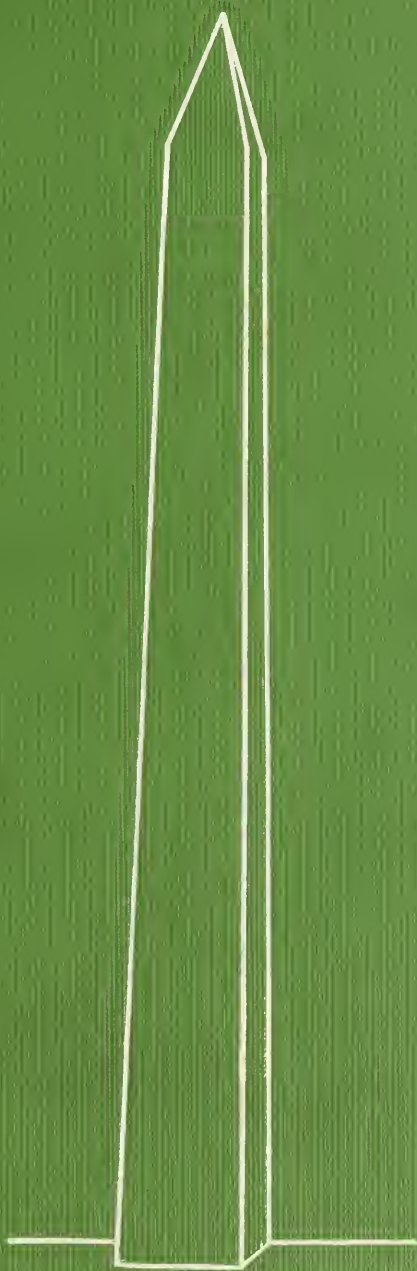


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The
Story of
Asenath





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The Story of Asenath

Daughter of Potipherah,
High Priest of On

By John Willy

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GENESIS XLI, 45v.

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah;
and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potiphe-
rah priest of On.



Introduction

The play, "The Story of Asenath, Daughter of Potiphara, High Priest of On," was written by me during the years, 1884 and 1885, and submitted for criticism to Frank B. Wilkie, managing editor of the Chicago TIMES, and John McGovern, journalist, who at that time was treasurer of the Chicago Press Club.

Later, it was submitted to Cornelius Gardner, of the Chicago EVENING JOURNAL, who submitted it to Richard Mansfield. Also, it was submitted to others for their criticism.

The play has remained in manuscript these twenty-eight years, and its publication in book form at this time is conditional that the rights for its presentation on any stage be reserved to the sanction of the author.

The inspiration for this play was a desire to provide for near relatives who are blind, should accident befall me.

The same motive prevails today.

The characters who become blind in the play, and whose sight is restored, is a message of hope to the blind.

JOHN WILLY

THE STORY OF ASENATH

A Drama in Five Acts

PHARAOH	king of Egypt	.
POTIPHERAH	priest of On	
POTIPHAR	captain of Pharaoh's army	
JOSEPH	} steward of Potiphar's household	
ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH		} ruler of Egypt
FELIX	butler to Pharaoh	
OG	servant to Potiphar	
NUABA	a story-teller, and father of Og	
AMOS	a surgeon	
BASIL	an acolyte and secret messenger for Potipherah	
PAGE	master of ceremonies, king's pal- ace	
BOLAN	captain of a Midianite band of traders	
JAREZ	lieutenant of Bolan's band	
CAPTAIN	in charge of the king's prison	
OAH	king's constable	
FIRST OFFICER	} in the king's service	
SECOND OFFICER		
FIRST MESSENGER		
SECOND MESSENGER		
FIRST SENTRY		
SECOND SENTRY		
PHYSICIAN	} priestess of Isis and daughter of Potipherah	
ASENATH		
ZILLAH	a priestess and companion to Asenath	

PRIESTS, PRIESTESSES, ACOLYTES, SINGERS, DANCERS, SOLDIERS, CITIZENS, ROBBERS, SLAVES, ETC., ETC.

ACT I

SCENE 1

The caravan of Bolan, a Midianitish merchant of Damascus, is returning from a journey into Egypt. The first rest is being taken under a grove of trees by the roadside, ten miles distant from the royal city of Meres, and about two miles from On, the dwelling place of the High Priest of the Sun. It is nearly time to resume the journey. Bolan is in conversation with his lieutenant, Jarez.

BOLAN:—I tell thee, Jarez, this is my last journey into Egypt.

JAREZ:—Methinks thy wits belie thee, Bolan. 'Twas but yesterday and thou did'st bargain to bring cedar wood for Pharaoh.

BOLAN:—Ay, and that bargain would bring us wealth, Jarez; but I tell thee again: this is my last journey into Egypt.

JAREZ:—And why thy last, Bolan?

BOLAN:—Dost thou remember Joseph—old Jacob's brat—whom I bought of his brothers and sold to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's army?

JAREZ:—Ay, I remember him well; a comely brat. Thou bought'st him for twenty pieces of silver; and Potiphar gave thee for him fifty pieces of silver and a monkey—a blue-faced monkey. Ay, I remember. 'Twas fifteen years ago or more; but 'twas a good trade, Bolan, a good trade!

BOLAN:—'Twas an evil business, Jarez, and bad fortune hath followed it. Did I not lose the silver by the way? and did not the ape kill my first born babe? My caravan then was thirty men, ten camels and fifty asses; now 'tis but six men and yon few beasts. 'Twas an evil business. The brat hath saddled a curse on me.

JAREZ:—Thou hast a fit of melancholy, Bolan. 'Tis the food of the Egyptians that rebels in thy stomach and giveth thee ugly dreams. Hie thee home and

the good wine of Midian will restore thee a cheerful countenance.

BOLAN:—Hold thy prattle! This Joseph is a curse. To-day he cost me spices valued at three hundred pieces of silver.

JAREZ:—What sayest thou?

BOLAN:—This morn I did go to the house of Potiphar bearing the costly spices of Ind. Potiphar's wife did look on them with favor, and would have bought; then calling the steward of the household did bid him pay me three hundred pieces of silver. The steward of Potiphar's household is Joseph—

JAREZ:—Joseph!

BOLAN:—Ay: old Jacob's son, whom Potiphar hath advanced, giving to him power and authority. Joseph did know me, called me by name, and then did make himself known: whereat my knees trembled. Then, taking a whip, he did belabor me unmercifully, voicing himself that I and my caravan leave the land ere nightfall and not to again visit Egypt under pain of being publicly whipped by negroes and to have my caravan confiscate. His face showed so terrible an anger that I fled the house, leaving my spices and taking not the price of them. This Joseph is now powerful and can work us harm.

JAREZ:—Thou hast indeed cause to fear.

BOLAN:—Are the beasts well rested? We must speed our journey.

JAREZ:—I will burden the drivers to make ten miles ere sundown.

BOLAN:—Stay, Jarez. See'st thou those women coming from yon vineyard? Are they not priestesses?

JAREZ:—They be, and they come this way.

BOLAN:—We have done many a foul piece of business together, Jarez. I am tempted to one more and this for the last time. These women be sacred persons, and bear about them jewels of priceless value. To lift hand of violence against these women is by law of Egypt certain death. We can commit the crime and escape the penalty. Let us waylay them, rob them, divide the spoils and flee the land ere pursuers can o'ertake us.

JAREZ:—Good!

BOLAN:—Instruct the men. There be three women—two men to a woman. When they pass here rush upon them, bind them firmly and I will tear the jewels from their bodies. Quick, Jarez; they are nearing us.

JAREZ:—(*Aside*) We are trusty knaves.
(*Exit Jarez*)

BOLAN:—This is desperate work. I almost fear me of its success. But my men are equal to't. This bag will hold the spoils. They be almost here. That's right, my men; lie low; make quick attack; when I snap the finger, jump.

The attack is made; the women scream, but they are easily overpowered and their mouths silenced by rude hands. Bolan busies himself stripping jewels from arms and necks. Suddenly the men see strangers approaching and they run away. Joseph rushes in, followed by several soldiers. He captures and recognizes Bolan.

JOSEPH:—(*To Bolan*) Miserable whelp! thy doom is sealed.

(*To soldiers*) Bind this cur!

(*To other soldiers*) Ezel, Ak, Baylum, Napri, Lotur, Bel! (*pointing toward the fleeing robbers*) take those fellows dead or alive and report with them at On tonight.

(*Exit six soldiers after the robbers. Joseph addresses those who are binding Bolan.*)

Set a heavy burden on this fellow's shoulders and drive him before you.

(*He picks up the bag containing the jewels that Bolan had taken from the priestesses and advances towards Asenath. He hands her the bag.*)

(*To Asenath*) Priestess, thy servant.

ASENATH:—Our thanks to thee, sir. Thou did'st arrive in timely season for rescue.

JOSEPH:—I would we had arrived in season to thwart the attack.

ASENATH:—How came you so suddenly upon the scene?

JOSEPH:—We journeyed from Meres, and as we did round yon hill, coming into view, did see the villains fall upon you. Thou knowest the rest.

ASENATH:—I pray thee, sir, tell me thy name and occupation, that I may speak it unto my father.

JOSEPH:—My name, fair Priestess, is Joseph. Thy servant is steward of the house of Potiphar, the captain of the king's army.

ASENATH:—Thou art brave enough to be captain of the king's army thyself.

JOSEPH:—I did but as all men should do.

ASENATH:—Sir, I would thank thee with more than words. Take this ring, and if aught befall thee, send it by a trusted messenger to Asenath, daughter of Potipharah, Priest of On. It will keep thee under the sacred protection of the Priesthood of Egypt.

(She takes a ring from her finger and gives him. He kisses her hand.)

Farewell, good sir.

JOSEPH:—And art thou Asenath?

ASENATH:—I am.

JOSEPH:—My company is bound for thy father's house. Wilt thou accept our protection? With me is a chariot which my master doth send asking thy father's acceptance. Let Asenath and her women ride in the chariot.

ASENATH:—Sir, thy speech becometh a prince. We will ride in the chariot.

JOSEPH:—Thou shalt ride as becomes a princess, and my men shall cry "bow the knee" before thee.

ASENATH:—*(To her maidens)* Zillah, we will journey home. Noe, thou shalt be charioteer—

(To Joseph) Sir, we are dutiful.

(Exit)

ACT 1

SCENE 2

The place of audience and public worship in the Temple of Isis at On. It is a roofless court, built foursquare and paved with marble. Colonnades of massive granite pillars extend along the sides of the court. On a dais at the east side of the court is a picture of the goddess Isis done in a combination of metals and precious stones curiously inlaid in a block of marble. On the north side of the court there is a chair of state, used by the High Priest on all occasions, except during the Feast of Isis, when it is occupied by the King. There is no sculpture of any kind in the court. Many of the pillars are covered with writings graved into the stone.

It is the morning after the rescue of Asenath. The High Priest is scated. Priests and acolytes stand about him on either side and behind. Joseph stands in front, while his men bring in the presents which Potiphar had sent in his charge. Asenath and Zillah stand a short distance off.

ASENATH:—See, Zillah, how proudly he carries himself!
Is he not handsome? Did'st ever see so perfect a form?

ZILLAH:—He hath a noble form.

ASENATH:—His head, how truly balanced! Did'st ever see so shapely a head, Zillah?

ZILLAH:—'Tis a well formed head.

ASENATH:—Note his eyes, Zillah. Methinks they are soft as a gazelle's; piercing as an eagle's; bright as the evening star! Did'st ever see such wonderful eyes, Zillah?

ZILLAH:—They are wonderfully keen.

ASENATH:—See how gracefully he moves. Mark his step; the turn of his hand; those rounded limbs; those arms! Dost note his color, Zillah? How clear his skin! See how his rich blood mantles! Is he not a man to love, Zillah?

ZILLAH:—He hath charmed Asenath.

ASENATH:—Answer me, Zillah: Is he not a man to love?

ZILLAH:—He hath all the qualities that do charm the eye.

ASENATH:—Rememberst thou, Zillah, when I did give him the ring? I did but touch his little finger and my

whole body was thrilled with pleasurable sensation! When he did kiss my hand, O, Zillah! Let us draw near him, Zillah, that we may hear the music of his words.

JOSEPH:—(*To Potipherah*) Potipherah, great and learned priest, my master, Potiphar, sends greetings unto thee, and doth entreat thou wilt accept the peace offerings which are now before thee.

POTIPHERAH:—Thy master hath our love, therefore will I accept.

JOSEPH:—Thy love he treasures. Thy gracious acceptance of his gifts is surety of thy love.

POTIPHERAH:—Is thy master well?

JOSEPH:—He hath robust health.

POTIPHERAH:—Sent he any request by thee?

JOSEPH:—But one, my lord. He doth even now lead an army to the country of the rebellious Hamites, and asketh thy prayers in his behalf, that he may return victorious and with much spoils.

POTIPHERAH:—I will invoke Osiris to fight his battles.

(*Risks and examines the chariot*)

Tell me, if thou knowest, where thy master did procure this matchless chariot.

JOSEPH:—My lord, it is the chariot of Nim, the king of Ethiop, whom my master did slay with his own arm in battle.

POTIPHERAH:—Can'st thou relate the circumstances of the battle; the death of Nim, and the taking of the chariot?

JOSEPH:—From the soldiers I have heard the story, but I lack words to picture it unto thee as it was told me.

POTIPHERAH:—I would hear thy account of it: Speak.

(*Potipherah resumes his seat*)

JOSEPH:—The armies of Egypt and Ethiop met at Bo-afra where the river hath two channels. The army of Egypt numbered ten thousand trained warriors. The army of Ethiop was a countless horde. Potiphar ranged his men along a hillside facing another hill on which Ethiop's army did await attack. Between the armies was a plain of two bow-shots in width. Nim and his people did mock and rail at our men, saying: "Pharaoh hath sent his women to fight. Where be the men of Egypt? Be they not afraid?"

Potiphar did call his officers about him and did

instruct them in a daring plan of attack. Then commanded he that should any of his men turn their backs upon the enemy, their lives should be sacrificed and their wives and children sold into bondage. While he was yet speaking, Nim, mounted in his chariot, did approach to midway of the plain, and, calling in a loud voice, heard by both armies, did challenge to single combat the leader whom Pharaoh had sent against him. My master did accept the challenge forthwith, and, calling for his white charger, vaulted onto its back and galloped towards the enemy. Quick as thought they met—Potiphar lightly armed, Nim cumbered with weapons. Nim being a giant in form and with brute daring did savagely cut and slash and roar, his charioteer managing the horses dexterously. Potiphar, quick of eye and limb, and perfect master of the sword, did maintain the advantage of science over strength, and by thrust and dart, quick and sure defense of his person, and supported by his conscious pride of winning glory for Egypt, did exhibit super-human powers.

Meanwhile the eyes of both armies did watch most intently the terrible fight of their chiefs. Not a word was uttered. The savage horde of Ethiop was spell-bound. Egypt looked on with fear and trembling. Never before was such a fight witnessed.

For the space of an hour the leaders exchanged blow for blow. Then it was that both showed signs of failing strength. Then to the lookers-on did watching become agony. Now, Nim's charioteer being wounded by unlucky thrust of his master, did fall lifeless from the chariot. Nim, unable to control his horses, dismounted. Potiphar sprang from his horse and met his fierce enemy hand to hand, foot to foot, eye to eye. A few desperate passes and the king was seen to reel. Potiphar's arm was lifted for a sure stroke. A turn of his wrist, a quick stroke of his sword and the head of Nim rolled upon the plain. Picking it from the ground, Potiphar lifted it exultantly on high and beckoned to his soldiers to charge the enemy.

Then from Egypt's ranks went up a shout that rent the clouds: Glory to Potiphar! Victory! Vie-

tory! Then with a mighty onslaught they fell upon the enemy, leaving their dead upon the field to the number of tens of thousands. The Ethiops were as sheep before our warriors. Never was so great a victory. The spoils were princely. Our warriors were loaded with riches. To my master's share fell the chariot of Nim, whom he had defeated in single combat. In thankfulness for his victory, Potiphar doth give the chariot to the great High Priest of Isis and Osiris. I have spoken.

POTIPHERAH:—Thy master is indeed a great warrior. Methinks thou hast been even modest in thy description.

(Potipherah departs, followed by the priests and acolytes. Asenath and Zillah retire to original position. Men remove the presents. Joseph remains till the last present is taken away.)

ASENATH:—*(To Zillah)* What a wondrous story! How finely he told it. Did'st ever hear so well told a story, Zillah?

ZILLAH:—'Twas well delivered.

ASENATH:—I will speak with him. I MUST hear his voice again. Zillah, go thou—

ZILLAH:—Asenath is love-struck.

ASENATH:—O, fie, Zillah. Go thou to my room and fetch me the silken headdress I do wear in the garden.

(Zillah goes. Asenath advances to Joseph and addresses him.)

ASENATH:—Sir, I perceive thou art not an Egyptian. How long hast thou served Potiphar?

JOSEPH:—Fifteen years, fair Priestess.

ASENATH:—And art thou happy in his service?

JOSEPH:—I serve a kind master.

ASENATH:—I am curious to know thy history, and would ask thee prying questions.

JOSEPH:—Since my servitude, fair Priestess—

ASENATH:—Call me Asenath, Joseph.

JOSEPH:—Since my servitude, Asenath, my lips have been sealed.

ASENATH:—And therefore am I all the more curious to unseal them. Let us walk together in the garden, Joseph.

JOSEPH:—Thy head, Asenath, is uncovered.

ASENATH:—Zillah doth fetch me a headdress. She will bring it unto me in the garden.

(*They are leaving when Zillah comes tripping into the court and catches sight of them going out. She calls out.*)

ZILLAH:—Asenath!

(*Asenath turns back into the court*)

ASENATH:—The headdress here so soon!

(*Zillah puts it on Asenath's head*)

I will return in a little while, Zillah. If my father seeks me, tell him I do walk in the garden.

(*Exit Asenath and Joseph*)

ZILLAH:—I like not Asenath's manner with the steward. She is infatuated. I must acquaint her father of her apparent strange fancy. He will give her wholesome advice. Yea, if Asenath love this man—and I verily believe she doth—it forbodeth trouble. The flame must be quenched ere it burn too fiercely. Her father shall know of it at once. But what if he discredit me? I will tell him she walketh in the garden with the steward—with a slave! That will haste him to find her—(*Going*) He will find them. He will bring her to her senses.

ACT 1

SCENE 3

A scene in the garden of the Temple. Two paths, come together to a sharp point. Near their junction is a large shade tree. At the foot of the tree and a little in the foreground is a double seat made of stout vine-stems, interlocked. The paths are bordered with a dense growth of tropical plants.

(Enter Joseph and Asenath)

ASENATH:—Tell me thy story, Joseph.

JOSEPH:—It were better I tell it thee not, Asenath. It is harsh and will offend thine ears.

ASENATH:—Methinks it is not in thee to speak harshly. Thy unwillingness to tell but makes the greater my desire to hear. Thou hast seen far countries. Thou hast a home in a far-away land—Tears? O, sir, I pray thee forgive me. I—I—

(Asenath sits down. Joseph sits by her)

JOSEPH:—Asenath, thou did'st speak of home. I can tell thee of a home that will not sound harsh to thee. Let not these tears offend thee. There is a magic in the word home that o'ermasters these eyes even as the swollen waters o'ermaster the banks of the great river. The home of my early days was a land of hills and valleys, covered with rich verdure, and watered with ever-flowing streams; a land of great cedars and pleasant pastures; a land flowing with milk and honey. My father is Jacob, a patriarch of the house of Abraham, and greatest of the shepherd kings of Canaan.

ASENATH:—Then thou art a prince!

JOSEPH:—I was, but am not.

ASENATH:—Thou should'st be: but let me not delay thy story.

JOSEPH:—My father begat many sons, of whom I am the youngest and the child of his old age. On me were his affections centered. His love engendered envy among my brethren, to whom my carriage was haughty. They, angry at my taunts, the fruits of unseemly dreams, did resolve among themselves to put me away secretly, and would have killed me, had

not Reuben, with more kindness of heart, resolved them to beware of bloodshed.—

ASENATH:—Which of thy brothers was Reuben?

JOSEPH:—My father's firstborn.

ASENATH:—And he loved thee?

JOSEPH:—Nay, he advised to lower me into a pit, which being done, I did give myself up for dead. After lying from morn till eve in the pit, my brethren did draw me up, and, taking the coat from my back, did sell me to Midianites, hated kinsman of our house, who were journeying into Egypt. Tied to an ass, beaten, and with indignities heaped upon me, the caravan, after ten days, reached Meres, where I was sold to Potiphar, and became his slave.

ASENATH:—Can'st thou not purchase thy freedom?

JOSEPH:—Many a time hath Potiphar been offered my weight in silver if he would but part with me, yet doth he set a value on my services that money tempts him not.

ASENATH:—Would I could purchase thy freedom.

JOSEPH:—Thou hast a noble spirit, Asenath, and I thank thee.

ASENATH:—It is cruel that thou should'st be a slave.

JOSEPH:—My once-free nature rebels at the thought; but, in truth Potiphar doth use me kindly.

ASENATH:—Potiphar shall make thee free.

JOSEPH:—Why should Asenath so concern herself for my welfare?

ASENATH:—Methinks thou art—art—O! ask me not, Joseph, for indeed I do but follow a strong impulse within me. Thou seemest more worthy in my eyes than other men;—a prince, and a slave; a slave, and with authority over free-born Egyptians. Thine is a strange lot. Joseph, it would delight me to see thy home among the cedars.

JOSEPH:—The Priestess of On dwelleth in splendor. The tents of my fathers would not delight thee.

ASENATH:—An such men as thou dwell in them: what more could Asenath covet?

JOSEPH:—The lovely Asenath would shrink from the rude customs of my people. They be shepherds, despised of the Egyptians.

ASENATH:—They be men—strong men! Asenath see'st a glory in strength.

JOSEPH:—I would that thou wert an Hebrew maiden.

ASENATH:—And I, that thou wert a prince in Egypt.

JOSEPH:—My lips should be silent, Asenath. I have spoken too freely. My unguarded speech would sound in thy father's ears as treason.

ASENATH:—Fear not my father, Joseph. Speak unto me as thou would'st to a Hebrew maid.

JOSEPH:—Asenath, I must leave thee.

ASENATH:—Nay, nay; stay yet a little while—a little while—Joseph—I—love thee.

JOSEPH:—Nay, do not mock me, Asenath. Thou sayest that which, were I the son of Pharaoh, would give me boundless joy. I pray thee take back thy words. Spurn me; revile me; drive me hence! To know that thou lovest me, and I, a slave, kept by law of caste and country from showing thee affection. 'Twould be a living torment in my breast.

ASENATH:—O, say not so—

JOSEPH:—Call me "slave." Say thou wert in jest; 'twas thy humor. O, speak, Asenath! But say thou did'st mock me and I will be a thousand-fold grateful.

ASENATH:—Joseph, I did speak the secret of my heart. I love thee. I know thou lovest me. Thine eyes betrayed that which thy tongue did curb.

JOSEPH:—Asenath doth make me the most happy and the most miserable of men.

ASENATH:—Say not miserable, Joseph. The days of thy servitude are numbered; then as a Prince of Canaan can'st thou openly woo me.

JOSEPH:—To wed thee were unspeakable happiness.

ASENATH:—Thy love to me is more than life.

JOSEPH:—Fairest of women!—

(*Kisses her*)

JOSEPH:—How can Joseph contain himself! Today I am beloved of Asenath; tomorrow, the servant of Potiphar. Until I be free, how can the knowledge of our love be hid from the people? They must not know that Asenath loveth a slave. They must not know that Potiphar's servant hath won the heart of Asenath, else would their anger know no bounds, and I be cast into prison.

ASENATH:—"Twere well they know it not till such time as Potiphar doth release thee.

JOSEPH:—The Feast of Isis draweth near; 'tis scarce a hundred days. Perchance I shall attend in Pharaoh's train.

ASENATH:—Come, Joseph, come! It shall be the day of thy deliverance!

JOSEPH:—Sayest thou of a certainty?

ASENATH:—Verily, at the Feast of Isis shalt thou be made free.

(Enter Potipherah, unobserved)

JOSEPH:—And how will Asenath 'complish this matter?

ASENATH:—The Feast of Isis is held but once in seven years. Then do the King and the Priests enter into solemn covenant, each with promise to support the other for the safety and glory of Egypt. 'Tis a covenant which, oft renewed, hath made our land greater and more powerful than all the nations of earth. At the covenant it is the custom of the High Priest to make known unto the King certain secrets of the priesthood, not to be divulged under penalty of the wrath of Isis. The King then permits the Chief Priestess to ask of him a favor, which, if within his royal power, is granted. And Pharaoh's word is law.

JOSEPH:—What favor wilt thou ask, Asenath?

ASENATH:—I will acquaint him that a young man, an Hebrew slave in the household of Potiphar, did bravely rescue me and my maidens from the hands of robbers. Then will I ask that he give the young man his freedom and passports that shall take him safely to the land of his kindred.

JOSEPH:—Thy wit becomes a sage!

ASENATH:—Asenath will follow her love to the home his tongue doth so eloquently picture.

JOSEPH:—My love! My life!

(Joseph embraces and kisses her. Potipherah confronts them.)

POTIPHERAH:—Asenath! what viper is this thou art nursing? Come here, girl! Away, fellow! Away! Out of my sight!

ASENATH:—My father, this is—

POTIPHERAH:—*(To Joseph)* Begone, thou vermin! or I will make thy carcass food for vultures.

(Joseph stands. Potipherah draws a dagger and

rushes savagely at him. Asenath throws herself between them. She arrests her father's arm.)

ASENATH:—Stay, my father; an thou kill him, thou also killest me.

(To Joseph) Withdraw a little space, Joseph.

(To Potipherah) Let my father hear me.

POTIPHERAH:—What damned potion hath he given thee that thou should'st be thus infatuate!

ASENATH:—Blame him not, my father; 'twas I, Asenath, did woo him.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou! woo him! a slave! The proud Asenath, my daughter, Priestess of On, woo a slave! Child, thy mind is sick. The rogue hath cast an unholy spell upon thee. Come home with me, child. Thou needest rest. Thy duties have been too heavy for thee. Go to thy maidens and rest thee awhile, my child. Thy malady will not vex thee long.

ASENATH:—My father, I am not sick—more than my soul doth yearn for Joseph. I do love him. Did he not save my life from the hands of robbers? And is he not of royal blood? An his rank be restored, where could Asenath find a nobler consort?

POTIPHERAH:—Be there not princes in Egypt to whom my daughter would be a thrice-welcome bride? Thy present yearning for this fellow is but an infatuation. 'Twill wear off on the morrow, e'en as the dew is absorbed in the air. Thy young blood is hot with the fever of excitement. 'Tis unnatural that thou mate with one of foreign birth, e'en though he be a prince. This fellow is a slave of Potiphar. 'Tis 'gainst the law for a free-born Egyptian to wed a slave. Think soberly, Asenath; thou knowest 'tis so. Come child, walk home with me.

ASENATH:—My father, I am thy daughter—daughter of a Prince of Egypt—daughter of the High Priest; and the laws of Egypt say that I may not wed any but a prince of royal blood.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou knowest the law.

ASENATH:—This Joseph, whom I love, is a prince. Is he not of the house of Abraham, the great Prince of Canaan, of whom tradition sayeth: Egypt's mighty king, the great Ramenes, did make welcome as his guest?

POTIPHERAH:—Tut, tut, child; he hath fed thee with honied words till thy conceit of him hath unbalanced reason. “A Prince,” said he? An impostor, child; a slave! My daughter doth bring shame upon the priesthood. Enamoured of a slave! Asenath, the slave that beguiles thee shall have a righteous punishment.

ASENATH:—(*Boldly*) Harm him not!

(*Earnestly*) I love him. My nature cries for him. I am his. He is mine. Where is his equal in Egypt—so perfect a man? Shall I forget him and die? My father, I say unto thee: if Joseph be not thy son, I be not thy daughter.

POTIPHERAH:—(*Aside*) I must humor her.

Asenath, I will enquire into the young man’s history. An his story be true, I will not set my face against him.

ASENATH:—Speak to him now, my father, that I may know thou meanest well.

POTIPHERAH:—(*To Joseph*) Hast thou fed her ears with romance?

JOSEPH:—I have spoken honestly, my lord.

(*Asenath affectionately embraces her father*)

POTIPHERAH:—(*To Asenath*) Come home now, child.

(*To Joseph*) Young man, we shall see thee at the Feast of Isis.

ASENATH:—At the Feast of Isis, Joseph! Till then Isis guard thee.

JOSEPH:—Till then, farewell.—

(*Exit Potipherah and Asenath. She looking back.*)

Is this a dream, or do I move in things of substance?

(*Touches his arm*) This is flesh.

(*Touches the ground*) That is earth. Yonder walks Asenath and her father. And Asenath gazes back at me!

(*Holds his arms towards her. Looks at his hand*) This ring she did give me. O, this is life, joy, ecstasy! “At the Feast of Isis thou shalt be made free!” Asenath will ask it. Pharaoh will grant it. My day of jubilee is at hand!

(*Exit*)

ACT 1

SCENE 4

A place in the Temple garden where several paths meet. The ground between the paths is thickly studded with bright-colored flowers. Several kinds of fruit trees are in view, some in full blossom, others heavily laden with fruit. In the distance is a high wall.

(Enter Potiphar in deep thought. Shortly afterwards enter Og, who, when he sees the priest, is about to retrace his steps.)

POTIPHAR:—Og, come hither.

OG:—*(Prostrating himself)* Thy servant, my lord.

POTIPHAR:—Arise. . . . How long is't since thou wast Potiphar's steward?

OG:—About a year, my lord.

POTIPHAR:—Who is this man that Potiphar hath placed above thee?

OG:—He is an Hebrew slave, who hath found favor in the eyes of my master and mistress.

POTIPHAR:—An Hebrew slave, sayest thou? 'Tis strange he should be advanced above an Egyptian.

OG:—My lord, the yoke galleth which maketh me answer his command.

POTIPHAR:—*(Aside)* I will make a tool of this fellow. *(To Og)* Thou lov'st him not?

OG:—My lord speaketh the truth.

POTIPHAR:—I, too, hate the slave. He is a mischief-maker and seeketh by unholy arts to win my daughter's love. He hath supplanted thee in the affections of thy master, therefore dost thou hate him. He hath fawned upon my daughter to entice her from me, therefore am I concerned and do take thee into my confidence, knowing that with thy aid, we can effect his disgrace.

OG:—My lord is the soul of wisdom. Let him but suggest and his plans are accomplished.

POTIPHAR:—Did'st thou not say the slave had found favor in the eyes of Deza, thy mistress?

OG:—My lord, 'tis said she looketh upon him with a lustful eye.

POTIPHERAH :—Deza is a woman of strong passions. I know full well she doth love this Joseph. Go thou to her. Tell her Joseph is enamoured of Asenath. Tell her Asenath did meet him in secret and thou did'st hear them exchange vows:—

Og :—My lord, she will not believe—

POTIPHERAH :—Peace, man! She will lend thee a willing ear. She will ply thee with a thousand questions, which thou must answer with words I will put in thy mouth. I know her nature. Jealousy will brew within her until she become even as a wild beast. Then shalt thou counsel her to entrap him, so that he become an abomination in the eyes of Potiphar. So shall his ruin be complete and thou be restored to thy stewardship.

Og :—My lord counselleth well. Thy servant will haste this matter.

POTIPHERAH :—Nay; use thy vantage with caution. Watch thou closely, both thy mistress and the steward. Her passion is like unto that of the tiger—beyond the bonds of restraint. Neither can she hide it from the eyes of the servants of her household.—

Og :—'Tis even so—

POTIPHERAH :—Thou shalt observe her offer him favors in a manner unbefitting a mistress to her slave. The steward hath control of himself, and, being shrewd, will evade the punishment of discovery by holding himself aloof from her presence. When thou shalt find her in a vexed mood from disappointment, then shalt thou tell in her ears the words I have spoken unto thee—

Og :—Every word, my lord.

POTIPHERAH :—Thou shalt acquaint her that this Joseph hath conspired with the lady Asenath for his freedom, to be granted through the mouth of Pharaoh on the day of the Feast of Isis. Use thy wits, man. Be bold. I will prepare me a plot for his entrapping which I will deliver unto thee ere thou depart. Mark thou the words, and falter not in their execution. An thou do thy part well, the knave will not live to see the Feast of Isis.

Og :—My lord, I will obey thy every command.

(Exit Potipherah)

OG:—(*Gives a long, surprised whistle*) O, Oh! Here's a pretty pass. Ha, ha, ha! "Won his daughter," said he? Ha, ha, ha, ha! Now's my time. So, ho, my pretty gamecock; I'll spoil thy feathers; I'll quiet thy crowing. "Tell thy mistress that her steward is enamoured of Asenath." Tell her? I'll risk my life to tell her. See my hated rival displaced? What would I not give to see it? I never felt like a villain till now. The High Priest commands; 'tis not villainy, 'tis justice. A slave in authority! 'Tis a virtue to cut him off. I'll do it, if my tongue palsy in the attempt. "Thou shalt be restored to thy stewardship," said the priest. I should be steward now, but that this upstart Hebrew did beguile his way into my master's favor. But I'll end him. I'll rout him. I'll serve Og, first; the Priest, next; and my master, third. I have an oily tongue. Hath not Deza many times listened to my story-telling? Am I not the great story-teller of Meres? Shall my talent not serve me in this business? Deza will be vexed and will send for me to spin a merry tale; and a merrier one than I'll spin was never spun. Ha, ha, ha! I will tell her of our journey to On; the adventure by the way; the ring Asenath did give him; and then I will tell her a story of passion—how Asenath and Joseph did meet in secret! did embrace! did vow eternal friendship! did plan his liberty! I will prepare me a story that shall work upon her more potently than Potipherah doth dream of. "I will put words in thy mouth," quoth he. Thou may'st give me a ene, Sir Priest, but thou can'st not better my words. Oh, what a scene I'll make! what mischief I'll raise! (*Uncontrollable laughter*) Poor Joseph! (*Laughter*) What will become of Joseph? (*Laughter*) Between Deza and Asenath 'tis uncomfortable. Joseph, uncomfortable.

(*Exit, laughing immoderately*)

(CURTAIN)

ACT 2

SCENE 1

Ninety days have elapsed.

That part of the Temple garden where numerous paths centralize.

(Enter Basil and Felix from opposite directions)

BASIL:—Felix! And dressed again in the garb of royal butler? Ten thousand welcomes, my old friend.

(Shakes both hands heartily)

FELIX:—I thank thee, Basil.

BASIL:—What happy chance brought thee out of the prison?

FELIX:—Methinks it was the king's humor.

BASIL:—A most excellent humor, Felix; and still better to give thee back thy station!

FELIX:—And best of all, good Basil, to restore me to my family.

BASIL:—Spoken like the man thou art! Tell me, good Felix, how liked'st thou the prison?

FELIX:—So ill, Basil, that I have sworn never to cage a bird.

BASIL:—Till thou catch one?

FELIX:—And I catch one, I give him liberty, or death!

BASIL:—Thou hast liberty, Felix, yet thy face weareth not a pleased look.

FELIX:—Basil, thou art my friend?

BASIL:—As I ever have been.

FELIX:—And thou wilt be a priest some day?

BASIL:—'Tis so ordained.

FELIX:—Thou knowest somewhat of the priestly power, and the mysteries?

BASIL:—A very little as yet. Wherefore thy questions?

FELIX:—To answer thee fully, I should unbosom myself of a trouble that weigheth heavily on my mind.

BASIL:—I will hear thee.

FELIX:—If thou hast the patience. It may be thou wilt make sport of that I tell thee.

- BASIL:—I will hear thee as gravely as could Potipherah.
- FELIX:—Basil, 'tis said: "Those who be friends avail themselves each of the other in time of need." As thou art my friend, I'll tell thee my trouble e'en though it weary thee.
- BASIL:—Thou'lt have to begin soon, or I weary e'er thou do begin.
- FELIX:—With me in the prison was a Prophet, who foretold that which should come to pass.
- BASIL:—That which he made thee believe should come to pass.
- FELIX:—Nay, that which afterwards did truly happen as the Prophet foretold.
- BASIL:—What did happen?
- FELIX:—Myself taken from the prison and restored to my former office of butler to Pharaoh.
- BASIL:—Thy Prophet divined at random and the propheey was by chance fulfilled.
- FELIX:—Nay: verily I believe he divined with certain knowledge of the future.
- BASIL:—Thy reason, Felix.
- FELIX:—The king's baker, who was in the prison with me, he was hanged in the time and manner the same as the Prophet foretold.
- BASIL:—Felix, there be the divining cups which reveal the mysteries of things past and present. That which shall come to pass is not revealed even to the Priests. I have heard enough of this propheey: now for thy trouble.
- FELIX:—The Prophet intrusted in my care a ring—
- BASIL:—Which thou hast lost?
- FELIX:—Ay, and would give all I possess to have with me this day.
- BASIL:—Thou fearest witchcraft?
- FELIX:—I fear something; I know not what I fear. It haunteth me as it were the ghost of evil.
- BASIL:—Thou art weak of mind from long imprisonment. An thou allow this silly fear to master thee, thou'lt lose thy reason. Be a man, Felix. Shake off thy gloom. Feast thy mind with happy thoughts—
- FELIX:—He bade me give the ring to Asenath—
- BASIL:—The Priestess?
- FELIX:—Ay, and bade me swear by Isis—yea, upon my life—that I would deliver it into her hand.

BASIL:—Now thou art interesting. For what purpose sent he the ring to Asenath?

FELIX:—I know not, save to gain his freedom. He did credit the ring with marvelous virtues—

BASIL:—Of what nature?

FELIX:—The protection of the Priesthood.

BASIL:—Art sure of this?

FELIX:—Basil, the Prophet spake as an honest man. Quoth he: "When it shall be well with thee, remember me. When Pharaoh goeth to the Feast of Isis, then give thou the ring to Asenath. When she question thee, tell her he who sent the ring lieth in prison, wrongfully accused by Deza, the wife of Potiphar. Tell her I am innocent of the crime for which I suffer. Tell her this," quoth he, "and Pharaoh himself hath not greater power to set me free!"

BASIL:—And thou believedst him?

FELIX:—With my whole heart.

BASIL:—Thou hast almost wou me to thy belief. How came'st thou to lose the ring?

FELIX:—Yesternorn, while saying good-bye to my wife and babe. In play with my little one, he took the ring from me and swallowed it; then was choked. . . . The agony of my boy!—I see it now—My wife bearing him, in frantic haste, to the surgeon. . . . Myself leaving . . . to obey Pharaoh's command—tearing my heartstrings in this most unnatural parting.

BASIL:—Felix, I marvel not thou art sad. Can I lift but a tithe of thy sorrow, thou shalt have my best service.

FELIX:—Canst thou—canst thou tell me if my boy be alive?

BASIL:—I grieve to tell thee, nay.

FELIX:—Hast thou friends among the priests who will divine for thee?

BASIL:—The divining cup at On is read by none, save only the High Priest.

FELIX:—Darest thou enquire of him?

BASIL:—Not this day.

FELIX:—Tomorrow?

BASIL:—He cannot be approached until after the Feast of Isis.

FELIX:—Basil, methinks a curse goeth with the miscarriage of the ring. O, this bitter doubt! How I long to be

home! and O, how great my misgiving! Basil, thinkest thou a curse on me would be visited on my child?

BASIL:—I know not, Felix—yet—See, yonder cometh Potipherah. Let us not meet him.

(*Exit*)

(*Enter Og*)

OG:—Ah, here cometh the Priest.

(*Enter Potipherah—Og salaams*)

POTIPHERAH:—I see by thy dress thou art again steward.

OG:—My lord, to thee I am much indebted.

POTIPHERAH:—How worked the plot?

OG:—Excellent, my lord. My mistress did swallow the story whole; did put forth questions that verily did puzzle my wit to answer; did show her passion for this Joseph in every look; and then she did conspire for his disgrace in the eyes of her lord. Yea, she did force me to counsel her a way for his entrapping.—

POTIPHERAH:—Ah!

OG:—Then counseled I that she entice him and seize his coat, using the garment to convince her lord of the slave's baseness.—

POTIPHERAH:—Wisely counseled.

OG:—My words pleased her; she was swift in putting them to effect; she trapped him skillfully, and made so much ado on her lord's return, that the slave was sent to the dungeon e'er it was given him time to answer the charge;—yea, or even to learn the full measure of it.

POTIPHERAH:—Is he dead?

OG:—Nay, my lord.

POTIPHERAH:—Why not?

OG:—On the morrow, when Joseph should be hanged, then did my mistress petition that his life be spared until such time as it should be convenient for her to witness his death. His life is now in her hands. And with savage delight goeth she about, eager to learn how Asenath will take the news of his treachery. Yea, she hath commissioned me to bring her full tidings of such grief (!) as the lady show when she doth learn of his plight.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou hast done thy part well. But there is one thing more I would have of thee. Asenath, as yet, knoweth not of this affair. There shall come a time

today when I will ask thee to speak that thou knowest concerning this Joseph; then speak boldly e'en though it be before Pharaoh.

OG:—I will, my lord.

(Exit Potipherah—Og salaams)

By the smiling crocodile, this is a strange world! The Priest I did think so righteous, weareth a heart burdened with malice. I, who for a year have dared not lift my head, am now entreated by my betters. Not for good ends, 'tis true; but I gain by it. O, how I hated that Hebrew! I like this rascality; there's a flavor in it—a toothsome flavor! But who cometh here? Felix, the king's butler, as I do live!

(Enter Felix)

A long and merry life to thee, Felix. *(They grasp hands)* I give thee joy at being restored to the king's favor.

FELIX:—As warm a greeting fits thee from me, good Og, for I perceive that fortune hath covered thee with a goodlier mantle than thou did'st wear a year ago.

OG:—Ay, and long hope I to wear it. The fellow from whose back 'twas taken lieth where, but a while ago, thou didst house. Didst see him there, Felix?

FELIX:—We lodged in the same ward. The young fellow did say he was innocent of any crime that should hold him in dungeon.

OG:—Innocent, said he? Ha, ha, I like that. Innocent! Ha, ha, ha! He'll not say that three days hence. He'll choke, Felix. The journey of three suns will see him hanged. Think of him innocent! Ha, ha! Come, Felix, let us to the Temple. *(Leads him off)* These rascal eyes of mine would feast upon the worship dancers. Methinks the virgins of On be more supple of limb than the dancing girls of Pharaoh's court.

(Exit)

ACT 2

SCENE 2

The place of public worship in the Temple. A congregation is assembled. Pharaoh is seated in state. To the left of the throne stand the priests and acolytes: to the right, the officers of the king's retinue. Potipherah stands in front of the throne.

POTIPHERAH:—(*To acolytes*) Jusotop and Basil, bring forth the Bread of the Covenant.

(They fetch it, and bring it on a table having four arm lifts)

(To Pharaoh) The sacred mysteries which have this day been revealed unto Pharaoh, these must he, under the extreme penalty of our religion, keep within himself. That Pharaoh may so bind himself that he do safely guard them, let him now break bread of covenant that shall hold him accountable unto Isis.

(Acolytes bear the bread to in front of the picture of Isis. Pharaoh and Potipherah advance to the picture and stand upon the dais. Priests and acolytes group on both sides of the picture. The congregation forms a semi-circle in front.)

(Potipherah and Pharaoh break bread)

(Potipherah then faces the audience)

(To audience) Behold the vast vault of Heaven. It is Osiris, the Great First God. Behold the Sun. It is Isis, the wife of Osiris. She is the mother of all. She is the giver of all. Egypt is her chosen people. In the heart of Egypt's king, dwelleth the Spirit of Ra, the son of Isis and Osiris.

Listen to the seven laws which Isis gave unto Egypt.

(Chorus of priests and acolytes chant)

THE CHORUS:—Glory be to Isis.

POTIPHERAH:—The first and greatest law is:

A man shall have but one wife; her he shall love, honor and cherish, and he shall know no other woman. The wife shall be true to her husband. She shall keep his house in order and shall delight in bearing him children.

THE CHORUS:—Glory be to Isis.

POTIPHERAH:—The second law is:
Speak the truth.

THE CHORUS:—Glory be to Isis.

POTIPHERAH:—The third law is:
Do ye unto others as ye would they should do unto
you.

THE CHORUS:—Glory be to Isis.

POTIPHERAH:—The fourth law is:
Honor old age.

THE CHORUS:—Glory be to Isis.

POTIPHERAH:—The fifth law is:
Every man shall sow before he shall reap.

THE CHORUS:—Glory be to Isis.

POTIPHERAH:—The sixth law is:
One week of each year every man shall give the
labor of his hands to the building of a Temple.

THE CHORUS:—Glory be to Isis.

POTIPHERAH:—The seventh law is:
The first-fruits of the land shall be brought to the
Temples and laid upon the altar of the Gods. Every
man shall bring his portion.

THE CHORUS:—Glory be to Isis. Help us O, Mother, to
keep thy laws.

*(Pharaoh, Potipherah, priests and officers return
to original places. The congregation distributes along
the sides of the court.)*

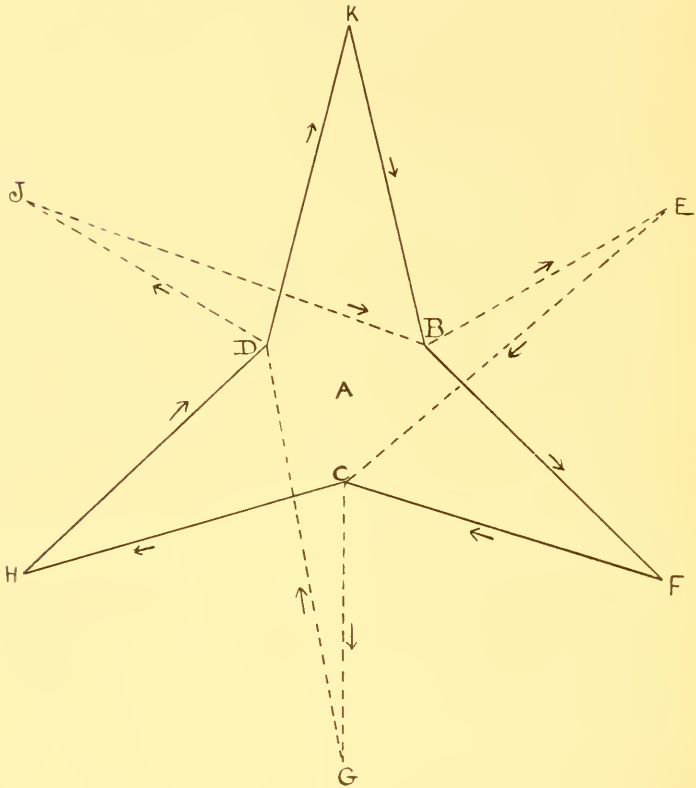
POTIPHERAH:—*(To Pharaoh)* It is by custom ordained
that Pharaoh do now give audience to the Chief
Priestess, and, to show his fidelity to the priesthood,
do grant such humble request as she shall ask.

PHARAOH:—That which the Priestess shall ask is granted
e'er the asking.

POTIPHERAH:—Your Majesty, 'tis now the hour of noon.
Asenath, the Priestess, doth lead the virgins in the
Adoration of Light. When the services be done, then
will she make known her desire.

*(Enter Asenath, leading six priestesses, all danc-
ing. They advance rapidly to the picture of Isis,
bow three times, then advance to Pharaoh, bow once.
Then they do the Star dance. The first positions of*

the dancers are shown in the accompanying diagram:)



A dancer at each of the points: B, C, D, G, J and E awaits a signal from Asenath at A. The signal is given B, C and D, who are each about two feet from Asenath, and they dart outwards about ten feet to points F, H and K respectively; and the dancers at G, J and E at the same time dart inwards to C, D and B. Thus: B goes to F, back to C, out to H, back to D, and so on round and round the central figure. In like manner, G darts in to D, out to J, in to B, out to E, in to C, and so on. Asenath is dressed in a robe of silk, buff and white colors. At first positions in diagram, the dancers at B, C and D are dressed in buff colored robes, and those at C, J and E in white robes. The figure movements are very quick and the effect is supposed to represent a twinkling star.

At the close the dancers form in single file—Ascnath leading, and those in white preceding those in buff. The column moves to the picture of Isis so rapidly that the effect is supposed to represent a shooting star. The seven priestesses kneel at the dais. Zillah, who is of their number, steps up to the dais and sings The Song of Isis.

ZILLAH:—(Sings) Isis, Maker of Light, to Thee we sing:

Thou art the grandeur of the Heavens; the glory of the morning.

Sleeping and waking, Thou art with us; Thy breath is life.

Thou givest eyes to see and ears to hear; Thou fillest our hearts with gladness.

Thou carest for the little ones—the children of our people.

Thou makest the mother to love her babe, and the father to be joyful in his offspring.

Thou art the Mother of Love.

Keep us, O Mother, in Thy Love and let Thy Spirit dwell in us.

Thou art Isis the good; Isis the beautiful; Isis the all in all; Isis the everlasting.

Lovely and pleasant are Thy ways: Thou shalt reign for ever and ever.

The priestesses do the Sun dance. This is done by symbolizing the beetle as the origin of life; the lotus flower as the birth and expansion of life; and the circling stars as eternity.

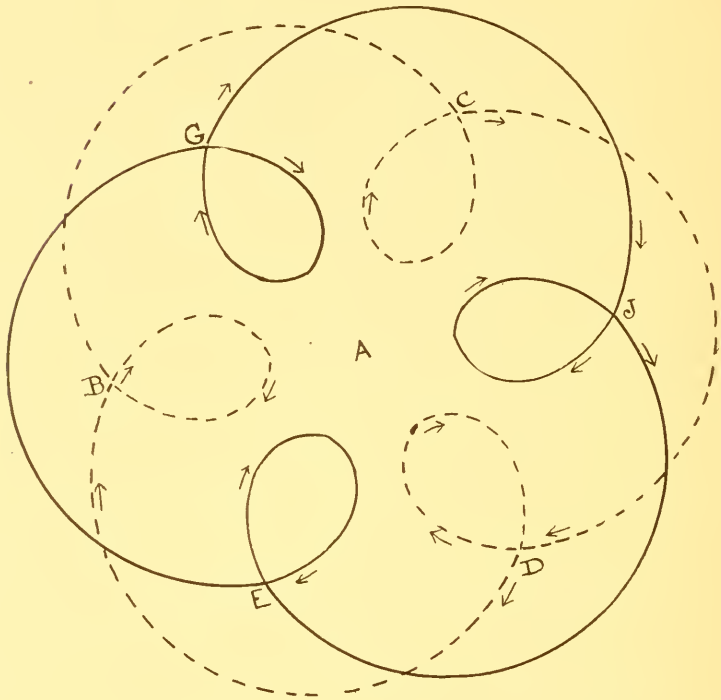
The priestesses group around Ascnath and at a given signal dart away from her, each one taking a separate and erratic course, and all striving to produce the most irregular motions. They move over all the available space and utter a prolonged buzzing sound. This peculiar movement is supposed to represent the flight of the beetle; also the unborn soul seeking habitation in a human body.

In the meantime Ascnath has moved to the center of the court. She brings order out of chaos by shouting:

ASENATH:—A Mother!

Immediately the dancers move towards Ascnath and form a close circle around her, standing alternate white and buff. This is the lotus bud. Birth comes

with the opening of the flower. This is done by the six dancers moving slowly outwards, balancing at every step, until each of them has advanced about ten feet. Here the "Sun" dance proper begins. The positions at its opening are shown in the accompanying diagram:



B, C, D in buff; G, J, E in white. The dancers move simultaneously in the direction of the arrows and govern their speed so as not to collide at the crossing of the lines. This moving in a circle represents the life of mortals continued in the (then known) six planets, which will forever circle the sun.

At the close, Asenath leads the six priestesses to Isis. They bow three times, then advance to Pharaoh, bow once; then exit, dancing rapidly.

POTIPHERAH:—(To Basil) Basil, tell the Priestess Asenath Pharaoh doth await her presence.

(Exit Basil)

(Reënter Asenath, followed by maidens and Basil)

PHARAOH:—(*To Asenath*) Fair Priestess, thou art welcome: I will esteem it honor to listen to a petition from thy lips.

ASENATH:—The favor I do ask is of modest limit, yet of odd fashion. The granting of it may not be a pleasure to thee.

PHARAOH:—Is there a greater than Pharaoh in Egypt? Let the beautiful Asenath but speak her desire, and I will grant it, even though it cost the price of ten cities.

ASENATH:—There is in the household of Potiphar, captain of the army, an Hebrew slave, Joseph by name, who, but three moons past, did, with great bravery rescue me and my maidens from the hands of robbers. Asenath doth now beseech Pharaoh that he do take the young man out of bondage, and do also give him passports that shall carry him safely to the home of his kindred. Let Pharaoh but grant this request and Asenath shall have joy at showing gratitude for her deliverance.

(Felix, who is present, shows facial expression of pleasurable surprise. His countenance changes as the scene progresses. He is dumb.)

(Pharaoh, about to grant Asenath's request willingly, is interrupted by Potipherah.)

POTIPHERAH:—Pharaoh, the king, is in kind humor and I do crave a few words, that Pharaoh, in his gracious conforming to the wish of Asenath, be not embarrassed.

PHARAOH:—What embarrassment can lurk in so simple a petition?

POTIPHERAH:—Asenath hath unwittingly asked that which, if thou grant, will be a precedent that shall endanger the throne of Egypt.

PHARAOH:—How sayest thou?

POTIPHERAH:—The laws which Pharaoh doth administer are heaven-born. They do bind together and make powerful a nation whose virtues do so stand out that we be honored and feared of all the earth. Greatest and most potent of our laws is that one which doth guard the sanctity of our homes. Whoso violateth this law becometh an outcast, the stigma of which doth so follow him that Pharaoh on his royal throne hath not power to pardon the offense. The

slave for whom Asenath petitions now lieth in the king's dungeon, convicted of the crime that doth most revolt our people.

ASENATH:—(*Excitedly*) And how know you this, my father?

POTIPHERAH:—My daughter, a new steward administereth in Potiphar's household and doth now attend our ceremonies. I did enquire of him of the welfare of the young man Joseph, to whom but a while ago we did give unbounded thanks. Then told he me of the young man's downfall and imprisonment.

(*Ascnath gets intensely excited, but can't speak*)

PHARAOH:—(*To Potiphar*) Is thy informant before us?

POTIPHERAH:—He is, your Majesty.

PHARAOH:—Bid him stand forth.

POTIPHERAH:—Og, advance.

PHARAOH:—(*To Og*) Art thou steward for Potiphar?

OG:—I am, your Majesty.

PHARAOH:—Knowest thou Joseph?

OG:—As a brother, your Majesty.

PHARAOH:—Knowest thou the cause of his disgrace?

OG:—I do, your Majesty.

(*Ascnath gets wildly excited*)

POTIPHERAH:—(*To Ascnath*) My daughter, thou art not well. I pray thee retire to thy apartment.

ASENATH:—I stay here.

POTIPHERAH:—What this man will say is not for the ears of maidens.

ASENATH:—I will stay.

POTIPHERAH:—Asenath, thou MUST NOT stay. Come with me, I pray thee.

ASENATH:—My father: and the man speak blasphemy, shall I not know it? Dareth he to speak a lie before Pharaoh? Joseph is NOT GUILTY of the crime thou dost load upon him. I will hear the evidence.

PHARAOH:—(*To Og*) Speak on.

OG:—My master did lead an army against the Hamites, and, quickly returning, victorious, did find his household in great commotion; Deza, his wife, bewailing and wearing sackcloth. "The Hebrew!" quoth she. "The Hebrew slave thou didst bring into thy house! Hath he not assaulted thy wife! Hath he not fled! Is not this his garment which he did leave in his haste?" Then was Potiphar exceeding wroth and

commanded that the slave be bound and cast into prison. Your Majesty, I have spoken.

(Ascnath, exerting a wonderful self-control, advances toward Pharaoh. She speaks slowly.)

ASENATH:—Pharaoh, the king, cannot now set him free.

Let Pharaoh then spare his life. I ask no more.

PHARAOH:—*(To Ascnath)* The young man hath committed a crime, the penalty for which is death. Justice wills it that Deza be avenged.

(To Og) Thou sayest the young man is in prison. How long hath he lain there since accused by his mistress?

OG:—The space of two moons, your Majesty.

PHARAOH:—Knowest thou the cause why his execution was not put into effect the day following his arrest, as the law calls for?

OG:—My mistress did request the captain of the guard to delay the execution until such time as suited her pleasure to be an eye-witness.

PHARAOH:—Had she named a day for his taking off?

OG:—The day after to-morrow at high noon, your Majesty.

PHARAOH:—*(To company)* By delaying the time of his death, Deza hath established a precedent which I, Pharaoh, do follow. I decree that Joseph, the Hebrew, be hanged in the king's prison one hundred years from high noon to-morrow. And furthermore, I decree that no violent hands be laid on him until the one hundred years be fulfilled.

(Pharaoh is about to leave his throne, when Ascnath advances toward him.)

ASENATH:—Stay! Pharaoh is a just king. Let the king be a witness to my vow.

(To her father) My father, come with me to the altar.

(He takes her hand. They walk to in front of Isis. Potipherah leaves Asenath there and walks backward a few steps. Ascnath prostrates herself before the picture; then slowly rises; then motions her maidens to approach. They advance and stand around her. Turning to Isis, she says:)

Holy Mother Isis, Thou who knowest our inmost thoughts, to Thee cometh Asenath, Thy Priestess, grief stricken and with desolate heart. Take of me, O Mother, a virgin offering. Myself, my whole

affection I give. Before these witnesses, I, Asenath, swear to forever hold my body sacred, to live and die a virgin, loving and serving only Thee.

(Potipherah takes her hand)

POTIPHERAH:—*(To company)* Asenath hath done this thing in purity of heart. Whosoever shall lift his finger against her, or speak of her in reproach, for him the sun shall not shine and his days shall forever be utter darkness.

CURTAIN

ACT 3

SCENE I

(Two years have elapsed)

That part of the Temple garden where numerous paths centralize. Potipherah is walking alone.

(Enter Basil, running. He kisses the Priest's hand)

POTIPHERAH:—Basil, thou hast tarried long. What news from Meres?

BASIL:—News and news, my lord. The city is in commotion! Such news of startling import is heard that the people flock around the story-tellers in dense masses—such a running and questioning and babble! Some have gone stark mad, drunk with so much news!

POTIPHERAH:—Tell thy news, man.

BASIL:—My lord, it so burdeneth me I know not where to begin.

POTIPHERAH:—Thy news! As it cometh to thy mind. Out with it.

BASIL:—Deza is dead—taken in adultery—slain by her husband, who did kill both her and her lover.

(Enter a servant)

SERVANT:—*(To Potipherah)* My lord, messengers from Pharaoh would see thee on urgent business.

POTIPHERAH:—Bring them hither.

(Exit servant)

(To Basil) Well?

BASIL:—Pharaoh hath found one who could make known the meaning of his dream.—

POTIPHERAH:—Not so, Basil.

BASIL:—A young man, a soothsayer of the Hebrews, hath gained the king's ear and hath set the king's heart against the Priesthood. Yea, the king hath publicly proclaimed him ruler of his household and of Egypt. Only in the throne shall Pharaoh be greater than he. I did see him with my own eyes, riding in the king's

chariot, and runners went before him crying, "In the name of Pharaoh, bow the knee."

POTIPHERAH:—This is news indeed! How gained he so great an influence over the king?

BASIL:—'Tis said he ministered to the king's vanity, my lord, saying: thus and thus shalt thou do and thy power shall be increased a thousand fold.—

POTIPHERAH:—A flatterer! a trickster!

BASIL:—The king, by his favorite's advice, hath commanded that one-fifth of the harvest of the land be garnered into the king's storehouses. "For," said the soothsayer, "is there not a famine to come? and shalt thou not then give bread to thy people that they die not?"—

POTIPHERAH:—A fool! Famine in Egypt? Bah!

BASIL:—Then said the soothsayer: "Would Pharaoh live for ever? Then let him build himself a mound whose top shall overlook the mountains. In the years of famine shall not the people work for the bread Pharaoh has to give them! Shall they not hew them stones and raise unto Pharaoh a monument that neither time nor the hand of man can destroy!"

POTIPHERAH:—Go thou to the house, Basil. I will follow thee when yon messengers have finished their business with me.

(Exit Basil)

(Enter the king's messengers, who bow, and present a scroll whereon is imprinted the royal seal)

POTIPHERAH:—I listen to Pharaoh.

FIRST MESSENGER:—Prince Potipherah, Pharaoh hath commanded that thy daughter Asenath be given unto Zaphnath-paaneah to wife.

POTIPHERAH:—What! What! My daughter—Pharaoh—Asenath—Pharaoh hath commanded? What say ye? Sirs, ye speak idly. Pharaoh is my friend, my pupil. Pharaoh would not, could not command as ye have spoken.

SECOND MESSENGER:—Prince Potipherah, we be the bearers of the words of the king. Pharaoh hath commanded that Asenath be given unto Zaphnath-paaneah to wife.

POTIPHERAH:—And who is this Zaphnath-paaneah that Pharaoh willeth shall be my son?

SECOND MESSENGER:—He is a man well favored of body, young in years, old in wisdom. Pharaoh hath put a gold chain about his neck and hath made him to be ruler over Egypt. Whence he came, we know not. He rideth in the second chariot and runners cry “Bow the knee!” before him.

POTIPHERAH:—What service hath the young man done Egypt that Pharaoh should thus honor him?

SECOND MESSENGER:—We will speak thee honest: None.

POTIPHERAH:—None?

SECOND MESSENGER:—The king dreamed a dream, twice repeated, whereat he was troubled. To the priests, the magicians and the wise men, he spake the manner of the dream, but none could interpret. Thou, Potipherah, Priest of On, wast consulted, but even thy ripe learning could not give the interpretation of the dream. It was told Pharaoh, by the mouth of Felix, his butler, that there was in the king’s prison a young man, an Hebrew, a servant of the captain of the guard, who could understand the dream and interpret it. He was brought before the king, and, hearing the dream, did upon the instant interpret, prophesying great and wonderful things to come to pass in Egypt: all the nations coming to Pharaoh for bread. His words so pleased Pharaoh that the king placed a ring upon his finger and clothed him in fine linen and made him ruler over the king’s household and over Egypt.

POTIPHERAH:—My daughter, sirs! my daughter! I would know good and sufficient reasons why Pharaoh hath singled her from all the virgins of Egypt to bestow upon his favorite.

FIRST MESSENGER:—My lord, we can give no reasons other than the king’s command.

POTIPHERAH:—Would the king willfully wreck his throne!

FIRST MESSENGER:—Prince Potipherah, Pharaoh’s word is law. We but obey him in saying thy daughter Asenath must accompany us to Meres.

POTIPHERAH:—Sirs, she shall not! See: yonder she cometh, a virgin Priestess who hath taken the holy vows of chastity; whose life is consecrated to Isis. She but now cometh from the altar. Take her but a day, an hour, a minute, from her sacred duties and the throne of Egypt is saddled with a curse that shall blight and

wither and destroy; that shall make this fair land desolate! that shall raise each man's hand against his neighbor! that shall make the women and children from the Northern to the Southern sea, slaves, subjected to the vile passions of barbarian conquerors!

(The messengers are terrified at the fierce earnestness with which he speaks)

(Enter Asenath)

ASENATH:—My father, what would they do that thou warnest them with so awful a threat?

POTIPHERAH:—It concerneth thee, child. Pharaoh is arrogant and sendeth by these messengers an impudent command that thou marry an upstart servant who hath recently been advanced in the king's household.

ASENATH:—I marry!

(To Messengers) Sirs, it cannot be. Pharaoh himself did witness my taking the vow of chastity. It is a mistake. He hath forgotten.

POTIPHERAH:—He hath NOT forgotten!

ASENATH:—Calm thyself, my father. No harm shall come of this. Is not our religion true? And I be in danger, will not Isis shield me? Is she not greater than Pharaoh?

POTIPHERAH:—Asenath, thou art yet a child and thinkest as a child. Thou hast learned to put thy trust in the powers of good. The fabric of our religion hath heretofore been revered by the king and his subjects. Now hath the king violently assailed it. He did ask the Priests of Egypt to make known the meaning of an idle dream. When we did not satisfy him with answers, then sent he for a slave, whose trick of fortune telling had given him renown among the king's menials. This fellow shaped a plausible answer to the king's dream, and in payment therefor is bestowed with extravagant marks of royal favor.

ASENATH:—Can that which is false stand before Pharaoh? Can falsehood defy truth? Can it harm thee, or me?

POTIPHERAH:—Asenath, the fellow is a Hebrew, a worshiper of strange gods. He hath influenced the king against us; therefore doth the king in his foolish

spite think to belittle our power and the Divinities we worship, yea, even to making the Chief Priestess of Isis a creature of his whim! Asenath, thou hast yet to learn: "Put not thy trust in the sons of men."

ASENATH:—My father, in so saying, thou dost confess a weakness which shameth thee. Our Gods, be they but myths, that thou, who hast always declared them King of Kings, shouldst now quail when an earthly potentate but lifteth his finger against them! As Isis liveth, there is no earthly power can harm me!

(Potipherah looks on her in amazement. She advances to him and takes a signet ring from his finger.)

(To Messengers) Sirs, take you this token to Pharaoh. Bid him prepare a marriage feast on the first day of the New Moon. At high noon of that day, Potipherah and Asenath will appear before the king's throne. You have our answer.

(The messengers hesitate about going. Potipherah stands speechless, gazing in astonishment at his daughter.)

ASENATH:—*(To messengers)* Sirs, I pray you leave us. Rest ye in the house a while and refresh ye and feed your beasts.

FIRST MESSENGER:—*(To Potipherah)* Prince Potipherah, doth Asenath speak for thee?

POTIPHERAH:—Her words bē my words.

FIRST MESSENGER:—And shall be so delivered unto Pharaoh.

(Exit Messengers)

POTIPHERAH:—Child, child, thou knowest not what thou hast done. I must open thine eyes. See thou yon stately palace? It was built by thy forefathers of ten generations. In that palace, when it was yet but a few stones. Nor, the first of the priests, did shape and fashion certain mysteries with which he awed the people. He did invent the names of Gods and Goddesses, giving to each certain powers, and did preach them as being watchful over mankind, rewarding and punishing according to their desserts. He built altars and offered sacrifice. To his altars, a deluded people brought the firstfruits of the land—

ASENATH:—A deluded people! O, my father!

POTIPHERAH:—From shapeless rock, he gave form to Sphynx, and with his own hand, graved the seven laws upon its guarded tablet. These laws are not from Heaven, nor is the writing a Heavenly gift—

ASENATH:—Not from Heaven!

POTIPHERAH:—Nor, alone, created both the laws and the writing.

ASENATH:—O, my father, do not tell me so!

POTIPHERAH:—My daughter, I must tell thee all: The great learning of Nor and the earnestness with which he preached, brought unto him riches, and the fear and the reverence of men, from Pharaoh on the throne, to the poorest of his subjects. Only to the first-born of his line hath this secret been confided. All the priests of Egypt, with the exception of myself, have the faith which, but an hour ago, thou hadst.

(Asenath cries—Potipherah takes her two hands in his)

I have no son in whom to confide, and did think when I passed away, the Divine origin of our religion would be so deeply rooted as never to be questioned.

But thou, my daughter, art in danger and I must save thee. Our priesthood is a sham. By trickery we have gained power; by trickery we must hold it, even at the cost of taking away thy beautiful faith.

(Asenath listens in horrified astonishment. She passes her hands to her temples and gazes earnestly, doubtfully, despairingly into her father's eyes. He continues:)

Our teachings are good. Their observance hath made this nation a prosperous and happy people. Let the people's faith be weakened and we would be outcasts! The Pharaoh who now sitteth on the throne hath in his confidence one who quaileth not before us; who believeth in the God of the Hebrews—the One God, Supreme over all nations and peoples, to whom, in comparison, he thinketh Egypt's Gods are but pigmies. Through secret messenger I have heard he is bold in challenging Egypt's Gods against his God.

ASENATH:—O, that Isis were real! Who now can help us?

Tell me, my father, is the God of the Hebrews a real God?

POTIPHERAH:—My child, I know not, yet would I fain believe him a myth, even as be Osiris and Isis. Hear me further, child: Pharaoh is beloved by his people. He is a great conqueror. He hath divided the spoils of his victories; therefore the people love him. To the priests, he hath given vast treasures. We in return gave him such flattery that he hath grown vain and exacting. When we could not interpret his dream, then was he suspicious of our power and, turning his back upon us, did consult this Hebrew, who hath framed an answer to please him. Our sole power over the king now lieth in a trick, which, perchance may be successful. The king will yet have a coward conscience. We will meet him and confront this Zaphnath-paaneah even as thou hast said, even at the wedding feast. Thou shalt marry him.—

ASENATH:—No! No!

POTIPHERAH:—Yea, my daughter, thou SHALT marry him: but the priests of Egypt shall, through Potipherah, gain a victory that shall be a lasting lesson to those who would dispute our power. Pharaoh, Zaphnath-paaneah, the Royal household, all who set at meat—except thee and me, shall rise from the table sightless and shall call piteously for help—Asenath—child—look at me—Do not recoil. Let me take thy hand: Listen:

My father sought him roots and plants and from them extracted the healing virtues that give relief to those in pain. On the river's bank, he found a plant whose properties affected the mind, causing a sleep to fall upon those to whom he administered. From this same plant he took a juice, sweet as wine of Midian, which, when mixed with wine and drank, affected not the mind, but caused the sight to fail, leaving such as partook of it in total darkness for the space of three days. In the cellars of my house, there is enough of this drug to make sightless all the men in Pharaoh's army. I will see to it that some of this drug appear at the marriage feast. It shall be mixed with the wine and shall be poured into Pharaoh's cup and into the cups of all those who partake of the feast. Only thou and I, my daughter,

shall refrain from drinking. When the terrors of darkness shall be felt by the king and those about him, and they shall wail and cry and be utterly helpless, then will I denounce Pharaoh for forsaking the Gods of Egypt, and will say unto him that Isis, the Goddess of Light, whose Priestess the king hath wantonly taken from her holy duties, hath in Her anger, taken from him Her most precious gift, sight!

Then, my child, thou wilt be restored to me, a virgin. Pharaoh shall be penitent and I will supplicate Isis that the light of Her glorious sun be again allowed him. This shall be granted when the three days be fulfilled, and Pharaoh and his seed after him will not again invoke the displeasure of the Gods.

(Potipherah rubs his hands gleefully)

Asenath, it is the mind that is the master. Pharaoh hath a throne, and ten times ten thousand warriors to fight his battles; but what are they to the knowledge of the secrets of Nature? Here, in this head, is stored that which can make the proudest monarch of earth—my plaything!

Asenath, thou art now the possessor of a secret that—

ASENATH:—Speak no more, my father; thy words stab me to the heart. I cannot hear any more.—

POTIPHERAH:—Child, thou must guard this secret with—

ASENATH:—I will have no secrets. O, would I had never been born. No Isis; no love; no hope! All false, false, false!

(Asenath cries bitterly)

POTIPHERAH:—My child, take it not so to heart. It was unkind in me to open thine eyes and blight so noble a faith. But it was to save thy body from harm, child. My girl, hear me yet a little: The world is yet beautiful. There is yet love. Thy father loveth thee, child; loveth thee more than himself. The people love thee, child. Thy sweet influence sheddeth a light that maketh happy the poor of the land. Would'st thou cloud the minds of all that love thee? Think of our people, Asenath. They are glad of heart. Do they not go about with a song in their mouths? Do they not love one another? Their doors are not barred. Are there in other lands such

happy homes? It is Isis, my child, and Osiris and Ra, the creations of thy forefather Nor, that have made this valley of the river the abode of joy and content. Would'st thou have strife in the land, the heathen enter our homes, the people return to barbarian customs, the priests to be driven from the land? Say rather, my child, Isis is still beautiful and good. She is to thee a fancy; to our people, a reality. Be Her priestess. Though a mockery, She will yet shield thee and keep thee from harm; and Her protecting wings will ever be a safeguard for all who put their trust in Her.

ASENATH:—Father, I am weak and helpless. My thoughts wander. I pray thee let me go in solitude awhile.

POTIPHERAH:—Asenath, promise me thou wilt not speak to others of that I have told thee.

ASENATH:—I am in thy power.

POTIPHERAH:—My power can not bridle a woman's tongue. Promise me thou wilt not speak of this matter.

ASENATH:—I promise.

(Potipherah kisses her brow and leads her away)

(Exit)

ACT 3

SCENE 2

The audience chamber in the king's palace: It is a polygon-shaped room, decangular, with walls, floor and ceiling of polished cedar wood. Massive cedar pillars support the roof. The main entrance is from the northwest. A door at the northeast opens into the banquet hall. The only piece of furniture in the room is a throne of ebony, inlaid with gold. This throne has three seats, the center one being a trifle higher than the others. It faces west.

It is the day appointed for the marriage of Zaphnath-paaneah and Asenath. Musicians are seated on the floor opposite the throne. Female dancers stand behind them with timbrcls.

(Enter, a page, who claps his hands and cries:)

PAGE:—The king! The king!

(The musicians immediately strike up a lively air. Six dancers group themselves and await a signal from the page. Lance-men and archers march in and take up positions at the door. The page signals to the dancers, who trip lightly to the door where they meet the king. They wheel around and go before him dancing in the direction of the throne. At intervals during the dance they chant)

DANCERS:—Great is Ra!

Great is the son of Ra!

Pharaoh is the son of Ra.

Pharaoh is mighty.

He hath fought!

He hath conquered!

His enemies flee before him.

Pharaoh is kind to his people.

Pharaoh is beloved by his people.

Let Pharaoh live forever!

(Pharaoh takes his seat on the throne. His queen sits at his left. Court officers distribute about the room. Nubian slaves attend the queen with fans. Felix, the butler, attends the king. The dancing is continued, but without chants, the dancers appearing singly, in pairs, trios, four, five and six, as the evolution of the dance goes on. At its finish, the page

appears and claps his hands. The dancers group. The page cries aloud)

PAGE:—Zaphnath-paaneah! Zaphnath-paaneah! The bridegroom cometh!

PHARAOH:—*(To page)* Bid him welcome.

(Page signals dancers as before. They dance rapidly to the door and meet Zaphnath-paaneah. They dance before him to the foot of the throne, chanting:)

DANCERS:—Pharaoh hath a friend.

He is Zaphnath-paaneah.

We have come to meet him.

We bring him unto Pharaoh

That he may speak words of wisdom unto our king.

Welcome, Zaphnath-paaneah!

A bridegroom!

Who cometh to meet his bride!

She is a virgin.

She is the flower of Egypt.

In her heart there is love.

(Zaphnath-paaneah is before Pharaoh. Dancers retire to rear of musicians)

PHARAOH:—Zaphnath-paaneah, thou comest to meet a bride, whom, were my son of discreet age, I would gladly give unto him to wife. I give unto thee Asenath, daughter of Potipherah.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—*(Starts)* Asenath!

PHARAOH:—Thou knowest her?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—As a most lovable woman.

PHARAOH:—She is thine.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Pharaoh did make me ruler over Egypt. He hath loaded me with honors. Can I repay him with my humble service? Pharaoh hath now given to me that which is dearer than riches; that which is more valued than even the State honors thou hast graciously bestowed on thy servant. Asenath for wife! My king, this is joy beyond measure!

PHARAOH:—Zaphnath-paaneah, I have heard thy story and know the cause why Deza sought thy life. I do remember Asenath at the Feast of Isis, praying for thy release from the dungeon—

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Asenath interceded for me? Glorious news, my king!

PHARAOH:—I do remember how Deza, wishing to see thee hanged, did stay thy execution until such time as suited her convenience to be an eye-witness. I do remember this was made a precedent to give thee length of days beyond the allotted span of life. I do remember Asenath saying with boldness, she did believe thee innocent;—

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Thrice welcome words, O king.

PHARAOH:—And when she heard thy doom of life imprisonment did witness her taking of the vow of chastity. She loved thee, and was broken-hearted. I now know thou art innocent of the crime for which thou hast suffered.—

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Pharaoh overwhelms his servant with kindness.

PHARAOH:—Deza, thy accuser, is dead: died in shame, false to her husband, her home, her Gods. Og, the steward of her household, hath published her iniquity and hath confessed himself her confidant in the attempt at thy ruin.

Zaphnath-paaneah, I, Pharaoh, pronounce thee free as a free born Egyptian. I absolve thy reputation from all stain. I believe thee a man of virtue in whom Asenath shall find an honored lord and husband.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Let me kiss the hem of Pharaoh's garment.

PHARAOH:—Nay, my hand, Zaphnath-paaneah; and the seat beside us is for thee.—

(Zaphnath-paaneah kisses the hand and takes the seat)

'Tis nearing the hour of high noon when Asenath and her father shall arrive.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—My lord, the time of her coming cannot pass too swiftly.

PHARAOH:—Thou art in love. Methinks the lady is not so hurried.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Knoweth she to whom she is betrothed?

PHARAOH:—To Zaphnath-paaneah, ruler of Egypt.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—And she knoweth me not as Joseph?

PHARAOH:—It is my pleasure to see thy surprise and hers.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Cometh she willingly to the marriage?

PHARAOH:—In that she believeth Isis will shield her from harm. To my messengers she herself did say: Bid Pharaoh prepare a marriage feast.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—I see Felix, thy butler, near. Let Pharaoh not be displeas'd if thy servant putteth a question to him.

PHARAOH:—(*To Felix*) Felix, answer that which Zaphnath-paaneah shall ask thee.

(*Felix bows to Pharaoh and stands before Zaphnath-paaneah*)

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—(*To Felix*) Felix, did'st thou deliver unto Asenath the ring I charg'd thee with when in the dungeon?

FELIX:—(*Trembling and falling*) My lord, have pity, have pity! Misfortune hath indeed befallen thy servant.

PHARAOH:—What meaneth this fellow?

FELIX:—My lord, the ring—the ring—the—

PHARAOH:—Speak to the point, slave: What of the ring?

FELIX:—My lord, an I tell the truth, all Egypt will say I lie.

PHARAOH:—Speak to the point, or I will have thee lashed!

FELIX:—The ring was and is not, and I know not where it is. O, merciful Gods, what new evil hath befallen me!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Charg'd I thee on thy life not to lose it?

PHARAOH:—(*To Felix*) And thy life is already forfeit. Officers, away with him!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Let Pharaoh not be hasty in this matter, for indeed the man is contrite. I pray thee grant him a space that his tongue may be unloosened before us. Perchance his speech may reveal the secret hiding of the ring, which, by virtue of its curious workmanship, the like of which is not on earth, may restore it unto me; for I prize this jewel as my life.

PHARAOH:—(*To officers who are leading Felix away*) Officers, bring him again before us.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—(*To Felix*) Speak that thou knowest of the ring and keep back no jot or tittle.

FELIX:—(*To Pharaoh*) Zaphnath-paaneah did prophesy me that on the Feast of Isis, I, being Pharaoh's cup-bearer, should attend thee to On: Then putting

words in my mouth, he bade me tell them unto Asenath, the Priestess, and giving the ring into her hand, it should be potent for his goodwill. The ring. O king, I cherished and did think most honorably to fulfill his command. On the day that the king and his household would go to the temple, myself being girded for the journey, did seek my house, where, kissing my wife and babe good-by, I did bethink me that the ring was safe with me. Holding it in my hand, my little babe perched on my knee, did in play reach and take it from me. Quickly his little hand conveyed the jewel to his mouth, and, ere I could snatch it forth, was swallowed: where, stopping in his throat did cause the babe to wretch and cough, and so convulsed himself that he was like to die. My wife being crazed with grief lest she should lose her babe did take him in her arms and forthwith ran to the house of Amos, the surgeon. Myself being already overstayed, and fearing the king's wrath at my absence, did with burdened heart hasten to the palace, where the king, being already mounted in his chariot, did command me to mount the swiftest horse, and preceding his majesty, bear greetings unto Potipherah.

Glorious was the Feast of Isis, O king! All the nations of the earth were powerless to equal it in splendor! The Priestess Asenath moved through the mysteries even as a Goddess of Light. O king, live forever! Thou wert greater in majesty than the kings of a thousand thrones. In presence of so sublime a greatness, thy servant felt humbled like unto a beast of burden. Many times did Asenath pass near and as many times did thy servant lash himself to speak the lady of Joseph and the ring. Fear silenced me. Counsell'd I: When Asenath shall know the ring is not with me (and surely it is a ring of magic power) will not the wrath of the Priesthood be on my head? O, king, the Feast ended and my tongue refused me utterance. Returning with your majesty to Meres, I did quickly seek my home; (*sobs*) . . . my babe was not . . . my wife weeping, refusing to be comforted, did curse the Gods who first gave and then took away. Myself now knowing and dreading the magic curse of the

ring, did bethink me to return it with all speed unto Joseph. To my queries for the jewel, my wife replied that Amos did keep it. Then hasted I unto Amos and did beseech him to restore unto me the ring. Then spake Amos harshly saying: "Get thee gone, babbler; thy wife did take the ring." With my wife, O king, threats and entreaties were of no avail. She had it not. Amos being a man of power, I dared not question further. From that time forth was I dumb in the matter and did think the curse removed. When Pharaoh dreamed so strangely and the seers of Egypt could not interpret, then remembered I Joseph, and in love for Pharaoh did commend him to your majesty.

PHARAOH:—(*To Felix*) Would'st thou know the ring again if it was shown thee?

FELIX:—Your majesty, I would know it among ten thousand rings.

PHARAOH:—(*To officers*) Bemur, Kep, Theman, go you to the house of Amos. Bind Amos and search his house. Bring Amos before us, and bring with you all the jewels that are in his house.

(*Exit officers*)

(*To Felix*) Thou shalt confront the surgeon before us.

(*Enter page, who claps his hands and cries:*)

PAGE:—Potipherah! Asenath!

PHARAOH:—(*To page, who has knelt before him*) Bid them welcome.

(*Page motions dancers. They group, advance as before to the door. They meet Potipherah and Asenath and precede them to the throne, chanting:*)

DANCERS:—Hail, Potipherah!

Our great High Priest.

Thrice welcome Asenath.

A bride!

A joyful bride!

Her step is light.

She cometh to meet the bridegroom.

He is here!

His soul burneth with love.

(*Dancing closer to Asenath and circling around her*)

Asenath wearoeth a veil,

To hide the beauty of her countenance.

In her husband's house her face she will uncover.

And the glory of her presence shall be his delight.

(Potipherah and Asenath stand before Pharaoh)

(Singers—dancers—retire to original positions)

POTIPHERAH:—Pharaoh is king. Thou send'st for my daughter. She is before thee.

PHARAOH:—To give in marriage to one deserving so beautiful a bride, sent I for Asenath.

POTIPHERAH:—My lord, she is a virgin, and must ever so remain.

PHARAOH:—The Gods forbid!

POTIPHERAH:—The Gods have heard her vow. She is sacred. Let not Pharaoh invite the anger of the Gods upon him. I pray thee, most noble king, listen to the words of an aged priest: Send the girl home in peace.

PHARAOH:—Thy daughter hath registered an oath, yet, it seemeth unto me, one that binds her not. It is my pleasure that she marry Zaphnath-paaneah. *(Pointing to Joseph)* Behold thy son.—

(Potipherah sees Zaphnath-paaneah for the first time, and recognizes him. He gives a slight start)

Thou knowest him?

POTIPHERAH:—To my sorrow.

PHARAOH:—*(To Zaphnath-paaneah)* Zaphnath-paaneah, claim thy bride. Give her in our presence the kiss of truth that shall bind thee and her in holy wedlock.

(Zaphnath-paaneah rises from his seat and advances toward Asenath. Potipherah places her hand in Zaphnath-paaneah's and retires a few steps. When Asenath feels the touch of Zaphnath-paaneah's hand, there is a slight trembling of her frame. Zaphnath-paaneah lifts her veil and drops it back over her head. He bends over to kiss her. She lifts her eyes and meets his gaze. She recognizes him, starts involuntarily, disengages her hand, and, as it were, shrinks from him and clings to her father. She exclaims:)

ASENATH:—No, no! He is unclean!

(Potipherah gazes defiantly at Zaphnath-paaneah and Pharaoh)

PHARAOH:—(*To Asenath*) Asenath, thou hast listened to a false accuser. I, Pharaoh, pronounce him guiltless.

POTIPHERAH:—(*To Pharaoh*) The proof, my lord.

PHARAOH:—Is here.—

(*To Potiphar*) Potiphar, stand forth.—

(*To officers*) Officers, fetch Og and stand him before us.

(*Exit officers*)

(*To Potiphar*) Potiphar, thou art a brave soldier, and it grieveth me to call on thee to speak of thy home troubles before this company. I, Pharaoh, would show unto Potipherah and unto Asenath that an innocent man hath suffered from a grave charge made against him by Deza, who was thy wife. Now I would have thee say unto Potipherah and unto Asenath that which thy heart dictates, whether the words of Deza, which she cried unto thee, saying of thy former steward: "Hath he not assaulted thy wife?" should be believed.

POTIPHAR:—The words of Deza were the words of a strumpet.

POTIPHERAH:—(*To Potiphar*) Potiphar did believe them.

POTIPHAR:—Until with my own eyes did I witness her shame. She died a harlot.

(*Enter officers with Og*)

PHARAOH:—(*To Potiphar, and pointing to Og*) Know you this man?

POTIPHAR:—He is Og, my steward.

PHARAOH:—How long hath he been of thy household?

POTIPHAR:—His whole life.

PHARAOH:—Thou art excused—

(*Potiphar retires*)

(*To Og*) Og, thou art before me to tell what thou knowest of the relations between Deza and Joseph before the time Joseph was cast into prison.

(*Og trembles violently; gazes helplessly into the faces of Potipherah, Zaphnath-paaneah, Potiphar and Pharaoh; then falls prostrate before Pharaoh*)

Rise man and speak boldly.

OG:—Let Pharaoh have mercy on thy servant, for indeed I was blameless.

PHARAOH:—Speak not of thyself.

OG:—My master went to the wars, leaving Deza to bewail his long absence. She became enamoured of Joseph;

and her enticement, he strove to avoid. It came to Deza's ears that Joseph and Asenath loved each the other. Then was she jealous and did seek his ruin, even so madly as to press me into being an accomplice. Joseph was taken unawares. His coat was taken from him in malice. In her outcry she deceived my lord Potiphar.

ASENATH:—(*Who has been an eager listener, advances to Og*) Thou art the man from whose lips I heard the traitrous words that doomed him.

OG:—Most noble priestess, Deza then lived. Og was her servant.

ASENATH:—Thou lied'st before Pharaoh!

(*Og droops his head and falls prostrate before Pharaoh*)

OG:—O, king, live forever! Have mercy on thy unhappy servant. Life is coveted by a dog. 'Twas life I craved.

PHARAOH:—Thou hast served a purpose and I give thee life. The punishment that was meted unto Joseph shall be thine.

(*To officers*) Officers, away with him.

(*Exit officers with Og*)

(*Meanwhile Zaphnath-paaneah and Asenath exchange glances. He edges toward her. She edges away from him to her father and clings to her father's arm. Pharaoh watches the movements, apparently an amused spectator*)

(*Enter officers with Amos and jewels. Amos, who is bound, wears an expression of fear. He stands before the king*)

PHARAOH:—(*To Amos*) Amos, a certain ring belonging to Asenath, the Priestess, is lost. Felix, my butler, in whose custody the ring was, says thou hast it; that thou did'st take it from the throat of his babe, who had swallowed it in play. Hast thou the ring?

AMOS:—Your majesty, I have not seen the ring since the day the babe was brought unto me.

PHARAOH:—(*To officers*) Bring hither the jewels you did find in the house.—

(*They bring them forward*)

(*To Felix*) Felix, can'st thou find the ring among these?

(*Felix examines them, but finds it not*)

FELIX:—It is not here.

PHARAOH:—(*To officers*) Searched you the house thoroughly?

FIRST OFFICER:—Every room and closet, your majesty.

PHARAOH:—(*To Zaphnath-paaneah*) 'Tis strange. He seemeth to have it not.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—(*To Pharaoh*) My lord, and I have found favor in thy sight, I will show the king where, if Amos hath the ring, it can be found.

PHARAOH:—Speak on, Zaphnath-paaneah.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Amos hath many costly jewels which he doth hide jealously from the gaze of his fellow men. In his beard is woven a pocket. The manner of its weaving I taught him. I know by the peculiar shape of his beard the pocket is in it now. If Amos hath the ring, there it can be found.

PHARAOH:—(*To officers*) Officers, you have heard the words of Zaphnath-paaneah. Search the beard of Amos.

(They search the beard and take from it several gems. The first officer carries the jewels to Pharaoh)

Show them unto Felix.

(They do so. Felix examines and picks out the lost ring)

FELIX:—(*To Pharaoh*) Here is the ring, my lord!

PHARAOH:—(*To Zaphnath-paaneah*) Is the ring which Felix holdeth the one thou gavest him to convey to Asenath?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—(*Takes the ring from Felix*) My lord, it is the ring.

PHARAOH:—(*To Amos, who stands sullenly*) Amos, I am Pharaoh. Thou hast dared to speak a lie unto me. Thou knowest the penalty. (*To officers*) Officers, away with him.

(They lead him away. Zaphnath-paaneah has the ring. He takes it to Asenath and goes on his knee before her)

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—(*To Asenath*) Asenath, thou hast heard the words of Pharaoh and of Potiphar and of Og. Have they not shown thee I am Joseph, whom thou once did'st love? Have they not shown thee I am guiltless of the crime for which but even now thou spurnd'st me?

ASENATH:—(*Weeps*) O, sir, I know thou art true. These years I have thought evil of thee and wronged thee. Thou can'st not love me now.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Asenath, I love thee. See this ring: thou gavest it unto me as the shield of the mighty priesthood, should misfortune befall me. Let Asenath now wear the ring, and I, Zaphnath-paaneah, whom Pharaoh hath set above his people, I will shield thee and be unto thee a husband.

POTIPHERAH:—(*To Zaphnath-paaneah*) Sir, I have heard of thee that thou worshippest a strange God, whom the Egyptians know not. How can'st thou love and cherish one who is chief priestess of Isis?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Most reverend Priest, the teachings of Isis are love, honor and charity. I bow unto these virtues. To the Great One, the God of my fathers, I answer for these same teachings. Preach thou Isis and Osiris and Ra. They are Great. They be the Gods of Egypt. Let Asenath continue to serve them if it be her will. I only ask of her the duties of a wife.

POTIPHERAH:—The maid can choose between thee and me.

ASENATH:—(*To Zaphnath-paaneah*) Thy house shall be my house; thy God, my God; thy people, my people.

(*Zaphnath-paaneah gives the marriage kiss. He places the ring upon her finger, takes her hand and leads her to the foot of the throne, where they kneel before Pharaoh*)

PHARAOH:—(*To company*) I, Pharaoh, have made a marriage feast unto these two. Let us make merry. Zaphnath-paaneah, arise, take thy bride; for shall she not drink from my cup. To the banquet hall!

(*Zaphnath-paaneah and Asenath arise, hold hands and gaze long and lovingly into each other's eyes. The dancers group, perform an evolution before the throne and precede Pharaoh and his queen to the banquet hall. Courtiers and others follow, leaving only Zaphnath-paaneah, Asenath and Potipherah in the room. Potipherah stands apart*)

ASENATH:—(*To Zaphnath-paaneah*) My husband, let me, I pray thee, speak a word unto my father.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—As many as thou wilt, Asenath.

(*Asenath goes to her father and speaks to him in an undertone*)

ASENATH:—My father, poison not the wine; it will not serve thee now.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou speakest truly, my child; it will not serve me now. (*Kisses her*) I will bless the wine and withhold the potion for thy . . . thy sake—

(*Potipherah leads Asenath to Zaphnath-paaneah*)

Zaphnath-paaneah, use her well. She is delicately bred. I loved her. Thou hast taken her from me. She is thine. Swear unto me by thy God thou wilt be true to her.

(*Zaphnath-paaneah places his hand upon his thigh*)

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—By the God of Israel, I swear it.

(*Reënter dancers, shouting*)

DANCERS:—Come to the marriage feast!

Pharaoh himself is there

To welcome the bride and the bridegroom.

The meat is served,

The wine is brought in.

Haste to the feast!

To the feast of joy and gladness!

Come, follow! Come, follow! Come, follow!

(*They dance out of the room into the banquet hall. Zaphnath-paaneah proudly leads his bride after them. Potipherah slowly brings up the rétro. He turns back and soliloquizes*)

POTIPHERAH:—How desolate feels this heart! My child, mine only child, has left me! Where be the fond hopes I cherished that she would comfort my old age? Gone. Gone.

(*Pauses awhile as though recalling past scenes*)

An infant, prattling in my arms. How I loved her then!—A laughing girl, fleet of foot and strong of limb. How proud I was of my little girl! A maiden budding into womanhood—ay, rightly named, The Flower of Egypt. How I worshipped her! A Priestess, of beauty peerless. O, what a treasure had I in her!

She has left me . . . in my old age. And I fain would think harshly of her; but I cannot. Nay, she shall have my blessing, both her and—Nay! Not him! Shall I fondle a viper? Hath Potipherah weakened? Shall I in my power bow to a stripling! Shall I see the fruit of my loins graft with the seed

of a shepherd! Old man, thou art not conquered.
This potion—

(Producing a phial)

shall yet do its work. I will bless the wine—with a
curse—a curse as black as blindness! . . . My
daughter shall return with me to On this night.

(Exit to banquet hall)

(CURTAIN)

ACT 4

The audience chamber in the king's palace. Two sentries stand at the door of the banquet hall. Sounds of revelry from within.

FIRST SENTRY:—Pharaoh is in merry humor. Hark! that's the king's laugh; 'tis an honest good laugh, fellow.

SECOND SENTRY:—Ay, and a laugh that says good wine for all his household this night—

FIRST SENTRY:—And good eating! I did hear Felix—that's the king's butler—I did hear him say unto the waiting men: Open the storehouse of preserved meats. Pharaoh giveth to every man his fill this day. What thinkest thou of that, fellow?

SECOND SENTRY:—And I did hear Felix—that's the king's butler—I did hear him say: Bring forth ten casks of wine—ten casks! Every man of the King's household shall be drunken this night.

FIRST SENTRY:—And the baker hath orders to give cakes and sweetmeats!

SECOND SENTRY:—I would the king made a marriage feast every day—

FIRST SENTRY:—To fill our stomachs withal. My very mouth waters with expectancy.

(A slight shriek is heard)

SECOND SENTRY:—Hark! what is that?

(The shriek is repeated)

FIRST SENTRY:—By the holy cow! 'tis a woman's cry.

(Felix comes running from the banquet hall)

FELIX:—*(To first sentry)* A physician! Haste, fellow; the king's physician. Bring him hither.

(Exit sentry)

(To second sentry) The queen's waiting maids—summon them on the instant.

(Exit sentry. Felix paces up and down excitedly)

She is dying, the lovely Asenath, the bride. But a minute ago, a joyful bride; now—no, not dead! She is too beautiful to die! Where tarries the physician!

'Tis an age since I sent for him!—He cometh—

(Enter physician)

(To physician) Haste, haste!

PHYSICIAN:—Why this hurried summons? The king! Is he sick?

FELIX:—The king is well. The bride, Asenath, did sit at meat, when, as it were on the instant, while yet a smile lingered on her lips, turned pale as death; her two hands she placed to her eyes, then swiftly removing, she gazed vacantly as one bewitched; next she uttered a shriek that affrighted all, then fell into a swoon, in the which, thou'lt find her. Haste—

(Exit physician)

(Enter waiting maids)

(To maids) Maids, attend the lady Asenath.

(Exit Felix and maids)

(Enter Pharaoh, groping his way as though blind. Following enter a miscellaneous assemblage—the courtiers who sat at the feast all blindly groping; the servants all with good eyesight)

PHARAOH:—A light! Bring a light!

FIRST SENTRY:—The king is mad! A light, quoth he, did'st hear, fellow?

SECOND SENTRY:—Methinks the whole court is mad. See how they grovel.

PHARAOH:—A light! Where be the varlet slaves? This strange darkness frights me.

(Court women wail and cry. Courtiers in their groping run against each other and the king, making the utmost confusion)

PHARAOH:—Potiphar!

POTIPHAR:—Here, my lord.

PHARAOH:—Come hither, I would take thy hand.

POTIPHAR:—My lord, 'tis so black a darkness, I cannot find my way.

PHARAOH:—Oah!

OAH:—Here, my lord.

PHARAOH:—Come thou hither.

OAH:—My lord, I need a light. I'll reach thee if naught balks me.

(Oah goes toward the king, but is stopped by pillars, blind courtiers, etc.)

PHARAOH:—Felix!

(No answer)

PHARAOH:—Felix!

(Felix comes from the banquet hall. He kneels before Pharaoh)

FELIX:—Thy servant, my lord. What would'st thou?

PHARAOH:—A light, varlet. Bring a light!

FELIX:—My lord, it is broad day.

PHARAOH:—Thou liest, coward! Thou'rt afraid of this darkness! Bring hither a light!

FELIX:—My lord, no light must shine against the Sun. Thou'lt anger the Gods.

PHARAOH:—The Sun shineth not, fool. Where is Zaphnath-paaneah?

FELIX:—In the banquet hall, my lord. Asenath lieth there as one dead.

PHARAOH:—Bid Zaphnath-paaneah come hither.

(Exit Felix)

FIRST SENTRY:—The king hath his fill of wine.

SECOND SENTRY:—By Sphynx, the whole court is well filled.

FIRST SENTRY:—Would that I carried so much liquor within.

SECOND SENTRY:—Thou'lt do it tonight, or die in the attempt.

(Both laugh)

(Enter Zaphnath-paaneah. He advances to Pharaoh)

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—My lord, I await thy pleasure.

PHARAOH:—Zaphnath-paaneah, what meaneth this darkness?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—What darkness, my lord?

PHARAOH:—Art thou a scoffer, too?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—My lord, the Sun is high in the heavens. I have eyes and see.

PHARAOH:—What see'st thou?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—I see the king and all his courtiers who did sit at meat with him, feeling about them as though in the dark.

PHARAOH:—Thou hast cat's eyes.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Thy servants see as I see.

PHARAOH:—Potiphar seeth not.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—My lord, I grieve to tell thee: thou art stricken blind.

PHARAOH:—Blind! Blind! Art sure?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—My lord, I fear treason. Thou and those who sat at meat with thee are equally helpless.

PHARAOH:—Treason! Helpless!—I hear the menials scoff
—I am betrayed. What shall I do?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—If treason, O king, the traitor shall die.—

(*To soldiers*) Captains, stand around your king—

(*Eight captains advance and form a bodyguard around the king. Joseph next beckons to four of them*)

(*To four captains*) Thou, and thou, and thou, and thou, stand forth.

(*The four captains advance before him*)

Gather ye your companies. Guard the four gates of the palace:—thou, the east; thou, the north; thou, the west; thou, the south. Let none leave the house. Command your men that they speak not a word to any outside the walls. To your stations on the instant!

(*Exit the four captains*)

(*To Potiphar*) Potiphar.

POTIPHAR:—I hear thee.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Knowest thou if any neighboring nations show a warlike front?

POTIPHAR:—Three kings have sworn to conquer Egypt.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—And would pillage the land if chance offered?

POTIPHAR:—Worse: They have sworn to make the river flow crimson with the blood of our women and children. Three bestial hordes are ready to fall upon us and wipe the name of Egypt—

PHARAOH:—Hold! Thou hast said enough. Picture not thy horrors. Can'st think of no way to save the land?

POTIPHAR:—My lord, I, too, am blind, as thou art. Can a soldier fight without eyes? I have lost heart.

PHARAOH:—My great general, Potiphar, helpless! O, Egypt, Egypt, where is now thy strength!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—(*To Pharaoh*) Courage, my lord. Thou hast yet to confess a weakness. Thou art king. Egypt loves thee. So long as Pharaoh liveth, no conquering nation shall cross thy boundary.

PHARAOH:—What would'st thou do?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—My lord, none without the palace know of this calamity which hath befallen thee.

Command a silence of all within the palace that no word of it be spoken abroad.

(*To Potiphar*) Potiphar, thou hast trusty men. Make of them heralds to bring thee tidings from the frontier. Thou canst strengthen the weak places with reinforcements and bar the entrance of all strangers to the land.

PHARAOH:—Thou counsellest wisely—most wisely.

(*Enter Potipherah leading Asenath*)

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—(*To Pharaoh*) There be physicians in the palace. Have they not skill to restore sight to the blind? There is yet hope—

POTIPHERAH:—There is no hope.

PHARAOH:—Potipherah?

POTIPHERAH:—I, Potipherah, make known the vengeance of Isis. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, look no more upon the sun.

PHARAOH:—A visitation from Isis, priest? How have I offended?

POTIPHERAH:—Thou hast defied the Priest of the Sun.

PHARAOH:—Not in anger.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou hast wantonly taken a priestess from the altar.

PHARAOH:—Not in mischief, priest; to right a wrong.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou hast consulted a strange God.

PHARAOH:—Who answered that which thou could'st not.

POTIPHERAH:—The Gods reveal not the future.

PHARAOH:—I have learned that which shall come to pass.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou art a gulled king. Foretold the Hebrew prophet thy blindness? . . . Thou art silent. . . . A Hebrew cheated thy forefather, Ramenes. The law is written: an Egyptian shall not eat with one of this race. Thou hast made a feast unto a Hebrew soothsayer.

PHARAOH:—I serve Isis.

POTIPHERAH:—As a weakling. Thy excuses but make thy offense the more damnable! Thinkest thou the tongue can deceive She who readeth the heart!

PHARAOH:—Silence, priest!

POTIPHERAH:—Thou would'st still defy me. Let the proud Pharaoh now humble himself. In the name of Isis, I curse thee!

PHARAOH:—Merely, priest! Merely! Curse me not in the dark. Give me sight and I will face thee, even though thou be a devil.

POTIPHERAH:—The night that is come upon thee shall last thy lifetime: thou shalt wish for morning; thou shalt pray for death. Thou art strong, yet weaker than a fly! Thou art the great Pharaoh, yet shalt thou be led about as a little child. Thou had'st the courage of a bull; hereafter a leaping frog shall fright thee. Thou shalt eat without enjoyment, drink without mirth. Thy people shall love thee, yet shalt thou not see them. Thy queen, whom thou lovest tenderly, she shall share thy misery—

PHARAOH:—She hath not sinned. Spare her—

POTIPHERAH:—Thy sin is visited upon her and upon the princes of thy house!

PHARAOH:—This is more than I can bear.

(Pharaoh falls on his face before Potipherah)

O, Priest, spare my wife; spare my princes; let thy curse fall only on me. The Gods be kind and those I have wronged suffer not.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou art penitent. Darest thou ask of me mercy for thy house? Thou whose blackened soul hath closed my daughter's eyes!

PHARAOH:—O, black despair! To whom shall I turn!

POTIPHERAH:—Go to thy chamber, king; humble thyself; cry aloud unto Isis. An thou dost truly repent, peradventure she will hear thee. Beseech Her not for thyself, but rather for those whom thy sin hath cursed, that they be saved from a living death.

PHARAOH:—I will supplicate day and night.

POTIPHERAH:—*(To captains)* Captains, lead your king to his chamber.

(The four captains lead Pharaoh away)

POTIPILAR:—*(To Potipherah)* Most Holy Priest, give unto me thy blessing that I too may pray unto Isis.

POTIPHERAH:—What wouldst thou ask of Her?

POTIPILAR:—That the curse be lifted from Pharaoh.

POTIPHERAH:—Most brave and faithful soldier: what a treasure hath the king in thou! Pray for him, Potiphar, pray earnestly. Thy prayer shall be heard in highest heaven.

(To servants) Servants, ye know your masters: lead them unto their chambers and abide with them until the wrath of Isis be assuaged.

(The servants lead off all who are blind, except Asenath. Potipherah gazes triumphantly after the

departing prince. Zaphnath-paaneah advances to Ascnath and takes her hand. Ascnath recognizes his touch.)

ASENATH:—My husband!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—(*Embracing her*) My wife!

(*Potipherah discovers Zaphnath-paaneah and Ascnath together*)

POTIPHERAH:—(*To Zaphnath-paaneah*) Thou doubly-damned knave. Give me back my daughter!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—I have the greater right to her.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou stoled'st her.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Pharaoh commanded.

POTIPHERAH:—By thee advised.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—By none advised.

POTIPHERAH:—(*To Ascnath*) Ascnath, come hither.

ASENATH:—My father, command me not. My husband stands before thee.

POTIPHERAH:—Come peacefully, child, ere Potipherah command thee.

ASENATH:—I will not come back to thee.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou shalt rue this day, girl.

ASENATH:—Use not thy threats. I have promised thee to hide a secret—I, who now stand before thee sightless. Thou hast deceived me. Shall I not betray thee?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—(*To Potiphar*) Most vile, unnatural father! To further thy ambition, thou hast banished sight from this innocent girl,—thine own flesh and blood.

POTIPHERAH:—Thou liest!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—I drank not of thy poisoned wine.

POTIPHERAH:—I poisoned not the wine.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Potipherah, thou liest! Though thou be priest of On, expounder of truth, I brand thee a trickster and a liar. The wine thou didst bless is in yonder room. Thou shalt drink of it & cupful to the dregs, before me.

POTIPHERAH:—I will not drink for thee.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Thou shalt drink, or I force thee.

POTIPHERAH:—Insolent fool, who are thou that darest defy me!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Zaphnath-paaneah, ruler of Egypt!
Knowest thou this?

(*Zaphnath-paaneah extends a finger circled with
Pharaoh's ring*)

POTIPHERAH:—The royal seal!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—What sayest thou now, priest?
(*Potipherah kneels*)

POTIPHERAH:—Thou art a greater than I.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Miserable priest, thou shalt drink of
the wine.

ASENATH:—My husband, I beseech thee, be lenient unto
him. He is my father.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—And thou art blind, Asenath. An
eye for an eye is priestly justice; yea, kingly justice;
yea, heavenly justice! He shall drink the cup to
the dregs.

ASENATH:—Forgive him, Joseph. Thou hast conquered.
He will do thy bidding; but do not make him thy
slave.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Pharaoh, Potiphar, Oah,—all the
princes of the court be in agony of darkness.

ASENATH:—I know 'tis so, yet in three days shall they all
see.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—How knowest thou?

ASENATH:—The drug is potent but for the space of three
days. (*To Potipherah*) O, my father, why didst
thou deceive me?

POTIPHERAH:—My child, I could not part with thee. (*To
Zaphnath-paaneah*) Zaphnath-paaneah, Egypt's
strength lieth in the sanctuary. Pharaoh would tear
Asenath from the altar; would belittle the priest-
hood; would ruin Egypt. The drug I did put in the
wine was but a ruse to frighten the king. How well
I have succeeded, thou knowest.

ASENATH:—'Tis a pardonable offense, my husband. Thou
wouldst not destroy Isis. She maketh the homes of
Egypt so pleasant to dwell in.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Far be it from me, Asenath, to
weaken thy people's faith.

ASENATH:—And thou wilt forgive my father?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Thy father shall make a covenant
with me. (*To Potipherah*) Potipherah, give thy
right hand to Asenath.

(Potipherah puts his right hand in Asenath's left hand. Zaphnath-paaneah puts his right hand in Asenath's right hand)

Let thy daughter be witness between us.

POTIPHERAH:—I consent.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Thou art Priest of On; I am ruler of Egypt; Pharaoh is king. Thou serve thy Gods and the king; I will not hinder thee. I serve my God and the king; thou shalt not hinder me. Let the king rule.

POTIPHERAH:—It is well.

(Asenath disengages her father's hand. He turns to leave)

ASENATH:—My father, give me I pray thee thy blessing.

(Potipherah faces her. His countenance wears a kindly expression)

POTIPHERAH:—Ay, child—for thou art still my child—I will bless thee and thine:

May thy days be many, and thy every day full of joy.

May thy children, and thy children's children to the fourth generation, delight thee.

May thy husband ever love thee as thou lovest him. *(To Zaphnath-paaneah)* Zaphnath-paaneah, thou art wise beyond thy years. Thou art honest in thy worship. The covenant between thee and me shall be marked with an altar to thy God in the temple of On.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Nay, priest, I would not violate thy traditions. Thou givest reverence to the kid and the heifer. My fathers sacrifice the flesh of the kid and the heifer upon their altars.

ASENATH:—My husband, thou must have a place of worship in this land.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—That place is everywhere, Asenath, wherever I be.

ASENATH:—And needest thou no temple?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Can a temple made with hands equal the firmament? *(To Potipherah)* Prince Potipherah, let us be friends. Thou hast been gracious indeed to offer unto me a privilege in the temple of Isis. Give me, I pray thee, at On, a space of ground on which to place a stone that shall record the covenant between thee and me.

POTIPHERAH:—The ground is thine: yea, at the very gate of the temple.

ZAPHNATH-PANEAH:—A single pillar, hewn solid from the rock, shall point heavenward, a mute witness that in the vastness of space there dwelleth the Great One, whose name cannot be spoken, to whom I bow.

ASENATH:—And I.

POTIPHERAH:—Egypt shall reverence the God of the Hebrews forever!

CURTAIN

ACT 5

SCENE 1

A street in Meroë.

(Citizens are gathered. There is much excitement)

FIRST CITIZEN:—See, here cometh another messenger from the palace. Let us stop him and learn the cause.

SECOND CITIZEN:—Nay. He is sworn to secrecy. Seest thou not he carries the white flag? He goes to the army with despatches, and 'tis death to whoever delays him.

(Enter a messenger, running. He goes his way unhindered)

FIRST CITIZEN:—By Osiris, I like not this suspense. Three days have passed since any but these messengers of the white flag have entered or left the Palace. We must know the cause.

SECOND CITIZEN:—Pharaoh is a wise king. Have thou patience yet another day. Is not Potiphar within the gates, and Zaphnath-paaneah, and Potipherah? Be they not in council with the king? Thinkest thou it is well that affairs of state be published?

FIRST CITIZEN:—Thou talkest like a fool! A council last three days! A conspiracy, thou meanest. That may last three days and demand the gates be closed. By my faith in Osiris, I believe the king is prisoner in his own house!

THIRD CITIZEN:—Or bewitched.

FOURTH CITIZEN:—Or sick unto death.

FIRST CITIZEN:—Or dead. I am for knowing. Who is with me?

VOICES:—I!

VOICES:—Here!

VOICES:—We be all with thee!

THIRD CITIZEN:—See, here comes another messenger from the Palace.

FIRST CITIZEN:—Stop him!

SECOND CITIZEN:—Ye do so at your peril.

FIRST CITIZEN :—Stop him!

(Enter messenger, running)

Halt!

(He confronts the messenger and stops him. Several of the crowd assist and the messenger is a prisoner)

MESSENGER :—In the King's name, let me pass.

FIRST CITIZEN :—Not until thou hast told us of the King.

MESSENGER :—I will tell ye nothing .

FIRST CITIZEN :—Thou shalt tell us everything.

MESSENGER :—I carry the white flag. My mouth is sealed to all, save one. He is of the army. In the King's name, let me pass.

FIRST CITIZEN :—Is the King well?

(The messenger is silent)

FIRST CITIZEN :—Is Potiphar well?

(The messenger remains silent)

FIRST CITIZEN :—Hast thou seen the King, or Potiphar since the doors of the Palace were closed?

(Still no answer)

FIRST CITIZEN :—I have asked of thee simple questions and thou art silent. Unless thou dost answer yea, or nay, we shall know there is a conspiracy against the King. I ask thee again: Is the King well?

(The messenger remains silent)

FIRST CITIZEN :—*(To crowd)* Did I not say unto you: There is a conspiracy in the Palace?

THIRD CITIZEN :—Ay, and he, the messenger, is of the conspirators.

VOICES :—Conspirator!

(The messenger fares badly at the hands of the crowd and fears for his life. He weakens)

MESSENGER :—No! No! I serve the king. There is no conspiracy.

FIRST CITIZEN :—So! Now thou wilt talk?

MESSENGER :—The King is blind.

VOICES :—Blind!

FIRST CITIZEN :—*(To messenger)* Now it grieves me thou hast spoken, for thy tidings are indeed evil.

THIRD CITIZEN :—*(To messenger)* Is Potiphar well?

MESSENGER :—He, too, is blind.

FIRST CITIZEN :—*(To messenger)* Potiphar blind? Thy mouth is charged with evil tidings.

MESSENGER:—Thou hast brought them forth. Now that I have spoken and thou hast heard, I again say unto thee, and to all of ye: In the King's name, let me pass.

FIRST CITIZEN:—Nay, sir messenger, thou shalt enlighten us further. By what misfortune hath so dreadful a visitation come upon Pharaoh and Potiphar?

MESSENGER:—It is the curse of Ra-appa. They have sat at meat with one who is of the Hebrews.

VOICES:—Ra-appa!

VOICES:—Woe unto Pharaoh.

VOICES:—Woe unto Potiphar.

VOICES:—Woe unto our beloved King.

VOICES:—Woe unto the noble Potiphar.

VOICES:—Woe unto Egypt.

(While the people are bewailing, the messenger escapes and goes his way)

(A man of patriarchal appearance mounts a stool. He claps his hands violently. The people give him attention)

NUABA:—I am Nuaba, the story-teller. I speak the truth. I know this Hebrew who hath brought the curse upon Pharaoh and upon Potiphar.

FIRST CITIZEN:—His name, Nuaba?

VOICES:—Ay, his name? His name?

NUABA:—I will speak it unto ye after a while.

VOICES:—Now!

NUABA:—First ye shall hear of the curse. I am Nuaba, the story-teller. I have spoken before Pharaoh. I speak the truth.

FIRST CITIZEN:—Then haste thee with thy tongue.

NUABA:—Ye shall pledge me your silence.

FIRST CITIZEN:—Say on. We will hear thee in patience if thou but give us the name of the Hebrew.

THE STORY OF THE CURSE OF RA-APPA

NUABA:—Nine score years have passed since Abram, the Hebrew, driven by famine from his country, came down into Egypt.

I speak the truth. This Abram was very rich in sheep and cattle and asses and camels and gold and silver and jewels. And the number of persons whom he ruled, and who came with him unto the River of Egypt, was a thousand and fifty souls.

When he was come unto Goshen, he sent Eliezer, his steward, unto Pharaoh-Ramenes, saying: Let Abram, the Hebrew, pass through Egypt to the farther borders, he and his people and all that is his; and whatsoever his people consume, or his beasts consume, of that which belong to an Egyptian, that will he pay for.

And Ramenes sent the princes of his house to meet Abram at Goshen and to bargain with him.

And it was so, that when the Princes came unto Abram, they saw Sarai, his wife.

Now Sarai was very beautiful to look upon, so that the Princes talked among themselves, saying: She is even more beautiful than the Queen.

And when they had done bargaining with Abram, they returned unto Pharaoh.

And the Princes said unto Pharaoh: "Behold there is in the tent of Abram a woman of wondrous beauty. We enquired of her, and Abram said, 'She is my sister'; and the woman said, 'He is my brother.' Now, therefore, if it please Pharaoh let him demand the woman as hostage during the time Abram is in Egypt."

Their words pleased Ramenes, and he said: Make a feast unto Abram and unto his sister.

So the king made a great feast.

Now it was so, that the Queen was sick in child-bed; and when the King saw Sarai, he loved her, and he forgot his Queen.

And the maids said unto the Queen: Behold the King sitteth at meat with a woman who is fair to look upon, and a stranger in the land.

And the Queen answered them: He hath forsaken me in mine hour of peril.

So she prayed, saying: Isis let him not look upon her

The King looked upon Sarai and his love grew into madness. Unto Abram he said: "Who is she?" And Abram fearing the King would do him harm if he answered, "She is my wife," replied: "She is my sister."

Then the King said unto Sarai: "Who is he?" Sarai made answer: "He is my brother."

Pharaoh said unto Abram: She shall be my queen.

Abram was afraid of Pharaoh, so he returned to his people and left Sarai, who was indeed his wife, with the king.

When Ra-appa, the high priest, heard what Pharaoh had done, he hastened unto him, saying: Let the woman go to her people.

But Pharaoh defied the High Priest, saying: She is my wife.

Ra-appa said unto the King: Touch her not.

Pharaoh held out his hand to take the woman unto him, when, lo! his arm withered, and fell helpless to his side.

Ra-appa again said: Touch her not.

But Pharaoh held out his other hand to take her unto him, and that hand also became withered.

Then came one running unto the King, saying: O, King! thy new-born son is dead!

The King heard him not, but looked upon Sarai, even as one bereft of his senses.

The King said unto his Princes: Take her into my chamber.

Ra-appa said yet again: Touch her not.

And so many as put forth their hands, saw them become as dead, even as were the King's hands.

Ra-appa said unto Pharaoh: The woman is Abram's wife. If thou harm her even so much as by a thought, thou shalt suffer a plague.

Pharaoh made reply: I fear not thy plagues, Priest.

Then Pharaoh looked toward Sarai and he saw her not, for his eyes were blind, and a black darkness came upon him. Then was he afraid and repented him that he had defied the High Priest. And he cried unto Ra-appa, saying: Mercy! Mercy!

Ra-appa said: Make thy peace with the woman's husband, for he is powerful.

And Pharaoh answered: How can I make peace with him? All that thou sayest that will I do, so that I become whole.

Ra-appa said: Send him a peace offering of gold and silver and jewels.

And Pharaoh sent messengers unto Abram, bearing much treasure.

Ra-appa said: Send him sheep and asses and camels.

And Pharaoh sent a thousand sheep and a hundred asses and fifty camels.

Ra-appa said: Send the woman unto her husband, for thou hast not touched her.

Pharaoh said unto Sarai: Woman, why didst thou deceive me?

But Sarai answered him not a word.

When Sarai had gone the plague was lifted from Pharaoh and from his Princes.

And again one came running, saying: O, King, thy new-born babe is dead.

And Pharaoh heard him and was very sorrowful and wept bitterly.

Then spake Ra-appa: Pharaoh-Ramenes, king of Egypt, know thou that Isis lives forever. Listen! As punishment for thy sin, a child of thine whom thou hast never known, is dead. Listen! If in time to come, thou, or any of thy line, or any Egyptian, sit at meat with a Hebrew, the curse of Ra-appa shall fall upon you. I, Ra-appa, Priest of On, do solemnly pronounce it.

I, Nuaba, the story-teller, have spoken the truth.
 FIRST CITIZEN:—Thou lovest to hear the sound of thy own voice, Nuaba. We have heard thee tell that which was already known unto us. Now speak that which we do not know, the name of the Hebrew dog.

NUABA:—He is Zaphnath-paaneah.

FIRST CITIZEN:—Meanest thou he whom Pharaoh hath made to be ruler over us?

NUABA:—He is the man.

FIRST CITIZEN:—How knowest thou?

NUABA:—He is a Hebrew. The king made a feast unto him.

FIRST CITIZEN:—Canst thou prove thy words?

NUABA:—I was in the Palace. Og, my own son, the steward of Potiphar, was sent to the dungeon under sentence once pronounced upon the Hebrew, who also served Potiphar. I heard Pharaoh say unto the Hebrew: "Thou art free as a free born Egyptian." I heard the king say: "I have made a feast unto Zaphnath-paaneah." I left the Palace and none came away after me, save these messengers.

FIRST CITIZEN :—The Hebrew is now in the Palace ?

NUABA :—Ay, and in authority.

FIRST CITIZEN :—Monstrous !

NUABA :—Ye allow it.

SECOND CITIZEN :—The Hebrew is at fault !

THIRD CITIZEN :—He is a pestilence !

FIRST CITIZEN :—Shall the Palace house that which brings
a curse ?

NUABA :—An ye be men, No !

THIRD CITIZEN :—We be ruled by that which should be
carrion.

FIRST CITIZEN :—And shall be carrion.

NUABA :—The man is a wizard.

FIRST CITIZEN :—A dead wizard can do us no harm.

THIRD CITIZEN :—Let us kill him !

VOICES :—Kill him !

NUABA :—Stay ! He weareth the King's seal. The guard
will defend him.

FIRST CITIZEN :—There be men in Meres to outnumber the
guard as a hundred is to one. Ho ! All ye that hear
me : Rouse ye the city ! Cry it forth : Let every man
to arms ! Delay not an instant ! Meet by the
River, at the King's Landing !

Cry ye : Save the King !

VOICES :—Save the King !

FIRST CITIZEN :—Cry ye : Down with the Hebrew dog !

VOICES :—Down with the Hebrew dog !

FIRST CITIZEN :—Begone. Rouse the city as with fire !

(There is a great dispersion, all shouting)

VOICES :—To arms !

VOICES :—Save the King !

VOICES :—Down with the Hebrew dog !

VOICES :—To the King's Landing !

NUABA :—My son hath an enemy. His enemy is a dog of a
Hebrew. Doth Og take the Hebrew's punishment
for naught ? Not while Nuaba hath a tongue.

(Exit)

ACT 5

SCENE 2

The audience chamber in the King's Palace.

(Enter Joseph and Asenath. Asenath is blind)

ASENATH:—I forget this darkness when thou art with me.
Joseph.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Darkness is cruel company in the
daytime, Asenath. My presence is but poor relief to
you.

ASENATH:—Such relief, Joseph, that methinks I see with
your eyes. How beautiful a thing is sight! I know
that when I shall see again of mine own eyes, the
blind people in Egypt will have a friend in Asenath.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—A sympathizing friend, truly.

ASENATH:—And more, Joseph. Though it be taught by
our Priests that the blind are accursed, yet will I
strive to lighten the burden of their misfortune.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—It is a proverb, Asenath, that those
who have suffered can best relieve suffering. How
will my wife minister unto the sightless ones?—
How can she give a light to those who are in dark-
ness?

ASENATH:—I will tell you, Joseph, of a strange vision which
came to me last night. It may seem an idle tale, but
I cannot keep it from you, my husband.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—It cannot be an idle tale, Asenath,
for I know from your speech it hath an influence for
good.

ASENATH:—I was in bed. You had not yet returned from
the night inspection of the garrison. I felt the dark-
ness of the night a thousand-fold more dark with the
absence of eyes. Suddenly an apparition came be-
fore me. It was as if a light glowed within my brain,
the light taking the form of a damsel whose height
was not more than a span. Her robe was white.
Her face beamed with a glory of incomparable
brightness. Slowly she moved as it were from the
sockets of my eyes to half an arm's length from my
face. Then she stood a while and gazed upon me
with the look of one whose heart is touched with
compassion. So lovely was she that my soul was

silenced with awe,—an ecstatic wonderment; for the being while so clearly visible was yet transparent, and while apparently a substance, yet remained in mid air. She raised her hands as if to bless me. She spoke, and her voice was like unto the sweetest music. O that I could remember all she said!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—In what manner did the Spirit address you, Asenath?

ASENATH:—She called me by name three times: Asenath, Asenath, Asenath.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—And then?

ASENATH:—For the space of about twenty heart beats was silent. Then she said: I am the Spirit of thine eyes. By me hath the Creator of All Things revealed unto thee the work of His hands.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Of a truth it is so, Asenath. The eyes are the windows of the soul.

ASENATH:—I know it now, my husband; yet before was I as one having a jewel of priceless value, the which I prized not, for it was with me even as a shadow. O, now that I am blind, how precious is that sight which is withheld from me!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—An affliction oft times serves a good purpose, Asenath. But tell me further, I pray thee, of that which the Spirit spake unto thee. I would hear all the wonderful words.

ASENATH:—That cannot be, Joseph. The words have gone from me. I feel their influence, but cannot speak them.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—The substance of them, Asenath,—their import?

ASENATH:—It was of charity—of helping the helpless. The Spirit commissioned me, saying: When your sight shall be restored, remember those who live in darkness. Let your eyes be their eyes. Speak unto them and refresh their souls with the knowledge of that I show unto you.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—A noble commission, Asenath.

ASENATH:—Will my husband be with me in ministering unto the afflicted?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Thou hast enlisted me, Asenath, for all I can do.

ASENATH:—How shall I begin, Joseph?

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Methinks, my love, thou art already ministering. A convert has been made by thee this day. Speak unto others as thou hast spoken unto me, wife, and all the blind in Egypt will have eyes.

ASENATH:—To see as through a veil, dimly.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—As the eagle, which, soaring skyward, sees the whole earth at a glance.

ASENATH:—O that I had the power to work miracles!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Asenath, thou saidst a while ago that thou dost see through my eyes. When, in time to come, thou shalt see of thine own eyes, and those who be blind shall hear the sound of thy voice and be guided by thy hand, then will thy mission carry with it the sunshine which is begot of human kindness, which shines so brightly in the dungeon as on the housetop, and which knows no night.

ASENATH:—O, my husband! It is coming! There is a mist—a clearing away—O, what a flood of light!

(She places her hands over her eyes)

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—A most welcome visitor, Asenath.

ASENATH:—*(Removing her hands)* How joyful I feel!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—And happy indeed am I.

(He kisses her)

(Enter Felix. He salutes, first Asenath, then Zaphnath-paaneah)

FELIX:—*(To Zaphnath-paaneah)* My lord, the watchman reports a crowd of people marching toward the Palace, the leaders armed and brandishing their weapons.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—*(To Felix)* Summon the Captains to the guard room. Bid them haste.

(Exit Felix)

(To Asenath) The people of the city have had their patience sorely taxed, Asenath. They have resolved to use force in gaining entrance to the palace, so that they may learn the cause of this strange seclusion.

ASENATH:—There must be no blood shed, Joseph, or it will be on my father's head.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—There shall none be shed, Asenath, if I can prevent. Thou hast eyes now, love. Seek thy room a while until the people are pacified. I must to the captains. *(Kisses her)*

(Exit Joseph)

ASENATH:—(*Gazing after him*) "Thou hast eyes now, love," he said. With what rapture do they meet his eyes! My footsteps would follow him—slave to these eyes—that they may always see him. O, fie, Asenath, it is unseemly to be so outwardly love-struck. "Seek thy room," he said. 'Tis his first command and I will obey.

(*Exit Asenath*)

(*Enter Potipherah from another door*)

POTIPHERAH:—A mob advances with show of violence. If these wits serve me, the people have heard of the curse of Ra-appa and they seek the Hebrew's life.—It must be so—It is so. Shall I prevent? Think twice, Priest. Thy daughter a widow. Would she again give thee affection?—Thy king in thy power. Art sure of it?—Zaphnath-paaneah dead, and I am again without a peer. None can then betray me, save my daughter—my own flesh and blood. Will she? No, she shall not. Hark! That is noise of fighting. The mob has entered the Palace. Let them do their deed. I will hide me till 'tis done; then play the hypocrite in bewailing his death.

(*Exit Potipherah*)

(*Enter Zaphnath-paaneah, walking backwards. Ten soldiers follow, all doing their best to shield him from the mob, who have singled him out for their vengeance. The soldiers are careful not to harm their assailants. They surround Zaphnath-paaneah in the room. The mob is frantic to catch him*)

VOICES:—(*From the mob*) The Hebrew dog!

The wizard!

Hang the upstart!

He hath brought a curse upon Pharaoh!

Kill him! Kill him!

(*A desperate struggle ensues and the soldiers are overpowered*)

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—(*To mob*) Stand back, ye fools!

(*There is a temporary halt*)

Your king is alive.

FIRST CITIZEN:—Thou hast brought a curse upon him: therefore, shalt thou die.

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—Your king brought the curse upon his own head. Potipherah would save him, but without avail.

FIRST CITIZEN:—Hear him! He slandereth the king!

ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH:—The curse shall be removed ere sundown. I swear it upon my life.

(Enter Asenath)

FIRST CITIZEN:—Thy life is not worth the swearing. *(To mob)* The rope, fellows.

(A man throws a slip-noose over Zaphnath-paaneah's head and shoulders, pulls it tight and binds him firmly)

Drag him to the east gate. Hang him to the first tree without the walls!

(Asenath, who at first is paralyzed with astonishment, rushes to the rescue and throws her arms around Zaphnath-paaneah's neck)

(The mob so unexpectedly interrupted, let go of their prisoner)

ASENATH:—*(Facing the mob)* Murderers! Devils! Would ye slay your master?

FIRST CITIZEN:—Pharaoh is our master. We know no other.

ASENATH:—Ye shall know another.

FIRST CITIZEN:—*(To mob)* The woman is bewitched. Take her away.

(There is a move toward her)

ASENATH:—Cowards!

(The mob hesitates)

I am Asenath, Priestess of On! I command ye to leave the Palace.

FIRST CITIZEN:—Priestess, thou art sheltering a wizard—a blight—a Hebrew!

(Enter Potipherah)

ASENATH:—He whom I shelter is—my husband!

POTIPHERAH:—*(To mob)* And my son.

(The mob falls back to a respectful distance)

What meaneth this confusion and violence? Speak!—Have ye no tongues?

FIRST CITIZEN:—My lord, we came to avenge the curse of Ra-appa.

(Enter Pharaoh and Potipherah)

POTIPHERAH:—Fools! Would ye have the curse multiplied? Know ye not it cometh of the Gods? See, here comes your king. The curse is even now removed.

PHARAOH:—(*To Potipherah*) Blessed be Isis.

(*Pharaoh kisses Potipherah's hand*)

(*Meanwhile Asenath has loosened the rope and freed her husband from its bonds*)

(*The mob slinks away*)

POTIPHERAH:—(*To Pharaoh*) Isis hath shown mercy unto Pharaoh. Let Pharaoh now make amends unto Zaphnath-paaneah, that he may go forth among the people, even as he did before the day of the curse.

PHARAOH:—(*To Zaphnath-paaneah*) I, Pharaoh, have sinned and have suffered because that I defied the Holy Laws. Thou, Zaphnath-paaneah, art blameless.

POTIPHERAH:—(*Aside*) I have asked too much. He must not wear the king's seal.

(*To Pharaoh*) My lord, he weareth thy seal as Ruler of Egypt. But now a mob did set upon him and would have killed him for love of thee. Shall he continue to wear thy seal?

PHARAOH:—It shall be as thou sayest, Priest.

POTIPHERAH:—Let the king do even as Ra-appa directed for Abram: give him gifts and send him unto his people.

ASENATH:—(*To Pharaoh*) If it please the King—O, my lord, think me not bold—let me, I pray thee, speak for him who is my husband.

PHARAOH:—I will hear thee, Asenath.

ASENATH:—Pharaoh gave unto Asenath a husband. I pray thee take him not away from me. Since Pharaoh was stricken my father did covenant with my husband, saying: Serve thou the King.

(*To Potipherah*) It is so, my father.

(*To Pharaoh*) My lord, the King knoweth how, when Potiphar's heart failed him, Zaphnath-paaneah was a soldier of soldiers: and that he hath saved Egypt; for even now the King's enemies have not heard of the King's blindness.

POTIPHERAH:—(*Aside*) She will have her way.

(*To Pharaoh*) My lord, Asenath hath spoken the truth. I said unto thee, "Send him away," that I might show thee how strong is her affection for him, whom the King in his wisdom made her husband.

PHARAOH:—(*To Potipherah*) It is well spoken.

(*To Zaphnath-paaneah*) Zaphnath-paaneah, give me thy hand.

(*He takes the hand*)

(*To Potipherah and Potiphar*) Potipherah and Potiphar, place you each your right hand over this the hand of Zaphnath-paaneah.

(*They do so*)

(*To Potipherah*) Potipherah, swear by Isis to give unto him whom I have made ruler of Egypt, the support of the Priesthood.

POTIPHERAH:—Let Isis be my witness: I swear it.

PHARAOH:—(*To Potiphar*) Potiphar, swear by Osiris, to give unto him whom I have made ruler over Egypt, the obedience of the army, there to be no command greater than his, save mine.

POTIPHAR:—By Osiris, I swear it.

(*Zaphnath-paaneah kneels before the king and kisses the king's hand*)

PHARAOH:—(*To Zaphnath-paaneah*) Rise, Zaphnath-paaneah.

(*To Asenath*) Asenath, come hither.

(*She advances and shyly takes Zaphnath-paaneah's right hand in both of hers. She looks hopefully to the king*)

Thy husband is my friend. All blessings go with thee to his house.

POTIPHERAH:—Amen.

POTIPHAR:—Amen.

CURTAIN

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