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# A Den of Thieves

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A Den of Thieves

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4/29/14

## A DEN OF THIEVES -- CAST REPORT

### Character

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**DISMAS** - A money lender. Exchanges Roman coins for shekels during the Passover festival. After the death of his family and personal set-backs in his quest for spiritual fulfillment, he is uncertain about his place in the world. He has also learned to be skeptical of those who would claim to give him the place he seeks. 20s.

**GESTAS** - A follower of Jesus. Formerly a thief, Gestas despised all those who claimed to speak for God, including and especially the Priests at the Temple. When he met Jesus, he came to believe not only that Jesus's message was pure, but that his mission was destined to be successful. He has dedicated his life to the fulfillment of that mission, and he now despises all those who refuse to do the same. 20s.

**JESUS** - The leader of a rebellion against Rome. He is at once preacher, teacher, soldier, and storyteller. He understands at a very deep level the dichotomy between the haves and the have-nots. He has dedicated his life to the reversal of the status-quo. 30s.

**JUDAS** - An advisor of Jesus. Judas has been part of the rebellion since its beginning, and while he believes in its message he is concerned by the way in which it is being executed. He is a practical, pragmatic man. His patience and loyalty are unquestionable, though they have their limits. 30s.

**SIMON** - A member of the zealot party. He is a Jewish politician who sees the potential of the new rebellion to succeed where the zealots have not been able to by themselves. His only goal is to see the destruction of Rome and the foundation of a Jewish state. 30s.

**SAUL/PAUL** - Saul is a Pharisee. He is a Jewish politician and advisor to the priests in the temple. He understands the necessity of the temple and will defend it. We see him at the beginning and end of the play as Paul, a year after the main events of the play, having had a conversion experience and now spreading the story of Jesus. 40s.

**CAIAPHAS** - The high priest of the temple of Jerusalem. He believes that his position was given to him by God, but understands that in earthly matters, he must defer to Roman authority. He views himself as the protector of

the Jewish people on Earth, and therefore will not accept any questioning of his authority. 60s.

**PILATE** - The Governor of Judea. Sent to Jerusalem to maintain peace during the Passover festival mainly because he is a brutal man with no patience for the Jewish people. It's not that he hates the Jews, it's that he does not understand them. Therefore, he would have no qualms in executing Jewish people in order to maintain order and to protect roman authority in the region. The only European character in the play. 50s.

**BEGGAR** - A drunk homeless person wandering the streets of Jerusalem during the Passover festival in order to receive some charity from the pilgrims. An opportunist who will do what he needs to do to survive. 50s.

**SHOPKEEPER** - A merchant who has come to Jerusalem during the Festival to pedal his wares. 30s.

**PILGRIMS** - various people who have come to Jerusalem to worship God and make sacrifices during Passover.

**ZEALOTS** - Followers of Simon.

**CENTURIONS** - Followers of Pilate, soldiers of Rome.

#### PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE:

The exchanges of dialogue form the structure of this play more than any other element. A production of this play will benefit most from minimal set design and a restrained acting style. This will be challenging because actors will be tasked with playing these famous characters and the design team will be tasked with clothing Roman soldiers and building the Temple of Jerusalem. A helpful touchstone for a production of this play is Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which was made on minimal budget with naturalistic acting. The characters wear nothing more than tunics and the few sets are simply designed. Locations in this play should be suggested by sets (e.g. merchant stands and lending mats for the Temple, small tents for the encampment), costumes should be simple and minimal, and actors should not be creating larger-than-life people. Rather than adhering to the excesses of a Biblical epic, a production of this play should let the words speak for themselves.

This play is many things at once. The simplest narrative summary of the piece would be "a retelling of the last days of Jesus of Nazareth told from the point of view of the two *lestai* alongside whom he was crucified, presenting a construction of Jesus as he may have existed in history." It is important to keep in mind that this is "**a**" construction, not "**the**" construction. This is not "the way it actually happened," nor should it be presented or promoted as such. This is one possible way in which Jesus may have existed in history - Jesus of Nazareth, *not* Jesus Christ. The distinction is that one is a man and one is a God. This play is not about Jesus Christ. This play focuses on Jesus as a figure in history, not as God made flesh as he is in the Gospels.

There are only two elements that one needs to know about Jesus as a figure in history: one is that he was from Nazareth (and therefore certainly Jewish and likely poor and illiterate), and the other is that he was crucified (and therefore found guilty of and executed for sedition by Rome). The story of this man called Jesus has

survived for two thousand years; it is safe to say that had a profound impact on people when he was alive and led a revolt so threatening that Rome decided to crucify him. Taking these elements into consideration, I wrote a story about the kind of man that Jesus may have been, told from the perspective of the two *lestai*, a Biblical Greek word for "bandit" - not thief. *Lestai* was the most common term for Jewish rebels in First Century Palestine, and characterizations of the two men crucified alongside Jesus as thieves are the result of bad translation. For more insight into the historical Jesus, I recommend Reza Aslan's *Zealot* as well as the scholarship of Dale B. Martin.

This play exists at once by itself as a piece of theatre as well as within a larger conversation about the Bible, faith, and truth. The central theme of the play is that a person's response to truth is far more important than the truth itself (i.e. The truthfulness of the Bible is not nearly as important as whether or not reading the Bible compels you to go to a soup kitchen or to murder your enemies). I use anachronistic language and a naturalistic telling of the story as opposed to a more emphatically "Biblical style" (e.g. *Son of God*) because I believe that it is important for the audience to be able to access these characters as people. The person playing Jesus should *not* speak calmly and quietly, like a shepherd talking to his sheep; such a performance would not be compatible with the words being spoken. Remember that this Jesus is a peasant leading a populist revolution against a tyrant. This Jesus more closely resembles William Wallace than he does Bob Ross. The Jesus in this story is from the Gospel of Matthew and Luke, not the Gospel of John. Furthermore, this Jesus is Jewish, not Christian.

I thank you for your cooperation in this.

## PROLOGUE

Lights come up on PAUL,  
standing downstage center.  
He is dressed modestly, as  
though living day-to-day,  
place-to-place.

Behind him, we see GESTAS,  
JESUS, and several DISCIPLES  
including JUDAS and SIMON in  
a crowd. The following  
movements are very precise,  
very ritualistic:

GESTAS is kneeling, SIMON  
and JUDAS behind him. JESUS  
stands before GESTAS, and  
after a moment bends down,  
cups his hands in the pool  
of water dividing them, and  
pours the water over GESTAS'  
head. GESTAS sighs as though  
a great weight has been  
lifted from his shoulders.  
JUDAS and SIMON are pleased.  
GESTAS stands. He and JESUS  
embrace.

While this occurs, PAUL  
speaks.

## PAUL

I left the darkness of Jerusalem behind me. I was going  
out to prosecute - no, to kill - any rebels I could  
find. I hated the Nazarene and I hated all who called  
him Messiah. And it was on the road to Damascus that I  
saw the light and I was blinded.

JESUS holds a new sword out  
to GESTAS with two hands.  
GESTAS takes it by the hilt  
and holds it up. He looks  
back at JESUS, who nods.

PAUL (CONT'D)

He spoke to me. And it was only after being blinded that I finally saw. That I could finally see the truth. And the truth is that there is no truth. There is only what you choose to do with the truth.

The crowd of DISCIPLES parts to either side of the stage. There, kneeling on the ground, blindfolded and bloodied, is a CENTURION, weak and scared.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Before that day, I chose to murder my enemies. To kill those who disagreed with me. To silence voices I no longer wanted to hear. But after that day I decided to do something else. Once I was blinded and once I saw the truth, I knew what I had to do.

GESTAS slowly walks behind the CENTURION, glaring at him as though to cut through the blindfold into his eyes.

Now, I know what must be done.

GESTAS grabs the CENTURION's hair, pulls his head back, and puts his sword to his throat.

Blackout.

## ACT I - TO BRING A SWORD

## SCENE ONE

A drunk beggar stumbles through the street. He drinks from a wineskin and talks to himself.

BEGGAR

I saw Caesar once... thought he'd be taller. I had a good head on him. They might as well call *me* the Son of God. Don't see why he gets to be. Son of God should be tall. Probably should be sober, too.

Two PILGRIMS enter, walking in the opposite direction.

BEGGAR

(To the PILGRIMS)

What a day for a Festival, eh?

Frightened, the PILGRIMS speed up and walk away.

BEGGAR

Pilgrims. Only want from God what's good for them. They'll get their blessing though. I live here. The Temple is my home, the walls are my bed, and I will go blessingless this Passover, like I do every other Passover. God's there when you want him. Where is he when you need him?

DISMAS enters carrying his lending mat and several large sacks of coins. He walks past the BEGGAR.

BEGGAR

Ah, another one. Back to whatever shit-smelling village you came from, God doesn't care.

DISMAS

(Showing off his mat and purses)

Not a pilgrim.

BEGGAR

A lender? You're even worse.

DISMAS

Doesn't smell too nice here either. Guess you're to blame for that. Now if you'll excuse me.

BEGGAR

At least spare some change. You've got enough.

DISMAS

(lifting up one of his purses)

This money is property of Rome. The other is property of the Temple.

BEGGAR

Then give me some of your's. You're a money lender, not an idiot.

Amused, and in a good mood,  
DISMAS takes out his own  
purse and pulls out a  
shekel. He tosses it to the  
BEGGAR.

BEGGAR

A whole shekel? Might get a blessing from Caiaphas himself with this.

DISMAS

I'm a money lender, not an idiot. And I'm late.

DISMAS exits.

BEGGAR

(Spitting, calling after him)

*Caesar's harlot.* Have a joyous and *profitable* festival.

BEGGAR drinks more, then leans against the wall of the Temple and sits down. He begins humming "Ashir Shirim" quietly to himself.

After a moment, GESTAS and JUDAS enter. They stop at center stage.

JUDAS

Thing is, it has to be convincing. We can't have there be any doubts. I remember one time there was one like the Rabbi out in Cappernaum, I was there trying to recruit an apprentice for the smith, he kneels next to a *dead man*, puts his hands on him, and brings him back to life. Crowd goes wild. Except that *dead man* wasn't dead enough. His chest was heaving the whole time. Like the tides. Gave the whole act up. We won't be making that mistake.

GESTAS

Because the Rabbi is different.

JUDAS

Of course.

GESTAS

No. You said that this healer of yours from Cappernaum was *like* the Rabbi.

JUDAS

Well, yeah, just in their line of work.

GESTAS

There is no one like the Rabbi.

JUDAS

Yeah, I know that. Calm yourself, Gestas. You get baptized and suddenly you're a different person.

GESTAS

I'm the same. Just better. Now tell me what we're working with.

They both look up at the wall.

JUDAS

You've seen it before.

GESTAS

I'm very familiar with it.

JUDAS

Well, then you know that we're not climbing in there.

GESTAS

We're going through the front gate.

JUDAS

Through the market?

GESTAS

Through the market.

JUDAS

That will be tough.

GESTAS

Sure will be.

JUDAS

That will take time.

GESTAS

Not much. With our numbers it will be quick.

JUDAS

Twelve against the Festival pilgrims?

GESTAS

Thirteen if you include me. Fourteen when you include the Rabbi.

JUDAS

He's not coming.

GESTAS

Yes he is. He told me so.

JUDAS

When did he tell you?

GESTAS

Just this morning.

JUDAS

I was there with you this morning.

GESTAS

You were there when he told us about the leper. You weren't there when we talked about what comes next.

JUDAS

Was he ever going to tell me?

GESTAS

If I knew what he was going to say, I'd be the one saying it. But I don't, so I'm not.

JUDAS

I don't like being out of the loop.

GESTAS

I can bring you in closer if you'd like.

JUDAS

Can you?

GESTAS

Yeah. We're not here to plan the attack.

JUDAS

We're here to find a leper.

GESTAS

You are. I'm not. I'm here to meet with Simon.

JUDAS

No.

GESTAS

The Rabbi forbids us to lie.

JUDAS

Why wouldn't he tell me?

GESTAS

He didn't want you getting involved, I imagine.

JUDAS

I know the Zealots. They won't help us.

GESTAS

I know Simon. They will.

JUDAS

This is a misstep.

GESTAS

Judas. You and I are soldiers. We don't get to say what step we take next. We follow the orders of the Rabbi. This is what the Rabbi wants. Don't you want what the Rabbi wants?

JUDAS

This is not the way to get it.

GESTAS

If it weren't the way, then he wouldn't be asking us to do it.

JUDAS

Using the Zealots will only get us attention.

GESTAS

Good. The more the better. I'm going to the Temple. Simon should be waiting for me.

JUDAS

So what, I'm supposed to find our leper by myself?

GESTAS looks around for a moment, sees the BEGGAR. He walks over to him and kicks him firmly in the side, waking him up.

GESTAS

Here's one.

GESTAS exits. BEGGAR moans in pain. JUDAS goes over to him and offers a hand.

JUDAS

(helping him stand)

Are you ok?

BEGGAR

Son of a bitch broke my rib.

JUDAS

Yeah?

JUDAS looks around. No one is coming.

JUDAS

Want to be healed?

## SCENE TWO

The Temple of Jerusalem. In the yard. The fesitval of Passover is beginning. There are many PILGRIMS on stage, exchanging goods, speaking with one another, praying, etc.

At center stage, DISMAS is sitting at his stall, exchanging coins with a PILGRIM. A line has formed. SIMON is next in line.

DISMAS

All Roman coins must be exchanged for shekels.  
Augustus's face is on the Roman coins. Commandments One,  
Two, and Three broken unless you exchange.

PILGRIM

Why do I need coins at all?

DISMAS

Tax for the Festival.

PILGRIM

Tax?

DISMAS

First time here?

PILGRIM

Yes.

DISMAS

Give me whatever Roman coins you have.

The PILGRIM does. DISMAS  
hands him back a handful of  
shekels.

DISMAS

Thank you very much. NEXT!

PILGRIM walks off. SIMON  
comes forward.

SIMON

How much did you get from that one? That rate didn't  
look quite fair.

DISMAS

Simon!

DISMAS stands and hugs  
SIMON.

SIMON

It's been a long time.

DISMAS

Where have you been?

SIMON

North. Mostly.

DISMAS

Back for the Festival?

SIMON

I wanted to beat the crowds. Looks like they beat me.

DISMAS

(Sitting back down, preparing some shekels)

They're bigger than ever this year.

SIMON

Must be Passover.

DISMAS

God delivered his people from bondage straight to my stall.

SIMON

Good business for you then.

DISMAS

Doesn't mean I have to like them. What will it be? Fifty? A hundred? Man like you must need to make a lot of sacrifices.

SIMON

No sacrifices today. I saw your stall, thought I'd come say hello.

DISMAS

Great. Well, stay. Talk a while. NEXT.

SIMON comes over to DISMAS's side, out of line and away from the stall. DISMAS continues to exchange coins with PILGRIMS as he talks with SIMON.

DISMAS

So, North? How long?

SIMON

A few months. I can't be more specific. You understand.

DISMAS

Was it nice, anyway?

SIMON

You know, it was actually great. It's more open up there. I know the Capitol isn't always like *this*, but still. It's nice to be the only person for miles in any direction.

DISMAS

Wandering the wilderness? That's not like you.

SIMON

I was traveling a lot. By myself.

DISMAS

But you can't be more specific.

SIMON

You understand. How have things been here?

DISMAS

Good. You know. All things considered, good. I'd like to be able to leave the Capitol at some point. Can't now, obviously. At least not until the Festival's over. But once everything is back to normal, you know.

SIMON laughs at this.

DISMAS

What's funny?

SIMON

I just... I can't imagine what it must be like to run my life around the comings and goings of the Temple.

DISMAS

Well, you do. Just differently, I guess.

SIMON

I serve God. Not Caiaphas.

DISMAS

So then why are you here? I don't think you'd want to be seen here. By your people or by...

SIMON

*Your people?*

DISMAS

They aren't my people.

A PILGRIM comes up to the stall, but does not offer DISMAS coins.

DISMAS

Drachma? Denari?

PILGRIM

I have nothing.

DISMAS

This is an exchange stall. You need shekels?

PILGRIM

I need a blessing.

DISMAS

You need to pay the Temple tax.

PILGRIM

I have nothing.

SIMON reaches into his own  
purse and takes out a  
handful of shekels.

SIMON

Here, Pilgrim. Go to the Temple. Get your blessing.

THE PILGRIM walks off.

DISMAS

What was that?

SIMON

He needed money.

DISMAS

You don't make the rules here, Simon, I have a job to  
do.

SIMON

What's the problem?

DISMAS

If he doesn't have the money, then he can't pay the tax,  
then he can't enter the Temple. NEXT.

More PILGRIMS approach the  
stall, the same as before.  
GESTAS enters, unnoticed.

SIMON

The Dismas I grew up only cared about God. Not about the  
rules of the Temple.

DISMAS

Bringing in Roman coins is breaking God's law, not  
Caiaphas's. Furthermore, when I was younger, I wanted to  
be a Rabbi, but I couldn't, so I do what I can, which is  
all I can do.

SIMON

Lending? Denying people their blessings?

DISMAS

I don't deny them. Caiaphas denies them.

SIMON

In a perfect world we wouldn't need people like Caiaphas.

DISMAS

In a perfect world we wouldn't need God. But the world isn't perfect, and that's where God comes in. God, and his rules.

SIMON sees GESTAS. GESTAS motions towards the opposite side of the stage.

SIMON

Dismas, I'm sorry, but I have to go.

DISMAS

And I have to work. Take care, Simon. It was good to see you.

SIMON approaches GESTAS.

SIMON

Gestas.

GESTAS

Zealot.

SIMON

How was the trip south?

GESTAS

Shh. Calm yourself. Come.

The two of them approach one of the stalls and begin browsing the clothes.

SIMON

Don't want people to think you're talking to me?

GESTAS

Don't take it personally. We didn't want you coming to our camp. It's better that I'm here, inconvenient as it is.

SIMON

How brave of you to take the risk.

GESTAS

I hear the judgment in your tone.

SIMON

Your Rabbi used to be a carpenter, right? I might as well ask him to build my cross for me.

GESTAS

Shhhhh.

SIMON

Right. Sorry. I guess I'm more used to taking risks than you are.

GESTAS

I'm just nervous.

SIMON

Then calm down. I'll help you. How was your trip south?

GESTAS

Fine.

SIMON

How was Nazareth? Sepphoris?

GESTAS

I'm glad to be back in the Capitol.

SIMON

I personally could never stand it. Especially during Festival season. Whenever these crowds come in, giving their money for nothing in return, it just makes me realize how bad things have gotten.

GESTAS

Like *you* know.

SIMON

Excuse me?

GESTAS

The Zealots love a good Festival. You find the poorest of the poor and feed them your script. Don't act like you know what it's like to be one of them.

SIMON

I've been hungry.

GESTAS

Have you ever forgotten what hunger feels like, you've gone so long without food?

SIMON

You and I want the same things, Gestas.

GESTAS

How was *your* trip south, Simon? You and the Rabbi left on good terms, I thought.

SIMON

We did. And it put me in a good mood for the ride back. Nazareth. I pray to God that I never have to go back to Nazareth.

GESTAS

You won't have to. If everything works out.

GESTAS picks up a purse from the stall. He approaches the SHOPKEEPER.

GESTAS

How much for this?

SHOPKEEPER

Two shekels.

GESTAS

(Looking through his purse)

You don't take denari?

The SHOPKEEPER shrugs.

GESTAS walks over to DISMAS's stall, cutting the line. He slams his denari on the tray and takes two shekels.

DISMAS

(*"Fuck you!"*)

God bless!

GESTAS goes back to the SHOPKEEPER, who inspects the coins.

GESTAS

Are we settled?

SHOPKEEPER

Not real.

GESTAS

Excuse me?

SHOPKEEPER

These Shekels aren't real. Fake.

GESTAS inspects the coins.

GESTAS

That *cheat*.

SIMON

(Stopping GESTAS from attacking  
DISMAS)

Calm down, Gestas. I've got it.

SIMON pays for the purse,  
then hands it to GESTAS.

SIMON

Don't know what you want with a money purse anyway.  
You've already got one.

GESTAS

Judas. He's upset. Change in leadership and all that.  
I'm buying him this to... I don't know... that lender  
should be dealt with.

SIMON

Like you said, it doesn't matter. If everything works  
out. (*Pause*) Shall we talk specifics?

GESTAS

What's there to talk about? I just need your figure.

SIMON

You need my numbers.

GESTAS

Bigger the numbers, bigger the message. We want  
spectators.

SIMON

You want witnesses.

GESTAS

Sure. And with the Zealots we'll have them.

SIMON

I thought you wanted the Temple gone, not scared.

GESTAS

Look around, Simon. What do you see?

SIMON

Pilgrims.

GESTAS

Slaves. Slaves to a system that no longer represents them. They come here every year to make sacrifices. Pray. Buy purses, whatever it might be. They're starving. They're illiterate. Scared. What they need is food and clothes. What they need is love. What they get is a blessing. A blessing won't keep you warm at night. But they've been told that's all they can ever hope to get. We want to show them that they can hope for more. But first we need to convince them to listen to us. That's where you come in. With you on our side, there will be no doubts.

SIMON

Gestas, you know me. You know that I don't care about how the Temple is run.

GESTAS

You care about destroying Rome. You know what that means for the Temple. You said it yourself: we want the same things.

SIMON

But we want them in different ways. You're confident, I respect that. But you're not smart. I'm alive because I'm smart, and I'm not going to die for something foolish.

GESTAS

You're not going to die. You're going to live forever.

SIMON

Like I said. Confident. Not smart.

GESTAS

Teach me something, then.

SIMON

Three stages, right? First one, go right ahead. I think it's unnecessary, ridiculous even, but I understand what you're trying to do. Second stage? Third stage? You can't clear out the market without help from within the market, and you can't destroy the Temple without someone inside the Temple first.

GESTAS

So we need an insider. Do you have ideas?

SIMON

I do.

SIMON nods over to DISMAS.  
GESTAS looks at SIMON  
incredulously, then back at  
DISMAS. DISMAS notices their  
stares.

### SCENE THREE

DISMAS's home. It is modest.  
There is a rug on the floor.  
In the corner there is a  
small wooden table, on top  
of which are DISMAS's  
lending materials (a scale,  
the purses, etc). There is  
also an object covered by a  
small cloth on the table.

SIMON and GESTAS sit on the  
rug while DISMAS tends a  
fire.

SIMON

Thank you, Dismas, for allowing us to come for supper.

DISMAS

Anything for an old friend. And a new... acquaintance.

SIMON

I was telling Dismas before, Gestas, about my trip north.

GESTAS

Oh? What did you tell him?

SIMON

Just about the trip. Nothing specific.

GESTAS

Did you tell him where we were?

DISMAS

He didn't tell me anything.

GESTAS

No one is talking to you.

SIMON

I told him about the nights I spent wandering in the desert.

GESTAS

What nights?

DISMAS

Apparently he's some sort of shaman now.

GESTAS

Lender. Enough.

DISMAS

You are a guest in my home.

GESTAS

And I am having a conversation.

SIMON

Gestas, please. I told him about how I would walk in the desert sometimes. Just to be by myself. It's nice to be away from the city. It gets dark out there. Here, there's always a little bit of light, coming from a house or a traveler or whatever it might be.

But out there, out of the city, you might be the only person for miles in any direction, and then the dark can take over, and when it's that dark you can just be yourself. No expectations, no posturing, no lying. Just being.

GESTAS

I prefer the city.

SIMON

You were telling me that before.

GESTAS

I'm only interested in people.

SIMON

And God.

GESTAS

Yes. And God.

SIMON

What about you, Dismas? Do you have a preference? The Capitol or the provinces?

DISMAS

I don't know. I never really thought about it much.

GESTAS

You've never left Jerusalem, have you?

DISMAS

I was actually born in Sepphoris.

SIMON

A *cosmopolitan* money lender, who would have thought?

GESTAS

Come on, Simon, this can't be our man.

SIMON

This is our man.

DISMAS

I was just about to ask if you had a preference for wine or water, but somehow I don't think that you're here to break bread with me.

SIMON

No, we are.

GESTAS

And then some.

DISMAS

And then some... and then what?

SIMON

Nothing, Dismas. Nothing at all. *(Pause)* I would love some wine.

GESTAS

And I would love to get to the point. Simon, that's enough. Leave us.

DISMAS

He's my guest. He leaves when I ask him to.

GESTAS

He works for me. He is leaving now. Simon, please.

SIMON

Gestas. Remember what I said. Arrogance is confidence mixed with stupidity.

GESTAS

It's a relief that I'm as smart as I am. Leave.

SIMON stands. He goes to  
DISMAS and shakes his hand.

SIMON

You can trust him. You don't have to like him, but you can trust him.

Now.

GESTAS

SIMON leaves.

Forget the fire. Sit.

GESTAS

DISMAS sits down in front of  
GESTAS.

Sepphoris?

GESTAS

DISMAS

Yes. I lived there for many years.

GESTAS

Why did you leave?

DISMAS

I had to.

GESTAS  
(Looking around the house)

You're not married. You have no children.

DISMAS

I have a wife. And a daughter.

GESTAS

Where are they?

DISMAS

Back in Sepphoris.

GESTAS

On the streets?

DISMAS

In the ground, actually.

GESTAS

I'm sorry if I offended you.

DISMAS says nothing.

GESTAS

I hope you understand why I act the way I act. I don't have time to waste trying to make you like me. I say what I mean, nothing else.

DISMAS

Then say what you came here to say. I was excited to have a conversation with Simon, my friend, but it looks like I'm talking to you now. So talk.

GESTAS

Why did you come to Jerusalem?

DISMAS

More work. No so many memories.

GESTAS

Were you always a lender?

DISMAS

I feel like you might know the answer to that question.

GESTAS

Simon told me a little. You used to be an acolyte.

DISMAS

Used to be.

GESTAS

But you know Caiaphas.

DISMAS

Everyone knows Caiaphas. I know Saul better.

GESTAS

The Pharisee?

DISMAS

He is a Pharisee, yes.

GESTAS

How well do you know him?

DISMAS

What do you want, Gestas? You're a stranger in my home.  
Tell me what you want.

GESTAS

I want what you wanted when you came to Jerusalem. I  
want to be close to God.

DISMAS

You're not going to find him here.

GESTAS

Oh, I know that. Because I've already found him.

DISMAS

I'm glad for you.

GESTAS

How is the Festival going?

DISMAS

Busy.

GESTAS

More than most years?

DISMAS

They've brought Pilate in to keep the peace. It's pretty  
hectic.

GESTAS

And the Priests?

DISMAS

You know what they're like.

GESTAS

Not as well as you.

DISMAS

They're busy. I never see them. They're always inside the Temple. I don't hear them ever. Now I just hear the goats screaming.

GESTAS

They're *always* in the Temple?

DISMAS

In the early morning or the late night sometimes they'll come out. I see them leaving. They dress all in black, cover their faces, walk quickly. They only like to be seen when it's on their terms.

GESTAS

Would you be able to bring them out into the courtyard?

DISMAS

During the day?

GESTAS

Yes.

DISMAS

With the pilgrims?

GESTAS

Yes.

DISMAS

I don't know. To them, I'm just a money lender, regardless of our... history.

GESTAS

What about Saul? Would you be able to convince him to come outside?

DISMAS

A friendly conversation between one of the most powerful politicians in Jerusalem and a common lender in the middle of the Temple on its most popular day of the year?

GESTAS

Tell him you want an authority figure nearby in case of any... criminal activity.

DISMAS

What kind of criminal activity? Why do you want Saul in the courtyard?

GESTAS

Look, Dismas, I'm not going to lie to you. I don't know you, so I don't trust you. It's nothing personal, it's just the way that I have to operate during times like these. Tomorrow, something special is going to happen in the Temple. Someone is going to come to the Temple and ask to see the Priests. It would be a lot easier to see the Priests if someone like Saul could gather them.

DISMAS

If you want a blessing, then why not just pay the tax and see Caiaphas? I'll give you a discounted rate on the exchange if it means you'll get out of my house sooner.

GESTAS

We don't want a blessing. This is different.

DISMAS

Are you a Prophet?

GESTAS

What?

DISMAS

You are, aren't you? The way Simon acts around you, the way you talk to me, you're planning something against the Temple.

GESTAS

I assure you, I am no prophet.

DISMAS

Then you work for one.

GESTAS

I need this favor, Dismas.

DISMAS

Leave. I'm done with this.

GESTAS

You really should help us, Dismas. You really should let me help you.

DISMAS

How can you help me? You need my help.

GESTAS

And you need me to not report you to Saul myself.

GESTAS takes out the fake shekel from earlier and tosses it to DISMAS.

GESTAS

Look familiar?

DISMAS

(Realizing it is his)

Son of a bitch.

GESTAS

Word of advice? Work on your chalice. Your branch is ok, but the chalice is the work of an amateur, and you don't want to look like an amateur when you're breaking the law. Trust me.

DISMAS

You're blackmailing me?

GESTAS

No. I'm asking you to make sure that Saul is in the courtyard tomorrow. If you say yes, then that will be the end of it. But *if* you say no, *then* I'll go to the authorities. You'll probably lose a hand. (Pause) What's it going to be?

DISMAS

I'll make sure he's in the courtyard. Yes.

GESTAS

See? Not blackmail.

SCENE FOUR

The Temple. Same as before,  
a line up to DISMAS's stall.  
DISMAS exchanges coins with  
PILGRIMS while he talks to  
SAUL, who stands on his  
side.

DISMAS

(To a PILGRIM)

See? Not Caesar. His face isn't on the shekels.

PILGRIM

Money is money.

DISMAS

Idols are idols. (To SAUL) Do you see what I'm talking  
about now?

PILGRIM

I don't want to exchange everything. Just what I need.

DISMAS

You don't want to make God mad. Trust me.

PILGRIM

All coins?

DISMAS

All denari.

The PILGRIM gives him all of  
his Roman coins in exchange  
for shekels.

DISMAS

On your way. NEXT.

SAUL and DISMAS talk as more  
and more PILGRIMS come  
forward.

DISMAS

They're all like this. They just don't understand.

SAUL

And you need me... why do you need me here, Dismas?

DISMAS

To explain the rule. I'm losing money. The Temple's  
money. When they don't understand what I'm saying they  
just go through anyway.

SAUL

You seem to be doing that just fine without my help.

DISMAS

There are times when people don't listen to me. I need  
you here as an authority. A voice they'll hear.

SAUL

You said you're losing money?

DISMAS

Sometimes.

SAUL

Well it sounds to me like it's all your fault.

DISMAS

It's not.

SAUL

You're not teaching the law properly, you're allowing  
yourself to be robbed, and you're allowing the Temple to  
look incompetent.

DISMAS

The Temple can never look incompetent.

SAUL

If you really believe that, then you haven't learned a thing since you came out here.

DISMAS

I apologize, Saul.

SAUL

Don't apologize to me. There is a reason why you're out here instead of in there. Want to know what it is? Look at your reflection in these coins of yours.

DISMAS

I know why I'm here. I accept my place.

SAUL

It's not yours to accept. It's just yours. Are we done here?

DISMAS

Not quite yet.

SAUL

What else is there?

DISMAS

Stay.

SAUL

Why?

DISMAS

You should be out in the courtyard. See the pilgrims. Enjoy the festival.

SAUL

The Festival is not meant to be *enjoyed*. It is meant to be observed.

DISMAS

Then observe it here.

SAUL

I don't want to be here. Don't have to be here.

DISMAS

Saul, please...

PILGRIM

(Overhearing the name)

Saul? Saul of Tarsus?

SAUL

(Putting on airs)

I am.

PILGRIM

(Kneeling before him)

It is an honor, such a great honor.

SAUL

(Disgusted)

I'm not a Priest.

PILGRIM

Bless me. I need a blessing.

SAUL

I can't give you one.

PILGRIM

I need a blessing now.

SAUL

Look *elsewhere*.

JUDAS

(O.S.)

LOOK! HE IS HEALED! LOOK, ALL OF YOU, LOOK!

JUDAS enters followed by  
GESTAS and several  
DISCIPLES. He is holding the  
arm of the BEGGAR, who is  
now sober.

PILGRIM

(Releasing SAUL)

Healed? What happened?

GESTAS sees DISMAS and makes  
a bee-line for him.

SAUL

What is this?

DISMAS

Get Caiaphas.

After a brief hesitation,  
SAUL runs O.S. just before  
GESTAS reaches DISMAS.

DISMAS

Gestas, what is happening?

GESTAS

Say nothing. You know nothing.

JUDAS

(To the BEGGAR)

Tell them! Tell them exactly what happened!

BEGGAR

(With purpose and conviction. He  
has been coached.)

I have been *healed*!

The gathering crowd mutters  
amongst themselves.

JUDAS

He had the scales. For years this man has lived in the colony outside of the city. But not anymore.

BEGGAR

(Once more, with feeling)

I have been healed!

DISMAS

Gestas, no...

GESTAS

It's too late. Keep calm.

PILGRIM

So he's gotten his blessing. Good for him. I need *my* blessing!

GESTAS

Yes, he has been blessed. But not by the Priests. He has been healed. But not by Caiaphas.

PILGRIM

Then by whom?

BEGGAR

I have been healed.

JUDAS

Tell them, friend. Tell them who has healed you.

Before he has a chance to answer, CAIAPHAS and SAUL enter. CAIAPHAS is dripping with blood from the sacrifices.

CAIAPHAS

What is this? What is going on here?

SAUL

(Noticing GESTAS)

You, bandit, what have you done?

GESTAS

Nothing, Pharisee.

JUDAS

Don't talk to Gestas. Talk to me.

SAUL

Who are you?

JUDAS

In due time, Pharisee, we will explain everything.

CAIAPHAS

(Referring to the BEGGAR)

And who is this?

BEGGAR

I have been healed!

SAUL

(Sarcastically)

Mazel Tov.

CAIAPHAS

(To BEGGAR)

Tell me what happened.

GESTAS

Just this morning, this man was living in the colony when...

CAIAPHAS

Nobody is talking to you.

SAUL

You. Miracle Man. Tell me what happened.

BEGGAR

Well, I used to have leprosy. But now I don't. I have been healed!

CAIAPHAS

When did this happen?

BEGGAR

Just this morning, sir!

CAIAPHAS

And you came straight here?

BEGGAR

I did.

CAIAPHAS

You're telling us that this morning you had the scales and now you've simply been cured?

BEGGAR

Yes. I am.

CAIAPHAS

(To JUDAS)

He's obviously a liar.

SAUL

He's not a leper, that's for certain.

CAIAPHAS

How can you tell?

SAUL

Because his skin isn't falling off, is it?

CAIAPHAS

Why didn't you come to us if you were in need of a healing?

JUDAS

Well, he would have, but he couldn't afford the sacrifice.

SAUL

What's your trade?

BEGGAR

I used to be a farmer.

CAIAPHAS

You're a farmer and you couldn't spare one sheep?

BEGGAR

I *used* to be a farmer. Then I got leprosy and couldn't be a farmer anymore.

CAIAPHAS

(to JUDAS)

How much are you paying him? Fifty shillings? A hundred?  
(To *BEGGAR*) I suspect you'll be the talk of the town tonight, my friend.

SAUL

(To *BEGGAR*)

You realize that you're committing blasphemy, don't you? By even implying that you've been cured by some magician is punishable by death.

BEGGAR

I haven't been cured by a magician. I've been cured by the Rabbi.

CAIAPHAS

Rabbi? Which Rabbi?

JUDAS

Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Carpenter.

CAIAPHAS

Never heard of him.

GESTAS

You will.

CAIAPHAS

Will I?

GESTAS

You will, and Rome will. You and Rome will feel the wrath of God in three days time.

SAUL

Oh, not another one.

CAIAPHAS

We've heard this all before...

GESTAS

Gestas. Disciple of the Nazarene.

CAIAPHAS

Well, Disciple, you're implying that this Rabbi of yours has the power to heal the sick. Are you implying that he is my equal?

GESTAS

No, I'm implying that this man used to have leprosy and now he doesn't.

SAUL

Lepers aren't allowed to be inside the temple.

GESTAS

Well, let's thank the Lord he isn't a leper then.

JUDAS

He has been healed.

BEGGAR

I have been healed!

CAIAPHAS

Who do you think you are? What right do you have to enter *here* and...

JUDAS

What *right*? What right do you have to deny this man a proper healing? What right do you have to say that he should suffer and die just because he was a few sheep short? What right do you have?

SAUL

This is the way of the world, Disciple.

GESTAS

Not anymore.

SAUL

Excuse me?

GESTAS

Not. Anymore.

CAIAPHAS

Are you threatening us?

GESTAS

Not a threat. More of a warning.

DISMAS

Gestas. Please.

SAUL

We've dealt with rebels before, Gestas. With wood and spike, we've dealt with them.

JUDAS

The Son of the Carpenter will make God known to you all.

CAIAPHAS

If God wanted to make himself known, he would do it himself. He wouldn't send the son of a man.

GESTAS

He is *not* the Son of Man, he is the Son of God!

SILENCE. JUDAS instinctively grabs GESTAS by the arm. GESTAS stares at CAIAPHAS and SAUL defiantly. The PILGRIMS are astonished.

Furious, SAUL and CAIAPHAS storm back into the TEMPLE.

The PILGRIMS all turn to GESTAS and JUDAS.

JUDAS

What have you done, Gestas?

GESTAS

Spoken the truth.

PILGRIM

The son of God? From Nazareth? I was raised in Nazareth.  
I never thought... never believed...

JUDAS

(To GESTAS)

We're leaving.

GESTAS

(To the PILGRIM)

Believe, brother. Soon. Soon.

JUDAS

(Pulling GESTAS by the arm)

Now, Gestas.

GESTAS

(As he is being dragged away,  
shouting to the crowd)

He is here! And he has brought with him his Kingdom!  
Prepare the way!

GESTAS and JUDAS run off  
stage. The crowd screams  
after them. DISMAS is left  
alone, astonished.

#### SCENE FIVE

Outside the city walls.  
SIMON is pacing back and  
forth. TWO ZEALOTS sit on  
the ground beside him.

ZEALOT 1

A beggar?

SIMON

They found him here. Cleaned him up. Taught him the words.

ZEALOT 1

Why?

SIMON

To make a point.

ZEALOT 1

We could have done that. Would have been easier.

SIMON

That's what I told them.

ZEALOT 2

They didn't listen?

SIMON

Let them play their game.

ZEALOT 2

They should be back soon.

SIMON

They should have been back already.

ZEALOT 1

Stupid

SIMON

I agree.

ZEALOT 2

Then why are we doing this?

ZEALOT 1

The Governor's Palace is a mile that way. We could go in. Slit his throat. Sends more of a message than putting on a show.

SIMON

They need us.

ZEALOT 2

So?

SIMON

We need them.

ZEALOT 2

They're going to get us killed.

SIMON

(After a pause)

This is the best we have right now.

ZEALOT 1

It's not very good.

SIMON

No, it is not. But it's something. We have to act.

GESTAS, JUDAS, and the  
BEGGAR come running in from  
S.L.

ZEALOT 1

You're back.

ZEALOT 2

Finally.

SIMON

What happened?

GESTAS

(Catching his breath)

We made ourselves known.

JUDAS

We built our own crosses.

SIMON

What. Happened.

GESTAS

Everything went according to plan.

JUDAS

It absolutely did not.

GESTAS

The beggar performed brilliantly. Everyone was convinced.

JUDAS

You think Caiaphas bought the act for a second?

GESTAS

Caiaphas doesn't matter.

JUDAS

Yes he does, Gestas, and you've just given him an excuse to send us to Golgotha.

SIMON

Tell me exactly what happened.

JUDAS hesitates for a moment, then he speaks.

JUDAS

He said it.

SIMON

What did he say?

JUDAS

The one thing you don't say.

SIMON is furious. He goes to GESTAS and looks down on him.

SIMON

You didn't.

GESTAS

I did.

SIMON

What was all that yesterday, you telling me to keep quiet in the Temple? You telling me how careful we needed to be. You call this careful?

GESTAS

You weren't there. You don't know. You didn't see what we saw.

JUDAS

You said his name, you said his intentions, and you called him the Son of God, right in front of the Priest and the Pharisee.

GESTAS

Right in front of the pilgrims. They were listening. You saw what I saw, you saw their eyes.

SIMON

You've just given them everything they need.

GESTAS

Am I wrong?

JUDAS

Pilate will be out for us now. Every Roman soldier in Jerusalem will be on the lookout.

GESTAS

Did I lie?

JUDAS looks down. He shakes his head.

JUDAS

It doesn't matter. They'll be expecting us now, Gestas. You've doomed us.

GESTAS

They have no idea what's coming next. And there's nothing they can do about it. Not in the market. Not with all the crowds. They won't see us coming and they won't be able to stop it. How can we be stopped if the Rabbi is who he says he is?

SIMON

No, Gestas. No. The Rabbi has *never*. NEVER. Called himself what you called him. He's smarter than that.

BEGGAR

Is it true?

SIMON, GESTAS, JUDAS, and the two ZEALOTS look at the BEGGAR.

BEGGAR

Is he the one?

GESTAS

You've read Isaiah?

BEGGAR

I have. But I think I had something different in mind.

JUDAS

What do you mean?

BEGGAR

Someone like Caiaphas. Not someone like me.

DISMAS runs in from S.L. carrying his lending materials. He heads straight for GESTAS.

DISMAS

You!

JUDAS

Who is this?

SIMON

Dismas, what are you doing here?

DISMAS

Tell me what just happened. Tell me what you've gotten me involved with.

GESTAS

Calm down.

SIMON

It's over now. You can go back to the Temple.

DISMAS

I'm done for the day. Nobody's exchanging.

JUDAS

What?

SIMON

What does that mean?

DISMAS

Nobody wants coins. Nobody is going in for sacrifices. They're only talking about you.

GESTAS

It worked. See, Simon? Judas? It worked.

DISMAS

What worked, exactly? What is happening?

JUDAS

We have the people on our side, yes, but now Rome will be ready for us.

GESTAS

They can never be ready for what's coming.

SIMON

They've been ready before. Other rebels with bigger numbers. They've been ready.

DISMAS  
Rebels?

SIMON  
Dismas, leave. You won't want to stay here.

DISMAS  
I'm part of this. You've made me part of this.

SIMON  
You don't have to be anymore.

GESTAS  
Let him stay if he wants to stay.

JUDAS  
What?

GESTAS  
We can use him.

JUDAS  
For what, exactly?

GESTAS  
Always a good thing to have an inside man.

JUDAS  
A Roman?

DISMAS  
I am not a Roman.

JUDAS  
You work for Rome. You are a Roman.

DISMAS  
I work for the Temple.

JUDAS  
Do you want to help us?

DISMAS  
I don't know who you are.

JUDAS

And we're not going to tell you. That's the end of it. You, beggar, I assume you'll be wanting your payment.

BEGGAR

That's right. Truth be told, a proper healing actually would have been nice. This one broke my rib.

GESTAS

I promise you, I'll make up for it in two days.

JUDAS hands the BEGGAR some shekels.

BEGGAR

No shekels. Roman coins.

JUDAS

You'll take what we give you, beggar

BEGGAR

I know too much. You'll give me what I want.

JUDAS

You, lender. Lend.

DISMAS

Are you serious?

JUDAS holds his shekels out.  
DISMAS reaches into his purse and hands him some denari.

BEGGAR

God Bless.

The BEGGAR runs off stage.

JUDAS  
(to GESTAS)

Tomorrow is postponed, I assume. We'll go back to the Rabbi. Regroup.

GESTAS  
Tomorrow is still happening, Judas. What's changed?

JUDAS  
We should go back to the Rabbi.

GESTAS  
The Rabbi trusted me to bring the Zealots into the fold and to carry out his plan. I've done the first part. I will not fail on the second.

JUDAS  
(To SIMON)  
Are you ok with this?

ZEALOT 1  
We might not even make it past the gates.

ZEALOT 2  
We won't win, Simon.

Brief pause, then SIMON  
speaks.

SIMON  
Only one way to find out.

JUDAS is furious, but he  
knows that he cannot  
convince the others.

JUDAS  
Till tomorrow, then?

GESTAS  
Till tomorrow.

SIMON  
We're with you, Gestas.

JUDAS, SIMON, and the  
ZEALOTS exit.

DISMAS

What is happening tomorrow?

GESTAS

You know, there was a time when Judas enjoyed his work. He loved telling people about our new Rabbi, he loved spreading the message. He's not like that anymore. He doesn't realize that what we're doing is a *good* thing. Not a responsibility, but an honor.

DISMAS

You said you didn't trust me. Well, you trusted me to bring Saul outside, and I did just that. Can you trust me now? Tell me what this is.

GESTAS

What do you think about what you saw? In the Temple?

DISMAS

You lied to the Priests.

GESTAS

We didn't lie.

DISMAS

He wasn't really a healed leper.

GESTAS

The Pilgrims don't know that. To the Pilgrims he was touched by God.

DISMAS

Or the Son of God.

GESTAS

You don't think it's true.

DISMAS

I don't know this man, but I know that there have been others before him. Many others. And they all ended up in the same place.

GESTAS

This one is different.

DISMAS

You said he was from Nazareth.

GESTAS

Born and raised.

DISMAS

I traveled through Nazareth when I was still an acolyte. Nothing but mud huts. No one was educated. Not five teeth among the entire population.

GESTAS

God needs teeth?

DISMAS

God needs Power. Priests, not peasants. I didn't learn nearly as much as I had wanted to when I was studying with Saul and Caiaphas. But I did learn that it takes power to reach God. That's why everyone's here today, to make sacrifices to people who have that kind of power. For a powerful Priest to know God, that's one thing. For a some poor, illiterate Nazarene to know God? That's something else.

GESTAS looks around to make sure that no one is listening, then he takes a seat next to DISMAS.

GESTAS

You're right. It is something else.

DISMAS

I've never heard anything like that. I've learned about a thousand different saviors, a thousand different preachers, a thousand different teachers. All of them were rich, at least educated. It seems.... I don't know... backwards.

GESTAS

You're right. It is backwards... You want to know what the Nazarene preaches?

DISMAS nods in approval.

GESTAS (CONT'D)

Reversal. Revolution.

He looks around to make sure that no one is listening.

GESTAS (CONT'D)

The rich? They'll be poor. The powerful? Powerless. You're happy now? You'll be crying soon. But it goes the other way. Are you hungry? Not for long. Mourning? In three days you'll be joyous. The Temple is the puppet of Rome and do you know what Rome is? It's a clay statue. My master is a stone, and God threw the stone straight at the statue's ankles. Rome is going to fall and bring the Temple and Caiaphas and Saul and Pilate and the whole lot of them crashing to the ground and it's us, the meek, the powerless, it's us that will take their place.

Silence.

DISMAS

Destroy Rome *and* the Temple.

GESTAS

They're one in the same, really. Can't get one without the other.

DISMAS

But then how will he preach?

GESTAS

What, he needs a Temple to preach?

DISMAS

Yes.

GESTAS

Why have a Temple when you can have a Kingdom?

DISMAS

He's going to move into the Senate House in Rome?

GESTAS

He will inherit his father's throne.

DISMAS

When he dies?

GESTAS

On Earth.

Silence.

GESTAS (CONT'D)

That's right, Dismas. The Kingdom of God. On Earth. In three days.

CENTURION 1

(O.S.)

He was seen running this way.

GESTAS recognizes the voice  
and immediately stands up  
and prepares himself to  
leave.

GESTAS

A centurion. They're coming for me.

DISMAS

Wait, I want to know more. I need to know more.

GESTAS

Be in the Temple tomorrow. You will see what we can do.

GESTAS leaves. DISMAS tries  
to run after him, but stops.

TWO CENTURIONS enter.

CENTURION 2

You!

DISMAS

Me?

CENTURION 1

Money Lender. You're coming with us.

THE CENTURIONS grab DISMAS  
by the arms.

DISMAS

Where? What have I done?

CENTURION 2

Don't ask questions. We're not answering.

DISMAS

I'll go back to the Temple, I'll set up my stall again,  
I just needed to leave for a moment.

CENTURION 1

You're going back to the Temple. Just not to the market.

THE CENTURIONS drag DISMAS  
offstage.

#### SCENE SIX

SAUL is pacing back and  
forth in front of CAIAPHAS's  
desk. CAIAPHAS has changed  
robes.

CAIAPHAS

I don't remember him.

SAUL

You wouldn't have. He was with me for the brief period of time he was here. He learned history, nothing else.

CAIAPHAS

He was Roman?

SAUL

He was. He tried to hide his mother's heritage from me, but I found out.

CAIAPHAS

I've seen him in the market, I'm sure. Curious that he would want to stay here after being rejected.

SAUL

Not curious if you think about it. Makes sense

CAIAPHAS

How?

SAUL

He wants to be close to God, I think. He wants to help out however he can. It's noble. Just misguided.

CAIAPHAS

You don't like him.

SAUL

I don't respect people who pretend to be things that they aren't. And now he's working with this new... whatever he is.

CAIAPHAS

They called him Rabbi.

SAUL

They called him something else, too.

CAIAPHAS

I'm more upset about them calling him Rabbi. A crazy man can call himself the Son of God. You can ignore crazy people.

SAUL

Not blasphemers.

CAIAPHAS

We won't ignore him.

PILATE enters, flanked by  
two CENTURIONS.

PILATE

Alright. What is this about?

SAUL

Governor.

CAIAPHAS

Thank you for coming so quickly.

PILATE

It's my job. Don't thank me Tell me what happened.

CAIAPHAS

Earlier today in the courtyard a group of bandits  
presented me with a man they claimed was healed by a  
prophet.

PILATE

How many dead?

SAUL

What?

PILATE

How many dead?

CAIAPHAS

None. This wasn't an attack.

PILATE

Then why am I here?

CAIAPHAS

You're here to keep the peace. You were sent to Jerusalem to keep the peace during the Passover Festival.

PILATE

And no one is dead. No one was even hurt, the way you're telling the story. It would seem that I'm doing my job.

CAIAPHAS

No violence today, but what about tomorrow?

SAUL

We have a witness coming in soon, Pilate. He will be able to explain this better than we can.

PILATE

A witness? What kind of witness?

CAIAPHAS

A money changer.

SAUL

A former acolyte of the Temple. I suspect him of conspiring with the bandits.

PILATE

On what grounds?

SAUL

He told me to stand with him as he was exchanging coins. It didn't seem like he needed me there at all. Then the bandits arrived.

PILATE

On this evidence alone you're willing to send him to Golgotha? This is what I don't understand about you people. You go on and on and on about laws and your rules and your practices, but you never follow them.

CAIAPHAS

Don't tell me how to run my Temple.

PILATE

If you didn't want me to tell you how to run your Temple, then why did you call me down here in the first place?

TWO CENTURIONS dragging  
DISMAS enter. They push  
DISMAS out in front of  
CAIAPHAS.

CENTURION 1

Here he is.

CENTURION 2

Found him outside the city gates.

SAUL

Trying to escape?

PILATE

Is this the lender?

DISMAS

My name is Dismas.

PILATE

Alright, Dismas, tell me what happened today.

DISMAS

I don't know what you're talking about.

SAUL

You don't want to be arrested, do you?

PILATE

That's not up to you, Pharisee, that's up to me.

DISMAS

What have I done?

SAUL

You weren't conspiring with the bandits today? You weren't hired by them to distract me?

DISMAS

No.

SAUL

Well, that makes you a liar.

PILATE

He won't lie to me. He's too smart for that. You, Lender, you're too smart to lie to a Roman governor, right?

DISMAS

Yes, sir.

PILATE

Now, then. Tell me everything that happened today.

SAUL

We already explained everything to you.

PILATE

I want to hear the story from Dismas.

SAUL

From a lying money lender.

PILATE

Saul. Stop. I'm not talking to you. I'm talking to Dismas. Now, tell me exactly what happened.

DISMAS

I asked Saul to stay with me as I completed my transactions. The pilgrims are not familiar with the tax law or with the exchange policy at the Temple. I wanted a figure of authority from the Jewish leaders to be with me in case of any transgressions. While Saul was with me, a group of men came in with a man. They claimed he had been cured by a healer.

PILATE

A prophet. Exactly what this town needs, what this Festival needs. Another prophet.

SAUL

He's not a prophet. He's nothing.

CAIAPHAS

He claimed to be the Son of God.

PILATE

He said that?

SAUL

One of his men...

PILATE

Saul. Enough. Dismas, tell me. Did this Rabbi say that he was the Son of God?

DISMAS

I don't know. He wasn't here today.

PILATE

Did any of his men claim as much?

DISMAS

(After some hesitation)

No. Not that I recall.

CAIAPHAS

You *lie*.

PILATE

So this person, he didn't make any claims of divinity. He didn't cause a disturbance in the Temple, he wasn't even here to begin with. He has made no statements against authority.

CAIAPHAS

No statements against authority? He claimed to be a healer! He claimed that the Temple was obsolete!

SAUL

He didn't heal a leper. That was a paid actor or a beggar.

CAIAPHAS

Magic, no magic, illusion, no illusion, it's the appearance of power that counts. And this man, this Jesus claimed to be more powerful than the Temple. A blatant statement against my authority, no?

PILATE

Oh, it certainly is a statement against *your* authority. Not against Roman authority though. He's a Jew. You deal with him. The festival seems to be going well so far, so you have nothing to worry about.

CAIAPHAS

You are in this city to keep the peace. You are in this city to make sure that no violence takes place. You are abdicating your duties if you refuse to arrest this person.

PILATE

He has committed no crime that I can see. But listen to me. You're right - I am here to keep the peace. But if he does commit a crime I deem punishable, make no mistake that there will be violence. And don't you ever accuse me of not doing my job, Caiaphas. Treason is treason.

PILATE exits.

CAIAPHAS kicks dirt into  
DISMAS's eyes.

CAIAPHAS

*Liar. Worthless liar.*

SAUL

What was that all about, Dismas?

DISMAS

What are you talking about?

CAIAPHAS

You know damn well what Gestas said about the Nazarene. You were there. You heard.

SAUL

You couldn't have missed it.

DISMAS

I honestly didn't hear what was happening. I was focusing on my work.

CAIAPHAS

Be thankful it's the Passover festival, Lender. Be thankful we need you this month.

DISMAS

I am.

CAIAPHAS

What's that?

DISMAS

I am grateful. Thank you for letting me work here. I am sorry I could not have been of more help with the Governor.

CAIAPHAS

What are you still even doing here, Dismas?

DISMAS

I'm good with money and want to be close to God. Well, as close as I can be.

SAUL

Conspiring with terrorists won't get you closer to God.

DISMAS

They're not terrorists.

SAUL

They threatened the temple with destruction to prove a point. They're terrorists.

CAIAPHAS

You don't want to be seen associating yourself with people like that, do you Dismas?

DISMAS

Of course not.

CAIAPHAS

Of course not, he says. As if there was ever any question. As if there was any other option than listening to us and doing *exactly* what we say.

DISMAS

Excuse me?

CAIAPHAS

Listen, Dismas, and listen carefully: You work for us. You exist because of us and you will do what we ask. Your duty is to me and my duty is to God.

DISMAS

I'm an exceptional money lender. The rate at my stall is always fair and I make a modest but earned profit.

CAIAPHAS

That you are. We've noticed. You care about your work because you care about your God, is that right?

DISMAS

I... yes.

CAIAPHAS

Gestas. Simon. Judas. The Nazarene. They don't care about God. They care about themselves and themselves only. These threats they're making against the temple, how can that be for God's benefit? It doesn't make sense, Dismas. They're a threat. They're not a big threat and we know that, if it comes to it, Pilate will take care of them the way Romans always have. Having said that, we don't need any riots in the Temple during the Festival. Bad for you, bad for me, bad for God.

DISMAS

What is it you want me to do?

CAIAPHAS

They'll be back. At some point over the next few days, they'll come back. And they'll probably come to you, seeing as how you are a witness to their threat. Talk with them. Engage them in conversation. Find out everything. Then come talk to me or Saul. It's not a difficult thing we're asking. It's a righteous thing.

DISMAS

I really should focus on my work.

SAUL

What, exchanging coins? That's not what you want to do with your life, I know it isn't. What you want to be doing, what I *know* you want to be doing is working with us. On the inside of the temple, not the outside.

CAIAPHAS

We can make that happen for you, Dismas.

DISMAS

My mother is a Roman.

SAUL

And Augustus is the Son of God. It doesn't matter what we know. It matters what we choose to believe. And, if you help us out over these next few weeks, I believe you will make a most excellent priest.

DISMAS

(Uneasy)

They'll know what I'm doing. They'll see through it. If they are as violent as you claim they are, then they'll try to hurt me.

SAUL

Oh, I wouldn't worry about them. It's us you should be concerned about.

DISMAS

Is that a threat? You need me for the festival.

CAIAPHAS

You're right. We do. And what is it you think happens *after* the Festival?

DISMAS

I continue to exchange coins.

CAIAPHAS

What, you're the only money lender in Jerusalem?

SAUL

Maybe one day you show up here and your spot has been taken. Maybe you try to set up somewhere else but we don't let you.

DISMAS

You said it yourself, I'm an exceptional lender.

CAIAPHAS

You are. But if you refuse to help us with the Nazarene, then you would be committing blasphemy. Not listening to an order from an agent of the Lord? Not honoring God? That'd certainly change my opinion of you.

DISMAS

(Uneasy, unsure)

You need me.

SAUL

We needed you for your lending skills, and now we need you to do this. Listen to the rebels. Find out what they're doing.

CAIAPHAS

And just remember: we need you until we don't.

CAIAPHAS and SAUL exit.

DISMAS is alone on stage.

#### SCENE SEVEN

The next day in the courtyard. It is more crowded than ever before.

There is a huge line at  
DISMAS's stall, and he is  
struggling to keep up.

DISMAS

All Roman coins must be exchanged for shekels.

PILGRIM 1

I just want to make a sacrifice.

DISMAS

Then pay up, a line is forming.

The two exchange coins.

SIMON enters, his head  
covered in a black keffiyeh.  
He goes over to DISMAS and  
stands by his side as DISMAS  
continues to exchange coins  
with the next PILGRIM.

SIMON

(Quietly)

Get out of here.

DISMAS

(Not realizing who it is.)

There's a line, sir.

SIMON

Get out of here right now. Take your coins and leave.

DISMAS

All coins must be exchanged for...

He realizes that it is  
SIMON. He knows what is  
coming.

SIMON

Get out of here.

JUDAS enters next. He and SIMON nod at one another. JUDAS waves off stage and then walks with purpose to the opposite side. He takes a club out of his tunic.

DISMAS

What is happening?

SIMON

You have exactly thirty seconds to collect everything you can and leave this place.

DISMAS

Simon, call this off. You need to call this off. Pilate, Caiaphas, Saul, they all spoke to me last night. They're out for you. They want you all arrested.

SIMON

Not the Zealots. They want the Nazarene. And today they're going to get him.

JUDAS begins to wrap his head in a black keffiyeh.

DISMAS

Please, Simon. Talk to Judas and Gestas.

SIMON

It's too late. Leave now. Last chance. Nothing stops this.

GESTAS enters flanked by several other DISCIPLES. He is carrying a club and already is wearing a keffiyeh. He and JUDAS signal one another.

DISMAS

No, Simon.

SIMON  
Last chance.

DISMAS  
Do not do this!

GESTAS  
NOW!

SIMON picks up DISMAS's  
lending tray and scales and  
throws them into the air.  
THE PILGRIMS back away in  
fear.

GESTAS and the DISCIPLES  
begin to shove people to the  
ground and destroy the other  
stalls.

JUDAS finds any PILGRIM  
attempting to sell goods in  
the yard and beats them.

And just like that, there is  
a riot in the Temple of  
Jerusalem.

JUDAS  
Lenders, merchants, whores, thieves! This is a place of  
worship! Not a market!

SIMON  
You use the Roman coins, you pray in the Roman temples!

GESTAS  
He is here! The One True God of Israel is come!

DISMAS, amid the chaos, runs  
to GESTAS.

DISMAS  
Gestas, stop this! You will all be arrested tomorrow,  
you must stop this!

GESTAS

I don't care about tomorrow, Dismas. Stand aside.

DISMAS

LISTEN TO ME!

GESTAS doesn't think twice about it. He swings his club across the back of DISMAS's skull, and DISMAS passes out. GESTAS continues to wreck the stalls and intimidate the pilgrims.

As the riot grows, A MAN dressed in the garments a groom would wear on his wedding day - a white tunic with red trimming - comes on stage. He takes in the view. Then Jesus of Nazareth draws his sword and heads for the thick of it.

Blackout. End of Act I.

## ACT II - NOT ONE STONE

When we open, we see the aftermath of the riot. There is debris everywhere. Goods, coins, broken structures, weapons, garments all litter the stage.

DISMAS is attempting to clean up the area around his stall. He looks for dropped coins, he clears out a space for his rug, and he tries to fix his scales. Standing next to him are PILATE and CAIAPHAS.

PILATE

I told you to deal with this. I specifically told you that this was *your* problem.

CAIAPHAS

We didn't know. We couldn't have known.

PILATE

Now you do. What are you going to do about it?

CAIAPHAS

The Pilgrims haven't left, the taxes are still coming in.

PILATE

*What* are you going to *do* about it, Priest?

CAIAPHAS

We're going to find him.

PILATE

Wrong answer.

CAIAPHAS

We are going to find him.

PILATE

No you absolutely are not. You know why? Because this is no longer your problem. You stalled. Now it's *my* problem. *I* am going to find him. And I am going to crucify him.

DISMAS

(Interrupting)

Crucify?

PILATE

Have I asked you a question? Is there any question to begin with? The Temple is a Roman establishment. You can give your heart to whatever *one true God* you want in here, but your ass still belongs to Rome.

CAIAPHAS

Listen carefully to what he says, Dismas.

PILATE

I was talking to both of you. You may be subject to your God, but you belong to Caesar. You, *him*, and the Nazarene. You're all the same. You're the same as every other Priest, Caiaphas, and Jesus is the same as every other Messiah. You should have dealt with him, and you didn't. Now it's my turn. You just focus on your festival. No more stalling. No more mistakes. You make sure of that. Or there will be two trips up to Golgotha this weekend.

With that, PILATE exits.

DISMAS continues to clean.  
CAIAPHAS looks at DISMAS,  
distraught.

CAIAPHAS

He's wrong about one thing.

DISMAS

What?

CAIAPHAS

This Jesus? He's not the same as other bandits. He's not. He's something much different. Much more dangerous. "The Temple will be destroyed." "The way of the world..."

He pauses. Brief silence.

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)

You knew this was going to happen.

DISMAS

No, no, I....

CAIAPHAS

You *knew* this was going to happen and you didn't say a thing.

DISMAS

Rabbi, I swear, I...

CAIAPHAS

You *knew* this was going to happen and you deliberately misled me. What else do you know?

DISMAS

Caiaphas, I swear. Do you think I wanted this? Do you think I'm happy about this? My stall is ruined. The provincials won't be coming back here, they'll think it's too dangerous. If I had known this was going to happen, I would have told you immediately! I didn't want any of this!

CAIAPHAS

How am I supposed to believe you?

DISMAS

Because I'm telling you the truth.

CAIAPHAS

How do I know that?

DISMAS

You... you just have to trust me...

CAIAPHAS

Well, there you go.

CAIAPHAS exits. Dejected, DISMAS kicks some debris across the stage. He then continues to walk around looking for dropped coins or anything he can use to rebuild his stall.

As he is doing this, JESUS enters. DISMAS does not notice him. JESUS looks around and takes in the scene. He then approaches DISMAS.

JESUS

What happened here?

DISMAS quickly glances up, but then looks back at his work.

DISMAS

Your guess is as good as mine.

JESUS

Looks like some kind of fight broke out. A riot or something.

DISMAS

*Or something.* I'm not an idiot. Your clothes are dirty, you've got blood on your fingers, and you're carrying a sword.

JESUS

You take one look at me and you have me figured out.

DISMAS

I also saw you. During the fight.

JESUS

You could have me mistaken for someone else.

DISMAS

Yeah, well, no one else was here dressed like they were about to get married. Who's the lucky girl?

JESUS

Were you involved? Were you fighting, too? Your clothes are dirty. You've got blood on your head and in your hair.

DISMAS

Look, if you wouldn't mind, I have to clean up the mess you made.

JESUS

What is your trade?

DISMAS

I'm a money lender. *Was* a money lender.

JESUS

What are you now?

DISMAS

Who knows, but business is going to be taking a hit, no thanks to you people.

JESUS

What do you think about what you saw today?

DISMAS

You're not going to leave me alone, are you?

JESUS

I'm just asking questions.

DISMAS

I think that whoever Jesus of Nazareth is, he's going about this in the entirely wrong way.

JESUS

Oh?

DISMAS

This is bigger than all of us. Rome, Rome is bigger than all of us.

JESUS

Is Rome bigger than God?

DISMAS

No, of course not.

JESUS

You say that with authority.

DISMAS

Rome is Rome. But God... God is God.

JESUS

You used to wear the cloth, didn't you?

DISMAS

Excuse me?

JESUS

You speak as though you used to work inside the Temple as opposed to outside of it.

DISMAS

I was an acolyte. Once. Kicked out because my mother was Roman.

JESUS

That doesn't seem too fair, does it?

DISMAS

Of course it isn't. It's complicated. Rome, the Temple. I don't know... to think that I once wanted to be one of them.

JESUS

So why money lending?

DISMAS

It's not like I had a choice or anything. God's rules are God's rules.

JESUS

It sounds like the Priests kicked you out. Not God.

DISMAS

Yeah, well, you know...

JESUS

This reminds me of a story. Would you like to hear it?

DISMAS

It's not like I have a choice or anything, I suppose.

JESUS

I like telling stories. It's easier than talking.

DISMAS

I can't promise I'll listen.

DISMAS continues to work  
while JESUS begins to tell  
his story.

JESUS

There was once an old, old king. As he lay on his dying bed, he decided that it was time to settle his accounts with all of his slaves. So he called them into his chambers one by one and demanded that they pay the king what they owed. Almost all complied, except for one slave. Now this slave, this slave owed the king ten thousand shekels, but he didn't have a single one to spare. He came into the chambers and told the king as much, "I cannot pay my debt." Well, the king was a logical man, and the king said, "Ok, then you and your wife and all of your possessions are to be sold to a new owner." Fearing for his life and his family's well being, the slave fell to his knees in front of the king. "Please, lord. Please, show mercy and me and my family. Please show mercy! Have patience with me and you will receive everything!" The slave's tears moved the king's dying heart. The king released him and relieved the slave of his debt. You would think that would be enough to teach the slave a lesson in charity, but no.

At this point, DISMAS has stopped working and is engrossed in the story.

JESUS

Immediately after leaving the king's chambers, the slave went to *another* slave who owed him a hundred shekels and said, "Pay me what you owe." The other slave admitted that he was completely broke, but that if he would show him patience then he would be able to save money and pay him back in due time. The first slave, he was not impressed, and he was certainly not patient. He went to the centurions and ordered that the slave be put in jail until such time as he could pay back the one hundred shekels. Well, the other slaves who saw this happen were very concerned, of course, and they immediately told their king what had happened. The king, of course, was also very concerned, and he sent for the slave. The slave arrived in the king's chambers, and the king said, "You wicked creature! Did I not just show you mercy for your debt? Did I not just save your life? Why could you not have shown the same mercy to your fellow man?" And instead of selling the slave until such time as the slave could pay his debts, he ordered that the slave be tortured. Continuously. Until he could pay his debts.

DISMAS says nothing. He has nothing to say.

JESUS (CONT'D)

God? He and the king are pretty similar. Same set of principals.

DISMAS gathers his thoughts, then speaks.

DISMAS

Why are you telling me this?

JESUS

It's something you need to hear.

JESUS goes to DISMAS and puts his hand on his head.

JESUS (CONT'D)

God doesn't belong to the Priests. The Priests belong to God.

JESUS smiles at DISMAS, and then he leaves.

SCENE TWO

GESTAS and SIMON are filling their waterskins at a well outside of Jerusalem.

GESTAS

God gave us this land. He didn't give us a well, though. That we had to build for ourselves.

SIMON

Gestas...

GESTAS

And look at it! It barely functions. Sometimes I wonder what we've done to offend God.

SIMON

The money, Gestas. I need it. And then I'm leaving.

GESTAS

Maybe we've just built the well in the wrong place. But then why didn't God tell us where to build the well? A sign every once in a while from God would make this all easier. And that sign should say "Build Well Here."

SIMON

You're ignoring me.

GESTAS

I've got to tell you, the Rabbi couldn't have come at a better time for me. I was starting to hate God before he came.

SIMON

Gestas. Stop. Listen. Pay me now, and I'm leaving.

GESTAS

No, you listen. Have you not heard a word I've been saying? Have you not listened to one thing the Rabbi has said?

SIMON

I know what Jesus says.

GESTAS

Then what is this obsession with money? What does it matter what you have? In two days this land will be the Kingdom of God, and in the Kingdom of God, Simon, you won't need any money. And I won't have to come out here to get my water.

SIMON

You were never planning on paying me in the first place, were you?

GESTAS

What does it *matter*, Simon?

SIMON

You little *thief*.

GESTAS

If you heard what the Rabbi said, you never would have joined us in the first place.

SIMON

Yesterday? That little publicity stunt of yours? That was bold. That was daring. I was happy to take part in it. But you will never set foot inside the city walls again. They'll be ready for you this time. You should have gone all the way yesterday. You didn't. I'm leaving, Gestas.

GESTAS

Where are you going?

SIMON

Sepphoris, maybe. Cappernaum. I don't know. Just far away from Pilate, that's all I can say.

GESTAS

What about the Rabbi?

SIMON

What about him, Gestas? I mean do you honestly think that he's the Messiah? What makes him so different from any of the other hundred Messiahs you've seen come and go? If you really believe him, then you're as stupid as the rest of them. But I know you're not stupid.

GESTAS

You're right. I do think he's the Messiah.

DISMAS enters with a bucket.  
He sees GESTAS and  
immediately goes for him.

DISMAS

You son of a bitch.

GESTAS

Calm down.

SIMON

That's the idea. Knock some sense into him.

DISMAS

You didn't say one thing about starting a riot.

GESTAS

I'm sorry I hit you yesterday, but you were getting in the way.

DISMAS

Don't apologize to me.

DISMAS turns the bucket  
upside down. Wet sand  
stained with blood comes  
crashing down.

DISMAS

I saw an old man, a pilgrim, limping out of the gates this morning. The back of his leg was cut through to the bone. I saw a child, his arm was bent backward, he was going around asking people for blessings because a hundred men trampled over him because of *you*.

GESTAS

Any injury we caused to the pilgrims was unavoidable. I told you that we were going to attack the Temple, I told you that explicitly.

DISMAS

That wasn't an attack yesterday, that was a show.

SIMON

That's exactly what I said.

DISMAS

Don't you start with me, Simon, I told you to call them off and you didn't listen to me.

GESTAS

Yesterday was necessary. We have made ourselves known both to the Priests and to the People. We had to warn them about the coming of the Kingdom so that they could prepare themselves.

DISMAS

"Prepare themselves?" Listen to what you're saying. Even before you destroyed the market, Saul and Pilate and Caiaphas were out for you. They had everything they need to charge you with sedition. Now they know that you are getting ready for a war. A few dozen peasants versus the Roman army, Gestas. You figure it out.

SIMON

He's right, Gestas. This is too much for me. I want to see the Kingdom of God as much as you do. But this is not the way to do it. I refuse to die for a lost cause... Now pay me.

GESTAS reluctantly takes out his purse and counts out SIMON's payment.

DISMAS

Why did you participate in the first place? If you knew their cause was doomed, then why did you go along at all?

SIMON

The Zealots have always been the enemies of Rome. The Nazarene is also an enemy of Rome. Bandits need to stick together.

GESTAS

(Handing him the money)

Until they don't.

SIMON

That's right.

He turns to leave.

DISMAS

Wait.

SIMON stops and turns around.

DISMAS (CONT'D)

You said that they might have a chance. You said that this movement might be different.

SIMON

That's right.

DISMAS

Did you mean that when you said it? Did you ever actually believe it?

SIMON walks back to DISMAS.

SIMON

Yeah. I did. Jesus is different than the rest of them. He doesn't want to change Rome, he wants to change the world. I guess that's the difference between him and me. He thinks the world can change and I know it can't.

SIMON leaves.

GESTAS

What do you think?

DISMAS

What?

GESTAS

Do you think the world can change?

DISMAS

I don't think it really matters.

GESTAS pulls his necklace out from under his shirt. It is a piece of string going through a coin.

GESTAS

You see this? This is the first drachma I ever stole. I lived in Jerusalem for my entire life. Never learned a trade, unless picking pockets and stealing food can be considered a trade. You know where I was able to do the best for myself? The Temple. You can imagine, right? The market and the lenders, there's a lot of coins going around. But I was smarter than to steal in sight of the Priests and Pharisees, so I would beg. I'd ask for coins. There's no shame in it once you realize that you don't have a choice. Most people were generous. The merchants and landowners may have been stingy but at least they gave. You know who never gave? The Priests. Never. Not once for three years I begged in the Temple, and not once did a Priest offer me anything. Not even a blessing. When I left Jerusalem I left knowing that God did not need the Temple. When Jesus found me he gave me water and wine and bread without question.

I told him about my life, about the Temple. You know what he said to me? He said, "God doesn't belong to the Priests..."

DISMAS

(Finishing the sentence for him)

"... the Priests belong to God."

GESTAS

(Surprised)

Yes.

DISMAS

(Realizing who the man from the Temple was)

This is too much.

GESTAS

The Temple doesn't care about you. The Temple doesn't care about me. And the Temple certainly doesn't care about God.

DISMAS

The Priests want me to turn you in. They want me to spy for them. They said if I did that then I could be an acolyte again.

GESTAS

Is that what you want?

DISMAS

I wanted to be an acolyte to be closer to God.

GESTAS

There's only one way to do that. Meet the Rabbi.

DISMAS

In the Temple you called him the Son of God.

GESTAS

Next to this well I call him the Son of God.

DISMAS

Do you really believe that?

GESTAS

I wouldn't have said such a dangerous thing if it weren't true.

DISMAS

Has the Rabbi said that himself?

GESTAS

He's smarter than that. That's what makes him different than the others. There are a lot of men claiming to be the Son of God walking around nowadays. That's why they all get sent to Golgotha. Not Jesus. Not this time.

DISMAS

Then how do you know?

GESTAS

That he's the Son of God?

DISMAS

Yes.

GESTAS

Because he is going to destroy Rome and the Temple.

DISMAS

But how do you know that?

GESTAS

Because no one could have restored my faith in God. It wasn't going to happen. It simply was not possible. And then it was. If he could give me faith, then he can do anything.

DISMAS

Caiaphas and Saul? They're scared. I think they're really scared. They're trying not to show it but after what you did in the Temple...

they're going to try to stop you. Pilate, too.  
Especially Pilate. He won't let you win.

GESTAS

Do you have any idea how valuable you could be to us?  
Having you inside the Temple?

DISMAS

They already suspect me of being in contact with you.  
They think that I'm with you.

GESTAS

Are you?

DISMAS

I don't know. I honestly don't know.

GESTAS

It's good that they suspect you. They also want you to  
help them, don't they? Dismas, you could be the person  
who makes this possible.

DISMAS

So if I refuse then that means you would fail. If you  
fail, then he's not the Messiah. You're not doing a good  
job of convincing me, Gestas.

GESTAS

You think believing in him is easy? That it's a choice?  
It's not like that.

DISMAS

You said something in the Temple. Something that you  
never would have said if you weren't sure of yourself.

GESTAS

Then you know how serious I am. How serious this is.

DISMAS

You have no fear.

GESTAS

I don't need to be afraid.

DISMAS

Then you're stupid. Destroying the Temple, destroying Rome... it's simply not possible.

GESTAS

You think the Messiah needs a Temple?

DISMAS

Even if you did destroy the Temple, what then? What happens next?

GESTAS

The Kingdom of God, Dismas.

DISMAS

I'm sorry, but if God wanted to establish his Kingdom on Earth he wouldn't ask one of us to help him do it.

GESTAS

Why not?

DISMAS

He doesn't need our help. He's God.

GESTAS

Rome does not respond to our God. They will respond to the Rabbi.

DISMAS

This is impossible.

GESTAS

That's the good thing about the Rabbi. Making the impossible possible? That's what he does.

DISMAS

I met him.

GESTAS

You what?

DISMAS

I think I met him. Earlier today. I think he came to the Temple.

GESTAS

He wouldn't have done that.

DISMAS

There was a man, and he told me this story about a king and a slave, and then he just walked away.

GESTAS

Sounds like him.

DISMAS

Exactly! And you're telling me that he's smart? Showing his face in the Temple again?

GESTAS

I don't know what to tell you, Dismas. I'm not him.

DISMAS

Can you take me to him?

GESTAS

No. Absolutely not.

DISMAS

Do you want me to help you or not?

GESTAS

I do, but...

DISMAS

You trust me? You've told me a lot about your plans already, so you must trust me.

GESTAS

We don't take outsiders into the camp. Security.

DISMAS

You could blindfold me, I really don't care. Just let me talk to him.

GESTAS

Do you trust us? I'm not going to take you to him unless you tell me that you trust us.

DISMAS

I don't trust Caiaphas and Saul.

GESTAS

Do you want to see the Temple destroyed?

DISMAS

I want to see God.

GESTAS

Soon, Dismas, I think you might.

GESTAS walks away. DISMAS  
follows him close behind.

### SCENE THREE

Somewhere outside of  
Jerusalem. JUDAS, as well as  
a group of DISCIPLES, are  
listening to JESUS speak.

JESUS

You know what they're saying in the Temple right now,  
don't you? You heard it on the Temple steps yesterday.  
They called us blasphemers. They called us heathens.  
They called us idolaters. But they called us something  
else, something that Caiaphas clearly cannot accept.  
They called us *treasonous*.

THE DISCIPLES laugh.

JESUS (CONT'D)

As if there could be nothing worse than fighting against  
Rome. As if there could be nothing worse than refusing  
to honor a man who prays to a thousand different Gods,  
who occupies our land, who refuses to hear our cries for  
help, who hand-picks our Priests, who murders our  
brothers, as if there could be nothing worse than  
honoring a man like that. And yet I stand before  
Caiaphas and I say, "Be warned, Priest.

The temple will fall in three days time," to which he responds, "That is treason." Brothers, there is something different between us and the rest of them. The Priests would sooner bless Caesar than bless a hungry child. They accept rule from the other side of the world. We do not accept that rule, and therefore this kingdom we find ourselves in, this new empire, this world itself cannot stand. A Temple who serves both Rome and God, that Temple cannot stand. The Priests will try to tell you that they exist to maintain God's rule in the face of this Roman Empire, but I say to you, how can Satan cast out Satan?

THE DISCIPLES cheer. GESTAS  
and DISMAS enter, unnoticed.

JESUS (CONT'D)

But make no mistake, brothers. This fight of ours, though just, though sacred, though righteous, will not be an easy one. Rome is a powerful enemy and Caiaphas, though a sinner who has broken every single commandment he swore to protect, is too a powerful enemy. But Caiaphas is our brother. I know that may sound strange coming from my mouth, but it is true. And any sins he has committed against you or me or any other of our brothers, I forgive them. We all forgive them. The Lord we serve is a just Lord, and Caiaphas will learn that to be true first hand. For even though his sins against us are forgiven, the sins he has committed against our Father will never and can never be forgiven. Caiaphas, Pilate, Caesar and his Sinning Gods, all those who sin against our Lord will never be forgiven, never enter the Kingdom of God, and live forever in darkness and pain, a pain and darkness we will serve them first hand!

As the DISCIPLES cheer  
again, JESUS approaches  
DISMAS.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Dismas! Welcome!

DISMAS

How.. How did you know my name?

JESUS

Don't look so surprised, Lender. Gestas told me. I'm not a magician.

GESTAS

Dismas is interested in what you have to say.

JESUS

I told you not to bring anyone here.

GESTAS

He was quite insistent.

JESUS

So was I.

JUDAS

(Drawing his sword)

Only one thing left to do then.

DISMAS steps back, GESTAS puts his body in front of him. Several other DISCIPLES stand behind JUDAS, but JESUS simply lifts his hand.

JESUS

And what would that be, Judas?

JUDAS

He's seen our camp. He knows who we are.

JESUS

The entire city knows who we are now. That doesn't matter. And he came here to help us, right?

DISMAS nods.

JUDAS

How can we trust him? He's a lender. Why would he want anything to do with us?

JESUS

We could ask him ourselves.

Everyone turns to DISMAS.

DISMAS

I've worked in the shadow of the Temple for my entire life. All I've ever wanted was to know my God. I've had no luck with the Priests or the Temple.

JUDAS

You're a better liar than that, I know you are.

JESUS

Calm down, Judas.

JUDAS

Why are we even discussing this? He is one of them!

JESUS

If you wanted to kill him, you would have done it already. I'm not stopping you.

JUDAS

Alright then.

JUDAS goes for DISMAS.

GESTAS

(Panicked)

He can help us!

JUDAS

He can help us by dying.

GESTAS

He knows the Temple and he knows Caiaphas and Saul. He can help us.

JESUS

Is that so?

DISMAS

I was an acolyte. I've been a lender for years. Caiaphas and Saul wanted me to gather information about you for them. They still expect me to. They've blackmailed me. I can get them away from the Temple. I can distract them.

JUDAS

Would you kill them?

DISMAS

What?

JUDAS

Why distract them? Why not kill them? Save a step.

DISMAS

I don't... I...

JUDAS

And why were you kicked out? You said you *were* an acolyte. You're not a Priest now, so why were you kicked out?

DISMAS

A disagreement with Saul.

GESTAS

It doesn't matter why he was kicked out.

JUDAS

(Furious)

IT MATTERS TO ME. And it should matter to you, too. But it obviously doesn't. None of this matters to you.

GESTAS

What is that supposed to mean?

JUDAS

(Counting each sentence out on his fingers.)

Taking a former acolyte - who was probably sent here by Caiaphas - at his word? Letting strangers into our encampment? Hiding out in plain sight discussing *treason*? Ransacking the Temple, *warning* the Priests about our intentions, and then leaving to give them time to prepare? Lying about miracles to prove a point? And saying, *out loud*, the *one* thing we all agreed to *never say out loud*?

After all of this, do you all still think we have a chance? Do you still think that we are going to succeed?

THE DISCIPLES all disagree with JUDAS and try to shut him down. "Yes we will!" "Have faith!" "Listen to your Rabbi!"

GESTAS

Do you not believe in us anymore, Judas?

JUDAS

What makes us any different from the rest of them? Sixty years we've been under Roman rule. And in sixty years how many people just like our beloved Rabbi have there been? What makes us so different?

GESTAS

The message, Judas. And the messenger. You've seen our numbers grow every single day for the past three years. We're different because the Rabbi is different.

Pause.

JUDAS

You, Lender, why do you think this is different?

DISMAS

I didn't think I would ever try to know my God after I was kicked out of the Priesthood. If the Rabbi can give me hope, even for a second, I believe that he could do anything.

JUDAS

Will you follow him, with this great new hope you have?

JESUS

I think he would rather take a chance than accept a cross without even fighting first, Judas.

JUDAS

(Angry, frustrated)

You *know* that's not what I'm saying.

JESUS

Then what are you saying? You've been a leader here for years, and now you've accepted failure without even starting the fight.

JUDAS

We used to be smarter than this, Jesus. We used to let the message speak for itself. We didn't need swords before.

JESUS

You can't start a new kingdom without destroying the old one first. The Kingdom of God cannot exist so long as the Temple exists, Judas. You know that.

JUDAS

That's what made us different. That's why I thought, why I *knew* that we would not fail. Because we were smarter. Because we had *you*. Then we got messy. *You* got messy. *You* got arrogant. It became about *you* instead of us, and now you're going to get us all killed because you have the ego and pride to call *my* God your *father*.

With that, JUDAS has gone too far. JESUS punches JUDAS in the gut. He doubles over. The rest of the crowd backs away in fear.

JESUS

What did you just say?

JESUS kicks JUDAS, who falls on his back on the ground.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Who do you think I think I am?

JUDAS

I loved you so much, Rabbi. I had faith in you.

JESUS

And what good is faith without works? You came to me years ago and you were hungry and cold and I fed you and clothed you. Did I tell you to go be warm and have your fill without giving you what you needed? You say you have faith, and I say your faith is dead. You have faith, and your faith is meaningless.

JUDAS

(Standing up)

What a Messiah you would have been, Jesus. Fine... Go walk straight into Pilate's hands. See if I care.

JESUS

I will, Judas.

Judas begins to leave, but  
then JESUS speaks again.

JESUS

And when I greet him and warn him of his fate, when I tell him what happens to those who do not follow me, when I tell him what happens to liars and mutineers and betrayers, I will tell him to take solace in knowing that he will be in good company with the likes of you. See if you care.

JUDAS knows that JESUS is  
serious. He looks at his old  
friend at once with pity and  
scorn, throws down his  
sword, and leaves.

JESUS takes a moment to  
compose himself. He then  
looks at his followers.

JESUS (CONT'D)

(to all the DISCIPLES)

A family divided against itself cannot stand. Are we that family?!

THE DISCIPLES cheer.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Eat and drink hearty, men. In two nights, we dine with the angels. Bless you all, brothers. Amen, I say to you, you will all be with me in paradise.

THE DISCIPLES break up and move apart.

GESTAS and DISMAS stay close by. JESUS approaches DISMAS.

JESUS (CONT'D)

I am sorry you had to see that. In any army there is dissent amongst the ranks at some point. He and I... that fight was a long time coming.

JESUS doesn't look at GESTAS and DISMAS. He instead looks off in the distance after JUDAS.

GESTAS

Are you ok?

JESUS

(Suddenly, sharply)

Yes.

GESTAS

Don't let Judas's outburst dissuade you, Dismas. Everyone here is united in their faith.

DISMAS

He seemed very...

JESUS

There was nothing I could do for him. I'm not interested in him anymore. I am interested in what you can do for me.

GESTAS

You need access to the Temple, but there is no way you would be able to get anywhere close as long as there are any Romans around. Dismas tells Caiaphas and Saul to tell Pilate where they can find you. They send their forces away. You take the Temple.

JESUS

Sounds easy enough.

DISMAS

Wait, no... that's.... Saul would never believe me. He's way too smart. He'll know I'm lying.

GESTAS

Will he? Or will he think you're doing whatever you need to do in order to get back into the priesthood?

JESUS

He wants me so badly he won't think twice about it. You tell him you can give me up, he'd follow you to a brothel on a Saturday.

DISMAS

I don't know about this.

JESUS

I do. Can I trust you?

GESTAS

You can trust him.

JESUS

I'm asking Dismas.

DISMAS hesitates. He looks around at the camp, then back at JESUS and GESTAS.

Can I trust *you*?

GESTAS

Dismas.

JESUS

Let him talk.

DISMAS

Yesterday morning I was getting ready for the Passover Festival. Then you came and destroyed everything. The Festival is in chaos, and you claim you're doing this all for God? How can you be a servant of God when you want to make worshipping him impossible? How can you be a servant of God, a true servant of God, when you claim to be God yourself?

JESUS

(Forcefully)

Make no mistake, Lender, I never *once* said that to anyone. What people say about me is one thing, but I'm not so foolish that I would build my own cross.

DISMAS

Is it true?

JESUS

Did you see what happened to Judas? Did you see what I had to do to my *closest brother* for saying something like that out loud?

DISMAS

*Is it true?*

JESUS

Does it matter?

DISMAS

To Gestas it does, apparently.

JESUS

Well then, Gestas, what do you think? *Is it true?*

GESTAS

Yes.

JESUS

Then it's true. Dismas, does it matter to you?

DISMAS

I don't know.

JESUS

Then it doesn't matter. I learned a long time ago that the truth doesn't matter. It's what you decide to do with it that counts.

DISMAS

If the truth doesn't matter, then why are you even doing this? What makes you different than the rest of them? I want you to tell me. Not someone else.

JESUS

If you need me to convince you, then you can't be convinced.

DISMAS

Most people will never get the chance to meet you. I have that chance. Convince me.

JESUS

I don't know if I can convince you, but I can tell you a story.

DISMAS

Why tell a story when you could just tell me the truth?

JESUS

Why tell the truth when I could just tell you a story.

GESTAS

It's better if you just listen. He likes it when people listen.

JESUS

What do they call me, Dismas?

DISMAS

Rabbi. Prophet... the Son of....

JESUS

(Cutting him off)

The Son of the Carpenter, yes.

They call me the Son of the Carpenter, which I am. My trade since birth - creating things. What else do they call me? Where do they say I'm from.

DISMAS

I've heard some people call you the Nazarene.

JESUS

And what do you know about Nazareth?

DISMAS

Not much. What I've heard from people. In passing.

JESUS

Don't try to flatter me. What do you know about Nazareth? Have you been there yourself?

DISMAS

Yes.

JESUS

Well, that explains why you're trying to flatter me.

As JESUS speaks, DISCIPLES begin to gather around him to listen to his story. By the end of the story, the entire lot has gathered behind him.

JESUS (CONT'D)

You grew up in Jerusalem, I take it. Your idea of poverty is begging outside the Temple. You've been hungry, but you've never been so hungry that you can feel walls of your stomach, brick by brick, falling. Collapsing on themselves. In Nazareth, this was our day-in and day-out. Even after the Romans came we were no better off. Sepphoris, however... Sepphoris was different. I was born on the day they sacked the city. I bet you didn't know that. See, Nazareth got off easy when the Romans came. They wanted nothing with a half-dozen mud huts and a handful of illiterate Jews.

He stops, then looks around  
at his crowd.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Guess they still want nothing with us.

They all laugh. Except for  
DISMAS, who is enthralled.

Sepphoris was different, obviously. A great and powerful city all but destroyed, and for what? To put freedom fighters like us in their place. To send a message. Well, the message was well received. There hasn't been a revolution. Until now. All thanks to the great and wonderful sacking of Sepphoris...

He pauses for a moment,  
looks at his followers, then  
looks down at the ground.

There wasn't much work for my father and I in Nazareth, as I'm sure you've figured out. I mean what impressive wooden buildings would you find in a place like Nazareth? But Sepphoris? A different story. Entirely. That was a story about men like my father and I earning our keep. We built that city from the ground up. That's where I learned my trade. My father and I would walk there every morning. Every single morning, we'd wake up in our hut made of mud and shit and sweat and we'd walk six miles to Sepphoris where we built wooden palaces for the scholars and the merchants and the Rabbis. We would spend every day hammering and cutting and lifting, us Nazarenes in the city of scholars who did nothing all day but talk about how they lived in the city of scholars... At night, we'd come home to our starving families with whatever scrap we were given that night and we'd eat a little bread if we were lucky and maybe drink a little milk if we were blessed with half-healthy goats. We'd talk about how to make better lives for ourselves. We'd debate moving to the capital. We'd talk about selling the goats.

The Rabbis, the merchants, they'd spend their nights walking around in homes we had built for them where they'd talk about how to keep on being Rabbis and merchants. How to keep things the way they were. Not about how to improve them. Just how to keep them the same. How to keep them from changing while we in Nazareth waited for the change to come.

JESUS looks at his disciples. He goes up to one of them who is holding a sword. He holds out his hands, and the follower hands him the weapon. JESUS inspects it, touches the blade. It is sharp.

JESUS (CONT'D)

We still want that change. Now we're not waiting for it.

He hands the sword back to his disciple.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Night and mornings with the meek. Days with the powerful. This went on for years and years and years. Mind you, Sepphoris wasn't all bad. I enjoyed listening in on the conversations of the wealthy. No matter who you are, rich or poor, imagining yourself higher on the rung is tempting. So I'd listen to the Rabbis as they talked about a new tax or a new deal with Rome, whatever it may have been. I learned what they all wanted, and what I learned was this: it doesn't take a Rabbi to know what God expects of you. But you know that already. Don't you, Dismas?

After a moment, DISMAS nods his head in agreement.

One day as I was working I overheard a couple of the Rabbis talking about a man. A baptist who had been preaching in the mountains. John, they called him. Said he was a revolutionary.

Said that he was professing the coming of Isaiah's promise. In my life I had never known the meaning of a full stomach. I had never experienced comfort, and I certainly had never known God. I had heard Rabbis talking all the time about God, but mostly they were talking about themselves. To hear them say that lions and lambs are getting cozy... I had no choice. I had to see him. I left Nazareth and Sepphoris behind me and I traveled to the River Jordan to meet the Baptist... They call me Rabbi, preacher, prophet, leader. They call me... sometimes, some of them do call me the chosen one. Make no mistake, if there was ever a Messiah, if there was ever a Savior, if there was ever a champion for our people, it was John.

Suddenly, JESUS'S demeanor changes. Where once there was pride and confidence now there is sadness.

He was my friend. He opened my heart, but more importantly he opened my eyes. "Why is it," he asked me, "that you, a poor man, must work for a rich man who doesn't work? Why is it that those same men claim to hold the key to Heaven, claim to hold all of the answers, when they never could possibly understand the questions? The tree is rotten," he said. "And what do you do with a rotten tree? You chop it down"... he would have done it, too... he would have... I spent my nights with the poor, my days with the rich. One day, John told me, the two would be switched. That day was coming, and I was the one to bring it. John gave me the axe. Now I'm about to swing it.

Silence.

GESTAS

(To DISMAS)

This is how he is different. This isn't some scholar or mad man. He is one of us.

DISMAS does not know how to respond.

JESUS

Is there something you want to ask me?

DISMAS searches for the words, then finds them.

DISMAS

Why are you dressed like a bridegroom? The white, the red... why?

THE DISCIPLES laugh.

JESUS

Because I'm going to a wedding.

Throughout his next speech, the DISCIPLES get more and more excited, responding to JESUS with cheers of agreement.

JESUS (CONT'D)

I am renewing the vows of Israel to God. You see, Israel and God had a happy marriage. After their wedding day at the base of Mount Sinai in the Land of Milk and Honey, the marriage was set to be everlasting and joyous. God loved his bride, and Israel loved her bridegroom. But Israel has sinned. Israel has committed adultery. Caiaphas has committed adultery with Pilate. The Temple is a bastion of whoredom and Israel has been made the harlot of Rome. Israel: Babylon the Great, the Mother of Abominations. The covenant has been broken, the marriage has failed!

JESUS pauses. The DISCIPLES agree, "*Down with Rome!*" "*Amen!*" "*Praise God!*"

I'm here to pledge Israel's love to God again. I am going to destroy the Temple of Jerusalem and usher in the Kingdom of God on this rotten Earth, and you, Dismas, you are going to help me do it.

Caiaphas is a strong man, and the Temple is his home. So what do you do if you want to destroy that home? You subdue the strong man. You will take Caiaphas and Saul and Pilate outside the city gates and you will make them watch as their city burns.

THE DISCIPLES cheer for  
their leader.

JESUS (CONT'D)

They will call you blasphemous. They will call you treasonous. But you serve me now, and know this: I am the God of Blasphemy and the Caesar of Treason. I will meet the Priests as though I were a mother bear taken from her whelps, and I will baptize the world. *With fire.*

SCENE FOUR

JUDAS is far away from Jerusalem. He has set up a tent and a fire and is drinking from a skin of wine. He squeezes every last drop out of it that he can, then throws the skin away.

JUDAS

Useless.

SIMON enters, carrying a large sack of materials as though he is traveling very far away. JUDAS does not notice him immediately.

SIMON

Thirsty?

JUDAS jumps.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you.

JUDAS

Yes.

SIMON

What?

JUDAS

Yes, I'm thirsty.

SIMON offers him his skin of wine. JUDAS takes it and drinks from it, greedily.

SIMON

You're a long way from home.

JUDAS

As are you.

SIMON

Jerusalem's not my home anymore.

JUDAS

Not mine either.

SIMON

This is news to me.

JUDAS

Though I guess it never really was to begin with.

SIMON

You and your friend. You were going to *make* it your home. No, sorry... your *Kingdom*.

JUDAS

And you were invited.

SIMON

I'm humbled.

JUDAS

And you helped us.

SIMON

Well... obviously my help did your cause a lot of good.

JUDAS

It did. It helped me to see just how wrong I was.

SIMON

I was wrong, too.

JUDAS

What were we thinking? Following that doomed fool?

SIMON

We made a simple mistake. We thought things could change.

JUDAS

I still think they can change.

SIMON

They can change, I guess. Rome can get stronger and the Temple can move further away from God and you and I can sink lower and lower until we're buried in the ground. *That's* how they can change.

JUDAS

I think that things can get better.

SIMON

If you did, you wouldn't be fleeing the city. Where are you going to go, anyway?

JUDAS

Away. Far away.

SIMON

And do what? At least I have a plan. The Zealots don't need the city.

JUDAS

I don't know. I was a blacksmith before I met Jesus.  
Maybe I can find work somewhere else.

SIMON

Maybe. But you know where the most work for people of  
your trade is, don't you?

JUDAS

I'm not an idiot. I would appreciate it if you didn't  
talk to me like I am one.

SIMON

Just conversation. Conversation between two ex-bandits.

JUDAS

You're still a bandit. You'll always be a wanted man.

SIMON

(Trying to be light)

You will, too. Hey, I guess we're still bandits after  
all. Let's drink to it.

JUDAS

I don't think that's true.

SIMON

What?

JUDAS

I'm not an outlaw. I don't have to be.

SIMON

You dragged a drunkard in front of Caiaphas and told him  
that he had been healed.

JUDAS

But I didn't do anything myself. Just said some words.

SIMON

Words are enough.

JUDAS

I don't know what I'll do, Simon. You're right. I stay in Jerusalem, they arrest me for treason. I leave, I starve to death in the desert or I am found and then arrested for treason.

SIMON

And then crucified.

JUDAS

None of this would have happened if I had listened to myself. If I had spoken my mind when I had the chance.

SIMON

What are you talking about?

JUDAS

When I first met him, I was broken. I had nothing. He took me in, fed me, clothed me. Then he told him his plan. He told me that he was going to lead the Jews into the Kingdom. At that point, I already knew he was doomed to fail. He told me about being honest and truthful and kind, and yet the only reason he took me in was that he needed a blacksmith for his mission. If I hadn't told him that, he would have probably left me in the streets. I should have told him that I saw through him. I should have told him that he would never defeat Rome. But he told me that those who had wronged me in my life would feel the wrath of God and that I would sit at his hand. He convinced me. He was so good at telling us the story we didn't even know that we wanted to hear: the story of a world that is just. Attainable. Now.

SIMON

He told me something similar.

JUDAS

What did he tell you?

SIMON

That the Zealots would one day be in power. That our mission would be fulfilled. That our mission and his mission were one in the same.

JUDAS

Were they not?

SIMON

I dreamed of a world in which God was all and all was God. He saw the world the same. Just a different idea of who God was.

JUDAS

What will you do now?

SIMON

Probably go to Sepphoris. Fall in with the others there. Wait out whatever happens at the Temple. Maybe I'll even celebrate the Festival like a good servant of God.

JUDAS

All this for a man who calls himself Messiah.

SIMON

Did you ever believe it?

JUDAS

Of course. I wanted Jerusalem destroyed. Then I thought about what that would really mean.

Silence.

SIMON

You know... there is another way.

JUDAS

What's that?

SIMON

You can't convince Jesus to stop, and you won't be able to convince anyone else to stop him.

You and I were the only ones who had a chance, and now look where we are. What do you think will happen if Jesus succeeds?

JUDAS

Chaos. God doesn't send the angels to help fools.

SIMON

And if he attacks and fails?

JUDAS

If you thought it was hard to be a Jew in Rome before, think about what it will be like then.

SIMON

Then you know what needs to be done.

Silence. JUDAS does know,  
but has been avoiding the  
thought.

JUDAS

If it were that simple, then why haven't you done it yet?

SIMON

And put myself in front of Caiaphas like that?

JUDAS

If you can't do it, then I certainly can't.

SIMON

I'm his rival. You just got caught in the middle of this.

JUDAS

Jesus trusted me above everyone else.

SIMON

Which is why Caiaphas will believe what you tell him, will listen to what you have to say.

JUDAS

No, Simon. You're not hearing me. Jesus *trusted* me.  
Above everyone else.

SIMON

And look at what he did with that trust.

JUDAS

How did it come to this?

SIMON

How could it not have?

## SCENE FIVE

JESUS is kneeling on the  
ground in a garden. He is  
deep in silent prayer. After  
a moment, GESTAS enters.

GESTAS

Rabbi?

JESUS

(Not looking up from prayer)

Alone, Gestas. I said I wanted to pray alone.

GESTAS

May I speak?

JESUS

Alone.

GESTAS

It's important.

JESUS

So is this.

GESTAS

Rabbi, please.

JESUS

Ok, Gestas.

GESTAS kneels.

GESTAS

I'm scared, Rabbi

JESUS

Scared.

GESTAS

Terrified, actually.

JESUS

As well you should be. We're going to war. If you weren't scared before going to war then you wouldn't be ready for it.

GESTAS

No. I'm not worried about the battle. I'm worried for what comes after. Rabbi, I've done things in my life. Terrible things. Terrible sins.

JESUS

I wouldn't trust any man who hasn't committed at least one terrible sin in his lifetime.

GESTAS

I don't think I belong in the Kingdom you plan to bring to this Earth. I don't think that I am worthy.

JESUS

What are you talking about, Gestas?

GESTAS

The Kingdom of God belongs to you and people like you. I'm not like you, Jesus.

JESUS

You think I won't let you into the Kingdom?

GESTAS

I don't know if it is up to you.

JESUS

Why wouldn't you be allowed? Say all your sins were forgiven. As if they had never even been committed. Why would you not be allowed to enter?

GESTAS

I'm a coward. I know what God says about sin, but I think being a coward is the greatest sin a man can commit. Fear to act, fear to exercise the instrument God has given you. Fear to do what God wants you to do.

JESUS

If being a coward is the greatest sin, then I'm the greatest sinner.

GESTAS

Please don't patronize me.

JESUS

Who's patronizing? It's a fact.

GESTAS

In what way are you a coward?

JESUS

In what way am I not?

GESTAS

You are leading an army to the gates of the Temple, to the gates of Rome.

JESUS

An army that may very well fail.

GESTAS

What?

JESUS

How do I know that this *army* of ours is going to be victorious? How do I know that you and I won't be on crosses before the week is over?

GESTAS

It has to succeed.

JESUS

Why is that?

GESTAS

Because if it doesn't, then... it has to succeed. And it will. You're right. This army cannot win the battle by itself. But we don't fight alone.

JESUS

No?

GESTAS

The angels will join us in the morning, Jesus. You know it, and I know it. The angels will join us in this fight.

JESUS

That makes me even more of a coward. I cannot fight by myself, I need to hide behind the wings of angels.

GESTAS

You have no reason to be afraid.

JESUS

How many hundreds of people have failed where we aim to succeed? If I weren't afraid of ending up like them, then I'd be doomed to.

GESTAS

You have no right to be afraid.

JESUS

Why are you allowed to be afraid and I'm not?

GESTAS

Because of who you are. I don't care what you say, I don't care what the others say, and I know I'm not supposed to say it, but I know that you are the one promised by Isaiah, and I know that you will fulfill Isaiah's promise.

JESUS

If you *know* that, then you don't have any right to be afraid either.

If you *know*, beyond any doubt, if you cannot be convinced otherwise, then you can put down your sword now because nothing else matters then, does it? If you claim to know this thing that you claim to *know*, then what does it matter what anyone else says? What does it matter what I say? I could say that I am the Son of the Carpenter, but you would say that you *know* that I am the Son of God, and that's the end of it.

GESTAS

Everyone needs to know. People *need* to know. That's why I'm not putting down my sword.

JESUS

No, you're not putting down your sword because I haven't told you to.

GESTAS

If you want me to stay behind, I will.

JESUS

You're missing the *point*, Gestas. You're a follower. That isn't what I wanted. I wanted you to fight *with* me. Not *for* me. This... all of this... this isn't about me.

JESUS stares into GESTAS'S eyes until he knows that GESTAS sees the truth.

Now go. I need to pray.

JESUS returns to his prayers. Not knowing what else to do, GESTAS leaves.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE SIX

CAIAPHAS and SAUL are sitting in the Temple listening to DISMAS.

SAUL

You know this how?

DISMAS

They told me. I gathered information about them, like you asked.

CAIAPHAS

They're in Tekoah?

SAUL

That's only four hours from here.

DISMAS

That's where their encampment is. Not far from the city gates.

SAUL

Why are you telling us this?

DISMAS

I'm doing what you asked.

SAUL

Why are you doing what we asked?

DISMAS

I feel it is my duty to do so.

CAIAPHAS

You don't want us to remove you from your post. You're doing this out of fear.

DISMAS

I'm doing it because I serve my Priest. And my God.

CAIAPHAS

I believe you. Saul, do you believe him?

SAUL

I believe him. If we warn Pilate now we can have cavalry in Tekoah before sunrise.

DISMAS

Thank you, Saul. Thank you, Rabbi.

SAUL

No, thank you, Dismas. You're doing a righteous thing.

CAIAPHAS

Tell me, Dismas, when are they planning to make their next move?

DISMAS

They were rather secretive, but I think that it's going to happen soon. They wouldn't tell me specifics.

SAUL

What did they tell you?

CAIAPHAS

About Jesus, specifically?

DISMAS

That he is a Rabbi. That he wants to destroy the Temple.

CAIAPHAS

Do they call him the One?

DISMAS

Rabbi?

CAIAPHAS

The Messiah, Dismas? Do they call him King?

DISMAS

They call him Rabbi.

CAIAPHAS

Dismas. I'm going to ask you one more time. Do they call him the Son of God?

Silence.

DISMAS

They call him Rabbi.

Silence.

CAIAPHAS

You know what? The saddest thing is that you almost had me fooled. You see, after we captured Gestas outside of the Garden, he was like you. He didn't give away important information. "Where is he?" the soldier shouted as he struck him in the gut with the butt of his spear. No answer. "Where is Jesus?" They would shout as they broke every bone in his cheek. No answer. "Where is the Son of the Carpenter?" That seemed to do the trick. "*He's the Son of God!*" Oh, I wish I had been there. A rider arrived just before you with the news. Bad luck for you, I'm afraid. Apparently once your friend Gestas saw the rebel being dragged out of the garden, he burst into tears. He stopped resisting. He just broke down. How about you, Dismas? Are you going to break down?

CAIAPHAS motions off stage.  
Several CENTURIONS enter,  
armed.

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)

Because I don't think that you are here to serve God. I think you're here to serve the Rabbi. I think you thought you would trick us. I think you think we're stupid. Do you think we're stupid?

DISMAS  
(Defeated)

No.

CAIAPHAS

Do you think we are going to be fooled by you?

DISMAS

No.

CAIAPHAS

Do you think that we are going to be undone by another rebel just because he has you on his side?

DISMAS

One day.

CAIAPHAS

What was that?

DISMAS

Maybe not today. Maybe not this week. Maybe not for a thousand years. But one day, things are going to change. Things will change.

Another group of CENTURIONS enters with GESTAS, in chains. GESTAS is not resisting. He is not bold, he is not fierce. He is a broken man.

CAIAPHAS

Perfect timing! This must be Gestas. What have you done with the Rabbi?

CENTURION 1

Took him directly to Pilate as ordered.

CAIAPHAS

Good. Now, Gestas, your friend here was just telling me that things were going to change! He was preaching the same thing that your King preached. Things are going to change. How does that sound, Gestas? Do you like that? Looks like things are already changing for you.

Silence.

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)

Remember this: There is no change where God is concerned. If our Lord wanted things to change, he would have done it himself. He wouldn't send a handful of thieves and a street preacher to do his work for him.

SAUL

Take them both to the dungeons. No sense making two trips to Golgotha in one day. We'll wait for Pilate to finish up with the rebel.

DISMAS

The cross?

SAUL

Crimes against Rome, Dismas. Of course you get the cross. You, your friend, and your Rabbi. The next piles of bones to decorate the hill. Take them.

The CENTURIONS try to subdue  
DISMAS, but he resists.

DISMAS

(Fighting, desperate)

No, no, no, no, not the cross, please.

SAUL

You knew this was coming, Dismas.

DISMAS

Stones, swords, anything but the cross.

CAIAPHAS

You earned the cross, you get the cross. Both of you.  
You and the man you call God.

GESTAS finds his courage.  
Still in chains, he runs  
after CAIAPHAS and tackles  
him to the ground. He  
punches him and beats him  
with his chains until the  
CENTURIONS are able to free  
CAIAPHAS. Finally, both  
DISMAS and GESTAS are  
subdued. CAIAPHAS stands.

SAUL

Are you finished?

GESTAS says nothing.

SAUL (CONT'D)

Good. Dismas, I know you're scared of the cross, but take comfort. All your life you've been trying to get closer to your God.

SAUL reaches out to DISMAS  
as though being crucified.

SAUL (CONT'D)

Now you'll be so close that you can just... barely... touch him.

CAIAPHAS

To the dungeons.

THE CENTURIONS drag DISMAS  
and GESTAS away as the  
lights slowly fade to

BLACKOUT. END OF ACT II.

## ACT III - INTO YOUR KINGDOM

## SCENE ONE

DISMAS and GESTAS are in the dungeon. The two are chained to a pillar, but have enough slack to be able to move around. DISMAS is trying to hear what is happening outside through the door. GESTAS is sitting next to the pillar, dejected and defeated.

DISMAS

I can't hear anything.

He half-waits for a response from GESTAS but knows that he won't get one.

DISMAS (CONT'D)

He must still be with Pilate.

DISMAS puts his ear closer to the door.

DISMAS (CONT'D)

I wonder if they'll bring him down here.

At this, GESTAS has heard enough. He punches the pillar and tries to break free from his chains, all in vain. DISMAS goes to him.

DISMAS (CONT'D)

Calm down, Gestas.

GESTAS

Get away.

GESTAS shoves DISMAS. He  
falls on his back.

DISMAS

(Trying to stay composed)

I'm here, too. I'm with you.

GESTAS

Don't. Just. Don't.

DISMAS

You're scared?

GESTAS

I am not.

DISMAS

I am, too.

GESTAS says nothing.

DISMAS

It's ok.

GESTAS clangs his shakles  
together.

GESTAS

That doesn't sound like ok to me.

DISMAS

Gestas...

GESTAS

Not another word. Not. One more. Word. Until you say it.

DISMAS

I don't know what you want me to say.

GESTAS

Admit it.

DISMAS

Admit what, what are you talking about?

GESTAS

It's my fault really. I should have seen it. I should have known.

DISMAS

Do you want to ask me something?

GESTAS

That's the thing about playing both sides, I guess. Neither has any real reason to trust you. Every time you trust someone you flip a coin. But I forgot that your coins are always fake.

DISMAS

I didn't say a word, Gestas.

GESTAS

And yet here we are.

DISMAS

You got caught. I didn't tell them where to find you.

GESTAS

If they had caught us when we were on the move, that would have been one thing. But they found us *in the garden*. How would they have known to find us there? The only people who knew that Jesus liked to pray there were people who knew Jesus. People like you.

DISMAS

It could have been any number of people, Gestas, *if* you were informed on. Maybe there were just people looking for you.

GESTAS

Don't start.

DISMAS

Maybe if you hadn't told them exactly what you were going to do. Maybe if you hadn't gone straight to Caiaphas and gave him exactly what he needed to put you in here.

Maybe if you had, yes, if you *had* been smarter, maybe they wouldn't have had any reason at all to put you in here and Jesus up there.

GESTAS

So what, you're saying that we would have been successful if we hadn't thrown out the pilgrims? You're saying that you would have been willing to let innocent Jews die in the wake of our attack? You're saying that taking the Temple would have been easier if there were a thousand people in the way?

DISMAS

That didn't stop you from making your first move, it wouldn't have stopped you from making your last one.

GESTAS

Do you think we would have won? Do you think that we'd be in the Kingdom of God right now if we hadn't hit you? Don't answer that question because I know the answer and I know that you think this was doomed from the start.

DISMAS

Yes, I did, but that doesn't mean that I don't think that things could have gone another way.

GESTAS

You thought we were doomed, so you tried to sell us out to Caiaphas in order to save yourself, but you didn't count on Caiaphas and Saul not honoring your *previous relationship* and sending you right down here with me. You flipped a coin, too.

DIMAS

This isn't my fault, Dismas.

GESTAS

So you're saying it's *my* fault?

DISMAS

I'm saying that we're in this dungeon, we're probably going to be crucified...

GESTAS

*Probably? When we're crucified - not if, when - I want you to tell that to me again. I want you to tell me to accept it then.*

DISMAS

That isn't what I meant.

GESTAS

What else could you have meant?

DISMAS

This isn't over, Gestas.

GESTAS

It was over three hours ago.

DISMAS

It doesn't have to be.

The door to the dungeon swings open, and PILATE enters flanked by two centurions. DISMAS and GESTAS look at him.

PILATE reads from a scroll.

PILATE

Sedition?

DISMAS

Yes.

PILATE

(To GESTAS)

The same?

GESTAS spits on the ground.

PILATE (CONT'D)

Golgotha, then. Shame we couldn't get more of you, but at least we got the one we wanted.

DISMAS

Where is he?

PILATE

What, the Rebel?

DISMAS

Jesus. Where is he? We were told that he was to be brought to you.

PILATE

(Flippant)

He was. We talked about the weather, wine, and women. You know. What dead men prefer to think about before their crucifixion.

DISMAS

Where is he now?

PILATE

The yard.

DISMAS

You've let him go?

PILATE

You're the lender, aren't you? I recognize you. Your priest mentioned that I might know you, but now I remember you. Money Lending is a necessary profession. Maybe not a noble one, but a necessary one to be sure. What brings you down here?

DISMAS

Not mine.

PILATE

What was that?

DISMAS

Caiaphas is *not* my Priest.

PILATE

He would beg to differ.

GESTAS

Why is the Nazarene in the yard?

PILATE

See, I'm of the opinion - and your Priests disagree - that whippings don't happen enough in public. We torture you down here, it's a secret. I want everyone to know. I want everyone to see. (Pause) Most of your rebels we send up to Golgotha without a second thought. One thing I'll say for him, the Nazarene made us think twice.

GESTAS

You're going to flog him?

PILATE

Repeatedly.

GESTAS

Good. Give him one from me.

DISMAS

Gestas...

PILATE

You are being charged with sedition, aren't you? That makes you one of the Nazarene's followers, does it not?

GESTAS

I did follow him. Not anymore.

PILATE

Shame. You're going to have to follow him up Golgotha soon.

GESTAS

And I'll hate myself every step.

PILATE

You people. You make no sense to me. You curse the Nazarene's name, the Zealot runs away to Sepphoris, our informant hangs himself outside the city walls, Saul leaves the city talking about a pain in his eyes...

DISMAS

Your informant?

PILATE

Ah, yes. Your friend Judas Iscariot? Told us where to find your leader. He regretted doing that.

GESTAS begins to cry softly.

PILATE (CONT'D)

Are you crying, bandit? Save your tears. You are going to need them.

PILATE exits.

GESTAS collapses to the floor.

DISMAS

Judas. It was Judas.

Silence

DISMAS (CONT'D)

Do you believe me now?

GESTAS

We should have killed him like he was going to kill you.

DISMAS

You can't be surprised.

GESTAS says nothing.

DISMAS

You kicked him out.

GESTAS

He left. Of his own accord. *We* didn't do anything to him. No. That's not true. We took him in. There was our first mistake.

DISMAS

Mistake?

GESTAS

Dismas, I want to hear what you were saying before Pilate came in.

DISMAS

What?

GESTAS

About our fight not being over. Explain, please. I'm in the mood for a good joke. I apologize if I don't laugh, I'm about to die.

DISMAS

It's not a joke. Why should our fight against Rome be finished just because we're finished?

GESTAS

I can think of several reasons.

DISMAS

This is bigger than any one person. It has to be. What we've done is just the beginning. People have heard the message: things have to change.

GESTAS

Things can't change. Not anymore.

DISMAS

Why do you say that?

GESTAS

Even if I explained it to you, it wouldn't matter. We'll both be dead soon.

DISMAS

You can't see how this might possibly be bigger than you?

GESTAS

(Serious, somber)

It has always been bigger than me.

DISMAS

Then why can't you hear what I'm saying?

GESTAS is about to respond, but something interrupts him. The sound is faint - a crowd cheering up above. Nothing specific can be heard, but the crowd is obviously very large and very angry.

GESTAS

They've brought him outside. They're about to start.

GESTAS stands and rattles his chains.

GESTAS (CONT'D)

THAT'S RIGHT! THAT'S WHAT YOU GET! BLASPHEMER! FALSE IDOL! FALSE FRIEND! YOU SEE WHAT HAPPENS? YOU BROKE MY HEART, AND NOW THEY'LL BREAK YOUR SKIN!

DISMAS

Calm down, Gestas! What is wrong with you?

GESTAS

Listen to what you've been saying. The fight can go on. Things will change. THAT MAN IS NOT THE MESSIAH! HOW CAN THINGS CHANGE!

DISMAS

I don't know if that matters anymore.

GESTAS

When I was living in Jerusalem, long before I ever met that doomed man outside, you know what I would do for fun?

I would sometimes, for no reason at all, I would sometimes go to the base of Golgotha and watch them take Messiah after Messiah up to the top of the hill. It's a long walk, but you can still hear the screams as clear as ever from the base of the mountain. I would listen and I would watch and I would laugh because you know what I thought? Blasphemers get what they deserve. Calling yourself the Messiah just because you don't want to pay a tax. Declaring yourself king just because you're hungry. It's not that easy. And Jesus knew that. But then he was smarter than the rest of them. That's why he was able to convince me. All of us. He didn't preach like the others. He told stories. He made us listen. And he listened to us, that was the other thing. He listened to what we had to say, and he wanted to hear us say it. Or at least that's what I thought. He was smarter than the rest of them because he never had to call himself the Son of God; he let us work that out for ourselves.

SNAP.

AND THE ROAR OF THE CROWD.

The whippings have begun.  
They continue over GESTAS...

GESTAS (CONT'D)

You hear that? Do you hear what that is? That is the sound of the Son of God screaming for his father. That is the sound of a liar being found out. YOU DIDN'T THINK YOU'D BE GREETED AT YOUR FATHER'S HOUSE LIKE THIS, DID YOU? What kind of Messiah gets whipped by Centurions? What kind of Messiah gets brought before Pilate? What kind of Messiah gets sentenced to sedition? To *sedition*? The Son of God being subjected to the laws of *men*? I'll tell you what kind of Messiah. The kind of Messiah that *isn't* a messiah. How can a dead man usher in the Kingdom of God? How can a corpse destroy the Temple? How can a man being beaten *as we speak* call himself the Ruler of the Universe? You said it yourself, Dismas. God doesn't need the help of men to do what he wants to do. Why would he?

At this point, the whipping  
is so powerful and  
consistent that it nearly  
drowns out the sound of the  
crowd.

YOU HEAR THAT, GOD, DO YOU? THAT'S YOUR SON! YOU SHOULD  
PROBABLY HELP HIM! Better yet, *save yourself*, Jesus of  
Nazareth! You were going to bring the angels to help you  
in the battle. You're a healer. So heal your own wounds  
and save yourself. Because God isn't going to help you,  
you know why? BECAUSE GOD DOESN'T LISTEN TO US ANYMORE.

A final SNAP.

The crowd swells with  
approval, then begins to die  
down again.

GESTAS (CONT'D)

That, Dismas, is the sound of a God who simply does not  
care.

GESTAS sits back at the  
pillar.

DISMAS

You are scared.

GESTAS

God isn't listening, and neither am I.

Silence.

GESTAS

I'm terrified... I don't want to die, Dismas.

DISMAS

Neither do I.

GESTAS

People die everyday. But I don't want to die today. I've always said that fearing death is like fearing the dark. Usually there's a light. But now there isn't.

DISMAS

Everyone I've ever loved has died. My child. My wife. In death I will not have to live without them anymore.

GESTAS

You think they care that you've been suffering without them? They're dead.

DISMAS

Don't insult my family.

GESTAS

I'm not insulting your family. I'm insulting you. Death is not a comfort. Death isn't a bed you lay down in, it's a pit you're thrown into.

DISMAS

I bet that *he's* scared, too.

GESTAS

I doubt it. If he actually believes what he preached then he probably thinks that angels will lift him off the cross. Now, after *that*, he probably has his doubts. But he's not scared. He thinks he doesn't have to be.

DISMAS

Maybe he's the lucky one.

GESTAS

The lucky one. You have an interesting outlook on this situation. The lucky one.

DISMAS

You're deluded too, you know. If you think that all this has been for nothing.

GESTAS

Like I said. God. Isn't. Listening.

DISMAS

God isn't listening. Fine. Let's say that's true. So what? Do we just give up? Do we just accept that?

GESTAS

Yes. Yes I do. And you're a fool if you don't do the same.

DISMAS

Who cares if he was just a man? Poor. Illiterate. Nothing. He got Rome's attention. He made the Roman army sweat, even if only for a weekend. Nothing can change the fact that he was able to take matters into his own hands.

GESTAS

A lot of good it did him.

DISMAS

Who's to say we can't be the same? Who's to say that we can't believe what we want to believe, what we see fit? Who's to say that we can't take power?

GESTAS

(Shaking his chains in DISMAS's face)

Break these, fight your way past the guards. If you can take power, then take it.

DISMAS

It doesn't matter that the Messiah hasn't come because I choose to live as though he has. It doesn't matter that the Kingdom of God is not here because I choose to prepare for it anyway. It doesn't matter that Jesus wasn't the Son of God because I choose to believe that he was.

GESTAS

Whatever makes you feel better.

DISMAS

It *does* make me feel better. I lived my entire life following the rules of others and it brought me nothing. Then you found me.

You taught me that it doesn't have to be that way, and for the past two days I have felt comfort unlike anything I have ever felt. So it wasn't what I thought it was. I can still choose to believe that it is true.

GESTAS

Why would you do that?

DISMAS

Because it's my choice. That's what I learned from you. That I have a choice. I never knew God, never felt like I could. Now I choose to know him. I might not live long enough to enjoy this power, but at least I can die with it.

GESTAS

I once spoke to a man who was taken off the cross before they finished him. Pardon or whatever, I don't know. They got what they needed out of him, so they spared him. He told me that all of your weight is on your feet. The pain shoots up from your ankles to your pelvis. So you try to flex your arms to relieve the pain. You do that, and your wrists tear. Pain shoots through your chest. All you can do when you're up there is trade one kind of pain for the other.

DISMAS

And then there will be no pain.

GESTAS

And then there will be nothing.

DISMAS

There won't be nothing. There will still be people. This world will go on without us. There won't be nothing.

GESTAS

Do you take comfort in that?

DISMAS

Yes. Would you want to live forever?

GESTAS

If it meant I could be with my God, then yes.

DISMAS

And if you couldn't?

GESTAS

I don't know what the alternative looks like. Ask me in a few hours.

DISMAS

I wish my family was here. I wish I could enter this darkness with them instead of reaching into the darkness for them.

GESTAS

You're here with *me*.

DISMAS

I'm glad I don't have to die alone.

GESTAS

You'll have to die alone. You just won't have to greet death alone. I'll be on your side and you'll be on mine.

DISMAS

And the Rabbi.

GESTAS

You can't win everything.

DISMAS

Will you say anything to him? When we're up there?

GESTAS

Well... if I do... it won't be nice.

DISMAS

You could say nothing.

GESTAS

So could he.

DISMAS

Gestas?

GESTAS

I followed him for years. I did what he asked. I baptized strangers for him. I fed strangers for him. I *killed* for him. I gave my soul to him. For this?

DISMAS

Would you trade those years for years without him?

GESTAS

Now that I know the truth, yes.

DISMAS

The truth doesn't matter. It's about how you respond to it.

Silence.

GESTAS

I'm sorry I brought you into this. I'm sorry I misled you. If I had known, I never would have taken you to him. I would have told you to go straight to Caiaphas. I would have come with you, too.

DISMAS

But you did take me to him. And nothing can change that. And I'm not upset.

GESTAS

Why?

DISMAS

Because I choose not to be.

The door to the dungeon  
swings open. TWO CENTURIONS  
enter.

## CENTURION 1

It's time.

DISMAS and GESTAS look at each other. They then stand.

Down stage right, lights come up on JESUS. He is dressed as a groom once again. This is JESUS from a time before.

## JESUS

What do you do when you light a lamp? Why do you light a lamp in the first place? Not because you fear the dark but because you embrace the light!

PAUL appears downstage.

## PAUL

I left the darkness of Jerusalem behind me. I was going out to prosecute, no, to kill any rebels I could find. I hated the Nazarene and I hated all who called him Messiah. And it was on the road to Damascus that I saw the light and I was blind and I heard his voice.

At this point, the CENTURIONS have unshackled DISMAS and GESTAS.

## JESUS

When you light a lamp, you do not put it under your bed or under a table, you do not immediately smother it or else what would be the purpose of the light? The purpose of the light is to be seen!

## PAUL

He spoke to me. And it was only after being blinded that I finally saw. That I could finally see the truth. And the truth is that there is no truth. There is only what you choose to do with the truth.

THE CENTURIONS begin to lead  
DISMAS and GESTAS out of the  
dungeon.

JESUS

You may not like what you see in the light. You might  
find that you prefer the darkness. You might find that  
you would rather have not have known. You might curse  
the light.

PAUL

But now I know what must be done.

JESUS

But you will put your light where everyone can see it.  
You will make them all see what has been put into the  
darkness. And that light will never go out. You will  
see.

DISMAS, GESTAS, and THE  
CENTURIONS leave the room.  
The door SLAMS.

Blackout.

End of play.