

# Herod and Mariamne

A Tragedy in Five Acts by  
Friedrich Hebbel

Translated by  
Paul H. Curts

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Mariamne, consort of Herod I, King of Judea, approximately 57 B.C.-approximately 29 B.C. — Drama.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The better works of foreign literature should be available to the reading public in English translation. The more nearly they are reproduced in the form and spirit of the original, the more such works enrich our own great store. It is with this in mind that I have translated Hebbel's masterpiece *Herod and Mariamne*, probably the greatest German drama of the nineteenth century.

Christian Friedrich Hebbel was born in the village of Wesselburen in Ditmarsch, Holstein, on March 18, 1813. He died in Vienna on December 13, 1863. The gloomy bleakness of northern Germany, the poverty of his home, the strict and sometimes violent discipline of his father had a permanent effect on his character. His was a serious, sensitive, imaginative nature, strong-willed even to the point of obstinacy.

Convinced early in life that he was to make his mark as a writer and a poet, he left his narrow provincial home and devoted himself to the achievement of his literary aims with an unswerving fixity of purpose—in spite of hunger, hardship, and disappointment. He endowed the characters of his dramas with the same fixity of purpose which he himself possessed, with a rigid, unswerving, relentless adherence to a point of view.

Hebbel was persuaded that the most tragic situations of life arise, not necessarily from any moral guilt, but rather from conflict between the individual will and its environment, and that this conflict is most significant when a vital change is taking place in the existing state of the world. His most important dramas are located at such critical times in history. In its early stages the conflict between the old established order and the representative of the new order is tragic for the new, but suggests hope for a brighter future. Such a conflict is the core around which most of Hebbel's tragedies are built. The individual undergoes a process of inner change and must inevitably suffer in a conflict with the whole, but the new cause is advanced, although it be but slightly. The Hegelian philosophy: thesis, antithesis, synthesis, is presented here in dramatic form.

The tragic story of Herod and Mariamne has appealed to many dramatists. For all of them the only historical source is Flavius Josephus in *The Jewish War* (75 A.D.) and *The Antiquities of the Jews* (93 A.D.). Hebbel is the first of these dramatists for whom the historical events are merely the background and for whom the real drama lies in the inner psychological development of the characters.

Herod was the King of Palestine from 37 B.C. to 4 A.D. The action takes place in the period just prior to the beginnings of Christianity. Though really an enlightened monarch for his day and even a reformer, Hebbel's Herod knows only the traditional methods of procedure, he still represents the old tyrannical order and represents it more completely

as the play develops. From our point of view the change in him is retrogressive. Although Mariamne can be just as ruthless as Herod toward those beneath her, there is in her the first suggestion of the new order. Conscious of her own worth as an individual, she expects trust and confidence from Herod. When she does not receive them, life loses all value for her, and she deliberately brings on her own death at the hands of Herod. Less rigid and unyielding characters might have reached a compromise. With characters such as Hebbel depicts, tragedy is unavoidable. Herod is not only in love with Mariamne, he is an Idumean and a king, as Mariamne is a Maccabean and the daughter of Alexandra. Try as he will, Herod cannot forget the king for love of Mariamne, nor can she forget the Maccabean for love of him (*lines 1005 ff.*). Tradition and heredity are too strong for them. The necessity for tragedy lies within the characters themselves, not outside of them in a superhuman power. This is the modern fate tragedy.

A forerunner of Ibsen and naturalism, Hebbel was too early for his contemporaries. The performance of *Herod and Mariamne* in Vienna in 1849 and that in Berlin in 1874 could not but fail miserably, for neither the public nor even the directors and the actors understood either Herod or Mariamne and the nature of their tragic inner struggle. With the turn of the twentieth century appreciation began to dawn and since then this drama has appeared with fair regularity on the important German stages, reaching a high of 158 performances in one season. *Herod and Mariamne* will never enjoy wide popularity with the masses. To appreciate Hebbel the audience must think as well as feel, and that is not the mood in which most people attend the theater.

Hebbel wrote his drama in unrhymed iambic pentameter. The form is that of the classic German drama. The language, however, is straightforward, realistic, contemporaneous. It is the common language of his day, not colloquial, but simple and dignified. To produce as nearly as possible the same effect in translation, I have used a dignified, straightforward, modern English, avoiding exalted diction on the one hand and obvious colloquialisms on the other. I have tried to express Hebbel's ideas as he might have expressed them, had English been his medium. Translation in this spirit is a difficult task in prose, doubly so when it must be metrical and at the same time faithfully render the meaning of the original. Even with the difficulties it is surprising how literal the translation can be.

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PAUL H. CURTS.

Middletown, Connecticut  
1950

# HEROD AND MARIAMNE



## CHARACTERS

KING HEROD

MARIAMNE, *his wife*

ALEXANDRA, *her mother*

SALOME, *sister of the king*

SOEMUS, *Governor of Galilee*

JOSEPH, *husband of Salome, Viceroy in absence of the King*

SAMEAS, *a Pharisee*

TITUS, *a Roman captain*

JOAB, *a messenger*

JUDAS, *a Judean captain*

ARTAXERXES, *a servant*

MOSES }  
JFHU } *servants, as well as other servants*

SILO, *a citizen*

ZERUBBABEL and }  
PHILO, *his son* } *Galileans*

A ROMAN MESSENGER

AARON, *and five other judges*

THREE KINGS OF THE ORIENT, *later called Saints by the Christian Church*

Place: *Jerusalem*

Time: *about the birth of Christ*

## ACT I

*Castle Zion. Large audience room. Joab. Sameas. Zerubbabel and his son. Titus. Judas, and many others. Herod enters.*

### SCENE 1

JOAB (*advances toward the King*).

I have returned!

HEROD. Save your report till later!

The most important business first!

JOAB (*stepping back, aside*). Important!

I thought the most important was to learn

Whether or not our head still sits secure!

HEROD (*summons Judas*).

Tell me about the fire!

5

JUDAS. About the fire?

So you already know the news I bring?

HEROD. That it broke out at midnight, yes. I was

The first who noticed it and called the watch.

If I am not mistaken, I woke you!

JUDAS. The fire is out. (*aside*) So what they say is true,

10

That in disguise he prowls the streets

While others sleep! We must be on our guard

Lest careless words might sometime reach his ear.

HEROD. When everything stood wrapped in flame I saw

A woman through the window of the house

15

Who seemed benumbed. Was this young woman saved?

JUDAS. She did not want to be!

HEROD. Not want to?

JUDAS. No!

She fought against them when they tried to take

Her out by force, she struck at them with hands

And feet, she clung with desperation to the bed

20

On which she sat, and cried that she had been

About to kill herself with her own hands

And now a kindly fate brought death to her.

HEROD. She must have been demented!

JUDAS. Possibly

Her mind had been upset by pain and grief!

25

Her husband had just died a while before,

His body lay still warm upon the bed.

HEROD (*aside*). That I will surely tell to Mariamne

And watch her while I tell her! (*aloud*) Probably

30

This woman had no child! But if she had,

I will take care of it! She shall herself

Be buried richly and with royal splendor,

She was, it may well be, the queen of women!

- SAMEAS (*steps forward*). Be buried! That is not permissible!  
 At least not here, not in Jerusalem! 35  
 For it is written in—
- HEROD. Do I not know you?
- SAMEAS. You had occasion once to know me, yes:  
 I served the Sanhedrin as tongue that time  
 When it sat mute before you.
- HEROD. Sameas,  
 I hope you know me too! You hated Herod 40  
 When he was young. You would have liked so much  
 To make his head a present to the hangman.  
 The man and king has now forgotten that,  
 For you still have your own head on your shoulders.
- SAMEAS. If for the reason that you let me keep it 45  
 I must not use it now, then take it from me;  
 That would be worse by far than losing it.
- HEROD. Why did you come? Till now I never saw you  
 Within these walls.
- SAMEAS. But that is just the reason 50  
 You see me now. Perhaps you thought I stood  
 In awe of you. I have no fear of you,  
 Not even now when many men have learned  
 To fear, who did not use to be afraid,  
 Before Aristobulus met his death.  
 And since the opportunity has come 55  
 To prove to you that I am thankful, I take  
 Advantage of it and give solemn warning  
 Against an act which God the Lord condemns.  
 Accursed are this woman's bones, for she  
 Resisted rescue as a Gentile might, 60  
 And that is quite as if she killed herself,  
 And since—
- HEROD. Some other time! (*to Zerubbabel*) From Galilee!  
 Zerubbabel, who was—I bid you welcome!  
 The blame is yours, I did not see you sooner!
- ZERUBBABEL. It is an honor, King, that you still know me! 65  
 (*points to his mouth*)  
 Of course these two great tusks of teeth I have,  
 That make me like the cousin to a boar—
- HEROD. I would forget my own face sooner far  
 Than that of one who served me faithfully!  
 When we were hunting robbers to their lair 70  
 You tracked them best. What do you bring me now?
- ZERUBBABEL (*beckons his son*).  
 In fact not much! Just Philo here, my son!  
 You have a need for soldiers, I do not,  
 And this boy is a Roman, whom, it happened,  
 A Hebrew woman brought into the world. 75

HEROD. What comes to me from Galilee is good!

You may expect a summons soon!

*(Zerubbabel and his son step back)*

TITUS *(steps forward)*.

A fraud

Which I discovered forces me—

HEROD.

Disclose it!

TITUS. The dumb speak!

HEROD.

Please be clear!

TITUS.

Your man-at-arms

Who stood on watch before your bedroom door

80

Last night with one of my centurions—

HEROD *(aside)*. Whom Alexandra recommended to me,

My mother-in-law—I see!

TITUS.

He is not dumb,

As everyone has always thought he was;

He spoke aloud last night in sleep, he cursed!

85

HEROD. In sleep?

TITUS. He fell asleep while standing watch,

And my centurion did not awake him;

He did not think he was responsible,

Because he is not in the cohort with him,

But yet he kept close watch, so as to catch him

90

If he should fall. For it was early still,

You were asleep, he did not want to rouse you.

Then suddenly, as he is watching him,

The dumb man starts to mumble, speaks your name,

And calls down fearful curses on your head.

95

HEROD. Can the centurion have been mistaken?

TITUS. He would have had to be asleep himself;

And that would be an omen worse by far

For the eternal city than the lightning

That struck the Capitoline wolf not long

100

Ago.

HEROD. I thank you! Now—*(he dismisses all but Joab)*

Yes, so things stand!

Rank treason in my house, and in the crowd

Of Pharisees defiance, bolder still

Because I can not punish them at all

Unless I make the fools appear as martyrs;

105

A little love among the Galileans,

No, mere attachment of a selfish sort,

Because I am the bogey with the sword

Who from the distance scares their rabble so;

And—this man Joab surely brings bad news,

110

He was too anxious to announce it to me.

For even he, although he is my servant,

Likes doing what will vex me, if he knows

That I must act as if I did not notice!

- (*to Joab*) What news have you from Alexandria? 115
- JOAB. I spoke with Antony.
- HEROD. A strange beginning!  
 You spoke with Antony? I am accustomed  
 To have the messengers I send received;  
 You are the first who finds it necessary  
 Thus to assure me that he was successful. 120
- JOAB. They made it hard for me. They put me off,  
 Time after time!
- HEROD (*aside*). He stands then with Octavius  
 On better terms than I had thought! (*aloud*) That proves  
 To me, you failed to choose the proper hour.
- JOAB. I chose each one among the twenty-four 125  
 Of which the day consists; no matter how  
 They urged, I did not leave the spot, not even  
 When Roman soldiers offered me a meal,  
 And then, since I refused it, jeered at me:  
 He eats no food save what the cat has tasted 130  
 And what the dog has torn to shreds! At last  
 I was successful—
- HEROD. For a wiser man  
 It would have been at once—
- JOAB. And was received.  
 It was already night and first I thought  
 He had me summoned merely to continue 135  
 The sport the soldiers had in jeering at me,  
 For when I came inside I found a group  
 Of drinkers there, reclining at their ease.  
 But he himself poured out a glass for me  
 And said to me: Drink this to my good health! 140  
 And when I courteously declined to drink it,  
 He said: If I set out to kill this man  
 I only need to bring him to my table  
 For eight full days and on it place before him  
 The tribute earth and sea have rendered me, 145  
 He would not eat but only sit and starve  
 And dying swear that he had had his fill.
- HEROD. Yes, yes, they know us well. That must be changed.  
 What Moses ordered only to prevent  
 Their worshipping the Golden Calf again— 150  
 If he was not a fool—this people still  
 Observes as if it were an end itself,  
 And so is like the sick man who, when healed,  
 Continues still to take the remedy  
 As if he thought that medicine were food. 155  
 That must—Go on!
- JOAB. However, I was soon  
 Convinced that I was wrong, for while he drank

ACT I, SCENE 1

15

He carried out all business of the state,  
 He named the magistrates, and made arrangements  
 To sacrifice to Zeus, heard auguries, 160  
 And interviewed the messengers who came,  
 Not me alone. It was quite strange to see.  
 A slave stood there behind him, ears alert,  
 A stylus and a tablet in his hand,  
 Ridiculously serious, recording 165  
 What he had said in his half drunken state.  
 Next morning then, still feeling the effects,  
 He reads the tablet through, or so I heard,  
 And holds to all it says so faithfully  
 That he—they say he swore this recently— 170  
 Would choke himself to death with his own hands  
 If in his cups at night he gave away  
 The world o'er which he ruled, and had thereby  
 Renounced his rights to any place within it.  
 Whether he staggers then, as well as when 175  
 He goes to bed at night, I do not know;  
 That seems to me to be of no import.

HEROD. You win, Octavius! The only question:  
 If now or later. Well?

JOAB. When finally  
 My turn had come and I had given him 180  
 The letter which I had for him from you,  
 Instead of opening and reading it,  
 He tossed it to his clerk quite scornfully.  
 He had his servant bring a portrait; this  
 He bade me look at carefully and tell him 185  
 Whether I found the likeness good or not.

HEROD. It was the portrait . . . ?

JOAB. Of Aristobulus,  
 The young high priest, who drowned so suddenly.  
 The picture had been sent to him long since  
 By Alexandra, by your mother-in-law, 190  
 Who keeps in touch with him, and yet he gazed  
 With greedy eyes as if 'twere new to him.  
 I stood confused and silent there. He said,  
 When he saw this: Perhaps the lamps are burning  
 Too dimly here! and reached then for your letter, 195  
 Set it ablaze and let it burn out slowly  
 Before the picture like a blank white sheet.

HEROD. Bold! Even bold for him! But—he was drunk!

JOAB. I cried: What are you doing there? You have  
 Not even read it yet! And he replied: 200  
 I want to talk with Herod, that's the meaning!  
 A charge of murder has been brought against him!  
 And now he had me tell how this high priest

- Had come to die. And when I said to him  
 A fainting spell had seized him in his bath, 205  
 He interrupted: Seized! Yes, yes, the word  
 Is chosen well; the fainting spell had hands!  
 And so I learned—forgive me if I say it!—  
 That they did not believe in Rome the youth  
 Had drowned, but rather they were quite convinced 210  
 That your own officers, at your command,  
 Had strangled him while bathing in the river.  
 HEROD. Thanks, Alexandra, thanks!
- JOAB. He motioned me  
 To go and so I went. But then he called  
 Me back and said: As yet you have not answered 215  
 The question which I put to you at first,  
 So I repeat it. Is the picture like  
 The dead man? When perforce I nodded yes:  
 Is Mariamne like her brother? Does she  
 Look like the youth who died so shamefully? 220  
 Is she so beautiful all women hate her?
- HEROD. And you?
- JOAB. First hear the comments of the others,  
 Who left their seats and now were standing with me  
 Around the picture. Laughing they exchanged  
 Suggestive looks with Antony and said: 225  
 Say yes! if ever he befriended you,  
 Then you will see at least that he's avenged!  
 I said however that I did not know,  
 For I had never seen the Queen except  
 When she was veiled, and that is really true! 230
- HEROD (*aside*). Ah, Mariamne! But—I laugh at that;  
 For I shall know how to protect myself  
 From that, somehow, however it may come!  
 (*to Joab*) What message did he give to you for me?
- JOAB. Why none! If I had had a message for you 235  
 I would not need to tell you all of this.  
 But now I thought I must!
- HEROD. It's well! You shall  
 Return at once to Alexandria  
 With me and must not leave the royal palace.
- JOAB. I shall not even talk to anyone. 240
- HEROD. That I believe! For no one likes to die  
 Upon the cross while figs are ripening!  
 The dumb man shall be slain and should he ask  
 The reason, say to him: Since you can ask!  
 (*to himself*) And now I know through whom that wily serpent 245  
 So often learned what I—A wicked woman!  
 (*to Joab*) Take care of that! I want to see his head,  
 I plan to send it to my mother-in-law!

ACT I, SCENES 2 AND 3

17

(*aside*) She needs a sign of warning as it seems.

JOAB. At once!

250

HEROD. One other thing! The Galilean

Shall take his place, Zerubbabel's son Philo,

I want to speak with him before we leave. (*exit Joab*)

SCENE 2

HEROD (*alone*). Now comes the test! Once more! I almost said,

But I can see no end. I'm like the man

They tell of, whom the lion seized in front,

255

The tiger from behind, and whom the vultures

With beaks and talons threatened from above,

While he stood on a nest of vipers! Good!

I shall defend myself as best I can

Against each enemy with his own weapons,

260

Let that from now on be my rule and law!

How long it lasts, that shall not worry me

If I but hold my ground until the end

And lose no thing that I have called my own,

Then let the end come now, or when it will!

265

SCENE 3

SERVANT (*enters*). The Queen! (*Mariamne follows him*)

HEROD (*goes to meet her*). You steal a march on me, I was

About to—

MARIAMNE. Not to come yourself to get

The thanks I owe you for your wondrous pearls?

I have refused to see you twice, to try

Again to see if I had changed my mind,

270

That would have been too much for any man

And certainly too much for you, a king.

O no, I know my duty and since you

Have heaped rich gifts upon me every day

Since my gay brother's sudden death, as if

275

You're wooing me anew, so now at last

I come to show you my appreciation.

HEROD. I see!

MARIAMNE. Of course I do not know just what

Your purpose is. You send the diver down

For me into the sea's dark depths and when

280

No diver can be found who will disturb

Leviathan's repose for money wage,

You open up your jails and give the robber

His head again, which he had forfeited,

That he may serve you fishing pearls for me.

285

HEROD. And does that seem absurd to you? Why once



- I had them take a murderer from the cross,  
 When there was need to save a child from flames  
 That threatened it, and said to him: If you  
 Can bring it safely to its mother, I  
 Agree the debt you owe to death is paid.  
 He plunged at once into the flames— 290
- MARIAMNE. And did he  
 Come out again?
- HEROD. It was too late. I would  
 Have kept my word and would have sent him off  
 To Rome to fight, where they have need of tigers. 295  
 It's best to make full use of everything,  
 I think, why not of lives thus forfeit?  
 For cases do arise where one can use them.
- MARIAMNE (*aside*). Oh, would he did not have the bloody hands!  
 Best say no more! Whatever he has done 300  
 Seems good when once he comes to speak of it.  
 How frightful it would be, if he compelled me  
 To find my brother's murder necessary,  
 Yes, unavoidable and justified!
- HEROD. So silent? 305
- MARIAMNE. Shall I speak? Of pearls perhaps!  
 Till now it was alone of pearls we spoke,  
 Of pearls which are so pure and clean and white  
 That even in bloody hands they never lose  
 Their lucid splendor! You are giving me  
 Great heaps of them. 310
- HEROD. It troubles you?
- MARIAMNE. Not me!  
 You surely can not wish to pay a debt  
 With them, and it would seem to me I have  
 A perfect right as wife and queen to pearls  
 And jewels. It is quite right for me to speak  
 Of precious stones as Cleopatra did: 315  
 They are my servants and I pardon them  
 That they cannot outshine the stars for me,  
 In spite of that they do surpass the flowers!  
 You have a sister, though, Salome—
- HEROD. She—
- MARIAMNE. Well, if you aim to have her murder me, 320  
 Then keep right on, despoil the sea for me,  
 If not, then give the diver respite! I stand  
 Already deep enough in debt to her!  
 You seem to doubt? I lay a year ago  
 Quite sick and close to death, she kissed me then. 325  
 It was the first and only time. I thought  
 At once: The kiss is your reward, because  
 You are about to die! And so it was;

- But she was disappointed, I recovered,  
 And now I have her kiss for nothing; that 330  
 She never has forgotten. So I fear  
 That she might think of that, if I should go  
 To see her with the pearls around my neck  
 By which you showed me last how much you love me!  
 HEROD (*aside*). The only thing that still is lacking is 335  
 That my left hand should turn against my right.
- MARIAMNE. I would at least disdain the drink of welcome;  
 If she should offer me instead of wine  
 A drink of water in a crystal glass,  
 I still would leave the water quite untouched: 340  
 Of course that would not mean a thing! No! That  
 Would even be quite natural, for water  
 Seems to me no longer what it was:  
 A gentle element that waters flowers,  
 Refreshes me and all the world; it sends 345  
 A shudder through me, fills me now with horror,  
 Since my own brother died so suddenly;  
 I always think, within the drop dwells life,  
 But in the wave there dwells a bitter death;  
 For you it must be very different! 350
- HEROD. Why?
- MARIAMNE. Because you have been slandered by a river  
 Which dares unload its own inhuman and  
 Malicious deed on you; but never fear,  
 For I dispute it!
- HEROD. Really?
- MARIAMNE. I can do it!  
 To love the sister and to kill the brother, 355  
 The two can not be reconciled.
- HEROD. Perhaps!
- If such a brother is himself intent  
 On killing, and if one can only save  
 Himself by matching him, yes acting first!  
 We're speaking here of possibilities! 360  
 And further! If he, unsuspecting, lets  
 Himself become a weapon in the hands  
 Of foes, a weapon which must strike and kill,  
 If not destroyed before it has been swung.  
 We're speaking here of possibilities! 365  
 And if it threatens not a single head—  
 No, if it is the head of all the people  
 And one as necessary to this people  
 As ever any head to any body.  
 We're speaking here of possibilities! 370  
 I think in all these cases that the sister,  
 As wife because of love she owes her husband,

As daughter of her people out of sacred  
 Duty, as queen because of both of these,  
 Must say: I dare not censure what has happened. 375

*(he takes Mariamne's hand)*

Although a Ruth might well not understand me—  
 How would she learn it plucking ears of grain—  
 A Maccabee will surely comprehend!  
 You could not kiss me there in Jericho  
 But surely in Jerusalem you can! 380

*(he kisses her)* And if this kiss should rue you nonetheless,  
 Then listen, and you will be reconciled:  
 I took the kiss as my farewell to you  
 And it may be, this parting is forever!

MARIAMNE. Forever? 385

HEROD. Yes! For Antony has summoned  
 Me. Whether I return, I do not know!

MARIAMNE. You do not know?

HEROD. Because I do not know  
 How harshly my—your mother has accused me.

MARIAMNE *(starts to speak)*.

HEROD. It makes no difference! I shall find it out.  
 But one thing I must know from your own lips: 390  
 Whether and how I shall defend myself.

MARIAMNE. Whether—

HEROD. Oh Mariamne, do not ask!  
 You know how strong the bond that holds me to you,  
 You know that every day but makes it stronger,  
 And you must surely realize, I now 395  
 Can not fight for myself if you do not  
 Assure me that your heart still beats for me!

Oh tell me whether ardently or coldly,  
 Then I will tell you whether Antony  
 Will call me brother, or perhaps condemn 400  
 Me to the subterranean dungeon where  
 Jugurtha died the death of slow starvation!

Why are you silent? Speak! For this confession  
 Does not, I feel, beseech a king; he should  
 Not be subjected to the common lot 405

Of man, should not be bound within himself  
 To any being that's outside of him,  
 He should be bound to God alone, and I  
 Am not! When you a year ago lay sick  
 And at the point of death, I had the thought 410  
 That I would kill myself. I could not bear

To live if you were dead—you know this now,  
 So know one other thing! If ever I  
 Myself lay dying I could even do  
 What you expect Salome would, prepare 415

- A poison in your wine and give it to you,  
So I should still be sure of you in death!
- MARIAMNE. If you did that, you would no doubt recover!
- HEROD. Oh no! For I would share this poison with you!  
But tell me whether you could e'er forgive  
Such an excess of love as that would be! 420
- MARIAMNE. If after drinking such a drink I still  
Had only breath enough for one last word,  
Then I would curse you with that final word.  
(*aside*) Yes, all the more, the more I'm sure that I  
Could reach out for the dagger in my grief 425  
To kill myself if death should call you hence:  
That one can do, not have it done to him!
- HEROD. In this last night a fire consumed a woman  
With her dead husband; and although they tried 430  
To save her, she resisted. You probably  
Despise this woman then?
- MARIAMNE. Who says I do?  
She was not forced to be a sacrifice,  
She sacrificed herself and thus she proved  
The man meant more to her than all the world. 435
- HEROD. And you? And I?
- MARIAMNE. If in yourself you feel  
That you mean more to me than all the world,  
What else is there to keep me in the world?
- HEROD. The world! The world still has so many kings  
And there is none among them who would not 440  
Be glad to share his throne with you, would not  
Desert his bride, cast out his wife for you,  
And had the wedding been the night before!
- MARIAMNE. Is Cleopatra dead, that you speak so?
- HEROD. You are so beautiful, whoever sees you 445  
Has to believe in immortality,  
Of which the Pharisees so glibly speak,  
For none believes your image ever could  
Die out in him; so beautiful I should  
Not be surprised if suddenly the mountains 450  
Provided me a metal to adorn you  
More precious far than even gold or silver,  
A metal kept reserved until you came;  
So beautiful that—Ah, to know you'll die  
From love, the moment that another dies, 455  
To hasten after him who went before,  
To mingle in that sphere in which one is  
And yet is not, for so I think of it,  
As your last breath and his last breath together—  
That would be worth a voluntary death, 460  
Would mean to find a bliss beyond the grave

- Where horror dwells: oh, may I, Mariamne,  
Perhaps still hope for this, or must I fear  
That you—for Antony has asked about you!
- MARIAMNE. One does not ask a promissory note 465  
On deeds, much less on pain and sacrifice,  
Such as despair, I feel, may bring, but which  
Love never can demand!
- HEROD. Farewell!
- MARIAMNE. Farewell!
- I know you will return; for He alone 470  
(*pointing to Heaven*)  
Decrees that you shall die!
- HEROD. So little fear?
- MARIAMNE. So great assurance!
- HEROD. Love is ever anxious!  
It trembles even in the hero's breast!
- MARIAMNE. Mine trembles not at all!
- HEROD. You do not tremble!
- MARIAMNE. Now I begin! If you can trust no more 475  
Since you contrived my brother's—Then alas  
For me, and you!
- HEROD. You do not give your word,  
Your simple word, when I had hoped to have  
A vow from you; on what shall I depend?
- MARIAMNE. And if I made it, what is your assurance 480  
That I would keep it? Only I myself,  
My nature as you know it. So I think,  
Since you must end with hope and trust in me,  
You might as well begin with both of them!  
Go! I can not do otherwise! Not yet! (*exit*)

## SCENE 4

- HEROD. Not yet! Tomorrow or some other day!— 485  
She plans to do me favors after death!  
A wife speaks so? Of course I know that often  
When I had called her beautiful, she twisted  
Her face awry till she no longer was,  
I know she can not weep, and spasms are 490  
For her what tears for others! I also know  
She quarreled with her brother not so long  
Before he met his death while in the bath  
And afterwards would not be reconciled;  
Yes, more than that, when he already was 495  
A corpse, a gift was brought from him which he  
Had bought for her while on his way to bathe.  
Yet does a wife speak so, and at the moment  
The man she loves, or surely is at least

Supposed to love — — She is not turning back, 500  
 As once, when I — — She left no scarf behind  
 As pretext — — No, she can endure to have  
 Me leave with this impression — — Very well!  
 To Alexandria—the grave—no matter!  
 But one thing first! One! Earth and Heaven listen! 505  
 You made no vow to me, but I make one  
 To you: I place you now beneath the sword!  
 If Antony puts me to death for you,—  
 And for your mother's sake he will not do it!—  
 He but deceives himself; though it is doubtful 510  
 Whether the clothes that cover me at death  
 Will follow to the grave, because a thief  
 May rob my corpse, yet you shall follow me!  
 That is my vow! If I do not return,  
 You perish! That command I leave behind! 515  
 Command! But that presents a vexing problem;  
 How to assure myself obedience  
 When I am feared no more? Oh, someone will  
 Be found, I think, who has good cause to be  
 In fear of her! 520

## SCENE 5

SERVANT. Your brother-in-law!  
 HEROD. Is welcome!  
 That is my man! I will give him my sword  
 And then by working on his cowardice  
 Incite his courage to the point of using it!  
 JOSEPH (*enters*). I hear you think of setting out at once  
 For Alexandria. I wish Godspeed! 525  
 HEROD. I leave at once. May be, not to return.  
 JOSEPH. You fear that you will not return?  
 HEROD. I might not!  
 JOSEPH. You never talked like this before!  
 HEROD. Then be  
 Assured, things never looked so bad for me!  
 JOSEPH. If you are losing heart— 530  
 HEROD. But I am not,  
 For I shall bear whatever comes, but hope  
 Is gone that any good may come of it.  
 JOSEPH. I only wish that I had been quite blind  
 And never had laid bare the secret plans  
 Of Alexandra! 535  
 HEROD. That I can believe!  
 JOSEPH. For if I never had found out that she  
 Had had Aristobulus' portrait painted  
 Quite secretly for Antony, and if

- I had not learned that she sent messages  
To Cleopatra, and then last of all 540  
I had not seized the coffin in the harbor,  
Which hid her son and her, and stopped their flight  
When it had scarce begun—
- HEROD. Then she would have  
Nothing to thank you for, and you could calmly  
Stand by and see her daughter on the throne, 545  
Which Mariamne, daring Maccabee,  
Will surely seize if I do not return,  
And if no other seizes it before her.
- JOSEPH. I do not mean that. I mean, many things  
Would never have been done! 550
- HEROD. Yes, that is right!  
But other things would have occurred instead.  
That makes no difference—You recounted much,  
One thing you have forgotten!
- JOSEPH. What is that?
- HEROD. You too were in the bath when he—
- JOSEPH. I was!
- HEROD. You wrestled with him too? 555
- JOSEPH. At first I did.
- HEROD. Well then!
- JOSEPH. The dizzy spell had not yet seized him  
While I was with him, if it had come on,  
I would have rescued him, or else he would  
Have pulled me down with him beneath the waves.
- HEROD. I have no doubt of that. But you must know 560  
That no one who was there speaks otherwise,  
And since an evil chance decreed that you  
Not only went into the water with him  
But wrestled with him too—
- JOSEPH. Why do you stop?
- HEROD. My Joseph, you and I, the two of us, 565  
We are accused!
- JOSEPH. I too?
- HEROD. You are not only  
My brother-in-law, you are my friend as well!
- JOSEPH. I hope I am!
- HEROD. Oh had you never been!  
Had I, like Saul, but thrown the spear at you  
And you could prove it by your gaping wounds, 570  
It would be better for you, then this slander  
Would not have found a willing ear, nor would  
You be beheaded for a bloody deed  
You never did commit!
- JOSEPH. What, I? Beheaded?
- HEROD. That is your lot if I do not return 575

- And Mariamne—  
**JOSEPH.** I am innocent!  
**HEROD.** What help is that? Appearances are bad!  
 And even if they did believe, are not  
 The many many services that you  
 Have done for me, in Alexandra's eyes 580  
 A proof of crimes against herself, will she  
 Not think: If he had let me flee, then he  
 Who now lies in the grave would be alive?  
**JOSEPH.** True! True!  
**HEROD.** Can she not therefore with a sort 585  
 Of right demand your life to pay for one  
 That she believes she lost through act of yours,  
 And will she not demand it of her daughter?  
**JOSEPH.** Salome! This has come because I went  
 To see the painter! Every year she wants  
 A portrait of me! 590  
**HEROD.** I know how she loves you!  
**JOSEPH.** Ah, if she loved me less it would be better!  
 Would I have found Aristobulus' portrait,  
 If I—Salome, you can now soon have  
 My last one, but it will be headless!  
**HEROD.** Joseph,  
 One must defend his head! 595  
**JOSEPH.** If you admit  
 Your head is lost?  
**HEROD.** I do not quite do that,  
 I still shall try to save it if I can,  
 By putting it into the lion's jaws  
 Quite voluntarily.  
**JOSEPH.** In that you once  
 Succeeded when the Pharisees— 600  
**HEROD.** But now  
 The case is worse, whatever comes to me,  
 Your fate I leave with you in your own hands;  
 You always were a man, be now a king!  
 I hang the purple mantle round you, extend  
 To you the scepter and the sword, so hold 605  
 Them fast and give them back to me alone!  
**JOSEPH.** But do I hear aright?  
**HEROD.** And to assure  
 Possession of the throne and of your life,  
 Kill Mariamne, if you ever hear  
 That I am not returning. 610  
**JOSEPH.** Mariamne?  
**HEROD.** She is the only bond that Alexandra  
 Has with the people since the river drowned  
 Her son, she is the brightly colored crest



- Rebellion will be sure to wear if it  
Rise up against you. 615
- JOSEPH. Yes, but Mariamne!
- HEROD. You are astonished—I am not dissembling,  
And my advice is good, is good for you,  
What need for futher words? Yet it is not  
Alone for you—In plain words: I can not  
Endure the thought that any other ever— 620  
That would be bitterer than—she is proud  
I know—yet after death—an Antony—  
And then above all else this mother-in-law,  
Who will incite the dead against the dead — —  
You understand! 625
- JOSEPH. But—
- HEROD. Hear me to the end!  
She let me hope that she would kill herself  
With her own hand, if I—One has the right  
To have a debt collected?—One may even  
Use force to—What do you think?
- JOSEPH. I believe so!
- HEROD. Then promise me that you will kill her, should she 630  
Not kill herself! Do not be overhasty,  
But do not wait too long! So go to her  
As soon as messengers, for I shall send them,  
Report to you that I am dead, and tell her;  
Then notice if she reaches for a dagger, 635  
If she does something else. You promise?
- JOSEPH. Yes!
- HEROD. I will not have you swear an oath. There is  
No need to have one swear that he will crush  
A serpent that is threatening him with death.  
He does it of himself, if he is sane, 640  
Since he could leave off taking food and drink  
With much less danger than omitting this.  
(*Joseph moves nervously*)  
I know you well! And I will recommend you,  
Tell Antony you are the only one  
Whom he may trust. That you will prove to him 645  
By showing him that even blood relations  
Are not too sacred for a sacrifice  
If there is need to stop a revolution.  
That is the explanation for the deed  
Which you must give him. Street rioting 650  
Will surely follow it, and you must tell him  
That rioting preceded it as well,  
Which only was subdued by killing her.  
And as concerns the people, they will shudder  
When they behold your bloody sword, and many 655

Will say: I knew this man but half! And now—  
JOSEPH. Until we meet again! Today is not  
The end! I know you will return, as always.  
HEROD. A possibility, so one thing more! — — (*long pause*)  
I swore an oath just now concerning you! 660  
*(he writes and seals)*  
It is recorded here! Take this sealed sheet!  
You see it is addressed to—  
JOSEPH. To the hangman!  
HEROD. And I shall keep what I have promised in it,  
If you should tell a tale about a king  
Perhaps, who gave— 665  
JOSEPH. Then give the order to me  
To take this sheet myself straight to the hangman! (*exit*)  
HEROD (*alone*). She lives beneath the sword, and that will spur me  
To do what I have never done, to bear  
What I have never borne, and comfort me  
If it is all in vain. And now, away!—(*exit*) 670

## ACT II

*Castle Zion. Alexandra's rooms.*

### SCENE 1

*Alexandra and Sameas.*

ALEXANDRA. And now you know this!

SAMEAS. I am not surprised!

Nothing that Herod does surprises me!  
For one, who as a youth declares a war  
Against the Sanhedrin, with naked sword  
Steps up before his judge and gives him warning 675  
That he himself is hangman, and the hangman  
Will carry out no sentence on himself,  
He may as man — — Ah, I can see him yet,  
How he, undaunted by the high priest, leaned  
Against a column with his soldiers round him, 680  
Those soldiers who in chasing down the robbers  
Themselves had been transformed to robbers too,  
And calmly counted us all, one by one,  
As if he stood before a bed of thistles,  
And were deciding how to clear it out. 685

ALEXANDRA. Yes, yes. it was a moment made for him,  
On which he may quite well look back with pride!  
A youthful madcap, scarcely twenty years  
Of age, is summoned by the Sanhedrin,  
Because, in criminal excess of spirits, 690  
He has presumed to go against the law,  
Because he dared to carry out a sentence  
Of death which you had not as yet decreed.  
The widow of the dead man, with a curse,  
Has met him on the threshold, and within 695  
Sit all Jerusalem's old men and gray beards.  
Because he has not dressed in sackcloth, has  
Not strewed his head with ashes, you lose courage.  
You think no more of punishment for him,  
You do not even think of threatening him, 700  
You do not speak a word, he laughs and goes!

SAMEAS. I spoke!

ALEXANDRA. It was too late!

SAMEAS. If I had spoken

Sooner, it would have been that much too soon,  
Respect for the high priest had kept me silent,  
The first word was for him, for me the last, 705  
He was the oldest there, the youngest I!

ALEXANDRA. Mere words! If then and there you Sanhedrists  
Had proved the simple courage of your duty,

- No greater courage would be needed now!  
 But now see whether you — — Oh, you will find 710  
 Some other good excuse, I know! If you  
 Are not inclined to fight with him—in fact,  
 It would be venturesome and I advise  
 Against it—then you only need to fight  
 With lions or with tigers when he orders. 715
- SAMEAS. What's that?
- ALEXANDRA. You know the gladiatorial combats,  
 The Roman games?
- SAMEAS. Praise God, I know them not!  
 I think it is a gain to know what Moses  
 Tells us about the Gentiles, nothing else;  
 I close my eyes quite tightly every time 720  
 A Roman soldier meets me on the street,  
 And I still bless my father in his grave  
 That he had never taught their tongue to me.
- ALEXANDRA. You do not know they bring wild animals  
 To Rome, which they have sent from Africa 725  
 By hundreds?
- SAMEAS. No, I had not heard of that.
- ALEXANDRA. That in the stone arena there they drive  
 Them all together, that they then send in  
 Their slaves to them, who have to fight with them  
 Till men or beasts are dead, while they themselves 730  
 Sit round them in the amphitheater  
 And shout with joy when mortal wounds are gaping,  
 And when the bright red blood spurts on the sand?
- SAMEAS. The wildest of my dreams has never shown  
 Me that, and yet it fills my soul with joy 735  
 To learn of it, it is well suited to them!  
*(with hands upraised)*  
 Lord, Thou are great! Though Thou dost grant the Gentile  
 The right to life, yet he must pay Thee tribute,  
 A fearful tribute for it too, for he  
 Is punished by the very way he lives it!— 740  
 How I should like to see those games!
- ALEXANDRA. Your wish  
 Shall be fulfilled when Herod has returned,  
 He thinks of introducing them!
- SAMEAS. Oh, never!
- ALEXANDRA. That's what I said! And why not? For we have  
 Lions a plenty! And the mountain herdsman 745  
 Rejoices if their number but grows less,  
 For that will save him many cows and calves.
- SAMEAS. But quite aside from all the rest, where would  
 He find the fighters? There are no slaves with us,  
 Who owe him service even unto death. 750

ALEXANDRA. The first—I see before me!

SAMEAS. What?

ALEXANDRA. Of course!

You will distort your face as you do now,  
 Perhaps will even tightly clench your fists,  
 Will roll your eyes and gnash your teeth with rage  
 When you shall live to see the day on which 755  
 He dedicates the heathenish arzna  
 As festively as Solomon the Temple.  
 All that will not escape him, as reward  
 He will command you by a sign to enter  
 And show the people there what you can do, 760  
 When you are thus confronted with a lion  
 That has been kept from food for many days.  
 For since we have no slaves, the criminals  
 Deserving death will have to take their place,  
 And who then is deserving death, if he 765  
 Is not, who openly defies the King!

SAMEAS. He could—

ALEXANDRA. Oh, do not doubt! It would be bad  
 If they should take his head from him too soon,  
 Then there would die with him such mighty plans  
 As even Pompey, who with impious boldness 770  
 Once dared to penetrate the Inner Temple,  
 Perhaps—

SAMEAS (*bursting out*). Oh Antony, if you destroy him,  
 Then for a whole year long I will not curse you,  
 And if you do not—well then, we are ready!

ALEXANDRA. He thinks that if our people were intended 775  
 To keep from mixing with the others, God would  
 Have given us the world all for ourselves!

SAMEAS. Does he think that?

ALEXANDRA. Since that is not the case,  
 He thinks that there is need to break the bars,  
 Which separate us still from all the rest, 780  
 As dykes cut stagnant pools off from the sea.  
 And that could happen, if we would adapt  
 Ourselves to them in usage and in customs.

SAMEAS. In usage—(*to Heaven*) Lord! If I am not to go 785  
 Completely mad, show me how he will die!  
 Show me the death that borrows all the horrors  
 From every other death, and then proclaim  
 To me, it is for Herod this is done!

ALEXANDRA. Then be yourself death's angel!

SAMEAS. For myself,  
 If not for him! I swear! I will prevent 790  
 This outrage or will punish my own weakness  
 And kill myself (*with a motion toward his breast*)

- before the day arrives  
Which is besmirched by such abomination!  
That oath compels me to commit a crime  
If I can not perform heroic deeds; 795  
What man is there who ever swore a greater?
- ALEXANDRA. Good! But do not forget, if your own arm's  
Not strong enough to overcome the foe,  
Do not reject with scorn the arms of others!
- SAMEAS. These others? 800
- ALEXANDRA. You can arm them easily!
- SAMEAS. Explain your words!
- ALEXANDRA. Who gave the royal crown  
To Herod?
- SAMEAS. Antony! Who else than he?
- ALEXANDRA. Why did he do that?
- SAMEAS. Because he liked him!  
Or merely this, because we did not like him!  
When has a Gentile had a better reason? 805
- ALEXANDRA. Another thing! What keeps him on the throne?
- SAMEAS. The people's blessing, no! Perhaps its curse!  
Well, who can say?
- ALEXANDRA. Why I! The trick alone  
Of sending in the tribute we must pay  
The Romans every year, before it's due, 810  
And even freely doubling it unasked,  
If somewhere a new war has broken out.  
The Roman wants our money, nothing more,  
He lets us keep our ancient faith, our God,  
And he would even honor Him with us, 815  
Grant Him that place upon the Capitol  
Beside his Jupiter and Ops and Isis,  
Which is unoccupied until today,  
If He, like them, were only made of stone.
- SAMEAS. If that is so, and I regret to say 820  
It is, what do you hope from Antony?  
In this respect, as you yourself have said,  
There's nothing Herod leaves undone. Just now—  
I saw him go! The back of one mule broke  
Before it even reached the city gate! 825  
For every drop of blood within his veins  
He offers him an ounce of gold; do you  
Believe he will reject the gold for you?
- ALEXANDRA. Of course not, if I acted for myself!  
But Cleopatra works in my behalf 830  
And Mariamne helps me too, I hope.  
You are surprised? I do not mean in person,  
She is more apt herself to work against me,  
But through her portrait, and not even that,

- No, through another which resembles her. 835  
 For as the forest shelters not alone  
 The lion but his foe the tiger too,  
 There nestles also in this Roman's heart  
 A swarming serpent-brood of fiery passions  
 Which struggle with each other for control, 840  
 And if now Herod builds upon the first,  
 Then I build on the second, and I think  
 The second one is stronger than the first.
- SAMEAS. You are—
- ALEXANDRA. No Hyrcanus, although his daughter!  
 But lest you should misjudge what I have done, 845  
 Know this: I am no Mariamne either!  
 If Antony destroys the husband, who  
 Possesses her, to clear the way to her:  
 She still is mistress of herself and can  
 Entrench herself behind her widow's veil. 850  
 But I am certain of one thing: already  
 His hand is on his sword, and if he has  
 Not drawn it, only this consideration  
 Has really held him back: the Romans think  
 This lucky soldier Herod is the ring 855  
 Of iron holding things together here.  
 Just bring the proof the opposite is true,  
 Stir up revolt, disturb this lazy peace,  
 Then he will draw it!
- SAMEAS. That will be quite easy!  
 In thought the people have already slain him 860  
 And it is said—
- ALEXANDRA. So put your seal upon it,  
 And quickly then disclose his testament!  
 You know its contents now, the Roman games  
 Stand first in it, and if each one believes  
 He will receive a hundred lashes less 865  
 By Herod's death, or miss the martyr's cross,  
 Then each one thinks, what he is right in thinking.  
 For Israel is facing things so terrible,  
 That it may force from many hearts the wish  
 Of utter desperation, that the Red Sea 870  
 Had swallowed all the people, all twelve tribes  
 Of Israel, and Moses first of all.
- SAMEAS. I go! Before the noontide comes—
- ALEXANDRA. I know  
 What you can do when you put sackcloth on  
 And, shouting woe! alas! move through the streets 875  
 As if your forebear Jonah were among us.  
 And you will learn that it is very useful  
 To go sometimes to see the fisherman,

## ACT II, SCENE 2

33

And eat that humble tradesman's food that he  
Permits himself because no one has bought it. 880

SAMEAS. And you yourself will learn, we Pharisees  
Have not forgotten the disgrace we suffered,  
As you seem to believe. So listen now  
To something you were not supposed to learn  
Until it happened: we are sworn long since 885  
Against him, all Judea's undermined  
And in Jerusalem, so you will see  
How firmly we can count upon the people,  
There even is a blind man in our league.

ALEXANDRA. What use is he? 890

SAMEAS. Why none! And that he knows!  
But yet he is so filled with hate and anger,  
That he would rather share the undertaking  
With us and die, than still continue living  
In such a world, if it should not succeed.  
I think we may consider this a sign. (*exit*) 895

## SCENE 2

ALEXANDRA (*alone*). In thought the people have already slain him!  
I know! I know! And I can see by that  
How much they wish he never will return.  
How fortunate that as he left the swarm  
Of locusts hid him from our sight, for that's 900  
An omen that they do not wish in vain.  
And it is possible that even now  
He is beheaded.—No, speak as you think,  
No Pharisee is lurking at the door!  
And Antony is Antony, I know, 905  
He is a Roman too, and Romans form  
Their judgments slowly, execute them swiftly.  
He may now be a prisoner, although  
Not yet in prison! If one uses that,  
It can lead further. Therefore it is good 910  
If insurrection comes, although I know  
What insurrection means, no less I know  
What consequences it will have if he  
Returns in spite of all. If! That can happen,  
So weigh it well! Before he left, he sent 915  
A severed head as parting gift to you.  
That shows—Fie! I am talking like my father!  
That shows me he is swift as tyrants are,  
And also that he aims to frighten me.  
The first I knew long since, the other shall not 920  
Succeed! And if the very worst should come,  
If everything I try should fail, if he



Should dare the worst in spite of his strong love  
 For Mariamne, which will rather mount  
 Than fall, and will protect me if she will— 925  
 What of it? I have ventured all for vengeance,  
 In death it would be vengeance still, on him  
 Who did it and on her who let it happen.  
 The people, even Rome itself, would not  
 Look on at it with patience. As for me, 930  
 I should be better suited to my forebears  
 If death for me should be a bloody one!  
 Did not the great-grandfathers of my race,  
 The great-grandmothers too, did not the most  
 Of them go to the grave without their heads 935  
 Because they would not bow them? I should share  
 Their lot with them, what more then would it be?

## SCENE 3

*Mariamne enters.*ALEXANDRA (*aside*).

She comes! Yes, if she could be turned from him  
 And could be moved to follow me to Rome,  
 Then—But, she hates him and she loves him too! 940  
 Shall I still dare a last attack? So be it!  
 (*she hastens up to Mariamne*)  
 You seek for comfort where it can be found!  
 Come to my heart!

MARIAMNE. Comfort?

ALEXANDRA. You feel no need?  
 I have misjudged you then! But I had reasons  
 For thinking you the sort of wife you are not, 945  
 And what I heard was slander!

MARIAMNE. What you heard?

ALEXANDRA. They told me of embraces and of kisses  
 You gave your fratricidal husband right  
 After the murder—Do forgive, I should  
 Not have believed it. 950

MARIAMNE. No?

ALEXANDRA. No, never, never!  
 For more than one good reason! Even if  
 You could have turned so heartlessly aside,  
 Refused to give your brother's bloody shade  
 A sister's offering of revenge, which you  
 Could take, not by a Judith's sword, nor yet 955  
 By Rahab's nail, but merely by a twist  
 Of lip or silent crossing of your arms,  
 And should have taken for the dead man's sake:  
 The murderer himself would not have dared

ACT II, SCENE 3

35

Approach, for you resemble so the dead man, 960  
 You would have seemed to him too like the corpse,  
 Aristobulus' corpse, made up with rouge.  
 He would have turned away from you and shuddered.  
 MARIAMNE. He did not do the one, nor I the other!  
 ALEXANDRA. Then be—But no! Perhaps some doubt remained 965  
 As to his guilt. Do you want proof of it?  
 MARIAMNE. I need no proof!  
 ALEXANDRA. You—  
 MARIAMNE. It is not important!  
 ALEXANDRA. Then—But I hold the curse back even now,  
 For you are laden with another one!  
 You still are bound in fetters by a love 970  
 Which never brought you honor.  
 MARIAMNE. But I thought,  
 I did not choose my husband for myself,  
 I but submitted to the lot which you  
 And Hyrcanus deliberately imposed  
 On me, the grandchild and the daughter. 975  
 ALEXANDRA. Not I  
 But my faint-hearted father planned the marriage.  
 MARIAMNE. Then what he did displeased you?  
 ALEXANDRA. No, it did not!  
 For then I would have fled with you before—  
 A refuge had been offered me in Egypt.  
 I only say that he evolved the plan, 980  
 The first of all our high priests lacking courage;  
 I merely fought the feeling of aversion  
 With which I heard the plan at first. But still  
 I did it, for I liked the coward's deal  
 On second thought, and gave the pearl of Zion 985  
 For Edom's sword, when he insisted on it!  
 Yes, if the serpent had been poisonous  
 That at the time had bitten Cleopatra,  
 Or if Mark Antony, when on his journey,  
 Had only come this way, why then I would 990  
 Have answered no! As 'twas, I answered yes!  
 MARIAMNE. And yet—  
 ALEXANDRA. I had expected that you would  
 Not merely waste the purchase price, I hoped  
 That you would ask of Herod—  
 MARIAMNE. Oh, I know!  
 I should have made him pay for every kiss 995  
 By granting me a head that you disliked,  
 And finally when no one more defied you  
 Save only he himself, have driven him  
 To suicide, or if that did not work,  
 On some still night I should have craftily 1000

- Repeated Judith's sneaking deed on him;  
That would have made you proud to call me daughter!
- ALEXANDRA. Much prouder, I do not deny, than now. 1005
- MARIAMNE. But I preferred to be a wife to him  
To whom you married me, for love of him  
Forget I was a Maccabee, as he  
Forgot that he was king for love of me.
- ALEXANDRA. In Jericho, however, you again  
Remembered it, or so it seemed, at least  
You were the first who openly accused him 1010  
While I myself held back with my complaint,  
To test you. Am I right?
- MARIAMNE. In Jericho  
The terrible event confused me so,  
It came too suddenly, from meal to bath,  
From bath to grave, a brother, I admit 1015  
My brain reeled! If, however, stubborn and  
Suspicious, I closed my door to king and husband,  
I'm sorry now and can forgive myself  
Only because it happened as in fever!
- ALEXANDRA. In fever!
- MARIAMNE (*half to herself*). I would not have done it either 1020  
If he had not worn mourning when he came!  
In red, in deep dark red, I could have seen him,  
But—
- ALEXANDRA. Yes, he found it quickly! He had ordered  
It in advance, as other murderers  
Draw water, possibly, before they murder— 1025
- MARIAMNE. Mother, do not forget!
- ALEXANDRA. What? That you are  
The murderer's wife? That's something you've become,  
And only are as long as you desire,  
Perhaps right now, who knows! you're that no longer;  
But yet you always were the dead man's sister 1030  
And that you will remain, you even still  
Will be, if you—you seem inclined to do it—  
Should shout into his grave: It serves you right!
- MARIAMNE. I owe respect to you, I should not like  
To do it violence and, therefore, stop! 1035  
For otherwise I could—
- ALEXANDRA. What?
- MARIAMNE. Ask myself  
Who is more guilty of it, whether it's  
The man who did the deed because he had to  
Or she who drove him to it! Let the dead rest!
- ALEXANDRA. Then speak to one who did not give him birth! 1040  
I carried him beneath my heart, and must  
Avenge him, since I can not waken him,



ALEXANDRA. Then die! And now! For—

MARIAMNE. Oh, I understand you!  
 And that is why you thought I needed comfort? 1090  
 Oh no! You're wrong! I do not feel alarm  
 If menial mobs, which only tolerate  
 The chosen few because they're human, mortal,  
 Already have put him to death with words.  
 What else is there a slave can do, whene'er 1095  
 A king goes by in regal pomp and splendor,  
 Than say: His turn will surely come, like mine!  
 I do not grudge him that! and if he moves  
 A battlefield with many graves up close  
 Beside the throne, I quite approve of that, 1100  
 It stifles envy! Yet my heart tells me  
 That Herod lives and will live. Death must cast  
 A shadow, it falls here, inside!

## SCENE 4

SERVANT. The Viceroy!

ALEXANDRA. And surely armed, just as he always is,  
 Whenever he comes to see us, since he failed 1105  
 To dupe us by the use of flattery,  
 As seemed to be his aim when first he came.  
 Do you know that Salome almost died  
 Of jealousy of you?

MARIAMNE. She still is jealous!  
 For constantly, when she is near, I tell him 1110  
 The worst things, smiling intimately,  
 And since she never wearies of her spying,  
 I do not weary either, plaguing her  
 Because she is so foolish!

*Joseph enters.*

ALEXANDRA (*pointing to his weapons*). See!

MARIAMNE. Oh let him!  
 His wife demands it so that she can dream 1115  
 She has a valiant and courageous husband.

ALEXANDRA (*to Joseph*).

I am still here, you see!

JOSEPH. A strange reception!

ALEXANDRA. My son is still here too! He has again  
 Concealed himself within a dead man's coffin.  
 If you will drive him forth, I will forgive you 1120  
 For having done it once before unbidden.  
 But this time you must seek the coffin, not  
 On any ship that sails the sea to Egypt,  
 But deep within the bowels of the earth!

JOSEPH. I am not one who can awake the dead! 1125

ALEXANDRA (*scornfully to Mariamne*).

How true! For then you would have gone to Egypt  
To help your master when he kneels and pleads  
And that does not protect him from the axe—

MARIAMNE. He kneel and plead!

JOSEPH (*to Mariamne*). And I can show you how!

"I am accused of this!" Yes, I admit it. 1130  
"But not of this!" I add it right at once  
So that you know it all! He'll do it so.

ALEXANDRA. You boast for him?

JOSEPH. He did that once before!

I stood beside him, when the Pharisees  
Had planned to file a charge with Antony. 1135  
He hastened on to camp ahead of them  
Just as he was, told it himself instead,  
And when they came, repeating all the charge,  
Enlarging point by point, he said: Now speak!  
Have I omitted anything or not? 1140  
You know the end, how many an accuser  
Then lost his stubborn head for not retracting;  
He had the Roman's favor when he left.

ALEXANDRA. The two were younger then than they are now.

The arrogance of Herod pleased the other, 1145  
And all the more, since others bore the cost  
Not he himself. The Pharisee whose tongue  
Is always preaching of revolt 'gainst Rome,  
Can he be anything? Whoever plucks  
His beard for him, reduces his esteem! 1150  
Thus Antony did think and laugh, I doubt  
That he will let that happen to himself!

JOSEPH. You speak as if you wished—

ALEXANDRA. Whether we wish

Alike or not is no concern of yours!  
Hold your wish fast! For you it is important 1155  
That he return!

JOSEPH. You think so? If for me,  
Then too for you!

ALEXANDRA. I know no reason why!

There was an Alexandra once before  
Who came to wear a crown in Israel,  
Who seized it when no king was wearing it 1160  
And did not leave it for a thief to steal.  
By God, there soon shall be a second one  
If there are really (*to Mariamne*) Maccabean women  
Who keep their childish oaths!

JOSEPH (*listening*). Yes, it is true!

There really was once such an Alexandra, 1165  
But if one will attain her goal, he'll have

- To follow her example to the full,  
 Not merely half. She reconciled herself  
 With all her foes when once she took the throne,  
 Now no one feared her more but only hoped, 1170  
 No wonder that she sat secure till death!
- MARIAMNE. That is deplorable! Why have a scepter,  
 If not to satisfy both love and hate?  
 A twig's enough to scare away the flies!
- JOSEPH. How true! (*to Alexandra*) And you? 1175
- ALEXANDRA. She never saw in dreams  
 The father of her race, the mighty Judas,  
 Else she would not have feared a single foe,  
 For even from the grave he guards his children,  
 Because he cannot die in any heart.  
 How should he die! No one can ever pray, 1180  
 Who does not have to say: It's due to him  
 That I may kneel before my God and not  
 Before a god of wood or stone or bronze!
- JOSEPH (*aside*). The King was right! I must commit the deed,  
 Put both to death or suffer death myself. 1185  
 I have to put the crown upon my head  
 If I would save it from the hangman's axe.  
 A world of hate stares at me here! So be it!  
 They have pronounced the sentence on themselves;  
 Now for the last time I have tested them, 1190  
 And if his messenger were here, I would  
 This very moment do it without mercy!  
 My preparations are already made.

## SCENE 5

- SERVANT. The Captain Titus asks an audience!
- JOSEPH. At once. (*He is about to go*) 1195
- ALEXANDRA. And why not here?
- SERVANT. He's here already!
- TITUS (*enters; secretly to Joseph*).  
 The thing you feared is happening, the people  
 Are in revolt!
- JOSEPH. Then do what I commanded,  
 Draw up your cohorts and advance at once!
- TITUS. That is already done. I come to ask:  
 Do you want prisoners or only dead men? 1200  
 My eagle merely seizes, or it mangles,  
 And you must know which method suits you better.
- JOSEPH. No blood must flow!
- TITUS. Good! I shall then move in  
 Before the stoning starts, but otherwise  
 I should delay! 1205

- JOSEPH. Did you see Sameas?  
 TITUS. The Pharisee who one time almost crashed  
 His head against my shield because he shuts  
 His eyes each time he catches sight of me?  
 I saw him, to be sure!
- JOSEPH. And how? Speak loudly!  
 TITUS. With thousands round him in the open market 1210  
 And loudly cursing Herod!
- JOSEPH (*to Alexandra*). Sameas  
 Just left you! It was not an hour ago!  
 ALEXANDRA. You saw?  
 TITUS (*to Joseph*). You'll come yourself?  
 JOSEPH. When I can!  
 And in the meantime—
- TITUS. I am leaving! (*turns to go*)  
 ALEXANDRA (*calls him back*). Captain!  
 Why did you take away our guard? 1215
- MARIAMNE. The guard  
 Has gone?  
 ALEXANDRA. Yes, yesterday!  
 JOSEPH. I ordered it!  
 TITUS. Because the King told me before he went:  
 This is the man who knows just what I want,  
 What he commands, that I command myself! (*exit*)
- ALEXANDRA (*to Joseph*).  
 And you! 1220
- JOSEPH. I thought that Judas Maccabaeus  
 Was guard enough for you and for your daughter.  
 And furthermore you hear how things are going:  
 I need the soldiers elsewhere! (*aside*) If the Romans  
 Were near, it might not be successful! Today  
 I sent the Galileans! 1225
- ALEXANDRA (*to Mariamne*). Do you still  
 Think my suspicion false?
- MARIAMNE. I do not know,  
 But it infects me now. I find this strange!  
 Although—If spears came flying from the wall  
 They would not come more unexpectedly!
- ALEXANDRA. Two dagger thrusts would clear the way for him; 1230  
 For if there are no Maccabees alive,  
 Then the Herodians will claim the throne.
- MARIAMNE. I should still laugh at you, were only  
 Salome not his wife!—But by my brother,  
 Her head is mine! And I will say to Herod: 1235  
 As you give me revenge on her, just so  
 You love me! For it must be she, not he!
- ALEXANDRA. Do not rejoice too soon! First we must act,  
 And this revolt can serve our purpose well!



- MARIAMNE. I will not be involved in this revolt, 1240  
 Because, if Herod does return, I have  
 Nothing to fear, and if he does not come,  
 Then I will welcome death in any form!
- ALEXANDRA. I'm going! (*starts to leave*)
- JOSEPH (*stepping in her way*). Where?
- ALEXANDRA. Up to the parapet  
 For now, and after that where I may please! 1245
- JOSEPH. The way up to the parapet is open!  
 The fortress closed!
- ALEXANDRA. So we are prisoners?
- JOSEPH. Until the time when peace has been restored,  
 I must request you—
- ALEXANDRA. Are you not presuming?
- JOSEPH. A stone is blind, a Roman javelin too, 1250  
 They both may hit what they are not supposed to,  
 So one must keep out of the way of them!
- ALEXANDRA (*to Mariamne*).  
 Then I shall go and try to tell my friends  
 Somehow by signs how matters stand with us.
- MARIAMNE. By signs—your friends—oh mother, mother! So 1255  
 It really is yourself and not the people?  
 I hope you are not digging your own grave!  
 (*Alexandra starts to go*)
- JOSEPH. With your permission I shall send along  
 My man-at-arms. Philo!
- ALEXANDRA. Open war then?  
 (*Philo enters; Joseph speaks to him in low tones, then aloud*)
- JOSEPH. You understand? 1260
- PHILO. Yes!
- JOSEPH. As a last resort!
- PHILO. I am to watch, and then—
- JOSEPH. Your head is pawn!  
 (*aside*) It seems that Herod's spirit is within me!
- ALEXANDRA (*aside*). But yet I go! Perhaps this man-at-arms,  
 Although a Galilean, may be won!  
 I can but try! (*exit; Philo follows her*) 1265
- JOSEPH (*aside*). There is no other way  
 However much it throws suspicion on me,  
 For the revolt drives me to take this step,  
 I do not dare lose sight of her, unless  
 I want to make the deed impossible;  
 His messenger may come at any hour! 1270  
 I gave up long ago expecting Herod.
- MARIAMNE. And when did Herod die?
- JOSEPH. When did he die?
- MARIAMNE. And how? You ought to know, you risk so much!
- JOSEPH. What am I risking then? You ask a riddle!

- MARIAMNE. Nothing, if you believe I shall not find  
Protection when the Romans hear my life  
Is threatened, everything if you are wrong. 1275
- JOSEPH. And who is threatening your life?
- MARIAMNE. You ask?  
You!
- JOSEPH. I?
- MARIAMNE. And can you swear the opposite?  
By your child's head! Well, can you?—You are silent! 1280
- JOSEPH. You have no right to ask an oath of me.
- MARIAMNE. One so accused denies it of himself.  
Alas for you if Herod now returns!  
Two things I have to say before I kiss him,  
The one is, that you planned to murder me, 1285  
The other, what I swore; now judge yourself  
What fate is waiting for you when he comes!
- JOSEPH. What did you swear? If it shall frighten me,  
Then I must know it.
- MARIAMNE. Let it be your curse!  
That I will kill myself with my own hand 1290  
If he—Ah! Now you think: Had I but known that!  
Why then I should have paid no heed at all  
To a cold greeting, should have gone ahead  
As I began and now all would be well!—  
You were a very different man at first! 1295
- JOSEPH. I have no thing to fear!
- MARIAMNE. Because you think  
It is impossible that he return!  
Who knows! And if! Then I shall keep my oath,  
But not until I am avenged on you,  
Till I have so avenged myself—yes, tremble— 1300  
As he would have avenged me! Draw your sword  
At once! Draw it! You dare not? I believe it!  
However you may guard me, I shall find  
A way to Captain Titus I am sure!  
Your game is lost, since I have found it out. 1305
- JOSEPH (*aside*). True!  
(*to Mariamne*) I shall hold you to your word! You will  
Avenge yourself as Herod would avenge you!  
You have vowed that to me! Do not forget it!
- MARIAMNE. Thus madness speaks! That Herod loves me 1310  
Far more than I can love myself, no one  
Will doubt, Salome even will not doubt it,  
That tricky wife of yours, not even if  
She hate me doubly for it, even if  
She be the one who for revenge has put  
The ugly thought of murder in your head! 1315  
That the idea comes from her, I know,

- And I will smite her so it hurts, her grief  
 For you shall be my last real joy on earth!
- JOSEPH. Though wrong, it matters not! I have your word!
- MARIAMNE. You keep repeating it? Accursed man, 1320  
 What fearful turmoil of dark thoughts you wake  
 In me, and what suspicions in my breast!  
 You speak as if King Herod had himself  
 Picked you as sacrificial priest and me  
 As victim. Is it so? As he took leave 1325  
 He dropped a vague dark hint, I think of it  
 With horror. Answer!
- JOSEPH. I shall answer you  
 As soon as necessary, when I know  
 That he—
- MARIAMNE. No longer can expose your lies, 1330  
 When you with evil cowardice accuse him  
 Of the most terrible and monstrous thing  
 Only to clear yourself from my suspicions?  
 I tell you, I will hear you only now,  
 When he, perhaps before you even finish,  
 May enter at the door and strike you down! 1335  
 Keep silent then forever, or speak now!
- JOSEPH. And if it were? I do not say it is!  
 But if it were? What else then would it be  
 Than confirmation of the things you feel,  
 Than proof that he loves you, as no man yet 1340  
 Has ever loved his wife?
- MARIAMNE. What did you say?  
 It seems to me I heard that once before!
- JOSEPH. I thought that it would only flatter you  
 If death were not one half as bitter for him  
 As is the thought of leaving— 1345
- MARIAMNE. What the wager,  
 That I myself can finish that for you!  
 As is the thought of leaving me behind  
 Within a world where Antony still lives!
- JOSEPH. Well, yes! I do not say that he said that—
- MARIAMNE. He said it! He said— Oh, what did he not say! 1350  
 If he would only come!
- JOSEPH. But Mariamne!—  
 (*aside*) I have become entangled! Yet I did  
 No more than what I had to! But I fear  
 That he—I see the dead Aristobulus.  
 Accursed be the deed that throws a shadow 1355  
 Before it's even done!
- MARIAMNE. So it was more  
 Than merely empty bubbles in my brain,  
 As may sometimes develop and then burst,

It was—My life is only now beginning,  
Until today I dreamed! 1360

## SCENE 6

*A servant enters, Salome follows.*

SALOME (*to the servant*). Were you commanded  
To let no person enter unannounced?  
I take the blame!

JOSEPH. Salome, you?

SALOME. Who else?  
No evil spirit, only your poor wife,  
Whom you once wooed as Jacob wooed his Rachel  
And whom you now—(*to Mariamne*) Accursed woman, was 1365  
It not enough to turn my brother's heart  
Away from me? Do you now have to steal  
My husband from me too? Both day and night  
He thinks of you, as if you were a widow,  
And I still less than that! By day he dogs 1370  
Your footsteps everywhere! By night he dreams  
Of you, and anxiously calls out your name,  
He starts up out of sleep—(*to Joseph*) Did I not charge you  
With that this very morning? Even today  
When all Jerusalem is in revolt, 1375  
Today he's not with me, nor in the market  
Where I had sent because he did not come,  
He is with you, and you—you are alone!

MARIAMNE. It surely is not she. So it is he!  
If any doubt were still remaining, then 1380  
This silly jealousy has stifled it!—  
For him I was a thing and nothing more!

JOSEPH (*to Salome*).

I swear—

SALOME. That I am blind? Oh no! I see!

MARIAMNE. The dying man who would cut down his fig tree  
Because he could not bear to have another 1385  
Enjoy its fruit when he himself was dead,  
He would be culpable, and yet perhaps  
He had set out the tree himself and knew  
That it would give refreshment to the thief  
Or even to the murderer who shook it. 1390  
In my case that's not so! And yet! And yet!  
That is a crime whose like there never was.

SALOME (*still speaking to Joseph*).

You speak in vain! Commission! What commission?

MARIAMNE. Commission! That the seal!—If it could be,  
Then now's the time it would be possible! 1395  
But it's not possible! However great

The turmoil in my breast, my soul is still  
 Unsullied by a single base emotion!  
 This moment I would give to Antony  
 The selfsame answer that I would have given 1400  
 Him on our wedding day, I feel that, so it  
 Affects me as it does. Were that not so,  
 Then I would have to bear it, yes, forgive it!

SALOME (*to Mariamne*).

You do not seem to see me here!

MARIAMNE. I do!  
 And what is more, you have done me a favor, 1405  
 The greatest favor, I was blind and now  
 I see, see clearly, and alone through you!

SALOME. You scoff at me? You shall do penance for it,  
 If only Herod will return! I will  
 Tell everything to him— 1410

MARIAMNE. What? Oh yes! Do that!  
 If he gives ear — — Why not? Why do I laugh?  
 Is that impossible? — — And if he listens,  
 You have my word, I will not contradict you!  
 I do not love myself enough for that!

SCENE 7

ALEXANDRA (*rushes in*). The King! 1415  
 JOSEPH. In town?  
 ALEXANDRA. Already in the castle!

## ACT III

*Castle Zion. Alexandra's rooms.*

### SCENE 1

*Alexandra. Joseph. Salome.*

*Herod enters with his retinue. Soemus.*

- HEROD. Well, here I am! (*to Soemus*) Is it still bleeding? The stone  
Was meant for me, and you were only struck  
Because you came just then to tell me something.  
And so this time your head was your king's shield!  
If you had only stayed back where you were— 1420
- SOEMUS. I would not have the wound, nor credit either,  
If credit be deserved. In Galilee  
That man at most is stoned who dares oppose  
Both you and me, for I am but your shadow,  
Or better still your mouthpiece or whatever 1425  
You will.
- HEROD. Yes they are very loyal there,  
At least to their own interests, and to mine  
Because their own go hand in hand with mine.
- SOEMUS. How much they do is shown you by the fact  
That you have found me in your capital. 1430
- HEROD. In fact, I was surprised to find you here;  
For when the king is gone, there is more need  
Of watchers in the restive provinces!  
What was it then that drove you from your post?  
It certainly can not have been the wish 1435  
To prove to me it was not dangerous  
To leave it, nor was it the premonition  
That there would be a stone to intercept!
- SOEMUS. I came to town in all due haste to see  
The Viceroy and disclose direct to him 1440  
A few peculiar facts I have discovered.  
I wanted to report to him, that even  
In Galilee the Pharisees are trying,  
Without success, to undermine the ground;  
And yet my warning came too late, I found 1445  
Jerusalem in flames and I could only  
Help him to put them out!
- HEROD (*shakes hands with him*). And that you did  
With your own blood!—Ah, Joseph, greetings to you!  
I thought to find you elsewhere!—Never mind!  
But go at once and bring me Sameas, 1450  
The Pharisee, whom the Roman Captain Titus  
Is holding captive as the Scythians do.  
The stubborn Roman has been hauling him

- Around with him behind the horse he rides,  
 Tied to its tail; in his fanatic zeal 1455  
 He spit at him upon the open square.  
 And so he has to run, as he perhaps  
 Has never run before, to keep from falling  
 And being dragged along. I should at once  
 Have turned him loose as I was riding by! 1460  
 My thanks are surely due to him alone  
 That now I know who all the serpents are  
 Who hitherto have crawled away unseen!  
 I now can crush them easily at will! (*exit Joseph*)
- HEROD** (*to Alexandra*). I greet you too! And from Mark Antony 1465  
 I bring a message to you that you can  
 Not hale a river into court, much less  
 A king within whose land the river flows,  
 Because he did not fill it up with earth!  
 (*to Soemus*) I would have been here long ago, but friends 1470  
 Who do not often see each other, find it hard  
 To bring themselves to part! And it will be  
 That way with us, I tell you in advance,  
 Now that I have you here again at last.  
 You must be here to help me feast on figs 1475  
 As I helped Antony consume the morays,  
 Delicious smothered in Falernian wine,  
 A gourmand's dish! He had me tell him tales  
 About our younger days just to refresh  
 His memory! So you must be prepared 1480  
 To do the same for me. Though I have not  
 So much of the triumphant victor in me,  
 That I would ever summon you to me  
 As he had summoned me to him, pretending  
 That he believed such an absurd complaint, 1485  
 With knitted brows like Caesar, armed as well  
 With lightning and with thunderbolt  
 To make quite sure that I should really come—  
 That was the only reason why he did it—  
 Yet I shall take advantage of the chance 1490  
 Which brings you to Jerusalem today  
 And say, as he, when you begin to talk  
 About your duty: If you do it, as  
 You should, it will not need you every moment!  
 You come so rarely that it seems you do 1495  
 Not like to come!
- SOEMUS.** You do me wrong, and yet  
 I have good reason not to come too often!
- HEROD** (*to Salome*). Are you here too? So have you learned at last,  
 When you meet Mariamne, to imagine  
 That you are only looking in a mirror 1500

- And what you see there is your own reflection?  
 I often gave that good advice to you  
 When you were piqued at her,—you never took it!  
 Now do not take the joke amiss and spoil  
 The joy of our reunion! But, where is she? 1505  
 They told me I would find her with her mother,  
 So I came here!
- SALOME. She went when she was told  
 That you were coming!
- HEROD. Went? Impossible?  
 And yet, perhaps! Since it would be more fitting  
 To meet alone!—(*aside*) Do you feel anger, heart, 1510  
 Instead of asking pardon?—She is right,  
 I'll follow her!
- SALOME. That's right, deceive yourself,  
 Explain her fear at seeing you alive,  
 Her shame for having thought you dead, and more  
 Because she knows she is no longer widow, 1515  
 Explain it all as but a maiden's shyness,  
 A maiden who has never known a man,  
 Not the confusion of a sinful woman!  
 She left because of fear!—
- HEROD. Of fear?—Look round you,  
 We are not here alone!
- SALOME. That suits me well, 1520  
 If I accuse when witnesses are present,  
 Then my complaint will be more surely heard,  
 And will be harder to suppress!
- HEROD. You place  
 Yourself between my wife and me? Take care,  
 You might be crushed!
- SALOME. This time I shall not be, 1525  
 Although I know how much a sister counts  
 With you, when it involves this Maccabee,  
 This time—
- HEROD. I have one thing to say! The day  
 On which I saw her first, if on that day  
 Someone had entered a complaint against her 1530  
 He would not easily have found a hearing,  
 But easier still than now! Be warned by that!  
 I owe so much to her that she can not  
 Owe anything to me! I feel it deeply!
- SALOME. She has full freedom then? 1535
- HEROD. To wear what mask  
 She will to aid her in deceiving you,  
 If she finds joy in making sport of you.
- SALOME. Then—then I must keep still. Words would be vain!  
 Whatever I might say to you, you always



Would have your answer ready: Mummery! 1540  
 This mummery has had a fair success,  
 It fooled not me alone, it has deceived  
 The world as well and it costs you your honor  
 And me my peace of mind, though you may swear  
 That Joseph only did what was his duty 1545  
 When he—but see if any man believes you!  
 HEROD. When he—what is it you withhold? Go on!  
 But no — — not yet! (*to a servant*) A message for the Queen.  
 I ask her presence here!—Does it not seem  
 As if the whole wide world were free of spiders 1550  
 And all of them were nesting in my house,  
 And when for once the blue of heaven seems  
 To shine for me they start to spin their webs  
 And hide it as with clouds? In fact—it's strange  
 She does not come. She really should have kissed me, 1555  
 Succumbing to the impulse of the moment,  
 And then have bit her lips in her distress  
 If after all the ghost had not yet gone!  
 (*to Salome*)  
 You know what you have ventured? Woman, you know?  
 I was so happy! Understand? And now— 1560  
 The earth once spilled a glass of wine for me  
 When I was thirsty, for it started quaking  
 When I had not yet finished drinking it;  
 That I forgave because I had to. But now—  
 On you I could take vengeance!

## SCENE 2

*Mariamne enters.*

HEROD. Cast yourself 1565  
 Down at the feet of her you openly  
 Insulted, then I will not!  
 SALOME. Ha!  
 ALEXANDRA (*aside*). That means?  
 HEROD. Well, Mariamne?  
 MARIAMNE. What does the King command?  
 I have been summoned and I have appeared.  
 ALEXANDRA (*aside*). Is this the wife who swore to kill herself, 1570  
 If he did not return?  
 HEROD. Is this your greeting?  
 MARIAMNE. The King has sent for me to give him greeting,  
 I give him greeting! Thus the task is done!  
 ALEXANDRA. How wrong! You stand arraigned before a court.  
 HEROD. There was a charge about to be preferred 1575  
 Against you! So I sent for you to come  
 Before I heard it, but it truly was not

So that you might defend yourself against it,  
 Only because I think it will be stifled  
 Quite of itself if you are present here! 1580

MARIAMNE. To hinder that I ought to go again!

HEROD. But Mariamne? Never were you one  
 Of those so wretched pitiable souls  
 Who, even as they see the face or back  
 Of foe, forgive and are once more disgruntled 1585  
 Because they are too weak for honest hate,  
 Too small to be completely generous.  
 What then has so transformed your very soul  
 That now you seem to be as one of them?  
 Before I left, you gave me a farewell. 1590  
 This led me to expect a welcome from you,  
 Do you refuse me that? You stand there now  
 As if the hills and plains that lay so long  
 Between us still were separating us?  
 And you step back when I come closer to you? 1595  
 Is my return so hateful to you then?

MARIAMNE. Why should it be? It gives me back my life!

HEROD. Gives back your life! Ah! What a word that is!

MARIAMNE. But you will not deny you understand me!

HEROD (*aside*).  
 Can she then know it? (*to Mariamne*) Come!  
 (*since Mariamne makes no move*) Leave us alone! 1600  
 (*to Alexandra*) Pardon!

ALEXANDRA. Of course!  
 (*exit; all the others follow her*)

MARIAMNE. The coward!

HEROD. Coward?

MARIAMNE. And—  
 What shall I call it?

HEROD. And?—(*aside*) That would be dreadful!  
 For never could I blot it out in her!

MARIAMNE. Whether his wife shall follow him in death  
 By her own choice, or hangman strike her down— 1605  
 It matters not if she but dies! He leaves  
 No time for her to sacrifice herself!

HEROD. She knows!

MARIAMNE. Is Antony a man, as I  
 Believed till now, a man like you, or is he  
 A daemon as you must believe, since you 1610  
 Do seem to doubt there is a sense of duty  
 Or remnant of a pride within my bosom  
 That would resist, if dripping with your blood  
 He came as suitor for my hand and urged me  
 To help him while away such leisure time 1615  
 As the Egyptian may perchance leave free?

HEROD (*aside*).

But how? But how?

MARIAMNE. He would of course have had to

Put you to death before he could woo me,  
And if you feel yourself so valueless,  
I never would have thought it but I see it, 1620

That you are fearful, lest the very fullness  
Of manly worth in you would not outweigh him  
In your wife's heart, yet by what right do you  
Believe I am so low, that you should fear  
That I would not repulse the murderer? 1625  
Oh double shame!

HEROD (*breaking out*). What was the price you paid  
To get this secret? For it was not cheap!

A head was my security!

MARIAMNE. Salome,

How well you knew your brother!—Ask the man  
From whom I learned of it what he received, 1630  
No further answer will you get from me! (*turns away*)

HEROD. I'll show you now just how I question him!  
Soemus!

### SCENE 3

*Soemus enters.*

HEROD. Is my brother Joseph there?

SOEMUS. He waits with Sameas.

HEROD. Take him away!

I gave a note to him. Tell him he shall 1635  
Deliver it at once! Accompany him  
And see that everything that it commands  
Is faithfully performed!

SOEMUS. It shall be done! (*exit*)

HEROD. Whatever you suspect, or think, or know,  
You still misjudge me! 1640

MARIAMNE. On my brother's murder

You put the seal of real necessity  
And one must bow to that, however much  
One shudders, but you never will succeed  
In stamping any plan to murder me  
With this same seal, it will remain just what 1645  
It is, a crime one can at most repeat  
But neither now nor ever can surpass!

HEROD. I would not have the courage to reply  
If I, however much I might have risked,  
Had not been sure of what the end would be. 1650  
But sure I was, and I was only sure  
Because I staked my all upon the play!  
I did that which the soldier well may do

In battle sometimes as a last resort,  
 He hurls the standard from him which he carries, 1655  
 Upon which fortune, honor, both depend,  
 Right in the midst of milling foe he hurls it,  
 But not because he thinks to let it go:  
 He plunges after it, he brings it back  
 And brings the laurel too, though sadly torn, 1660  
 The wreath of victory which even courage  
 No longer could attain but only desperation.  
 You called me coward. If a man is that  
 Who feels a demon in himself and fears it,  
 Then sometimes I am cowardly, but only 1665  
 When I must reach my goal by devious paths,  
 When circumstances force me to pretend  
 That I am not the man I really am.  
 Then I am fearful I might show myself  
 Too soon, and so to tame my pride, 1670  
 Which easily aroused might spur me on,  
 I fix on something which is more than I,  
 On something which must stand or fall with me.  
 You know what stood before me when I left?  
 No duel and still less a court of justice, 1675  
 But a capricious tyrant, in whose presence  
 I was supposed to hold myself in check  
 But surely would not if—I thought of you,  
 And did not even grind my teeth—however  
 He might offend the man and king in me 1680  
 While dragging me from feast to feast, and yet  
 So strangely silent, putting off the pardon;  
 As patient as a slave I bore it all!

**MARIAMNE.** You speak in vain! In me you have offended  
 Humanity; all who like me are human 1685  
 Must share my pain. One need not be my kin,  
 One does not need to be like me a woman.  
 When you by secret underhanded murder  
 Did rob me of my brother, only those  
 With brothers could weep with me. All the others 1690  
 Could stand aloof, refusing sympathy,  
 Dry-eyed. But everyone who breathes has life,  
 And no one willingly lets life be taken  
 From him save by the hand of God alone,  
 Who gave it to him! Such a monstrous crime 1695  
 The whole wide human race condemns and hates,  
 The fates condemn, who, though they let it start,  
 Can not permit completion, you yourself condemn it!  
 And if you have so deeply hurt what's human  
 In me, then tell me, how is the wife to feel, 1700  
 How do I stand with you and you with me?

## SCENE 4

*Salome rushes in.*

SALOME. What awful deed have you in mind? I see  
 My husband led away—and he implores me  
 To plead with you for mercy—I hesitate,  
 For I am angry, do not understand him— 1705  
 And now—now fearful whispers reach my ears,  
 They say—Their words are lies?

HEROD. Your husband dies!

SALOME. Before he has been judged? It cannot be!

HEROD. He has been judged and by himself! He had  
 The document condemning him to death 1710  
 In his own hands before he sinned against me,  
 He knew the punishment awaiting him  
 If he should do it; he accepted it  
 And yet he did it!

SALOME. Herod, listen to me!

Are you so sure of that? Oh I complained 1715

Against him, I believed that I was justified,  
 I had good reason for it—that he loved her  
 Was obvious, no longer did he have

A glance for me, or pressure of the hand—  
 He was with her by day whenever possible, 1720  
 And in the night his dreams betrayed to me  
 How much his mind was with her—That is all

Quite true, and more—And yet it does not follow  
 From this, that she must love him in return,  
 Still less, I grant, that she—Oh no! oh no! 1725  
 My jealousy had carried me too far—

Forgive! You too forgive. (*to Mariamne*) I hated you!

Oh God, how fast time flies! They said—Am I  
 To love you, as I hated you? Then be  
 No longer silent, say that he is guiltless, 1730  
 Beg mercy for him, just as I myself!

MARIAMNE. He is!

HEROD. In her sense, yes—but not in mine!

MARIAMNE. In your sense too!

HEROD. But then you would not know

The thing you know! Now nothing can excuse him!  
 And if I have him put to death and do 1735

Not first give him a hearing, then one reason  
 I do is this: because I want to show you  
 I think no ill of you and deeply rue

The hasty word I spoke at first in anger,  
 But more because I know that he has nothing 1740  
 He can say to me!



HEROD (*aside*). It simply had to be. He could have had  
 Uriah's place assigned to him in battle!  
 But now I grant that I regret my haste! 1780

## SCENE 6

MESSENGER (*enters*). I come from Antony!

HEROD. I know then too

What word you bring. I must at once make ready.

The battle is at hand of which he spoke!

MESSENGER. Octavius already has embarked  
 For Africa, and Antony has joined 1785

With Cleopatra and set out with haste

To clash with him at once near Actium—

HEROD. And then I, Herod, am to be the third!

Good! I shall go today! Soemus can

Replace me here although affairs are bad. 1790

It's well he came!

MARIAMNE. He has to go again!

I thank Thee, God!

HEROD (*watching her*). Ha!

MESSENGER. No, great King, no!

His need is not at Actium, he wants

The Arabs, who have risen in revolt,

Held down and not allowed to join the foe! 1795

That is the service he requires of you.

HEROD. It is his place to name the spot to me

Where I can be of use!

MARIAMNE. Once more! That gives him

Another chance!

HEROD (*as before*). See how my wife rejoices!

(*to the messenger*)

Tell him—but you already know!—(*aside*) Her brow 1800

Is smooth, her hands are folded as in prayer—

Such is her heart!

MESSENGER. But is there nothing else?

MARIAMNE. Now I shall see: was it a fever only,

The fever of a passion so aroused

That it confused him, or his inner self 1805

Which thus betrayed itself to me so clearly?

Now I shall see!

HEROD (*to the messenger*). There's nothing more! (*exit messenger*)

(*to Mariamne*) Your face

Now looks more cheerful! But you must not hope

Too much! One does not always die in war,

I have returned from war before, so often! 1810

MARIAMNE (*starts to speak but restrains herself*).

No! No!

- HEROD.** The battle this time is more fierce  
 Than e'er before. All other times the struggle  
 Was fought for something in the world, but now  
 It's for the world itself. It shall decide  
 Who rules the world, is it Mark Antony, 1815  
 The profligate and libertine, or is it  
 Octavius, whose sole claim to merit is  
 That never in his life has he been drunk.  
 Great blows will be delivered and received,  
 Yet it is possible your wish will not 1820  
 Be realized, that death may pass me by.
- MARIAMNE.** My wish! Of course! My wish! It's well this way!  
 Be firm, my heart, do not betray yourself!  
 The test is none if he suspects what moves you!  
 And if he proves his worth, how great is your 1825  
 Reward, how great his too can be! Then let him  
 Misjudge you! Test him! Keep the end in mind!  
 Think of the crown which you can hand to him  
 When he has overcome the demon in him!
- HEROD.** I thank you! You have now relieved my heart! 1830  
 Although quite possibly I have transgressed  
 Against humanity in you, yet this  
 Is clear, I have not sinned against your love!  
 So I no longer beg you by that love  
 To make a final sacrifice, however, 1835  
 I hope that you fulfill one final duty.  
 I hope for that not merely for myself,  
 For your own sake I hope for it much more.  
 You will not want me after this to see  
 You only in a fog; since I have sealed 1840  
 The dead man's lips I hope you open yours,  
 And in his place explain to me, just how  
 It came that he presented you his head;  
 Because of your humanity you will,  
 Because of your own self-respect you will! 1845
- MARIAMNE.** To keep my self-respect, I will not do it!
- HEROD.** So you refuse me what is reasonable?
- MARIAMNE.** Is reasonable! You think it would be that  
 For me to fall upon my knees before you  
 And swear: Your servant, Sire, did not come near me! 1850  
 And so you can believe,—I have no right  
 To confidence although I am your wife—  
 Hear this besides, and this! Oh shame! Oh shame!  
 No, Herod, no! If curiosity  
 Should sometime ask, perhaps! Now I am silent! 1855
- HEROD.** Yet if your love had been but great enough  
 To pardon all that I have done for love,  
 I never would have asked the question of you!



- But since I know how small it is, I must  
Repeat the question now, for such assurance 1860  
As is afforded by your love can only  
Be as great as is your love itself,  
And any love that values life more highly  
Than the beloved, seems to me quite worthless!
- MARIAMNE. And I am silent still! 1865
- HEROD. Then I declare  
I will not kiss the lips again that are  
Too proud to swear no other man has kissed them,  
Until they do it in humility;  
Yes, if there were a means of wiping out  
All memory of you within my heart, 1870  
If I by simply piercing both my eyes,  
Effacing thus the mirror of your beauty,  
Could by that means efface your image too,  
Then I would pierce them in this very hour.
- MARIAMNE. Herod control yourself! I think perhaps 1875  
Right now you hold your fate within your hands,  
Mayhap can even turn it as you will!  
For every man at some time comes the moment  
In which the guider of his star gives him  
The reins to hold, and only this is bad, 1880  
He can not know the moment and it may  
Be any that comes rolling by! I feel  
So sure this very one is yours! So stop!  
As you today mark out your course of life  
You well may have to walk it to the end: 1885  
Will you do that in the wild flush of anger?
- HEROD. I am afraid you sense but half the truth,  
The turning point is here but is for you!  
For I, what do I want? Only a means  
With which to frighten evil dreams away! 1890
- MARIAMNE. I do not want to understand! I bore  
You children! Think of them!
- HEROD. One who is silent,  
As you are, wakes suspicion that he fears  
To tell the truth but does not want to lie.
- MARIAMNE. No further! 1895
- HEROD. Good, no further! So farewell!  
And then when I return, let that not rouse  
Your anger too much!
- MARIAMNE. Herod!
- HEROD. Be quite sure  
I will not try again as now to force  
A greeting from you!
- MARIAMNE. There will be no need  
Of that again! (*to Heaven*) Guide Thou his heart, Oh God! 1900

- I had forgiven him my brother's murder,  
 I was prepared to follow him in death,  
 I still am, can a mortal then do more?  
 God, Thou hast done what Thou hast never done,  
 Rolled back the wheel of time, things stand again 1905  
 Just as before, oh let his actions this time  
 Be different, then I will forget the past,  
 Forget it as I would if he had made  
 A thrust at me in fever with his sword  
 And then, recovered, bound my wound himself. 1910  
 (*to Herod*) Shall I see you again?
- HEROD. If you should see me,  
 Then call for chains! For that will prove to you  
 That I have gone insane!
- MARIAMNE. You will regret  
 This word!—Restrain yourself, oh heart!—You will! (*exit*)
- HEROD. It's true, I went too far. Already I 1915  
 Have said that to myself. But no less true,  
 That if she loved me she would pardon it!  
 Yes, if she loved me! Did she ever love me?  
 I think she did. But now—Her brother is  
 Revenged, though he is dead and in the grave! 1920  
 I had him killed to make my crown secure.  
 He took with him what matters more: her heart!  
 For since her brother died, her attitude  
 Toward me is strangely changed. When I compared  
 Her with her mother, never did I find 1925  
 The slightest trace of similarity,  
 Today she seemed in more than one way like her;  
 No longer can I trust her as I did!  
 That is quite sure! But is it necessary  
 That I assume at once she has deceived me? 1930  
 The guarantee I had because she loved me,  
 That now is gone, a second guarantee  
 I still have in her pride, and will a pride  
 Which scornfully disdains all self-defense  
 Not scorn still more thus to besmirch itself? 1935  
 It's true, she knows it! Joseph! Oh! Why can  
 Man kill and not awake the dead again?  
 He should be able to do both or neither!  
 He is revenged! He is not here! And yet  
 I see him! "You command?"—It can not be! 1940  
 No! I will not believe it! You, Salome,  
 Silence! Howe'er it came, it was not thus!  
 Perhaps the secret, like a fire inside him,  
 Ate through him by itself. Or he betrayed it,  
 Because he thought me lost and now he wanted 1945  
 To reconcile himself with Alexandra

Before the news arrived here. We shall see!  
 For I must test her! If I had but dreamed  
 She ever could find out, I never would  
 Have gone so far. But since she knows it now, 1950  
 I must go further! For because she knows it,  
 I now must fear from her revenge those things  
 Which I had feared from her inconstancy,  
 Perhaps quite wrongly. I must fear that she  
 Will celebrate a wedding on my grave! 1955  
 Soemus came quite opportunely. He is  
 One who would stand where I now stand, were I  
 Not in the world. His very coming proves  
 How loyally and zealously he serves me.  
 I will give him the order now! I know 1960  
 She will lure nothing out of him, if she  
 Tempts him by human means!—If he betrays me,  
 She will have paid a price, which is—Salome  
 Then you were right!—The test will give the answer! (*exit*)

## ACT IV

*Zion Castle. Mariamne's rooms.*

### SCENE 1

*Mariamne and Alexandra.*

- ALEXANDRA. Your words and acts are riddles. First your oath: 1965  
If he does not return, I too shall die!  
Then bitter coldness when he came, defiance  
Which could not but arouse his anger, as it  
Gladdened me! Now again the deepest mourning!  
Is there a person who can understand you? 1970
- MARIAMNE. If you find that so hard, why vex yourself?
- ALEXANDRA. And then the harsh and yet reluctant way  
In which you keep Soemus at a distance!  
One sees that he has something on his mind—
- MARIAMNE. You think so? 1975
- ALEXANDRA. Yes! And he would like to tell us,  
Only he does not dare, he would perhaps  
Be doubtful, if he saw you throw yourself  
Into the Jordan, whether he should try  
To rescue you from death; he would be right,  
For you have treated him disdainfully! 1980
- MARIAMNE. That is quite true, and Herod can not say,  
That I have tempted his good friend, that I  
Have lured his secret from him, if he has one,  
By cunning flattery. It's in the hands  
Of Heaven, whether I shall ever learn it!  
I feel it in my heart, I'm risking nothing! 1985

### SCENE 2

SAMEAS (*enters, his hands in chains*).

The Lord is great!

MARIAMNE. He is!

ALEXANDRA. You free and yet

In chains? Another riddle!

SAMEAS. I will not

Remove these chains again! Jerusalem

Shall be reminded by them day by day

That Jonah's grandson had to sit in prison. 1990

ALEXANDRA. How then did you escape? You bribed the guards?

SAMEAS. I bribed? The guards?

ALEXANDRA. Of course and yet with what?

You still have on your woven gown of hair,

I doubt if they would let you out if you

Had told them where to find a nest of bees,

As you well could who know just where to find 1995

- Each hollow tree, for honey is not scarce!  
 SAMEAS. Why do you ask? Soemus opened up  
 The gates for me himself! 2000  
 MARIAMNE. Would he have dared?  
 SAMEAS. Why not? I thought that you had ordered it.  
 MARIAMNE. I?  
 SAMEAS. No? And yet it seems to me he said so!  
 I can be wrong, for I was just repeating  
 The last Psalm backwards when he came, and so  
 I listened to him with but half an ear! 2005  
 Oh well! So then it was the Lord, and I  
 Must go up to the Temple to give thanks  
 And have no errand here in David's palace!  
 MARIAMNE. The Lord!  
 SAMEAS. The Lord! Was I then justly jailed?  
 MARIAMNE. Those times are long since past in which the Lord 2010  
 Was wont to speak directly to his people.  
 We have the law instead, and it speaks for Him!  
 The pillar of fire and smoke has ceased to be,  
 By which he marked the paths across the deserts  
 For our forefathers, and the prophets are 2015  
 As silent as the Lord!  
 ALEXANDRA. Not all are silent!  
 Just recently one prophesied a fire;  
 This prophecy was afterward fulfilled!  
 MARIAMNE. Of course, but he himself had set the fire  
 At midnight. 2020  
 SAMEAS. Woman! That is blasphemy!  
 MARIAMNE. It is no blasphemy, I know it happened!  
 He is a Pharisee as you yourself,  
 He speaks like you, he raves like you, the fire  
 Was planned to be the proof he really was  
 A prophet able to foresee the future, 2025  
 But then a soldier caught him in the act.  
 SAMEAS. A Roman?  
 MARIAMNE. Yes!  
 SAMEAS. He lied! He was perhaps  
 A hireling! Had perhaps been hired by Herod  
 Or hired by you!  
 MARIAMNE. Do not forget yourself!  
 SAMEAS. You are his wife, the wife of the blasphemer 2030  
 Who looks upon himself as the Messiah;  
 Since you can clasp him in your arms and kiss him,  
 You might do other things for him as well!  
 ALEXANDRA. He looks upon himself as the Messiah?  
 SAMEAS. He does, he told it to me to my face 2035  
 When he was having me led off to prison.  
 I cried unto the Lord, I cried: Oh guard

- Thy people, send us the Messiah whom  
 Thou promised us in times of direst need,  
 Those times are now upon us! Then he said  
 With haughty scorn: Oh He is long since here,  
 You merely do not know it! I am He!
- ALEXANDRA. Well, Mariamne?
- SAMEAS. With accursed wit  
 He proved we are a folk of lunatics  
 And he alone enjoys the gift of reason,  
 We do not dwell in vain beside the Dead Sea,  
 In which there is no ebb and flow of tide,  
 And that explains why everyone is tainted.  
 It is a faithful mirror of ourselves!  
 But he intends to give us life and vigor,  
 Even if he must take that stupid book  
 Of Moses from us—such his impious words—  
 For that bears all the blame that we are not  
 More like the Jordan, our clear river, rippling  
 Along so merrily, but like a swamp.
- ALEXANDRA. He threw away his mask completely?
- SAMEAS. Yes!  
 Perhaps, however, when he did, already  
 He thought of me as dead; right afterward  
 He ordered that I die.
- MARIAMNE. He was provoked!  
 He found rebellion here!
- SAMEAS. I now remind you  
 Of what your duty is. You must renounce him  
 Even as he renounced the Lord! You can  
 Thus punish him, for Herod loves you much!  
 And when Soemus set me free I thought  
 You had already done it. Unless you do it,  
 Then do not call the lightning from the clouds  
 At all unjust, if it strikes you like him!  
 I go to offer sacrifice!
- ALEXANDRA. Then take  
 The victim from my flock!
- SAMEAS. I take it where  
 It's missed! The widow's lamb, the poor man's sheep!  
 What use has God for yours! (*exit*)

## SCENE 3

- SOEMUS (*comes*). Your pardon!
- MARIAMNE. I was  
 About to summon you! I bid you welcome!
- SOEMUS. This is the first time, is it not?
- MARIAMNE. It is!

- SOEMUS. You have avoided me till now!
- MARIAMNE. Have you  
Sought me and have you something then to seek? 2075  
I do not like to think of it.
- SOEMUS. One thing at least:  
Consider me as your most faithful servant!
- MARIAMNE. I did, but I no longer do!
- SOEMUS. No longer?
- MARIAMNE. How can you open up the prison doors  
And let the rebel out whom Herod jailed? 2080  
Is Herod still the King, or is he not?
- SOEMUS. The answer's not as easy as you think!
- MARIAMNE. If it is hard, then you will have to suffer!
- SOEMUS. You have not heard the battle has been lost!
- MARIAMNE. At Actium? The battle has been lost? 2085
- SOEMUS. Mark Antony has died by his own hand!  
Queen Cleopatra too, by hers!
- MARIAMNE. She had  
The courage? She could never bear to look  
Upon a sword, recoiled from his when once  
He held it up before her as a mirror! 2090
- SOEMUS. It was reported so to Captain Titus!  
Octavius cursed aloud because they were  
Not hindered! I myself read the dispatch!
- MARIAMNE. Then Death has had his share for many days  
And every head is safer than it was 2095  
Before!
- SOEMUS. Do you think so?
- MARIAMNE. You smile so strangely!
- SOEMUS. It seems you do not know Octavius!  
He will not ask if Death is surfeited,  
He will prepare another feast for him  
Of friends of Antony, there is no lack 2100  
Of dainty morsels for this feast of death!
- MARIAMNE. Does that apply to Herod?
- SOEMUS. If he does  
What he proposed—
- MARIAMNE. And what was that?
- SOEMUS. He said:  
My love for Antony is past, I would  
Much rather say I hate him, but I shall 2105  
Continue to stand by him till the last,  
Although I am afraid that he must fall,  
I owe it to myself, if not to him!
- MARIAMNE. Quite like a king!
- SOEMUS. Yes, like a king! Only 2110  
Octavius is not one to admire it,  
If Herod should do that—

- MARIAMNE. Who dares to doubt?  
 SOEMUS. Then he is lost indeed, or else they wronged  
 Octavius grievously when they held him  
 Responsible for all the bloody slaughter  
 That followed Caesar's death! 2115
- MARIAMNE. That you believe  
 So firmly in this outcome, that already  
 You number Herod with the dead, is clear,  
 Or else you would not dare what you have dared.  
 I shudder too, and I admit it freely,  
 At your assurance, for you are no fool,  
 And surely not without good reason risk 2120  
 So much. And yet, however things may stand,  
 I still am here and I assure you, that I  
 Will find a way to bring obedience  
 To him in death, not even one command 2125  
 That he has given shall be unfulfilled,  
 And that shall be his sacrifice!
- SOEMUS. Not one!  
 I doubt it, Queen!—(*to himself*) Now let the blow descend!
- MARIAMNE. As surely as I am a Maccabee,  
 You shall send Sameas back to his prison! 2130
- SOEMUS. If you desire it, then it shall be done,  
 If you want more, if he shall die, just as  
 The King decreed, speak and he is dead!  
 But now may I have leave to ask a question:  
 Am I, so that the sacrifice you plan 2135  
 To offer for the dead may be complete,  
 Am I to take my sword and thrust it through you?  
 That too is a command he left with me!
- MARIAMNE. Alas!
- ALEXANDRA. Oh no!
- MARIAMNE. So then the end is here!  
 And what an end! So dwarfing the beginning 2140  
 And everything besides! The past, the future  
 As well, for me it all dissolves to nothing.  
 I had nothing, I have nothing, I shall  
 Have nothing. No one ever was so poor!
- ALEXANDRA. Whatever evil deeds you might report 2145  
 Of Herod, I could well believe them all,  
 But this—
- MARIAMNE. Oh do not doubt! For it is true!
- ALEXANDRA. Do you say that?
- MARIAMNE. Oh God, I know well why!
- ALEXANDRA. Then you will know what you must do!
- MARIAMNE. Yes, this!  
 (*she aims the dagger at herself*)  
 ALEXANDRA (*preventing her*).



- Have you gone mad? Is that what he deserves? 2150  
 That you should act the hangman on yourself?
- MARIAMNE. That was reversing it! Thank you! He chose  
 This office for himself!  
*(she hurls the dagger from her)*  
 Away, you tempter!
- ALEXANDRA. You will now seek protection of the Romans!
- MARIAMNE. I shall not hinder anyone for whom 2155  
 That seems important—I myself tonight  
 Will give a feast!
- ALEXANDRA. A feast!
- MARIAMNE. There I will dance! —  
 Yes, yes, that is the way!
- ALEXANDRA. And to what end?
- MARIAMNE. Ho, servants! *(servants come)*  
 Open up the banquet halls!  
 Invite all those who feel in festive mood! 2160  
 Light all the candles, any that will burn,  
 Pluck all the flowers that are not yet wilted!  
 There is no need of leaving any over!  
*(to Moses)* You once arranged the wedding feast for us,  
 This feast today must far surpass that other, 2165  
 So spare no effort! *(she steps forward)* Herod, tremble now!  
 And even if you never did before!
- SOEMUS *(steps up to her)*.  
 I feel the pain as much as you!
- MARIAMNE. I do  
 Not want your pity! You are not a hangman,  
 I have no call to doubt, for you have shown it; 2170  
 Instead you are a traitor, and I can not  
 Owe thanks to traitors nor endure them round me,  
 However useful in this world they are.  
 For this I judge aright! If you had been  
 The man you seemed to be, God would have had 2175  
 To work a miracle, He would have had  
 To give the very air the tongue it lacks;  
 That He foresaw when He created you,  
 So He made you the foremost of dissemblers!
- SOEMUS. No! That I am not! I was Herod's friend, 2180  
 I was his brother-in-arms and his companion  
 Before the throne was his, I was his servant,  
 Most faithful servant, after he was king.  
 But only while in me he recognized  
 The human being, honored him in me, 2185  
 As I in him the hero and the king.  
 And that he did, until, unworthily  
 Dissembling, he cast down his eyes and gave  
 The dread command by which he heartlessly

- Consigned both you and me to certain death, 2190  
 Exposed me to the vengeance of your people,  
 To Roman anger, and to his own spite,  
 As he did you to death at my sword's point.  
 I then had proof of what I meant to him!
- MARIAMNE. And did you give expression to your horror? 2195
- SOEMUS. I did not, for I wanted to protect you!  
 So I pretended to accept, dissembled,  
 If you prefer, so that he would not give  
 The order to another, and kill me;  
 A Galilean would have done the deed! 2200
- MARIAMNE. Forgive my words! You stand to him as I,  
 Like me you are offended in your inmost  
 Being, like me degraded to a thing!  
 He is a friend, just as he is a husband.  
 Come to my feast! (*exit*) 2205
- ALEXANDRA. So you were waiting too, bidding your time,  
 As I!
- SOEMUS. My time? What do you mean by that?
- ALEXANDRA. I always noted with astonishment  
 The way you bowed before this king, who owed  
 His high position to the Roman's whim, 2210  
 The reveller's drunken ecstasy and not  
 To race and birth, as if you had forgotten,  
 As he had, that you are his equal; now  
 I see your aim, you only planned to make  
 Him feel secure! 2215
- SOEMUS. In that, you are mistaken!  
 I spoke the truth in all. I do not think  
 I am his equal and I never shall!  
 I know how many rogues there are who serve him  
 With grumbling only for the reason: Herod  
 Is not his grandson; I know others only 2220  
 Are loyal for the sake of Mariamne;  
 But I do not belong to any group  
 That rather would obey an infant's sword,  
 That is inherited, than hero's sword,  
 That is but freshly forged and fire hardened. 2225  
 I always looked upon him as superior,  
 I was as ready to pick up his shield  
 For him, my friend-in-arms, when he might let  
 It fall, as ever the scepter for the king!  
 The crown, the best of women, never did I 2230  
 Begrudge him either, for I felt his worth!
- ALEXANDRA. But you too are a man!
- SOEMUS. That I have not  
 Forgotten that, is what I now am proving!  
 None is so great that he may use me as

- A tool! Whoever asks a service of me  
Which—done or not done as it comes—consigns me  
Disgracefully to certain death, that man  
Frees me from every duty; him I have  
To show, that there exists a middle step  
Between the one for kings and that for slaves  
And that on this stands man! 2235
- ALEXANDRA. It makes no difference  
Just what your reason: it's enough to find  
You on my side! 2240
- SOEMUS. No longer fear a struggle,  
He is as good as dead! Octavius  
Is not an Antony, who lets one hack  
Away his flesh and then forgives it freely,  
Because he so admires the hand that does it!  
He only sees the blows! 2245
- ALEXANDRA. And Titus says . . . ?  
SOEMUS. He thinks as I! I freed your Sameas  
Only because I wanted her to call  
Me to account. That was the only way  
I knew to get a hearing with the Queen!  
She knows now what she has to know, and is  
Prepared for it when news of death arrives.  
That was my purpose! What a noble woman!  
Kill her! A pity, even if she wept! 2255
- ALEXANDRA. Surely, a tender husband!—Talk to her,  
Persuade her if you can that she should seek  
Protection with the Romans, and yourself  
Come to the feast by which she breaks with Herod,  
Be he now dead or still alive! (*exit*) 2260
- SOEMUS (*following her*). He's dead!

## SCENE 4

*Servants enter and make arrangements for the feast.*

- MOSES. Well Artaxerxes? Lost again in thought?  
Come, come! You're not the clock with us, you know!
- ARTAXERXES. If you had had that job for years, as I have,  
Then your reactions would be quite like mine!  
Especially if every night you dreamed  
You had the former duty to discharge!  
With my right hand I grasp the left hand's pulse  
Involuntarily and count and count  
And often count to sixty beats, before I  
Remember I no longer am a clock! 2265
- MOSES. Remember then that here with us your job  
Is not to measure time! For that we have  
The sundial and the sand! And you have things 2270

- To do in time, just like the rest of us! 2275  
 It's loafing, nothing else!
- ARTAXERXES. I swear it's not!
- MOSES. Be still! You never count while you are eating!  
 And furthermore, we do not swear here either,  
 And (*to himself*) if the King himself were not half Gentile  
 We would not have a foreign servant either! 2280  
 There the musicians come already! Hurry! (*joins the others*)
- JEHU. You, is that really true what people tell  
 About you?
- ARTAXERXES. Why then should it not be true?  
 Must I confirm the tale a hundred times?  
 That at the satrap's court I was the clock 2285  
 And was much better off than here with you!  
 At night I was relieved, then 'twas my brother,  
 And daytimes too, when it was time to eat.  
 I do not feel so grateful to your King  
 That with the other prisoners of war 2290  
 He dragged me here. I grant my work at last  
 Was getting hard. I had to go along  
 To war, and when you see the arrows flying  
 And people falling all around, you are  
 More apt to miss the count than in a hall 2295  
 Where people come together for a dance.  
 I shut my eyes, for I am not a hero  
 The way my father was. An arrow hit him  
 While at his post—he also was a clock,  
 As we, my brother too, and I, we all 2300  
 Were clocks—he called the hour and died! How's that?  
 That was a man! That took a deal more courage  
 Than it required to shoot the arrow at him!
- JEHU. Have you no sand at home then? Is that why  
 You have to do that? 2305
- ARTAXERXES. We? Have we no sand?  
 More than enough to cover all Judea!  
 It's only that our satrap, so they say  
 Has every thing much better than the others.  
 The pulse of man, you know, beats more exactly,  
 If he is well and does not have a fever, 2310  
 Than ever any sand runs through a tube.  
 And of what use to you are sundials then,  
 On days it does not suit the sun to shine?  
 (*counts*) One— two—
- MOSES (*returns*). Be off! The guests are coming now!
- ARTAXERXES. Is that a feast? I have seen different feasts, 2315  
 Where only food was eaten that had come  
 From foreign countries! Where a guest was punished,  
 Yes even put to death, if he should dare

- To drink a drop of water, and where men  
 Who had been wrapped in hemp well soaked with pitch 2320  
 Were later set ablaze and burned by night  
 As torches in the gardens—
- MOSES. Stop! What crime  
 Against your satrap had those men committed?
- ARTAXERXES. Committed? Nothing! Funerals with us  
 Are much more splendid than are weddings here! 2325
- MOSES. Presumably you feast upon your dead?  
 That would go well with all the rest!
- ARTAXERXES. Perhaps  
 It is not true then either that your Queen  
 Dissolved a pearl once in a glass of wine,  
 A pearl more valuable than all the kingdom, 2330  
 And that she gave a beggar this same wine,  
 Who drank it as he would have any other!
- MOSES. That is not true, thank God!
- ARTAXERXES (to Jehu). You said it was!
- JEHU. Because it seemed to me to be an honor for her  
 And I had heard it told of the Egyptian! 2335
- MOSES. Get out!
- ARTAXERXES (*points to the roses Jehu carries*).  
 Are those real roses? They are cheap,  
 With us all roses are of gold and silver!  
 They ought to send them where the flowers are  
 As valuable as gold and silver here!  
*The servants scatter. The guests, Soemus among them, have  
 been gathering during the last half of this scene. Music.  
 Dancing. Silo and Judas leave the others and step forward.*
- SILO. What is the reason for this feast? 2340
- JUDAS. The reason?  
 The King is coming back! And that today!
- SILO. Really?
- JUDAS. How can you ask! What other reason  
 Could there well be for such a festival?  
 Best practice some new way to bow and scrape!
- SILO. Did they not say— 2345
- JUDAS. All lies! It always is  
 When rumor says some ill has come to him!  
 And that is natural, there are so many  
 Who wish him ill! Besides, do people dance  
 In homes where they are mourning for the dead?
- SILO. Then very soon the blood will flow in streams, 2350  
 The jails are full to bursting since the riot!
- JUDAS. I know that better far than you can know it,  
 I dragged so many into jail myself.  
 This riot was so absolutely senseless  
 That everyone was forced to fight against it 2355

- Who did not crave a hanging for himself.  
 You know I have no love at all for Herod,  
 However deeply I may bow before him,  
 But what he says is right: the Romans are  
 Too powerful for us, we are no more  
 Than insects are within the lion's jaws,  
 They dare not sting, for they would be devoured!
- SILO. I'm only sorry for my gardener's son  
 Who threw a stone right at a Roman eagle  
 And hit it too! That is hard luck for him.
- JUDAS. How old is he?
- SILO. How long ago was it  
 I broke my ankle?—That's when he was born,  
 For then his mother could not be my nurse,  
 That's right—he's twenty!
- JUDAS. There's no danger then!  
*(Mariamne and Alexandra appear)*  
 The Queen! *(starts to go)*
- SILO. Why not? What do you mean? Explain!
- JUDAS. Well then! In confidence! Since he is twenty  
 There is no danger, but were he nineteen  
 Or twenty-one, it would be bad for him!  
 Next year it will be different!
- SILO. Do not joke!
- JUDAS. I tell you it is true! You wonder why?  
 The King himself is father of a son  
 Of twenty years, and yet he does not know him!  
 When he deserted her, the mother took  
 The child away and swore a solemn oath  
 She would corrupt the child—
- SILO. Frightful woman!  
 A Gentile?
- JUDAS. Probably! I do not know!—  
 But so that he would have to kill his son,  
 You understand? I think it was a frenzy  
 Which then subsided after her first rage,  
 Yet he is anxious, and no decree of death  
 Has ever been enforced against a man  
 Whose age was that of Herod's son.  
 Comfort your gardener! But keep it to yourself!  
*(they lose themselves among the others)*

## SCENE 5

*Alexandra and Mariamne in the foreground.*

- ALEXANDRA. You will not seek protection of the Romans?
- MARIAMNE. Why should I?
- ALEXANDRA. To be sure you stay alive!

MARIAMNE. Alive! Of course! One has to stay alive!  
 Pain has no sting unless one is alive!

ALEXANDRA. At least then you should give the hour its due!  
 You hold a feast, so you should show your guests  
 A festive face, as is but fit and proper! 2395

MARIAMNE. I am no instrument nor yet a candle,  
 Am not supposed to sound nor yet to shine,  
 So take me as I am! No! Do not do it!  
 Urge me to whet the axe for my own neck,  
 What am I saying, urge me to make merry— 2400  
 Cheer up, Soemus!  
*(to Salome as she enters and approaches)*  
 You Salome? Welcome  
 Especially to me, although in mourning!  
 I scarcely hoped for that!

## SCENE 6

SALOME. I have to come  
 If I desire to know how matters stand!  
 I am invited to attend a feast 2405  
 But no one tells me why the feast is held!  
 I may suspect, but really I must know!  
 You are expecting Herod back? We shall  
 See him today? The candles tell me yes,  
 The merry music! You must tell me too! 2410  
 I do not ask for me! But as you know—  
 No, no, you do not know, you have forgotten,  
 Perhaps you dreamed that she was dead and buried,  
 Else you would not have kept the news from her,  
 Only your dream deceived you, for she still 2415  
 Is sitting in the corner where she sat  
 When she blessed you—

MARIAMNE. What is it you are saying?

SALOME. Enough! For Herod has a mother still,  
 Who pines away with worry for her son.  
 And I, I beg you: Do not let her longer 2420  
 Do penance for the crime of bearing me,  
 Give her the comfort which her heart requires!

MARIAMNE. I have no comfort I can give his mother!

SALOME. Today then you are not expecting Herod?

MARIAMNE. No, not at all! I heard that he was dead! 2425

SALOME. And yet you celebrate?

MARIAMNE. Since I still live!  
 And shall one not rejoice that one still lives?

SALOME. That—I do not believe!

MARIAMNE. Thanks for your doubt!

SALOME. The candles—

- MARIAMNE. Are intended to shed light.
- SALOME. The cymbals— 2430
- MARIAMNE. Must resound, why else have cymbals?
- SALOME (*points to Mariamne's festive clothing*).  
The jewels—
- MARIAMNE. Would of course become you better—
- SALOME. That indicates—
- MARIAMNE. A joyous festival!
- SALOME. But held above a grave—
- MARIAMNE. Quite possible!
- SALOME. Then—Mariamne, hear a serious word!  
I always hated you, but always I 2435  
Have doubted whether it was justified,  
And penitent I often came to you  
To—
- MARIAMNE. Kiss me! Once you even did it too!
- SALOME. But now I see that you are—
- MARIAMNE. Rude enough 2440  
To leave you standing here alone, and join  
The group beginning dancing over there!  
Soemus!
- SOEMUS (*offers his arm*). Yes, my Queen!
- MARIAMNE. I am quite sure  
That Herod saw me thus, when he gave you  
The bloody order. Is it not amazing!  
Now everything has come as he expected! 2445  
(*as she goes away, to Salome*)  
You will look on?  
(*with Soemus backstage where they are no longer seen*)
- SALOME. This woman is still worse  
Than I had thought! And that is saying much!  
That's why she has the brilliant serpent's skin  
With which she lures all men!—Yes, she is dancing!  
Well, truly, now my conscience is at rest, 2450  
No one on earth can do her an injustice!  
(*she watches Mariamne*)

## SCENE 7

*Alexandra comes with Titus.*

- ALEXANDRA. Titus, you notice how my daughter mourns!
- TITUS. Perhaps she has some further news from Herod?
- ALEXANDRA. The news that all is over with him! Yes!
- TITUS (*looks at Mariamne*).  
She dances!
- ALEXANDRA. Like a bride, not like a widow! 2455  
Titus, until today she wore a mask,  
And, mark you, she was not the only one!



- TITUS. It's for her good! She stays then what she is!  
 If she is one of Herod's enemies  
 She will not have to suffer with his friends! 2460
- ALEXANDRA. To show us that, she gives this festival!  
*(turns away from Titus)*
- TITUS. These women send a thrill of horror through me!  
 The one hews off the hero's head, whom she  
 Has just won over with her traitorous kisses,  
 While he is still asleep, the other dances 2465  
 Like mad upon the grave of her dead husband  
 Because she wants to keep the crown herself!  
 I surely was invited here to see that—  
*(he looks at Mariamne again)*  
 Yes, yes, I see and will report in Rome—  
 But here I shall not drink a drop of wine! 2470
- SALOME. Well, Titus, what do you say? Is the King  
 So badly off that she may venture all?
- TITUS. If he did not go over to Octavius  
 At once and help to give Mark Antony  
 The final blow even before his fall, 2475  
 And that I doubt, then things look bad for him!
- SALOME. If he had only done it!—If she should keep  
 Her head, then I do not know why the Lord  
 Gave dogs the flesh of haughty Jezebel  
 To eat! *(she mingles with the others)* 2480
- TITUS. She goes on dancing, but it seems  
 It is not easy for her! She ought to glow,  
 But she is pale, as if in thought she were  
 Some other place and only following  
 The dance mechanically! Well even Judith  
 May well have felt some fear while at her task! 2485  
 This woman too must still feel on her lips  
 The last kiss of the husband whom she now  
 So solemnly renounces here before me,  
 And she has not yet seen him dead!—She comes!  
*Mariamne appears again. Alexandra and Soemus follow her.*
- ALEXANDRA *(to Mariamne)*.  
 I spoke with Titus! 2490
- MARIAMNE *(as she turns sees her image in the mirror)*  
 Ha!
- ALEXANDRA. What is the matter?
- MARIAMNE. Just so I saw myself once in my dreams!—  
 So it was that, which would not let me rest  
 Until I found the ruby I had lost  
 Which gleams so somber now upon my breast:  
 The picture would not be complete without it!— 2495  
 The last scene follows soon!
- ALEXANDRA. Come to yourself!

MARIAMNE. Let me alone!—A mirror quite like that!  
 At first a little dimmed as by the breath  
 Of someone, then quite gently clearing, like  
 The images it showed me one by one, 2500  
 And gleaming finally like polished steel.  
 I saw my life entire! First I appeared  
 A child enveloped in a rosy light  
 That slowly changed into a deeper red:  
 The features, though my own, seemed strange to me 2505  
 And only in the third clear transformation  
 I recognized my own too youthful face.  
 And now there came the maiden and the moment  
 When Herod led me to the flower garden  
 And said to me with ardent flattery: 2510  
 Of all these flowers none is too beautiful  
 For your dear hand to pluck!—Accurst be he  
 That he forgot it so completely!—Then it  
 Became uncanny and against my will  
 I had to see the future. So and so 2515  
 I saw myself—and last as I stand here!  
 (*to Alexandra*) Is it not strange, a dream so comes to life?—  
 The gleaming mirror now grew dull again,  
 The light turned ashen hue and I myself,  
 Who had just been so glowing, was as pale 2520  
 As if my blood had long been flowing out  
 From all my veins beneath this festive garment;  
 My flesh did creep, I cried: Now I am coming  
 As skeleton and that I will not see!  
 I turned away—(*she turns away from the mirror*) 2525

VOICES IN THE BACKGROUND. The King! (*general commotion*)  
 ALEXANDRA. What? Who?

## SCENE 8

*Herod enters, in military dress. Joab. Retinue.*

MARIAMNE. It's Death! Grim Death! Yes, Death is here  
 among us!  
 And unannounced, just as he always comes!  
 SALOME. Yes, death for you! You feel it close upon you!  
 My brother!  
 (*she is about to embrace Herod, he pushes her away*)  
 HEROD. Mariamne! (*he draws near*)  
 MARIAMNE. Draw your sword!  
 Prepare the poison cup! For you are Death! 2530  
 And Death's embrace and kiss is sword and poison!  
 HEROD (*turns to Salome*). What does it mean? Already from afar  
 A thousand candles called out through the night:  
 Your messenger is safe, he was not captured

- By Arabs, he arrived, you are expected, 2535  
 And now—
- SALOME. The candles have deceived you badly,  
 They were rejoicing here, they thought you dead!  
 Your messenger did not arrive, your mother  
 Has rent her garments over you!  
*(Herod looks around, sees Titus, and beckons him)*
- TITUS *(steps forward)*. It's so!  
 Here no man was prepared, not even I, 2540  
 To think you would desert Mark Antony  
 Before the battle lost at Actium  
 And join your force to Caesar's, as good judgment  
 So clearly counseled! That this is what you did  
 Is proved to me by your return. Well then! 2545  
 I—wish you luck!
- MARIAMNE *(joins them)*. And I lament the fact  
 That opportunity was not presented  
 To slay Mark Antony with your own hand.  
 Thus you would best have shown to your new lord  
 That you no more had interest in the old one; 2550  
 You would have brought your friend's head with you for him,  
 He would have paid you for it with the crown!
- HEROD. Shame, Titus, shame! You too think that of me?  
 I marched right down into Arabia  
 As Antony had bidden me to do, 2555  
 But there I found no enemy! So I  
 Set out for Actium and it was not  
 My fault that I arrived too late. If he  
 Had held, as I believed he would and could,  
 I would *(to Mariamne)* have sought the opportunity 2560  
 To pay him for the crown by giving him  
 Octavius' head! *(to Titus)* But he did not! He was  
 Already dead when I appeared, a friend  
 Was now no longer necessary, and I  
 Sought out Octavius; but not as king— 2565  
 I laid the crown aside—I did not go  
 As beggar either. I drew my sword and said:  
 I planned to use this sword against you, might  
 Perhaps have colored it with your own blood  
 Had things been different here. But that is over! 2570  
 I lower it before you, lay it down!  
 Consider now how firm a friend I was,  
 Not whose; dead Antony has set me free!  
 Henceforth I can be your friend if you will!
- TITUS. And he?
- HEROD. He said: where have you left your crown? 2575  
 I want to add another jewel to it,  
 The province you have lacked! For you shall feel

- It only in my generosity  
That I am victor, not Mark Antony.  
He never would have taken it away 2580  
From Cleopatra, I present it to you!
- TITUS. That—I should never have believed. I praise  
Your star alone!
- HEROD. Oh Titus, do not praise it!  
For I was spared for onerous tasks! Soemus!  
(*Soemus stays where he is and does not answer*)  
Did you betray me? You are mute! I know 2585  
Enough! Away with him!
- SOEMUS (*while being led away*). I make no plea!  
But you may well believe I thought you dead!  
Now do what pleases you! (*exit*)
- HEROD. And after death  
It all ends, does it not? Yes! Yes! My Titus,  
If you had known the man as I — — You would not 2590  
Be standing here as calm and self-possessed  
As I am, you would gnash your teeth and froth  
With rage and cry in anger: (*to Mariamne*) Woman, what did  
You do to make him go so far?—Salome,  
You were right, I must wash and wash myself— 2595  
I must have blood! The Court shall sit at once!  
(*to Mariamne*) Still silent? Taking refuge in defiance?  
And I know why! You still remember what  
You were to me! It would be easier  
To tear my heart out of my breast—yes, Titus— 2600  
Than (*again to Mariamne*) you out of my heart. And yet I do it!
- MARIAMNE (*turns abruptly*).  
I am a prisoner?
- HEROD. Yes!
- MARIAMNE (*to the soldiers*). Take me hence!  
(*turns—at a sign from Herod, Joab follows her with soldiers*)  
Death can not be my husband any longer! (*exit*)
- HEROD. Ha! Ha! Once long ago I said to her:  
Two people can not ever one outlive 2605  
The other, if their love is deep and true,  
And even if I fell on distant fields;  
One would not need to send a messenger,  
For you at once would feel it when it happened,  
Without a wound would die with me of mine! 2610  
Oh Titus, do not laugh at me! It's true!  
But people do not love each other so! (*exit*)

## ACT V

*Large audience room as in the first act. Throne and judges' table.*

### SCENE 1

*Herod and Salome.*

- HEROD. Enough! I have directed that the Court  
Shall sit and I shall execute its sentence!  
Yes I, who used to fear each sign of fever, 2615  
And if it only struck her waiting-woman,  
Now I myself am arming death against her!  
It is enough! And if your zeal will still  
Not let you rest, then it will miss its goal  
And I shall surely think that hate alone 2620  
Speaks from your lips, and as a witness shall  
Reject you, even though I let each candle  
Bring evidence, that was ablaze that night,  
And every flower that filled the air with fragrance!
- SALOME. But Herod! I will not deny that I 2625  
Have often hunted for her failings and  
Have magnified them, just as you the virtues  
That you discovered in her. Could the pride  
With which she never failed to treat your mother  
And me, could such a pride inspire love? 2630  
She thought herself a higher type of being,  
But one which never did arouse in me  
Another thought than this: What is the need  
Of that thick book in which we are informed  
About the Maccabees' heroic deeds? 2635  
The chronicle is written on her face!
- HEROD. Your aim is to refute me, and you seal  
The judgment I pronounced!
- SALOME. Pray hear me out!  
I grant that it was so. But if I now  
Said more than what I know and think and feel, 2640  
Yes, if because of sisterly compassion  
I did not still lock in my breast the half  
Of what I might have said, then may my child—  
I love him dearly!—live as many years  
As there are hairs that grow upon his head, 2645  
And may each day bring him as many pangs  
As it has minutes, yes, as it has seconds!
- HEROD. The oath is terrible!
- SALOME. And yet I find  
It easier to say than: Night is black!  
My eye might well be sick, but scarcely could 2650  
It be, that at the same time with the eye

The ear be sick, the heart, the instinct, all  
 The other organs that support my senses!  
 And this time all of them are in agreement,  
 As if they could not contradict each other. 2655  
 Yes, if upon that festive night the Lord  
 Had cried out to me from the vault of Heaven:  
 From what dire evil shall I free your earth,  
 You have your choice, then I would not have named  
 The plague, I would have named your wicked wife! 2660  
 I shuddered at the sight of her, it seemed  
 As if I had stretched out my human hand  
 In darkness to a demon out of Hell  
 And he were scoffing at me for it, stepping  
 Forth from that stolen body of flesh and blood 2665  
 And in his own so terrifying form  
 Were leering at me through the smoke and flames;  
 Not only I was shuddering so, even  
 The Roman, hardened Titus, was amazed!  
 HEROD. Indeed, and he weighs heavier than you, 2670  
 For as he loves no one, he hates no one,  
 And he is just, like spirits without blood.  
 Now leave me, for I am expecting him!  
 SALOME. No, no, I never shall forget this dance  
 At which she moved in rhythm with the music 2675  
 And yet as if she knew for certain you  
 Lay dead beneath the ground! By God, I would  
 I did not have to say that! For I know  
 How it must rouse you, who have sacrificed  
 Your mother, sister, and much more for her! 2680  
 But so it was! (*exit*)

## SCENE 2

HEROD (*alone*). What Titus told me was  
 The same! Besides I saw enough myself!  
 And she is right! I sacrificed my sister  
 For her, almost my mother: would not they  
 Outweigh the one, the brother she has lost? 2685  
 In her eyes they would not!

## SCENE 3

*Titus enters.*  
 HEROD. Well, Titus, has  
 Soemus yet confessed?  
 TITUS. The things you know!  
 No more!  
 HEROD. And not—

- TITUS. Oh no! He flared right up  
In rage when I remotely hinted at it!
- HEROD. I could expect it! 2690
- TITUS. Never had there lived  
A wife like yours and never had there been  
A man so little worthy of the jewel  
That God had granted him—
- HEROD. As I myself!  
Yes, yes!—"He did not know what pearls were worth,  
Therefore I stole them from him," said the thief. 2695  
I do not think it helped.
- TITUS. Her heart was rarer  
Than gold—
- HEROD. He knows it? He is all aglow,  
Praises the wine! Is that not proof enough  
That he has tasted it? What reason did  
He give you? Why did he betray my order 2700  
To her?
- TITUS. Abhorrence, so he said!
- HEROD. Abhorrence?  
And did not say a word to me about it?
- TITUS. Would that have been advisable for him?  
Could you have let the stubborn servant live  
Who ever once received an order from you 2705  
And then refused it?
- HEROD. Was it not enough?  
In such a case, to leave it unfulfilled?
- TITUS. Of course! If he went further, then he did it  
Perhaps because you seemed already lost  
And now at your expense he may have wished 2710  
To gain himself the favor of the Queen  
In whose two hands his future fortune lay.
- HEROD. No, Titus, no! Soemus was the man  
To risk the stroke himself, that makes the favor  
Of any other quite unnecessary! 2715  
Therefore I gave the charge to him, I thought:  
He certainly will do it for himself,  
If not for you! Were he a lesser man,  
Did he not have so many friends in Rome,  
I might perhaps believe, but now—No, no! 2720  
There was one reason only!
- TITUS. Yet he will not  
Admit that one!
- HEROD. He would not be the man  
He is, if he admitted it. He knows  
Full well what must now follow and he hopes  
By his denial to awake in me 2725  
A final doubt which, if it does not save

His head for him, may yet guard hers from death!  
 But he is wrong, the doubt lacks any sting,  
 For had I nothing that she did to punish,  
 I have what she became and what she is! 2730  
 Ah! Had she ever been what she appeared:  
 She never could have so transformed herself;  
 And I take vengeance on the hypocrite!  
 Yes, Titus, yes, I swear it by the key  
 To paradise she holds within her hands; 2735  
 By all the happiness which she has brought  
 To me, and all the joy she still could bring;  
 Yes by the shudder which just now has warned me  
 That I shall but destroy myself in her:  
 Yes make an end, however it may be! 2740  
 TITUS. It is too late to cry a warning to you:  
 Oh do not give the order! and I know  
 No means myself that can bring clarity  
 And so I do not dare to say: Desist!

## SCENE 4

*Joab enters.*

HEROD. Are they convened? 2745  
 JOAB. Long since! And from the prison  
 I must report what seems important to me!  
 I must report that Sameas can not  
 Be brought to kill himself!  
 HEROD. My order was  
 That torture be inflicted till he does!  
 (to Titus) I heard that he had sworn to kill himself 2750  
 If he could not make me the like of him,  
 Not break the Gentile streak in me—  
 He calls it that. Since he did not succeed  
 In that, I force him now to keep his oath,  
 He has deserved that death a thousandfold! 2755  
 TITUS. I would have strongly urged his death myself,  
 He has affronted me and Rome in me  
 And that can everywhere be freely pardoned  
 But not here, where the people are so headstrong!  
 HEROD (to Joab). Well then! 2760  
 JOAB. They did exactly as you ordered,  
 Only it did not help at all. The hangman  
 Tried almost every torture on him. He gave  
 Him wounds besides, for he was angered so  
 By his defiance, which he took for scorn,  
 But it is just as if he lashed a tree, 2765  
 As if he had been cutting into wood:  
 The old man stands as if he had felt nothing,



- He sings instead of screaming and makes no move  
 To grasp the dagger which they hold before him,  
 He sings the psalm the three men sang when they 2770  
 Were in the burning fiery furnace, sings  
 More loudly still at each new pang of torture,  
 And when he stops, he even prophesies!
- HEROD (*aside*). Yes, that is how they are!—Will she be different?
- JOAB. As if he had received the gift of eyes 2775  
 For secret and mysterious things, as many  
 As he has wounds, he cries aloud: The time  
 Is now fulfilled and at this sacred moment  
 The Virgin Mother of the tribe of David  
 Is laying in the manger bed a Child 2780  
 Who will cause thrones to topple, wake the dead,  
 Tear stars from Heaven, and will rule the world  
 From everlasting, unto everlasting!  
 The mob meanwhile has gathered there in thousands,  
 Awaits outside the gates, hears everything, 2785  
 Believes Elijah will again send down  
 The chariots of fire to carry him  
 To Heaven like the prophet. Even a hangman  
 Was terrified and held the old wounds closed  
 Instead of wounding him anew! 2790
- HEROD. They shall  
 Put him to death at once; when he is dead,  
 Shall show him to the people!—And then bid  
 The judges come as well and—
- JOAB. and the Queen! (*exit*)
- HEROD. You, Titus, will please sit beside me here!  
 I also sent a summons to her mother, 2795  
 So she shall feel no lack of witnesses.

## SCENE 5

*Aaron and the other five judges enter. Alexandra and Salome follow.  
 Joab enters immediately after them.*

ALEXANDRA. My King and Lord, I give you greeting!

HEROD.

Thank you!

*He seats himself upon the throne, Titus sits down beside him, the  
 judges at a sign from him take seats in a semicircle round the table.*

ALEXANDRA (*while this is taking place*).

I think of Mariamne's fate as something  
 Distinct from mine, and save myself, as if  
 I were a torch, for what is yet to come. 2800

(*she sits down beside Salome*)

HEROD (*to the judges*).

You know why I have had you summoned here!

AARON. It was with deepest pain that we appeared!

HEROD. I do not doubt that! You are all related  
 Or stand on terms of friendship with my house,  
 So what hurts me, hurts you! You will be glad 2805  
 Then, if the Queen, whom I—(*he hesitates*) But spare me that!  
 You will be glad, if you do not condemn her,  
 If you may send her home to me, instead  
 Of sending her to Golgotha, and yet  
 If that necessity arises, you will 2810  
 Not lose your courage but will face the worst,  
 For as you share my fortune and misfortune  
 So you will share disgrace and honor too.  
 Proceed then!  
*He gives Joab a sign. Joab goes and returns with Mariamne.*

*A long pause follows.*

HEROD. Aaron!

AARON. Queen! Our task is not 2815  
 An easy one! You stand before your judges!

MARIAMNE. Before my judges, yes, and also you!

AARON. Do you not recognize this Court?

MARIAMNE. I see  
 A higher one! If that permits an answer  
 To questions that you ask, then I shall speak,  
 And shall keep silent, if that Court forbids!— 2820  
 My eyes can scarcely see you, for behind you  
 Stand spirits that regard me, silent, solemn;  
 They are the famous forebears of my race.  
 For three long nights I saw them in my dreams  
 And now they come by day as well, I know 2825  
 Exactly what it means to see the dance  
 Of death already opened up for me  
 And all who live and breathe becoming pale;  
 There right behind that throne on which a king  
 Appears to sit, stands Judas Maccabaeus: 2830  
 Hero of Heroes, gaze not down so darkly  
 On me, you shall be satisfied with me!

ALEXANDRA. Not too defiant, Mariamne!

MARIAMNE. Mother!

Farewell!—(*to Aaron*) Of what then do I stand accused?

AARON. That you deceived your king and husband—  
 (*to Herod*) Is 2835

That right?

MARIAMNE. Deceived? And how? Impossible!  
 Did he not find me as he thought he would?  
 Did he not find me dancing and at play?  
 Did I put on deep mourning when I heard  
 That he was dead? Did I shed tears of grief? 2840  
 Or tear my hair? Oh, I would then have been  
 Deceiving him, but I did not do that

- And I can prove it. Speak your mind, Salome!
- HEROD. I found her as she says. She does not need  
To look around to find another witness. 2845  
But never, never had I thought it of her!
- MARIAMNE. Not thought it? Yet you stationed close behind me  
The hangman in his mask? That can not be!  
For as I stood before his mind at parting,  
Just so he found me after his return, 2850  
And so I must deny that I deceived him!
- HEROD (*breaking out in wild laughter*).  
So she did not deceive me, since she only  
Did what foreboding, premonition let  
Me fear—How much I praise that sinister  
Admonisher!—(*to Mariamne*) Ah! Woman! That is like you! 2855  
But do not build too much upon the hope  
That I, with joy and peace, have also lost  
My strength, perhaps enough is left for vengeance  
And—even as a boy I always shot  
An arrow after birds if they escaped me. 2860
- MARIAMNE. Speak not of premonition and foreboding  
But speak of fear alone! You quaked at that  
Which you deserved! That is the way of man!  
You can no longer trust the sister, since you  
Have put to death the brother; you have done 2865  
Most frightful things to me and now you think  
I must reply, yes, even must outdo you!  
No? Or did you, when you were facing death  
In honest open warfare, always station  
A hangman right behind me? You are silent? 2870  
It's well. Since you yourself do feel so deeply  
What is most fitting for me, since your fear  
Instructs me what my duty is, so then  
I finally fulfill this sacred duty,  
And separate myself from you forever! 2875
- HEROD. Answer! Do you confess? Or do you not?
- MARIAMNE (*is silent*).
- HEROD (*to the judges*).  
You see, there is no frank confession! Also  
I do not have the proof you like to have!  
But once you did condemn a murderer  
To death because one of his victim's jewels 2880  
Was found on him. It was of no avail  
To show his hands, which he had washed so clean,  
Nor yet to swear the dead man's jewel had been  
A gift; you had the sentence carried out!  
It stands the same way here! She has a jewel, 2885  
An evidence, more incontestible  
For me than any human tongue could give,

That she is guilty of the sin of sins.  
 A miracle would not have merely happened,  
 It would have had to be repeated, were it  
 Not so, and miracles are not repeated! 2890

MARIAMNE (*moves as if to speak*).

HEROD. Yes, she will say, just as the murderer said:

It had been given her! And she may risk it,  
 For like a forest, bedrooms too are mute.  
 But if you should be tempted to believe her 2895

Then all my inmost feelings contradict you  
 And every explanation possible is  
 Against you too, and I demand her death.

In truth, her death! I do not want to drain  
 The loathesome cup defiance offers me, 2900  
 Nor to torment myself from day to day  
 With wondering whether such defiance is

The most unpleasant face of innocence, or  
 The boldest mask of sin, I want to save  
 Myself from this mad whirl of love and hate 2905

Before it stifles me, cost what it may!  
 And so away with her!—You hesitate?  
 That is my will!—Or do you differ with me?

Then speak! I know it's time that I were silent!  
 So speak then! Do not sit like Solomon 2910

Between the mothers with the two young babes!  
 The case is clear! To judge, you need no more  
 Than what you see! A woman, who can stand there

As she does, merits death and were she free  
 From every guilt! And still you do not speak? 2915

Do you perhaps first want the proof, how firmly  
 I am persuaded that she has deceived me?  
 I give it to you with Soemus' head,  
 And that at once! (*he turns to Joab*)

TITUS (*rises*). I don't call this a court!  
 Pardon! (*he is about to go*) 2920

MARIAMNE. No, Roman, stay, I recognize it!

And who will challenge it, if I do not!  
 (*Titus sits down again, Alexandra stands up, Mariamne steps  
 up to her, in an undertone*)

You have brought sorrow to me, never have  
 You judged your happiness in terms of mine!  
 If I'm to pardon that, keep silence now!

You will not alter what I have resolved! 2925  
 (*Alexandra sits down*)

Well, judges?

AARON (*to the rest*). Any one of you who thinks

The King's decree unjust, let him arise!  
 (*all remain sitting*)

- So you have all decreed that she shall die!  
*(he stands up)*  
 You are condemned to death, my Queen!—Have you  
 Aught else you wish to say? 2930
- MARIAMNE. Unless the hangman  
 Has had his orders in advance, already  
 Is waiting for me with the axe, I wish  
 To speak with Titus yet, before I die.  
*(to Herod)* It is the custom to allow a wish  
 To one about to die. If you can grant it,  
 Then let my life be added to your own! 2935
- HEROD. The hangman has no orders yet—I can!  
 And since you promise me eternity  
 As my reward for that, I must and will!  
*(to Titus)* Is not this woman terrible? 2940
- TITUS. She stands  
 Before a man, as woman never should!  
 So make an end of it!
- SALOME *(steps forward)*. Oh do! Your mother  
 Is sick and close to death! She will recover  
 When she has heard this!
- HEROD *(to Alexandra)*. Did you not say something?  
 ALEXANDRA. No! 2945  
*(Herod looks long at Mariamne who remains silent)*
- HEROD. Die! *(to Joab)* I put it in your hands!  
*(exit rapidly, Salome follows)*
- ALEXANDRA *(looking after him)*. For you  
 I have another barb! *(to Mariamne)* That was your wish!
- MARIAMNE. I thank you! *(exit Alexandra)*
- AARON *(to the other judges)*. Shall we still not try to bring  
 Him to relent? For this is horrible!  
 She is the last of all the Maccabees!  
 If we could but obtain a brief delay!  
 It would not do directly to oppose him  
 But he himself may soon again be different,  
 And it may be that he will punish us  
 Because today we offered no resistance!  
 So come! *(exeunt)* 2955
- JOAB *(to Mariamne)*. Will you forgive? I must obey!
- MARIAMNE. Do what your master ordered, do it quickly!  
 I shall be ready just as soon as you  
 Yourself, and queens, as you know, do not wait! *(exit Joab)*

## SCENE 6

- MARIAMNE *(steps up to Titus)*.  
 Just one word more before I go to sleep,  
 While my last chamberlain prepares the bed! 2960

- You are astonished, as I see, that I  
Direct this word to you and not my mother,  
But she is almost like a stranger to me.
- TITUS.** I am amazed to have a woman show me  
How as a man I have someday to die! 2965  
Yes, Queen, your actions seem to me uncanny,  
And, I will not deny, your nature too,  
Only I must admire the heroic spirit  
Which lets you leave this life as if the world  
With all its beauty seemed not even worth 2970  
Another hasty glance on your last walk;  
This courage almost reconciles me with you!
- MARIAMNE.** It is not courage!
- TITUS.** To be sure, they say  
It is a teaching of your gloomy Pharisees  
That life does not begin till after death, 2975  
And all those who believe with them despise  
The world in which the sun alone shines on  
And everything besides dies out in night!
- MARIAMNE.** I never listened to them, I do not  
Believe it! No, I know what I am leaving! 2980
- TITUS.** Then you stand there, as scarcely Caesar did  
When Brutus' hand had thrust the dagger home,  
For he, too proud to let his pain be seen,  
And yet not strong enough to stifle it,  
In falling covered up his face; but you 2985  
Are keeping it concealed within your breast!
- MARIAMNE.** No more! No more! It is not as you think!  
No longer do I suffer pain, for life  
Is part of pain and life within me has  
Become extinct, I long have been halfway 2990  
Between a person and a shadow, and  
I scarcely understand just how I still  
Can die. Now hear the things I have to say,  
But first you promise me as man and Roman  
That you will keep it silent till I'm gone, 2995  
That you will stay beside me when I go.  
You hesitate? Do I demand too much?  
It's not because I fear to stumble, and whether  
You later speak or whether you keep silent,  
Decide yourself! In nothing do I bind you, 3000  
I even let my wish go unexpressed.  
This is the reason I have chosen you:  
Because you always in the past have watched  
Our Hell aloof and cold, just as a statue  
Of bronze might look upon a burning city. 3005  
When you give evidence, they must believe;  
We are for you a different race, to which

- No bond attaches you, you speak of us  
As we do of exotic plants and stones,  
Impartially and without love or hate! 3010
- TITUS. You go too far!
- MARIAMNE. If you unyielding now  
Refuse your word, my secret goes with me  
Into the grave, and then I must forego  
The consolation that one human breast  
Preserves my image pure and undefiled 3015  
And that, if hatred dares its worst, he then  
From sense of duty and respect for truth  
Can lift the veil that hides it from the others!
- TITUS. I yield! I promise it to you!
- MARIAMNE. So know then 3020  
That I deceived the King, but not as he  
Believes! I was as loyal to him as he  
Himself. But why revile myself? More loyal,  
He is long since another than he was:  
Do I need to affirm that? I should rather  
Decide to swear that I had hands and feet. 3025  
For I could lose both hands and feet and yet  
I should still be just what I am, but I  
Could not lose heart and soul!
- TITUS. Yes I believe you  
And I will—
- MARIAMNE. Keep what you have promised me! 3030  
I have no doubt! Now ask yourself just what  
I felt, when he placed me a second time  
Beneath the sword: I had forgiven him once,  
When I was forced to think: Your shadow is  
More like you, than the so distorted picture  
Of you he carries in his deepest soul! 3035  
That was too much, I could not stand it longer!  
I reached down for my dagger and, restrained  
From sudden suicide, I swore to him:  
You plan to be my hangman if you die,  
You shall become my hangman, but in life! 3040  
You shall now put to death the wife you saw  
And after death shall see me as I am!—  
You saw me at the feast. Well then: a mask  
Was dancing there!
- TITUS. Ah!
- MARIAMNE. And today a mask stood 3045  
Before the Court, and for a mask the axe  
Is being ground, but falling it strikes me!
- TITUS. You move me deeply, Queen, and I accuse you  
Of nothing wrong, but I must say to you:  
I was myself deceived, for at your feast

- You filled me with a horror and aversion 3050  
As now with shuddering thrills of admiration.  
If that was the effect on me, why should not  
The glamor of your mask have blinded him  
Whose heart, so stirred by ardent feeling, was  
As little able as a turbid stream 3055  
To mirror things exactly as they are.  
I feel deep sympathy for him as well  
And so I find your vengeance too severe!
- MARIAMNE. I take my vengeance at my own expense;  
If dying like a sacrificial beast 3060  
Incensed me so, I now show it was not  
Because of life; I throw my life away!
- TITUS. Release me from my promise!
- MARIAMNE. If you broke it,  
You would not change a thing. A man  
Can have another put to death; the strongest 3065  
Can not compel the weakest to live on.  
And I am tired, I even envy stones,  
And if it is the purpose of this life,  
That one shall learn to hate it, to prefer  
Eternal death to life, that purpose was 3070  
Attained in me. Oh would that they might carve  
My coffin out of never-crumbling granite  
And sink it deep beneath the sea, so that  
Throughout eternity my very dust  
Be kept apart from all the elements! 3075
- TITUS. But we are living in a world of pretence!
- MARIAMNE. I see that now, so I am leaving it!
- TITUS. And I myself gave evidence against you!
- MARIAMNE. I asked you to the feast, so that you would!
- TITUS. And if I told him now, what you have told me— 3080
- MARIAMNE. He then would call me back, I have no doubt!  
If I turned back, then my reward would be  
That from that moment I should have to stand  
In fear of any who approached, and say:  
Take care, for that can be your third dread hangman! 3085  
No, Titus, no, it was not mere dissembling,  
For me there's no return. And if there were,  
Do you not think I would have found it out  
When I took leave forever from my children?  
If mere defiance drove me, as he thinks, 3090  
My children's sorrow would have broken it:  
Now sorrow only makes my death more bitter!
- TITUS. Oh, if he felt that, came himself and fell  
Down at your feet!
- MARIAMNE. Yes! That would show that he  
Had overcome the demon and I could 3095



Tell everything to him! For I ought not  
 To stoop to bargain with him for a life  
 Which, by the very price at which it can  
 Be bought, must lose for me its every value;  
 I should reward him for his victory, and  
 Believe me, I could do it! 3100

TITUS. Herod, do you  
 Not feel it?

*Joab comes in noiselessly and stands there silent.*

MARIAMNE. No! You see, he sends me him! (*points to Joab*)

TITUS. Let me—

MARIAMNE. Did you not understand me, Titus?  
 In your eyes is it mere defiance still  
 That seals my lips? Can I continue living? 3105  
 Can I continue living with a man  
 Who does not honor God's own image in me?  
 And if the very fact that I kept silent  
 Could conjure death, provide the weapon for him,  
 Should I now break my silence? Should I merely 3110  
 Exchange one type of dagger for another?  
 And would it have been more?

TITUS. She is quite right!

MARIAMNE (*to Joab*). Well, are you ready? (*Joab bows*)

MARIAMNE (*toward Herod's chambers*). Herod, farewell to you!  
 (*toward the earth*) To you, Aristobulus, my fond greetings!  
 Soon I shall join you in eternal night! 3115

*She goes to the door. Joab opens it. Armed men visible  
 standing at attention. She goes out. Titus follows.  
 Joab last. Solemn pause.*

## SCENE 7

*Salome enters.*

SALOME. She went! And still my heart does not beat faster!  
 Another sign that she deserved her fate.  
 So finally again I have my brother,  
 My mother has her son! It's well I did  
 Not budge from him. For otherwise the judges 3120  
 Might still have changed his mind. No, Aaron, no!  
 Imprisonment! She would not stay in prison  
 A month. The grave alone will hold her fast,  
 For only for the grave has he no key.

## SCENE 8

A SERVANT. Three kings have come here from the Orient 3125  
 And bring with them rich loads of precious gifts,  
 They have arrived this very moment, never  
 Before have eyes beheld more foreign shapes

Nor more amazing costumes here than these!  
 SALOME. Have them come in! (*exit servant*) 3130

I will at once announce them.

While they are here with him he will not think  
 Of her! And soon all will be over with her!

(*she goes in to Herod*)

*The servant brings in the three kings, strangely clothed but different from one another. They are accompanied by a rich retinue similarly clothed. Gold, frankincense and myrrh. Herod enters with Salome immediately after.*

FIRST KING. Hail King to you!

SECOND KING. And blessed is your house!

THIRD KING. Glorified in all eternity!

HEROD. Thank you! But for this hour your greeting seems 3135  
 Quite strange to me!

FIRST KING. Was not a son just born  
 To you?

HEROD. To me? Oh no! My wife has died!

FIRST KING. Then this is not the place for us!

SECOND KING. There is  
 A second king besides you here!

HEROD. There would  
 Be none here then. 3140

THIRD KING. Besides your own there is  
 A second royal family in the land!

HEROD. But why?

FIRST KING. Then it is so!

SECOND KING. It must be so!

HEROD. I do not know of one!

SALOME (*to Herod*). In Bethlehem,  
 They say, a branch of David's race has been  
 Preserved! 3145

THIRD KING. And David was a king?

HEROD. He was!

FIRST KING. Then let us go on down to Bethlehem!

SALOME (*continuing to Herod*).

But his descendants there are only beggars!

HEROD. That I believe! Else—

SALOME. Once I saw a maid  
 Of David's house and spoke with her, her name  
 Was Mary. She was beautiful enough 3150  
 And was betrothed, but to a carpenter,  
 She scarcely lifted up her eyes toward me  
 When I was asking for her name!

HEROD. You hear?

SECOND KING. It matters not, we go!

HEROD. But will you tell,  
 Before you go, what brings you here? 3155

- FIRST KING. Respect  
For Him the King of Kings!
- SECOND KING. And the desire  
To see Him face to face before we die!
- THIRD KING. The sacred duty to do homage to Him  
By laying at His feet the precious things  
Of earth! 3160
- HEROD. But who told you of Him?
- FIRST KING. His star!  
We did not start together, had no knowledge  
Of one another, and our realms lie far  
Apart in East and West, and there are seas  
Between them and high mountains cut them off—
- SECOND KING. But all of us had seen the selfsame star, 3165  
The same desire had seized all three of us.  
We traveled by the selfsame route and here  
We came together at the selfsame goal—
- THIRD KING. And whether He be son of king or beggar, 3170  
The Child for whom this star shines out on life,  
Will be exalted high, and on the earth  
No man will breathe who does not bow to Him!
- HEROD (*to himself*).  
The ancient book predicts that too! (*aloud*) May I  
Supply a guide for you to Bethlehem?
- FIRST KING (*pointing to the sky*).  
We have one! 3175
- HEROD. Good—when you have found the child,  
Will you be sure to send me word of it  
So that I can, like you, pay homage to it?
- FIRST KING. We will! And now away to Bethlehem!  
(*exeunt kings and retinue*)
- HEROD. They will not do it!  
(*enter Joab and Titus followed by Alexandra*)
- HEROD. Ah!
- JOAB. It has been done!  
(*Herod covers his face.*)
- TITUS. She died. That's true. But I now have a task, 3180  
A task more terrible by far than he  
Performed who carried out your bloody sentence:  
I have to tell you, she was innocent.
- HEROD. No, Titus, no!  
(*Titus starts to speak. Herod steps up to him.*)  
If that were so, then you  
Would not have let her die. 3185
- TITUS. That no one could  
Have hindered but yourself!—It gives me pain  
That I must be for you far worse than hangman.  
If it's a sacred duty to inter

- The dead, whoever he may be, then surely  
To clear him from disgrace, if he does not  
Deserve it, is a duty still more sacred,  
And now this duty falls on me alone! 3190
- HEROD. In all you say I only see one thing:  
Even in death her charm was true to her!  
Why still feel rancor toward Soemus! How 3195  
Could he resist her glamor while she lived!  
About to die, she still enflamed your heart!
- TITUS. Does jealousy extend beyond the grave?
- HEROD. If I were wrong and if behind your words  
Lay something other than a sympathy 3200  
That is too deep to be no more than that:  
I should remind you still, your evidence  
Had its full share in helping to condemn her,  
And so you would have been in duty bound  
To warn me, when you felt the slightest doubt! 3205
- TITUS. My word prevented me and more than that!  
A harsh, inexorable necessity.  
If I had moved a single step from her  
She would have taken her own life at once,  
I saw the dagger hid upon her breast, 3210  
I saw her hand start toward it more than once.  
(*pause*) She planned to die, she had to die, for she  
Had suffered just as much, forgiven just  
As much as she could suffer or forgive.  
I saw deep down into her inmost soul. 3215  
Who asks for more should not find fault with her,  
His quarrel's only with the elements  
Which were so mixed in her that she could go  
No further. But let him show me the woman  
Who ever went as far as she had gone! 3220  
(*Herod moves restlessly*)  
She wanted death from you and at her feast  
She called into deceptive life that ugly  
And fatal phantom of your jealousy  
And thus deceived us all with an illusion.  
I found it harsh but not unjust. She showed 3225  
Herself to you as mask, a mask intended  
To prod you, make you draw your sword against her,  
(*he points to Joab*)  
You did and you yourself put her to death!
- HEROD. She said that. But she spoke that way from vengeance!
- TITUS. She said it. I gave evidence against her, 3230  
How I should like to doubt it!
- HEROD. And Soemus?
- TITUS. I met him on his way to death, he was  
About to start on his when she had finished

- Hers, and it seemed to be a comfort to him  
That his blood would be mixed so soon with hers 3235  
If only on the block by hangman's hand.
- HEROD. Ah! You see!
- TITUS. What? It may be that he glowed  
For her in secret. But if that was sin,  
Then it was his, not hers. He called to me:  
I die, because I spoke, but otherwise 3240  
I should have had to die because I could  
Speak. That was Joseph's lot! He swore to me  
In dying, that he was as innocent as I!—  
I noted that!
- HEROD (*breaking out*). Is Joseph too avenged?  
The earth is opening up? Do all the dead 3245  
Step forth?
- ALEXANDRA (*steps up to him*).  
They do!—No! Do not fear! There was  
A queen. She will remain below, I'm sure!
- HEROD. Accurst—  
(*controls himself*) So be it! Even if Soemus  
Committed only one offense against me—  
(*turning to Salome*)  
Joseph, who filled him with this base suspicion, 3250  
Joseph though facing death was lying to him,  
Or no? Joseph—Why are you silent now?
- SALOME. He dogged her every step—
- ALEXANDRA (*to Herod*). I know, but yet  
He only sought the opportunity,  
And that is sure, to carry out your order 3255  
To kill both her and me—
- HEROD. Is that the truth?  
(*to Salome*) And you? you?—
- ALEXANDRA. Almost in the very hour.  
When he completely dropped the mask he wore  
Then Mariamne made a solemn oath  
To kill herself with her own hand if you 3260  
Did not return. I will not hide it from you,  
I hated her for that!
- HEROD. Oh! Terrible!  
And that—you tell me only now?
- ALEXANDRA. I do!
- TITUS. I know that too, it was her parting word,  
A thousand years I would have kept it silent, 3265  
I wanted to clear her, not torture you!
- HEROD. Oh then—(*his voice fails him*)
- TITUS. Control yourself, it hits me too!
- HEROD. Yes you—and her (*toward Salome*)—and everyone who was,  
As I, the blind tool of malicious fate,

- But I alone have lost what on the earth  
Will not be seen in all eternity  
Again! Lost? Oh! 3270
- ALEXANDRA. Aristobulus! Now  
You are avenged, my son, and I in you!
- HEROD. You triumph? Do you believe that I shall now  
Collapse? Oh no, I shall not go to pieces! 3275  
I am a king and will see to it that  
*(he makes a motion as if he were breaking something)*  
The world feels it!—Up then Pharisees,  
Rebel against me now! *(to Salome)* You, why are you  
Retreating from me now? As yet I have  
No different face, but it can happen by tomorrow 3280  
That even my own mother has to swear  
That I am not her son!  
*(after a pause—with hollow voice)*  
And if my crown  
Were set with all the stars that flame on high,  
For Mariamne I would give them all,  
And if I had it, give the world besides. 3285  
Yes, I would even lay myself alive  
Within the grave, just as I am, if I,  
By doing that, could set her free from hers,  
Yes, I would dig the grave with my own hands!  
I can not do that! Therefore I hold fast 3290  
To what I have and keep on holding fast!  
It is not much but with it is a crown  
Which now must take the place of wife and queen.  
And if one grasps for that — — But someone does,  
A boy is doing it, the wonder child 3295  
Of whom the prophets long since spoke to us  
And for whom now a star shines out on life.  
But, Fate, your error was a grievous one  
If you had thought to smooth the way for him  
By trampling me beneath your brazen feet, 3300  
I am a soldier, I will fight against you  
And still will bruise your heel though lying prone!  
*(quickly)* Joab! *(Joab steps forward)*  
You go today to Bethlehem  
And tell the captain who is in command there  
To take the wonder boy—But he will not 3305  
Know where to seek, not all can see the star,  
These kings are quite as false as they are pious—  
Tell him to kill the children on the spot,  
All children who were born in this last year,

Not one of them must stay alive! 3310  
JOAB (*steps back*). It's well!  
(to himself) And I know why! But Moses still was saved  
In spite of Pharaoh!  
HEROD (*still loud and strong*). I shall check tomorrow!  
Today there's Mariamne—(*he collapses*) Titus!  
(*Titus catches him*)

FINIS





