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PARADISE REGAINED



A Drama in Four
Acts

Harry Forester Chapman

[1911]

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By H. L. CHAPIN

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NO. 1

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1911

A DRAMA

Paradise Regained

Cast of Characters:—

HOWARD CAPET (Nom de Plume). Real name—RAN-
DOLF WARNER.

JOSEPHINE WHITE, or JOSA—Maiden name—JOSE-
PHINE or JOSA TILLMAN.

HENRI BAZANTA—A writer of some note.

EDNA BLAND—A friend of Josephine and Henri.

SIR JOHN TWEEDY, M. D.—A London Specialist.

NELLIE AMES—A nurse.

ACT I.

TIME, PRESENT.

Setting: Frescartie's fashionable buffet or Winter Garden in Oxford Street, London, much frequented by theatre-goers after evening performances.

As curtain rises, Howard Capet is seated at a table in quiet meditation, gazing dreamily into oblivion. Henri Bazanta sits across the room at another table in company with Josephine White and Edna Bland.

JOSEPHINE. Henri, have you noticed that gentleman across the room? He has been sitting in that same dreamy attitude ever since we have been here.

EDNA. Yes, Henri, I wonder who he is; I have noticed him also.

JOSEPHINE. His bearing appeals to me. I have always had a sort of clairvoyant image of my ideal man,—that is, one I could really love, and he comes nearest to it of anyone I have ever seen.

HENRI. Why, I know him personally, as well as by reputation. He is a poet and has been a great traveler. He lost his eyesight several years ago in one of his adventurous trips into the far East. His name is Howard Capet.

JOSEPHINE. Howard Capet—a good name. That is a king's name. Were not the Louis of France Capets?

EDNA. Yes, Capet is patronymic of the French Kings.

HENRI. Josephine, would you and Edna care to meet the gentleman?

JOSEPHINE. Yes, we want to meet him, but I want to ask you if he can see at all?

HENRI. Oh, yes, he has a little sight left; he can see with difficulty. But he would know you were both beautiful, even though he could not see, just by your entrancing loquacity.

EDNA. Now, Henri, you are joking with us.

HENRI. Come on, and I will have you both meet Mr. Capet.

(They cross to the table at which Howard Capet is seated.)

HENRI. Mr. Capet, I am Mr. Bazanta. You remember me? I know you must, and this is Miss White and Miss Bland. We noticed you here in solitude, and we wished to join you.

(Howard Capet rises from his chair in his usual dignified manner)

HOWARD. I am delighted, ladies, I assure you; be seated.

HENRI. Mr. Capet, I have been telling these ladies about some of your adventures, and they were at once desirous of meeting you.

JOSEPHINE AND EDNA (Speaking simultaneously). Yes, can you not relate some of your experiences to us, Mr. Capet?

HOWARD. I would do so willingly, but am afraid my itinerant life and self-inflicted trouble would bore you. Although, since my sight has been so impaired, I have found solace in my sadness, in quiet solitude.

JOSEPHINE. Yes. I notice you are in a pensive, meditative mood most of the time.

HOWARD. It is a pleasure to me to think of many reminiscences, and that I am seeing the beautiful and interesting things of this world over again through the eyes of the soul. That is really possible, you know. Democritus would go into a dungeon to meditate, so that the world's mundane environment would not divert his intellectual soul. It is a pleasure to see God's masterpieces of nature, even through blind eyes. Still, it is not altogether true that "What the eye does not see the heart does not grieve for," for I grieve to think I will never be able to travel or see those awe-inspiring scenes again.

JOSEPHINE. Are you an Englishman by birth, Mr. Capet?

HOWARD. I was born in Glasgow, Scotland. My father was Scotch-Irish, and my mother was of French extraction. During by adolescence my home was in Paris, my father having sent me there to live with an aunt, and it was there I received my literary education.

JOSEPHINE. In what part of Paris did you reside, Mr. Capet?

HOWARD. Most of the time I made my home in Rue Arch de Triomphe, just off from Champs-Elysees Boulevard.

JOSEPHINE. Do you think, Mr. Capet, you lost your eyesight through travel altogether?

HOWARD. (Changing his posture) Not altogether through travel, but by a nervous breakdown caused by a great disappointment. To find relief from this, I left home and subjected myself to the hardships of Asiatic travel.

JOSEPHINE. By the way, Mr. Capet, did you ever know a French tutor that lived in that part of Paris by the name of M. Laverav?

HOWARD. Laverav—Laverav—(he ejaculates impetuously) I have a very keen recollection of the French pedagogue. He was my tutor for years and it was his little niece, Josa—Josa—well, Jo—I—well, I cannot say more.

JOSEPHINE. (Startled at this laconic confession, having a cup in her hand from which she was about to sip tea, drops the cup with force onto the saucer and breaks it, as she re-

marks dramatically) Randolph, Randolph! (and falls into a faint, supported by Edna Bland and Mr. Bazanta.)

CURTAIN

ACT II.

A home near the Q Gardens, London, where Howard Capet makes his home.

CURTAIN RISES.

Howard is walking back and forth in his drawing room, now and then running into a chair or table. He winds the clock and tries to set it, but sets it wrong. He arranges books and gets them upside down. He sees the pillow case off the pillow on the lounge, goes to the cupboard and takes out what he thinks is a nicely folded pillow case, but it is a flour bag that has been washed, ironed and laid away. The brand of the flour is on the sack, "Gold Medal Flour," and when he puts the case on the pillow he puts the pillow case in his teeth instead of the pillow itself. After this is done, he soliloquizes to himself, as he walks back and forth in his room.

HOWARD. How could she have uttered that word? Why should she have uttered that word? Could that have been Josa, the real Josephine, my Josephine, the light and life of my adolescence, the one who brought into my life all the sunshine it has ever known? Josephine, Josephine, my ideal, she with the auburn tresses, the diadem of luxurious hair, the fairy-like feet and hands like the forest nymph, complexion a mixture of the lily and the rose, arched eye-brows, olive cut canthus of the eye, eyes as dark as the roe's, lips like cupid's bow,—she is a venus from the sea, a venus in all to me! Oh, but how could that have been the real Josephine, for she left Paris the day after our quarrel, and lived in Versailles with a relative, and shortly sailed for South America, where she finally married a rich miner. That was the last we knew of her. Well,—

(Bell rings. A card is brought in on a salver)

HOWARD. (To servant) Please read the name?

SERVANT. Josephine White, sir.

HOWARD. Thanks; show them in, please.

SERVANT. There is but one, sir.

HOWARD. Very well, show her in.

(Enter Josephine. It is just at dusk and a heavy storm is approaching from the West. Josephine stands and looks at Howard for a moment or two before she takes his proffered chair. Howard is reluctant about addressing her, and she is also reluctant about abruptly approaching him, until they are both satisfied in their respective minds that their identities are correct. Howard's eyes are so bad he can only see the outline of her figure and a vague perception of her features.)

JOSEPHINE. I called for a few moments to learn of you the present whereabouts of the old tutor (this being merely a ruse to offer an excuse for calling).

HOWARD. Before I enter into any conversation with you, I will leave the door in the hall ajar, for you are unchaperoned.

JOSEPHINE. How kind of you.

As Howard opens the door she surveys him with deep scrutiny. Howard seates himself near her, saying:

HOWARD. Miss White, first of all, may I ask you why you fell into the sudden swoon or faint last evening at Frescartie's, as I uttered the sentence: "It was his little niece, Josa?"

JOSEPHINE. I can hardly answer that now, Mr. Capet, but I suppose it was because of my deep sympathy for your affliction that caused me to do as I did.

HOWARD. Why should you, a stranger as you are, be so interested in one you had never known before. As you fell back in that swoon, you made a preternatural exhortation of the name "Randolf," why did you do this?

(Josephine sits in a state of lethargy for a moment, as she does not care to make her real identity known as yet.)

HOWARD. Why do you not answer my question? (No reply—) Why are you so delinquent in your answer?

JOSEPHINE. Why, Mr. Capet, you are really unkind. I am not on the witness stand, or before any tribunal of law.

HOWARD. I beg your most humble pardon. I did not, in demanding the answer, mean to be unkind or unjust with my fair guest, but I—well, perhaps I am a little hasty.

JOSEPHINE. (Smiling) I will excuse you this time.

HOWARD. Perhaps my ten years of unremitting suspense have stimulated me to ask questions that I otherwise would not have asked. I knew a young lady once by the name of Josa Tillman. At that time she was light itself to me. Her mental propensities were correct in every detail. She had vivacity in her virtue, simplicity in her beauty, lore in her logic, grace in her gestures, humility in her manners, love in her loquacity, and inspiration in her diction,—her characteristics were all redeeming except,—except,—one.

JOSEPHINE. And what was that one?

HOWARD. Inconstancy.

JOSEPHINE. I would like to meet or know the lady.

HOWARD. You can never know her as she was then, for women change as years come upon them.

JOSEPHINE. Do you think they change for the better?

HOWARD. As a rule they change for the better. They become more settled; they lose the cupidity that so characterizes girls at the age of eighteen years. There is more duplicity in their declarations of love at that time than at any other time,—at least, that was the case in Josa's make-up.

JOSEPHINE. My maiden name was—you were saying you once knew a young lady by the name of Josa Tillman?

HOWARD. I did. I knew her very well. You were about to tell me your maiden name,—please do so.

JOSEPHINE. My maiden name at the age of eighteen was Josa Tillman.

HOWARD. Tillman—Tillman,—Josa, Josa,—. Then you—Then you are—

(As he hesitates and looks into vacancy with staring eyes, he rises from his seat. There is a terrible thunder storm outside, the lightning throwing its quickening rays of light through the windows. Howard goes over and closes the door at this time and locks it and removes the key, madly throwing it upon the floor, and stumbles back to Josephine.)

HOWARD. Miss White, then you are Josa Tillman! Oh, but if God would give me sight for a moment (putting his hands frantically to his eyes as though he would tear them out)—Oh, but if I could look well into those windows of the soul that once inspired me to become a drunkard, I know I could recognize some scintilla of likeness. Answer me, you are the Josa of my heart and soul (madly and loudly),—the idol of my youthful days, and cause of my debauchery? The door is locked, the night is dark and stormy. I have you in my power; you are at the mercy of the merciless love that knows no bounds. Tell me, tell me, before I kill you? I know you are my Josa, I know it,—I know it all now.

JOSEPHINE. (They stand embracing) Please do not be so harsh. I am your Josa. My name is Josa Tillman, and you are living under your nom de plume,—your real name is Randolph Warner.

HOWARD. Josa, how could you be so cruel? You have indirectly caused my blindness.

JOSEPHINE. Randolph, I was driven to do it. They compelled me to marry Mr. White because he had millions. I was married against my will. I loved you with all my heart.

HOWARD. How can I believe you (taking her by the throat)—Are you sincere? You deceived me once,—will you do so again? I love you madly,—as a rose, I crush you.

“Man always kills the thing he loves,
 By all let this be heard;
 Some do it with a bitter look,
 Some with a flattering word.
 The coward does it with a kiss,
 The brave man with a sword.”

JOSEPHINE. Believe me, Randolph, believe me, I loved you then and I love you now. I can prove my love, only give me an opportunity. God has been good to bring us together. I will expiate the past and make restitution for all my wrong doing. You have brought retribution. The world held you in its great rendezvous. In the theatre of life you and I will play the esthetic act of unselfish and uncoached affection. Oh, Randolph, (throwing her arms about his neck) my king of men, give back your love to me in trust once more. God seems to say that I will restore those orbes back to health again.

(At this moment Howard embraces and kisses her fervently, crying)—

HOWARD. Josa! Josa!

CURTAIN

ACT III

This scene is a nursing home on Nottingham Place near Regents Park, London.

CURTAIN RISES.

The stage setting is an operating room. Nellie Ames, an interne nurse, is arranging the operating table and the sterilizer retort. She burns her fingers as she removes the cover of the retort. She takes from the shelf a vichy water bottle with bichloride solution to make the instrument antiseptic. She does not understand the mechanism of the bottle, and as she presses the lever, the solution shoots into her face.

Enter Henri Bazanta and Edna Bland.

EDNA BLAND. Good afternoon. We understand that Mrs. Josephine White has become the proprietress of this nursing home; is it true?

NELLIE AMES. Yes, Mrs. White has purchased this home and is going to devote the rest of her life and her entire fortune to mitigate the sufferings of mankind.

Enter Josephine dressed as a nurse.

JOSEPHINE. Good afternoon, Mr. Bazanta and Miss Bland. How did you know where to find me?

HENRI. We had heard that you had entered into a new field of work, and could be found here.

EDNA BLAND. Is it true that you have established this hospital as an ophthalmic hospital?

JOSEPHINE. Yes, the eyes, and nothing but the eyes. Eyes!—eyes!—eyes!—that is all I live for now. I dream of them, think of them, read about them, see them in my moments of repose.

HENRI. I understand. It is clear to me now (with a supercilious laugh).

JOSEPHINE. Why indulge in levity at this time, Mr. Bazanta?

HENRI. Oh, I remember the evening at Frescartie's, and how you were overcome with sympathy for Mr. Howard Capet. Has his affliction inspired you to take up this avocation?

JOSEPHINE. I am afraid you have guessed the truth.

HENRI. By the way, where is Mr. Capet now, Mrs. White?

JOSEPHINE. He is not far distant,—he is in the adjoining room.

HENRI. In the adjoining room? What do you mean? Is he going to seek relief through a surgical operation again, after visiting all the celebrated ophthalmologists in America, France, Austria, Russia and India?

JOSEPHINE. Yes, he is about to undergo an operation for the last time. I have appealed to him and finally persuaded him to make one more attempt.

EDNA BLAND. I only hope his sight can be restored.

HENRI. Yes. I pray he may get relief from what is about to be done. We both wish him only good. Good-bye.

(They make their exit and Nellie Ames enters).

JOSEPHINE. Dr. Tweedy will be here in a moment to operate on Mr. Capet. Is everything in readiness?

NELLIE AMES. Yes, everything is in order.

(Bell rings. Enter Dr. Tweedy).

DR. TWEEDY. Is everything ready to proceed?

NELLIE AMES. Yes, everything is in readiness.

(Dr. Tweedy dons his operating gown and prepares for the operation. At this moment Howard Capet is rolled in on an operating table by two hospital porters. Porters then make their exit.)

DR. TWEEDY. (taking Howard's hand)—Well, my boy, are you going to remain quiet today while I operate? You know as much depends on you as on me. You will suffer, but it will be of short duration. If you cause me to lose the vitreous fluid, you know the consequences, so you must do your very best.

HOWARD. Doctor, I will do the best I can. Proceed with the operation, so that I may be relieved of this suspense.

(Nellie Ames drops the cocaine into his eyes.)

JOSEPHINE. (Goes to his side and takes his hand, strokes his brow and tries to console him, saying in a low, tender voice)—Do not be worried, I am at your side. If the worst happens, and you lose what little sight you have, you may rest assured that there is at least one in this world that will minister to your wants and care for you in every way. My fortune is yours, and your troubles and cares shall be mine. But I feel in my heart that you will regain your sight.

HOWARD. How sweet of you, Josa. I hope that your predictions will come true. But if not, and God sees fit to take the light of heaven from me forever, His will must be done, for He knows best. Your kind words have strengthened me and prepared me for the worst.

JOSEPHINE. God bless you! (She makes the sign of the cross).

(Dr. Tweedy begins to operate. He inserts the cataract knife into one of the eyes, then inserts forceps and pulls out part of the iris and clips it off. After this he can plainly see a detached retina, and he turns to Josephine and the nurse and says:)

DR. TWEEDY. A detached retina,—that eye is gone forever. There is no use going further with it.

(Josephine places her handkerchief to her eyes and sighs audibly. Dr. Tweedy places absorbent cotton over this eye, applies adhesive straps and proceeds with the other eye. He pro-

ceeds to go through the travesty of an ophthalmological operation, after which he binds the eyes with bandages, and as he finishes, says:)
DR. TWEEDY. I can only say I hope for the best.

CURTAIN

ACT IV.

This scene is a hospital room with a small brass bed, a dresser, several chairs, a small table, a couch and Morris chair, two windows, a screen and wash room. Howard is lying in bed slightly raised by pillows with eyes bandaged.

CURTAIN RISES.

HOWARD. I wonder what the future has in store for me, whether light or darkness? If light, all be well, but if darkness, the skies may be flamboyant, and the days be bright or bleak and stormy, what will it matter to me? I will only be a burden to others. That I cannot endure.

(He tries to find a satchel in the room that contains his revolver, and climbs out of bed in pajamas and feels under his bed and around the room until he finds the satchel, which he opens and removes the revolver and goes back to the bed with difficulty, muttering:)

HOWARD. This is my only relief.

(He places the revolver under his pillow and gets back into bed again. Enter Nellie Ames just in time to see him with the revolver in his hand. She goes back to the door and whispers, audibly:)

NELLIE AMES. I have just seen Mr. Capet get a revolver from his satchel and place it under his pillow. Now, Mrs. White, I think Mr. Capet will bear watching. I believe he intends to commit suicide if he does not recover his sight.

JOSEPHINE. I will watch him; leave him alone with me.

(Nellie Ames makes her exit).

JOSEPHINE. (going to the bedside and taking Howard's hand)—Randolf, how are you feeling today? Don't you feel encouraged? Don't you think you will regain your sight? I am sprinkling holy water over you, Randolf, water that we got from the River Jordan while we were touring the Holy Land. Hold this and press it to your lips occasionally.

HOWARD. What is this, Josa?

JOSEPHINE. That contains a piece of the holy sepulchre we got at Jerusalem and the rosary of yours that was made from the olive wood taken from the holy tree in the Garden of Gethsemane. Hold it, Randolf,—hold it and think of it. Pray on it, and I know God will help you.

HOWARD. God bless you, Josa, you are a christian.

JOSEPHINE. Have you ever contemplated doing anything rash, Randolf, if you do not regain your sight?

HOWARD. Why do you ask me this, Josa? What ever put this idea into your head? You know I am a Catholic, and how could I ever atone for such a deed as that? How could I receive the last sacrament of extra unction?

JOSEPHINE. (Reaches under his pillow and withdraws the revolver) Why have you this revolver then, Randolf, here under your pillow if you did not intend using it?

HOWARD. I would only use it in case I lost my sight entirely.

JOSEPHINE. And would you use it then even, and leave me, the one who loves you so much, Randolf? Would you do this when you know I could make you happy, even though you were blind?

HOWARD. Yes, Josa, but what assurance have I that you will always care for me? You say you will, but verbal contracts are not binding; they are null and void. You know you desired me once before.

JOSEPHINE. How cruel to refer to that time. I was young then, and did not know myself as I do now, Randolf. I will marry you today if that will prove my true love for you.

HOWARD. Now you have struck the chord, the chord that harmonizes with my whole soul. Ah, I will

marry you,—those words would have been the blessing of my whole past life, and now they will be the light of the rest of my earthly nativity. I will have no use for the revolver now. Do as you wish with it. Do you really mean it, Josa? Would you marry a man in this condition? (excitedly) Raising his head from the pillow, and she gently presses him back and says:

JOSEPHINE. You must not get up or become excited or nervous. The doctor says you are to just lie quiet. I will prove all, if that is what you desire,—proof of my affection. Father Pollen is to call here in a short time and he will, under the present circumstances, marry us, or we may be married by a Justice and later by the Church, whichever you prefer, Randolf.

HOWARD. By the Priest, if such is possible. The Bishop will grant a dispensation in case of sickness. Call Father Pollen by 'phone and ask him to procure a license so that he may marry us at once.

(Enter Mr. Bazanta and Edna Bland).

ENDA BLAND. Good afternoon, Mrs. White. We have called to see how Mr. Capet is getting on.

HOWARD. Very well, Miss Bland. You are just in time to hear the good news. I am delighted to inform you that Mrs. White and I are about to be married. She is just about to 'phone for the Priest (Josephine makes her exit).

HENRI BAZANTA. You are really going to be married at once, here in the hospital? It really cannot be solemnized here, Mr. Capet, by a Catholic priest. A marriage must be before an altar, and must be announced for several weeks previous to the marriage, from the pulpit. A protestant ceremony would legally marry you, but I would not resort to that method. It will be but a few hours now until you can be discharged from the hospital, and then you can be married according to the rules and regulations of the Church.

(Enter Josephine).

JOSEPHINE. I have overheard it all. Mr. Bazanta is right, we cannot be married by a priest, Father Pollen informs me, but I will concede to anything that will please you (taking Howard's hand).



HOWARD. Perhaps it is best that we wait until I can leave the hospital. You have shown yourself in your true colors. I can see you are a noble, sincere woman, and I trust you implicitly. We will wait.

EDNA BLAND. And then we will go and see you married under much pleasanter circumstances.

(Bell rings)—

JOSEPHINE. That is Dr. Tweedy now, I know his mode of entry. He is going to remove the bandages from his eyes.

HENRI. We will go now, Edna.

JOSEPHINE. No, do stay until you learn the result of the operation. Be seated,—you will only have to wait a moment.

(Dr. Tweedy enters, making a slight bow in acknowledgment of the many good afternoons made to him by those present)—

DR. TWEEDY. Nurse, get a bowl with some warm water and bichloride, please.

(The nurse gets the bowl and holds it while Dr. Tweedy proceeds to unwind the bandage from Howard's head. Josephine is at his left side with her left hand on his shoulder. They all looking on quietly, and not a word is spoken. The bandage is removed. He takes the cotton from the eye that is good and at once washes it with a piece of cotton from the bowl which the nurse is holding. He bathes the lids, saying:)

DR. TWEEDY. Open your eyes, Mr. Capet?

(Howard opens his eyes and looks into Josephine's face first. A smile overspreads his countenance as he gazes at her for a second, and he exclaims in a loud voice:

Paradise regained!

(He places both arms around Josephine's neck and cries audibly.)

CURTAIN

DR. H. L. CHAPIN,
Hotel Euclid,
Cleveland, Ohio.