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GOOD FRIDAY

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GOOD FRIDAY



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TORONTO

GOOD FRIDAY

A DRAMATIC POEM

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

AUTHOR OF "THE EVERLASTING MERCY" "THE WIDOW
IN THE BYE STREET" "THE TRAGEDY OF
POMPEY THE GREAT," ETC.

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1915

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GOOD FRIDAY

PERSONS

PONTIUS PILATE, Procurator of Judæa.

PROCUA, His Wife.

LONGINUS, A Centurion.

A JEW, Leader of the Rabble.

A MADMAN.

A SENTRY.

JOSEPH OF RAMAH.

HEROD.

SOLDIERS, SERVANTS, THE JEWISH RABBLE, LOITERERS,
IDLERS.

THE SCENE

The Pavement, or Paved Court, outside the Roman Citadel in Jerusalem. At the back is the barrack wall, pierced in the centre with a double bronze door, weathered to a green color. On the right and left sides of the stage are battlemented parapets overlooking the city. The stage or pavement is approached by stone steps from the front, and by narrow stone staircases in the wings, one on each side well forward. These steps are to suggest that the citadel is high up above the town, and that the main barrack gate is below. THE CHIEF CITIZEN, THE RABBLE, JOSEPH, THE MADMAN, HEROD, and THE LOITERERS, etc., enter by these steps. PILATE, PROCULA, LONGINUS, THE SOLDIERS and SERVANTS enter by the bronze doors.

GOOD FRIDAY

A DRAMATIC POEM

PILATE. Longinus.

LONGINUS. Lord.

PILATE [*giving scroll*]. Your warrant. Take
the key.

Go to Barabbas' cell and set him free,
The mob has chosen him.

LONGINUS. And Jesus?

PILATE. Wait.

He can be scourged and put outside the gate,
With warning not to make more trouble here.
See that the sergeant be not too severe.
I want to spare him.

LONGINUS. And the Jew, the Priest,
Outside?

PILATE. I'll see him now.

About this Jesus man. The laws are clear.
I must apply them, asking nothing more
Than the proved truth. Now tell me of your
dream:

What was it? Tell me then.

PROCULA. I saw a gleam
Reddening the world out of a blackened sky,
Then in the horror came a hurt thing's cry
Protesting to the death what no one heard.

PILATE. What did it say?

PROCULA. A cry, no spoken word
But crying, and a horror, and a sense
Of one poor man's naked intelligence,
Pitted against the world and being crushed.
Then, waking, there was noise; a rabble rushed
Following this Jesus here, crying for blood,
Like beasts half-reptile in a jungle mud.
And all the horror threatening in the dim,
In what I dreamed of, seemed to threaten
him. . . .

So in my terror I sent word to you,

Begging you dearly to have nought to do
With that wise man.

PILATE. I grant he says wise things.
Too wise by half, and too much wisdom brings
Trouble, I find. It disagrees with men.
We must protect him from his wisdom then.

PROCLA. What have you done to him?

PILATE. Made it more hard
For him to wrangle in the Temple yard
Henceforth, I hope.

Enter LONGINUS.

PROCLA. You have not punished him?

PILATE. Warned him.

LONGINUS. The envoy from the Sanhedrim
Is here, my lord.

PILATE. Go. I must see him. Stay.
You and your women, keep within to-day.
It is the Jewish Feast and blood runs high
Against us Romans when the zealots cry
Songs of their old Deliverance through the land.
Stay, yet. Lord Herod says that he has planned

To visit us to-night, have all prepared.

PROCLA. I would have gone to Herod had

I dared,

To plead for this man Jesus. All shall be

Made ready. Dear, my dream oppresses me.

[*Exit.*

PILATE. It is this earthquake weather: it

will end

After a shock. Farewell.

Enter CHIEF CITIZEN.

CHIEF CIT. Hail, Lord and friend.

I come about a man in bonds with you,

One Jesus, leader of a perverse crew

That haunts the Temple.

PILATE. Yes, the man is here.

CHIEF CIT. Charged with sedition?

PILATE. It did not appear

That he had been seditious. It was proved

That he had mocked at rites which people loved.

No more than that. I have just dealt with him.

You wish to see him?

Frightened, by thought of where such claims
would end.

There had been rumors, yet we only heard
The fact but now. We send you instant word,

PILATE. Yes. This is serious news. Would I
had known.

But none the less, this Jesus is alone.

A common country preacher, as men say,
No more than that, he leads no big array;
No one believes his claim?

CH. CIT. At present, no.

He had more friends a little while ago,
Before he made these claims of being King.

PILATE. You know about him then?

CH. CIT. His ministering

Was known to us, of course.

PILATE. And disapproved?

CH. CIT. Not wholly, no; some, truly; some
we loved.

At first he only preached. He preaches well.

PILATE. What of?

CH. CIT. Of men, and of escape from hell
By good deeds done. But when he learned his
power

And flatterers came, then, in an evil hour,
As far as I can judge, his head was turned
A few days past, from all that we have learned
He made this claim, and since persists therein.
Deluders are best checked when they begin.
So, when we heard it from this frightened
friend,

We took this course to bring it to an end.

PILATE. Rightly. I thank you. Do I understand
stand
That friends have fallen from him since he
planned
To be this King?

CH. CIT. They have, the most part.

PILATE. Why?

What makes them turn?

CH. CIT. The claim is blasphemy
Punished by death under the Jewish laws.

PILATE. And under ours, if sufficient cause
Appear, and yet, if all the Jews despise
This claimant's folly, would it not be wise
To pay no heed, not make important one
Whom all contemn?

CH. CIT. His evil is not done.
His claim persists, the rabble's mind will turn.
Better prevent him, Lord, by being stern.
The man has power.

PILATE. That is true, he has.

CH. CIT. His is the first claim since the
Baptist was,
Better not let it thrive.

PILATE. It does not thrive.

CH. CIT. All ill weeds prosper, Lord, if left
alive.
The soil is ripe for such a weed as this.
The Jews await a message such as his,
The Anointed Man, of whom our Holy Books
Prophesy much. The Jewish people looks
For Him to come.

I know your Temple plots; pretend not here
That you, the priest, hold me, the Roman,
 dear.

You, like the other Jews, await this King
Who is to set you free, who is to ding
Rome down to death, as your priests' brains
 suppose.

This case of Jesus shows it, plainly shows.

He and his claim were not at once disowned;
You waited, while you thought "He shall be
 throned,

We will support him, if he wins the crowd."

You would have, too. He would have been en-
 dowed

With all your power to support his claim

Had he but pleased the rabble as at first.

But, since he will not back the priestly aim,

Nor stoop to lure the multitude, you thirst

To win my favor by denouncing him.

This rebel does not suit the Sanhedrim.

I know. . . . The next one may.

CH. CIT. Why, home. You hear that noise
below,

Or are you deaf?

MADMAN. No, lordship, only blind.

CH. CIT. Come this-day-next-year if you
have the mind.

This year you come too late, go home again.

MADMAN. Lord. Is the prisoner loosed?

CH. CIT. Yes, in the lane.

Can you not hear them cry "Barabbas" there?

MADMAN. Barabbas, Lord?

CH. CIT. The prisoner whom they bear

In triumph home.

MADMAN. Barabbas?

CH. CIT. Even he.

MADMAN. Are not you wrong, my Lord?

CH. CIT. Why should I be?

MADMAN. There was another man in bonds,
most kind

To me, of old, who suffer, being blind.

Surely they called for him? One Jesus? No?

CH. CIT. The choice was made a little while ago.

Barabbas is set free, the man you name
Is not to be released.

MADMAN. And yet I came
Hoping to see him loosed.

CH. CIT. He waits within
Till the just pain is fitted to his sin.
It will go hard with him, or I mistake.
Pray God it may.

MADMAN. I sorrow for his sake.

CH. CIT. God's scathe.

Enter more JEWS.

MADMAN. A penny for the love of Heaven.
A given penny is a sin forgiven.
Only a penny, friends.

1ST CIT. The case was proved. He uttered
blasphemy.

Yet Pilate gives him stripes: the man should die.

3RD CIT. Wait here awhile. It is not over yet.

CH. CIT. It is sure. Wait here a little while.

1ST CIT. We mean to, Lord. His tongue
shall not defile

Our Lord again, by God.

CH. CIT. By a happy chance

There came a hang-dog man with looks askance,

Troubled in mind, who wished to speak with us.

He said that he had heard the man speak thus

That he was the Messiah, God in man.

He had believed this, but his doubts began

When Jesus, not content, claimed further things;

To be a yoke upon the necks of Kings,

Emperor and Priest. Then, though he found

him kind

In friendship, he was troubled. With bowed

mind

He came to us and swore what Jesus claimed.

This Emperor over Kings will now be tamed.

VOICES. Will Pilate back the priests?

CH. CIT. He cannot fail.

It threatens Roman power.

2ND CIT. That was before this charge came.

A VOICE. Even so

This Roman swine is fond of swine like these.

A VOICE. Come, Pilate, come.

A VOICE. He will not have much ease
This Paschal Feast, if Jesus is not cast.

A VOICE. There is the door. Lord Pilate
comes at last.

No. 'Tis the trumpet.

[A TRUMPETER *comes out.*]

VOICES. Blow the trumpet, friend.

A VOICE. Roman. Recruit. When will the
sitting end?

VOICES. Fling something at him. Roman.

A VOICE. O, have done.

He will not hang until the midday sun

And we shall lose our sleeps. Let sentence pass.

A VOICE [*singing*]. As I came by the market
I heard a woman sing:

“My love did truly promise to wed me with a
ring,

But, oh, my love deceived me and left me here
forlorn

With my spirit full of sorrow, and my baby to
be born."

A VOICE. Why are you standing here?

A VOICE. I came to see.

A VOICE. O, did you so?

A VOICE. Why do you look at me?

A VOICE. You were his friend: you come
from Galilee.

A VOICE. I do not.

A VOICE. Yes, you do.

A VOICE. I tell you, No.

A VOICE. You know this man quite well.

A VOICE. I do not know

One thing about him.

A VOICE. Does he know the cur?

A VOICE. Ay, but denies. He was his follower.

A VOICE. I was not.

A VOICE. Why, I saw you in the hall,
I watched you.

A VOICE. I was never there at all.

A VOICE. So would be a King.

A VOICE. That was the plan.

A VOICE. I swear to God I never saw the
man.

A VOICE. He did; you liar; fling him down
the stair.

A VOICE. I did not, friends. I hate the man,
I swear.

VOICES. You swear too much for truth, down
with him, sons.

Leave him, here's Pilate.

Enter LONGINUS and SOLDIERS.

LONGINUS. Stand back. Keep further back.
Get down the stair,
Stop all this wrangling. Make less babble
there.

Keep back yet further. See you keep that line.
Silence. These Jewish pigs.

THE JEWS.

The Roman swine.

Enter PILATE.

PILATE. Longinus.

LONGINUS. Lord.

PILATE. No Jew here thinks him King.
They want his blood.

LONGINUS. They would want anything
That would beguile the hours until the Feast.

PILATE. I would be glad to disappoint the
priest.

I like this Jesus man. A man so wise
Ought not to end through crazy prophecies.
Still, he persists.

LONGINUS. They are a stubborn breed.
The medicine Cross is what they mostly need.

PILATE. Still, this man is, in fact, a kind of king,
A God beside these beasts who spit and sting,
The best Jew I have known.

LONGINUS. He had his chance.

PILATE. O, yes, he had. We'll let the Jews
advance
Into the court. I tried to set him free.

Still, if he will persist, the thing must be.
And yet I am sorry.

LONGINUS. I am sorry, too.
He seemed a good brave fellow, for a Jew.
Still, when a man is mad there is no cure
But death, like this.

PILATE. I fear so.

LONGINUS. I am sure.
Shall I begin?

PILATE. Yes.

LONGINUS. Sound the Assembly. [*Trumpet.*]

Sound

The Imperial call. [*Trumpet.*]

PILATE. You people, gathered round,
Behold your King.

VOICES. Our King. I see him. Where?
That heap of clothes behind the soldiers there.
He has been soundly beaten. Look, he bleeds.
A cross on Old Skull Hill is what he needs.

PILATE. What would you, then, that I should
do to him?

VOICES. Stone the blasphemer, tear him limb
from limb,

Kill him with stones, he uttered blasphemy,

Give him to us, for us to crucify.

Crucify!

PILATE. Would you crucify your King?

VOICES. He is no King of ours; we have no King

But Cæsar. Crucify!

PILATE. Bring pen and ink.

LONGINUS. Hold up the prisoner, Lucius;
give him drink.

PILATE. I come to sentence.

SERVANT. Writing things, my lord.

PILATE. Fasten the parchment to the piece
of board.

So. I will write.

VOICES. What does his writing mean?

It is the sentence of this Nazarene,

Condemning him to death. A little while

And he'll be ours. See Lord Pilate smile.

Why does he smile?

PILATE. Longinus.

LONGINUS. Lord.

PILATE. Come here.

Go to that man, that upland targeteer,
I want this writ in Hebrew. Bid him write
Big easy letters that will catch the sight.

LONGINUS. I will, my lord. Make way.

[*Exit* LONGINUS.]

A VOICE. What's on the scroll?

A VOICE. It gives the prisoner into his control

To nail to death, the foul blaspheming beast.

A VOICE. D'you think he will be dead before
the Feast?

A VOICE. They'll spear him if he lingers until
dark.

A VOICE. When Feast begins he will be stiff
and stark.

There's little life left in him as it is.

VOICES. We'll hammer iron through those
hands of his,

And through his feet, and when the cross is set
Jolt it; remember. I will not forget.

A VOICE. Here comes the sentence.

[*Enter* LONGINUS.

A VOICE. Wait; it is not signed.

A VOICE. Come to the hill, you will be left
behind.

I want a good place at the cross's foot.

A VOICE. I've got a stone for when they
move the brute.

Besides, I mean to bait him on the way.

I'll spatter him with filth.

A VOICE. No, come away.

PILATE. Imperial finding in the High Priest's
suit.

In the name of Cæsar and of Rome. . . .

LONGINUS. Salute.

PILATE. I, Procurator of Judæa, say
That Jesus, called the King, be led away
To death by crucifixion, here and now.

In the name of Cæsar and of Rome. . . .

At Golgotha. Come; drag him through the gate.
Give him his cross. Come, soldiers.

CH. CIT. Israel, wait.

Wait. I must speak. Lord Pilate.

VOICES. Stand aside. . . .

Are we to miss his being crucified?

CH. CIT. Wait. Only wait. One word.

MADMAN. Lord Pilate. Lord.

SENTRY. Stand back.

MADMAN. I'll speak.

SENTRY. I'll tame you with the sword.

MADMAN. Lord Pilate, Jesus is an upright
man,

I heard his teaching since it first began.

You are mistaken, Lord, you are misled.

Spare him, great King.

SENTRY. Get down.

MADMAN. Kill me instead.

He never said this thing. [*He is beaten aside.*]

LONGINUS. The company,

Attention. Front. Take up the prisoner. By

The left, quick wheel. Down to the courtyard,
wheel.

THE TROOPS *go out by the doors, into the barracks, so as to reach the main gate from within. The PRISONER is not shown, but only suggested.*

A VOICE. He cannot lift his cross, I saw him reel.

A VOICE. We'll find a man to bring it.
Hurry, friends.

Three to be nailed.

A VOICE. The thieves will make good ends;
They always do. This fellow will die soon.

A VOICE. The troops will spear them all before full moon.

Come; watch them march them out.

Get mud to fling.

They hurry down the staircase O.P. side.

CH. CIT. [*to Pilate*]. Lord Pilate, do not write "Jesus the King,"

But that "He called himself, 'Jesus the King.'"

PILATE. Empty this water here.

[SERVANT *does.*]

Remove this board.

Take in the bench.

CH. CIT. I have to ask, my lord,
That you will change the wording of your scroll,
My lord, it cuts my people to the soul.

PILATE. Tell Caius Scirrus that I want him.

[*Exit* SERVANT.]

So. [*To* CHIEF CITIZEN.]

What I have written, I have written. Go.

Exit CHIEF CITIZEN. PILATE *watches*
him. A yell below as the TROOPS march
out from the main gate. LONGINUS' voice
is heard shouting.

LONGINUS. Right wheel. Quick march.

Close up. Keep your files close.

A march is played, oboe and trumpet.
PILATE *goes in, the TROOPS salute, the*
bronze doors are closed, but a SENTRY stands
outside them. THE MADMAN remains.

MADMAN. They cut my face, there's blood
upon my brow.

So, let it run, I am an old man now,
An old, blind beggar picking filth for bread.
Once I wore silk, drank wine,
Spent gold on women, feasted, all was mine;
But this uneasy current in my head
Burst, one full moon, and cleansed me, then I saw
Truth like a perfect crystal, life its flaw,
I told the world, but I was mad, they said.

I had a valley farm above a brook,
My sheep bells there were sweet,
And in the summer heat
My mill wheels turned, yet all these things they
took;

Ah, and I gave them, all things I forsook
But that green blade of wheat,
My own soul's courage, that they did not take.

I will go on, although my old heart ache.
Not long, not long.

Soon I shall pass behind
This changing veil to that which does not
change,
My tired feet will range
In some green valley of eternal mind
Where Truth is daily like the water's song.

Enter the CHIEF CITIZEN.

CH. CIT. Where is Lord Pilate?

MADMAN. Gone within.

CH. CIT. You heard

The way he spoke to me?

MADMAN. No, not a word.

The dogs so bayed for blood, I could not hear.

Ask the tall sentry yonder with the spear.

CH. CIT. I wish to see Lord Pilate.

SENTRY. Stand aside.

CH. CIT. Send word to him; I cannot be
denied.

I have to see him; it concerns the State

Urgently, too, I tell you.

You cannot. Stand away. A man like you
Ought to know better than to lead a crew
To yell for a man's blood. God stop my breath,
What does a man like you with blood and death?
Go to.

CH. CIT. You will not send?

SENTRY. I will not send.

CH. CIT. [*going*]. You shall regret this.

SENTRY. Right. Goodbye, my friend.

CH. CIT. Means will be found.

[*Exit.*

SENTRY. These priests, these preaching folk.

[*Pause. Sings.*]

“Upon a summer morning, I bade my love
goodbye,

In the old green glen so far away,

To go to be a soldier on biscuits made of rye.”

It is darker than it was.

MADMAN. It is falling dark.

SENTRY. It feels like earthquake weather.

Listen.

MADMAN. Hark.

SENTRY. It sounded like a shock inside the
walls.

MADMAN. God celebrates the madman's
funerals.

SENTRY. The shouts came from the Temple.

MADMAN. Yes, they sing
Glory to God there, having killed their King.

SENTRY. You knew that man they are hang-
ing?

MADMAN. Yes. Did you?

SENTRY. Not till I saw him scourged. Was he
a Jew?

MADMAN. No. Wisdom comes from God,
and he was wise.

I have touched wisdom since they took my eyes.

SENTRY. So you were blinded? Why?

MADMAN. Thinking aloud,
One Passover.

SENTRY. How so?

MADMAN. I told the crowd

That only a bloody God would care for blood.
The crowd kill kids and smear the lintel wood,
To honor God, who lives in the pure stars.

SENTRY. You must have suffered; they are
angry scars.

MADMAN. There is no scar inside.

SENTRY. That may be so;

Still, it was mad; men do not wish to know
The truth about their customs, nor aught else.

[*Cries off.*]

MADMAN. They have nailed the teacher Jesus
by those yells.

SENTRY. It is darker. There'll be earthquake
before night.

What sort of man was he?

MADMAN. He knew the right

And followed her, a stony road, to this.

SENTRY. I find sufficient trouble in what is
Without my seeking what is right or wrong.

MADMAN. All have to seek her, and the
search is long.

There they find peace to have their own wild
souls.

In that still lake,

Only the moonrise or the wind controls

The way they take,

Through the gray reeds, the cocking moorhen's
lair,

Rippling the pool, or over leagues of air.

* * * * *

Not thus, not thus are the wild souls of men.

No peace for those

Who step beyond the blindness of the pen

To where the skies unclose.

For them the spitting mob, the cross, the crown
of thorns,

The bull gone mad, the saviour on his horns.

* * * * *

Beauty and Peace have made

No peace, no still retreat,

No solace, none.

Only the unafraid

Before life's roaring street

Touch Beauty's feet,
Know Truth, do as God bade,
Become God's son. [Pause.]

Darkness come down, cover a brave man's pain.
Let the bright soul go back to God again.
Cover that tortured flesh, it only serves
To hold that thing which other power nerves.
Darkness, come down, let it be midnight here,
In the dark night the untroubled soul sings clear.
[It darkens.]

I have been scourged, blinded and crucified,
My blood burns on the stones of every street
In every town; wherever people meet
I have been hounded down, in anguish died.
[It darkens.]

The creaking door of flesh rolls slowly back.
Nerve by red nerve the links of living crack,
Loosing the soul to tread another track.
Beyond the pain, beyond the broken clay,
A glimmering country lies

Where life is being wise,
All of the beauty seen by truthful eyes
Are lilies there, growing beside the way.
Those golden ones will loose the torted hands,
Smooth the scarred brow, gather the breaking
soul,
Whose earthly moments drop like falling sands
To leave the spirit whole.
Now darkness is upon the face of the earth.

[*He goes.*]

PILATE [*entering, as the darkness reddens to a glare*].

PILATE. This monstrous day is in the pangs
of birth.

There was a shock. I wish the troops were
back

From Golgotha. The heavens are more black
Than in the great shock in my first year's rule.
Please God these zealot pilgrims will keep cool
Nor think this done by God for any cause.
The lightning jags the heaven in bloody scraws

Like chronicles of judgment. Now it breaks.

Now rain.

PROCUA [*entering*]. O Pilate.

PILATE. What?

PROCUA. For all our sakes

Speak. Where is Jesus?

PILATE. He is crucified.

PROCUA. Crucified?

PILATE. Put to death. My wife, I tried

To save him, but such men cannot be saved.

Truth to himself till death was all he craved.

He has his will.

PROCUA. So what they said is true.

O God, my God. But when I spoke to you

You said that you had warned him.

PILATE. That is so.

Another charge was brought some hours ago,

That he was claiming to be that great King

Foretold by prophets, who shall free the Jews.

This he persisted in. I could not choose

But end a zealot claiming such a thing.

PROCLA. He was no zealot.

PILATE. Yes, on this one point.

Had he recanted, well. But he was firm.

So he was cast.

PROCLA. The gouts of gore anoint
That temple to the service of the worm.
It is a desecration of our power.

A rude poor man who pitted his pure sense
Against what holds the world its little hour,
Blind force and fraud, priests' mummery and
pretence,
Could you not see that this is what he did?

PILATE. Most clearly, wife. But Roman laws
forbid
That I should weigh, like God, the worth of souls.
I act for Rome, and Rome is better rid
Of these rare spirits whom no law controls.
He broke a statute, knowing from the first
Whither his act would lead, he was not blind.

PROCLA. No, friend, he followed hungry and
athirst

The lonely exaltation of his mind.

So Rome, our mother, profits by his death,

You think so?

PILATE. Ay.

PROCUA. We draw securer breath,
We Romans, for his gasping on the cross?

PILATE. Some few will be the calmer for his
loss.

Many, perhaps; he made a dangerous claim.

Even had I spared it would have been the same
A year, or two, from now. Forget him, friend.

PROCUA. I have no part nor parcel in his end
Rather than have it thought I buy my ease,
My body's safety, honor, dignities,
Life and the rest at such a price of pain
There [*she stabs her own arm with her dagger*] is
my blood, to wash away the stain.

There. There once more. It fetched too dear a
price.

O God, receive that soul in paradise.

PILATE. What have you done?

Leave to prepare his body for the grave,
And then to bury him. May I have leave?

PILATE. Yes, you may have him when the
guards give leave.

Wait. In a case like this men may believe
That the dead master is not really dead.
This preaching man, this King, has been the
head

Of men who may be good and mean no harm,
Whose tenets, none the less, have caused alarm
First to the priests, and through the priests to
me.

I wish this preacher's followers to see
That teaching of the kind is to be curbed.
I mean, established truths may be disturbed,
But not the Jews, nor Rome. You understand?

JOSEPH. I follow; yes.

PILATE. A riot might be fanned,
Such things have been, over the martyr's grave.

JOSEPH. His broken corpse is all his followers
grave.

PILATE. Why, very well then.

JOSEPH. Will you give your seal?

PILATE. My seal? What for?

JOSEPH. That I may show the guard

And have the body.

PILATE. Gladly; but I feel . . .

Not yet; not until dark.

JOSEPH. It will be hard

To bury him to-night . . . the feast begins.

PILATE. I know, but still, when men are
crucified . . .

JOSEPH. There is no hope of that. The man
has died.

PILATE. Died? Dead already?

JOSEPH. Yes.

PILATE. 'Tis passing soon.

JOSEPH. God broke that bright soul's body
as a boon.

He died at the ninth hour.

PILATE. Are you sure?

JOSEPH. I saw him, Lord.

PILATE. I thought he would endure
Longer than that; he had a constant mind.

JOSEPH. The great soul burns the body to a
rind.

PILATE. But dead, already; strange. [*Calling.*]
You in the court,
Send me Longinus here with his report.

A VOICE. I will, my lord.

PILATE. This teacher was your friend?

JOSEPH. Was, is, and will be, till the great
world end;

Which God grant may be soon.

PILATE. I disagree
With teachers of new truth. For men like me
There is but one religion, which is Rome.
No easy one to practise, far from home.
You come from Ramah?

JOSEPH. Yes.

PILATE. What chance is there
Of olives being good?

JOSEPH. They should be fair.

PILATE. You will not use Italian presses? No?

JOSEPH. Man likes his own, my lord, however
slow;

What the land made, we say, it ought to use.

PILATE. Your presses waste; oil is too good
to lose.

But I shall not persuade.

SERVANT. Longinus, Lord.

PILATE. Make your report, centurion.
Where's your sword?

What makes you come thus jangled? Are you
ill?

LONGINUS. There was a shock of earthquake
up the hill.

I have been shaken. I had meant to come
Before; but I was whirled . . . was stricken
dumb.

I left my sword within. . . .

PILATE. Leave it. Attend.

Is the man, Jesus, dead? This is his friend
Who wants to bury him, he says he is.

LONGINUS. Jesus is out of all his miseries.
Yes, he is dead, my lord.

PILATE. Already?

LONGINUS. Yes.

The men who suffer most endure the less.
He died without our help.

JOSEPH. Then may I have
His body, Lord, to lay it in the grave?

PILATE. A sentry's there?

LONGINUS. Yes, Lord.

PILATE. Have you a scroll?
[*Takes paper.*] Right. Now some wax. [*Writes.*]

Give into his control
The body of the teacher; see it laid
Inside the tomb and see the doorway made
Secure with stones and sealed, then bring me
word.

This privilege of burial is conferred
On the conditions I have named to you.
See you observe them strictly.

JOSEPH. I will do

All that himself would ask to show my sense
Of this last kindness. I shall go from hence
Soon, perhaps far; I give you thanks, my lord.
Now the last joy the niggard fates afford;
One little service more, and then an end
Of that divineness touched at through our
friend.

[*Exit.*

PILATE. See that the tomb is sealed by dark
to-night.

Where were you hurt, Longinus? You are
white.

What happened at the cross?

LONGINUS. We nailed him there
Aloft, between the thieves, in the bright air.
The rabble and the readers mocked with oaths,
The hangman's squad were dicing for his
clothes.

The two thieves jeered at him. Then it grew
dark,

Till the noon sun was dwindled to a spark,

And one by one the mocking mouths fell still.
We were alone on the accursed hill
And we were still, not even the dice clicked,
Only the heavy blood-gouts dropped and ticked
On to the stone; the hill is all bald stone.
And now and then the hangers gave a groan.
Up in the dark, three shapes with arms out-
spread.
The blood-drops spat to show how slow they
bled.
They rose up black against the ghastly sky,
God, Lord, it is a slow way to make die
A man, a strong man, who can beget men.
Then there would come another groan, and then
One of those thieves (tough cameleers those
two)
Would curse the teacher from lips bitten through
And the other bid him let the teacher be.
I have stood much, but this thing daunted me
The dark, the livid light, and long long groans
One on another, coming from their bones.

LONGINUS. Lord. . . .

PILATE. Dismiss.

Lie down and try to sleep; forget all this.

Tell Scirrus I command it. Rest to-night.

Go in, Longinus, go.

LONGINUS. Thank you, Lord Pilate.

[*Exit* LONGINUS.]

PILATE [*alone*]. No man can stand an earthquake. Men can bear

Tumults of water and of fire and air,

But not of earth, man's grave and standing ground;

When that begins to heave the will goes round.

Longinus, too. [*Noise below.*] Listen.

Does Herod come?

I heard his fifes.

The doors open. SERVANTS enter.

SERVANT. Lord Herod is at hand;

Will it please your Lordship robe?

PILATE. Sprinkle fresh sand,

For blood was shed to-day, here, under foot

[*He robes.*]

Well, that; the other clasp. [*Music off.*]

A VOICE. Cohort. Salute.

PILATE. Leave torches at the door. Dismiss.

[*SERVANTS go.*]

He comes

Welcomed by everyone; the city hums

With joy when Herod passes. Ah, not thus

Do I go through the town. They welcome us

With looks of hate, with mutterings, curses,
stones.

Enter PROCULA.

Come, stand with me. Welcome Lord Herod
here.

Welcome must make amends for barrack cheer.

THE NUBIANS *hold torches at the door.*

HEROD *enters.*

Come in, good welcome, Herod.

PROCULA.

Welcome, sir.

HEROD. To Rome, to Pilate, and to Beauty,
greeting;

Give me your hands. What joy is in this meet-
ing.

Pilate, again. You, you have hurt your hand?

PILATE. It is nothing, sir.

HEROD. Beauty has touched this land,
A wound has followed.

PROCUA. What you please to call
Beauty, my lord, did nothing of the kind.

An earthen vessel tilted with a wall.

HEROD. May it soon mend. Now let me
speak my mind.

Pilate, since you have ruled here, there have
been

Moments of . . . discord, shall we say? be-
tween

Your government and mine. I am afraid
That I, the native here, have seldom made
Efforts for friendship with you.

PILATE. Come.

HEROD. I should
Have done more than I have, done all I could,
Healed the raw wound between the land and
Rome,
Helped you to make this hellish town a home,
Not left it, as I fear it has been, hell
To you and yours cooped in a citadel
Above rebellion brewing. For the past
I offer deep regret, grief that will last,
And shame; your generous mind leaves me
ashamed.

PILATE. Really, my lord.

PROCUA. These things must not be
named.

PILATE. It is generous of you to speak like
this,
But, Herod, hark.

PROCUA. If things have been amiss,
The fault was ours.

HEROD. No, the fault was mine.
Your generous act this morning was a sign

Of scrupulous justice done to me by you
For all these years, unnoticed hitherto,
Unrecognized, unthanked. I thank you now.
Give me your hand . . . so . . . thus.

PILATE.

Herod, I bow

To what you say. To think that I have done
Something (I know not what) that has begun
A kindlier bond between us, touches home.
I have long grieved lest I have injured Rome
By failing towards yourself, where other men
Might have been wiser. . . . That is over, then?
Our differences henceforth may be discussed
In friendly talk together;

HEROD.

So I trust.

PILATE. Give me your hand; I have long
hoped for this.

I need your help, and you, perhaps, need mine.
The tribes are restless on the border-line,
The whole land seethes: the news from Rome
is bad.

But this atones.

PROCULA. O, fully.

HEROD. I am glad.

PILATE. Let us go in.

HEROD. You lead.

PROCULA. A moment, one. . . .

You named a generous act that he had
done. . . . ?

HEROD. This morning, yes; you sent that man
to me

Because his crime was laid in Galilee.

A little thing, but still it touched me close;

It made me think how our disputes arose

When thieves out of your province brought to
me

Were punished with a fine, perhaps set free,

Not sent to you to judge, as you sent him.

In future you will find me more a friend.

Or so I hope.

PILATE. Thanks. May the gods so send
That this may lead to happier days for us.

VOICES OF THE CROWD [*who are now flocking*

in, among them THE MADMAN]. Herod the good, Herod the glorious.

Long life to Herod.

PILATE. Come, the crowd begin. . . .

VOICES. Herod for ever.

PILATE. Let us go within. . . .

HEROD. Yes. By the by, what happened to
the man?

I sent him back to you; a rumor ran

That he was crucified.

PILATE. He was.

HEROD. The priests

Rage upon points of doctrine at the feasts.

VOICES. God bless you, Herod; Give you
length of days, Herod.

HEROD [*to the CROWD*]. Go home. To God
alone give praise.

This is Deliverance Night; go home, for soon

Over the dusty hill will come the moon,

And you must feast, with prayer to the Adored.

[*To PILATE*] He well deserved his death.

A long while now; but now they will be friends.

[*Going.*]

A VOICE. What joy it is when Preparation
ends.

Now to our Feast. Do you go down the stair?

A VOICE. Yes, past the pools; will you come
with me there?

A VOICE. I love to walk by moonlight; let
us go. [*They go.*]

A VOICE [*singing*]. Friends, out of Egypt,
long ago,

Our wandering fathers came,

Treading the paths that God did show

By pointing cloud and flame.

By land and sea His darkness and His light

Led us into His peace. . . . [*The voice dies
away.*]

A VOICE [*off*]. Good-night.

*Only THE MADMAN remains. He takes
lilies from a box and begins to tie them in
bunches.*

MADMAN. Only a penny, a penny,
 Lilies brighter than any,
 Lilies whiter than snow. [*He feels that he is
 alone.*]

Beautiful lilies grow
 Wherever the truth so sweet
 Has trodden with bloody feet,
 Has stood with a bloody brow.
 Friend, it is over now,
 The passion, the sweat, the pains,
 Only the truth remains. [*He lays lilies down.*]

* * * * *

I cannot see what others see;
 Wisdom alone is kind to me,
 Wisdom that comes from Agony.

* * * * *

Wisdom that lives in the pure skies,
 The untouched star, the spirit's eyes;
 O Beauty, touch me, make me wise.

CURTAIN

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