

THE AGONY OF DAVID: THE OPERA

Libretto by
Anthony E. Gallo

Lyrics by
Anthony E. Gallo

Music by
TBA

Arrangement and Orchestration by
TBA

Songs and lyrics in higher caps

Dialogue in lower caps

Characters

1. David King of Israel , mid thirties
2. Amnon First Born Son , Teens
3. Absalom Second Born Son, Teens
4. Michal First Wife, mid thirties
5. Tamar Only Daughter , teens
6. Joab Nephew and Chief General, late twenties
7. Nathaniel Prime Minister, mid thirties
8. Bathsheba Favorite wife, late twenties
9. Abishage Favorite Concubine, Teens
10. Hushai Friendly counsel. (Nathaniel)
11. Shimei House of Saul. Hates at David
12. Ahithophel Traitorous counsel.
13. Ittai Loyal Friend .
14. Soldier

SCENE 1, QUEEN MICHAL'S RECEIVING ROOM, ABOUT 1020 BCE

Queen Michal, about 40, is sculpting a slab of marble. She hears sounds and rushes to the window. She immediately closes the shutters, bolts the door, and continues sculpting. Knocking ensues and gets louder.

MICHAL

I hate him, I love him.

I HATE HIM, I LOVE HIM
 I STAND ALONE, ALONE ALL ALONE
 I LOVED HIM ONCE, HE LOVED ME TOO
 BUT THEN I LEARNED HIS HEART WAS GONE
 TO THE PROSTITUE OF BABYLON.

CHORUS

DAVID, DAVID, DAVID THE EMBATTLED KING
 OF THEE WE SING, OF THEE WE SING

MICHAL

MY FATHER GONE, MY BROTHER GONE
 SEE THEM AGAIN, NEVER, OH NEVER
 SAUL THE KING AND MY BROTHER JONATHAN
 ALL ARE GONE FOREVER AND FOREVER!

CHORUS

DAVID, DAVID, DAVID THE EMBATTLED KING
OF THE WE SING, OF THE WE SING

MICHAL

HE KILLED THEM ALL WITHOUT A WORD
HE SAID HE LOVED MY BROTHER JONATHAN
AND SAID SO TO ONE AND ALL
HE SAYS HE LOVES MY FATHER SAUL
THIS IS THE WORST LIE OF ALL.

CHORUS

DAVID, DAVID, DAVID THE EMBATTLED KING
OF THEE WE SING, OF THEE WE SING

DAVID (O.S.)

Michal! Open the door.

Michal continues sculpting.

DAVID (cont'd)

Open the door. I know you are in.

Michal continues sculpting.

DAVID (cont'd)

My sons Absalom and Amnon are with me.

MICHAL

I did not invite you.

DAVID (O.S.)

I am the King and you are my wife. My visit is
a King's prerogative.

MICHAL

One of your eight wives. And thirty
concubines. They should be adequate for
anyone's needs I do not want to see you!

DAVID (O.S.)

I shall break this door down.

MICHAL

Bring your whole army!

AMNON (O.S.)

Father, we can simply turn the latch.

He turns the latch and the door
turns.

David, about 40, Amnon and
Absalom, teenagers, enter in
military outfits. Tony

DAVID

Disobedience to the King can result in a public
hanging.

MICHAL

Be my guest.

DAVID

I have not seen you in three years.

MICHAL

I have no complaints.

DAVID

Will you ever be civil!

MICHAL

To what do I owe the this visit?

DAVID RESPECT FOR THE DEAD

(SONG)

HAVE YOU NO RESPECT FOR THE DEAD! REMEMBER

TODAY IS THE ANNIVERSARY

JONATHAN AND SAUL ARE DEAD.

YOUR OWN FATHER AND BROTHER!

YOU MUST WEEP EVERY DAY FOR THE SLAUGHTER OF

YOUR FAMILY. ONLY A FEW, LIKE THE CRIPPLE

SURVIVE

JONATHAN'S BELOVED SON MERIBBAAL AND ALL HIS

FAMILY

I WILL ALWAYS TAKE CARE OF THE HOUSE OF SAUL.

YOUR HOUSE! YOU MUST RESPECT THE DEAD

MICHAL

Then why did you kill most of us!

DAVID

Now you call me a murderer. I should strangle

you with my own bare hands. Now come!

MICHAL

Forcing me to be in your procession! Must you

always find ways to humiliate me!

DAVID

And you not I? The night of the return of the

Covenant when I ...

MICHAL

Danced naked before young women

DAVID

With God's grace, I celebrated God's return to

us!

MICHAL

Naked?

DAVID

I wore loin cloth.

MICHAL

Ha! All was seen. (smiling) And you had grown
smaller. .

DAVID

Only your distorted eyes saw smaller! Now you

must come with me, my Queen.

MICHAL

Where and why?

DAVID

To visit the grave of your father and Jonathan.

MICHAL

I know my way to their graves.

DAVID

This is the special visit, with the King.

MICHAL

You only want to show that the house of Saul,
what is left of it, stands behind you.

DAVID

I go first to visit my friend Jonathan.

AMNON

You loved him, Father.

DAVID

More than my nine brothers and sixteen sons
combined.

Amnon and Absalom look uneasily at
one another uneasily.

MICHAL

They say a strange love indeed!

DAVID

Not a perverted love, oh bitter queen!

MICHAL

Indeed, he gave you the kingdom! And broke my
father's heart.

DAVID

You loved me once.

MICHAL

Indeed. I saved you when King Saul tried to
kill...

DAVID

Your love was such.. You lied for me. You
loved me then.

MICHAL

Indeed, my king, but...

The sound of footsteps is heard in
the background.

DAVID

The Holy Prophet arrives.

MICHAL

Some say he is not so Holy and not so
prophetic.

DAVID

Be not disrespectful to God's chosen.

Nathaniel ,thirties enters.

NATHANIEL

Why the delay? The crowds are waiting for the
King and the Queen Michal on this day of
solidarity.

MICHAL

The King is free to go when he wants.

NATHANIEL

You must aid the King in the divine mission
during this drought. The Nation suffers from
famine, and revolt may be brewing.

MICHAL

I claim no parts of any divine mission. As for
the famine, I and my household observed the
fast, even before the enunciation of the Royal
edict.

NATHANIEL

We are all part of that mission. The houses of
Saul and David must be like one.

MICHAL

I want to see my husband.

NATHANIEL

The king is your husband.

MICHAL

Palti was my husband!

NATHANIEL

The Marriage

THE MARRIAGE WAS NOT VALID!

YOUR FATHER BROKE THE SANCTITY OF THAT MARRIAGE

HE TOOK YOU AWAY FROM YOUR HUSBAND

HE GAVE YOU IN MARRIAGE TO ANOTHER MAN

WOE UNTO YOUR FATHER

WOE UNTO DAVID.

MICHAL

PALTI WILL BE MY HUSBAND UNTIL THE DAY I DIE.

DAVID

You are mine. I killed two hundred Philistines to get you. And to your Father's promise, you are my property. Palti could not kill one Philistine, let alone a hundred. I...

MICHAL

I remember when God's chosen brought the two hundred skeleton heads in a chariot. But now will God's chosen let me visit Palti's grave. You took me from him five years into our marriage. It has been twenty years now.

NATHANIEL

Your husband is David. You have committed grievous sins. To your nation, to your God, and to your husband..

MICHAL

What sins!

NATHANIEL

You did not submit

YOU DESTROYED THE KINGDOM.

HAD YOU SUBMITTED TO YOUR HUSBAND,

the throne would have an heir

But you would not submit

the House of Saul and the House of David would claim the new king,

There would be no potential civil war

after David's death.

the kingdom would be safe

And you would someday be queen mother.

But you would not submit

Amnon and Absalom glance at one another awkwardly.

MICHAL

I care to be neither a queen mother nor a Queen consort. I only seek one thing.

DAVID

And what is that?

MICHAL

Death!

DAVID

You have the most lavish palaces of any of my

wives. You have the highest allowance of any of the Royal Wives. And you want to die!

MICHAL

A curse upon you
 YOU HAVE IMPRISONED ME FOR TWENTY YEARS.
 MY CHILDREN DO NOT EVEN KNOW ME.
 MAY THERE FOREVER BE A CURSE UPON YOU
 I cannot visit my husband's grave.
 my children are always bickering
 May there forever be a curse upon you.

NATHANIEL

You speak treason! And commit a sacrilege in the eyes of God.

DAVID

The blood of the house of Saul will never be on my hands. Nor the blood of my first wife.
 Suddenly Amnon falls.

AMNON

Father, my pain!

DAVID

My son. My son. My first-born. Bring him water. (To Michal) Take back your curse.

AMNON

No, father, I have been sick for a long time.

DAVID

What is it my son?

AMNON

A strange spell that comes upon me. Melancholy and then a fever.

DAVID

My son!

Princess Tamar enters. Amnon seems to revive.

TAMAR

I come unannounced, oh Queen Michal. Forgive me.

MICHAL

Princess Tamar is always welcome in my home. Shall we retire to my very private quarters? I have some things to give you.

DAVID

No one leaves this room until we all visit the graves of Saul and Jonathan.

TAMAR

Why won't you come, dearest Queen Michal?

MICHAL

Because he will not allow me to even see my children.

TAMAR

Says who? They await you, even more now with their father's death. (Turns to David). I beg you, Father, do not deny Queen Michal the right to see her own grown children.

DAVID

We will visit the grave sites first, and then perhaps she may visit her children.

TAMAR

My beloved father! Now will you come my dear Queen Michal.

MICHAL

Come, I shall, but I must see my children . And you must come with me, O Tamar.

AMNON

Sister, shall I escort you.

ABSALOM

Whoa, there. But half sister, oh, Amnon.

DAVID

Must there be constant bickering between my first born and second born. Let us go. Let the house of David, at least, be united. (to Amnon) You seem to be recovered.

AMNON

The sight of my beloved sister always improves my health.

ABSALOM

A perverted love!

DAVID

Stop!

SCENE 2 JONATHAN AND SAUL'S BURIAL GROUND SHORTLY AFTERWARDS

Michal, Tamar, Amnon, Absalom, and Nathaniel surround King David who is weeping over the graves of Saul and Jonathan.

NATHANIEL

Weep no more, my King!

DAVID

Saul and Jonathan

ALAS! ISRAEL'S SAUL, SLAIN UPON YOUR HEIGHTS;

HOW CAN THE WARRIORS HAVE FALLEN!

SAUL AND JONATHAN, BELOVED AND CHERISHED,

GONE TO BE WITH GOD

SEPARATED NEITHER IN LIFE NOR IN DEATH

THIS DAY WE OBSERVE THESE BURIAL RITES

CHORUS

JONATHAN AND SAUL, JONATHAN AND SAUL,

FATHER AND SON, THE GREATEST OF ALL

DAVID

SWIFTER THAN EAGLES, STRONGER THAN LIONS!

JONATHAN MY BROTHER!

MOST DEAR YOU HAVE BEEN TO ME;

MORE PRECIOUS HAVE I CARED FOR YOU THAN HAVE I LOVED WOMEN.

FOREVER WILL IT BE ME AND MOURNING THEE.

CHORUS

JONATHAN AND SAUL, JONATHAN AND SAUL,

FATHER AND SON, THE GREATEST OF ALL

DAVID

HOW CAN THE WARRIORS HAVE FALLEN,
THE WEAPONS OF WAR HAVE PERISHED!

CHORUS

JONATHAN AND SAUL, JONATHAN AND SAUL,
FATHER AND SON, THE GREATEST OF ALL

MICHAL

You weep too much, Oh, husband.

NATHANIEL

Certainly a fitting tribute to the late king
and Prince Jonathan.

Joab enters the burial ground.

TAMAR

May we now proceed to see Michal's children.

DAVID

Be on your way.

AMNON

May I accommodate them?

MICHAL

We can manage.

ABSALOM

(To Amnon) I thought you were ill? Have your
spirits been revived?

Michal, and Tamar speed off.

DAVID

You have arrived late, General Joab?

JOAB

Uncle David, I do not mourn the loss of the
house of Saul. He is of the house of Kish, we
are from the root of Jesse. We are Judeans,
they are Benjamites.

DAVID

(Interrupting) This is the grave of my brother
Jonathan. We swore allegiance once.

JOAB

Once. You have fed his crippled son and all of
his offspring for a decade. Is that not
sufficient? But I have more news to report.
The Gibeonite revenge continues.

DAVID

They can be quelled easily enough.

NATHANIEL

But not the Gibeonite curse. There is blood
guilt on Saul and his family because he put the
Gibeonites to death.

DAVID

Surely..

NATHANIEL

It is real. The cause of the famine is the
Gibeonite curse.

DAVID

Superstition!

NATHANIEL

The Gibeonite Curse

GOD SPOKE TO ME IN A DREAM
HE TOLD ME THE CAUSE OF OUR THREE YEAR FAMINE
THE GIBEONITE CURSE.

I CALLED UPON THE GIBEONITES
I ASKED THEM WHAT WE MUST WE DO TO ATONE THE GIBEONITE CURSE,
THAT THEY MAY BLESS THE INHERITANCE OF THE LORD?
THEY SAY THAT KING SAUL KILLED HALF THEIR PEOPLE
SEVEN MEN OF HIS DESCENDANTS MUST BE GIVEN TO THEM TO REMOVE
THE GIBEONITE CURSE.

DAVID

For what reason?

NATHANIEL

THAT THEY WILL DISMEMBER THEM ON THE LORD'S MOUNTAIN
OH THE GIBEONITE CURSE.

DAVID

I cannot bear the thought..

NATHANIEL

The Gibeonite Curse

IF NOT THERE WILL BE MORE FAMINE!
THERE WILL BE MORE STARVATION.
THERE WILL BE A CIVIL WAR.
THE HOUSE OF DAVID WILL BE NO MORE,
YOU WILL LOSE FAVOR WITH GOD
YOU WILL FAIL TO GIVE A KINGDOM TO GOD'S PEOPLE.
WE MUST REMOVE THE GIBEONITE CURSE

DAVID

Surely, the people hold me responsible for the
famine?

JOAB

What for, Oh, Uncle?

DAVID

For my sin with Bathsheba and the murder of
the Hittite.

NATHANIEL

You have atoned and your first child died..
No, the house of Saul is to blame.

DAVID

God's Wrath

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE AMAKELITES WAS GOD'S WILL.
SAUL ONLY KILLED HALF
SPARED THEIR KING.
HE INCURRED GOD'S WRATH
IT WAS SAMUEL OBEYING GOD
WHO SAID TO THEIR KING
"AS YOUR SWORD HAS MADE WOMEN CHILDLESS, SO SHALL
YOUR MOTHER BE CHILDLESS AMONG WOMEN."
HE CUT THE KING DOWN BEFORE THE LORD IN GILGAL.
HE REMOVED GOD WRATH

NATHANIEL

NOT EVEN YOU CAN QUESTION GOD'S WILL.
WE CAN UNDERSTAND GOD'S WILL
BUT NOT HIS WAY

PLEASE AVOID GOD'S WRATH

DAVID

Let me consider.

JOAB

When the civil war begins, Saul's surviving descendants will take over the throne. And that venomous Michal will jump with glee. I am ready to pick up and deliver the seven men. Which ones do you choose?

DAVID

None from Jonathan's line. Take Armoni and Meribani, the two sons Rizpah bore to Saul, and the five sons of Saul's daughter Merob, my first love.

JOAB

We shall proceed immediately.

ABSALOM

Look, Father, the sun has disappeared and there are clouds in the sky.

DAVID

(Turning to the grave) Jonathan! Jonathan!
I do this to follow the will of God. But my love and oath to you will never cease.

SCENE 3 AMNON'S ROOM SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Amnon is lying asleep in bed.
David is holding his hand.

DAVID

Do not die on your father.

AMNON

I will get better.

DAVID

The pain?

AMNON

Agonizing.

DAVID

But you will get better.

AMNON

The rains have not come.

DAVID

They have come!

AMNON

When?

DAVID

My Son, My Father A Duet

TURNED OVER SAUL'S SEVEN DESCENDANTS,
THE GIBEONITES DISMEMBERED THEM ON THE MOUNTAIN BEFORE THE
LORD.
THE SEVEN FELL
THEY WERE PUT TO DEATH
SAUL'S CONCUBINE TOOK SACKCLOTH AND PROSTRATED HERSELF ON THE
ROCK.
THE RAINS FELL.

IT HAS RAINED FOR THREE DAYS
 it ended god's wrath
 But these were honorable men.
 I buried them with Saul and Jonathan,
 i buried them together in the tomb of Kish. it ended god's
 wrath

AMNON

OH FATHER. I WAS WELL, BUT I LOOKED OUT OF THE WINDOW.
 I SAW THE SEVEN HANGING BODIES...
 A look of terror comes over Amnon's face.

DUET DAVID AND AMNON: MY SON MY SON
 My son My son Duet by David and Amnon

DAVID

WHAT IS THAT LOOK OF TERROR ON YOUR FACE?

AMNON

THE CURSE CAME UPON ME

DAVID

YOU MUST NOT BELIEVE THIS
 THE WRATH OF GOD IS ENDED

AMNON

YOU HAVE MUCH SADNESS IN YOUR LIFE, FATHER.

DAVID

YOUR ILLNESS CAUSES ME THE MOST SADNESS.
 SOMEDAY YOU WILL BE KING.
 WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE YOU BETTER?

AMNON

MY SPIRITS WOULD BE LIFTED WITH A VISIT FROM MY SISTER.

DAVID

SHE IS ON HER WAY. AFTER MUCH COAXING , SHE AGREED TO COME.

AMNON

I AM ALREADY BETTER.

DAVID

AND SHE IS BRINGING HER CAKES WITH HER. I MUST MEET MY
 TROOPS. PLEASE REST.

David hurriedly exits. Amnon
 returns to sleep. A second later
 Tamar enters dressed in white
 carrying a basket of breads.

TAMAR

My brother, thou art ill indeed. Rest, sweet
 brother. I will return.

AMNON

Remain, sister.

TAMAR

I see some color coming to your face.

AMNON

My sister's visit always makes me feel better.
 May I have one?

She brings the basket to him. He takes it.

TAMAR

They are quite good today.

AMNON

Can you hold my hand.

TAMAR

Why yes, brother.

AMNON

This makes me feel better so much better.

TAMAR

Let me get you another cake.

AMNON

Hold my hand some more.

TAMAR

I must put the cover on the cakes.

AMNON

(Pull her hand closer) No. Stay here. I want your hand.

TAMAR

Let go.

AMNON

No. Come closer.

TAMAR

Let go. You are my brother.

AMNON

Come! Lie with me, my sister!

He gets up from the bed and overpowers her,

TAMAR

My Shame

NO MY BROTHER! DO NOT SHAME ME!

THAT IS A TERRIBLE CRIME.

DO NOT COMMIT THIS AWFUL DEED.

WHERE WILL I TAKE MY SHAME?

YOU WILL BE A DISCREDITED MAN.

AMNON

You are mine!

TAMAR

Let go of me!

AMNON

I can not control myself.

TAMAR

For our Father's sake, let go of me!

AMNON

I am cursed.

TAMAR

Let me go.

AMNON

I can not. I must have you.

TAMAR

No. Help! Help! Help!

AMNON
 I won't harm you. Just this once..
 TAMAR
 Get off me.
 AMNON
 I must have you.
 TAMAR
 Help! Help!
 Amnon overpowers and rapes Tamar.
 TAMAR (cont'd)
 Oh, God! Oh, God. I am destroyed. A virgin
 no more.
 YOU HAVE SHAMED ME
 AN AWFUL DEED
 aMNON
 No one else need know.
 TAMAR
 No one else need know! All of Israel shall
 know. You are unfit to be king.
 AMNON
 Get up and leave.
 TAMAR
 No, Brother, because to drive me out would be
 far worse than the first injury you have done
 me.
 AMNON
 Say nothing and no one will know about it. And
 you know the act was consensual
 TAMAR
 CONSENSUAL!!
 AMNON
 You enjoyed it.
 TAMAR
 I am violated! Destroyed for life.
 AMNON
 (Calling out to servants) Would one of the
 servants please escort this woman out.
 TAMAR
 Do not further humiliate me!
 AMNON
 Away from me, you whore!
 TAMAR
 Can I believe this is Amnon!
 AMNON
 (Shouting to the servants) Bar the door after
 her.
 TAMAR
 I will leave on my own accord. You have no
 mercy!
 AMNON
 It was YOU who submitted.
 TAMAR
 I did not!
 AMNON

Out.

TAMAR

May you forever be cursed.

AMNON

Leave!

TAMAR

Lord, hear my plea

LORD, HEAR MY PRAYER; LET MY CRY COME TO YOU.

DO NOT HIDE YOUR FACE FROM ME IN THE DAY OF MY DISTRESS.

TURN YOUR EAR TO ME; WHEN I CALL, ANSWER ME QUICKLY.

FOR MY DAYS VANISH LIKE SMOKE; MY BONES BURN AWAY AS IN A FURNACE.

MY HEART IS WITHERED, DRIED UP LIKE GRASS,
TOO WASTED TO EAT MY FOOD.

FROM MY LOUD GROANING

I BECOME JUST SKIN AND BONES.

I AM LIKE A DESERT OWL,

LIKE AN OWL AMONG THE RUINS.

LIE AWAKE AND MOAN,

LIKE A LONE SPARROW ON THE ROOF.

ALL DAY LONG MY ENEMIES TAUNT ME;

IN THEIR RAGE, THEY MAKE MY NAME A CURSE.*

EAT ASHES LIKE BREAD,

MINGLE MY DRINK WITH TEARS.

BECAUSE OF YOUR FURIOUS WRATH,

YOU LIFTED ME UP JUST TO CAST ME DOWN.

MY DAYS ARE LIKE A LENGTHENING SHADOW;

I WITHER LIKE THE GRASS.

Tamar goes outside weeping ,
closing the door behind her.
Absalom rushes up from the side
portico.

ABSALOM

My Sister, neighbors heard the screams and
sent messengers. What were you doing in
Amnon's quarters?

TAMAR

Our father sent me to ...

ABSALOM

And what happened?

TAMAR

Nothing.

ABSALOM

Nothing! The screams! Blood on your tunic?

TAMAR

The blood of the Virgin.

ABSALOM

He violated you!

TAMAR

I am confused!

ABSALOM

He pierced you!

TAMAR

I tried to stop him. But...

ABSALOM

Our father...

TAMAR

Won't do anything. (Begins weeping) Besides, what can he do! I am no longer a virgin. The deed is done.

ABSALOM

Amnon must hang. Come, we must go to our father. If he is God's chosen, he will hang that pervert.

TAMAR

Absalom! All I have is you.
They embrace.

DARK

David , Joab, and Nathaniel,
holding a contract, are standing
near a window

DAVID

He is to be kept in confinement for 40 days. You will assign four soldiers to carry him from one shrine to the other.

JOAB

Shrines are mostly in the desert!

DAVID

Exactly! He is to visit one shrine each day, kneel for two hours, and ask God's forgiveness.

JOAB

And what provisions?

DAVID

Bread and water in the morning and bread and water at night.

JOAB

A future king?

DAVID

You must proceed quickly. Absalom may wish to kill him.

Joab exits. Nathaniel opens the contract.

NATHANIEL

The grooms parents will provide a handsome dowry. And the mother is from the House of Kish. They are aware she is a violated woman.

DAVID

News spreads fast. Perhaps it did not happen at all....

NATHANIEL

Please....

DAVID

You have done your work.

NATHANIEL

And the succession?

DAVID

This is not the time to ..

NATHANIEL

Yes, My Lord.

DAVID

Please send Bathsheba to me.

Loud knocking is heard. The door opens and Absalom and Tamar enter. Nathaniel exits.

DAVID

My beloved daughter.

TAMAR

You already know?

HE HAS SHAMED ME

AN AWFUL DEED

ABSALOM

Our sister and daughter is destroyed by the hand of her own brother.

DAVID

But all is not lost.

ABSALOM

All is not lost!

DAVID

I have a marriage contract.

ABSALOM

Our father acts quickly.

DAVID

For my children I will do anything.

ABSALOM

Perhaps you should hang your son. Were he not the king's son he would have already been executed.

TAMAR

I am a destroyed woman. My life will never be the same.

DAVID

That need not be.

ABSALOM

What do you intend to do about the dastardly deed?

DAVID

He will do penance for 400 days. He will only eat bread and water each day.

ABSALOM

Is that all!

DAVID

We can not do what is done.

But I already have a marriage contract in hand. The son of Johanidim of the house of Kish has agreed to marry you and his wealthy family has provided a large dowry..

ABSALOM

Within moments of his only daughter's ...

TAMAR

I do not want to marry that bore.

DAVID

He is a fine and prominent young man. I am

trying to save you above all.

TAMAR

You forced me to visit my brother.

DAVID

I erred...

TAMAR

And now you force me into an undesirable marriage moments after I have been violated.

ABSALOM

A hanging is in order and you instead find ways to save a man who, were he not the Kings son, would surely be hung.

TAMAR

Hang me instead. I want to die.

DAVID

A sinner yes. But he is still the first-born. And had you remained quiet..

TAMAR

And now you hold me to blame.

DAVID

I love you, Daughter.

ABSALOM

Love! No decent father would allow a daughter to be raped and then allow the rapist to go free.

DAVID

And what is your interest in the matter? With Amnon out of the way you would king.

ABSALOM

My sister's honor is above any personal ambition.

DAVID

Why is it that only blood will satisfy you!

ABSALOM

Let the Amnon, son of the slave woman, be king! But from this day onward, may you bow your head in shame at the sight of my destroyed sister and your daughter.

DAVID

I want only to preserve my family.

ABSALOM

Is God's chosen so perverted that he allows the worst abomination to go unpunished. You have brought dishonor to the House of Jesse.

DAVID

I love you, Son!

ABSALOM

Then love your daughter as well!

DAVID

There is nothing more I can do. (Turning to Tamar) For your own happiness, for the sake of the House of Jesse, for your father, and for the Kingdom, please accept the marriage proposition.

TAMAR

I will sleep with no man again!

DAVID

Please, Daughter!

TAMAR

Even if I am dragged in chains to my marriage ceremony.

DAVID

Tamar, please!

TAMAR

Hang me instead of my evil half-brother.

DAVID

Forgive Amnon!

ABSALOM

From this day on, I will no longer call you father.

TAMAR

No my brother. He is still our father. But please, let me spend all of my days alone, oh, father.

DAVID

Do consider!

TAMAR

I will die first!

ABSALOM

Let us leave. We have no father.

Tamar and Absalom exit. David kneels.

DAVID

My Rock, My Refuge

LORD, YOU ARE MY REFUGE; NEVER LET ME BE PUT TO SHAME.

YOU ARE MY REFUGE; LISTEN TO ME;

LORD BE MY RESCUE!

BE MY ROCK OF REFUGE, A STRONGHOLD TO SAVE ME.

YOU ARE MY ROCK AND MY FORTRESS.

LEAD AND GUIDE ME.

I SEND YOU MY SPIRIT;

YOU WILL REDEEM ME, MY ROCK MY REFUGE MY FAITHFUL GOD.

BE GRACIOUS TO ME, LORD, I AM IN DISTRESS;

MY EYES ARE GRIEVED, MY SOUL AND BODY SPENT.

you will redeem me, MY ROCK MY REFUGE MY faithful God.

Bathsheba enters and embraces David.

BATHSHEBA

My King and Lord.

DAVID

What would I do without you?

BATHSHEBA

I arrived early and could not help but overhear. My dearest husband. What an ungrateful lot!

DAVID

Am I doing right?

BATHSHEBA

Why of course. Amnon is being punished. You have made appropriate wedding arrangements for poor Tamar who has been violated. Oh, I feel her sorrow and pain. But what more can be done?

DAVID

They want a hanging.

BATHSHEBA

NO more bloodshed, my king.

DAVID

I have only you and God by my side.

BATHSHEBA

Little Solomon sends poem he wrote for you. He has his father's gift of writing.

DAVID

Let us read it together within our own quarters.

BATHSHEBA

As you say my Lord.

SCENE 4 THE DESERT SEVERAL MONTHS LATER

Amnon is kneeling and weeping
before a shrine.

AMNON

Forgive me, Lord.

HAPPY IS THE SINNER WHOSE WHOSE SIN IS FORGIVEN.
HAPPY ARE THOSE TO WHOM THE LORD HAS SAVED,
WHOSE SPIRIT IS CLEAN.

Joab enters unnoticed.

AMNON (cont'd)

AS LONG AS I KEPT SILENT, MY BONES WASTED AWAY;
I GROANED ALL THE DAY.
DAY AND NIGHT YOUR HAND WAS HEAVY
MY STRENGTH GONE LIKE IN THE DRY SUMMER HEAT.
I TOLD MY SIN TO YOU AND I DID NOT HIDE.
I SAID, "I CONFESS MY FAULTS" AND YOU TOOK THE GUILT OF MY
SIN AWAY.
YOU ARE MY SHELTER;
YOU RING ME ROUND WITH SAFETY.
THANK YOU LORD

Amnon prostrates himself.

JOAB

Cousin, You have become a man of God, like
your father.

AMNON

I am unworthy but God has found me.

JOAB

And the rape of your sister?

AMNON

I shall spend the rest of my days in penance.

JOAB

We learned that your brother Absalom is riding
toward this shrine..

AMNON

I have no fear. A sinner I am , but now I am a different man. God has spoken to me through revelation.

Suddenly Absalom enters carrying a large basket of food and wine. Joab pulls out his sword.

ABSALOM

My brother!

JOAB

Stop or I shall strike you dead.

ABSALOM

I am a man of peace.

JOAB

Disarm.

ABSALOM

I have only my sword. Here. Take it. (Throws it to Joab) And some wheat cakes, cheese, wine, and figs for my starving brother.

AMNON

I love you, brother Absalom.

ABSALOM

And I love you, oh, future king.

AMNON

I see a new light. I have had God's calling.

ABSALOM

We are both sons of David.

AMNON

And Tamar? Whom I have destroyed!

ABSALOM

She is fine.

JOAB

I was not aware of this.

AMNON

I shall spend the rest of my life in restitution.

ABSALOM

All is forgiven. It was the curse of the House of Kish

JOAB

You are also violating your father's orders by breaking Amnon's penitential fast

ABSALOM

My father is sometimes too harsh.

Forgive Us. Duet by Amnon and Absalom

AMNON

I FELL UNDER THE YOKE OF THE CURSE,
IN THE END I DID THE DASTARDLY DEED.
YOUR FORGIVENESS IS GOD'S ANSWER TO ME.

ABSALOM

LET US PRAY FROM OUR FATHER'S PSALM.

ABSALOM

HAVE MERCY ON US, OH GOD, IN YOUR GOODNESS;

ABSALOM

IN YOUR ABUNDANT COMPASSION ERASE OUR OFFENSES

AMNON

WASH AWAY ALL MY GUILT; CLEANSE ME FROM MY SIN.
I KNOW MY OFFENSE; MY SIN IS ALWAYS BEFORE ME.

BOTH

HAVE MERCY ON US, O LORD.

JOAB

You can see your brother again when the penance
period is over in about forty days.

BOTH

HAVE MERCY ON US, O LORD.

ABSALOM

HAVE MERCY ON US, GOD, IN YOUR GOODNESS;
IN YOUR ABUNDANT COMPASSION ERASE MY OFFENSE.

BOTH

HAVE MERCY ON US, O LORD.

SCENE 5 SEVERAL MONTHS LATER, ABSALOM'S DINING ROOM

Joab, Nathaniel and Michal
standing around a banquet table
graced with flowers.

MICHAL

The smell of the roast lamb! Prince Absalom
has certainly prepared a fine feast.

JOAB

Fine food indeed. And where is the honored
guest?

MICHAL

Prince Amnon must be tired. He only returned
this morning.

JOAB

And why is the King not here?

NATHANIEL

He could not leave his visitor King Hiram, our
friend.

Amnon, carrying a large gold gift,
enters.

AMNON

Greetings to all in God's name.

NATHANIEL

You look so thin and tired, young prince.

JOAB

My cousin has lived on bread and water for 300
days.

MICHAL

(Raising her glass) To Amnon's health.

AMNON

I have never felt so well before.

Absalom, wearing his royal robes
and very well groomed enters.

ABSALOM

My dearest brother, you have returned.

AMNON

And you, oh Brother, prepared this feast for my
return.

ABSALOM

Let us be alone

I HAVE 7 OTHER BROTHERS, THERE IS ONLY ONE AMNON.
REMEMBER WHEN WE PLAYED AS CHILDREN..

LET US TALK

PERHAPS OUR OTHER GUESTS WILL GO

HAVE SOME OF MY NEWEST BEST WINE

SEE YOU IN THE COURTYARD BEFORE DINNER.

JOAB

Gladly.

MICHAL

You make the best of wines.

NATHANIEL

I shall have to bring some to your father.

ABSALOM

I have sent provisions to your home.

AMNON

You are too kind brother.

ABSALOM

We shall have dinner in a moment. But first
we have another guest.

AMNON

Who might that may?

ABSALOM

Tamar.

Amnon flinches in surprise.

AMNON

Tamar!

ABSALOM

Tamar. You don't want to see her? Our only
sister?

AMNON

Yes. But not now.

ABSALOM

Why, Oh Brother. If God has forgiven you...

AMNON

But now? Not on this night.

ABSALOM

Would it be fair to hold a feast and not invite
Tamar?

AMNON

I will want to see her in due time.

ABSALOM

With forgiveness the shame is gone.

AMNON

No shame. Only discomfort. For while I...

ABSALOM

Nonsense. (shouting out) Come in Tamar.

Tamar, withered, heavy, and
disheveled, enters. She is still
wearing the gown and tunic she
wore when raped. She carries a
plate of the breads, like the
ones she had prepared for Amnon.

Amnon looks in the other direction

ABSALOM (cont'd)

Our brother has returned. What joy, oh sister.

TAMAR

Amnon. Brother.

Amnon turns in the other direction.

ABSALOM

Why do you turn, Amnon.

TAMAR

Yes, Amnon.

ABSALOM

Come sister, let us embrace our brother.

Absalom and Tamar walk towards Amnon.

AMNON

You look so tired, sister.

TAMAR

I am better now.

AMNON

I am so pleased to see you, sister.

ABSALOM

And we too. Now my brother, here is a gift to you.

Absalom pulls out a knife and stabs Amnon five times. Amnon stumbles to the ground and dies. The guests scream. Everyone except Joab flees. David runs to Amnon.

DAVID (cont'd)

My son! My son!

AMNON

I will die shortly father.

DAVID

Who stabbed you?

AMNON

My dear brother Absalom.

DAVID

Don't die!

AMNON

All is forgiven.

DAVID

Live! God, Intercede!

JOAB

My Uncle!

DAVID

Amnon is not dead! Please tell me he is not dead!

JOAB

He is dead!

DAVID

Find Absalom immediately!

JOAB

As you say!

DAVID

Heal me, Lord

DO NOT BE ANGRY, LORD,
DO NOT PUNISH ME IN YOUR WRATH.
HAVE PITY ON ME, LORD, FOR I AM WEAK;
HEAL ME, LORD,

CHORUS

HEAL ME, LORD

DAVID

MY BONES ARE TREMBLING.
IN UTTER TERROR IS MY SOUL
LORD, SAVE MY LIFE;

CHORUS

HEAL ME, LORD

DAVID

IN YOUR MERCY RESCUE ME. I AM WEARY OF SIGHING;
TEARS DRENCH MY BED;
MY COUCH IS SOAKED WITH WEEPING.

CHORUS

HEAL ME, LORD

SCENE 6 MICHAL'S HOME, SHORTLY AFTERWARDS MICHAL HEARS
KNOCKING.

MICHAL

Who is it?

JOAB (O.S.)

The king's chief arm-bearer.

MICHAL

What do you want, Joab?

JOAB

Is Absalom with you?

MICHAL

You think I would harbor murderers?

JOAB

Well...

MICHAL

Check for yourself!

Joab enters.

JOAB

Your husband is in distress.

MICHAL

What can I do for you?

JOAB

Where is Absalom?

MICHAL

How am I to know?

JOAB

Tamar is also missing.

MICHAL

These are not MY children.

JOAB

They were last seen in this vicinity.

MICHAL

Search the entire house then.

JOAB

Not necessary.

MICHAL

Why!

JOAB

Because I trust you. May I call you Aunt Michal.

MICHAL

You may not. Now either search this house or get out.

JOAB

I shall leave then.

MICHAL

And no search?

JOAB

And If I find Absalom?

MICHAL

Bring him to the king.

JOAB

Send a messenger if he turns up. (Exits)

Absalom enter from side door.

ABSALOM

Does Joab really want to capture me?

MICHAL

Joab knows what your father.

Tamar enters quietly.

ABSALOM

Where shall I go now?

MICHAL

To Geshur! Flee immediately. And then do what you have to do to claim the kingdom that is yours.

ABSALOM

What do you mean?

MICHAL

Overthrow your father and claim what is yours!

ABSALOM

The kingdom is ALREADY mine.

MICHAL

You will never be able claim the kingdom!

ABSALOM

Simply because I killed a pervert?

MICHAL

Because YOU will be killed.

ABSALOM

By my father?

MICHAL

By that woman.

ABSALOM

Who?

MICHAL

Bathsheba!

ABSALOM

Bathsheba?

MICHAL

Amnon is now dead. You stand in the way.

TAMAR

Queen Michal knows best.

ABSALOM

I am the rightful heir.

TAMAR

That is irrelevant. The forces that count, Nathaniel, the Hittite whore, and others surrounding your father want Solomon. Yes, that 8 year old result of an illicit union!

ABSALOM

How!

MICHAL

The PROSTITUTE OF BABYLON

NOT HOW, BUT WHY! THE PROSTITUTE OF BABYLON GETS WHAT SHE WANTS

SHE WANTS HER OLDEST SON TO BE KING.

SHE GETS WHAT SHE WANTS IN THE VERTICAL POSITION,

OR SHE GETS WHAT SHE WANTS IN THE HORIZONTAL POSITION.

SHE ASKS SHE BEGS SHE WANTS SOLOMON TO BE KING

YOU ARE THE KING'S FIRST SON AND THE GRANDSON OF A KING

I AM THE DAUGHTER OF ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

I AM YOUR FATHER'S FIRST WIFE. TO NO AVAIL.

SHE ASKS SHE BEGS SHE PLAYS THE WHORE

The PROSTITUTE OF BABYLON will have her way.

she WILL get rid of you. YOU MUST BEWARE

ABSALOM

Bathsheba!

MICHAL

As she had Amnon killed.

ABSALOM

Amnon died at my hands.

MICHAL

Orchestrated by Bathsheba.

ABSALOM

How!

MICHAL

You remember Jonadab.

ABSALOM

My cousin? Amnon's friend.

MICHAL

I understand he goaded Amnon to rape Tamar. And it was he who reported Amnon's murder to your father. I am convinced she put him up to it. You fell into her plan too. Her intent was to cause strife between two brothers, and then claim the throne for Solomon. She stops at nothing!

ABSALOM

She has always been pleasant?

MICHAL

How did she become Queen!

ABSALOM

She married my father.

MICHAL

But how!

ABSALOM

Rumor has it that he saw her naked as she was bathing

MICHAL

She knew that she was well in view of the King when she bathed.

ABSALOM

But...

MICHAL

The rest is all history. Here she is, a foreigner, a Hittite, the wife of his trusted arm-bearer. She is now the favored Queen. And only HER son will be on the throne. You even hear the Chief Priest, Nathaniel, and the military already talking about it.

ABSALOM

I have heard nothing.

MICHAL

All the doting about the brilliance about little Solomon's brilliance? Wise up. You must harden if you are to become king. Your days are numbered.

ABSALOM

But I am the oldest. And my brother, Adonijah, is next in line should I die.

MICHAL

Irrelevant! That senseless one is already doomed. The noose is already for his head.

ABSALOM

But my Father..

MICHAL

Who knows what he will do! The throne is rightfully yours. And there is but one way to do it. Seize it!

ABSALOM

Lead a rebellion! Against my own father!

MICHAL

Is he setting the throne aside for you!

ABSALOM

What do I do?

MICHAL

Need I tell you how!

ABSALOM

By taking advantage of seething anger and underlying resentment against the King?

MICHAL

And!!

ABSALOM

Falling back on your tribe, the House of Benjamin...my Strongest supporters.

MICHAL

Now you speak like King Absalom!

ABSALOM

But how am I to know that your own relatives will not seize the throne. After all....

MICHAL

THEY ARE YOUR STRONGEST SUPPORTERS!

ABSALOM

But only to defeat my father. As the Ammonites say, "Mine enemies enemy is my friend. And afterwards?"

MICHAL

You are their only hope.

ABSALOM

I take your advice, oh Michal.

MICHAL

You will find the strength! Was it not you who slipped the knife into your evil brothers body? If you succeed the kingdom is yours. If you fail, your fate is no different than had you not tried.

ABSALOM

I will be grateful to you forever. And yet I love my father. And I believe you did once too.

MICHAL

More than anyone has ever loved before. Perhaps more than my brother Jonathan's love for him. And I was willing to die for him when the King tried to kill him.

ABSALOM

Do you love him now.

MICHAL

As much as I hate him.

ACT 2

SCENE 1 ABSALOM'S HOME, A YEAR LATER

Absalom is seated when Joab, soot all over his body, rushes into the room

ABSALOM

I was expecting you.

JOAB

Your servants set my field on fire?

ABSALOM

Thank you for coming.

JOAB

So you burn my barley field!!!

ABSALOM

I thought you might enjoy the light.

JOAB

Are you insane! What do you want!

ABSALOM

Why did I come back from Geshur?

JOAB

You begged to see your father.

ABSALOM

But I have not seen my father.

JOAB

Can you blame him? You murdered his son ! He relented and allowed your return to Israel with the stipulation that he never see you again.

ABSALOM

I took the life of an incestuous rapist. Now, I want to see my father. If I am guilty, let him put me to death.

JOAB

You have the devil in you.

ABSALOM

I want to see my father.

DARK

David is kneeling in prayer.

DAVID

I have sinned against you.

HAPPY ARE THOSE CONCERNED FOR THE LOWLY AND POOR
WHEN MISFORTUNE STRIKES, THE LORD DELIVERS US
LORD, HAVE MERCY ON ME, HEAL ME. HAVE I SINNED AGAINST YOU.
MY ENEMIES ASK WHEN WILL DAVID DIE AND BE FORGOTTEN?
WHEN PEOPLE VISIT ME, THEY SPEAK WITHOUT SINCERITY.
THEIR HEARTS STORE UP MALICE; THEY LEAVE AND SPREAD THEIR
VICIOUS LIES.

WHEN MISFORTUNE STRIKES THE LORD DELIVERS US

Joab enters carrying a small cloth case, unnoticed by David.

JOAB

The Nation awaits for the mourning to end.

DAVID

My official mourning is over. Only in the privacy of my...

JOAB

The two are one and the same. Now...

DAVID

Soot all over your body?

JOAB

My field was set on fire.

DAVID

Who would dare do such a dastardly thing.

JOAB

Absalom.

DAVID

Has the disgraced one gone insane.

JOAB

Shall I send my men out to kill him?

DAVID

Not now.

JOAB
A fathers heart ...

DAVID
A father's sore heart.

JOAB
Then shall I bring him to you?

DAVID
I do not wish to see him.

JOAB
Then I must send my troops to capture him and bring him in for the justice...

DAVID
Can I see a third child destroyed.

JOAB
Then what is the solution, Uncle. He will become more destructive without a response.

DAVID
Tell him that he may re-enter Jerusalem. But make sure he understands that he will not be welcome at court.

JOAB
As you say, Lord. I will keep him out of your presence.

DAVID
And Tamar?

JOAB
She is not well.

DAVID
Bring her to me.

JOAB
I will have to drag her in chains.

DAVID
Has she lost her mind.

JOAB
I believe so.

DAVID
Then I shall visit her.

JOAB
That you can not do. She is still troubled.

DAVID
No one is more troubled than I.

JOAB
She has sent this response to you in anticipation of your request to see her.

DAVID
Show me.

Joab pulls out the blood stained tunic.

JOAB
I wanted to spare you the pain.

DAVID
Pain? No I have anger. Does this woman ever do anything but indulge in self pity.

JOAB

No, it was your sons who committed the crimes.

DAVID

Can she not forgive. So as my Father in heaven has forgiven me, so I am willing to forgive my children regardless of the misdeeds.

JOAB

Is this the same David of who the women of Israel once said "Saul kills hundreds. David kills thousands"

DAVID

But not loved ones. I killed only the enemy.

JOAB

Sometimes the enemy is within our own family.

DAVID

Tell my son that he can live in the Royal City, but that he will not be allowed in my presence.

JOAB

Will do as told

DAVID

And if that murderer appears in my presence, I will have both a second dead son and a dead nephew.

JOAB

You would kill your nephew?

DAVID

Why you are my strongest soldier. But...

JOAB

But what?

DAVID

You yourself know what you, son of Zeruah, did to me when you slew the two generals of Israel's armies, Abner, son of Ner, and Amasa, son of Jether. You took revenge for the blood of war in a time of peace, and put bloodshed without provocation on the belt about my waist and the sandal on my foot

JOAB

I did it for Israel.

DAVID

I am Israel.

SCENE 2 A YEAR LATER

Absalom stands by the gate. Two strangers approach him.

STRANGER 1

Aren't you the King's son.

ABSALOM

Stranger, I am, kind man. But I am here to be your servant.

STRANGER 2

You rise early.

ABSALOM

Only to serve my father's subjects.

STRANGER 2

You are a prince indeed, and someday king. I

see you have the finest chariots and horses in the kingdom.

ABSALOM

Only to better serve my father.

STRANGER 1

We understand you are the core of your fathers eye. He has forgiven you and now you dine with him weekly.

ABSALOM

That is correct. He was once angry with me for the murder of the rogue Amnon, but now we are at peace since I did not commit a crime. Amnon had to die for the destruction of my sister.

STRANGER 1

He deserved to die. Then can you do us a favor.

ABSALOM

I will do what I can.

STRANGER 2

My brother claims our inheritance.

ABSALOM

Who is he?

STRANGER 2

A close friend of your father.

ABSALOM

From what city are you?

STRANGER 1

Your servants are from the tribe of Dan.

ABSALOM

I shall personally help you. Are you suing?

STRANGER 1

I am.

ABSALOM

Justice

YOUR SUIT IS GOOD AND JUST, BUT THERE IS NO ONE TO HEAR YOU IN THIS LAND.

IF ONLY I COULD BE APPOINTED JUDGE IN THIS LAND! THEN EVERYONE'S CASES WOULD COME TO ME AND I WOULD RENDER JUSTICE. COME TO SEE ME IN THE MORNING. YOUR SUIT IS GOOD AND JUST I WILL DO WHAT I CAN.

STRANGER 1

Blessed be Absalom in the name of the Lord.

STRANGER 2

Amen.

ABSALOM

Support me and a new day will come

STRANGER 2

We support you.

STRANGER 1

Totally.

He exits. The strangers remove their cloaks and we see that they are joab and Nathaniel

JOAB

Our disguise worked. Is this a full scale rebellion, Nathaniel?

NATHANIEL

What else?

DARK

David is seated, with Joab and Nathaniel facing him.

JOAB

The Israelites have transferred their loyalty to Absalom. Why did you allow him back into the court?

DAVID

You are a father too.

NATHANIEL

And why did you allow him to go out of the country again?

DAVID

He asked me several months ago. "Allow me to go to Hebron and fulfill a vow I made to the LORD.

JOAB

Why?

DAVID

He said: "For while living in Geshur in Aram, your servant made this vow: 'If the LORD ever brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship him in Hebron.'"

JOAB

While in Geshur, Absalom sent spies throughout the tribes of Israel to say, "When you hear the sound of the horn, declare Absalom king in Hebron."

DAVID

Surely you jest, my nephew!

JOAB

Two hundred men had accompanied Absalom from Jerusalem. They have been invited and went in good faith, knowing nothing of the plan.

DAVID

Stop!

JOAB

Absalom has also sent our counselor Ahithophel the Gilonite, an invitation to come from his town, Giloh, for the sacrifices he is about to offer. The conspiracy is gaining strength, and the people with Absalom are increasing by the day.

NATHANIEL

You must flee.

DAVID

No!

JOAB

For your life. Up! Let us take flight, or

none of us will escape from Absalom. Leave quickly, lest he hurry and overtake us, then visit disaster upon us and put the city to the sword.

DAVID

We need preparation.

JOAB

Your servants are ready, whatever our lord the king chooses to do.

DAVID

Then let us set out, accompanied by our entire household, except for ten concubines to take care of the palace.

JOAB

I go, but reluctantly.

Ittai, seventies, enters and falls prostrate before David.

ITTAI

My king, my king. I am coming with you!

DAVID

Why!? Return and take your brothers with you, and may the LORD be kind and faithful to you.

ITTAI

As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, your servant shall be wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life.

JOAB

Obey the king.

ITTAI

I, Ittai the Gittite, with all my men and all my dependents shall march with the king.

DAVID

Ittai, Ittai, my friend!

ITTAI

Everyone in the countryside weeps and they will weep aloud as your soldiers go by,

DAVID

We shall cross over to Kidron Valley on ahead of him by way of the Mount of Olives, toward the desert.

Nathaniel approaches with the Ark of the Covenant

NATHANIEL

We bring you the Ark of the Covenant.

DAVID

Take the Ark of God back to the city. If I find favor with the LORD, he will bring me back and permit me to see it and its lodging.

NATHANIEL

I too with all the Levite bearers of the ark of the covenant of God, and Abiathar will bring the ark of God to a halt until the soldiers march out of the city.

DAVID

But if he should say, 'I am not pleased with you,' I am ready; let him do to me as he sees fit.

NATHANIEL

Yes, oh king.

DAVID

See to it that you return to the city in peace. I shall be waiting at the fords near the desert until I receive information from you.

NATHANIEL

We shall take the ark of God back to Jerusalem and remain there.

DAVID

Now go.

JOAB

Athiopel is an infidel.

DAVID

Why do you say that?

JOAB

Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom.

DAVID

O LORD, turn the counsel of Ahithophel to folly!

Hushai rushes in

HUSHAI

I am here your lord.

DAVID

Hushai the Archite you are with rent garments and dirt upon your head.

HUSHAI

I come with you ,My Lord

DAVID

If you come with me, you will be a burden to me. But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, 'Let me be your servant, O king; I was formerly your father's servant, but now I will be yours,' you will undo for me the counsel of Ahithophel.

HUSHAI

Why Yes my Lord.

DAVID

If you hear anything from the royal palace, you shall report it to the priests or Nathaniel. You shall send on to me whatever you hear.

HUSHAI

I am honored my Lord. Exits.

Suddenly Shimei, late sixties appears and attacks the king but is repelled by Joab who grabs his knife.

JOAB

Shall we kill him.

DAVID

It is Shimei, the relative of my wife Michal.

JOAB

He deserves to die.

SHIMEI

Murderous and Wicked Man

AWAY, AWAY, YOU MURDEROUS AND WICKED MAN!

THE LORD HAS FORGIVEN YOU FOR ALL THE BLOODSHED IN THE FAMILY OF SAUL,

YOU BECAME KING, YOU MURDEROUS AND WICKED MAN

AND NOW THE LORD HAS GIVEN THE KINGDOM TO ABSALOM.

AND NOW YOU SUFFER RUIN YOU MURDEROUS AND WICKED MAN

JOAB

Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, please, and lop off his head.

DAVID

What business is it of mine or of yours, son of Zeruah, that he curses? Suppose the LORD has told him to curse David; who then will dare to say, 'Why are you doing this?'

JOAB

Uncle!

DAVID

Let him go

If my own son, who came forth from my loins, is seeking my life, how much more might this Benjamite do so! Let him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to. Perhaps the LORD will look upon my affliction and make it up to me with benefits for the curses he is uttering this day."

JOAB

Yes my Lord.

SHIMEI

I curse you in the name of Saul.

NATHANIEL

Kill him.

SHIMEI

May all of you children be cursed.

DAVID

Let him be.

SCENE 3 ABSALOM'S CAMP

Absalom is standing.

AHITHOPHEL

My Lord and king.

ABSALOM

Are you not Ahithophel, my father's counselor?

AHITHOPHEL

Long live the king!

ABSALOM

Is this your devotion to your my father? Why did you not go with your him? Or are you a spy

AHITHOPHEL

On the contrary, I am yours. All this people have chosen you to be their king. I was in attendance upon your father, so will I be in attendance before you. Whom should I serve, if not David's son?"

ABSALOM

Offer your counsel on what we should do.

AHITHOPHEL

Have relations with your father's concubines, whom he left behind to take care of the palace. When all Israel hears how defiant you have made yourself to your father, all your partisans will take courage.

ABSALOM

Superb idea.

AHITHOPHEL

The shame will be too much for him to bear.

ABSALOM

What more do you suggest?

AHITHOPHEL

Twelve thousand men.

PLEASE LET ME CHOOSE TWELVE THOUSAND MEN,
LET ME FIND DAVID TONIGHT.

IF I COME UPON HIM WHEN HE IS WEARY AND DISCOURAGED, I SHALL
CAUSE HIM PANIC.

WHEN ALL HIS PEOPLE FLEE, I SHALL STRIKE HIM DOWN
I CAN BRING HIS PEOPLE BACK TO YOU, AS A BRIDE RETURNS TO HER
HUSBAND.

WITH THE DEATH OF THIS MAN ALL THE PEOPLE WILL BE AT PEACE.

ABSALOM

This plan will be agreeable to all the elders
of Israel.

Ahithophel exits.

Hushai runs forward and embraces
Absalom

HUSHAI

My Lord and king. I too take refuge with you.

ABSALOM

You are welcome. Both of my father's chief
counselors have now come to the cause of our
Nation and joined me in the battle against my
treacherous father.

HUSHAI

My allegiance is to you.

ABSALOM

I need your advice. Ahithophel proposes that
twelve thousand men should go after the infidel
king. Shall we follow his proposal?

HUSHAI

This time Ahithophel has not given good
counsel.

ABSALOM

Why not?

HUSHAI

You know that your father and his men are as fierce as a bear in the wild robbed of her cubs. Moreover, since your father is skilled in warfare, he will not spend the night with the people.

ABSALOM

Not always.

HUSHAI

Even now he lies hidden in one of the caves or in some other place. And if some of our soldiers should fall at the first attack, whoever hears of it will say, 'Absalom's followers have been slaughtered.' Then even the brave man with the heart of a lion will lose courage. For all Israel knows that your father is a warrior and that those who are with him are brave.

ABSALOM

What do you counsel then?

HUSHAI

Let all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba, who are as numerous as the sands by the sea, be called up for combat; and go with them yourself. We can then attack him wherever we find him, settling down upon him as dew alights on the ground. None shall survive--neither he nor any of his followers.

ABSALOM

Brilliantk!

HUSHAI

As my lord wishes.

ABSALOM

Will you always you support me?

HUSHAI

With all my heart.

SCENE 4 OPEN FIELD

David, Joab, and Nathaniel are standing. And Hushai rushes into the field.

JOAB

What news!

HUSHAI

When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not acted upon, he saddled his ass and departed, going to his home in his own city. Then, having left orders concerning his family, he hanged himself. And so he died and was buried in his father's tomb.

NATHANIEL

The traitor has received his just due.

HUSHAI

Absalom has followed my advice and crossed the Jordan accompanied by all the Israelites

DAVID

I have made my decision. A third part of the soldiers shall be put under Joab's command, a third under command of your brother Abishai, a third under command of Ittai the Gittite. I intend to go out with Joab myself.

HUSHAI

You must not come out with us. For if we should flee, we shall not count; even if half of us should die, we shall not count. You are equal to ten thousand of us. Therefore it is better that they have you to help them from the city.

DAVID

I will do what you think best. Be gentle with young Absalom for my sake, General Joab.

JOAB

What is your estimate of their strength?

HUSHAI

Over twenty thousand.

DARK

Shouts and the voices of dying men and screaming women are heard.
David sits stone faced

JOAB

The battle spreads out over that entire region, and the thickets consumed more combatants than the sword.

Soldier rushes in.

SOLDIER

The traitor is in our hands. He is tied to a terebinth tree.

JOAB

Why did you not strike him to the ground on the spot? Then it would have been my duty to give you fifty pieces of silver and a belt.

SOLDIER

I will honor the king

EVEN IF I ALREADY HELD A THOUSAND PIECES OF SILVER IN MY TWO HANDS, I WOULD NOT HARM THE KING'S SON, FOR THE KING CHARGED YOU AND ABISHAI AND ITTAI IN OUR HEARING TO PROTECT ABSALOM FOR HIS SAKE.

HAD I BEEN DISLOYAL AND KILLED HIM, THE KING WOULD KNOW AND YOU WOULD WASH YOUR HANDS OF ME

JOAB

I will not waste time with you in this way. I shall take three pikes in hand, and thrust for the heart of Absalom, if he is still hanging from the tree alive. Is he at the tree

SOLDIER

Let me run to take the good news to the king that the LORD has set him free from the grasp of his enemies.

JOAB

You are not the man to bring the news today. On some other day you may take the good news, but today you would not be bringing good news, for in fact the king's son will be dead.

DARK

Absalom is tied to a tree. Joab enters with his sword.

JOAB

MY COUSIN, YOU MUST DIE

ABSALOM

AS YOU WISH.

JOAB

YOU HAVE REBELLED AGAINST YOUR FATHER.

YOU HAVE KILLED YOUR BROTHER.

ABSALOM

I DID WHAT WAS JUST. MY BROTHER SINNED AGAINST MY SISTER. MY FATHER SINNED AGAINST ALL ISRAEL.

JOAB

SO AS YOU HAVE KILLED OTHERS,
so you shall die by the sword.

ABSLOM

AS YOU WISH

Joab plunges the sword into Absalom's heart and blood gushes to the floor.

ABSALOM

I die for my God and my country and my family at the hands of an evil cousin.

JOAB

Die now, traitor.

DARK

David is kneeling in prayer.

DAVID

Help me Lord

LORD, LOVE ME LORD PRESERVE ME.

ALL ABOUT ME ARE THERE ARE EVILS

MY SINS OVERCOME ME SO I CANNOT SEE.

MY COURAGE FAILS ME.

LORD, RESCUE ME! LORD HELP ME,

LORD LOVE ME LORD PRESERVE ME!

JOAB ENTERS.

JOAB

Always in prayer, oh kind uncle.

DAVID

Surely you have good news!

JOAB

Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who rebelled against my lord the king.

DAVID

Is the youth Absalom safe?"

JOAB

Let my lord the king receive the good news that

this day the LORD has taken your part, freeing you from the grasp of all who rebelled against you.

DAVID

Is young Absalom safe?

JOAB

May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rebel against you with evil intent be as that young man!

DAVID

Is he dead!

JOAB

Yes.

DAVID

My son My son Duet

MY SON ABSALOM! MY SON, MY SON ABSALOM! IF ONLY I HAD DIED INSTEAD OF YOU, ABSALOM, MY SON, MY SON!

He begins crying.

JOAB

WHY DO YOU WEEP!

DAVID

MY SON, MY SON!

JOAB

My uncle, you have lost your son, but you are the king to millions of people.

DAVID

Can I not have my own grief?

JOAB

Courage, oh King A duet

TODAY'S VICTORY IS NOW MOURNING FOR THE WHOLE ARMY KNOWS THEIR VICTORY MEANS NOTHING

DAVID

MY SON ABSALOM! ABSALOM! MY SON, MY SON!

JOAB

THE ARMY SAVED YOUR LIFE

YOUR SONS' AND DAUGHTERS' LIVES,

YOUR WIVES AND YOUR CONCUBINES,

YOU HAVE PUT ALL YOUR SOLDIERS TO SHAME TODAY.

YOU LOVE THOSE WHO HATE

YOU HATE THOSE WHO LOVE YOU.

YOUR ARMY MEANS NOTHING TO YOU.

IF ABSALOM WERE ALIVE TODAY AND ALL OF US DEAD, YOU WOULD BE HAPPY

DAVID

STOP! CAN I HAVE MY GRIEF!

JOAB

HE TRIED TO KILL YOU. GET UP! GO OUT

PRAISE YOUR SOLDIERS.

I SWEAR BY THE LORD IF YOU DO NOT GO OUT, NOT ONE MAN WILL REMAIN WITH YOU,

THIS WILL BE THE GREATEST DISASTER YOU HAVE EVER KNOWN

DAVID

Only for my God and my country..

JOAB

Now you must make peace with all your countrymen.

Nathaniel, Bathsheba, and Hushai enter.

BATHSHEBA

The king delivered us from the clutches of our enemies, and it was he who rescued us from the grip of the Philistines.

NATHANIEL

And Absalom the traitor died in battle.

BATHSHEBA

My poor king.

Bathsheba, Joab, and Nathaniel embrace the king.

SCENE 5 DAVID'S BEDROOM MANY YEARS LATER

Bathsheba and Nathan are seated around the bed of David who is asleep. Bathsheba holds David's hand.

BATHSHEBA

My king, my king. Do you hear me?

NATHANIEL

Let him rest. He has only a short time to live. Even during these tragic days, we must prepare the future king to take over. The wolves are at our doorstep.

BATHSHEBA

Abishag, the Shunamite woman will arrive shortly. It hurts to leave him. And alone.

NATHANIEL

The servants will take care of him until she arrives.

BATHSHEBA

I only trust the Shunamite woman. I wonder if that snake Joab is holding her up.

NATHANIEL

Joab must die duet

JOAB MUST DIE

BEFORE THE CORONATION.

HE IS A TRAITOR

HE STANDS WITH ADONIJAH,

I UNDERSTAND HE HAS ACQUIRED CHARIOTS, DRIVERS, AND FIFTY HENCHMEN.

THE GOOD KING NEVER REBUKED HIM.

BATHSHEBA

YOU KNOW THE KING CHOSEN SOLOMON.

YOU ARE RIGHT. WE MUST KILL HIM

NATHANIEL

BOTH JOAB AND ADIJONAH MUST BE STRANGLED. YOUNG SOLOMON MUST SHOW THE NATION AND GOD THAT HE CAN BE KING OF ISRAEL HE MUST STRANGLE BOTH OF THEM

BATHSHEBA

And surely Shimei the Benjamite must die. How he insulted my husband.

NATHANIEL

As the king wills. More importantly, he must die to prevent a civil war.

BATHSHEBA

And do God's work on earth in the name of our king.

Abishag enters wearing a hood.

BATHSHEBA

You always arrive so early, my dear Abishag. Why were you detained tonight.

ABISHAG

Several of the King's wives approached me to visit the king.

BATHSHEBA

And what did you tell them, sweet Abishag?

ABISHAG

That they must first go through Nathaniel.

BATHSHEBA

You are an intelligent young woman. The king is to rest. No one is to gain access.

ABISHAG

Joab is waiting outside.

NATHANIEL

He will be spoken to.

Bathsheba and Nathaniel walk towards the door.

BATHSHEBA

Again, No one is to gain entry but Nathaniel and I.

ABISHAG

Yes, your majesty.

BATHSHEBA

And make sure that he is warm at all times.

ABISHAG

Yes, your majesty.

NATHANIEL

And did Adijonah speak to you?

ABISHAG

Yes, but I did not respond.

NATHANIEL

He will be dealt with by the new King.

.

Bathsheba and Nathaniel exit.
Abishag puts a blanket over the king. He begins turning.

DAVID

Who are you? Let me touch your face. Come closer.

ABISHAG

I am Abishag, the Shunamite, your concubine and caretaker.

DAVID

Ah, you are Abigail? My first wife.

ABISHAG

Abigail is dead.

DAVID

Then you are Maacah, mother of Absalom, Tamar,
and Adijonah?

ABISHAG

No, I am Abishag the Shunamite girl.

DAVID

What are you doing here?

ABISHAG

I am here to keep you warm at night. Your body
is frigid.

DAVID

Ah, yes. You are the one Adijonah wants as his
concubine. Disrespectful to his father and the
chosen king!

ABISHAG

Rest, my King.

DAVID

Where is my Bathsheba?

ABISHAG

She just left. She has been with you all day.

DAVID

Ah, yes she is preparing the future King
Solomon for his coronation.

ABISHAG

Rest, my king.

DAVID

And where is Tamar? I want to see her.

ABISHAG

Princess Tamar does not leave her house ever.

DAVID

Is she still obese?

ABISHAG

They say she is now very thin because she no
longer eats.

DAVID

I want to see my daughter. My only daughter.
Please fetch her.

ABISHAG

They say she speaks to no man.

DAVID

She is my daughter!

ABISHAG

In the morning, King David. You must rest now.

DAVID

Then get Amnon and Absalom.

ABISHAG

Amnon and Absalom passed away a long time ago.

DAVID

No, they are still alive. Amnon is eighteen.
Absalom is seventeen, and Tamar is sixteen.

ABISHAG

Would you like to have some water?

DAVID

No. And where is Michal?

ABISHAG

She is back with her tribe.

DAVID

I never did love her.

ABISHAG

Drink some water.

DAVID

My breathing is fine. Come closer. Very close.

ABISHAG

Yes, Sir.

DAVID

Are you the Angel of Death.

ABISHAG

No I am Abishag the Shunamite.

DAVID

Where is Joab!

ABISHAG

I do not know. The Queen wants you to rest.

DAVID

Both Joab and Adijonah must die at the hands of Solomon.

ABISHAG

Why do you say such a thing!

DAVID

To prevent civil war. The nation of God comes first. I have spent my whole life serving God, country, and family. I served my God. I saved my country. But I failed with my family.

ABISHAG

You have done your best.

DAVID

Is Solomon the right choice?

ABISHAG

Prophets say he will build the Temple.

DAVID

I AM DYING OH ANGEL OF DEATH. WILL I BE REMEMBERED?

ABISHAG

THE PROPHETS SAY THAT FROM YOUR LOINS COMES THE SAVIOR OF MANKIND.

DAVID

I DID SO LITTLE.

ABISHAG

YOU SAVED A NATION, YOU CREATED A KINGDOM, YOU WROTE FIFTY PSALMS, YOU PLAYED THE HARP, YOU SLEW OUR ENEMIES. YOU ARE GOD'S CHOSEN.

DAVID

But why?

ABISHAG

Only God can answer. But they say God spoke through you in the Psalms.

DAVID

I have no friends, my family is dissipated. I have but one thing.

ABISHAG

What is that?

DAVID

My God. Let us recite a Psalm I wrote a long time ago.

ABISHAG AND DAVID AND AUDIENCE

The Lord is my shepherd

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT.

HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES:
HE LEADETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS.

HE RESTORETH MY SOUL: HE LEADETH ME IN THE PATHS OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE.

YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF
DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL:
FOR THOU ART WITH ME; THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT
ME.

THOU PREPAREST A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE
ENEMIES:

THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL; MY CUP RUNNETH OVER.

SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF
MY LIFE:

AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOR EVER.

ABISHAG

My king, my king.

DAVID

And now I utter my last breath. I hope God
will forgive me.

ABISHAG

My king, my king!

Suddenly the room turns dark.
Abishag opens the shutters, and a
star shines through the window.

DAVID

I feel cold again. Come and lie with me.

ABISHAG

Can you rise to see the star that shines
through the window? I have never seen one like
it before.

DAVID

How so?

ABISHAG

The star has six sides. Perhaps it is the Star
of David.

DAVID

I see it.

ABISHAG AND DAVID

My Heart is glad

MY HEART IS GLAD, MY SOUL REJOICES;

MY BODY DWELLS SECURE.

YOU WILL NOT ABANDON ME TO THE UNDERWORLD, NOR LET YOUR
FAITHFUL SERVANT SEE THE PIT.

YOU WILL SHOW ME THE PATH TO LIFE,

ABOUNDING JOY IN YOUR PRESENCE,

THE DELIGHTS AT YOUR RIGHT HAND FOREVER.
MY LAST BREATH, OH ANGEL OF DEATH.

DAVID

Oh, Angel of Death

David dies. Suddenly light comes
through the window and permeates
the entire room.