

Play:

Whatever Ye Sow by Mary S. Hitchcock.
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WHATSOEVER YE SOW

A BIBLICAL DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

By
MARY S. HITCHCOCK



CHICAGO and MINNEAPOLIS
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
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WHATSOEVER YE SOW

FOR SIX MEN AND SIX WOMEN

CHARACTERS

(In order of their first appearance)

ELI.....	Prince Stephen's steward
DANIEL.....	The Prince's scribe
RUTH.....	Anna's handmaid
STEPHEN.....	Prince of Judea
SARAH.....	One of the Prince's debtors
TABITHA.....	Rebecca's aunt
REBECCA.....	The Prince's betrothed
MARTHA.....	Rebecca's handmaid
ANNA.....	The Prince's mother
JUDE THE SAMARITAN.....	Another debtor
RABBI JOSEPH.....	A priest from the Temple
ESAU.....	Slave in Prince Stephen's household

TIME—*About 29 A. D.*

PLACE—*Prince Stephen's palace in Jerusalem.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About an hour and a half.*

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SYNOPSIS OF ACTS

ACT I. In the court of Prince Stephen's palace in Jerusalem.

ACT II. Same as in Act I. One month later.

ACT III. Same as in previous acts. Two months later. During this act the curtain is lowered twice for a minute, the first time to indicate the lapse of a week, the second time to indicate the lapse of five days.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Care should be taken in preparing the costumes for this play, with a view to obtaining the long, graceful lines of the loose, flowing garments of the ancient Hebrews. Illustrations of such costumes may easily be found in Bible story books in church and public libraries.

Edward Robinson, in his Bible dictionary, says: "The chief garments of the Hebrews were the tunic or inner garment, and the mantle or outer garment. The tunic was of linen and worn close to the body. It had wide and open sleeves and reached below the knees; that worn by females reached to the ankles. The upper garment or mantle was a piece of cloth nearly square, and two or three yards in length and breadth, which was wrapped around the body or tied over the shoulders. Between these two garments, the Hebrews sometimes wore a third—a long and wide robe or tunic, without sleeves. The head was usually bare, or covered by a fold of the outer mantle. The priests wore a sacred turban. Veils were an article of female dress. Women wore a variety of plain and ornamental headdresses.

"The wealthy delighted in white raiment. Garments of mourning were dark brown or black. The Hebrews used a variety of colors for their gayer and more costly dresses. Blue, scarlet, and purple are most frequently referred to, the first being a sacred color.

"In Isaiah iii:16-23, mention is made of the decorations

common to the Hebrew women; among which are included tunics, embroidered vests, wide, flowing mantles, girdles, veils, caps of network, and metallic ornaments for the ears and nose, for the neck, arms, fingers, and ankles; also crimping-pins and mirrors.

"Sandals are usually intended where shoes are spoken of in our version. The ordinary sandal is a mere sole of leather or wood, fastened to the bottom of the foot by thongs, one passing around the great toe and over the fore part of the foot, and the other around the ankle. The sandals of females were frequently much ornamented."

DANIEL—A pleasant-faced, kindly young man of about twenty-five, with tactful manners. Very business-like with the Prince, and lover-like with Ruth. He is dressed in a sleeveless tunic of white linen with scarlet bands at neck and hem, and has a scarlet mantle. Wears sandals.

ELI—A middle-aged man in his forties, rather stout. He has dark hair and beard slightly touched with gray, and has a dignified, impassive manner. He wears a long full-sleeved robe of light brown or tan, with a blue napkin bound around the forehead and hanging straight in the back.

RUTH—A comely young woman in her early twenties, with a gay sprightly manner and a touch of innocent coquetry. She wears a blue robe with a veil of either white or a lighter shade of blue, and the usual sandals.

STEPHEN—A handsome, well-poised young man of twenty-eight, dark-haired, dark-eyed, smooth-shaven and straight as an arrow. In Acts I and II his manners are haughty and arrogant, and he displays all the cruelty of the pampered youth spoiled by too much power and wealth at too early an age. In Act III, he is bewildered, crushed, and humbled by calamity, his manners gradually acquiring kindness, showing the change wrought in his nature by suffering. In the first part of Act III, he has a thin bandage, through which he may see easily, tied over his eyes, and gropes his way about the stage with hands outstretched in the pathetic fashion of the blind. He is richly dressed in a

white linen tunic, sleeveless, embroidered with gold and purple at the neck and hem, and around the armholes. Around his neck is a costly gold chain. Around his waist is a purple sash with gold tassels on the ends, and he wears a purple mantle. His costume outshines the dress of all the other characters in simple elegance and costliness.

SARAH—In her forties. Long years of poverty and overwork have made her look older. Her back is bent and she walks slowly and laboriously. She has a timid manner and appears completely crushed by the Prince's arrogance. She wears a plain yellow tunic and a brown mantle of coarse material.— Her poverty is evident in her clothing.

TABITHA—A dignified, motherly-looking woman of about fifty. She wears a long white robe with full sleeves, with a wine-colored girdle and white veil bound with wine-colored band, and a wine-colored mantle.

REBECCA—Aged twenty. A beautiful, spirited girl, of the idealistic type, capable of great self sacrifice and devotion to those she loves. In Acts I and II, her manner to the Prince is at first pleading, then disdainful, repellent, and full of indignant hostility. In Act III, when her pity for him is aroused by his suffering, her attitude changes to one of gentleness and tender sympathy. She is dressed in a white linen robe, sleeveless, with low neck, fastened on each shoulder by a jewelled clasp. She has a bright blue girdle and a white veil ornamented with embroidery or bands of blue and bound by a band of gold coins across the forehead. On her arms are bracelets and armlets. Her mantle is of the same color as her girdle.

MARTHA—A pretty young servant girl of about eighteen. Her manner is modest and full of eagerness to please. She wears a robe of orange and a veil of either white or a lighter shade of yellow.

ANNA—A tall, stately matron of forty-eight, handsome and benign of countenance. Her manners are gracious and serene. She sees her son's faults clearly, and they obviously worry her. In her scenes with him, she shows motherly tenderness, foreboding, and sorrow for his moral blindness.

Her costume is a long white robe embroidered with purple, and a white veil with purple silk bands, bound about her temples with a gold band, and falling straight behind. She wears a jewelled girdle and necklace and armlets.

JUDE—In his middle fifties. A wiry, muscular, rough-looking peasant type, with bristling gray hair and beard, a skin tanned very dark from constant labor under a tropical sun, and knotted, work-hardened hands. He has a truculent manner, but is not really bad at heart, being literally driven to desperate deeds by the Prince's harshness. He wears a short tan-colored tunic and has a dark red mantle of coarse material. In Act III, he is without the mantle, and his tunic is stained and disheveled, showing signs of hard wear. His hair is matted, and his face and body bear the marks of his fugitive life.

RABBI JOSEPH—An elderly priest, in his fifties, shrewd and intelligent-looking, with an authoritative manner. He is dark, with carefully trimmed beard and hair, sprinkled with gray. He wears a white tunic with blue robe and turban.

ESAU—Aged about twenty-one. He is quick of movement, slim, lithe, and muscular, with darkly tanned skin and black hair and eyes, and is smooth-shaven. His attitude toward the Prince is somewhat cringing and indicates a deep fear of his master. He wears a short yellow tunic.

NOTE.—Cheesecloth, combined with gold and silver paper and colored crêpe paper, may be used for the women's costumes, and heavy cotton cloth for the men's. Flowers cut from cretonne and sewed on the garments may serve for embroidery. The material for Sarah's and Jude's costumes should be coarser and of poorer quality than the others. The publishers of this play do not handle crêpe paper, which may be obtained from almost any local dealer.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STAGE

The back and sides of the stage may be built of gray plaster board marked with broad black crayon to look like

stone. The floor should be marked in larger squares. The well curb is also plaster board marked like stone.

PROPERTIES

Large chair, with circular seat extending up into arms, and with low back, or no back at all

Three benches

Stepladder off stage behind window

Dark-colored curtains

Small bells for curtains

Several low potted plants

A dozen or more large potted palms and dwarf cedars in tubs

Numerous potted plants for well curb

Large earthenware jar with double handles. If this cannot be obtained, a large washstand pitcher painted gray or terra cotta, may be used.

Rope to let jar into well

For RUTH—Urn-shaped water jar, large enough to hold about one gallon.

For STEPHEN—Tablet and stylus. The tablet can be made from two blocks of wood about seven by ten inches, and half an inch thick, held together by strips of gummed cloth or paper pasted inside, so that the blocks will open like a book. A large meat skewer will serve as a stylus.

For SARAH—A wallet containing coins.

For MARTHA—Small lacquer tray, fan, water jar similar to Ruth's.

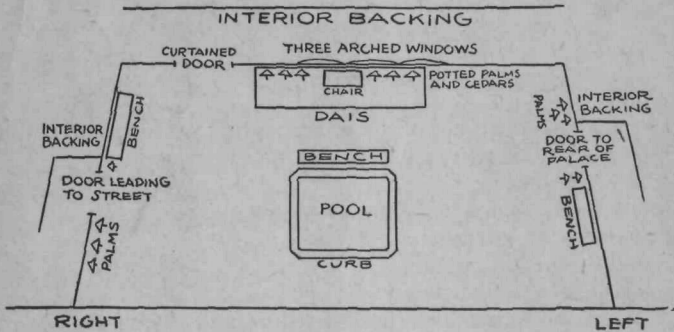
For JUDE—Small vial containing white powder. Cornstarch may be used.

For REBECCA—Bouquet of flowers.

For DANIEL—Scroll. This is a long sheet of parchment or paper to resemble parchment, rolled on two sticks from the ends toward the middle. The sticks should have knobs at both ends.

WHATSOEVER YE SOW

SCENE PLOT



STAGE DIRECTIONS

Up stage means away from footlights; *down stage*, near footlights. In the use of *right* and *left*, the actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

WHATSOEVER YE SOW

ACT I

SCENE: *The courtyard of PRINCE STEPHEN'S palace in Jerusalem, about 29 A. D. It is morning, and bright sunlight streams down on the courtyard. It is a rectangular space in the middle of the palace, with gray stone walls (plaster board) and a floor of stone flagging. It has three arched doors: one up center right, protected by heavy dark curtains; a second door at right, and a third at left, leading to the rear of the palace. In the center of the back drop are three arched, unglazed windows, about six feet above a small platform or dais, placed against the center of the back drop. A stepladder should be placed back of the middle window behind the back drop, for the use of REBECCA and RUTH when they look out of the window. Well back on the dais is the Prince's chair, whose seat curves up into the arms and has a low back (or none at all), with a bright-colored, rich-looking rug on it. Down center is a pool or well, from four to six feet square, surrounded by a low curb of stone (plaster board). If desired, silver paper or sheets of glass may be used to simulate water, but this is not absolutely necessary, as the interior of the pool will be fairly well hidden by the curb and by the profusion of potted plants placed upon it, which add to the beauty of the pool. A large earthenware jar with double handles, or a pitcher, if preferred, with a rope fastened to it, is just inside the curb, as if ready to be drawn up full of water. Along the up-stage side of the pool, parallel with the dais, is a low bench. Another is along right wall, a little up stage from the right door, while a third bench stands along left wall, a little down stage from the door. All three benches are covered by*

gayly colored rugs. A row of large palms and dwarf cedars in tubs stands at the back of the dais, and there are small groups of potted palms and cedars on each side of the doors at right and left, which are uncurtained. To the curtains of the door up center right are attached several small bells, which announce the approach of all who enter, by tinkling whenever the curtains are moved.

At rise of curtain, ELI is alone on the stage, standing near the lower right-hand corner of the dais. DANIEL immediately enters at left. *To center*

DANIEL (*saluting*). The peace of our fathers be with thee.

ELI (*returning salutation by crossing his hands on his breast and bowing*). And with thee, also. Thou art a stranger.

DANIEL. I am Daniel, the son of Cephas.

ELI (*coming down stage to DANIEL and speaking cordially*). Ah! The new clerk, the scribe for the Prince?

DANIEL. Thou hast said.

ELI. Why dost thou come? Wouldst thou not rather be free on the Judean hills than a servant in the house of the Prince?

DANIEL. I come to please myself. Also my father oweth the Prince, and in this manner I shall be able to pay something of the debt and thus ease my father's burden.

ELI. Ho! Another of his debtors!

DANIEL. Hath he many?

ELI (*shrugging and glancing down at floor*). Count the stones in the courtyard, then go out and count the stones of the street, and thou wilt hardly number them.

DANIEL. Is he a kind master? _____

ELI. To those that do his bidding without question.

DANIEL (*proudly*). I am not a slave.

ELI. He will not remember that.

DANIEL. I have seen him. He is young; he is handsome; he hath great riches. Why should he be unkind?

*walk
down
stage
& then
walk to
Eli*

ELI. He is not, unless your wills clash. Then thine must bend to his.

DANIEL. And if not—?

(ELI spreads out his hands and shakes his head.)

ELI. But he giveth audience to his debtors on the hour, and thou shalt see.

DANIEL. Is he unjust?

ELI. No. He boasteth himself of his justice. But he knoweth not mercy. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Is not that the law of Moses? But I must attend him. Wait thou here. (*Exit at right.*)

Daniel walk to front at R. S.
Bells on curtain ring. DANIEL looks that way and sees RUTH enter, up center right, with water jar on her shoulder. He goes to meet her. RUTH, seeing him, sets down the jar, and they clasp hands, raising them high.

meet at bench - Ruth L - Daniel R -
DANIEL. Now I know that the blessing of the God of our fathers doth follow me, in that I have found thee, my beloved Ruth.

RUTH. Oh, Daniel, can it be true? My heart is full of happiness that thou hast come.

DANIEL. Did I not tell thee I would come?

RUTH. But however didst thou find me?

DANIEL. After much persuasion, thy sister Abigail told me that when thy father had forbidden me to see thee he bound thee out to be a handmaid to the Princess Anna.

RUTH. But how is it that thou art here?

DANIEL. I offered myself as a scribe to the Prince, her son. And my father favored my coming, because he owes the Prince a large sum and I am able in this manner to pay a part of it.

RUTH. Hast thou been here long?

DANIEL. Thou couldst answer that thyself, as I have not seen thee before. Eli left me here while he went to the Prince, who he said would soon come.

RUTH. My mistress is very kind, and I am sure she will

*see
at C.M.
bench - Daniel
at R-side*

allow me to speak with thee; and thou wilt tell me of my home and kindred.

S. DANIEL. And I will tell thee how much I love thee, also.

RUTH. Tell me quickly, for that is the sweetest music to me. And the Prince will come soon, and I must be gone.

DANIEL. Dost thou fear him?

RUTH. Everyone fears or dislikes him.

DANIEL. It doth not matter what he is like as long as I am near thee. Why, is he not a good master?

RUTH. I know not. I have not spoken with him.

DANIEL. He is young.

RUTH. And very handsome.

DANIEL (*not very well pleased*). Oh, thou dost think him handsome?

RUTH. Everyone knows he is handsome and hard and cruel, and oh, so miserly! His father left him much moneys when he died; and the report is that Prince Stephen hath increased it ten times.

DANIEL. Small wonder that Rebecca doth not love him.

RUTH. And pray, who is Rebecca?

DANIEL. The fairest maid in all Hebron.

RUTH (*offended*). The fairest maid, thou sayest?

DANIEL (*enthusiastically*). Yea. As beautiful as the Rose of Sharon, and as stately as the tall white lilies that bloom in the springtime.

RUTH (*exasperated*). Oh, why didst thou come? (*Turns away from him.*)

DANIEL (*hastening to conciliate her*). Because she is not fair for me. Only thou art that. And my heart is so wholly thine that even such beauty as hers moveth me not.

RUTH (*turning back to him, appeased*). But what meanest thou, saying she loveth not the Prince?

DANIEL. Because she doth not and will have naught of him.

RUTH. Doth he love her?

DANIEL. More than all the world. Once upon a time, her father was the richest man in our country. He is Ishmael of Hebron.

RUTH (*shrugging cynically*). Oh, that is why the Prince doth love her!

DANIEL. No; it is not. Listen. In those days he and the Prince's father were warm friends. But for years his many ventures have failed on land and sea, and he doth owe much and is nigh to ruin.

RUTH. Tell that to the Prince, and he will cease loving her.

DANIEL. He hath known it all along. Old Ishmael is cunning, and last year he invited the Prince to come and see his ripening grapes, than which there are none finer. The Prince came and saw Rebecca in the garden and went quite mad over her, as her father expected. Since then, he hath been there time and again and besought her to be his wife. And her father did entreat her to that end. But she, being a wilful maid, would have none of him. She said she would give herself only to the man she loved, and he was yet to be found. She doth laugh at the Prince and bid him go his way. He is very angry and doth declare he will have her for his wife at all hazard. I am told that he hath bought up most of her father's debt, that she may not escape him.

RUTH. She could not love the Prince if she be a true woman. (*Shakes her head positively.*) No one in the wide world loveth him but his mother.

DANIEL. And doth she?

RUTH. Oh, very, very much. It is the way mothers have, whether we are good or bad. But mind not the Prince. I am rejoiced at thy coming. Thou wilt not go away and leave me alone. (*Puts her hand on his shoulder.*)

DANIEL. Never without thee. (*Puts an arm around her.*)

RUTH (*drawing coyly away from him*). I must draw the water and return to the women's house.

DANIEL. I will help thee. (*Draws the water, empties it into the jar, and lifts it to her shoulder.*) I would that I might carry it for thee. I would ever be thy burden-bearer. (*Gazes at her longingly.*)

RUTH. I would that it were so, also. Some one cometh. I will see thee soon. (*Exit RUTH, up center right.*)

Rise

Rise

Ruth
cross
to P.O.S

Eli - back to wall for Debtors.
Debtors - at right end of dais

WHATSOEVER YE SOW

After a pause, enter PRINCE STEPHEN and ELI, up center right. DANIEL crosses his hands on his breast and bows in salutation to STEPHEN.

Daniel at L.S. Ho - L.C. up

STEPHEN (graciously). Peace be with thee. (Inclines his head slightly as he pauses up center near dais.)

DANIEL. And with thee, my master.

STEPHEN. Eli tells me thou art Daniel, the son of Cephas, who hast come to be my scribe. Thy father said thou wert learned in certain matters. Dost thou write Hebrew and Latin?

DANIEL (modestly). Both, my master.

STEPHEN. Where didst thou get thy learning?

DANIEL. In the Temple.

STEPHEN. Then this is not thy first coming to Jerusalem?

DANIEL. I was an attendant in the courts.

STEPHEN. It is well. Thou canst serve me. (Goes to the seat on dais and turns to ELI, speaking in a hard tone.) Are the debtors here?

ELI (bowing). Most surely. They await thy pleasure.

STEPHEN (takes from his robe a tablet and stylus and hands them to DANIEL). Keep thou count for me. (To ELI.) Let them come.

Exit ELI at right. After a pause, he reënters, right, ushering in SARAH. She goes meekly up center to dais and bows low to STEPHEN.

SARAH. The peace of our fathers be with thee.

STEPHEN. And with thee. Hast thou brought the price?

SARAH. I have. But my husband hath died, and my children are fatherless. Wilt thou not be merciful to us and let me keep the interest? It is all my living. I have nothing more. I'll pay it thee later.

STEPHEN (coldly). That I cannot do. All my debtors would be claiming their interest. Hand the moneys to Eli.

(She takes a bag of coin from under her robe and silently hands it to ELI. He counts it.)

Eli to
Dias P.S.
Daniel to
L.S.
at
dais
at
wall

ELI. It is all here. (*Hands it to STEPHEN.*)

STEPHEN. Good. (*To DANIEL.*) Mark out her debt.
(*DANIEL writes.*)

Exit SARAH at right, weeping, conducted to door by ELI, who follows her out. ELI immediately reënters at right.

ELI (*announcing*). The noble Rebecca, in the care of the good Tabitha, her aunt, and her handmaid, are without.

STEPHEN (*interested at once*). It is well. Let them come. The others can wait. (*Steps down from dais.*)

Enter TABITHA, REBECCA, and MARTHA, at right. TABITHA crosses her hands on her breast and bows low, and REBECCA does likewise. STEPHEN places his hand on his forehead and bows. The women advance up stage to dais. ELI retires to extreme right, a little up stage from right door, where he stands impassively during the ensuing dialogue.

STEPHEN. I give thee welcome, good Tabitha. Peace to thee and those with thee.

TABITHA. And to thee, also. Ishmael of Hebron, whom thou knowest, hath entrusted his daughter Rebecca to my care. She cometh to ask mercy for her father, who is too ill to come to thee himself.

STEPHEN. Thrice welcome is the fair Rebecca. She is as sunshine in winter unto my house.

REBECCA (*putting back her veil*). I bring thee the peace of Ishmael my father. He could not leave his bed, else he would not have sent me. And I beg that thou wilt have mercy upon us, good Prince, and forgive my father his debt until such time as he can repay thee.

STEPHEN. Did I not tell thee the terms upon which I would release all his debt forever, when last I saw thee in thy father's house?

REBECCA (*stretching out her hands to him pleadingly*). I hoped that thou mightest repent of thy hard-heartedness and be merciful to us in our extremity.

STEPHEN (*inflexibly*). I will readily cancel all thy

father's indebtedness, if thou wilt be my wife. That has long been understood. *Turns to L.S.*

REBECCA (*clasping her hands as in prayer*). Oh, Prince, harden not thy heart! Let it be filled with mercy and pity! Give us time to repay thee, and let me return to my father.

STEPHEN (*bowing gallantly*). Most noble lady, my heart can never be hardened toward thee. Ever since I first saw thee in thy father's vineyard, it hath been full of thy beauty and sweetness. I begged thee to be my wife, but thou hast refused again and again. I prayed thee to wed with me, and thou didst scorn me. Now thou dost come and beg for mercy when thou didst show me none.

REBECCA (*faltering*). But my father is old and helpless and can never repay, unless thou wilt wait.

STEPHEN (*coolly*). That I know. I bought all thy father's debts knowing he could never repay me. Dost thou ask why did I throw away my shekels? Why, because I foresaw this day, when thou wouldst come to me and ask for mercy. And this is my answer: I will hold thee as hostage for thy father's debt. Thou shalt be a guest of my mother and abide in the women's apartment, until such time as he shall repay me all that he oweth me, or until thou dost consent to become my wife. Then I will cancel the debt, and only then. I have said.

REBECCA. Alas! My quest is hopeless. (*Turns to TABITHA, who takes her hand sympathetically.*) Dear aunt, tell my father the conditions and pray the Lord God of our fathers to soften the heart of our creditor. (*Draws her veil completely over her face and bows her head. TABITHA tries to comfort her in pantomime.*)

STEPHEN (*to ELI*). Tell the women to ask my mother to come to me. (*Exit ELI, through the curtain, up center right. STEPHEN turns to REBECCA.*) Thou wilt go with my mother. She will care for thee most zealously. *to R.C.*

Enter ANNA, through curtain up center right, followed by ANNA RUTH and ELI. ELI immediately goes out at right. down to

STEPHEN (*saluting*). Peace to thee, my mother. *line with other*

Ruth to R-S

ANNA. And to thee, my son. They told me that thou dost desire my presence.

STEPHEN. They told thee truly. (*Presents REBECCA.*) This is Rebecca, the daughter of Ishmael, a friend of my father's long ago. He dwells near Hebron, formerly in great prosperity, but evil days have come upon him, and his riches have flown. In the Lady Rebecca, however, he hath a treasure beyond compare. I saw her twelve months ago, and I wished beyond all things to make her my wife. She hath come and will remain with thee and thy maidens until such time as she becometh my bride. (*Takes REBECCA'S hand and leads her to his mother. ANNA kindly takes the girl's hand and escorts her out at center right, followed by TABITHA and the two maids. STEPHEN goes back to dais.*)

Enter ELI, at right.

STEPHEN (*to ELI*). Who awaiteth?

ELI. Many are there. Chief among them is Jude the Samaritan.

STEPHEN. He oweth me many shekels. Bring him hither.

ELI *goes out at right and immediately returns, followed by*
JUDE.

JUDE (*stridently*). The peace of Israel be thine. (*Bows to STEPHEN.*)

STEPHEN. And thine also. Last time thou couldst not pay, but promised faithfully to pay at this time.

JUDE. That I cannot do. The locusts have eaten my crops, and thou hast taken all my money, with thy interest.

STEPHEN. I took only the lawful rate.

JUDE. Thou didst collect the utmost farthing.

STEPHEN. Was it not mine?

JUDE (*bitterly*). Aye, it was thine. But hast thou no mercy on the poor?

STEPHEN. Mercy is for babes and women, not for men.

JUDE (*roughly*). I have naught to pay thee—not even thy interest! Thou wilt have to extend the time another year,

STEPHEN. That I will not do.

JUDE. What wilt thou do? I cannot make the stones of the field into gold or silver.

STEPHEN. Thou didst tell me that thou wouldst pay this year or forfeit thyself and thy property and thy sons. And I can take thee and thy sons and thy land, if thou dost defy me.

JUDE (*sullenly*). Thou hast no writings.

STEPHEN. No; but I have three witnesses—which is better.

JUDE. I did not believe evil fortune would come again this year when I promised that.

STEPHEN. Then thou dost admit thy promise?

JUDE. It is true. It is true. But I did not believe one of thy lineage could be so hard and unjust.

STEPHEN. Call me not unjust. I only demand my rightful dues. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. A shekel for a shekel. And by that law thou shalt abide, as I will.

JUDE (*desperately*). Give me one more month, master. I will sell all my holdings and bring all the money; that I promise faithfully. And it will cost thee many shekels to call in the lawyers and collect it.

STEPHEN. That is true. It is well said. I will give thee one month more. But beware! My vengeance shall follow thee to the ends of the earth if thou dost try to play me false.

JUDE (*angrily*). I go, but I will come again.

STEPHEN. I shall expect thee this day month. See that thou art here with the price. (*Exit JUDE at right, scowling.*)

STEPHEN turns to ELI.) Tell the other debtors I will see them to-morrow.

ELI. Some are sore pressed and say they cannot stay, my master.

STEPHEN (*haughtily*). Peace! They must await my pleasure. (*Exit ELI at right.*)

(STEPHEN descends from the dais, strolls down center to the pool, and stands looking into the water.)

Stephens to pool at L. S. - Stand at C.

After a brief pause, ELI reënters through the curtains, up center right.

ELI. My master, thy lady mother is without and craveth a few minutes' speech with thee.

STEPHEN (*absent-mindedly, still looking into the pool*). Bid my mother enter.

ELI goes out, up center right, and immediately returns, ushering in ANNA. She goes at once to STEPHEN and lays her hand affectionately on his arm. ELI quietly exits, at right.

ANNA. I would have a word with thee, my son. I do not quite understand about our guest Rebecca. Art thou buying her as a slave?

STEPHEN (*with a shrug*). In a sense, perhaps. All good things have their price, my mother; and I have sacrificed many good shekels to obtain her. At the same time, I love her, and she shall be mine—the peerless Rebecca! (*His eyes flash and his tone warms with ardor.*) There is no other like unto her. I think of her glorious beauty by day, and I dream of her by night. My soul is filled with her sweetness!

ANNA (*watching him gravely and keenly*). But if she love thee not, my son, what will that avail thee?

STEPHEN (*throwing back his head arrogantly*). But she shall love me! Can I not give her jewels and fine raiment and a palace and many servants? (*Returns to the dais and stands beside it, very erect and haughty, not looking at his mother.*) She shall reign as a queen on a throne if she will but love me.

ANNA (*after a short pause*). Alas, my son! Thou knowest naught of the human heart. Now I understand why she doth look so sad and hopeless. (*There is another pause, during which she continues to look at him steadily.*) I thank thee, my Stephen, for explaining thy purposes. (*Inclines her head to him and walks quietly out, up center right, her face inscrutable.*)

count 15

step back

To step at C - R - S -

count 25

(STEPHEN bows dutifully as she passes him, then seats himself again on the dais, looking puzzled and annoyed.)

Enter ELI at right.

ELI. A priest from the Temple, Rabbi Joseph, would speak with thee.

STEPHEN. Bid him enter.

Exit ELI at right, returning at once and ushering in the
RABBI JOSEPH.

RABBI JOSEPH. May the blessing of the one true God rest upon thee.

STEPHEN. And upon thee, reverend Rabbi.

(Exit ELI at right.)

RABBI JOSEPH. I come with a message from the Council of the Inner Court.

STEPHEN. I await thy message with pleasure.

RABBI JOSEPH. It concerneth the Nazarene. What knowest thou of Him?

STEPHEN (*carelessly*). Nothing. Only of strange unholy tales and wild imaginings that are everywhere repeated concerning Him.

RABBI JOSEPH. Hast thou seen Him?

STEPHEN. Once afar off. I was resting beneath a tree on Mount Olivet when adown the way came a dozen or more fishermen and craftsmen. They appeared to be listening to one in their midst very different from themselves, whom they regarded with awe and wonder. I mounted Selim, my Arab, and rode away. But the attendant who rode with me told me that it was the Nazarene and His followers.

RABBI JOSEPH. Dost thou believe in Him?

STEPHEN (*contemptuously*). What! Believe in a soothsayer—a wandering charlatan by the roadside? What is He to me? (*Shrugs.*)

RABBI JOSEPH. That I know not. But they are repeating

a strange tale of how one of thy servants was cured by Him of lameness, without money and without price.

STEPHEN. Then it cannot be true. Didst thou ever know a physician who healed without pay? Besides no attendant of mine is lame.

RABBI JOSEPH. Of a surety, they are telling a strange story, in the streets and the courts, of how thy slave was thrown from his horse and lamed.

STEPHEN (*rises in agitation*). What slave? What horse?

RABBI JOSEPH. I know not as to the slave, but it is told that the horse was a wonderful Arabian, dun and dappled, with a coat like satin and mane and tail as of spun silk.

STEPHEN (*sternly*). Hold! What sayest thou? No man ever shalt ride mine Arab but myself. (*Resumes his seat impatiently.*)

RABBI JOSEPH. The tale is given credence and hath many witnesses to prove it.

STEPHEN (*turns to door at left, much excited*). Ho, there, without! (*Claps his hands sharply.*)

Enter ELI at right.

STEPHEN. Where is Esau of the desert? Bring him here at once. (*ELI bows, crosses to left, and exits at left. STEPHEN turns to RABBI JOSEPH.*) Be seated, and I will have refreshments brought.

RABBI JOSEPH. Nay, nay. I have but lately partaken of food and drink, and I must report thy answer to the council as soon as I may.

Enter ELI at left, escorting ESAU, who advances up center and bows low before the dais. ELI stands near left door.

STEPHEN. Ho, slave! Where is Selim?

ESAU. Within his accustomed stall in the stable, my master.

STEPHEN (*turning to RABBI JOSEPH*). There! Thou seest.

RABBI JOSEPH. But it was not of to-day's happening.

STEPHEN. When was the time of its occurrence?

RABBI JOSEPH. Some two days ago.

(ESAU *looks panic-stricken.*)

step back

STEPHEN (*sternly, to ESAU*). Was Selim from his stall yesterday or the day before?

ESAU. I can speak of a certainty. Yesterday he was not.

STEPHEN. What of the day before?

ESAU. He was only out for drink and exercise.

STEPHEN (*sharply*). Thou hast orders to let none other touch him but thyself.

ESAU (*trembling*). And didst thou think I would let another touch him? Never.

STEPHEN (*furiously*). Coward! Slave! It was thou that rode him!

(*Though frightened, ESAU faces STEPHEN with an attempt at defiance.*)

ESAU. I did but ride him to the brook Kedron that he might drink and to keep him supple and swift, that he might carry thee whither thou wished to go.

STEPHEN (*thundering*). What happened then, thou spawn of evil?

ESAU (*sinks, subdued, at STEPHEN'S feet*). Oh, my master, I fell from his back and broke my leg. I did ride him carefully. He was not hurt in the smallest particle. Oh, my master, it was I that was injured.

STEPHEN. What meanest thou? Where wert thou?

ESAU. There was a great gathering of people, and I did but ride near to discover why they came. They were crowded about one whom they said was the Messiah. And the lictors came and strove to disperse the crowd with their whips, and Selim became frightened and, rearing, threw me from his back to the ground and broke my leg.

STEPHEN (*fiercely*). Did they so much as touch a hair of the Arab with their whips? If so, thou shalt pay for it with thy life!

ESAU. Nay, master. They did not touch him.

RABBI JOSEPH. When thy leg was thought to be broken, what didst thou do?

ESAU. Oh, honored sir, my leg was broken. When the men raised me it swung back and forth, useless, and the pain, oh, the pain was unbearable!

STEPHEN. Good, good! Thou didst deserve suffering. But where was Selim?

ESAU. He ran far, far out on the desert, unharmed. No man could touch him.

RABBI JOSEPH (*harshly, to ESAU*). Thou dost speak an untruth. Thou saidst that thy leg was broken. How can that be, two days ago, when thou dost walk upon it, straight and unhurt in this hour? step
return

ESAU. My suffering was so great that they laid me back on the ground. Then the healer came—the twice-blessed Nazarene. When I cried out in agony, He turned and looked at me. All the pain and torment left me, and I lay very still until the crowd passed. Then with a wonder so great that I knew nothing beside, I arose and walked, unaided and unhurt.

RABBI JOSEPH (*skeptically*). It is plain to be seen thy leg was not broken, only hurt for the moment.

ESAU (*earnestly*). Oh, Rabbi, may the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob smite me with death if I did not feel the broken bones grating together, until I near fainted with the pain of it!

RABBI JOSEPH (*sneering*). Oh, I see, I see. Another case of imaginary cures.

STEPHEN (*to ESAU, sternly*). But where is Selim? How came he again?

ESAU. I followed him from the fourth to the tenth hour. Then he awaited me, and I called him and he came to me.

STEPHEN. But he might have been hurt; he might have been lost. Oh, thou dog of the desert, thou shalt pay dearly for this!

ESAU (*prostrating himself before STEPHEN in terror*). Oh, mercy! Have mercy, my master! I will never again

transgress thy law. I will care for the Arab as though he were a child of my bosom.

STEPHEN (*in a hard voice*). Never again will thine eyes be gladdened by the sight of him.

ESAU (*desperately*). Oh, my Prince and my master, take him not from me! No hand but mine hath ever cared for him. When thou broughtest him from the desert, did I not forsake all for love of him and come with thee?

STEPHEN (*to ELI*). Take him away and let him be given forty lashes and cast into the dungeon. I, and only I, ride my Arab.

ESAU (*imploring*). Mercy, oh, my master, mercy! Have mercy!

STEPHEN. Take him away.

(ELI leads ESAU off at left.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *Same as in Act I. It is four weeks later.*

At rise of curtain, REBECCA is discovered seated upon the bench at the end of the pool, half turned about and supporting herself on her right arm, in a dejected attitude. She is looking with unseeing eyes into the water, her face sad and thoughtful.

Enter MARTHA, up center right, carrying a small tray with a fan on it, which she extends to REBECCA, who takes the fan and slowly fans herself.

MARTHA. Oh, my mistress, my heart is heavy to see the pain and sorrow ever upon thy lips and within thine eyes.

STEPHEN. No. I will not. (*Impatiently.*) What is it to thee?

ANNA. He is used to the freedom of the desert. He might die.

STEPHEN (*harshly*). Let him! He deserves it. What is one slave more or less?

ANNA (*in grave rebuke*). Thou art too hard, my son. I tremble for thee. The new Prophet doth preach, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

STEPHEN (*dryly*). The law of Moses, which says, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," is good enough for me.

ANNA. Thou mayst find that a hard law, my son.

STEPHEN. I am willing to abide by it.

ANNA (*shaking her head*). Few of us would dare say that.

STEPHEN. I dare, and I will abide by it. But where didst thou hear the new prophet?

ANNA. In the Temple. He was teaching in the outer court. We were within the woman's court.

STEPHEN. Art thou a proselyte?

ANNA. I can hardly say. But He doth teach a beautiful dispensation.

STEPHEN (*shrugging*). It may be beautiful, but it is not profitable. I care not for this prophet. He will come and go as all the rest; but if He teacheth men to forgive their lawful debtors, it were time He were driven from the city or destroyed. Under such teaching, all the debtors of the country will rise in rebellion. He teacheth against the law of Moses and should be cast into outer darkness.

Enter ELI at right. He bows to STEPHEN.

ELI. Jude the Samaritan is without and would speak to thee, my master.

STEPHEN. Let him come in.

(Exit ELI at right.)

Rise ANNA. Be merciful, my son.

STEPHEN (*at L.C. impatiently*). Peace, mother. Such things are not for thee. Thou knowest not of what thou speakest.

(*Exit ANNA, slowly, up center right, looking much distressed.*)

After a pause, enter ELI at right, followed by JUDE. ELI bows and steps back, and JUDE advances down stage and faces STEPHEN.

STEPHEN (*to JUDE*). Ah, thou hast come in good time. For that thou shalt have credit. Dost thou bring the amount of thy debt?

(*ELI crosses noiselessly to left and goes out at left door.*)

JUDE. That I could not do. No one would buy my land. But I will give it all to thee, together with my house and my cattle if thou wilt forgive me the debt.

STEPHEN. That is well; and thou shalt send thy two sons to serve me, and they shall be mine for seven years.

JUDE (*crying out in terror*). Nay, not so! Good master, I pray thee let me serve in their stead and let my sons go free.

STEPHEN (*harshly*). Away with thee, and leave thy sons, that they may earn back the shekels that I lent thee. And in the seventh year they shall go free, as the law doth command.

JUDE. But I can earn more than they. I will labor day and night. Oh, spare my sons!

STEPHEN (*inexorably*). It is in the bond. I will have them. Thou art old. They are young and strong and growing stronger.

JUDE (*kneeling and imploring*). But in seven years, their spirits will be broken and their lives spoiled. Oh, my master, they are the light of my life, the strength of my soul, the very eyes of my heart!

STEPHEN (*contemptuously*). That concerns me not. If they were the eyes of thy head, I would take them. Go thy way. Give them to the taskmaster.

Runs away

JUDE (*rising, with eyes flashing and a menacing ring in his voice*). And thou wouldst take mine eyes! Thou sayest, "An eye for an eye." Beware lest an eye for an eye be taken! May the curse of the merciless follow thee forever! (*He fairly flings the words at STEPHEN, as he strides off, at right.*)

Enter ELI at left. *He advances a few steps toward STEPHEN and bows.*

ELI. Thy mother desireth thy presence for a few moments, my master. She awaiteth thee in the garden.

STEPHEN (*curtly*). Tell her I will be with her at once.

(ELI bows and goes out at left. *STEPHEN stands a moment, frowning and deep in thought, then follows ELI hastily out at left.*)

Simultaneously DANIEL enters at right and looks around, as if searching for some one. In a moment, ELI reënters at left. DANIEL'S face brightens, and he crosses quickly to ELI.

ELI. My heart is filled with dread for the master. Jude is desperate because the Prince hath commanded that his sons be given over to the taskmaster.

DANIEL. They are fine young lads.

ELI. Yea. I wonder not that their father said that they were the eyes of his heart.

DANIEL. It is a sorrowful thing. The master is much too hard. He showeth mercy to none.

ELI (*shaking his head*). Some time he will pay. We always pay our debts, be it soon or late.

DANIEL. That is what thou believest?

ELI. Yea. Our master doth apply it only to material things, such as riches and land and slaves. But the Lord God of Israel meant more than that. He careth for his children. And did He not say, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay"? His word is law. (*With solemn emphasis.*) Doubt it not: Our master will pay.

DANIEL. How is Esau? Is it well with him? He seems sustained by some inner power that I do not understand.

ELI. It is even so. He asks every day for Selim, and if the animal hath good care. Much of the time he is absorbed in thought.

DANIEL (*eagerly*). Dost thou suppose his leg was truly broken?

ELI. I saw and talked with the men who lifted him. And they declared it was so badly shattered that the bones pierced the flesh.

DANIEL. And did they see the healing?

ELI. They did, but they would say nothing of it; only shook their heads and remained silent.

DANIEL. Let us go and speak with Esau. (*Exeunt ELI and DANIEL at left.*)

Count 25
Ref. R-S
S-L-S
 Enter STEPHEN at left. He crosses up center right to curtain and draws it aside, as he hears the bells ring. REBECCA is standing in the doorway. He bows and extends his hand to her. She inclines her head slightly but does not take his hand. Together they move down to the pool.

STEPHEN. Wouldst thou know, oh, beautiful one, why I ask for a portion of thy time, which thou art so loath to give me?

REBECCA (*curtly*). I am not curious. I ask only that thou be brief.

STEPHEN (*with mock humility*). I may not trouble thee again. So I think I will take what time I choose this once.

REBECCA (*indignantly*). What meanest thou?

STEPHEN. Ah, then dost thou wish so much to go?

REBECCA (*entreatingly*). Oh, gracious Prince, wilt thou let me go, or dost thou play with me?

STEPHEN. Where wouldst thou go?

REBECCA. Oh, anywhere, anywhere! It doth not matter.

STEPHEN (*mockingly*). If that is thy desire, thou wilt not be troubled at thy disposal.

REBECCA (*alarmed*). Why, what canst thou mean? I do not understand.

STEPHEN. Only this day one came to see me. He was Javan the Assyrian. He told me I had the most beautiful woman and the most beautiful horse in the world.

REBECCA (*disdainfully*). What is that to me?

STEPHEN. Because it was thyself of whom he spoke.

REBECCA. He hath never seen me.

STEPHEN. He saw thee from an opening, in the wall as he awaited me and thou wert walking in the court. I was angry that he saw thee, and he craved my pardon; and said it were impossible not to look, for thou wert the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

REBECCA. I care not what he thought of me. He is but a robber chief, even though he be a king.

STEPHEN. He is vastly rich, and he offered me a great sum for Selim.

REBECCA. And of course thou soldest him. (*Turns away.*)

STEPHEN. Nay, nay. I told him I would not sell my Arab because Selim loves me.

REBECCA (*pointedly*). Art thou sure he loves thee? (*Unfurls her fan and fans herself.*)

STEPHEN (*coming closer to her*). Yea, even as I am sure that thou dost hate me.

REBECCA (*looking at him defiantly*). Thou hast said.

STEPHEN (*angrily*). So! There is no reason why I should not sell thee to him, when he offered double the price of the horse!

REBECCA (*terrified and stammering*). Wh-what sayest thou? (*Drops her fan.*)

STEPHEN (*triumphantly*). That Javan offered a magnificent sum for thee. It would be madness to refuse it.

REBECCA (*indignantly*). But thou canst not sell me! I am not a slave.

STEPHEN. Didst thou ever let me forget that I bought thee?

REBECCA. But that is vastly different. Thou canst not sell me to anyone—least of all to a barbarian.

STEPHEN. But thou dost hate me.

Handwritten notes:
 should
 to
 chief
 next
 page

REBECCA (*spiritedly*). Even so, thou darest not sell a daughter of Israel of the line of David!

STEPHEN. Not dare? What sayest thou?

REBECCA. They would cast thee from the synagogue. They would spit upon thee and stone thee in the streets!

STEPHEN (*coolly*). Deceive not thyself. None would know of the barter. Thou wilt be captured and borne away into the desert, to be queen of Javan's court.

REBECCA (*wringing her hands and weeping*). But I am not thy slave to be sold to this monster, this heathen king, this barbarian of the desert! It is a great sin. I will kill myself before I will go with him!

STEPHEN (*cynically, amused*). Ah, then there are worse things than becoming my wife?

REBECCA. But that is different.

STEPHEN. Wherein?

REBECCA (*faltering*). I would be wed by a priest, and not by heathen rites. Thy mother would ever be near me, and I would be under the protection of the Temple.

STEPHEN (*walking around the pool*). Ah, then thou dost choose me instead of this Javan? If thou dost abide by thy choice, when wilt thou marry me?

REBECCA (*despairingly*). Whenever thou sayest. (*Bows her head in utter misery.*)

STEPHEN (*in triumph*). That is better. It shall be soon, I promise thee. But let me tell thee this. Listen and remember to thy last day. I would not sell thee if he offered all his kingdom. (*Passionately.*) I have sworn that thou shalt be mine; and thou shalt. No power on earth shall take thee from me. Be thou content.

REBECCA (*crushed and broken*). Content I cannot be, but as a true woman of Israel, I will obey thee in all things—so long as thou dost not ask wrong of me.

Enter JUDE swiftly at right. He looks flushed and distraught, and his manner is fierce and threatening. He carries a tiny vial of white powder concealed in his fist.

13034

STEPHEN advances to meet him. REBECCA shrinks back up left of dais. *to right of dais*

STEPHEN (with an arrogant frown). What meanest thou by returning here without warning? What have I to do with thee?

JUDE (breathing hard). I come to ask thee once more to have mercy and give me back my sons. *loud*

STEPHEN. I will not. Now go! (Points commandingly toward right door.)

JUDE. Again I do entreat thee and for the last time. I will labor for thee in their stead until the utmost farthing is paid, if thou wilt let them go.

STEPHEN. I will not, I repeat it. Get thee gone, or I will call the slaves to put thee out.

JUDE (in a hoarse and terrible voice). Beware! Thou hast taken from me more than my eyes, and I will take thine. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!

(Suddenly he raises his hand, in which he carries the vial, and throws a white powder in STEPHEN's face. STEPHEN utters a piercing cry, clasps his hands over his eyes and falls to the floor. Exit JUDE hurriedly at right. REBECCA runs forward and bends over STEPHEN.)

REBECCA (calling loudly). Help, Eli, Daniel! Help, help! Thy master is stricken!

ELI and DANIEL come running in at left. ANNA hurries in after them, and RUTH and MARTHA enter, up center right, in great alarm. ELI and DANIEL hurry to STEPHEN and help him to his feet. He leans on them heavily.

ELI (terrified). Oh, my master, what is it? What hath happened to thee?

(STEPHEN moves his head as though suffering, covers his eyes again and cannot speak.)

ANNA (going to him and putting her hand on his arm).

martha Ruth Daniel Eli Stephen Anna

Oh, my son, my son, what aileth thee? What is it? Tell us! Tell us!

STEPHEN (*with a piercing cry*). Mine eyes, mine eyes! He hath put out mine eyes. Oh, Lord God of Israel, I am blind, blind, blind!

(*General consternation.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *Same as in previous acts. It is late afternoon, one month later.*

At rise of curtain, the window directly above the dais is open, and REBECCA is looking out of it, her hands full of flowers. She leans forward eagerly and watches, as DANIEL and PRINCE STEPHEN enter, up center right, the latter with his hand resting on the shoulder of the scribe. DANIEL leads his master to the dais and seats him. STEPHEN is wearing a thin white bandage over his eyes, through which he can see, while appearing blind. DANIEL does not see REBECCA.

STEPHEN. Leave me, Daniel. I would be alone. If I must go through life, creeping and feeling my way, it is time that I began. (*Exit DANIEL, up center right. STEPHEN muses aloud bitterly.*) I have traveled far and poured out money as from a wide-mouthed jar, and all in vain. My sight hath gone forever. And I must learn to walk in darkness. How can I? Oh, how can I? (*The cry is a wail of misery. REBECCA drops a handful of her flowers down into his lap and disappears from the window. STEPHEN picks up the flowers gropingly, rises, and turns his face upward, as if trying to see.*) Art thou there, my mother? The blos-

soms are redolent with sweetness (*raises them to his face*), but alas, I cannot see them! Mother! (*Pauses.*) Thou dost not answer. Art thou gone? (*Shakes his head and resumes his bitter musing.*) I would not have anyone see my first attempt at going alone. (*Comes down center, feeling his way from the dais. He takes a few uncertain steps and blunders into the bench near the pool.*)

REBECCA enters, up center right, through the curtained doorway. STEPHEN hears the bells tinkle and turns toward door. She hesitates a moment, then comes down center right.

STEPHEN (*startled*). Who cometh?

REBECCA (*gently*). It is only I—Rebecca. Let me walk with thee, my Prince.

STEPHEN (*in a stricken voice*). Ah, how thou must pity me!

REBECCA (*puts her hand lightly on his shoulder*). Let me guide thee.

STEPHEN. A beautiful guide. But oh, the bitterness of never being able to see thee again!

REBECCA. Then to thee I shall ever be young and fair. (*Guides him up stage by route indicated in her directions.*) Thou art in front of the chair. Turn to the right and count thy steps. One, two, three, four. Now thou art at the end of the dais. Turn to the right and count four again. One, two, three, four. Now thou hast reached the curtain. And thou shalt go back alone. (*STEPHEN goes slowly back to his chair on the dais. She continues encouragingly.*) Soon thou wilt be walking everywhere.

STEPHEN. Who taught thee how to lead the blind?

REBECCA. An old slave of my father's went about ever counting, and carrying a stick to feel his way.

STEPHEN (*rebelliously*). And must I use a crutch and pattern from a slave, and go creeping where I have run and stumbling where I have walked so proudly?

REBECCA. Try walking around the pool.

Defect at L-S- on dies

C STEPHEN. Wilt thou go with me? - Rise

REBECCA. Surely, I will go with thee the first time. After that, thou wilt not need me.

STEPHEN (*in a breaking voice*). I shall always need thee.

anna - stephen - Rebecca -
Enter ANNA, up center right. She goes to his side.
all at center in front of dies

REBECCA. Thy mother cometh. (*She and ANNA exchange sympathetic looks.*)

STEPHEN (*despairingly*). Dost thou see, my mother? I am learning to walk.

ANNA (*stroking his arm with her hand*). May the God of our fathers give thee back thy sight, that thou mayst walk uprightly and fearlessly as of old.

STEPHEN (*hopelessly*). That can never be.

ANNA. My heart is heavy within me to hear thee speak. We can always hope.

STEPHEN. Have I not traveled afar, and poured out my money without measure? And all the doctors and the wise men have told me that my sight is utterly destroyed. May the God of our father Abraham smite Jude the Samaritan as he hath smitten me! (*Shakes his fists impotently.*)

ANNA. But my son, there has risen a new Physician, a very great One to whom thou hast never been.

STEPHEN. Thou meanest Pilate's doctor from Rome? Indeed, I have been to him, and he told me the same as the others: that my eyes are gone forever. Curses on the one who blinded me!

ANNA (*kindly and patiently*). But listen! It is not of him that I would tell thee. It is another and a greater. He doth cure the cripples, heal the lepers, and even raise the dead.

STEPHEN (*scornfully*). Thou must mean the Nazarene.

ANNA. I do. I do indeed, my son.

STEPHEN (*impatiently*). But mother, those are idle tales that have grown with telling until they are past belief.

ANNA (*with great earnestness, her hand on his arm*). Oh, Stephen, my son, hear me, I pray thee! For thy sake I went to see some of these people. For this I went to make

sure in the matter. And they one and all declared themselves whole. Some of them I had seen when they were crippled; and now they were restored to health and strength.

STEPHEN (*unconvinced*). What did they say?

ANNA (*with feeling*). They said but little; only something like this: "I was accursed but now I am whole, thanks to the Lord God of our fathers, and to his son Jesus Christ!"

STEPHEN. What a strange saying! What meaneth it?

ANNA (*with conviction*). It means hope for thee, my son.

REBECCA (*to STEPHEN*). Why not grant thy mother's desire? It can do thee no harm.

STEPHEN (*gloomily*). I cannot believe these things.
(*Claps his hands.*) *step forward slightly*

Eli to front, Daniel start by dies
Enter ELI and DANIEL, up center right.

STEPHEN. Eli, hast thou heard aught of the strange cures of the Nazarene?

ELI. I cannot help but hear, my master.

STEPHEN. What thinkest thou? Are the people deceiving themselves?

ELI. There are a cloud of witnesses; Jew and Gentile, Samaritan and barbarian, all of whom do attest the truth of the miracles.

STEPHEN. It is well. Take horse and ride until thou findest Him. And say to Him to come and cure me, and when I have my sight back again, He shall have ten silver talents.

ANNA (*urgently*). My son, thou must go to Him thyself.

ELI. My master, oh, my master, He worketh not for hire.

STEPHEN (*irritably*). This man is a Jew. Is He not as you and I?

ELI (*submissively*). Thou sayest.

STEPHEN (*with sarcasm*). Didst thou ever know a Jew to refuse such a fortune as ten talents when he could earn them lawfully?

ELI (*shaking his head*). I never knew another who would refuse. But there is no other like unto this man.

STEPHEN (*sternly*). Do thou my bidding. If he can, I

doubt not he will come and heal me in return for the ten talents. I would give all I have for my lost eyes. And he who wrought this suffering upon me shall pay in full, if we can but find him. (ELI turns to go, up center right.) (Stay, Eli. Hast thou any word of Jude yet? (2))

ELI. Nay, my master.

STEPHEN (*grimly*). Listen. Add one thousand shekels to the reward already offered for Jude, if he is brought to me alive. I would hear his groans and cries, even though I see him not. (*Grips his hands vengefully.*)

ELI. Shall I notify the officer before I go?

STEPHEN. No. Daniel will attend to the matter. Go at once.

*Eli exits at right
curtain*

(*The curtain is lowered for a minute or two to indicate the lapse of a week. When it rises again, the scene is unchanged. It is morning. At rise of curtain, the courtyard is unoccupied, but RUTH is standing at the open window overlooking the dais up center, gazing down into the court.*)

Enter DANIEL at left. On seeing RUTH, he crosses to center behind the bench near the pool, looking up at her. She greets him gayly.

RUTH. Peace be with thee.

DANIEL. And with thee. Why dost thou not come down?

RUTH. My mistress bade me wait here and bring her word at once of Eli's coming.

DANIEL. He hath been long gone. He must come soon. The Nazarene is somewhere near; on Olivet, so 'tis said. (*Advances to outer edge of dais, smiling at her.*)

RUTH. Will He come, thinkest thou?

DANIEL. I dare not believe it. Eli and I saw Him once. He is so much greater than any other.

RUTH. In what is He greater?

DANIEL (*thoughtfully*). In all things, but most, I think, in his power of loving. He loves not only the beautiful and

the gracious, but equally those whose faces are sweating with pain and whose bodies are twisted in agony.

RUTH (*awed*). That, indeed, is wonderful.

DANIEL. If I were in great distress, I would go to Him and on my knees pray for help.

RUTH. And would He help thee?

DANIEL. He turneth no one away who doth come to Him in humility and repentance.

RUTH (*shaking her head positively*). Then the Prince will never be healed. Humility and repentance he will never know.

DANIEL. Thou art too severe in thy judgment. (*Stepping on the dais, then on the chair, he brings himself near to her as she leans out of window. He takes her hand and holds it against his cheek.*) I see so little of thee, dear one. Since the Prince hath lost his eyes, he doth keep me ever at his side.

RUTH (*with a sigh*). That I know. I am always watching for thee, and he taketh too much of thy time. Thou art never rid of him.

DANIEL. One can but pity him.

RUTH. Yea, if he were not so hard and unforgiving. He hath given Jude's sons over to the taskmasters.

DANIEL. Alas, yes! Eli and I did both beg for them—they were so young and tender. But he is filled with the spirit of vengeance and refused to listen to us and was angry at our interference.

RUTH. His blindness is but just punishment for his sins.

DANIEL. Is Rebecca more kindly inclined toward him?

RUTH. She is filled with pity for his suffering, but she doth dread him as much as ever.

DANIEL. Doth he still insist on making her his wife?

RUTH. Yea. The time is set. She hath only another month's respite.

DANIEL (*moves nearer her and looks at her longingly*). Oh, dearest one, if I might also claim thee at that time!

RUTH (*smiling shyly at him*). I would thou mightest.

DANIEL. I shall ask the Prince to let us be wed and be-

come members of his household. (*Lays his hand on hers.*)

RUTH. And will he, thinkest thou?

DANIEL. He may. He is sometimes kind to me.

RUTH (*laughs and shrugs*). Ask him at a time when some debtor hath paid him his debt with all the interest. He will be more likely to grant thy request. (*DANIEL draws her toward him. She leans down as though to kiss him then starts back.*) Some one cometh. It is Eli. (*RUTH disappears from window.*)

DANIEL steps from dais and comes down to pool, as ELI enters at right.

DANIEL. Thou hast come, and alone.

ELI. Didst thou not know that I would come alone?

DANIEL. Yea, verily. I believed that thou wouldst.

ELI (*throwing out his hands*). I have done my best. I can do no more.

DANIEL. The Prince wished to be brought to thee at once, on thy return. (*Exit, up center right.*)

Ruth + Martha sit on bench
Enter ANNA and REBECCA, up center right, followed closely by RUTH and MARTHA. ANNA comes down to ELI and addresses him anxiously. *Eli at R. S. by pool*

ANNA. Ah, good Eli, what tidings dost thou bring?

ELI (*shaking his head*). Most sorrowful, my lady.

ANNA. Doth He refuse to aid my son?

ELI. That I cannot say. I could get no hearing from Him.

ANNA (*uneasily*). How strange! Why, thinkest thou, would He not help him?

ELI. He might listen to thy son, madam, if he would go to Him in faith and penitence.

ANNA (*dejectedly*). Alas, alas! What can we do? I much fear we cannot persuade him to that purpose.

Enter STEPHEN and DANIEL, up center right. STEPHEN has his left hand on DANIEL'S shoulder, and his right hand is extended gropingly.
*Rebecca at pool L. S. seated
Rise when Stephen enters to left of pool*

Daniel step back
Daniel + Stephen at dies - R of C -
Anna at R - (2) *Eli to Stephen*
Adrian to Stephen
 STEPHEN. Eli, thou hast come, and Daniel doth tell me that thou art alone. Didst thou not see the Nazarene?

ELI (*hesitating, a little afraid*). Oh, my Prince, I know not how to tell thee—but I could get no audience with Him.

STEPHEN (*frowning*). What meanest thou? Was He not to be found?

ELI. Yea, verily. I found Him easily. Three times did I approach Him, and three times did He pass me by without seeing me. Each time I cried with a loud voice, and did entreat Him to come to thee; and each time I told Him of the princely gift that awaited Him if He would give thee back thine eyes. (*Sadly.*) And He saw me not, neither heard me. And those standing near scoffed at me and said, "Dost thou think the Master can be bought for all the riches in the world?" And they did treat me with scorn and derision. (STEPHEN *makes a gesture of anger and despair, covers his face with his hand, and remains silent. ANNA weeps softly. ELI continues hesitatingly.*) Master, I would speak to thee.

STEPHEN (*without moving*). Speak.

ELI. Go to Him thyself, without money and without price, and He will hear thee.

(STEPHEN *takes his hand from his eyes and shakes his head impatiently.*)

STEPHEN (*wearily*). Nay. He cannot heal me, or He certainly would have done so for the ten talents.

ELI. Oh, my master, He worketh not for gain, but through the love and mercy of the most High God.

STEPHEN (*fiercely*). Silence! Say no more. I forbid thee to speak.

ELI (*earnestly*). I will speak though thou flay me. Thou knowest the blind beggar, who sat and begged outside the city gate? He came crying and prostrated himself, and the Nazarene healed him. I myself saw him, and he went away, walking straight and alone and calling blessings down upon his savior.

ANNA. Verily, Eli, if thou dost speak truly, why will not the Nazarene heal my son?

ELI. That I know not, unless the Prince must come to the Christ himself.

STEPHEN (*angrily*). Go your ways, all of ye! Speak not again. I will hear no more of this matter. (*Exit ELI at right.*) He cannot help me, and I will not humble myself before a charlatan and a pretender. (*Makes an impatient forward movement, and DANIEL guides him to the chair on dais, where he sits moodily, with his head bowed on his hand, taking no notice of those around him. DANIEL stands at his right and a little back of his chair throughout the following scene.*)

to Rebecca at L-
(ANNA draws REBECCA down right in front of the pool and speaks to her confidentially.)

ANNA. Rebecca, speak thou to Stephen and beg him to go to this Jesus, himself, I beg of thee.

REBECCA. It would do no good. He would not listen. (*Shakes her head sadly.*)

ANNA (*laying her hand affectionately on REBECCA'S shoulder*). My daughter, have I not been kind to thee?

REBECCA. Thou hast been as a mother to me. (*Strokes ANNA'S arm with a loving gesture.*)

ANNA. Then I do entreat thee for my sake, to persuade him to go to the Nazarene.

REBECCA (*doubtfully*). Hast thou faith to believe that he will be healed?

ANNA. He hath healed so many. Why should He refuse healing to Stephen?

REBECCA. I fear it will be of no avail, but I will try, because thou dost ask me. (*REBECCA crosses up right to the dais. ANNA remains down right, watching her son and REBECCA anxiously, with clasped hands. The girl speaks hesitatingly to STEPHEN.*) My Prince, may I not say a word to thee about this healer?

STEPHEN. Speak on. Thy voice is music in mine ears,

whatever thou dost say. (*Turns toward her eagerly, bending forward as if trying to see her.*)

REBECCA (*gaining courage*). I do entreat thee to see this man. It is so little a thing to do. If it were a great thing, thou wouldst try it; for thou art pleased to do great things.

STEPHEN (*after a short pause*). Why dost thou wish me to go?

REBECCA. That thy sight may be restored to thee.

STEPHEN (*with a touch of his old cynicism*). Thou dost not wish a blind man for a husband?

REBECCA. That might be the reason, but speaking truly, it is not.

STEPHEN. Then why is it?

REBECCA. I may not tell thee why I ask. But thou hast often said thou wouldst grant my every wish except the one to return to my father. And now the first thing I desire of thee thou wilt not grant. (*There is another pause.*)

STEPHEN (*wistfully*). Wilt thou try to think more kindly of me? And when thou art my wife, wilt thou remember that it was because I love thee that I insist on our marriage? If thou wilt, and because I promised to grant thy wishes when possible, I will humble myself to this man, and ask Him to heal mine eyes.

REBECCA. And what thou dost ask I will try to do.

STEPHEN. But how am I to go upon this quest?

DANIEL (*taking a step forward*). Oh, my master, let me go with thee and be thy guide.

STEPHEN. So be it.

Enter ELI at right. He halts at right of dais, bowing.

ELI. My master.

STEPHEN. What wouldst thou?

ELI. A strange thing has come to pass. A messenger has come from Jude.

STEPHEN. Where is the Samaritan?

ELI. That he would not say. And he disappeared as soon as the word was delivered.

STEPHEN (*impatently*). The message, the message! Repeat it to me.

ELI. This it is. He will give himself up to thy vengeance, if thou wilt let his sons go free. And thou canst keep the shekels offered for his apprehension.

STEPHEN. A-ah! A-ah! (*Slowly, then fiercely.*) Tell him in the hour that he offers himself up alive, in that hour—in that hour his sons shall go free. Tell him there are many witnesses to my promise, that he may know that it will stand. Tell him to come, and in that hour he shall pay for all my misery! (*Grips arms of chair in savage exultation.*)

(ANNA and REBECCA look at him sorrowfully, shake their heads, and turn away.)

ANNA. Ah, my son! This wicked thirst for vengeance!

STEPHEN. And now thou, Daniel, lead on. (*Gropes for DANIEL'S arm and grasps it.*) Let us start without delay for the dwelling of the Nazarene.

(*The curtain is lowered for a minute to signify the lapse of five days. When it rises again, the scene is unchanged. It is morning, and RUTH and MARTHA are standing down center in front of the pool. MARTHA is carrying a water jar, which she pretends to be filling at the pool.*)

Enter DANIEL at right with scroll under his robe. He strolls down center right and joins the women.

MARTHA (*to RUTH*). It is five days now since the Prince's sight hath been restored. Didst thou ever see a man so changed?

RUTH. Never. Never. If I had not seen him, I could not believe it. Why, in some way, even his countenance is changed!

MARTHA. It is so. Our thoughts and feelings show in our faces.

DANIEL. And he thinks not or feels not as he did.

RUTH (*to DANIEL*). It must have been done quickly. On your return from the Nazarene, he was as he is now.

DANIEL. It was indeed done quickly—in the twinkling of an eye. (*In a tone of awe.*) Some strange power seemed to overcome him as we drew near to the Nazarene. My master fell to the earth a prince. He arose a man!

RUTH (*clasping her hands*). How wonderful it must have been! A veritable miracle!

DANIEL. Ah, yes, indeed; he doth see everything with new eyes and a new understanding.

MARTHA. He is so different and so kind!

DANIEL. Didst thou know that his first act on reaching home was to release Esau and give Selim back to his care? Then he took Jude's two sons from the taskmasters and housed them comfortably in the palace.

RUTH. Yea, and he now is gentle and tender with his mother, when before he was ever so stern and impatient!

DANIEL. And he goeth about continually, trying to undo the results of his hardness and cruelty. Truly the Nazarene hath worked a miracle!

RUTH. Hath aught been heard from Jude?

DANIEL. Nothing as yet. But he will come, doubt it not. His sons are indeed the very eyes of his heart.

RUTH. What will the master do with Jude when he comes, thinkest thou?

DANIEL. Ask me not. I cannot say. (*Turns to MARTHA.*) What dost thou know concerning the marriage?

MARTHA. My mistress doth not speak of it. She, too, is changed these days! (*Shakes her head and lifts her jar to her shoulder.*) I must hasten back. She will have need of me. (*Exit with jar, up center right.*)

RUTH. Strange that nothing is said of the marriage—and the time so near!

DANIEL. I told the Prince I was to wed with thee and asked him to take us into his household.

RUTH (*anxiously*). And what answered he?

DANIEL. That he would speak to his mother and if she approved he would gladly grant my request. (*Puts his arm*

Back to bench

Take her hand-walk to bench R-S-

about her and draws her to him.) What will thy mistress say?

RUTH (*happily*). I am sure she will be kind. She is so happy that her son hath his sight restored and is so changed and good.

DANIEL. How doth the fair Rebecca regard the change in the master?

RUTH (*a little puzzled*). That I cannot say. She keepeth to herself and saith no word; but she is much happier.

Both to bench P-S sit
left
L-S
next to
the
L-S
both
P-S
anna
at C

Enter ANNA and REBECCA, up center right, followed by MARTHA, who is without her jar. ANNA seats herself on bench at right, while REBECCA sits on the end of the bench near the pool, her face turned half to ANNA and half to the audience. RUTH and MARTHA stand up right at the down-stage corner of the dais, while DANIEL stations himself at right of the curtained door.

Cramp 25

ANNA. Daniel, dost thou know where Stephen is? He asked us to meet him here at this hour.

DANIEL. He cometh even now. (*He draws the curtains aside as—*)

Rise as Anna enters
anna & Stephen L-C

STEPHEN *enters, up center right, with a brisk, springy step. His old haughty manner and ready frown are gone. He is radiant and smiling, and he looks happy and at peace with the world. He goes at once to his mother with outstretched hands.*

STEPHEN. I give thee greeting, my mother, and thank thee for granting my request about Daniel and Ruth.

ANNA (*rising and embracing him*). Happy am I to fulfill any wish of thine, my dear son. (*Sits again, smiling at him fondly.*)

To
Rebecca

STEPHEN (*inclining his head to REBECCA*). And thou, Rebecca, I give thee greeting also, and may peace attend thee.

REBECCA (*rising and bowing gravely*). May the Lord be gracious unto thee. (*Resumes her seat on bench near pool.*)

L-S-

Enter ELI at right.

ELI. The worthy Tabitha is here, my master, and would speak with thee.

STEPHEN. Bid her enter.

ELI goes out right door, and returns immediately, ushering in TABITHA. REBECCA gazes at her aunt, startled, with her hands clasped over her breast. Exit ELI at right.

Stephen meets Tabitha - C-3-
STEPHEN (turning to greet TABITHA as she comes a little up right). Ah, good Tabitha, I give thee greeting. I thank thee for coming in answer to my message.

TABITHA (bowing low first to STEPHEN and then to ANNA, who inclines her head, smiling). Peace be to thee and thine. (Turns to STEPHEN in amazement.) Verily, gracious Prince, in wonderment I behold thee! In Hebron they were telling a strange tale that thou wert made blind. But I rejoice, now that I see it is not true—that it was naught but idle gossip.

STEPHEN. Ah, good friend, but it was true. I declare unto thee that I was stone blind—stone blind, and all the doctors said mine eyes were gone forever. (TABITHA up-raises both hands in shocked astonishment.) But through the grace of our blessed Lord Jesus, the only son of the most High God, I have my vision back again.

TABITHA (eagerly). Of a truth, art thou one of the blind whom He healed?

STEPHEN. It is as thou sayest.

TABITHA (burning with curiosity). But how came it to pass?

STEPHEN (simply). Ask me not. I cannot tell. But when I heard His voice I was filled with an unspeakable longing for His blessing, and I fell to the ground before Him, blinded and accursed. I arose a new man, healed and cleansed in body and soul by His most gracious touch. Some great physician might have restored mine eyes, although they all pronounced them gone forever. (Reverently.) But only

the Son of God could have given me a new heart and cleansed my soul from sin.

TABITHA. Then thou must believe Him to be the Messiah!

STEPHEN (*earnestly*). Yea. I and all my household, beginning with Daniel, who will soon marry Ruth and continue in my service, and my faithful steward Eli, and on down through all my dependents and servants, we will serve and worship Him forever and ever.

Enter ELI hurriedly, at right.

ELI (*agitated*). My master, I would say unto thee that Jude the Samaritan is without.

ANNA (*rising, hurrying to her son, and laying her hand on his arm*). Oh, let him not come! He may seek to harm thee again.

ELI. He cannot. He is bound. (*ANNA looks relieved.*)

STEPHEN (*quietly and composedly*). Let him enter. (*Steps upon dais and stands waiting. Exit ELI at right.*)

He immediately returns, ushering in JUDE, ragged, unshorn, and unkempt. His hands are bound securely behind him, and his eyes are downcast. He looks sullen and wretched. He comes up center right in front of dais. ELI remains near right door.

STEPHEN (*gently, to JUDE*). Thou hast come to offer thyself up. Is it not so?

JUDE (*roughly*). Thou hast said.

STEPHEN (*after regarding him silently for a moment*). Eli, loose his hands and let him go.

JUDE (*loudly and passionately*). Thou didst promise to give my sons their freedom if I would surrender myself to thee to work thy vengeance upon.

STEPHEN. I did, indeed; and thou shalt have thy freedom, and thy sons also. Go back to thy home on the hills of Judea, which I unmercifully took from thee. It shall be thine; only in such time as thou canst, thou shalt repay me thy debt in full. Eli, loose his bonds.

Steph - Jude