress.

1 ANGEL:

You may be glad, both day and night,

To see your Son, our Saviour;

He'll crown you now, oh Lady bright,

You blessed mother and flower fair.

2 ANGEL:

Mary, mother and maiden clean,

Chosen chiefly by your child;

Of heaven and earth, you are the queen,

Come up now, Lady, meek and mild.

3 ANGEL:

Your son has sent us after thee,

To bring you now into his bliss;

You shall abide there blessedly,

For joy and mirth you shall not miss.

4 ANGEL:

For, in his bliss without an end,

You shall every solace see;

Your life in liking you shall spend,

With your dear Son in trinity.

MARY:

Ah, blessed be God the Father's command;

He knows Himself what's best to do.

I thank him with my heart and hand,

That thus his bliss he'd take me to.

And also you, his angels bright,

That from my son, to me are sent.

I am ready with all my might,

To carry out this commandment.

5 ANGEL:

Now we go, oh worthy one,

Up to your Son, who is so sweet.

We bring you into the sight of your son,

To crown you Queen, before his seat.

6 ANGEL:

All heaven and earth shall worship thee,

And mildly be at your bidding;

Your joy shall ever increased be;

Of special solace you shall sing.

[They sing]

1 ANGEL:

Jesus, lord and heaven's king,

Here is your mother, for whom you sent.

We have brought her, at your bidding,

Take her to yourself, as was your intent.

MARY:

Jesus my son, beloved you must be:

I thank you heartily in my thought,

That this way is ordained for me,

And to this bliss you have me brought.

JESUS:

Hail, oh Mary, maiden bright:

You are my mother, and I your son;

With grace and goodness, ever in light,

You'll dwell with me, for bliss you've won.

Now you shall have that which I cite;

The time has passed, of all your care;

You shall be worshipped by angels bright;

You'll never know annoyance there.

MARY:

Jesus my son, beloved you must be:

I thank you heartily in my thought,

That you this way ordained for me,

And to this bliss you have me brought.

JESUS:

Come forth with me, my mother bright,

Into my bliss we shall ascend,

To dwell in wealth, you worthy light,

That nevermore shall have an end.

Your pains, dear mother, to name them now,

Are turned to joy; and true it is,

To you all angels bright shall bow,

And worship you full well, like this.

For great joy, mother, you did know,

When Gabriel greeted you well by this,

And told you truly when and how,

You would conceive the king of bliss.

Now maiden meek, and mother mine,

For you it was great mirth to see,

That I within your womb should lie,

Through greeting of an angel free.

The second joy, mother, was the sign,

That free of pain, you did bear me.

The third, when after my bitter pain,

From death, alive you saw me to be.

The fourth was when I rose up right,

To heaven, to my father dear.

My mother, when you saw that sight,

It was for you a solace clear.

This is the fifth, oh shining light,

Of all the joys, this has no peer.

Now you shall bide in bliss so bright,

Forever and ever, I place you here.

For you are chief of chastity,

Of every woman born, the flower.

Now lady, you shall bide with me,

In bliss that shall ever endure.

Full high on height in majesty,

With all worship and all honour,

Where we shall ever together be,

Abiding in our perfect bower.

Every known sweetness is therein,

That man may think upon, or wife;

With joy and bliss that never grow thin,

There shall you, lady, lead your life.

You shall be worshipped with honours,

In heaven's bliss that is so bright;

With martyrs and with confessors,

With every virgin, oh worthy light.

Before all other creatures,

I shall give you grace and might,

In heaven and earth to send succours,

To all that serve you, day and night.

I'll grant them grace with all my might,

Through the asking of your prayer.

Whoever shall call you, day or night,

In whatsoever distress they are.

You are my life and my heart's bliss,

My mother and my maiden sheen.

My dear darling, receive now this:

Where I am king, you shall be queen.

My angels bright, a song now sing,

In honour of my mother dear;

And here I give you my blessing:

Holy now, all who are here.

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# 47. The Mercers' Play: The Last Judgement

GOD:

When I first all this world had wrought -

Wood and wind, and waters wan -

Each kind of thing that now is aught,

It seemed full well what I did then.

When they were made, "It's good," I thought;

Then in my likeness I made man,

- And man to grieve me tarried not;

Therefore I rue that I the world began.

When I had made man at my will,

To know himself I gave him wits;

And Paradise I put him till,

And bade him hold it all as his.

But of the tree of good and ill,

I said "The time you eat of this,

Man, you speed yourself to kill.

You'll be brought out of all your bliss."

And quickly man broke my bidding.

He thought he'd be a god thereby;

He thought he'd know of everything

Upon his world - he'd be as wise as I!

He ate the apple, disobeying.

Through gluttony he was beguiled,

And therefore man and his offspring,

Forthwith, I put them all to pine.

Too long and late I thought it good,

To catch those caitiffs out of care.

I sent my Son, in full blithe mood,

To earth, to salve them of their sore.

For pity of them, he went on rood,

And bought them with his body bare.

For them, he shed his own heart's blood -

What kindness might I do them more?

Then afterwards he harrowed hell,

And took those wretches from within;

Fought worthily with fiends so fell,

For souls that sunken were in sin.

Then back on earth he went to dwell,

To give an example, heaven to win,

In temples his words to teach and tell,

To obtain the bliss that will never end.

Since then they've found me full of mercy,

Full of grace and forgiveness;

And they as wretches utterly

Have led their lives in wickedness.

Often they grieved me grievously;

Thus they've repaid me my kindness.

Therefore no longer, certainly,

Will I suffer all their wickedness.

Men see the world's mere vanity,

Yet, no man will beware thereby;

Each day, their mirror they may see,

Yet they think not that they shall die.

All that I ever said would be,

Is now fulfilled through prophecy.

Therefore now comes the time for me

To make an end to man's folly.

I've suffered mankind many a year

On lust and pleasures his time to spend;

And now I scarce find, far or near,

A man who will his sins amend.

On earth I see sin everywhere,

And therefore angels I shall send,

To blow their horns, that all may hear.

The time has come: I'll make an end.

Angels, blow your horns and strive,

That every creature you may call:

Learned and lewd, husbands and wives,

Receive their doom, this day they shall.

Every soul that ever had life:

Let none be forgotten, great or small.

There they shall see the wide wounds five,

That my Son suffered for them all.

Before my sight, you'll sunder them;

As one in bliss they shall not be.

As I have promised, my blessed children,

Upon my right hand, I would them see;

And then see how all wicked men,

For fear, upon my left shall flee.

Today I ordain mankind's judgement:

To every man, as he served me.

ANGEL 1:

Praise be to you, the lord of mights most!

This angel shall your message bear.

Your will shall be fulfilled in haste,

All heaven and earth and hell shall hear.

Good and evil, every ghost:

Rise, and fetch flesh you used to wear;

For all this world is brought to waste.

Draw to your doom; it now comes near.

ANGEL 2:

Every creature, old and young:

Quickly I bid that you shall rise,

And with you, body and soul shall bring,

And come before the high justice.

For I am sent from heaven's king,

To call you to this great assize.

Therefore, rise up, give reckoning

Of how you served, and in what wise.

1 GOOD SOUL:

Praise be the Lord in such radiant sheen,

That in this manner made us rise,

Body and soul, together, clean,

To come before the high justice.

Of our ill deeds, Lord, do not mean -

The things we wrought, and in what wise -

But grant us your grace; we pray you'll deem

That we may dwell in Paradise.

2 GOOD SOUL:

Ah! Praised be you, the Lord of all,

Who heaven and earth and all things wrought;

Who with your angels would us call,

Out of our graves, here to be brought.

Often we've grieved you, great and small,

But for this, Lord, condemn us not,

Or suffer us unto the fiends to be thrall,

Who so often on earth, with sins us sought.

1 BAD SOUL:

Alas! Alas, that we were born!

So may we sinful captives say.

Well can we hear by this hideous horn,

That we are drawing near Doomsday.

Alas, we wretches are forlorn,

Who never yet pleased God his way,

But oft, upon his flesh have sworn.

Alas! Alas and wellaway!

What shall we wretches do for dread?

Or where in terror may we flee?

When we can bring forth no good deed,

Before him who our judge shall be?

To ask for mercy, we've no need;

For well I know that damned are we.

Alas, that such a life we've led,

Preparing for this destiny.

Our wicked works shall us betray,

Which we thought never should be known:

Which we committed privately;

Now plainly we may see them shown.

Alas, you wretches, dear we must pay;

Full smart, with hellfire we are smitten.

Now soul and body may never die,

But forever, with wicked pains we're bitten.

Alas for dread! Sore may we quake!

Our wicked deeds are our damnation.

Mourning for all our miss we make,

But there's no help in explanation.

We must be sentenced for our sins' sake,

Forever apart from our salvation,

In hell to dwell with fiends so black,

Where never shall be expiation.

2 BAD SOUL:

As mournful misdoers, we may rise;

Sorely we wring our hands and weep.

For cursedness and covetise,

Damned are we to hell so deep.

We never served our God so wise;

Commandments ten we would not keep.

But often we made sacrifice

To Satan, if our friends did sleep.

Alas, now wakens all our fear.

Our wicked works we may not hide,

But on our backs we must them bear;

They will betray us on each side.

I see the fiends that at us leer,

And all for pomp of wicked pride.

Now we may weep with many a tear.

Alas, that we this day should bide.

Before us plainly, forth are brought

The deeds that damn us, clearly seen -

What ears have heard, or hearts have thought,

Since any time that we may mean.

Where foot has walked, what hand has wrought,

What mouth has spoke, or eye has seen -

This day full dearly has been bought.

Alas, I wish we'd never been!

3 ANGEL:

Stand not together! Part in two!

You shall not all be brought to bliss.

Our Lord of Heaven wills it so,

For many of you have wrought amiss.

The good, on his right hand shall go;

The way to Heaven this way is.

You, dirty damned ones, flee now, go -

On his left hand, as none of his.

JESUS:

This woeful world is brought to end,

My Father in Heaven so wills it be

Therefore to earth now I will wend,

To seat myself in majesty.

To deem my dooms I will descend;

This body I will bear with me.

How it was hurt, man's sins to mend,

All mankind there shall clearly see.

My apostles, and my darlings dear:

This dreadful doomsday now unfolds.

All heaven and earth and hell shall hear,

How I fulfill what I have told.

Sit now on seats beside me here,

And watch and wonder at the sight;

And I shall deem folk far and near,

After their working, wrong or right.

I said also, when you were sent,

To suffer sorrow for my sake,

That all who would them right repent,

Should go with you and joyous wake;

And those who paid you no attent,

The fiery blackened fiends would take.

By "mercy" now, nothing is meant,

Except one's works - to wealth or ache.

My promises wholly I fulfill;

Therefore, come forth and sit by me,

To hear the dooms of good and ill.

1 APOSTLE:

Lord God Almighty, I praise thee!

Late and early, loud and still,

I do your bidding willingly;

I am obliged to do your will,

With all my might as is worthy.

2 APOSTLE:

Almighty God, now it is seen:

You will fulfill your promise right,

And all your words you will maintain.

I praise you Lord, with all my might,

That now such honours you ordain,

Who for our sakes has earthly been.

JESUS:

Come forth, I'll seat myself between,

And all fulfill, here in your sight.

[Here he goes to the Judgement Seat, with song of angels.]

1 DEVIL:

Fellows, array us for the fight,

To seize those which to us belong.

For dreadful doom is passed this night -

I dread me that we dwell too long.

2 DEVIL:

We shall be seen ever in their sight,

And warily wait, else work we wrong;

For if the doomsmen do us right,

We'll bring us back a monstrous throng!

3 DEVIL:

He shall do right to foe and friend,

For now shall all the truth be sought.

All sullied souls, with us he'll send -

To endless pain they shall be brought!

JESUS:

Every creature, take intent,

What message now to you I bring:

This woeful world away is went,

And I have come as new-crowned king.

My heavenly father has me sent,

To deem your deeds, and make ending.

Now comes the day of your judgement:

Of sorrow may all the sinful sing.

The day is come of wretchedness,

And care, for those who are unclean;

The day of bale and bitterness -

Full long abiding it has been.

The day of dread, for great and less;

Of trembling, trouble and of spleen,

When every soul in sinfulness,

Must say, alas - the day is seen!

Here you may see my wounds so wide

Which I received for your misdeed.

Through heart and head, foot, hand and hide;

Not for my guilt, but for your need.

Behold my body, back and side,

How dead I bought you. I agreed

These bitter pains I would abide;

To buy your bliss, thus would I bleed.

Without a crime, they scourged me still -

Like common thief, with taunt and threat.

On cross they hanged me, on a hill;

With crown of thorns thrust on my head.

Beaten bloody, bleeding still,

This spear into my side they set;

My heart-blood, they spared not to spill.

Man - for love of you I did not let.

The Jews spat on me spitefully

They spared me no more than a thief

When they struck me I stood right still

Against those men, I showed no grief

Behold mankind, this same is me

For you I suffered such mischief

Thus was I treated for your folly

So dear to me were you: believe.

This was all done, your sorrows to slake;

Man, it behooved you to saved to be.

No retribution did I ever take;

I suffered it all, for the love of thee.

Mankind, sore ought you to quake,

This dreadful day, this sight to see.

All this I suffered for your sake.

Say man, what suffered you for me?

My blessed children on my right,

To dread your doom, there is no need;

For all your comfort is in sight.

Your life in pleasure you will lead.

Approach the eternal realm of light,

Prepared for you, for your good deeds;

At this point you may be full blithe,

For your reward is great indeed.

When I was hungry, you me fed;

To slake my thirst, your heart was free.

When I was clotheless, you me clad;

You would no sorrow on me see.

In narrow straits, when I was stead,

Upon my pains, you had pity.

When I was brought full sick to bed,

Kindly you came to comfort me.

When I was weary and distressed,

Your generosity harboured me.

Delighted you were, to see your guest -

Lamenting my poverty piteously.

You fed and clothed me of the best,

And made my bed full comfortably;

Therefore, in heaven shall be your rest:

In joy and bliss to be by me.

1 GOOD SOUL:

When did we, Lord that all has wrought,

Give meat or drink, or resting place?

Since we had never on earth but naught,

Except as through the Godhead's grace?

2 GOOD SOUL:

When was it that we clothing brought?

Or visited you in any need?

Or in your sickness, we you sought?

Lord, when did we do for you this deed?

JESUS:

My blessed children, I shall say

What time this deed to me was done:

When any needy, night or day,

Did ask your help and had it soon.

Your free hearts never told them nay:

Early or late, midday or noon,

As oftentimes as they did pray,

They only needed ask their boon.

You, cursed criminals of Cain's kin,

Who never comforted me in care:

I and you forever shall twin.

In dole you'll dwell forevermore,

In bitter bale and endless din.

This you shall have when you come there.

Thus have you served me in your sin,

With wicked deeds you have done ere.

When I had need for drink and meat,

Condemned, you cast me from your gate.

When you were set like sirs on seat,

Outside and weary, wet, I'd wait,

While none of you would on me think,

Or pity took on my poor state.

Therefore, to hell I shall you sink:

Well you deserve to pass that gate.

When I was often clotheless, cold,

In need of you, I begged full naked.

Not house or harbour, help nor hold,

I'd none from you, although I quaked.

Misfortunes you saw manifold,

Yet none of you my sorrows slaked;

But all forsook me, young and old,

Therefore you now shall be forsaked.

1 BAD SOUL:

When had you Lord, that all things has,

Hunger or thirst, God nonetheless?

When was it that God in prison was?

When was God naked or harbourless?

2 BAD SOUL:

When was it we saw you sick, alas?

When showed we thus such unkindness?

Weary or wet, to let you pass?

When did we do this wickedness?

JESUS:

Wretches, as often it was done,

As any in need asked in my name.

You heard them not, your ears were stone;

Your help, to them it never came.

To me, was that unkindness shown!

Therefore, you bear this bitter blame:

To most and least, when it was done,

To me, you did the self and same.

My chosen children, come to me,

To dwell with me, now you shall wend.

There, joy and bliss shall always be;

Your life in pleasure you shall spend.

You cursed ones, from me now flee,

To dwell in hell without an end.

There, you shall nothing but sorrows see,

And sit by Satan's side, the fiend.

Now is fulfilled all my forethought,

For ended is each earthly thing.

All worldly ones that I have wrought,

After their works, they have their dwelling,

Those who would sin, and would cease not,

Of sorrows severe now they shall sing.

And those who amended when they ought,

Shall dwell and abide in my blessing.

[And thus he makes the end, with melody of angels crossing from place to place.]

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