

1893

SALOME

Oscar Wilde

Wilde, Oscar (1854-1900) - An Irish-born English poet, novelist, and playwright. Considered an eccentric, he was the leader of the aesthetic movement that advocated "art for art's sake" and was once imprisoned for two years with hard labor for homosexual practices. Salome (1893) - Originally written in French by Wilde, Lord Alfred Douglas translated "Salome" into English. Richard Strauss later used this play as the basis for the libretto for his famous opera of the same name.

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

HEROD ANTIPAS, Tetrarch of Judaea
 IOKANAAN, The Prophet
 THE YOUNG SYRIAN, Captain of the Guard
 TIGELLINUS, A young Roman
 A CAPPADOCIAN
 A NUBIAN
 FIRST SOLDIER
 SECOND SOLDIER
 THE PAGE OF HERODIAS
 JEWS, NAZARENES, ETC.

A SLAVE

NAAMAN, The Executioner
 HERODIAS, Wife Of the Tetrarch
 SALOME, Daughter of Herodias
 THE SLAVES OF SALOME
 SALOME
 SALOME
 SCENE-

A great terrace in the Palace of Herod, set about the banqueting hall.

Some soldiers are leaning over the balcony. To the right there is a gigantic staircase, to the left, at the back, an old cistern surrounded by a wall of green bronze.

The moon is shining very brightly.

THE YOUNG SYR How beautiful is the Princess Salome to-night!

THE PAGE OF HER Look at the moon. How strange the moon seems! She is like a woman rising from the tomb. She is like a dead woman. One might fancy she was looking for dead things.

THE YOUNG SYR She has a strange look. She is like a little princess who wears a yellow veil, and whose feet are of silver. She is like a princess who has little white doves for feet. One might fancy she was dancing.

THE PAGE OF HER She is like a woman who is dead. She moves very slowly.

[Noise in the banqueting-ball.]

FIRST SOL What an uproar! Who are those wild beasts howling?

SECOND SOL The Jews. They are always like that. They are disputing about their religion.

FIRST SOL Why do they dispute about their religion? SECOND SOL I cannot tell. They are always doing it. The Pharisees, for instance, say that there are angels, and the Sadducees declare that angels do not exist.

FIRST SOL I think it is ridiculous to dispute about such things.

THE YOUNG SYR How beautiful is the Princess Salome to-night!

THE PAGE OF HER You are always looking at her. You look at her too much. It is dangerous to look at people in such fashion. Something terrible may happen.

THE YOUNG SYR She is very beautiful to-night.

FIRST SOL The Tetrarch has a sombre aspect.

SECOND SOL Yes; he has a sombre aspect.

FIRST SOL He is looking at something.

SECOND SOL He is looking at some one.

FIRST SOL At whom is he looking? SECOND SOL I cannot tell.

THE YOUNG SYR How pale the Princess is! Never have I seen her so pale. She is like the shadow of a white rose in a mirror of silver.

THE PAGE OF HER You must not look at her. You look too much at her.

FIRST SOL Herodias has filled the cup of the Tetrarch.

THE CAPP A Is that the Queen Herodias, she who wears a black mitre sewed with pearls, and whose hair is powdered with blue dust? FIRST SOL Yes; that is Herodias, the Tetrarch's wife.

SECOND SOL The Tetrarch is very fond of wine. He has wine of three sorts. One which is brought from the island of Samothrace, and is purple like the cloak of Caesar.

THE CAPP A I have never seen Caesar.

SECOND SOL Another that comes from a town called Cyprus, and is as yellow as gold.

THE CAPP A I love gold.

SECOND SOL And the third is a wine of Sicily. That wine is as red as blood.

THE NUB The gods of my country are very fond of blood. Twice in the year we sacrifice to them young men and maidens: fifty young men and a hundred maidens. But I am afraid that we never give them quite enough, for they are very harsh to us.

THE CAPP A In my country there are no gods left. The Romans have driven them out. There are some who say that they have hidden themselves in the mountains, but I do not believe it. Three nights I have been on the mountains seeking them everywhere. I did not find them, and at last I called them by their names, and they did not come. I think they are dead.

FIRST SOL The Jews worship a God that one cannot see.

THE CAPP A I cannot understand that.

FIRST SOL In fact they only believe in things that one cannot see.

THE CAPP A That seems to me altogether ridiculous.

THE VOICE OF IOK After me shall come another mightier than I. I am not worthy so much as to unloose the latchet of his shoes. When he cometh the solitary places shall be glad. They shall blossom like the rose. The eyes of the blind shall see the day, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened. The sucking child shall put his hand upon the dragon's lair, he shall lead the lions by their manes.

SECOND SOL Make him be silent. He is always saying ridiculous things.

FIRST SOL No, no. He is a holy man. He is very gentle, too. Every day when I give him to eat he thanks me.

THE CAPP A Who is he? FIRST SOL A prophet.

THE CAPP A What is his name? FIRST SOL Iokanaan.

THE CAPP A Whence comes he? FIRST SOL From the desert, where he fed on locusts and wild honey. He was clothed in camel's hair, and round his loins he had a leathern belt.

He was very terrible to look upon. A great multitude used to follow him. He even had disciples.

THE CAPP A What is he talking about? FIRST SOL We can never tell. Sometimes he says thing that affright one, but it is impossible to understand what he says.

THE CAPP A May one see him? FIRST SOL No. The Tetrarch has forbidden it.

THE YOUNG SYR The Princess has hidden her face behind her fan! Her little white hands are fluttering like doves that fly to their dove-cots. They are like white butterflies. They are just white butterflies.

THE PAGE OF HER What is that to you? Why do you look at her? You must not look at her.... Something terrible may happen.

THE CAPPA

[Pointing to the cistern.]

What a strange prison!

SECOND SOL It is an old cistern.

THE CAPPA An old cistern! That must be a poisonous place in which to dwell!

SECOND SOL Oh no! For instance, the Tetrarch's brother, his elder brother, the first husband of Herodias the Queen, was imprisoned there for twelve years. It did not kill him. At the end of the twelve years he had to be strangled.

THE CAPPA Strangled? Who dared to do that? SECOND SOL

[Pointing to the Executioner, a huge negro.]

That man yonder, Naaman.

THE CAPPA He was not afraid? SECOND SOL Oh no! The Tetrarch sent him the ring.

THE CAPPA What ring? SECOND SOL The death ring. So he was not afraid.

THE CAPPA Yet it is a terrible thing to strangle a king.

FIRST SOL Why? Kings have but one neck, like other folk.

THE CAPPA I think it terrible.

THE YOUNG SYR The Princess is getting up! She is leaving the table! She looks very troubled. Ah, she is coming this way. Yes, she is coming towards us. How pale she is! Never have I seen her so pale.

THE PAGE OF HER Do not look at her. I pray you not to look at her.

THE YOUNG SYR She is like a dove that has strayed.... She is like a narcissus trembling in the wind.... She is like a silver flower.

[Enter Salome.]

SALOME I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means. Of a truth I know it too well.

THE YOUNG SYR You have left the feast, Princess? SALOME How sweet is the air here! I can breathe here! Within there are Jews from Jerusalem who are tearing each other in pieces over their foolish ceremonies, and barbarians who drink and drink and spill their

wine on the pavement, and Greeks from Smyrna with painted eyes and painted cheeks, and frizzed hair curled in columns, and Egyptians silent and subtle, with long nails of jade and russet cloaks, and Romans brutal and coarse, with their uncouth jargon. Ah! how I loathe the Romans! They are rough and common, and they give themselves the airs of noble lords.

THE YOUNG SYR Will you be seated, Princess? THE PAGE OF HER Why do you speak to her? Oh! something terrible will happen.

Why do you look at her?

SALOME How good to see the moon! She is like a little piece of money, a little silver flower. She is cold and chaste. I am sure she is a virgin.

She has the beauty of a virgin. Yes, she is a virgin. She has never defiled herself. She has never abandoned herself to men, like the other goddesses.

THE VOICE OF IOK Behold! the Lord hath come. The Son of Man is at hand. The centaurs have hidden themselves in the rivers, and the nymphs have left the rivers, and are lying beneath the leaves in the forests.

SALOME Who was that who cried out? SECOND SOL The prophet, Princess.

SALOME Ah, the prophet! He of whom the Tetrarch is afraid? SECOND SOL We know nothing of that, Princess. It was the prophet Iokanaan who cried out.

THE YOUNG SYR Is it your pleasure that I bid them bring your litter, Princess? The night is fair in the garden.

SALOME He says terrible things about my mother, does he not? SECOND SOL We never understand what he says, Princess.

SALOME Yes; he says terrible things about her.

[Enter a Slave.]

THE SLAVE Princess, the Tetrarch prays you to return to the feast.

SALOME I will not return.

THE YOUNG SYR Pardon me, Princess, but if you return not some misfortune may happen.

SALOME Is he an old man, this prophet?

THE YOUNG SYR Princess, it were better to return. Suffer me to lead you in.

SALOME This prophet... is he an old man? FIRST SOL No, Princess, he is quite young.

SECOND SOL One cannot be sure. There are those who say that he is Elias.

SALOME Who is Elias? SECOND SOL A prophet of this country in bygone days, Princess.

THE SLAVE What answer may I give Tetrarch from the Princess?
THE VOICE OF IOK Rejoice not, O land of Palestine, because the rod of him who smote thee is broken. For from the seed of the serpent shall come a basilisk, and that which is born of it shall devour the birds.

SALOME What a strange voice! I would speak with him.

FIRST SOL I fear it may not be, Princess. The Tetrarch does not suffer any one to speak with him. He has even forbidden the high priest to speak with him.

SALOME I desire to speak with him.

FIRST SOL It is impossible, Princess.

SALOME I will speak with him.

THE YOUNG SYR Would it not be better to return to the banquet?

SALOME Bring forth this prophet.

[Exit the Slave.]

FIRST SOL We dare not, Princess.

SALOME

[Approaching the cistern and looking down into it.]

How black it is, down there! It must be terrible to be in so black a hole! It is like a tomb....

[To the soldiers.]

Did you not hear me? Bring out the prophet. I would look on him.

SECOND SOL Princess, I beg you, do not require this of us.

SALOME You are making me wait upon your pleasure.

FIRST SOL Princess, our lives belong to you, but we cannot do what you have asked of us. And indeed, it is not of us that you should ask this thing.

SALOME

[Looking at the young Syrian.]

Ah!

THE PAGE OF HER Oh! what is going to happen? I am sure that something terrible will happen.

SALOME

[Going up to the young Syrian.]

Thou wilt do this thing for me, wilt thou not, Narraboth? Thou wilt do this thing for me. I have ever been kind towards thee. Thou wilt do it for me. I would but look at him, this strange prophet. Men have talked so much of him. Often I have heard the Tetrarch talk of him. I think he is afraid of him, the Tetrarch. Art thou, even thou, also afraid of him, Narraboth? THE YOUNG SYR I fear him not, Princess; there is no man I fear. But the Tetrarch has formally forbidden that any man should raise the cover of this well.

SALOME Thou wilt do this thing for me, Narraboth, and tomorrow when I pass in my litter beneath the gateway of the idol-sellers I will let fall for thee a little flower, a little green flower.

THE YOUNG SYR Princess, I cannot, I cannot.

SALOME

[Smiling.]

Thou wilt do this thing for me, Narraboth. Thou knowest that thou wilt do this thing for me. And on the morrow when I shall pass in

my litter by the bridge of the idol-sellers, I will look at thee through the muslin veils, I will look at thee, Narraboth, it may be I will smile at thee. Look at me, Narraboth, look at me. Ah! thou knowest that thou wilt do what I ask of thee. Thou knowest it... I know that thou wilt do this thing.

THE YOUNG SYR

[Signing to the third soldier.]

Let the prophet come forth.... The Princess Salome desires to see him.

SALOME Ah!

THE PAGE OF HER Oh! How strange the moon looks! Like the hand of a dead woman who is seeking to cover herself with a shroud.

THE YOUNG SYR She has a strange aspect! She is like a little princess, whose eyes are eyes of amber. Through the clouds of muslin she is smiling like a little princess.

[The prophet comes out of the cistern. Salome looks at him and steps slowly back.]

IOKANAAN Where is he whose cup of abominations is now full? Where is he, who in a robe of silver shall one day die in the face of all the people? Bid him come forth, that he may hear the voice of him who hath cried in the waste places and in the houses of kings.

SALOME Of whom is he speaking? THE YOUNG SYR No one can tell, Princess.

IOKANAAN Where is she who saw the images of men painted on the walls, even the images of the Chaldeans painted with colours, and gave herself up unto the lust in her eyes, and sent ambassadors into the land of Chaldea?

SALOME It is of my mother that he is speaking.

THE YOUNG SYR Oh no, Princess.

SALOME Yes: it is of My mother that he is speaking.

IOKANAAN.

Where is she who gave herself unto the Captains of Assyria, who have baldricks on their loins, and crowns of many colours on their heads? Where is she who hath given herself to the young men of the Egyptians, who are clothed in fine linen and hyacinth, whose

shields are of gold, whose helmets are of silver, whose bodies are mighty? Go, bid her rise up from the bed of her abominations, from the bed of her incestuousness, that she may hear the words of him who prepareth the way of the Lord, that she may repent her of her iniquities. Though she will not repent, but will stick fast in her abominations, go bid her come, for the fan of the Lord is in His hand.

SALOME Ah, but he is terrible, he is terrible!

THE YOUNG SYR Do not stay here, Princess, I beseech you.

SALOME It is his eyes above all that are terrible. They are like black holes turned by torches in a tapestry of Tyre. They are like the black caverns where the dragons live, the black caverns of Egypt in which the dragons make their lairs. They are like the black lakes troubled by fantastic moons.... Do you think he will speak again? THE YOUNG SYR Do not stay here, Princess. I pray you do not stay here.

SALOME How wasted he is! He is like a thin ivory statue. He is like an image of silver. I am sure he is chaste, as the moon is. He is like a moon-beam, like a shaft of silver. His flesh must be very cold, cold as ivory.... I would look closer at him.

THE YOUNG SYR No, no, Princess!

SALOME I must look at him closer.

THE YOUNG SYR Princess! Princess!

IOKANAAN Who is this woman who is looking at me? I will not have her look at me. Wherefore doth she look at me, with her golden eyes, under her gilded eyelids? I know not who she is. I do not desire to know who she is. Bid her begone. It is not to her that I would speak.

SALOME I am Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judaea.

IOKANAAN Back, daughter of Babylon! Come not near the chosen of the Lord.

Thy mother hath filled the earth with the wine of her iniquities, and the cry of her sinning hath come up even to the ears of God.

SALOME Speak again, Iokanaan. Thy voice is as music to mine ear.

THE YOUNG SYR Princess! Princess! Princess!

SALOME Speak again! Speak again, Iokanaan, and tell me what I must do.

IOKANAAN Daughter of Sodom, come not near me! But cover thy face with a veil, and scatter ashes upon thine head, and get thee to the desert, and seek out the Son of Man.

SALOME Who is he, the Son of Man? Is he as beautiful as thou art, Iokanaan? IOKANAAN Get thee behind me! I hear in the palace the beating of the wings of the angel of death.

THE YOUNG SYR Princess! I beseech thee to go within.

IOKANAAN Angel of the Lord God, what dost thou here with thy sword? Whom seekest thou in this palace? The day of him who shall die in a robe of silver has not yet come.

SALOME Iokanaan!

IOKANAAN Who speaketh?

SALOME I am amorous of thy body, Iokanaan! Thy body is white, like the lilies of a field that the mower hath never mowed. Thy body is white like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judaea, and come down into the valleys. The roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body. Neither the roses of the garden of the Queen of Arabia, the garden of spices of the Queen of Arabia, nor the feet of the dawn when they light on the leaves, nor the breast of the moon when she lies on the breast of the sea.... There is nothing in the world so white as thy body. Suffer me to touch thy body.

IOKANAAN Back! daughter of Babylon! By woman came evil into the world.

Speak not to me. I will not listen to thee. I listen but to the voice of the Lord God.

SALOME Thy body is hideous. It is like the body of a leper. It is like a plastered wall, where vipers have crawled; like a plastered wall where the scorpions have made their nest. It is like a white sepulchre, full of loathsome things. It is horrible, thy body is horrible. It is of thy hair that I am enamoured, Iokanaan. Thy hair is like clusters of grapes, like the clusters of black grapes that hang from the vinetrees of Edom in the land of the Edomites. Thy hair is like the cedars of Lebanon, like the great cedars of Lebanon that give their shade to the lions and to the robbers who would hide them by day.

The long black nights, when the moon hides her face, when the stars are afraid, are not so black as thy hair. The silence that dwells in the forest is not so black. There is nothing in the world that is so black as thy hair.... Suffer me to touch thy hair.

IOKANAAN Back, daughter of Sodom! Touch me not. Profane not the temple of the Lord God.

SALOME Thy hair is horrible. It is covered with mire and dust. It is like a crown of thorns placed on thy head. It is like a knot of serpents coiled round thy neck. I love not thy hair.... It is thy mouth that I desire, Iokanaan. Thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on a tower of ivory. It is like a pomegranate cut in twain with a knife of ivory.

The pomegranate flowers that blossom in the gardens of Tyre, and are redder than roses, are not so red. The red blasts of trumpets that herald the approach of kings, and make afraid the enemy, are not so red. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of those who tread the wine in the wine-press. It is redder than the feet of the doves who inhabit the temples and are fed by the priests. It is redder than the feet of him who cometh from a forest where he hath slain a lion, and seen gilded tigers. Thy mouth is like a branch of coral that fishers have found in the twilight of the sea, the coral that they keep for the kings!... It is like the vermilion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab, the vermilion that the kings take from them.

It is like the bow of the King of the Persians, that is painted with vermilion, and is tipped with coral. There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth.... Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN Never! daughter of Babylon! Daughter of Sodom! never!

SALOME I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth.

THE YOUNG SYR Princess, Princess, thou who are like a garden of myrth, thou who art the dove of all doves, look not at this man, look not at him! Do not speak such words to him. I cannot endure it.... Princess, do not speak these things.

SALOME I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

THE YOUNG SYR Ah!

[He kills himself, and falls between Salome and Iokanaan.]

THE PAGE OF HER The young Syrian has slain himself! The young captain has slain himself! He has slain himself who was my friend! I gave him a little box of perfumes and ear-rings wrought in silver, and now he has killed himself! Ah, did he not say that some misfortune would happen? I, too, said it, and it has come to pass. Well I knew that the moon was seeking a dead thing, but I knew not that it was he whom she sought. Ah! why did I not hide him

from the moon? If I had hidden him in a cavern she would not have seen him.

FIRST SOL Princess, the young captain has just slain himself.

SALOME Suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN Art thou not afraid, daughter of Herodias? Did I not tell thee that I had heard in the palace the beating of the wings the angel of death, and hath he not come, the angel of death? SALOME Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN Daughter of adultery, there is but one who can save thee. It is He of whom I spoke. Go seek Him. He is in a boat on the sea of Galilee, and He talketh with His disciples. Kneel down on the shore of the sea, and call unto Him by His name. When He cometh to thee, and to all who call on Him He cometh, bow thyself at His feet and ask of Him the remission of thy sins.

SALOME Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN Cursed be thou! daughter of an incestuous mother, be thou accursed!

SALOME I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN I will not look at thee. Thou art accursed, Salome, thou art accursed.

[He goes down into the cistern.]

SALOME I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan; I will kiss thy mouth.

FIRST SOL We must bear away the body to another place. The Tetrarch does not care to see dead bodies, save the bodies of those whom he himself has slain.

THE PAGE OF HER He was my brother, and nearer to me than a brother. I gave him a little box full of perfumes, and a ring of agate that he wore always on his hand. In the evening we were wont to walk by the river, and among the almond-trees, and he used to tell me of the things of his country. He spake ever very low. The sound of his voice was like the sound of the flute, of one who playeth upon the flute. Also he had much joy to gaze at himself in the river. I used to reproach him for that.

SECOND SOL You are right; we must hide the body. The Tetrarch must not see it.

FIRST SOL The Tetrarch will not come to this place. He never comes on the terrace. He is too much afraid of the prophet.

[Enter Herod, Herodias, and all the Court.]

HEROD Where is Salome? Where is the Princess? Why did she not return to the banquet as I commanded her? Ah! there she is!

HERODIAS You must not look at her! You are always looking at her!

HEROD The moon has a strange look to-night. Has she not a strange look? She is like a mad woman, a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers. She is naked too. She is quite naked. The clouds are seeking to clothe her nakedness, but she will not let them. She shows herself naked in the sky. She reels through the clouds like a drunken woman.... I am sure she is looking for lovers. Does she not reel like a drunken woman? She is like a mad woman, is she not? HERODIAS No; the moon is like the moon, that is all. Let us go within.... We have nothing to do here.

HEROD I will stay here! Manasseh, lay carpets there. Light torches. Bring forth the ivory tables, and the tables of jasper. The air here is sweet. I will drink more wine with my guests. We must show all honours to the ambassadors of Caesar.

HERODIAS It is not because of them that you remain.

HEROD Yes; the air is very sweet. Come, Herodias, our guests await us.

Ah! I have slipped! I have slipped in blood! It is an ill omen. It is a very ill omen. Wherefore is there blood here?... and this body, what does this body here, Think you I am like the King of Egypt, who gives no feast to his guests but that he shows them a corpse? Whose is it? I will not look on it.

FIRST SOL It is our captain, sire. It is the young Syrian whom you made captain of the guard but three days gone.

HEROD I issued no order that he should be slain.

SECOND SOL He slew himself, sire.

HEROD For what reason? I had made him captain of my guard!

SECOND SOL We do not know, sire. But with his own hand he slew himself.

HEROD That seems strange to me. I had thought it was but the Roman philosophers who slew themselves. Is it not true, Tigellinus, that the philosophers at Rome slay themselves? TIGELL There be some who slay themselves, sire. They are the Stoics. The Stoics are people of no cultivation. They are ridiculous people. I myself regard them as being perfectly ridiculous.

HEROD I also. It is ridiculous to kill oneself.

TIGELL Everybody at Rome laughs at them. The Emperor has written a satire against them. It is recited everywhere.

HEROD Ah! he has written a satire against them? Caesar is wonderful. He can do everything.... It is strange that the young Syrian has slain himself. I am sorry he has slain himself. I am very sorry. For he was fair to look upon. He was even very fair. He had very languorous eyes. I remember that I saw that he looked languorously at Salome. Truly, I thought he looked too much at her.

HERODIAS There are others who look too much at her.

HEROD His father was a king. I drove him from his kingdom. And of his mother, who was a queen, you made a slave, Herodias. So he was here as my guest, as it were, and for that reason I made him my captain. I am sorry he is dead. Ho! why have you left the body here? It must be taken to some other place. I will not look at it away with it!

[They take away the body.]

It is cold here. There is a wind blowing. Is there not a wind blowing? HERODIAS No; there is no wind.

HEROD I tell you there is a wind that blows.... And I hear in the air something that is like the beating of wings, like the beating of vast wings. Do you not hear it? HERODIAS I hear nothing.

HEROD I hear it no longer. But I heard it. It was the blowing of the wind. It has passed away. But no, I hear it again. Do you not hear it? It is just like a beating of wings.

HERODIAS I tell you there is nothing. You are ill. Let us go within.

HEROD I am not ill. It is your daughter who is sick to death. Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS I have told you not to look at her.

HEROD Pour me forth wine.

[Wine is brought.]

Salome, come drink a little wine with me. I have here a wine that is exquisite. Caesar himself sent it me. Dip into it thy little red lips, that I may drain the cup.

SALOME I am not thirsty, Tetrarch.

HEROD You hear how she answers me, this daughter of yours?

HERODIAS She does right. Why are you always gazing at her?

HEROD Bring me ripe fruits.

[Fruits are brought.]

Salome, come and eat fruits with me. I love to see in a fruit the mark of thy little teeth. Bite but a little of this fruit, that I may eat what is left.

SALOME I am not hungry, Tetrarch.

HEROD

[To Herodias.]

You see how you have brought up this daughter of yours.

HERODIAS My daughter and I come of a royal race. As for thee, thy father was a camel driver! He was a thief and a robber to boot!

HEROD Thou liest!

HERODIAS Thou knowest well that it is true.

HEROD Salome, come and sit next to me. I will give thee the throne of thy mother.

SALOME I am not tired, Tetrarch.

HERODIAS You see in what regard she holds you.

HEROD Bring me- What is it that I desire? I forget. Ah! ah! I remember.

THE VOICE OF IOK Behold the time is come. That which I foretold has come to pass.

The day that I spake of is at hand.

HERODIAS Bid him be silent. I will not listen to his voice. This man is for ever hurling insults against me.

HEROD He has said nothing against you. Besides, he is a very great prophet.

HERODIAS I do not believe in prophets. Can a man tell what will come to pass? No man knows it. Also he is for ever insulting me.

But I think you are afraid of him.... I know well that you are afraid of him.

HEROD I am not afraid of him. I am afraid of no man.

HERODIAS I tell you you are afraid of him. If you are not afraid of him why do you not deliver him to the Jews who for these six months past have been clamouring for him? A JEW Truly, my lord, it were better to deliver him into our hands.

HEROD Enough on this subject. I have already given you my answer. I will not deliver him into your hands. He is a holy man. He is a man who has seen God.

A JEW That cannot be. There is no man who hath seen God since the prophet Elias. He is the last man who saw God face to face. In these days God doth not show Himself. God hideth Himself. Therefore great evils have come upon the land.

ANOTHER J Verily, no man knoweth if Elias the prophet did indeed see God.

Peradventure it was but the shadow of God that he saw.

A THIRD J God is at no time hidden. He showeth Himself at all times and in all places. God is in what is evil even as He is in what is good.

A FOURTH J Thou shouldst not say that. It is a very dangerous doctrine. It is a doctrine that cometh from Alexandria, where men teach the philosophy of the Greeks. And the Greeks are Gentiles. They are not even circumcised.

A FIFTH J No man can tell how God worketh. His ways are very dark. It may be that the things which we call evil are good, and that the things which we call good are evil. There is no knowledge of anything.

We can but bow our heads to His will, for God is very strong. He breaketh in pieces the strong together with the weak, for He regardeth not any man.

FIRST J Thou speakest truly. Verily, God is terrible. He breaketh in pieces the strong and the weak as men break corn in a mortar. But as for this man, he hath never seen God. No man hath seen God since the prophet Elias.

HERODIAS Make them be silent. They weary me.

HEROD But I have heard it said that Iokanaan is in very truth your prophet Elias.

THE JEW That cannot be. It is more than three hundred years since the days of the prophet Elias.

HEROD There be some who say that this man is Elias the prophet.

A NAZ I am sure that he is Elias the prophet.

THE JEW Nay, but he is not Elias the prophet.

THE VOICE OF IOK Behold the day is at hand, the day of the Lord, and I hear upon the mountains the feet of Him who shall be the Saviour of the world.

HEROD What does that mean? The Saviour of the world? TIGELL It is a title that Caesar adopts.

HEROD But Caesar is not coming into Judaea. Only yesterday I received letters from Rome. They contained nothing concerning this matter.

And you, Tigellinus, who were at Rome during the winter, you heard nothing concerning this matter, did you? TIGELL Sire, I heard nothing concerning the matter. I was but explaining the title. It is one of Caesar's titles.

HEROD But Caesar cannot come. He is too gouty. They say that his feet are like the feet of an elephant. Also there are reasons of state. He who leaves Rome loses Rome. He will not come. Howbeit, Caesar is lord, he will come if such be his pleasure. Nevertheless, I think he will not come.

FIRST NAZ It was not concerning Caesar that the prophet spake these words, sire.

HEROD How?- it was not concerning Caesar? FIRST NAZ No, my lord.

HEROD Concerning whom then did he speak? FIRST NAZ Concerning Messias, who hath come.

A JEW Messias hath not come.

FIRST NAZ He hath come, and everywhere he worketh miracles!

HERODIAS Ho! ho! miracles! I do not believe in miracles. I have seen too many.

[To the Page.]

My fan.

FIRST NAZ This Man worketh true miracles. Thus, at a marriage which took place in a little town of Galilee, a town of some importance, He changed water into wine. Certain persons who were present related it to me. Also He healed two lepers that were seated before the Gate of Capernaum simply by touching them.

SECOND NAZ Nay; it was two blind men that he healed at Capernaum.

FIRST NAZ Nay; they were lepers. But He hath healed blind people also, and He was seen on a mountain talking with Angels.

A SAD Angels do not exist.

A PHAR Angels exist, but I do not believe that this Man has talked with them.

FIRST NAZ He was seen by a great multitude of people talking with angels.

HERODIAS How these men weary me! They are ridiculous! They are altogether ridiculous!

[To the Page.]

Well! my fan?

[The Page gives her the fan.]

You have a dreamer's look. You must not dream. It is only sick people who dream.

[She strikes the Page with her fan.]

SECOND NAZ There is also the miracle of the daughter of Jairus.

FIRST NAZ Yea, that is sure. No man can gainsay it.

HERODIAS Those men are mad. They have looked too long on the moon.

Command them to be silent.

HEROD What is this miracle of the daughter of Jairus? FIRST NAZ The daughter of Jairus was dead. This Man raised her from the dead.

HEROD How! He raises people from the dead? FIRST NAZ Yea, sire; He raiseth the dead.

HEROD I do not wish Him to do that. I forbid Him to do that. I suffer no man to raise the dead. This Man must be found and told that I forbid Him to raise the dead. Where is this Man at present? SECOND NAZ He is in every place, my lord, but it is hard to find Him.

FIRST NAZ It is said that He is now in Samaria.

A JEW It is easy to see that this is not Messiah, if He is in Samaria. It is not to the Samaritans that Messiah shall come. The Samaritans are accursed. They bring no offerings to the Temple.

SECOND NAZ He left Samaria a few days since. I think that at the present moment He is in the neighborhood of Jerusalem.

FIRST NAZ No; He is not there. I have just come from Jerusalem.

For two months they have had no tidings of Him.

HEROD No matter! But let them find Him, and tell Him, thus saith Herod the King, "I will not suffer Thee to raise the dead." To change water into wine, to heal the lepers and the blind.... He may do these things if He will. I say nothing against these things. In truth I hold it a kindly deed to heal a leper. But no man shall raise the dead.... It would be terrible if the dead came back.

THE VOICE OF IOK Ah! The wanton one! The harlot! Ah! the daughter Babylon with her golden eyes and her gilded eyelids! Thus saith the Lord God,

Let there come up against her a multitude of men. Let the people take stones and stone her....

HERODIAS Command him to be silent!

THE VOICE OF IOK Let the captains of the hosts pierce her with their swords, let them crush her beneath their shields.

HERODIAS Nay, but it is infamous.

THE VOICE OF IOK It is thus that I will wipe out all wickedness from the earth, and that all women shall learn not to imitate her abominations.

HERODIAS You hear what he says against me? You suffer him to revile her who is your wife!

HEROD He did not speak your name.

HERODIAS What does that matter? You know well that it is I whom he seeks to revile. And I am your wife, am I not?

HEROD Of a truth, dear and noble Herodias, you are my wife, and before that you were the wife of my brother.

HERODIAS It was thou didst snatch me from his arms.

HEROD Of a truth I was stronger than he was.... But let us not talk of that matter. I do not desire to talk of it. It is the cause of the terrible words that the prophet has spoken. Peradventure on account of it a misfortune will come. Let us not speak of this matter. Noble Herodias, we are not mindful of our guests. Fill thou my cup, my well-beloved. Ho! fill with wine the great goblets of silver, and the great goblets of glass. I will drink to Caesar. There are Romans here, we must drink to Caesar.

ALL Caesar! Caesar!

HEROD Do you not see your daughter, how pale she is?

HERODIAS What is it to you if she be pale or not?

HEROD Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS You must not look at her.

THE VOICE OF IOK In that day the sun shall become black like sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become like blood, and the stars of the heaven shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs that fall from the fig-tree, and the kings of the earth shall be afraid.

HERODIAS Ah! ah! I should like to see that day of which he speaks, when the moon shall become like blood, and when the stars shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs. This prophet talks like a drunken man....

but I cannot suffer the sound of his voice. I hate his voice. Command him to be silent.

HEROD I will not. I cannot understand what it is that he saith, but it may be an omen.

HERODIAS I do not believe in omens. He speaks like a drunken man.

HEROD It may be he is drunk with the wine of God.

HERODIAS What wine is that, the wine of God? From what vineyards is it gathered? In what wine-press may one find it?
HEROD

[From this point he looks all the while at Salome.]

Tigellinus, when you were at Rome of late, did the Emperor speak with you on the subject of...? TIGELL On what subject, my lord?
HEROD On what subject? Ah! I asked you a question, did I not, I have, forgotten what I would have asked you.

HERODIAS You are looking again at my daughter. You must not look at her. I have already said so.

HEROD You say nothing else.

HERODIAS I say it again.

HEROD And that restoration of the Temple about which they have talked so much, will anything be done? They say that the veil of the Sanctuary has disappeared, do they not? HERODIAS It was thyself didst steal it. Thou speakest at random and without wit. I will not stay here. Let us go within.

HEROD Dance for me, Salome.

HERODIAS I will not have her dance.

SALOME I have no desire to dance, Tetrarch.

HEROD Salome, daughter of Herodias, dance for me.

HERODIAS Peace. Let her alone.

HEROD I command thee to dance, Salome.

SALOME I will not dance, Tetrarch.

HERODIAS

[Laughing.]

You see how she obeys you.

HEROD What is it to me whether she dance or not? It is nought to me. Tonight I am happy. I am exceeding happy. Never have I been so happy.

FIRST SOL The Tetrarch has a sombre look. Has he not a sombre look? SECOND SOL Yes, he has a sombre look.

HEROD Wherefore should I not be happy? Caesar, who is lord of the world, Caesar, who is lord of all things, loves me well. He has just sent me most precious gifts. Also he has promised me to summon to Rome the King of Cappadocia, who is mine enemy. It may be that at Rome he will crucify him, for he is able to do all things that he has a mind to do. Verily, Caesar is lord. Therefore I do well to be happy. I am very happy, never have I been so happy. There is nothing in the world that can mar my happiness.

THE VOICE OF IOK He shall be seated on his throne. He shall be clothed in scarlet and purple. In his hand he shall bear a golden cup full of his blasphemies. And the angel of the Lord shall smite him. He shall be eaten of worms.

HERODIAS You hear what he says about you. He says that you shall be eaten of worms.

HEROD It is not of me that he speaks. He speaks never against me. It is of the King of Cappadocia that he speaks; the King of Cappadocia who is mine enemy. It is he who shall be eaten of worms. It is not I. Never has he spoken word against me, this prophet, save that I sinned in taking to wife the wife of my brother. It may be he is right. For, of a truth, you are sterile.

HERODIAS I am sterile, I? You say that, you that are ever looking at my daughter, you that would have her dance for your pleasure? You speak as a fool. I have borne a child. You have gotten no child, no, not on one of your slaves. It is you who are sterile, not I.

HEROD Peace, woman! I say that you are sterile. You have borne me no child, and the prophet says that our marriage is not a true marriage.

He says that it is a marriage of incest, a marriage that will bring evils.... I fear he is right; I am sure that he is right. But it is not the hour to speak of these things. I would be happy at this moment. Of a truth, I am happy. There is nothing I lack.

HERODIAS I am glad you are of so fair a humour to-night. It is not your custom. But it is late. Let us go within. Do not forget that we hunt at sunrise. All honours must be shown to Caesar's

ambassadors, must they not? SECOND SOL The Tetrarch has a sombre look.

FIRST SOL Yes, he has a sombre look.

HEROD Salome, Salome, dance for me. I pray thee dance for me. I am sad to-night. Yes, I am passing sad to-night. When I came hither I slipped in blood, which is an ill omen; also I heard in the air a beating of wings, a beating of giant wings. I cannot tell what that they mean.... I am sad to-night. Therefore dance for me. Dance for me, Salome, I beseech thee. If thou dancest for me thou mayest ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee. Yes, dance for me, Salome, and whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee, even unto the half of my kingdom.

SALOME

[Rising.]

Will you indeed give me whatsoever I shall ask of you, Tetrarch?

HERODIAS Do not dance, my daughter.

HEROD Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, even unto the half of my kingdom.

SALOME You swear it, Tetrarch?

HEROD I swear it, Salome.

HERODIAS Do not dance, my daughter.

SALOME By what will you swear this thing, Tetrarch? HEROD By my life, by my crown, by my gods. Whatsoever thou shalt desire I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom, if thou wilt but dance for me. O Salome, Salome, dance for me!

SALOME You have sworn an oath, Tetrarch.

HEROD I have sworn an oath.

HERODIAS My daughter, do not dance.

HEROD Even to the half of my kingdom. Thou wilt be passing fair as a queen, Salome, if it please thee to ask for the half of my kingdom.

Will she not be fair as a queen? Ah! it is cold here! There is an icy wind, and I hear... wherefore do I hear in the air this beating of wings? Ah! one might fancy a huge black bird that hovers over the terrace. Why can I not see it, this bird? The beat of its wings is terrible. The breath of the wind of its wings is terrible. It is a chill wind. Nay, but it is not cold, it is hot. I am choking. Pour water on my hands. Give me snow to eat. Loosen my mantle. Quick! quick! loosen my mantle. Nay, but leave it. It is my garland that hurts me, my garland of roses. The flowers are like fire. They have burned my forehead.

[He tears the wreath from his head, and throws it on the table.]

Ah! I can breathe now. How red those petals are! They are like stains of blood on the cloth. That does not matter. It is not wise to find symbols in everything that one sees. It makes life too full of terrors. It were better to say that stains of blood are as lovely as rose-petals. It were better far to say that.... But we will not speak of this. Now I am happy. I am passing happy. Have I not the right to be happy? Your daughter is going to dance for me. Wilt thou not dance for me, Salome? Thou hast promised to dance for me.

HERODIAS I will not have her dance.

SALOME I will dance for you, Tetrarch.

HEROD You hear what your daughter says. She is going to dance for me.

Thou doest well to dance for me, Salome. And when thou hast danced for me, forget not to ask of me whatsoever thou hast a mind to ask. Whatsoever thou shalt desire I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom. I have sworn it, have I not? SALOME Thou hast sworn it, Tetrarch.

HEROD And I have never failed of my word. I am not of those who break their oaths. I know not how to lie. I am the slave of my word, and my word is the word of a king. The King of Cappadocia had ever a lying tongue, but he is no true king. He is a coward. Also he owes me money that he will not repay. He has even insulted my ambassadors. He has spoken words that were wounding. But Caesar will crucify him when he comes to Rome. I know that Caesar will crucify him. And if he crucify him not, yet will he die, being eaten of worms. The prophet has prophesied it. Well! Wherefore does thou tarry, Salome?

SALOME I am waiting until my slaves bring perfumes to me and the seven veils, and take from off my feet my sandals.

[Slaves bring perfumes and the seven veils, and take off the sandals of Salome.]

HEROD Ah, thou art to dance with naked feet! 'Tis well! 'Tis well! Thy little feet will be like white doves. They will be like little white flowers that dance upon the trees.... No, no, she is going to dance on blood! There is blood spilt on the ground. She must not dance on blood. It were an evil omen.

HERODIAS What is it to thee if she dance on blood? Thou hast waded deep enough in it....

HEROD What is it to me? Ah! look at the moon! She has become red. She has become red as blood. Ah! the prophet prophesied truly. He prophesied that the moon would become as blood. Did he not prophesy it? All of ye heard him prophesying it. And now the moon has become as blood. Do ye not see it?

HERODIAS Oh, yes, I see it well, and the stars are falling like unripe figs, are they not? and the sun is becoming black like sackcloth of hair, and the kings of the earth are afraid. That at least one can see. The prophet is justified of his words in that at least, for truly the kings of the earth are afraid... Let us go within. You are sick. They will say at Rome that you are mad. Let us go within, I tell you.

THE VOICE OF IOK Who is this who cometh from Edom, who is this who cometh from Bozra, whose raiment is dyed with purple, who shineth in the beauty of his garments, who walketh mighty in his greatness? Wherefore is thy raiment stained with scarlet?
HERODIAS Let us go within. The voice of that man maddens me. I will not have my daughter dance while he is continually crying out. I will not have her dance while you look at her in this fashion. In a word, I will not have her dance.

HEROD Do not rise, my wife, my queen, it will avail thee nothing. I will not go within till she hath danced. Dance, Salome, dance for me.

HERODIAS Do not dance, my daughter.

SALOME I am ready, Tetrarch.

HEROD

[Salome dances the dance of the seven veils.]

Ah! wonderful! wonderful! You see that she has danced for me, your daughter. Come near, Salome, come near, that I may give thee thy fee. Ah! I pay a royal price to those who dance for my pleasure. I will pay thee royally. I will give thee whatsoever thy soul desireth. What wouldst thou have? Speak.

SALOME

[Kneeling.]

I would that they presently bring me in a silver charger...

HEROD

[Laughing.]

In a silver charger? Surely yes, in a silver charger. She is charming, is she not? What is it that thou wouldst have in a silver charger, O sweet and fair Salome, thou that art fairer than all the daughters of Judaea? What wouldst thou have them bring thee in a silver charger? Tell me. Whatsoever it may be, thou shalt receive it. My treasures belong to thee. What is it that thou wouldst have, Salome? SALOME

[Rising.]

The head of Iokanaan.

HERODIAS Ah! that is well said, my daughter.

HEROD No, no!

HERODIAS That is well said, my daughter.

HEROD No, no, Salome. It is not that thou desirest. Do not listen to thy mother's voice. She is ever giving thee evil counsel. Do not heed her.

SALOME It is not my mother's voice that I heed. It is for mine own pleasure that I ask the head of Iokanaan in a silver charger. You have sworn an oath, Herod. Forget not that you have sworn an oath.

HEROD I know it. I have sworn an oath by my gods. I know it well. But I pray thee, Salome, ask of me something else. Ask of me the half of my kingdom, and I will give it thee. But ask not of me what thy lips have asked.

SALOME I ask of you the head of Iokanaan.

HEROD No, no, I will not give it thee.

SALOME You have sworn an oath, Herod.

HERODIAS Yes, you have sworn an oath. Everybody heard you. You swore it before everybody.

HEROD Peace, woman! It is not to you I speak.

HERODIAS My daughter has done well to ask the head of Iokanaan. He has covered me with insults. He has said unspeakable things against me. One can see that she loves her mother well. Do not yield, my daughter. He has sworn an oath, he has sworn an oath.

HEROD Peace! Speak not to me!... Salome, I pray thee be not stubborn. I have ever been kind toward thee. I have ever loved thee.... It may be that I have loved thee too much. Therefore ask not this thing of me. This is a terrible thing, an awful thing to ask of me. Surely, I think thou art jesting. The head of a man that is cut from his body is ill to look upon, is it not? It is not meet that the eyes of a virgin should look upon such a thing. What pleasure couldst thou have in it? There is no pleasure that thou couldst have

in it. No, no, it is not that thou desirest. Hearken to me. I have an emerald, a great emerald and round, that the minion of Caesar has sent unto me.

When thou lookest through this emerald thou canst see that which passeth afar off. Caesar himself carries such an emerald when he goes to the circus. But my emerald is the larger. I know well that it is the larger. It is the largest emerald in the whole world. Thou wilt take that, wilt thou not? Ask it of me and I will give it thee.

SALOME I demand the head of Iokanaan.

HEROD Thou art not listening. Thou art not listening. Suffer me to speak, Salome.

SALOME The head of Iokanaan!

HEROD No, no, thou wouldst not have that. Thou sayest that but to trouble me, because that I have looked at thee and ceased not this night. It is true, I have looked at thee and ceased not this night. Thy beauty has troubled me. Thy beauty has grievously troubled me, and I have looked at thee overmuch. Nay, but I will look at thee no more. One should not look at anything. Neither at things, nor at people should one look. Only in mirrors is it well to look, for mirrors do but show us masks. Oh! oh! bring wine. I thirst... Salome, Salome, let us be as friends. Bethink thee... Ah! what would I say? What was't? Ah! I remember it!... Salome- nay but come nearer to me; I fear thou wilt not hear my words- Salome, thou knowest my white peacocks, my beautiful white peacocks, that walk in the garden between the myrtles and the tall cypress-trees. Their beaks are gilded with gold, and the grains that they eat are smeared with gold, and their feet are stained with purple. When they cry out the rain comes, and the moon shows herself in the heavens when they spread their tails. Two by two they walk between the cypress-trees and the black myrtles, and each has a slave to tend it. Sometimes they fly across the trees, and anon they couch in the grass, and round the pools of the water. There are not in all the world birds so wonderful. I know that Caesar himself has no birds so fair as my birds. I will give thee fifty of my peacocks. They will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, and in the midst of them thou wilt be like unto the moon in the midst of a great white cloud... I will give them to thee, all. I have but a hundred, and in the whole world there is no king who has peacocks like unto my peacocks. But I will give them all to thee. Only thou must loose me from my oath, and must not ask of me that which thy lips have asked of me.

[He empties the cup of Wine.]

SALOME Give me the head of Iokanaan!

HERODIAS Well said, my daughter! As for you, you are ridiculous with your peacocks.

HEROD Peace! you are always crying out. You cry out like a beast of prey.

You must not cry in such fashion. Your voice wearies me. Peace, I tell you!... Salome, think on what thou art doing. It may be that this man comes from God. He is a holy man. The finger of God has touched him. God has put terrible words into his mouth. In the palace, as in the desert, God is ever with him.... It may be that He is, at least. One cannot tell, but it is possible that God is with him and for him. If he die also, peradventure some evil may befall me.

Verily, he has said that evil will befall some one on the day whereon he dies. On whom should it fall if it fall not on me? Remember, I slipped in blood when I came hither. Also did I not hear a beating of wings in the air, a beating of vast wings? These are ill omens. And there were other things. I am sure that there were other things, though I saw them not. Thou wouldst not that some evil should befall me, Salome? Listen to me again.

SALOME Give me the head of Iokanaan!

HEROD Ah! thou art not listening to me. Be calm. As for me, am I not calm? I am altogether calm. Listen. I have jewels hidden in this place- jewels that thy mother even has never seen; jewels that are marvellous to look at. I have a collar of pearls, set in four rows.

They are like unto moons chained with rays of silver. They are even as half a hundred moons caught in a golden net. On the ivory breast of a queen they have rested. Thou shalt be as fair as a queen when thou wearest them. I have amethysts of two kinds; one that is black like wine, and one that is red like wine that one has coloured with water. I have topazes yellow as are the eyes of tigers, and topazes that are pink as the eyes of a wood-pigeon, and green topazes that are as the eyes of cats. I have opals that burn always, with a flame that is cold as ice, opals that make sad men's minds, and are afraid of shadows. I have onyxes like the eyeballs of a dead woman. I have moonstones that change when the moon changes, and are wan when they see the sun. I have sapphires big like eggs, and as blue as blue flowers. The sea wanders within them, and the moon comes never to trouble the blue of their waves. I have chrysolites and beryls, and chrysoprases and rubies; I have sardonyx and hyacinth stones, and stones of chalcedony, and I will give them all unto thee, all, and other things will I add to them.

The King of the Indies has but even now sent me four fans fashioned from the feathers of parrots, and the King of Numidia a garment of ostrich feathers. I have a crystal, into which it is not lawful for a woman to look, nor may young men behold it until they have been beaten with rods. In a coffer of nacre I have three wondrous turquoises. He who wears them on his forehead can imagine things which are not, and he who carries them in his hand can turn the fruitful woman into a woman that is barren. These are great treasures. They are treasures above all price. But this is not all. In an ebony coffer I have two cups of amber that are like apples of pure gold. If an enemy pour poison into these cups they become like apples of silver. In a coffer incrusted with amber I have sandals incrusted with glass. I have mantles that have been brought from the land of the Seres, and bracelets decked about with carbuncles and with jade that come from the city of Euphrates.... What desirest thou more than this, Salome? Tell me the thing that thou desirest, and I will give it thee. All that thou askest I will give thee, save one thing only. I will give thee all that is mine, save the life of one man. I will give thee the mantle of the high priest. I will give thee the veil of the sanctuary.

THE JEWS Oh! oh!

SALOME Give me the head of Iokanaan!

HEROD

[Sinking back in his seat.]

Let her be given what she asks! Of a truth she is her mother's child.

[The first soldier approaches. Herodias draws from the hand of the Tetrarch the ring of death, and gives it to the soldier, who straightway bears it to the Executioner. The Executioner looks scared.]

Who has taken my ring? There was a ring on my right hand. Who has drunk my wine? There was wine in my cup. It was full of wine. Some one has drunk it! Oh! surely some evil will befall some one.

[The Executioner goes down into the cistern.]

Ah! wherefore did I give my oath? Hereafter let no king swear an oath. If he keep it not, it is terrible, and if he keep it, it is terrible also.

HERODIAS My daughter has done well.

HEROD I am sure that some misfortune will happen.

SALOME

[She leans over the cistern and listens.]

There is no sound. I hear nothing. Why does he not cry out, this man? Ah! if any man sought to kill me, I would cry out, I would struggle, I would not suffer.... Strike, strike, Naaman, strike, I tell you.... No, I hear nothing. There is a silence, a terrible silence. Ah!

something has fallen upon the ground. I heard something fall. It was the sword of the executioner. He is afraid, this slave. He has dropped his sword. He dares not kill him. He is a coward, this slave! Let soldiers be sent.

[She sees the Page of Herodias and addresses him.]

Come hither. Thou wert the friend of him who is dead, wert thou not? Well, I tell thee, there are not dead men enough. Go to the soldiers and bid them go down and bring me the thing I ask, the thing the Tetrarch has promised me, the thing that is mine.

[The Page recoils. She turns to the soldiers.]

Hither, ye soldiers. Get ye down into this cistern and bring me the head of this man. Tetrarch, Tetrarch, command your soldiers that they bring me the head of Iokanaan.

[A huge black arm, the arm of the Executioner, comes forth from the cistern bearing on a silver shield the head of Iokanaan. Salome seizes it. Herod hides his face with his cloak. Herodias smiles and fans herself. The Nazarenes fall on their knees and begin to pray.]

Ah! thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. Well! I will kiss it now. I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit. Yes, I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I said it; did I not say it? I said it. Ah! I will kiss it now.... But wherefore dost thou not look at me, Iokanaan? Thine eyes that were so terrible, so full of rage and scorn, are shut now. Wherefore are they shut? Open thine eyes! Lift up thine eyelids, Iokanaan! Wherefore dost thou not look at me? Art thou afraid of me, Iokanaan, that thou wilt not look at me?... And thy tongue, that was like a red snake darting poison, it moves no more, it speaks no words, Iokanaan, that scarlet viper that spat its venom upon me. It is strange, is it not? How is it that the red viper stirs no longer?... Thou wouldst have none of me, Iokanaan. Thou rejectedst me. Thou didst speak evil words against me. Thou didst bear thyself toward me as to a harlot, as to a woman that is a wanton, to me, Salome, daughter of Herodias,

Princess of Judaea! Well, I still live, but thou art dead, and thy head belongs to me. I can do with it what I will. I can throw it to the dogs and to the birds of the air. That which the dogs leave, the birds of the air shall devour.... Ah, Iokanaan, Iokanaan, thou wert the man that I loved alone among men! All other men were hateful to me. But thou wert beautiful! Thy body was a column of ivory set upon feet of silver. It was a garden full of doves and lilies of silver. It was a tower of silver decked with shields of ivory. There was nothing in the world so white as thy body. There was nothing in the world so black as thy hair. In the whole world there was nothing so red as thy mouth. Thy voice was a censer that scattered strange perfumes, and when I looked on thee I heard a strange music. Ah! wherefore didst thou not look at me, Iokanaan? With the cloak of thine hands, and with the cloak of thy blasphemies thou didst hide thy face. Thou didst put upon thine eyes the covering of him who would see his God. Well, thou hast seen thy God, Iokanaan, but me, me, thou didst never see. If thou hadst seen me thou hadst loved me. I saw thee, and I loved thee. Oh, how I loved thee! I love thee yet, Iokanaan. I love only thee.... I am athirst for thy beauty; I am hungry for thy body; and neither wine nor apples can appease my desire. What shall I do now, Iokanaan? Neither the floods nor the great waters can quench my passion. I was a princess, and thou didst scorn me. I was a virgin, and thou didst take my virginity from me. I was chaste, and thou didst fill my veins with fire.... Ah! ah! wherefore didst thou not look at me? If thou hadst looked at me thou hadst loved me. Well I know that thou wouldst have loved me, and the mystery of Love is greater than the mystery of Death.

HEROD She is monstrous, thy daughter; I tell thee she is monstrous. In truth, what she has done is a great crime. I am sure that it is a crime against some unknown God.

HERODIAS I am well pleased with my daughter. She has done well. And I would stay here now.

HEROD

[Rising.]

Ah! There speaks my brother's wife! Come! I will not stay in this place. Come, I tell thee. Surely some terrible thing will befall.

Manasseh, Issachar, Ozias, put out the torches. I will not look at things, I will not suffer things to look at me. Put out the torches!

Hide the moon! Hide the stars! Let us hide ourselves in our palace,
Herodias. I begin to be afraid.

[The slaves put out the torches. The stars disappear. A great cloud
crosses the moon and conceals it completely. The stage becomes
quite dark. The Tetrarch begins to climb the staircase.]

THE VOICE OF SAL Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have
kissed thy mouth.

There was a bitter taste on thy lips. Was it the taste of blood?...

Nay; but perchance it was the taste of love.... They say that love
hath a bitter taste.... But what matter? what matter? I have kissed
thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth.

[A ray of moonlight falls on Salome and illumines her.]

HEROD

[Turning round and seeing Salome.]

Kill that woman!

[The soldiers rush forward and crush beneath their shields Salome,
daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judaea.]

CURTAIN

THE END