

AN ANALYSIS OF JEAN GIRAUDOUX'S JUDITH
FOR AN ARENA PRODUCTION

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
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R. Vance Paul

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ABSTRACT

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by R. Vance Paul

The purpose of this study was to set down in written form an analysis of Jean Giraudoux's play Judith. This analysis was employed in the directing of the play for arena production. What has been presented is a personal interpretation and discernment of the play.

Chapter One is an analysis of the play Judith. What has been attempted is an explanation of character, character relationships, plot, theme and philosophic concepts.

The Second Chapter contains the director's script including changes in lines, diagrams of the floor plans and lighting plots.

Chapter three contains an analysis of the physical production: the setting, lighting, costumes, make-up, and music.

Chapter Four contains a critical appraisal of those aspects of the production where weaknesses were perceived regarding the actors, director, and play-

wright.

The final Chapter includes the critical reviews
of the production of Judith from the local newspapers.

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Kuttledge", is written over a horizontal line.

AN ANALYSIS OF JEAN GIRAUDOUX'S JUDITH
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By

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A THESIS

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Judith: "Judith! I'm beginning to see what this girl Judith is like. Ah, but how I'd like to know what she is really thinking about behind this mask of flesh."

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Grateful acknowledgment is made to Mr. Frank C. Rutledge for his aid, supervision of production, and assistance in the writing of this thesis. Further recognition is due to Dr. E. C. Reynolds and Mr. Anthony Collins for their advice and suggestions concerning the production and thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

There is frequently worth in the study of men who greatly influence and shape areas of the theatre. There is even more worth to a study if the researcher can present a new insight into a playwright and his thoughts through study of the playwright and through the production of one of his plays. Jean Giraudoux is one playwright who has contributed to and greatly influenced modern theatre. Giraudoux's distinctiveness and talent have set him high above and apart from the mediocre.¹ This truth satisfies one of the factors to be considered when selecting a play to be directed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a production thesis for the degree of Master of Arts at Michigan State University. Other factors to consider are: the play must be full length, it must contribute to a season's program, and it must be acceptable to the faculty.

The purpose of this study is to present an analysis of Jean Giraudoux's play Judith. This analysis was employed in the directing of the play for arena production. What is being presented is a personal

¹Laurent LeSage, Jean Giraudoux: His Life and Works (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1959), p. 210.

interpretation and vision of the play.

Judith is not one of Jean Giraudoux's best plays, but one that does possess merit.² The play leads the viewer into the world of Giraudoux to bring forth those aspects and essences that typify the man and that are seen in his other works. There are certain themes that continually appear in Giraudoux's plays that are of literary note and demand exposure. These provoke thought and evoke endless treatises, they also seem to have universal appeal.

Giraudoux uses the play Judith to develop certain ideas. He contemplates the disparity that exists between the ideal and the real worlds. Giraudoux presents the universe as man-centered and that man's place is to dedicate himself to this universe and to those who exist within it. Giraudoux's utopia implies that man lives fully and freely according to his nature with this special Delphic restraint, know the limits of human nature; forget not the need for moderation and justice. God exists in a secondary role; Giraudoux attests the existence of unseen forces that determine movement of history, but these forces keep their distances and only on occasion condescend to raise havoc.

Giraudoux is indeed an exceptional artist and

²Gerald Weales, "Virtue Rewarded," The Reporter, XXXII, No. 9 (May 6, 1965), pp. 38-39.

to discuss and perform one of his literary creations
may be a small contribution to the field of drama.

CHAPTER I

Like many plays by Jean Giraudoux, Judith has been created from a source, this one being Biblical. Like other sources, the story of Judith has come under Giraudoux's prismatic effect: a simple story becomes diffracted into a spectrum of closely related intellectual digressions. Self-sacrifice, tribal sacrifice, the act of sacrificing is Giraudoux's point of diffraction; a spectrum of philosophical comment is the result. And it is Giraudoux's unique power to disperse a rainbow of intellectual fascination from an earthbound story that makes him great and also makes him a special challenge to the producer.

The familiar story of Judith is a convenient starting point for Giraudoux. It eliminates any preoccupation with plot, allowing the author to concentrate on character and especially idea. Although the ideas rely largely on character for their exposition, through dialogue and the very nature of the characters, character is subordinated to idea. Giraudoux's greatest preoccupation is with philosophical comment through well-chosen imagery; the characters are vehicles to this end. Consequently, there are potential problems intrinsic in

the main structure of the play.

It becomes tempting to produce Judith with the characters subordinated to the meat of Giraudoux's thought. To do so, however, would not do Giraudoux justice, or aim for his full magnitude. It may be true that Giraudoux's characters suffer from his primary focus on idea rather than character development; but, whatever the consensus, it cannot be denied that his characters are dramatically interesting and many times poetic. They are not merely mouths for Giraudoux's meditations; they are real, human, forceful. And to ignore the human, universal aspect of Giraudoux's characters is to deny the necessity for sinew because it is the force of Giraudoux's characters that give added force to his ideas. His characters sublimate his ideas.

The dialogue in Judith is alive with Giraudoux's gifted use of language, sound and metaphor. One problem with the script is met at the onset by those who are not familiar with French. No matter how excellent the performer's translation, the script still remains a translation and not wholly the work of Giraudoux. Those not instructed in French are left to trust in the translator. While the problem of translation may be secondary in other foreign works, it is primary in Giraudoux not only because one of the main attributes of the play is

lost, the beauty of language, but also because Giraudoux has such a great love for fantasy and is many times ambiguous.

The answer to the translation problem is lucid enough after a careful reading of a good script. There may be many excellent qualities eradicated in translation, but there remains a certain artistry in individual characterization, idea and metaphor which makes the play meritorious. The well-drawn metaphor in French can be as exquisite in English, Holofernes' speeches being probably the best examples. Giraudoux's philosophies and ideas are also clear enough in the English translations. It does make it difficult, however, to interpret characterization when one cannot rely on the author's exact words. The interpretation of Judith's role presents the biggest problem and it is here especially where one feels that ambiguity may be due to translation.

The rest of the characters in Judith are clear after careful study of the text. They are, for the most part, straightforward characterizations. To begin with, Joachim, the High Priest and Grand Rabbi of Israel, is clearly an anti-cleric characterization. There is no holy aura surrounding this man, indeed he negates the existence of God many times. The first character he encounters is Joseph, who is ineffectual in his attempts to save his niece.

Joseph: Joachim, you shall not do this to her.
 Joachim: Shall not! What shall not the High Priest do to Judith?
 Joseph: Transform a simple girl into a tribal saint for the crowd to sob over.
 Joachim: That, Joseph, is for the people of Israel to decide. And today Israel speaks with the voice of the prophets. Indeed, for lack of bread, prophecy is all our people have to live on.

The prophecy to which Joachim refers is a prophecy concocted by men in time of need. He does not say that God has chosen Judith, it is the people that have chosen her. Judith is their hope, Judith is all they have left.

Joseph: Joachim, you are a rabbi, I am a banker. Don't talk prophecy to me. Let's call it by its name: mass hysteria.

Joseph has no concern for the "mob" the "masses" and his is the traditional aristocratic view: they aren't worth saving. He especially does not want his niece sacrificed to them. When he singles himself and Joachim out as a rabbi and a banker, he is trying to appeal to Joachim as a member of the upper strata of society. He is saying that they know better, they know it will not be for God that Judith is sacrificed, but for the masses. In a previous dialogue with John, Joseph has given his opinion of the people of Israel.

Joseph: Other tribes can eat candy or chew gum. But not Israel! The children of Israel eternally need a proper name to suck on. It gives us an excuse for minding someone else's business. If our people are pious, John, it's because piety gives them an excuse for telling God how to run the world.

It is not that Joseph wouldn't allow his niece to sacrifice herself if God had singled her out; it is that the prophecy has been created by "manure piles" who want a proper name attached to their meddling.

As an emissary of the people, Joachim views the same sacrificial act in very different eyes.

Joachim: Am I to believe that on your shoulders sits the only clear head in the city?

Joseph: Yes - unless you are a hypocrite.

Joachim: And what is it you see standing between your family and the certain massacre that will fall on us tomorrow morning - because you must realize that your niece will be brutalized with the rest? I suppose you see what the bourgeoisie always looks for when courage fails and calamity threatens - a miracle! The dead rising from the battlefield and angels descending from heaven with swords of lightning to rout the enemy!

Joseph: If you like. Let's wait for the miracle.

Joachim: We need wait no longer! The miracle is at hand. After two months of blind martyrdom, our city has heard the name of your niece. And we blind martyrs now see an end of our ordeal.

Joseph serves as a strong contrast to Joachim. To Joseph, Joachim is a hypocrite, because he will create a lie and present it as divine prophecy. But to Joachim the very idea of waiting for an actual miracle is not only naive, but absurd. There is no divine prophecy. God does not intercede into man's life.

The entire beginning of the first act has been devoted to a despicable mass of people awaiting an end to their miseries. Their only strength is their

numbers. Nothing counteracts that impression until Joachim makes his entrance and presents a case for the people's needs. John, Joseph and the servants view the people as odious. Joseph provides final focus to this idea and once his function is concluded he makes his exit and never reappears.

Joachim derives his power from the people, and the people look to him for leadership. He must use Judith to give the people strength and faith. To Joachim the time is psychologically right for Judith to go to Holofernes, the time is psychologically right for the people to accept fully Judith as a saint, a savior, and to accept a miracle. He knows that if a miracle is to occur, it will have to occur by his hand, through his instigation, because he is the one who planted the seed. This is Joachim's creation, not God's. There are no divine flashes from heaven; there is no intervention by God. Indeed, Joachim's God seems to be whatever the people need. God is equated with the people's need and Joachim is certain of his duty to the people.

Joachim: The people have chosen Judith to be their miracle, and the more I hear her name the more I believe in Judith. . . . Once I despaired to see how Judith thrives on this adulation. Today I rejoice. For, it is thanks to this weakness that our Judith will consent to give herself to God!

He is thankful for her weakness because it will enable him to maneuver her into performing his will. He

rejoices to have his task made easier. Judith enters and Joseph leaves telling Judith to beware of Joachim - and God

Joseph: Don't trust him, Judith. Don't trust Joachim tonight.

Judith: Tonight there is no Joachim. Tonight there is only Judith and God.

Joseph: Don't trust God either. Not even God!

Joachim has observed Judith closely and will manipulate her for his needs by taking advantage of her need for adulation.

Joachim's first appeal to Judith is through God. Contrary to the expedient, divine businessman of the previous dialogue with Joseph, Joachim musters up a holy aura. Both Joachim and his God are chameleonic and Joseph's warning was justified.

Joachim: Judith! God is indeed in this room tonight.

The only presence in the room, however, is Joachim's, and Judith flatly rejects the prophecy. A debate ensues between Judith and Joachim, and as Joachim pleads God's case, Judith makes replies that are haughty, insulting, and cynical. When little Jacob enters, she uses him to try to dissuade Joachim. Little Jacob returns the apple she has given him, and Judith demands that Joachim "find someone else," but it appears that Joachim has already tried to find someone, and his results were negative.

Joachim: I have seen that girl. It's true her name is Judith, but she is blind in one eye and there are open sores on her face.

So it seems that this is Joachim's final chance to produce a miracle. He recruits Judith or he fails.

Joachim's spiritual appeal to Judith brings no results. His next appeal is patriotic and for the desperate state of the army. Judith says she has heard that Holofernes' army is so low on munitions that they are melting down jewels. It seems that Joachim has also been at the bottom of this prophetic news.

Joachim: Yes, I've heard the story. In fact, I was the one who put it into circulation.
The truth is, Judith, we are the ones who have no more weapons.

He tells her that the army no longer exists, and she still does not believe him. Then, when he sees John appear in the courtyard, another avenue of appeal is opened.

Joachim: Would you rather hear it from a soldier?
John, for instance?

With John's assistance and Joachim's knowledge of Judith, the task becomes easy. John will become Joachim's wedge. His final appeal will be personal.

Judith: It's no use. I still won't believe you.
Joachim: Would you believe him? You know him well, of course?
Judith: Yes, I know him well.
Joachim: You are engaged I suppose?
Judith: What if we are?

Joachim sends for John, and Judith thinks that she will prove, once and for all, that she is not the Judith in the prophecy by having John be witness that she is the most pleasure-loving girl in the city. Judith welcomes

John as support to prove her unworthiness, that she is "slightly soiled." Ironically enough, John unknowingly comes to Joachim's aid. Joachim realizes that the only effective appeal to Judith is personal, selfish.

Joachim: If it's because of John that you are hesitating, I know how to convince you.

Judith: Convince me of what?

Joachim: Of your duty to become a saint.

From Joachim's viewpoint Judith's duty, like his, is to answer the needs of the people. His attitude is more obvious in Act III. Joachim is not interested in their personal relationship, he has other uses for John. It is through John that he will reach Judith, but not through any love the couple share. John will be a tool to arouse Judith's extreme pride and susceptibility to humiliation. She has already admitted their close relationship. The defeat of the army made no difference to Judith, but to make this defeat touch Judith in any way, especially through a man she has singled out as someone special, will bring results for Joachim. Joachim is wily, quick and precise.

Joachim: John, is it true that this morning what was left of our city guard mutinied against its officers and surrendered to the enemy?

Judith: That's a lie!

Joachim: Is it a lie that at noon our sacred battalion fled in panic and left its flag on the ground for all to see - lying in the sun outside the city walls?

Judith: False! I know it's false!

Joachim: Is it false that the only troops left to defend the city are two companies of old men recently pressed into the service?

Answer me!
Judith: Well, answer him! One word will do it.
John: Don't be cruel.
Judith: Cruel! Where were my eyes? I don't need
an answer. It is written on your face.

Certainly Judith must feel some humiliation with the defeat of her countrymen, but it is as if Joachim has made John personally responsible. Judith turns on John to vent her disgust at defeat. A jab at Judith's pride reaps results for Joachim. He remains silent through her tirades and speaks only to offer Judith a chance to restore her wounded pride.

Joachim: Enough, my son. Tonight Judith is the first soldier of the city in our first line of battle.

And she accepts the chance Joachim offers because suddenly Judith visualizes herself as God's savior.

Judith: Yes, God still has Judith.

And suddenly she sees herself as the savior of her country as well.

Judith: Is it a crime to insist that Israel be the name for a race of conquerors? Is it my fault if you heroes are too weak to defend our honor and pass the sword to a woman?

She envisions herself not as saving old men, women and children from being massacred, but as leading a race of conquerors. Judith is not the commanding, victorious girl she thinks she is for Joachim has neatly obtained her consent to a mission she knows is a fraud. He has dressed up the act sufficiently to appeal to her tastes.

Judith's forthcoming sacrificial act in the name of religion and country is really an act for personal gratification. Giraudoux's position on sacrifice is clear.

The nature of Joachim's character rounds off a whole series of connecting ideas which reflect the author's attitude toward prophecy, the clergy and miracles. It is established that the rabbi and the prophet are not executioners of God's will, they are executioners of man's will, perhaps because they are human and respond mostly to their needs as men. It must be clearly understood that Joachim has not forced himself on the people, but rather the people have demanded the existence of Joachim. The miracle which is so desperately needed is a miracle created not by God but by man. And it is a special aspect of mankind that demands miracles and prophecy, a reliance on strength outside of itself. The city is in a state of decadence with soldiers who have fancy uniforms but lack the courage and will to fight, Joachim's description of the flight of the sacred battalion attest to that. The people in the city are starving, waiting for prophecies to be fulfilled.

John: Then you saw them too, huddled in groups
 at the street corners. The same hysterical
 old men. The same scab-studded crones
 that huddle together everytime the people
 smell a miracle in the making.

It is a weak, hysterical kind of old man that calls for miracles because they have nothing left to rely on. They

are pitiful, dying, and despicable. Since they cannot act to save themselves, they become parasitic.

Servant: The city is full of them. Dying dogs attract flies. But when it's a city that's sick and dying, then the scavengers are called prophets and the buzzing is called prophecy.

They are parasites, living off a sick and dying carcass. It is midst desperation, filth and death that prophecy is created, created by man from a trash pile of his own making. And it is during these occasions that the priest reigns.

John: In times of death and famine, reason is on the side of the priests - who have their own kind of logic which cries for miracles and, on occasion, invents them.

Undoubtedly the priest has no concern with the veracity of occurrences. He is there to give certificates, credence to the lies men need in order to exist when their own courage and strength have failed. The desperation of the city is real and terrifying in the beginning of the first act, and it is in these circumstances that Joachim must perform his duty. Whether he relishes his job or not is never made clear, indeed for Giraudoux, it is of no significance. Joachim must do what he must do. In performing his duty he is conniving, false, cruel, and effective, but he is not a villain. He is not a villain because he is fulfilling the needs of the "scab-studded old crones," who are symbolically

man in his most despicable, desperate situations. It is man who is villainous because he not only relies on miracles, but accepts the shams that are presented to him draped in holy pretense. For Giraudoux, however, villainous is too strong a word. Man is not villainous, he simply has eternal weaknesses which one must expect. They are not eradicable, but they must be exposed for what they are. Joachim, then, epitomizes one of man's inventions to save himself. What makes his fraudulency so poignant is his premeditation and cold organization. He decorates the sham with psalm singing and holy glitter. At the end of Act III Joachim is reduced to the lowest kind of bribery.

Joachim: On what conditions will you live and hold your tongue?

He is well aware that Judith's motives for killing Holofernes have not been holy. In fact he does not even care what her motives were; it makes little difference to him at this point since he has achieved his goal.

Joachim: Why you think you killed him. But what you think doesn't matter now. My dear girl, the point is that the deed is done. . . . and done just the way the church predicted it.

Joachim has prepared a holy chant which the ages can repeat, a spiritual cheerleading to give the team hope when none exists. Man's salvation is a fraudulent one because it is the product of minds that are tortured

and desperate. Joachim personifies man's perpetuation of this kind of fraud.

A portrayal of Joachim demands subtlety and precision. Joachim is a keen observer and because of this talent he is a great manipulator. Unemotional and with a strong sense of duty, his is a cold and precise intelligence. He operates on a plane where the usual morality does not exist. What motivates Joachim is his sense for what the people need. Right and wrong are gauged according to their effect on the people. His morality is relative, and socially, not spiritually, oriented. He must not appear villainous though, because he believes he is doing the right thing and it is this latter fact that makes him frightening. His acts are odious enough to speak for themselves.

It is into an atmosphere of counterfeit prophecy that Judith makes her first entrance. Although she is extremely attractive, she is a child, a young girl. She is full of energy and quick with words. There is a strong contrast between Judith and Joachim: Joachim has a calculating and cold intelligence and although Judith is quick with words, she rarely uses her intelligence. She is guided by her imagination and emotion. What motivates Judith is her sense of pleasure. Her sense of pleasure is very narrowly refined into a classic flaw. Judith derives her greatest satisfaction from adulation.

She is selfish and proud. Egon in Act II refers to her as a "cannibal of pride" and this is indeed what she is. She consumes everything around her. There are no restrictions to her appetite or her capacity; consequently, she lives in a superhuman world where fantasies must be fulfilled. And it is when obstacles encumber these fantasies that Judith reacts like a rebuffed child.

To Judith, Joachim presents just such an obstacle. The prophecy excites her imagination, but she mentally rejects the existence of Joachim.

Judith: Tonight there is no Joachim. Tonight
 there is only Judith and God.

She is angry with Joachim because she holds him personally responsible for the absence of divine flashes from heaven. She is the child who has been left waiting too long. She is impatient and rebellious.

Judith reveals in the next few lines that she believes the prophecy, in spite of her disappointment with the church and the "rabbi's truth," but she wants the prophecy to occur the way she imagined it. She will not accept sainthood from a Grand Rabbi or the masses that have begun to worship her.

Judith: I repeat: to me it is their voice, not
 Jehovah's, that I hear. And, I've been
 listening. The tiniest of signs and I
 would have been convinced.

Apparently Judith has learned her lessons well. God must send her a special sign like He does in stories.

She, like the masses awaiting death in the streets, needs extra-human deliverance from her human woes.

When Judith enters in Act I she is under the spell of a religious daydream. The people in the streets, the rabbis, and Joachim have been singing her praises. She is envisioned by the people as a shining saint, a savior, Psalms are being sung to her, people beg for her help, their eyes are filled with adulation. They have transformed her name into a prayer. This praising of Judith has continued for two months. It appeals to her imagination and her love for adulation.

Judith has a strong belief in God, the same God who fires the imagination of the people of Israel, and it is Joachim who helps to keep the fire glowing. Her belief in God, like every other aspect of her character, is based on a selfish dividend. She does not use God or the church as a guide to her actions or development of her character. There is nothing spiritual in her belief. God can fulfill daydreams, fantasies. He is the magician that can materialize Judith's superhuman ambitions.

Her interest and anxiety concerning the prophecy equals that of Joachim and the people of Israel, and like them, her interest is very personal, selfish, and has nothing to do with saving a city or bolstering a people in the depths of despair. The act of saving the city is not that spectacular to Judith. She wants something more

imaginative.

Judith: Any woman with courage to do what you propose would seem both beautiful and pure. That's what the prophecy really means.

She is not interested in what any courageous woman could do in the name of beauty and purity. She is interested in neither of these qualities since she has both and already takes great pride in them. She is not quite happy with the prophecy as it stands.

Judith's selfishness is evident in the way she uses the people around her to her best advantage. Like Joachim, she manipulates. She uses little Jacob against Joachim to show her dissatisfaction. She wants to peel away the false holiness of Joachim. She first does this with little Jacob by trying to make him break the fast and to show that it is the material things, the sensual things, that drive people. She offers little Jacob a crust of bread. When he refuses the bread and asks her to give herself to Holofernes, she tries to ply him with something more appetizing - meat - an apple. The boy accepts the apple, but a little later he returns it. Judith, too, will return the sensual gift, the fruit of life from Holofernes. The people would not allow Jacob to have the apple, as Joachim said they wouldn't. Doubtless at the beginning she was only going to offer him a crust of bread, but when the boy repeats Joachim's prophecy, which she bitterly says the boy has learned

well (she has swallowed the lesson too), the boy becomes a means to vent her anger. The boy is a special challenge because Joachim has had her mouth the same prophecy with no genuine results, and she wants to expose it, not because she doesn't believe it, but because it has not occurred.

Judith is performing two purposes in this debate with Joachim. She airs some of the tawdry functions of the church in an almost playful way. This lightens the tension that has been building since the beginning of the act and also presents Giraudoux's comments in a light rather than menacing way. The conversation also exposes Judith for the spoiled child that she is. This technique, although it serves Giraudoux's purpose, detracts from the play. A serious problem becomes lightened in mood and then in the next few lines, the problem is serious again. These shifts in mood occur so quickly that the play suffers dramatically, although it scores intellectually. It can be a troublesome scene because of the intermingling of light comedy with overall seriousness within a small space.

As the scene continues, Judith nonchalantly refuses the "sainthood" Joachim offers. She is not interested in counterfeit sainthood. This conversation becomes a match, just like the previous situation with little Jacob was a match, a possibility for her to parade

her superiority. To each of Joachim's remarks she has a hostile answer, culminating in a final jab at the church.

Judith: And what about the working girls? The church should be more democratic, Joachim. Why don't you give a chance at glory to a name like Cohan or Levy?

What other ulterior profit she expects from the prophecy is not hinted at until she introduces the idea of a young virgin confronting a giant. She says that one night she dreamt she "wrestled for hours with Goliath." And in her dreams Goliath won. She is the first to refer to Holofernes as a giant. Obviously she hopes to be "overtaken." But the part she is to play in the prophecy is appealing to her only if God singles her out personally. Her anxiety over the prophecy is shown when Judith's trips to the hospital, like everything else she does, prove to be based on a purely selfish motive.

Judith: . . . I even provoked the wounded to make them cry out. But when the words came they were no more than the words of dying men.

However splendid the fantasy is, it remains fantasy for Judith because she is aware that she isn't chaste in spirit and God has performed no divine antics for her. In her first meeting she denies the prophecy because it has no signs of being fulfilled and she has become impatient. But after the initial onslaught with Joachim, she reveals what is really bothering her.

Joachim: What do you want? A burning bush?

Judith: A flash of warmth would do. Or a single word. All day I've been listening for it.

For Judith the prophecy has a dual fascination. First of all, it is a fantasy she wishes were true and it seems possible to her. And the one factor necessary for a transition from fantasy to reality is some appearance of God. God appears, and of all the people of Israel, singles out Judith. This will be no ordinary occurrence. As in religious stories, Judith awaits some spectacular sign. The second fascination is sexual. Judith has not given herself to anyone because she feels guilt, as John attests, and because a special enough occasion has not presented itself. But if God sends Judith on this mission she has no reason to feel guilt and also the occasion would be most magnificent. The sexual and the religious become enmeshed and Giraudoux presents the same sacrificial act in slightly different focus.

It can be seen that Giraudoux rarely produces a single strong focal point, more often there are two or three points of view presented in the same scene. For example, in the beginning of Act I the audience is presented with the very real and desperate state of Israel. The people are wailing and helpless. They cannot save themselves so they are willing for Judith to save them. This same situation is presented from another point of view through John and Joseph. The people in the streets are not worth saving, they are little more than animals.

They are a tribe, a mob, the dregs of Israel. Once this focus is established John exits and Joachim enters. The debate between Joseph and Joachim is in the same serious mood. Joachim is an intruder and he demands sacrifices which no man has the right to ask from another. However, here too, the focus is dual. There is Joseph who is trying to protect his personal interests and Joachim who is the people's emissary. This dual and sometimes triple focus is shown throughout the play.

Judith is a complicated mixture of virginity, pride and religious fervor. She is restless, constantly searching for something, and her changeable nature makes her easily dissuaded from one goal to another. Her motivation is not direct since she operates wholly from ulterior motives, and certain aspects of her character are contradictory. She can see sharply, realistically and yet a web of fantasy distorts her sight. She can see through the church and the rabbi's adulterated truth, and yet she believes them, or wants very much to believe them. She knows the church is using her - yet she wants to be used. She knows the truth from the beginning, but does not admit it until Act III.

Judith: Your miracle is a fraud. God gave it to you cheap with a minimum of innocence, and all because I'm rich and spoiled and my name is great enough to conceal the deception.

Judith may be a virgin, but there is nothing

saintly about her virginity. She has remained a virgin because of her pride, not because of any lack of desire. She is passionate and sensual, but she clings to her virginity. John makes this clear when he tries to reveal the prophecy as a fake.

John: Fairest daughter of Israel. Are you really the fairest? So much of you is the reflection of gold and luxury that one never knows what you are really like. Look at her, Joachim! Look at her well, the subtle dialation of the nostrils, the blood beating at her temples. This girl is the threshold of everything that is passionately human and changing. Beauty it is, but human beauty - beauty of the moment.

This is hardly the description of a saint. As John testifies to her desire, Judith makes it clear that she has not surrendered.

Judith: I suppose I surrendered?

John: No, indeed, you did not. You are not simple enough for that. Everytime I approach Judith, she musters a mass of guilty feelings to fight me off. Who knows, God may like His virgins already warmed on the fire, palpitating with unvirginal desires?

Sarah, too, is aware of the condition of Judith's virginity.

Sarah: My Lord, she is a virgin. There has never been a virginity that was petted and desired at closer quarters, but it is a virginity just the same. She has a certificate from the Grand Rabbi to prove it. Would you like to see for yourself?

Judith is almost continually in the throes of conflict, and the solutions to her conflicts are dominated by her pride. The first conflict is between the prophecy

and truth. In conflict with Judith's faith in the prophecy is her knowledge of her own nature. In her beginning discussions with Joachim she reveals exactly what she is. When Judith wants to see clearly she can.

Judith: Does your prophecy also say she shall be the most pleasure-loving girl in the city? Because that's what I am believe me. If people think I am beautiful, that's because I have expensive clothes and I know how to wear them.

.
John will tell you! Although he certainly won't tell you anything about me that you couldn't learn from Paul, James or Peter, or any of the officers who can dance and kiss just as well as he does. But when he's finished, you will know once and for all time that I am not the Judith referred to in the prophecy.

The same Judith who can see herself so clearly, can suddenly be lost in flights of fancy.

Judith does not solve her conflict rationally. Her decision to go to Holofernes is motivated by her pride as a result of Joachim's maneuvering. Joachim presents John as a failure, and she grabs the bait. When John first enters, Judith is ready to use him against Joachim, to prove she is "a saint who is slightly soiled." But when Joachim uses John to verify the total defeat of the army, Judith reverses her tactics. It is a humiliation to her that John has been defeated. John becomes her victim and Joachim becomes her tool. The motivation for her new decision seems to be twofold. John, who seems to have been an admirable young man in Judith's eyes, has

been defeated. Her reaction to defeat is violent, not only because her country has been defeated, but also because the defeat attached to John becomes somehow associated with her through their relationship. She will raise God and country from defeat to victory to reinstate herself. Judith's vanity knows no bounds. And as John tries to reason with her, to try to get her to admit the prophecy is a fraud, Judith becomes only more firmly entrenched. John becomes a threat to her ability and to the prophecy, he may destroy her daydreams.

John: Judith, you are not the virgin prescribed by the scriptures - and you know it.

Judith: No, I do not know it.

Judith will not accept reality, to do so would be to deny that she was special. And when John tries to confront her with the reality of what she will be doing when she goes to Holofernes, Judith falls back on the only support she has: the lessons Joachim has taught her.

Judith: as if by memory. Holofernes does not exist. Holofernes is only a name for a special way of suffering necessary to redemption. If I leave here tonight it will not be to join him, but to give myself to those other things. And I shall not be the only girl in the world who has used her beauty and innocence as if they were intended not for a man, but for a great moment in history.

The speech has all the characteristics of Joachim's authorship. Holofernes has nothing to do with sex, he is a "special way of suffering." And perhaps the morsel

that appeals most to Judith's fancy: "as if they were intended not for a man, but for a great moment in history."

Judith has a very real fear of the moment when she is to meet Holofernes.

Judith: Small soul that you are have you no pity?
Can't you see that my courage will hold
just so long as I shut off my imagination?
Answer my question. Is everything lost?

She is afraid to become a woman, but exactly what she is afraid of does not become apparent until Act III after the murder. Joachim uses her fear to try to stifle any sexual excitement Judith might feel. As Judith begins to prepare herself for "the moment she was made for," she makes an oath uniquely indicative. God becomes a witness to the state of her legs.

Judith: No one has ever seen me without my clothes.
But before God I guarantee you and the
people that my legs are smooth and my feet
unscratched.

Joachim: Judith, it is absolutely necessary that
you remain unexcited.

Judith views the moment she was made for as the time when she will sacrifice herself for God. Actually, like any other girl, she was made to become a woman.

When she admits her confused mental state,
Joachim is there to interject his will.

Judith: Judith! I'm beginning to see what this
girl Judith is like. Ah, but how I'd like
to know what she is really thinking about
behind this mask of flesh.

Joachim: And Holofernes, do you see him clearly
too? A brute, shouting drunken insults at
the Jews and their God!

Judith: I can see him.
 Joachim: Do you see his women milling around you, despoiling your robes, tearing your hair, mocking your body?
 Judith: I can see them.
 Joachim: Do you see the giant, half asleep on his couch, reaching out to grab you, drawing you to him?
 Judith: I can almost touch him.
 Joachim: Are you fighting his embrace?
 Judith: I'm watching the pulse of a blue vein in his neck, it's throbbing like the artery on the neck of a bull. I'm pressing my finger against it. His face is growing purple. Heavens, where am I?

Joachim seems to have Judith mesmerized in this exchange of dialogue. Closely allied with the sexual union is the sacrifice of the bull and death. Joachim's treats sex as something harsh and ugly, grotesque. Judith appears to lose contact with reality. Her imagination has transported her into another world, and there is a moment where she loses all contact. Both of these moments will occur again, but they will occur transfigured by Judith's fantasies. The bull will be sacrificed, only the surroundings will be redecorated to suit a woman's tastes. Holofernes will be killed to preserve Judith's perfect love. She will lost contact with reality, but it will have a fairytale quality: there will be a delicious secret between a young girl and a fallen angel.

Once Judith has consented to go to Holofernes, there is no turning back for her, she could never admit a mistake. As far as the sign from God is concerned, it has not occurred so she must make some rationalization.

She tries to make some amends for the pleasure she has sought from her young suitors.

Judith: I never really loved any of those men, not really. They never really touched me. Does this mean that I am chaste and that God has chosen me to fulfill the prophecy?

Judith begins to erase the things that do not fit into her plans. Later, in Act III, she will find a way to erase also the mark Holofernes left. On a sudden impulse Judith has agreed to fulfill the prophecy. Now, although she negates final judgments from moments before, she must rearrange her thinking to coincide with her new intentions. By the time Susanna enters, Judith is firmly set in her new role.

It is through contrast with Susanna that Judith's faults become even more glaring. Susanna is everything that Judith is not.

Susanna: But I've stolen none of your haughtiness or pride. When I've bumped into you in the street and you've looked down on me with scorn, I've imagined your resignation. When you were cruel I've imagined your meekness. In front of your need for luxury, I've imagined your modesty. I've been happy, Judith, because I've made myself look just like you.

Susanna has been a woman to the men Judith has denied.

Susanna: The man? Dozens of them. They come to me after you have warmed them up on the terrace. Dozens of them, trying to forget or seeking revenge. And while they cry in my arms or caress me, they call me Judith.

Susanna has satisfied the men Judith has tormented in her pleasure-seeking. To each of Judith's disdainful remarks

Susanna replies in humility and honesty. Her intentions to go to Holofernes are most noble. Judith can still receive the credit, but Susanna will perform the deed. She will do this to preserve Judith's purity.

It is then that Judith tells Susanna, just exactly how she views her virginity. And Judith's fear of becoming a woman is a little clearer.

Judith: So that's what the foolish virgins dream about? My virginity! I don't know what yours was like, Susanna, but I'm beginning to understand mine. It's neither ignorant nor innocent nor pure, but it's mine. It's a promise I bear inside me, like a child; a shame that will someday fill me to bursting with pride. Now God has changed this promise of defeat into one of victory. That's his business. But even if I were in love with a young man, tonight I'd say to him: "No, you shall not be the first."

Judith has viewed the loss of her virginity as a promise of defeat that will fill her with pride. But defeat would never make Judith feel proud. It is now that Judith admits God's function and what she hopes to gain from the prophecy. God is going to change the defeat of her virginity into a glorious victory. She nonchalantly adds that this is God's business, when in reality it has little to do with God. It has been the extreme dislike of defeat (pride) and her fear that have kept Judith from becoming a woman.

Finally she thinks out loud of perhaps some way that she can get all the credit for "sacrificing" herself.

Judith: Susanna, you don't understand me any better than John or the rabbis. If I object to the way they're pushing me into this adventure, it's because I've been dreaming, in my bed at night, of doing something like this on my own. But I waited too long . . . and now it's God who's going to get all the credit. Maybe I've known all along it was really His idea. Maybe God thinks I really thought it up all by myself. Maybe God's jealous because I thought of it first . . . maybe this is His revenge.

Like the people of Israel's concept, Judith's concept of God is shallow and immediate. He exists when He is handy. When she is at the peak of her pride, she would just as soon dispense with Him. Judith's dialogue with Susanna is most revealing; Susanna serves as a contrast and a confidante. As Act I closes Susanna and John plan to save Judith in spite of herself. Through the people of Israel, Joachim and Judith, Giraudoux has made clear his opinion of man's eye view of God.

Act II opens with the seamier side of war in the midst of perverts and a procuress, and it is here that Judith comes face-to-face with stark reality. She enters young, virginal and naive. She is the source of their entertainment. Uneducated in certain aspects of life, she is at the mercy of those who have been saturated with sensation. Judith is as much a pawn here as she was with Joachim. Sarah knows that Judith is most sensitive to humiliation so she sets the plan.

Sarah: It's very simple. The rest of us will curse

and insult the girl. Egon will be fascinated by her words. Bit by bit, he will let her seduce him into saving the city.

They have no trouble fooling Judith, for she is still intoxicated with her fantasy. Her vision of the moment is romantic and unreal. She visualizes herself plated in virginal armor.

Judith: To remain a girl, my lord, is to be driven by a blind force that innures you to pain, unhappiness and suffering. All in the hope that some day you will encounter grandeur in the form of another human being.

When Egon tells Judith to go home because she has convinced him to save the city, Judith is bitterly disappointed. She was there mainly to become a woman, to lose her virginity and attain a glorious victory. Besides, Holofernes was supposed to be devastated by the most beautiful of women.

This beginning scene in Act II reveals how poorly Judith functions in a real situation. Sarah makes it clear that Judith exists in another world.

Sarah: There is scarcely a hint of hair and when Judith cries, even when she perspires, it is like dew at sunrise. And she was born rich.

Sarah and Egon exist in a world of sweat and blood. The death of Lamia fills the background of their existence, tattooed navels, hunger and perversion. This is their chance, especially Sarah's, for revenge: they shatter Judith's unrealistic existence with a minimum of effort. In the face of reality Judith is extremely fragile.

As Egon parades as the king, we get some impression of the real Holofernes. He is intelligent and powerful. Egon also serves as an effeminate contrast to the real king.

When the hoax is revealed to Judith she experiences a most bitter humiliation and her fantasies are disintegrated momentarily. Judith cannot accept the world on real terms, so she recoils. She vents her anger at the most available victim as she did when she was humiliated with John. The most handy scapegoat is God. He should have warned her, sent her some sign.

Judith: Do you think that, after what God has done to me, I can ever show the world my face again? I've been shamed, Holofernes. Burned with shame! I can still feel them, Egon's lips, like a white brand on my burning face.

Holofernes: It's the brand that burns, the face is white. Here, let me wipe it off.

Judith: You'll never wipe off the false kiss God gave me. His is worse than Egon's. And it's all over my face.

She is angry with God and herself for being fooled by Egon, but she can never accept defeat. Judith will find some way to work this out to her pride's content.

Judith: The only way I can get a foothold now is to debase myself. Do you think that all Israel and God Himself have been flattering me, pampering me, for twenty years just to throw me into a trap like this? And even if they have I refuse to accept it. Body and soul, buried in shame!

Judith's actual confrontation with Holofernes is little like she imagined it. Holofernes saves her from

the clutches of Egon and Sarah. She meets him at her greatest moment of humiliation. He is the personification of human strength, the strongest negation to man's reliance on God or the need of any "outside help" in human existence. He is also the perfect opportunity for Judith to realize her natural destiny. What he offers her is a free and natural life in its most perfect condition. But Judith cannot accept what is natural; it is not enough. She is sufficiently captivated by Holofernes to relinquish her virginity, but that is all. Her pride and selfishness will not allow her to choose to become a real woman and realize her natural destiny. Her choice is to become victorious and this is her tragedy.

When Holofernes interrupts Sarah and Egon's game, Judith is experiencing the most humiliating experience of her life. She comes face to face with her naivete. It is only after Holofernes has soothed and wooed her that she regains her confidence. And once Judith has regained her balance she has a new fantasy and begins again to rationalize away her past actions. Holofernes convinces Judith that the secret she contains is sweetness. As he describes a picture of a free life, free of God, Judith becomes enmeshed into a new fantasy: she is the very personification of love and her love with Holofernes shall be the greatest love story ever told. And in almost Victorian sighs at the beginning of Act III she announces

that she has killed Holofernes for love and she, too, will be killed - perhaps by an angry mob.

Judith's fantasizing is a retaliation for her wounded pride. It was her pride which envolved her in this situation. Her pride dominates the moment when she will become a woman. This could be no ordinary moment and indeed it is not. Holofernes is a "giant" among men. Holofernes' murder is motivated by this same characteristic. She must destroy him to make their physical relationship perfect.

But Judith's relationship to Holofernes is not purely physical, although he certainly viewed it is nothing else. Judith hopes to preserve in perfection her love for Holofernes. Judith's actions have already shown that she is capable of love only in the most ideal surroundings. Nonetheless, the strongest moments of love cannot be sustained indefinitely. They are fleeting moments which appear and disappear in the long continuum of human existence.

Because Holofernes is the man that he is, he would never have his life revolve around a woman. He cherishes the moments when a woman comes into his life, but Judith knows that in the morning, in the next moment, he will be carrying on his life in another realm: in war, in ruling, in being the "king of kings," in being a man. He is the epitome of independence. He is free from the laws

of God and man. He is free from the laws of man because he is the law. His icy commands are obeyed without hesitation by the underlings that surround him. He is free from the laws of God because he believes only in himself as a man complete in every aspect of human nature. He occupies an exceptional space in the human order. He is morally, spiritually, and intellectually independent. He is the supreme humanistic man and he is Giraudoux's hero.

Judith, nor any woman, can never possibly attain this glorified independence. The woman's role is to submit. Susanna, Sarah and Daria all exemplify woman's role: they are vehicles for pleasure, security, and progeny and they fulfill man's need for love. Even Judith submits. Holofernes tells her - it is you who comes to me. And she does. And she knows she must. And once she has submitted, once she has become Holofernes' wife she knows she will have to spend her life submitting. She and Sarah and Daria and Susanna will all be the same. Judith, in that respect, will be the same as all other women.

Judith is aware of her fate, of every woman's fate. But she cannot accept every woman's fate. Her pride demands that she must be something special. She can become a saint: a saint above woman and indeed above man. In the end her unnatural desires instigated by pride win out over her natural desire to become a woman.

Judith's murder of Holofernes is symbolically the

murder of reality in favor of fantasy; the murder of truth in favor of illusion. Holofernes was a magnificent man, but he will exist in a greater magnitude in Judith's dream world. She has transformed him into a fantasy, into Goliath. He will exist much more conveniently, and to her liking, in her mind. It is the only way she can control him.

Although the play occurs within an atmosphere of death and murder, it is only Judith who is viewed as a true murderer. John kills the prophet at the end of Act I and the author's tone is almost humorous.

The Prophet appears in the window and calls again for Judith to save the city. John runs to the window, grabs The Prophet, drags him into the room, throws him on the floor, and kills him.

John: Now, you've been saved! What next!

Holofernes is probably responsible for the greatest loss of human life, but his actions are to be expected since he is at war.

Sarah: . . . Take this city, burn it! But you'll never kill all the Jews, because for weeks and weeks I've been smuggling the young ones through your lines to safety in the hills. That's where they've gone, your playmates. But they'll come back and build again and they'll live to spit on your name!

It is precisely for these reasons that Holofernes has had the young Jews killed. To do otherwise would make him foolhardy.

All of these murders, although they are cruel and sometimes savage, are not unexpected occurrences in the

course of human events. Savagery has not been bred out of the human species, it is a regrettable but present aspect of human nature. These are murders, but murders that are almost natural in human existence. What makes Judith the true murderer is that her crime is unnatural to human behavior. It is almost the same as the classical murder, where one murders one's own blood, or more nearly where wife murders husband.

If Judith had murdered Holofernes according to the psalm, using her beauty to trap her enemy and catch him in a weak moment, her actions could be lauded, as the cantors do in Act III. But when it becomes apparent that she became Holofernes' wife, physically and spiritually, hers becomes the most odious of murders, the most unnatural. Judith has made virginity, which exists to be consumed, triumph. In a world where the male is the victor, she has made herself victorious. At the end of the play she is not a saint but a freak.

Through Holofernes, Giraudoux philosophizes about life and God. As he approaches Judith it is obvious that he is aware of her fickleness. The God and the people she was anxious to save are gone from her mind. And it is at this same time that Giraudoux presents a different concept of God, one who desires man's love rather than his fear or demands.

Holofernes: But if you were to speak for him I might

listen more sympathetically. I've always cared most for Gods that are weak, the ones whose divinity depends on the love men give them. And what about your brothers? When you left them a few hours ago, didn't you promise to work for their salvation?

Judith: That was a thousand years ago.

To Holofernes and to Giraudoux, life exists for man to life and to enjoy when he can enjoy it.

Holofernes: That this is a place where there is no such thing as God.

Judith: Where? Here?

Holofernes: These thirty quare yards of tent! One of the rare corners of life where we humans are really free! This poor universe of ours is infested with deities, Judith. From Greece to the Indies, from north to south, there isn't a country that doesn't swarm with them, each with his own particular evils, his own particular odors. They are the air you breathe from the first day you enter the world. But there are still some places off limits to them. This is one of those places. Here you are untouched by original sin. Here you have no need for prayers or singing hymns. I see you are beginning to guess who I am.

The place Holofernes describes is literally the tent, but symbolically it is the realm of pure sense, pure pleasure. It is in this most natural state that man is free of God, when he is closest to nature. Holofernes offers Judith a world where pleasure is not tainted by guilt.

Holofernes: I offer you, for tonight and for as long as you like, the gift of utter simplicity and the calm that goes with it. I'm offering you the same words you used as a child. Words as simple as "apples" and "oranges." And inside there are no gods to spoil the fruit, like worms eating away at the core. I offer you songs instead of litanies. Listen. Sounds like

those come to rest naturally around us instead of being sucked up to the clouds by that vacuum in the heavens. I offer you pleasure, Judith. And that is a word that makes the image of God disappear. . . .

So the incantations of the people of Israel are absorbed by a great vacuum. Gods spoil the fruit of life, they rot the naturalness of life. However, it should not be interpreted that Giraudoux is atheistic. Through the Guard he makes his belief clearer.

Judith is attracted to Holofernes and his words and she listens and evolves a new plan. When Susanna enters the scene pretending to be Judith, she is a threat to Judith. Judith reveals that she has grasped all that Holofernes has had to say.

Judith: Israel! As far as Israel is concerned, Judith came to Holofernes. That's the extent of her responsibility to her people, God and their prophets. From this point on, fate works for or against the Jews quite apart from anything Judith may do. Neither Holofernes nor poor miserable Judith can do anything for them.

Judith casts away God and country, but only because she has another plan in mind.

Judith: God is only interested in the way things look. Appearances, not the details! God asks us to dress up our acts, make them look like sacrifices. But underneath the appearance He leaves us free to satisfy our own desires, the lowest of them. Why, any streetwalker in the city would know the difference between the real Holofernes and his servant. But not Judith-the-saint! God wants to destroy me. Well, I won't let him. I shall destroy myself!

If God won't play the game Judith's way, Judith will play

the game herself. She realizes that she came to Holofernes for one reason, not holy or patriotic. She realizes her naivete and for these reasons she wants to destroy herself. By the opening of Act III she has planned her death. It will be most dramatic.

When Judith reveals to Susanna her reason for killing Holofernes, Susanna is appalled.

Judith: I'd been sleeping Susanna. No more than a few winks, but it was all the night to me. And then I awoke, and for the first time in my life I saw myself at dawn next to another human being. Everything had already happened! Now all I could look forward to was losing him. . . . Even if it were possible to make him mine, really mine in face of the Jews and the Assyrians. Even then every morning there would be this awful moment when he'd rise, face this light, leave me and go back to the world of living and fighting. So you see, there was no other way to keep it perfect, the way it was last night. . . . Hasn't the sight of a sleeping body next to yours ever made you think that perhaps murder is the tenderest and most enduring embrace of all.

And Judith plans for her murder to go down in history, and she tells her story to a drunken guard who will somehow remember all she has said.

When Joachim and the prophets enter, Judith is prepared to meet her death. She will be a martyr for love and their tortures will purge her.

Judith: Let them come. Let them tie my hands, spit on me, beat me, insult me with each lash of the whip! That's what I want from them. And with each lash of the whip I'll lash back with my tongue. Blow for blow, I'll make them listen to each joy I've known until I am whipped unconscious.

However, Joachim and the prophets overpower Judith. Judith is prepared with her version of the truth, but the cantors and Joachim are much more organized in their version. In the height of this contention Judith admits that she is bitterly disappointed because her sainthood did not materialize.

Judith: Then lose your patience. God won't mind.
 Not since last night have I felt his
 presence in this tent. I waited for Him
 to turn me into an archangel. He didn't.
 But you got your miracle just the same.
 Why is that man sitting up again? What
 does he want?

The drunken guard who would disperse Judith's story of love will now perform another function for Judith.

With the threat of her story being destroyed by the church, it is apparent to her that they will never let her story survive, Judith is forced into some kind of action. If God will not appear in person, or perform some thunderous trick, perhaps he could send a message in some more ordinary way. Or maybe some angel would feel sorry for her, sorry enough to break divine rules just for her. The Guard, a figment of Judith's imagination, will be Judith's means of rationalizing away the events with Holofernes so she will be free to become Judith the saint. This lie to herself will allow her to become a saint with a reasonably free conscience. This is also an opportunity for Giraudoux to perform the theatrics he was so fond of and disengage himself a bit from the play to make

some timely comment. For this reason the Guard is not a realistic psychological presentation, he is sprinkled with a little of Giraudoux's love for fantasy and theatre.

The guard's first function is to repair Judith's maidenhead.

Judith: And what about the mark made by Holofernes?
Guard: Even that can be disputed. You might as well face it, Judith. You are still a virgin.

After this operation the rest of the persuasion is easy. Giraudoux gets his chance to discuss those who are chosen by God.

Guard: Do you really think that God is ever going to talk to you? Do you think that God is ever going to talk to any man? No, Judith, it is not in words that God is articulate. Those chosen by Him are anointed with thistle oil, their ears ring with the silence of the night, they stumble across the battlefields and where they pass even the dying cease to cry. In the streams the cold water and hard pebbles flow silently around their legs, and watchdogs turn the other way without a single bark. Can you truthfully say you felt none of this presence along your path last night?

Those who are chosen by God are rare human beings. They are not like Joachim and his cantors. They are untainted.

Judith accepts the guard's suggestions, but she is unwilling to give up all the ideas that Holofernes gave her. She rather likes the idea of being considered tender and she has become rather swept away with the idea of love. She will incorporate both of these qualities into the Guard.

Judith: Do you think I'd suffer like this if I weren't made of tenderness? And why must this miracle be an afterthought? Why must you take a night of blasphemy and make it look as if it were something holy?

Guard: That is for God to worry about. From where He sits, a thousand years away, God reserves the right to project saintliness on sacrilege and purity on self-indulgence. It's all a question of knowing how to light the stage.

For Giraudoux, God is a thousand miles away from man. He is pure abstraction and so far removed from man that He is not caught up in man's religious machinations. Sacrilege and self-indulgence are man's fabrications. Through the Guard, Giraudoux can speak quite candidly. Giraudoux stops the play for a few moments to examine what is happening. He draws his creation, Judith, aside in a gentle but admonishing way. He talks to her in soft, warm, but firm tones. He tries to make her and the audience see that there is nothing left to discuss or argue about. She has made her choice through her actions, through her murder of Holofernes. She has made her choice, now she must carry through.

Guard: Brightness? That's because we've reached the moment when sour smells sweet, black is white, when you say clear as mud and mean transparent.

Judith remains untouched by human and sensual things. Holofernes touched her physically, but her mind and soul remained untouched. She is even untouched by the murder.

Guard: . . . Look at your hands. Is there a trace of murder left on them? Yes, rub them.

See if you can make a spot of blood appear.
 Rub away, my dear. As long as you live,
 Judith, your hands will remain white and
 pure. Not a mark to mar the perfection
 of your body.

She will never come in contact with life and consequently
 she is a philosophical personification diametrically
 opposed to Holofernes.

The Guard, much to Judith's delight, has lost his
 place in heaven because he has revealed himself to her.
 She is not the only one who has been "naughty."

Judith: You, too! You too betrayed God. But what
 made you do it?

Guard, with an angelic smile: Love?

Judith: Love for me?

Guard: Love for love.

So Judith, captivated like a child by her imaginary
 friend, agrees to Joachim's conditions. She departs for
 the city, lost from reality, but proud.

CHAPTER II

"JUDITH"

A Tragedy in Three Acts

by

Jean Giraudoux

English version by John K. Savacool

ACT ONE

(A room in JUDITH'S house. Two doorways and a window. Before the curtain rises, we hear a voice which wails with supplication: "Judith! Judith!" This voice is joined by a chorus which repeats the same musical wail. As the curtain rises, the voice is heard again in solo. We see UNCLE JOSEPH and several servants running around the room, brandishing swords and clubs.)

JOSEPH. Look downstairs! Look in all the closets! And remember the reward! There's silver for the man who catches him!

SERVANT. We'll never find him.

JOSEPH. He's someplace in this house.

SERVANT. No sir, he is; I mean, yes he isn't!

JOSEPH. What do you mean?

SERVANT. His voice is here, no one denies that. But Master, the voice has no body. No body at all! It's a ghost, that's what it is. It's the voice of the dead crying out for your niece, because she's the only one who can save us! Judith! Judith!

(This call sounds so much like the cries we first heard, that the servants tremble with fright. Indeed the cry is echo'd by the wailing chorus outside.)

JOSEPH, shouting. Quiet! Now get out! All of you!

(The servants leave. JOSEPH looks around the room suspiciously. He leaves.

A man's face appears in the window. The man makes a trumpet with his hands and bellows out in the same strident voice: "Judith! Judith! Save us!" The face disappears. Servants and JOSEPH enter as before. They surge into the empty room. Then, finding nothing there, they stand immobile with awe. Enter JOHN, a young army officer. He drags along with him the man whose face we saw at the window.)

JOHN, throwing the man onto the floor at JOSEPH'S feet.
I caught him in full flight. We'll teach these filthy mouths once and for all that certain names are not to be touched. Who are you?

JOSEPH. He smells as if he needs a bath. He must be one of the prophets!

SERVANT. The city is full of them. Dying dogs attract flies. But when it's a city that's sick and dying, then the scavengers are called prophets and the buzzing is called prophecy.

JOHN. What's your name? Answer me!

THE PROPHEET, raising a hand as if to speak. Judith!
Judith!

JOSEPH. It's an epidemic! All the manure piles of the city are dreaming about Judith. Put a gag in his mouth!

JOHN. Let him finish first. It might help . . .

THE PROPHEET. Fairest of the pure, purest of the fair . . .

JOSEPH. Yes we know. The prophecy! The fairest of our daughters, the purest flower of Israel must suffender herself to Holofernes.

JOHN. And the fairest, he says, is Judith.

THE PROPHEET. Judith! Save us!

JOSEPH. Stuff his mouth with rags and lock him in the cellar! (The servants drag off THE PROPHEET, who is still screaming, "Judith, save us!")

(One servant lags behind the others and turns at the doorway.)

JOSEPH. What's wrong with you?

SERVANT. Good Master, please let Judith save us!

(A threatening gesture from JOSEPH and the servant disappears after the others.)

JOHN. I hope she is not in the house.

JOSEPH. No, she is still at the hospital, tending the wounded.

JOHN. Have you told her?

JOSEPH. What is there to tell? She knows that Israel is dying while outside the city gates our enemy listens for the death rattle.

JOHN. Does she know that they've decided to send her -- a sacrifice to Holofernes?

JOSEPH. Who has decided?

JOHN. The rabbis. They had a meeting . . . and the High Priest is on his way here now. He's coming to persuade Judith to . . .

JOSEPH. He'll have to persuade me first.

JOHN. It's too late, Joseph. The whole city is behind him. Have you looked into the streets this afternoon?

JOSEPH. I have.

JOHN. Then you saw it, scribbled on the walls all over the city. Scratched with diamonds on shop windows and smeared with charcoal on the backyard fences. The same stupid words: "Judith the fair, purest of the pure, shall go to bed with Holofernes."

JOSEPH. I saw it.

JOHN. Then you saw them too, huddled in groups at the street corners! The same hysterical old men. The same scab-studded crones that huddle together every time the people smell a miracle in the making.

JOSEPH. Listen to them!

(From outside comes the sound of voices wailing,
"Judith, save us!")

JOSEPH. Other tribes can eat candy or chew gum. But not Israel! The children of Israel eternally need a proper name to suck on. It gives us an excuse for minding someone else's business. If our people are pious, John, it's because piety gives them an excuse for telling God how to run the world.

(From outside come more cries of "Judith!")

JOHN. Judith! Judith! Listen to them hammer the name, bark it, unveil its mystery. What chance do we have against a thousand voices led by a Grand Rabbi?

JOSEPH. Is that what you came here to tell me?

JOHN. I came to tell you that I can save your niece from being thrown to the barbarians and defiled in the hut of their General.

JOSEPH. Save Judith? I thought it was Judith who was to save the city.

JOHN. She must agree to nothing. When the rabbis arrive make the girl promise to decide nothing. I'll be back in an hour . . . and in the meantime her answer is no. No! -- even to the Grand Rabbi. (JOHN opens the door. abruptly the voices stop.) Silence? (Voices again. This time the wailing has turned into a chant.) More sinister than silence! They've turned her name into a prayer. Pray, cretins, pray. There are times when prayer is more inhuman than cries for blood!

JOSEPH. Go, John.

(JOHN leaves by side door. The chanting grows louder. Then, through the main door, enters the GRAND RABBI.)

JOACHIM. Where is she?

JOSEPH. What do you want of her?

JOACHIM. As High Priest and Grand Rabbi of Israel, I shall announce what I want only to your niece.

JOSEPH. Joachim, you shall not do this to her.

JOACHIM. Shall not! What shall not the High Priest do to Judith?

JOSEPH. Transform a simple girl into a tribal saint for the crowd to sob over.

JOACHIM. That, Joseph, is for the people of Israel to decide. And today Israel speaks with the voice of the prophets. Indeed, for lack of bread, prophecy is all our people have to live on.

JOSEPH. Joachim, you are a rabbi. I am a banker. Don't talk prophecy to me. Let's call it by its name: mass hysteria.

JOACHIM. Am I to believe that on your shoulders sits the only clear head in the city?

JOSEPH. Yes -- unless you are a hypocrite.

JOACHIM. And with those clear-sighted eyes, I suppose you see an end to this siege that has starved our people and ruined commerce? I suppose you see the children of Israel still fat and well-fed on God's bounty? As the sole reasonable man left in the city, you smell springtime in the air, I suppose?

JOSEPH. I smell death and pestilence. The slightest breeze from north, south, east or west reminds me that between us and Holofernes's army there is a ring of Jewish corpses, rotting on the ground. But as yet I do not see our people so anxious to save their skins at any price that they can act like ignorant barbarians.

JOACHIM. And what is it you see standing between your family and the certain massacre that will fall on us tomorrow morning -- because you must realize that your niece will be brutalized with the rest? I suppose you see what the bourgeoisie always looks for when courage fails and calamity threatens -- a miracle! The dead rising from the battlefield and angels descending from heaven with swords of lightning to rout the enemy!

JOSEPH. If you like. Let's wait for the miracle.

JOACHIM. We need wait no longer! The miracle is at hand. After two months of blind martyrdom, our city has heard the name of your niece. And we blind martyrs now see an end of our ordeal. Is she here?

JOSEPH. No -- and you will leave this house before she returns.

JOACHIM. The people have chosen Judith to be their miracle, and the more I hear her name the more I believe in Judith. I know your niece. I've watched her grow. She is lovely and she is aware of her beauty. She is rich and she has a taste for the fruits of her fortune. All the young men of the city are her suitors. She holds court over writers and doctors as well as merchants and entertainers. When a girl like Judith goes to the theatre she steals the show from the actors, just as right now at the hospital she is making men forget they are in the act of dying and that our city is losing a war. Once I despaired to see how Judith thrives on this worship. Today I rejoice. For, it is thanks to this weakness that our Judith will consent to give herself to God!

JOSEPH. Now that is between God and Judith.

JOACHIM. And what does Judith say about the choice God offers?

JOSEPH. We have other things to talk about.

JOACHIM. But she knows, does she not?

JOSEPH. How could she help but know. Your priests have besieged this house more thoroughly than the enemy has besieged the city.

JOACHIM. And has she changed her way of living? Has she turned her mirrors to the wall? Removed a single feather from her bed? You wouldn't know, of course. You are much too busy denying the grace of God in this place which the Almighty has already made sacred.

JOSEPH. Sacred! I hope that this house will never be sacred. Why this is where my father had his first stroke, where Judith used to play with her dolls, where she lost her first tooth. In this room my family has eaten, cried and spit. See, I spit! If this place is holy, that is because man has lived in it and made it human.

JOACHIM. That is for Judith to decide.

JOSEPH. She can decide tomorrow. Tonight she is busy at the hospital.

JOACHIM. I have already summoned her. And here she is.

(JUDITH enters, accompanied by LITTLE JACOB.)

JUDITH. Greetings, Joachim. Good evening, Uncle. Is there a crust of bread left in the house for little Jacob? Look at him. I found him on the stairway. He's dying of hunger.

LITTLE JACOB. I don't want any bread.

JUDITH. What do you want, little boy?

LITTLE JACOB. I want Judith to go to our enemy Holofernes.

JUDITH. My, but you learned your lesson well, didn't you! And what does Judith do when she gives herself to Holofernes?

LITTLE JACOB. I don't know.

JUDITH. Will she dance with him? Will she cut off his head? What will she do?

LITTLE JACOB. I don't know.

JUDITH. How sweet! And you are not going to eat any more bread until she does?

LITTLE JACOB. I shall not eat any more bread until she gives herself to Holofernes.

JUDITH. And what about meat? Would you eat a piece of meat?

LITTLE JACOB. Meat?

JUDITH. Uncle Joseph, see if there isn't one more slice of meat left in the kitchen.

JOSEPH. The last we have. Send him to the kitchen. And tell him to leave my house in peace!

(LITTLE JACOB runs off to the kitchen.)

JUDITH. Uncle, you must not be angry with him. Poor little Jacob, he's only repeating what they teach him in school. Here, let me smooth down those ruffled white hairs. There, kiss me. I hope the Grand Rabbi will forgive the vulgarity of this family scene. (She runs her hands around her uncle's collar.) Let me fix your collar. Now, leave us, please.

JOSEPH. Don't trust him, Judith. Don't trust Joachim tonight.



Judith: "My, but you learned your lesson well, didn't you! And what does Judith do when she gives herself to Holofernes?"

Little Jacob: "I don't know."

JUDITH. Tonight there is no Joachim. Tonight there is only Judith and God.

JOSEPH. Don't trust God either. Not even God! Beware of God, Judith! (Joseph leaves the room.)

JOACHIM. Judith! God is indeed in this room tonight.

JUDITH. Then I am afraid He's got the wrong address. This is not the house He was looking for.

JOACHIM. The prophecy says she shall be the fairest of the fair, purest of the pure. It says nothing about her being modest.

JUDITH. Does your prophecy also say that she shall be the most pleasure-loving girl in the city? Does it say the most frivolous, the most capricious, the most changeable? I am all these things as well. If people think I am beautiful, that's because I have expensive clothes and I know how to wear them.

JOACHIM. If you know of any one more worthy to fulfill the law, name her now.

JUDITH. Any woman with the courage to do what you propose would seem both beautiful and pure. That's what the prophecy really means.

JOACHIM. I'm afraid not, Judith. Israel is not Greece, and our God does not speak in Homeric metaphors. If we are bound to the letter of the law, that is because our Jewish God calls each one of His creatures by His own rightful name.

JUDITH. Strange, but I've yet to hear Him pronounce the name of Judith!

JOACHIM. Have you heard Him pronounce the name of Martha, Esther, Ruth or any of your friends?

JUDITH. Joachim, you set your sights too high on the social scale. Just once, can't you forget the rich and mighty? There are still plenty of virgins in the middle class.

JOACHIM. Judith!

JUDITH. And what about the working girls? The church should be more democratic, Joachim. Why don't you give a chance at glory to a name like Cohan or Levy?



Joseph: Don't trust him, Judith. Don't
truth Joachim tonight. . . .
Don't trust God either. Not
even God!

JOACHIM. These Cohans and Levys are the very ones who have designated you.

JUDITH. And I have no interest in choices made by people who have not, themselves, been chosen, chosen by God.

JOACHIM. Somehow, I did not expect to find Judith so resistant to the voice of God.

JUDITH. I repeat: to me it is their voice, not Jehovah's, that I hear. And, I've been listening. The tiniest of signs and I would have been convinced.

JOACHIM. What do you want? A burning bush?

JUDITH. A flash of warmth would do. Or a single word. All day I've been listening for it. I even provoked the wounded to make them cry out. But when the words came they were no more than the words of dying men. Two of them died in my arms this afternoon. I held them against me until I held nothing but death.

(LITTLE JACOB appears in the doorway.)

LITTLE JACOB. I don't want any meat either.

JUDITH. But you're so hungry, little fellow.

LITTLE JACOB. And I don't want any cheese either.
And no cake.

JUDITH. And what about a kiss, if Judith gives it to you?

LITTLE JACOB. Not if that means breaking the fast.

JUDITH. Not if I kiss you on the neck, behind the ear.
That's permitted. Now, would you like an apple?
There is just one apple left in the house.

LITTLE JACOB. An apple?

JOACHIM. Don't give it to him. They'll only make him give it back.

JUDITH. Off with you then.

LITTLE JACOB. But maybe an apple . . .

JUDITH. Very well, an apple. Now Go!

(LITTLE JACOB leaves.)

JUDITH. I'm grateful to you, Joachim, for not suggesting that this was God talking to me through the voice of a child.

JOACHIM. If to be worthy of you, a child of Israel has found a way of equating fast with famine, then his voice might well cause you to reflect . . .

JUDITH. Children have no idea of what happens when a giant and a young girl are locked in a room together.

JOACHIM. Do you?

JUDITH. Vaguely. One night in a dream I wrestled for hours with Goliath.

JOACHIM. Who won?

JUDITH. He did, in my dream. But then I woke up.

JOACHIM. Judith, that was no dream for a proper young girl, but it augurs well for us. When a girl is afraid to fight off an attack, she often has a better chance of winning the battle. (The apple comes hurtling through the window and lands at JUDITH'S feet.) And there is your apple again!

JUDITH. Please, Joachim, find someone else. Down in the courtyard I met a girl who sees visions. There are stigmata on her breasts and on her tongue, and her name is the same as mine. You don't see any divine ink on me, do you?

JOACHIM. I have seen that girl. It's true her name is Judith, but she is blind in one eye and there are open sores on her face.

JUDITH. Then cure her! In time you can turn her imperfections into something appealing.

JOACHIM. Time? How much time do you think we have?

JUDITH. At the hospital they say Holofernes is low on munitions. They say he is melting down jewels to make heads for his arrows.

JOACHIM. Yes, I've heard the story. In fact, I was the one who put it into circulation. The truth is, Judith, we are the ones who have no more weapons.

JUDITH. What about the thirty thousand Horsemen that were coming from Syria to help us?

JOACHIM. They arrived this morning. This afternoon they joined forces with the enemy.

JUDITH. All the greater glory for our army when the day of victory comes.

JOACHIM. Judith, our army no longer exists.

JUDITH. What did you say?

JOACHIM. The truth.

JUDITH. A rabbi's truth.

JOACHIM. Would you rather hear it from a soldier? John, for instance?

JUDITH. Why John?

JOACHIM. Because I see him coming across the courtyard.

JUDITH. It's no use. I still won't believe you.

JOACHIM. Would you believe him? You know him well, of course?

JUDITH. Yes, I know him well.

JOACHIM. You are engaged, I suppose?

JUDITH. What if we are?

JOACHIM. If it's because of John that you are hesitating, I know how to convince you.

JUDITH. Convince me of what?

JOACHIM. Of your duty to become a saint.

JUDITH. A saint who is slightly soiled.

JOACHIM. How dare you talk like that to a rabbi!

JUDITH. John will tell you! Although he certainly won't tell you anything about me that you couldn't learn from Paul, James or Peter, or any of the officers who can dance and kiss just as well as he does. But when he's finished, you will know once and for all time that I am not the Judith referred to in the prophecy.

(Enter JOHN.)

JOACHIM. Come in, my son.

JOHN. What do you want, Joachim?

JOACHIM. To ask you a few questions.

JOHN. I'm a soldier, not a rabbi. Your knowledge far exceeds mine.

JOACHIM. These will be questions that even a lieutenant can answer.

JOHN. Yes, Rabbi.

JUDITH. John answer me. And I want you to tell the truth, even if it debases you, even if it debases me.

JOACHIM. Don't you think that my question takes precedence over yours?

JUDITH. Oh? Then go ahead and ask it.

JOACHIM. John, is it true that this morning what was left of our city guard mutinied against its officers and surrendered to the enemy?

JUDITH. That's a lie!

JOACHIM. Is it a lie that at noon our sacred battalion fled in panic and left its flag on the ground for all to see -- lying in the sun outside the city walls?

JUDITH. False! I know it's false!

JOACHIM. Is it false that the only troops left to defend the city are two companies of old men recently pressed into service? Answer me!

JUDITH. Well, answer him! One word will do it.

JOHN. Don't be cruel.

JUDITH. Cruel! Where were my eyes? I don't need an answer. It is written on your face.

JOHN. Thank God for that.

JUDITH. I suppose you also thank God for defeat?

JOHN. Careful, Judith. Yours is the first mouth in the city to pronounce that word.

JUDITH. It's not the word I'm afraid of. It's what it stands for. So it's defeat, is it! Our glorious army has been defeated! Our captains in their fancy uniforms and our lieutenants with all their ribbons have been defeated.

JOHN. That makes us less attractive, I suppose?

JUDITH. Hideous, that's what it makes you! Hideous!

JOHN. I can still look you in the face, Judith.

JUDITH. But it's not me you see. If you could really see me, you'd lower your eyes. If you could see what I am like from head to foot, now that our country is broken, beaten and trampled on, you wouldn't be able to stand the sight of me. You'd fly from me faster than you flew from the enemy. I saw you, a little while ago, down in the street with the children running after you and the girls clapping their hands. You even kissed one of the children. You had no right to do that. It was the worst kind of lie. You knew in your heart you were defeated and yet you kissed that child!

JOHN. I suppose kisses are only for the man who wins.

JUDITH. For the old and the weak, or even children, defeat can be a kind of consecration. But for a soldier, no. For a soldier defeat is inadmissible.

JOHN. You are young, Judith, very young.

JOACHIM. Enough, my son. Tonight Judith is the first soldier of the city in our first line of battle.

JOHN. Then she should not insult the face of defeat. That is for the non-combatants. If I'm really defeated, that means I'm no longer responsible to you or anyone else.

JOACHIM. We are always responsible to God.

JOHN. God's never been especially fond of lost causes. When we're losing I think He even welcomes our insults. Insults spare him the bother of being implicated in the catastrophe. Besides he still has Judith. Because, if I understand rightly, this is the night when Judith pulls God's chestnuts out of the fire.

JUDITH. Yes, God still has Judith.



John: "God's never been especially fond of lost causes. When we're losing I think He even welcomes our insults. Insults spare him the bother of being implicated in the catastrophe. Besides he still has Judith. Because, if I understand rightly, this is the night when Judith pulls God's chestnuts out of the fire."

JOACHIM. You've said enough, John.

JOHN. Yes, because no matter what I say, her pride will translate it into flattery.

JUDITH. Is it a crime to insist that Israel be the name for a race of conquerors? Is it my fault if you heroes are too weak to defend our honor and pass the sword to a woman?

JOHN. To you, at least, we pass nothing at all. What was the next question?

JUDITH. There are no more questions.

JOHN. Fairest daughter of Israel? Are you really the fairest? So much of you is the reflection of gold and luxury that one never knows what you are really like. Look at her, Joachim! Look at her well, the subtle dialation of the nostrils, the blood beating at her temples. This girl is the threshold of everything that is passionately human and changing. Beauty it is, but human beauty -- beauty of the moment!

JUDITH. And this is the moment, the moment I was made for!

JOHN. With me you were more modest, Judith. With me you were not so sure. Maybe you think God is more easily satisfied?

JUDITH. Tonight I shall be the most beautiful of women. That I swear.

JOHN. Judith, you are not the virgin prescribed by the scriptures -- and you know it.

JUDITH. No, I do not know it.

JOHN. Ask her, Joachim, ask where she was two weeks ago. This same time of day, just after she left the hospital.

JUDITH. Where was I?

JOHN. In my arms.

JUDITH. In the arms of a soldier who had been defeated by the enemy.

JOHN. In the arms of a man who wrapped himself around you and pressed his lips against yours --

JUDITH. I suppose I surrendered?

JOHN. No, indeed, you did not. You are not simple enough for that. Everytime I approach Judith, she musters a mass of guilty feelings to fight me off. Who knows, God may like His virgins already warmed on the fire, palpitating with unvirginal desires?

JUDITH. It's you who are simple, my friend. And naive.

JOHN. Yes, because I'm weary with the weight of my love for you.

JUDITH. Listen to him, Joachim! One kiss and he thinks I'm promised to him for life.

JOHN. Don't worry. When you marry Holofernes you'll get no protests from these lips of mine.

JUDITH, as if by memory. Holofernes does not exist. Holofernes is only a name for a special way of suffering necessary to redemption. If I leave here tonight it will not be to join him, but to give myself to those other things. And I shall not be the only girl in the world who has used her beauty and her innocence as if they were intended not for a man, but for a great moment in history!

JOHN. Holofernes is very much a man.

JOACHIM. John, you've said enough.

JOHN. Holofernes is a giant. He has a giant's hands, a giant's fingers, a giant's bones in his body . . .

JUDITH. Small soul that you are, have you no pity? Can't you see that my courage will hold just so long as I shut off my imagination? Answer my question. Is everything lost?

JOHN. Everything.

JUDITH. Nothing can save us?

JOHN. Nothing. Holofernes attacks at dawn, and there will be nothing to stop him.

JUDITH. Nothing to stop him at dawn . . .

JOACHIM. And the sun is setting, Judith.

JUDITH. Thank you, John. You decided for me. I leave

tonight. (She takes a step toward Joachim.) That is, if Joachim will still accept me.

JOACHIM. I accept you.

JUDITH. I want you to be sure of this. Look me in the eyes. Touch my skin. Pinch my cheeks. God should know by the arch of my nose that I am more a creature of feeling than intelligence.

JOACHIM. You are the beauty of beauties.

JUDITH. No one has ever seen me without my clothes. But before God I guarantee you and the people that my legs are smooth and my feet unscratched.

JOACHIM. Judith, it is absolutely necessary that you remain unexcited.

JUDITH. I never really loved any of those men, not really. They never really touched me. Does this mean that I am chaste and that God has chosen me to fulfill the prophecy?

JOACHIM. You are chaste, and God has chosen you. Are you ready to leave?

JUDITH. I am.

JOACHIM. You know what is expected of you.

JUDITH. Please, Joachim, no sermons. If you know what I should do, keep it to yourself. I see only too clearly what's to be done.

JOACHIM. Then, Judith, this is farewell.

JUDITH. Judith! I'm beginning to see what this girl Judith is like. Ah, but how I'd like to know what she is really thinking about behind this mask of flesh.

JOACHIM. And Holofernes, do you see him clearly too? A brute, shouting drunken insults at the Jews and their God!

JUDITH. I can see him.

JOACHIM. Do you see his women milling around you, despoiling your robes, tearing your hair, mocking your body?

JUDITH. I can see them.

JOACHIM. Do you see the giant, half asleep on his couch, reaching out to grab you, crawling you to him?

JUDITH. I can almost touch him.

JOACHIM. Are you fighting his embrace? Are you fighting?

JUDITH. I'm watching the pulse of a blue vein in his neck, it's throbbing like the artery on the neck of a bull. I'm pressing my finger against it. His face is growing purple. Heavens, where am I?

JOACHIM. In the past, Judith. It's time to move into the future.

JUDITH. When? Now?

JOACHIM. Wait until the moon rises. That gives you time for prayers.

JUDITH. Very well. But you must keep my uncle occupied between now and then.

JOACHIM. John, are you coming?

JOHN. No, I'm staying here.

JUDITH. Let him stay. Like a good soldier, he'll stick to his post until he is relieved. (JOACHIM leaves.)

JOHN. Then you have made up your mind? To save an insensitive people ruled by a few unscrupulous priests and scorned even by their God, you are leaving. Judith! In this city of ours even the children are ugly!

JUDITH. To save them, people, priests and children, I am leaving.

JOHN. Now?

JUDITH. Now.

JOHN. Then what can I tell you? What do you want to know?

JUDITH. The password, to get through the lines. What is the password tonight?

JOHN. Can't you guess? It's your name. Tonight, Judith, even Jehovah is flattered because His name starts with the same letter as yours.

JUDITH. What gate do I take out of the city?

JOHN. The gate opposite your house. The guards expect you to pass that way.

JUDITH. Where is Holofernes's tent?

JOHN. North, due north of the gate.

JUDITH. I can understand that. He wanted to be where he could see the sun beating down on the city he is about to devour. Is there a road or a trail I can follow?

JOHN. No. Outside the gate follow the stream that crosses the road. But don't drink, because the water has been poisoned. And wear a heavy cloak. Are you afraid?

JUDITH. Neither solitude nor silence has ever frightened me.

JOHN. Count on neither solitude nor silence. Outside that gate, every ten paces you'll be stumbling on a sack of flesh and bones. There will be dogs and at times it will seem as if the whole battlefield is wailing in its sleep.

JUDITH. A heavy cloak . . . is that all the advice you have to give me?

JOHN. That is all I have to say.

JUDITH. Are you sure that's all?

JOHN. Do you want me to tell you how a girl can look a giant in the face? How a virgin can save the letter of her virginity while she is being raped? Is it now, Judith, that you finally ask me to teach you how a girl makes love?

JUDITH. I wish you would.

JOHN. It's too late for me, Judith. But outside that door is just the person you need. Susanna, where are you?

JUDITH. Who is that?

JOHN. A woman I brought here with me. She's not of your class. But it's my dying wish that you receive her and listen to what she has to say.

JUDITH. Since when is it the survivors who make the dying wishes?

JOHN. Judith, for once in your life forget your pride and listen to this woman. I'll be waiting outside. Susanna, you may come in now.

(John opens the door for SUSANNA. She enters a few steps. Stands looking at JUDITH. JOHN then disappears and closes the door behind him.)

JUDITH. Who are you?

SUSANNA. A friend.

JUDITH. You've come at an awkward time. This isn't exactly a day for friendships.

SUSANNA. . . . a woman who admires you.

JUDITH. Under the circumstances, admiration would seem like an insult in disguise.

SUSANNA. . . . a woman whose life has been the opposite of yours.

JUDITH. What kind of life is that?

SUSANNA. I have lovers and I give myself to them . . . for money. My name is the best known of all the names that girls like you are not supposed to know.

JUDITH. In that case, you have the right to speak to me tonight. What do you want?

SUSANNA. To save you.

JUDITH. Save the girl who is going to save the city? I see there is nothing modest about you.

SUSANNA. Do you think I am beautiful?

JUDITH. For the sake of your profession, I hope so.

SUSANNA. Look at me closely. Look closely, Judith. If I am beautiful, it is because I look something like you. My beauty, I know, covers nothing, nothing at all. It has nothing to hide. But just the same it is something like yours. I've been told so a hundred times. And I'm your height, too -- and my voice . . .

JUDITH. That voice?

SUSANNA. Oh, I know it isn't trained to hide my thoughts, like yours. I have no thought to hide. No silences inside me. But it is your voice!

JUDITH. Have you heard that a hundred times too? Who is he? Who is the man?

SUSANNA. The man? Dozens of them. They come to me after you have warmed them up on the terrace. Dozens of them, trying to forget or seeking revenge. And while they cry in my arms or caress me, they call me Judith.

JUDITH. That's their password again tonight.

SUSANNA. For a year now, I've been watching you. I know how you talk and how you walk. And if I've imitated you it's not just to please your boy friends. It's because I love what you are. It's because you are me. You are the way I'd be if I weren't what I am. What's the harm in that?

JUDITH. No harm. It's theft, that's all.

SUSANNA. But I've stolen none of your haughtiness or pride. When I've bumped into you in the street and you've looked down on me with scorn, I've imagined your resignation. When you were cruel I've imagined your meekness. In front of your need for luxury, I've imagined your modesty. I've been happy, Judith, because I've made myself look just like you.

JUDITH. Do you?

SUSANNA. I make people think I do.

JUDITH. No woman patterned after a human being could ever resemble me. Not tonight!

SUSANNA. But you have never been human before. Not before tonight.

JUDITH. Since you must imitate me, speak clearly and come to the point.

SUSANNA. I want to go in your place.

JUDITH. I expected this!

SUSANNA. I don't believe in prophets. Most of them are spies, anyway, working for the enemy. There are some people who think Holofernes has heard so many men boasting about Judith that he has set a trap to catch

her for himself.

JUDITH. What if he has? Couldn't God have put this thought in his head, in order to destroy him?

SUSANNA. If so many men of our own army, who know better, could be taken in by this resemblance how can you expect Holofernes to see the difference? Holofernes is a barbarian. He makes no distinction between the beauty I wear like a mantle and that other beauty like yours, that one really sees.

JUDITH. And what about God? Will He see any difference between us?

SUSANNA. God sees fewer differences than we give Him credit for, Judith.

JUDITH. And just so this exchange of roles will be complete, I suppose you'd like me to replace you and lie with the next man who knocks on the door and that he too will see no difference between us.

SUSANNA. Judith, you don't understand. It's not just to save your life, it's not because I think you are afraid! It's something else. Let me go in your place tonight. Tomorrow morning the people will see you in the street. They'll look at you and think you have returned from the enemy . . . and the city will be saved.

JUDITH. If it's not my life, then what is it?

SUSANNA. You must stay . . .

JUDITH. Stay pure? You talk like the catechism. I take it, you refer to my virginity!

SUSANNA. For once my profession will be an honor.

JUDITH. But doesn't Judith have to be a virgin? And isn't that precisely what you are not? Or has my virginity sent so many customers knocking at your door that you want to keep me the way I am?

SUSANNA. Oh, Judith, when a girl becomes a woman she changes her sex, her race. I want to preserve the miracle that you are -- Judith, the young girl.

JUDITH. So that's what the foolish virgins dream about? My virginity! I don't know what yours was like, Susanna, but I'm beginning to understand mine. It's



Judith: ". . . My Virginity! I don't know what yours was like, Susanna, but I'm beginning to understand mine. It's neither ignorant nor innocent nor pure, but it's mine. It's a promise I bear inside me, like a child; a promise of a wonderful defeat, a great shame that will someday fill me to bursting with pride . . ."

neither ignorant nor innocent nor pure, but it's mine. It's a promise I bear inside me, like a child; a promise of a wonderful defeat, a great shame that will someday fill me to bursting with pride. Now God has changed this promise of defeat into one of victory. That's His business. But even if I were in love with a young man, tonight I'd say to him: "No, you shall not be the first."

SUSANNA. Judith! You must save yourself!

JUDITH. Who says I won't?

SUSANNA. But you're a girl. You have no weapons, no strength.

JUDITH. I have the most dangerous weapon of all.

SUSANNA. Poison?

JUDITH. The gift of speech! Words seethe under pressure inside me. Answers to a question! To a whole series of questions I've never heard asked? Just what they are going to prove, I have no idea. But the words are there. And when the time comes I'll let them prove whatever there is to be proven. Why, Susanna, you're crying!

SUSANNA. All that sweetness . . . all that violence . . . all for nothing!

JUDITH. Susanna, you don't understand me any better than John or the rabbis. If I object to the way they're pushing me into this affair, it's only because I've been dreaming, in my bed at night, of doing something like this on my own. But I waited too long . . . and now it's God who's going to get all the credit. Maybe God thinks I really thought it up all by myself. Maybe God's jealous because I thought of it first . . . maybe this is His revenge.

SUSANNA. Judith!

JUDITH. As for my sweetness. Let me kiss you for that. No, look at me. Now am I really the one you give to those poor young men I've driven into your arms? Is this the way you talk to them? Farewell to my soft skin. Farewell to my lips. How much easier it is to say goodbye to a sister than to your own image in the mirror.

SUSANNA. Judith!

JUDITH. And now I must leave you.

SUSANNA. No, no!

JUDITH. Stupid woman, can't you recognize the voice of God when it speaks?

SUSANNA. You're not going out like that, without a cloak?

JUDITH. I don't want my uncle to know I'm leaving.

SUSANNA. Here, take mine. You will be wading through streams, pushing through the brush.

JUDITH. Is the street still full of people?

SUSANNA. The streets are empty now, but the whole town is watching. They're looking out their windows, waiting for Judith to pass. Even the children have been allowed to stay up late to watch.

JUDITH. It's time the children went to bed. How do I look?

SUSANNA. The way you always look, Judith.

JUDITH. The way I always look! Thank you, Susanna. May Judith look tonight as she has always looked. What a compliment for all the other days of my life.

(JUDITH leaves.)

SUSANNA. John! John!

(JOHN enters.)

JOHN. Has she gone? You know what to do? Do you remember the shortcut?

SUSANNA. Esther is going with me. She crosses the lines almost every night on business.

JOHN. You have plenty of time. I sent Judith the long way around.

(Exit SUSANNA. THE PROPHEET appears in the window and calls again for JUDITH to save the city. JOHN runs to the window, grabs THE PROPHECY, drags him into the room, throws him on floor, and kills him.)

JOHN. Now, you've been saved!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

(An anti-chamber in HOLOFERNES'S tent. URI and OTTA, two aides de camp, are joking with SARAH the procuress; EGON, another aide de camp, enters. In the background are a few guards and a giant negro named YAMI.)

(Laughter as EGON, a painted, manicured and effeminate officer, enters.)

OTTA. Egon! Come in! Sarah has an idea!

EGON. And it's about time, Sarah. The officers are beginning to complain. It seems that your merchandise no longer satisfies them.

SARAH. It's the best I can offer.

EGON. Your best is no longer good enough. Two months ago you brought us girls who were not only curious to learn but also plump enough to teach. But, ever since this beastly famine in the city, we get nothing but their older sisters.

OTTA. More like their mothers.

URI. No, their grandmothers.

OTTA. And all they want is food. They rush for the kitchen like a pack of dogs.

EGON. It's your widows who are the worst offenders. Either they are cold as icicles or else so wanton that a soldier loses his self-respect by obliging them.

URI. It's obvious you weren't born to your profession.

SARAH. Certainly not! I'm a direct descendant of Jacob.

EGON. Sarah, you amaze me. Ever since we've come to this country we've had nothing but famous names to serve us, whether it's to open the secret gates at night or furnish young boys for our pleasure. If the descendants of Jacob can't even be satisfactory procurers of women, what good does it do them to have him as an ancestor?

OTTA. This is the night that Jacob redeems himself.

EGON. Well, Sarah! And what entertainment do you offer tonight to celebrate the destruction of your city?

SARAH. A comedy.

EGON. But we've seen what you call comedy! Naked women with national emblems tattoo'd on their navels, dancing under colored lights. The only person who's not bored to death with them is the minister of war. I was hoping you'd have something more substantial.

SARAH. The funniest scene that a Jewess ever played in the theatre, or ever will play, if you kill them all tomorrow morning.

EGON. Nonsense, the theatre will never see the last of Jewish actresses -- Sarah! Who is this Jewess? Is she here?

SARAH. She is on her way.

EGON. She looks like you, I suppose?

SARAH. She is twenty years old.

EGON. Another beggar, I suppose?

SARAH. Her father is a millionaire. For three centuries her forefathers have been lending, renting and stealing to make a pedestal of gold for this wonder of charity and generosity to stand on.

EGON. Then why is she coming to see you?

SARAH. She is not coming to see me. She's coming to see Holofernes.

EGON. If you and this Jewess are plotting trouble . . .

SARAH. I did not arrange this visit. In fact, I had nothing to do with it. It's the people of Israel who send her. According to their prophets, they can be saved only if the fairest and purest girl in the city comes to Holofernes, unescorted. Everybody thinks that this is the girl the prophets were talking about. And, since she agrees with them, she's on her way.

EGON. This is more like it, providing she has some flesh on her!

SARAH. There is scarcely a hint of hair and when Judith cries, even when she perspires, it is like dew at sunrise. And she was born rich.

EGON. Judith? Did you say "Judith?"

SARAH. Why, do you know her?

EGON. That girl who bribed the Arab porters to massacre the officers of the guard last week, what was her name?

SARAH. It's the same girl.

EGON. And she dares come here after butchering our dearest friends? Otta, remember how poor Lamia looked with his head split open and that green slime in his mouth?

SARAH. At last my comedy is beginning to interest you!

EGON. So she's coming here! The girl who made green slime of a hero's blood is coming here! I can hardly wait the pleasure. What refinements of torture have you prepared to welcome our guest?

SARAH. There is only one for a girl like this: humiliation! May I bring her in?

EGON. If you must. The King is resting in the rear of the tent.

SARAH. Then you sit there, on the royal throne. Uri, hand me the cloak.

EGON. Holofernes's cloak? You want her to think that I am Holofernes?

SARAH. Of course. She'll come in trembling with fear. Obsessed with the idea that she is a queen facing a great king. Encourage her, she'll play the Queen of Sheba for you. She'll plead the cause of love and virtue in front of a modern Solomon.

EGON. But why me?

SARAH. Because you can talk. I told you she was a virgin. That means that above everything else she will be very talkative. And remember, all Israel believes in this girl. The people are spending the night on the parapets waiting.

EGON. Waiting? -- for what?

SARAH. For morning -- when she will walk out of here, followed by a penitent Holofernes.

OTTA. Now Egon, do you understand your part in this

comedy?

EGON. I can always understand revenge.

OTTA. You know, in the royal cloak, you look good.

EGON. In a royal cloak anyone looks good! It's the most flattering garment yet invented by man. Otta, remember how poor dear Lamia died? The anguish of that beautiful body torn by two deaths at once? One side of him swollen until he looked more like a giant tumour than a man. The other side, still slim, controlled and dignified, even to the impeccable grace of a smile on his lips. Tonight only the slim beautiful half of Lamia shall stand by my side. No, Lamia, the other side, please! Is the woman ready to present herself?

SARAH. She is coming.

EGON. How do you know?

SARAH. We've had spies on her trail from the moment she left the city.

EGON. And where did she enter the camp?

SARAH. Near the stream where your enemies made their last attack. The water is polluted with blood, but this girl bent down to drink and quenched her thirst.

EGON. Lamia! She drinks blood.

SARAH. She is now approaching the royal tent. Now she accosts the guard and asks for Holofernes.

EGON, to the guard. Bring in this creature, this cannibal of pride!

URI. But what about us? What do we do when she comes in?

SARAH. It's very simple. The rest of us will curse and insult the girl. Egon will be fascinated by her words. Bit by bit, he will let her seduce him into sparing the city.

EGON. She can kiss me, but that's all. One kiss.

URI. Egon! How courageous of you!

EGON. That's because of Lamia. Lamia liked women too.

But only those who were blond like him. Sarah, I hope this Judith is not a blond. I hope she hasn't put on a lot of paint, just to soften poor Lamia's heart.

SARAH. See for yourself, Great King!

(JUDITH enters. EGON and the officers pretend not to notice her entrance. They continue laughing and joking.)

JUDITH. I am here, Holofernes!

URI. Who dares pronounce the name of the King? Who is this creature so ignorant of the law that she knows not it is forbidden to touch the king, even with a word?

JUDITH. She can tell you who I am.

SARAH. Ah? So Judith condescends to recognize Sarah! Sarah has come up in the world since Judith threw her out of the house, hasn't she?

OTTA. What brings her to us? Hysteria? Hunger, thirst? Does she wish a drink?

JUDITH. I quenched my thirst in the stream outside your camp.

EGON. What did she say?

SARAH. I believe she said she just had a drink of water flavored with Jewish blood, so that she may be as courageous as her brothers. It's what they call a noble thought.

EGON. If it is to recite noble thoughts that you've come to us, my dear, you are wasting your time. Noble thoughts never do anyone any good until centuries after they are said. And even then the only people who have any time for them are actors playing in tragedies.

SARAH. She's acting now.

EGON. Please, save it for the theatre! I'm so rarely touched! If you knew how many women have played this scene before my eyes, wives trying to rescue their husbands from my clutches, sisters tendering vials of poison to their beloved brothers after drinking half of it themselves with a sad little smile on their

faces. Such noble thoughts! Such superlative gestures! I'm familiar with the whole repertory, but I've never been touched -- here! So you drank the water in Esau's stream? You were quite free to do so, you know. Only please don't come boasting about it to me. What is your name?

JUDITH. Judith.

EGON. Sarah, who is Judith?

SARAH. My Lord, she is a virgin. There has never been a virginity that was petted and desired at closer quarters, but it is a virginity just the same. She has a certificate from the Grand Rabbi to prove it. Would you like to see for yourself?

EGON. Touch her, Sarah, and I'll have you whipped! At least she is pleasant to look at, and considerably less emaciated than your usual recruits.

SARAH. I don't know how she does it. The others dry up with hunger. She thrives on it. I think she nourishes herself on the grandeur of the times.

EGON. We have plenty of that to give her. Princess! How dare you show yourself like this? Humm? That perfume around you! Is that the royal scent of Judah?

SARAH. No, my Lord. That's the aroma of the city bank. I told you, she's rich. But there she stands, captive and broken and shattered with fear.

EGON. Oh no, Sarah, you are mistaken. I recognize courage when I see it.

SARAH. She's afraid, I tell you. See how stiff and pale she is. See, she's afraid to open her mouth. It's not always so easy, is it, dearie? Sometimes those great big words seem out of place.

EGON. One more of them out of you, Sarah, and I'll turn you over to Uri. What brings you to our tent, my dear?

JUDITH. I wanted to see a great King, face to face.

EGON. I trust you see him just the way you imagined him to be.

JUDITH. I'm not sure exactly how I imagined him. But I do know that when I left I was despondent, and now I am hopeful.



Sarah: "My Lord, she [Judith] is a virgin. There has never been a virginity that was petted and desired at closer quarters, but it is a virginity just the same. She has a certificate from the Grand Rabbi to prove it. Would you like to see for yourself?"

EGON. Because of something you see in my eyes? The way I curl my hair?

JUDITH. Something in the way you speak.

SARAH. There, you see! Flattery!

EGON. Something that makes it more soft, I suppose? More trusting?

JUDITH. No. But underneath the harsh hypocritical tones of a ruler, I do sense a kind of playfulness. And then there is a curiosity in you which is very encouraging.

EGON. Beware of your intuitions, my child. Holofernes has made a thousand promises during his life. Once he promised the Queen of Aleppo to spare her eldest son if only the great lady would prostitute herself to a donkey. Another time he promised the God of Phoenicia to spare His temple if only He would materialize himself in the form of a man. The Queen obliged the donkey and the God of Phoenicia appeared in person. I killed the Queen's son and I burned the God's temple to the ground.

SARAH. That's because neither the Queen nor the God was like Judith!

JUDITH. Then you couldn't have been the real Holofernes, not the one I want to speak with tonight.

EGON. Speak then! He is listening.

URI. My Lord! It's this girl or us! You'll have to make your choice.

EGON. Silence! I have already chosen.

OTTA. But it's late, my Lord! There is scarcely time to read our reports.

EGON. Speak, girl, in whose name do you come to us?

JUDITH. Just that. Do you know the difference between a girl and a woman?

EGON. A girl is what Sarah was, a long time ago. She is what once all those women were who are the scourge of the earth.

JUDITH. Do you know what it means to be a girl?

EGON. Everybody knows that, except the girls themselves. Once a girl knows it, she is no longer one of them. She's a woman.

JUDITH. Then I am the exception. Because I know what I am, and I'm not a woman.

EGON. Let's say that you are not a woman yet, but that you are well prepared for the grotesque act which will make you one.

JUDITH. To remain a girl, my Lord, is to be driven by a blind force that inures you to pain, unhappiness and suffering. All in the hope that some day you will encounter grandeur in the form of another human being.

EGON. I hope, my dear, that you don't expect to find that here. Grandeur belongs to tragedy, and tragedy is for those who have been defeated. Grandeur is the consolation prize the gods offer to the victims, just before they lose their heads on the altar.

JUDITH. Holofernes! Spare the people of Israel, and your name will be praised with theirs for all eternity!

OTTA. Really now! Only a Jewess could take eternity as seriously as all that!

EGON. Goodness me, Judith, don't you think I've already heard all the arguments one could invent for sparing your people? Besides, I do not have much love for women.

SARAH. You'd never guess it tonight. Touch her, my Lord. Touch her with your hands!

EGON. Uri, take that woman away and whip her!

SARAH. But, my Lord, what have I said? What have I done?

EGON. You have insulted my guest.

SARAH. Pity, my Lord! I was joking!

OTTA. It's not right to whip her, my Lord, not if she was only joking!

EGON. Let Judith decide. If Judith takes pity on you, you shall be spared.

SARAH. Judith! Pity me!

EGON. One word, one move of her hand and Judith can save you. (JUDITH remains silent and motionless.) Very well, that's settled.

OTTA. Take care, my Lord. Embrace that virgin and you'll produce a new race of usurers and prophets.

EGON. It is for you to take care, Otta. Who do you think I am that you can talk to me in this manner? What sort of man are you to forget that today we commemorate the passing of our dear lamented Lamia? Lamia, who owed so much to this Jewess! In his name, Judith, we listen.

JUDITH. Then listen carefully, my Lord, for the love of this man Lamia, just as if he were standing there behind you.

EGON. He is, indeed. At least, half of him. All right Judith, we are listening. No, come here. Closer. Don't you think we've played this comedy long enough?

JUDITH. Comedy?

EGON. I lied to you, Judith. I knew you were coming. And not from the mouth of that old procuress, but from the mouths of those exquisite young men who screamed your name as we tore them apart, limb by limb. One would think that the whole army of Israel existed only to defend that name. And now here you are, a prisoner in my tent. It wasn't I who invented the story that you would save the Jews by coming here. And yet, my dear, don't you think it possible that the same popular imagination which can so often distill the wisdom of whole volumes of philosophy into a single proverb may have seen through the confusion of history, and simplified the great struggle of nations and armies by identifying the two real adversaries: you and me. Perhaps this war against the Jews cannot end except in a duel which sees the two of us, the real antagonists, face to face. And so here we are. And so the war is ended! Otta, call the general staff. Tomorrow we move north to attack the Phoenicians. And you, Judith, are free to go home.

JUDITH. Go home?

EGON. Hurry home, my child, and tell the Jews how you saved the city. Uri, will see you safely through the lines. Uri, do you understand? And tell your people what it is like to treat with a barbarian.

JUDITH. But . . .

EGON. Yes, my dear, you are very attractive, but we have no taste for your charms. And besides, I'm not in the mood.

JUDITH. My Lord.

EGON. Wait! Am I wrong in thinking that you might be able to conquer your aversion, bring your face close to mine, and gently implant a sisterly kiss on my forehead?

JUDITH. I could.

EGON. Well then, do!

(Distrustfully, JUDITH approaches EGON and kisses him on the forehead. Suddenly, she grabs him and kisses him passionately on the mouth. Cries of mockery from the others. JUDITH pushes EGON away as they surround her. She raises her hand with a dagger.)

EGON. The little bitch! She might have hurt me. Uri, take her away!

SARAH. Imbecile! Where did you think you were? In the court of love? What a fine picture of Jewish intelligence you've given these men, mistaking a pederast with his painted lips and long eyelashes for King Holofernes!

EGON. Uri! Take her away, she's yours. Do what you like with her.

URI. No.

EGON. Do you hear. I'm giving her to you.

URI. No.

EGON. You refuse?

URI. Yes.

SARAH. Give the girl to me, Egon. I can use her. Didn't you notice how nicely she's learned to kiss?

EGON. No. We are going to avenge poor Lamia, and right here.

SARAH. Why don't you cry for help, Judith? Call for

your soldiers! Call for the prophets! Or better yet,
call for God!

JUDITH. Holofernes! Holofernes! Holofernes!

(The curtains part at the rear of the tent, flooding
the stage with light. HOLOFERNES appears.)

HOLOFERNES. Take that woman out of my sight and kill her!

SARAH. But, Holofernes, what have I dont?

HOLOFERNES. Let's say that you mispronounced my name.
That should suffice.

SARAH. Pity, my Lord! It was Egon's idea!

HOLOFERNES. Then we'll start your little comedy all over
again, only this time in earnest. We'll ask this
young girl if she wants to pity you.

SARAH. Pity, Judith!

HOLOFERNES. One word, one move of her hand, and Judith
can save you.

SARAH. Save me, Judith! Don't let them kill me.

(JUDITH does not move.)

HOLOFERNES. Take her away! Besides she's a Jew. We
should have killed her long ago.

SARAH. You think you'll kill us all, don't you? Israel
will live, despite you, the Messiah will come and
He'll rule over us. And it won't be because of a
stupid bourgeois who walks around boasting she's still
a virgin. It will be because of Sarah, mistress of
whores! Take this city, burn it! But you'll never
kill all the Jews, because for weeks and weeks I've
been smuggling the young ones through your lines to
safety in the hills. That's where they've gone, your
playmates. But they'll come back. They'll come back
and build again and they'll live to spit on your name!

HOLOFERNES. Poor Sarah! Every night you smuggled them
out of the city, and every morning I'd have to send
fresh horsemen to pursue the caravan and exterminate
its Jewish cargo.

SARAH. Murderer! (She hurls herself onto HOLOFERNES.)

HOLOFERNES. Now leave us alone. All of you!

(All leave except HOLOFERNES and JUDITH. He contemplates her. Then, after a silence . . .)

HOLOFERNES. It's as if they come through the air on wings . . .

JUDITH. . . .

HOLOFERNES. . . . or come burrowing through the ground like moles. Just when a man least expects to see a woman, there she comes. Flying, burrowing, bringing some new note of sweetness or pain he never heard before.

JUDITH. . . .

HOLOFERNES. And that's about the sum of what I've learned during ten years of military conquest. The really great adventure comes to those who lock themselves in their tents. While the philosopher meditates, or the banker audits his books, or the general pores over his maps, alone at their desks these men weave an invisible web of thought. And, suddenly, in the next room they hear someone struggling. It's a woman, caught in the web. And then all the man has to do is gently untangle her with his two hands. But where on earth did this one come from, the most perfect of all?

JUDITH. From a battlefield, where men are dying.

HOLOFERNES. I can never remember how a woman slips away from me, disappears from my life, but I never forget a single detail of how she first crosses my path. The dress she was wearing, the time of day, the first smile. When she leaves, she's like all the rest, but when she comes to me, she's like no other creature on earth. But how different you are from the others, Judith. More different than I would ever have thought possible. If you'd like to powder your nose, tidy your hair . . .

JUDITH. After what they did to me, I'm ready for anything that comes.

HOLOFERNES. Even for love?

JUDITH, with horror. Egon touched me. I'm no longer worthy.

HOLOFERNES. Wipe away that rouge from the corner of your mouth, and Egon will disappear from your face. Would you like it if I also wiped him off the face of the earth?

JUDITH. Oh, no, let him live. Let his filthy marks stay to shame me as long as I live.

HOLOFERNES. Nonsense! You know very well he'll disappear the first time you wash your face.

JUDITH. Do you think that, after what God has done to me, I can ever show the world my face again? I've been shamed, Holofernes. Burned with shame! I can still feel them, Egon's lips, like a white brand on my burning face.

HOLOFERNES. It's the brand that burns, the face is white. Here, let me wipe it off.

JUDITH. You'll never wipe off the false kiss God gave me. His is worse than Egon's.

HOLOFERNES, kissing her lightly. We'll take care of Egon's first. There! The face is clean, washed clean. It looks as if we've washed off the other ones too, the ones your boy friends must have left there. Anger is the best thing in the world to bring back a look of outraged virginity to a woman's face. It takes anger to reveal her secret.

JUDITH. What is my secret?

HOLOFERNES. The secret behind those cold dry eyes . . .

JUDITH. Yes, what is it?

HOLOFERNES. Sweetness.

JUDITH. Sweetness! Didn't you feel the dagger under my cloak?

HOLOFERNES. Like a part of your body. But it's the only part of that body that wishes me harm. The rest is love.

JUDITH. I've abandoned myself to hatred.

HOLOFERNES. Yes, yes, I know there are complications. But there are times, Judith, when the only place in life we can get a foothold is in the glorious void of pleasure. Is that what you seek? Is that what you

want from me?

JUDITH. The only way I can get a foothold now is to debase myself. Do you think that all Israel and God Himself have been flattering me, pampering me, for twenty years just to throw me into a trap like this? And even if they have I refuse to accept it. Body and soul, buried in shame!

HOLOFERNES. But we just wiped that off! Or don't you like me the way I am? Do I have to disappear and make way for a third Holofernes? You wanted to see me. Here I am. You wanted to talk to me. I'm listening. Now, what is it?

JUDITH. Nothing. Nothing, anymore.

HOLOFERNES. Aren't you going to tell me about that God of yours?

JUDITH. Let Him talk for Himself. He's big enough.

HOLOFERNES. But if you were to speak for him I might listen more sympathetically. I've always cared most for Gods that are weak, the ones whose divinity depends on the love men give them. And what about your brothers? When you left them a few hours ago, didn't you promise to work for their salvation?

JUDITH. That was a thousand years ago.

HOLOFERNES. But they're still alive, waiting to be saved. They're still out there, crying for you. Listen! You can hear them from here.

JUDITH. I no longer understand their language. And I'm ashamed that I ever spoke it. Yes, they're singing, I know the song by heart. That's me they are singing about, pure as the lamb, brave as the lion. I'm sick of words. I've said the last one I'll ever say!

HOLOFERNES. No, you must talk. There is nothing to fear, so long as we are in the tent.

JUDITH. I don't understand.

HOLOFERNES. You understand only too well. You are beginning to guess where you are.

JUDITH. Where am I?

HOLOFERNES. What does it feel like?

JUDITH. An island. A clearing in the woods.

HOLOFERNES. You see, you knew all the time.

JUDITH. What did I know?

HOLOFERNES. That this is a place where there is no such thing as God.

JUDITH. Where? Here?

HOLOFERNES. These thirty square yards of tent! One of the rare corners of life where we humans are really free! This poor universe of ours is infested with deities, Judith. From Greece to the Indies, from north to south, there isn't a country that doesn't swarm with them, each with his own particular evils, his own particular odors. They are the air you breathe from the first day you enter the world. But there are still some places off limits to them. This is one of those places. Here you are untouched by original sin. Here you have no need for prayers or singing hymns. I see you are beginning to guess who I am.

JUDITH. Who are you?

HOLOFERNES. I am what in this God-infested world only the King of Kings dares to be: a man. The first one if you like. A man of the world, of this world, friend of nature and enemy of God. What is a pretty girl like you doing with all those psalm singers, anyway? Think how sweet life could be if you were freed from fears and had no need for prayers. Think what life would be like if man were really innocent.

JUDITH. So it's innocence you offer me!

HOLOFERNES. I offer you, for tonight and for as long as you like, the gift of utter simplicity and the calm that goes with it. I'm offering you the same words you used as a child. Words as simple as "apples" and "oranges." And inside there are no gods to spoil the fruit, like worms eating away at the core. I offer you songs instead of litanies. Listen. Sounds like those come to rest naturally around us instead of being sucked up to the clouds by that vacuum in the heavens. I offer you pleasure, Judith. And that is a word that makes the image of God disappear . . .



Holofernes: "I am what in this God-infested world only the King of Kings dares to be: a man. The first one if you like. A man of the world, of this world, friend of nature and enemy of God. What is a pretty girl like you [Judith] doing with all those psalm singers anyway? Think how sweet life could be if you were freed from fears and had no need for prayers. Think what life would be like if man were really innocent."

JUDITH. He has a way of reappearing afterwards awfully fast. Hadn't we better hurry?

HOLOFERNES. Hurry? Certainly not! Do you think there is any lovelier sight than a woman stripped naked of godliness! Still coltish in her new-found freedom! How beautiful you are, Judith . . . and, suddenly, so unadorned! That's the truth your whole body is crying out to me. What is it, Judith? What is it you want?

JUDITH. To lose myself!

HOLOFERNES. Your body says the same thing, but more gently.

JUDITH. Then I shall not listen to my body.

HOLOFERNES. Your body tells me that it is tired, that it's going to fall to the ground with its own weight unless a man puts his arms around it so tightly it can scarcely breathe. Your body wants to be God! What do you want?

JUDITH. To be insulted, beaten, reviled, torn to pieces and desecrated!

HOLOFERNES. Both of you shall be obliged.

JUDITH. No. Not yet!

(OTTA appears in the doorway of the tent.)

OTTA. My Lord, Judith is waiting outside.

HOLOFERNES. What did you say?

OTTA. There is a woman outside who says her name is Judith. I told her you were resting, but she insists on seeing you tonight.

HOLOFERNES. Two Holofernes, and now two Judiths! What shall we do with this new Judith?

JUDITH. I know who she is. Let her come in and you can choose between us.

(A gesture out of the door from OTTA. SUSANNA enters.)

HOLOFERNES. So you are Judith?

SUSANNA. Yes.

JUDITH. Then why don't you say so? We have no other way of knowing it.

SUSANNA. I am Judith.

JUDITH. You are also Esther, Madeleine or Rose. Must we go over all that again? Now that we've seen you, you may go.

SUSANNA. Not without you.

HOLOFERNES. What does she want?

JUDITH. She wants to save me from you.

HOLOFERNES. You want to save Judith? Is she in danger?

SUSANNA. Yes, but not the danger I anticipated.

JUDITH. You thought you'd find me on my knees, screaming for mercy in front of a bearded ogre, didn't you?

SUSANNA. I did not expect to interrupt a love scene.

JUDITH. . . . written a long time ago by God.

SUSANNA. This is not the way they imagine the scene back in the city. They see Judith on her knees, pleading with a monster.

HOLOFERNES. Oh? And what do you think it is that stands before her? Every girl gets the monster she deserves.

SUSANNA. What stands in front of her? That's obvious: the first man who's ever made Judith feel. She was sent here by God. But now, it's a man who keeps her here. Holofernes, you must save it!

HOLOFERNES. What am I supposed to save now?

SUSANNA. The honor of the world.

HOLOFERNES. You mean Judith's virtue?

SUSANNA. Today they are the same thing.

HOLOFERNES. My dear young lady, there will be plenty of girls to take Judith's place. Nothing reproduces itself so quickly as a virgin.

SUSANNA. She is not the real Judith. Why, I'm more Judith than she is -- me. And I am only a pale imi-

tation of what she was yesterday. In all the city she is the only one who isn't Judith tonight. And that goes for women, children, old men, as well as the heroes of the army.

JUDITH. Those heroes sent me here.

SUSANNA. But I came to save you.

JUDITH. Now, God's envoy unveils her holy secret. She is jealous of Holofernes!

SUSANNA. Silence her, my Lord, I beg you.

HOLOFERNES. I find this very interesting.

JUDITH. There's your rival, Holofernes. If you want me, you'll have to take me from her.

SUSANNA. Pity her, my Lord. You may not believe in God but you must believe in beauty, human beauty. She's suddenly seen herself naked, stripped of sainthood, and now she wants to destroy herself.

HOLOFERNES. If it's human, beauty has nothing to fear from me, not at a moment like this. On the contrary.

SUSANNA. Judith! Remember Israel!

JUDITH. Israel! As far as Israel is concerned, Judith came to Holofernes. That's the extent of her responsibility to her people, God and their prophets. From this point on, fate works for or against the Jews quite apart from anything Judith may do. Neither Holofernes nor poor miserable Judith can do anything for them.

SUSANNA. That's blasphemy!

JUDITH. God is only interested in the way things look. Appearance, not the details! God asks us to dress up our acts, make them look like sacrifices. But underneath the appearance He leaves us free to satisfy our own desires, the lowest of them. Why, any street-walker in the city would know the difference between the real Holofernes and his servant. But not Judith-the-saint! God wants to destroy me. Well, I won't let him. I shall destroy myself!

SUSANNA. Do you hear that, Holofernes? Don't think for one moment that you have seduced this girl. If she comes to you, that's because she is disgusted with life.

JUDITH. Not with life. With women like you!

SUSANNA. And what about men like John?

JUDITH. Women like him too! Everything that's ever touched me before tonight seems to have been of my own sex.

SUSANNA. Praise be to Holofernes! The only man in the world! Choose, Judith -- Holofernes or God!

(Exit SUSANNA.)

HOLOFERNES. Into my arms, Jewess!

JUDITH. I am the Jewess.

HOLOFERNES. That's a word we Assyrians reserve for insults.

JUDITH. King though you may be, that insult makes this Jewess your equal tonight.

HOLOFERNES. You don't know all the unpleasant things it means to us: greed, poverty, blood that beats stronger with fear than with appetite.

JUDITH. It is also the word for generosity and courage. Only a Jewess knows the force of a human embrace.

HOLOFERNES. That's something I'd like to learn.

JUDITH. God inspires only those who believe in Him.

HOLOFERNES. . . . and so puts them under a curse.

JUDITH. God's never found any other way of singling out one race or one person except to put them under a curse. The day God learns to smile, my people will not only be chosen, they will also be blessed.

HOLOFERNES. Bravo, Judith! When you marry, what wonderful conversation you'll serve your husband for breakfast -- if they let you live that long.

JUDITH. They? Judith!

HOLOFERNES. Now, you're not going to kill yourself! Purity, my dear, is only a word.

JUDITH. I am not pure.

HOLOFERNES. No?

JUDITH. Do you think that a virgin could have crossed that battlefield and come here, alone, to face the unknown?

HOLOFERNES. What else is there for virgins to face?

JUDITH. I gave myself to the man I love, just before I left the city.

HOLOFERNES. You've never loved anyone. Yesterday you were in love with the world in general. Today you detest it in detail. Besides, women like you abhor giving themselves for love, at least when it's the first time. You prefer to be taken by force.

JUDITH. There is no force but the force of God.

HOLOFERNES. But God has a way of delegating His powers. I've already acted as God's agent on several occasions.

JUDITH. This time you are going to be surprised.

HOLOFERNES. I shall not be surprised, I assure you. A woman is a creature who has discovered her own nature. You are still looking for yours. You are a virgin.

JUDITH. It's my nature to explore.

HOLOFERNES. That's not true. You won't know what you are really like until tomorrow morning. Miserly or spendthrift, angel or shrew, you don't yet know. From my couch you will get up with your first born child -- yourself. Wouldn't it be wonderful if Judith were to wake up as a woman and discover that she is all sweetness and loving submission?

JUDITH. I wouldn't count on it.

HOLOFERNES. . . . or if all those Jewish wedding chants were suddenly to resolve into a single word: "Holofernes," pronounced with tenderness.

JUDITH. Tenderness has nothing to do with a name like that.

HOLOFERNES. No? Then why did you call me? If you were so afraid of Egon, why didn't you call on God for help?

JUDITH, wiping her mouth. Only a man could help me.

HOLOFERNES. Yet I heard something I'd never heard before: my name, pronounced like a beacon in the dark. You called for me the way you'd call for a life guard to jump off his post, dive into the water, and save you from drowning.

JUDITH. And what can you save me from now?

HOLOFERNES. From everything that threatens to rob your life of meaning.

JUDITH. From love, too, I suppose?

HOLOFERNES. You know very well that if a single hair of my head displeased you, you'd find a means of breaking away from me.

JUDITH. And if the shape of my ears or the spading of my teeth failed to meet your taste, would you be able to say that we were destined to meet?

HOLOFERNES. You mean we like each other?

JUDITH. I mean my torment is complete. My duel with Holofernes has turned into a love match between two bodies, one fair and one bronzed by the sun.

HOLOFERNES. That God of yours never did believe in real fights between real enemies. To Him a fight is no more than a scrap between two of His accomplices who've had a falling out. And you can be sure that He depends more on our getting along together than on our mutual hatred. Come now. And silence!

JUDITH. Silence? How can I hate you in silence?

HOLOFERNES. Like this.

(He kisses her.)

Have you often dreamed of this moment, Judith?

JUDITH. Yes.

HOLOFERNES. Did you often imagine what it would be like?

JUDITH. I've spent my whole life thinking about it.

HOLOFERNES. And you don't want to wait any longer?

JUDITH. No longer.

HOLOFERNES. Because this is the high mark of your life?

JUDITH. This is as low as I'll ever sink. God has forsaken me. I don't know why, but God has forsaken me. He wants a girl to sacrifice herself. He pushes her towards it. But when the moment comes, God can't stand the details and He turns His head. I've been too proud of my virtue, Holofernes. Now God wants me to throw it away, for nothing at all.

HOLOFERNES. For joy!

JUDITH. For nothing at all.

HOLOFERNES. Don't feel sorry for yourself. You are probably the only girl in the world who has found a way of fulfilling her mission. You'll soon see how it is. God made little girls to be devoured by monsters, and somehow the little girls always end up giving themselves to some man. That's where, from God's point of view, they miss their calling.

JUDITH. And that's where I am different!

(A silence.)

HOLOFERNES beckons her to rear of tent. JUDITH starts to follow. HOLOFERNES, amused, turns. Yes, Judith?

JUDITH. Is there a woman here?

HOLOFERNES. At this time of night there is only Daria. Poor old Daria. But I am afraid she won't be much company to talk to. Daria is deaf and dumb.

JUDITH. If she were deaf, dumb and blind, just so she is a woman.

HOLOFERNES. As you like, I'll send her to you.

(He claps his hands.)

Judith --

(Pause.)

It is you who come to me.

(Exit HOLOFERNES to rear of the tent. DARIA enters.)

JUDITH. You are Daria, aren't you? Yes, I know you can't

hear me and you have no tongue to talk with. What do I want? Nothing, Daria. Just to spend one last minute with a woman before I become one myself. Maybe it is just as well you cannot answer. Are you a virgin, Daria? You look at me as if I were asking if you could hear or speak. Poor Daria! You are not very attractive. Your eyes don't even have any real kindness in them. But tonight you'll have to be mother, sister, and myself to me. He took you by force, I suppose, brutally? What if I were to fight him off? No! He can't soil me now. Since the day God singled me out just because I was pure, I've been soiled as much as I can ever be. Soiled by God Himself! This may sound conceited, but I can say it to you because you can't hear me. It's me God is angry with. It's not Holofernes and it's not the Jews in the city. All history is like that. Just God's way of hiding the fact that He is tracking down one poor lone creature to destroy her. And now He has me cornered, Daria. He wins. In a few minutes He'll have written the end of Judith's story. Or rather, I'll be writing it off for Him. If only He were a monster, maybe I'd have the strength to resist. Ah? Do you think so? It won't be unpleasant? Something half way between crucifixion and laughter? No, don't open the curtains yet. One minute more. All right, now! How silent it is! A great kind waiting for a wife . . . a girl waiting to be reviled . . . a people waiting to die . . . an army facing defeat . . . such things produce a silence like this. One would almost believe that God is also deaf and dumb! May Jehovah pardon me, Daria. I know that what I've been saying is blasphemy. But the day will come when you'll find your tongue and that's the day when the vengeance of heaven and the angels will fall on those like me who have gone joyfully to their shame.

(JUDITH exits to rear of the tent.)

DARIA, laughing. And so amen!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

(Same as Act Two, SUSANNA is seated. Over her knees is the dress JUDITH was wearing. One of HOLOFERNES'S guards is stretched out on the bench, dead drunk. JOHN enters, stealthily. As he comes through the doorway we see the pale light of early morning behind him.)

SUSANNA. John!

JOHN. And did you think it was an archangel? The angels will never be interested in Judith again, Susanna. After last night, a man is the best she can expect. Where are they?

SUSANNA. How did you get here?

JOHN. Sarah escaped. She's told them everything. All Israel is up in arms against Judith for betraying their trust. It wasn't hard to get in once Sarah put the guards to sleep. They're drunk, all of them. Like this one.

(JOHN kicks the guard asleep on the bench.)

GUARD. Dead drunk!

SUSANNA. What are you going to do?

JOHN. Where the Jewess has failed only the Jew may succeed. I suppose they are still asleep.

SUSANNA. Yes.

JOHN. Get Judith away from him, but quietly.

SUSANNA. But she's still asleep.

JOHN. Asleep! You say it so salmly! Judith is the only child of Israel who slept a wink last night.

SUSANNA. Don't shout!

JOHN. Susanna, if we came here this morning, it was not to whisper like mourners around her marriage bed. Ah! If it were weeping and wailing they wanted, I could tell them tales of sorrow about this wedding night!

SUSANNA. Not so loud, they'll hear you.

JOHN. All night I've seen it in my head, heard it buzzing in my ears. (He is talking in whispers now.) Not a detail in all its horror was spared my imagination, because I know Judith and I know what she is like. Oh, Susanna, I'm so miserable!

SUSANNA. No more miserable than I am.

JOHN. We didn't deserve this. We loved her. What's that?

SUSANNA. Her dress.

JOHN. Then she'll come in here . . .

SUSANNA. But how do we know Holofernes won't come with her?

JOHN. Because I know Judith. She'll squeeze every extra dividend out of this crime. And that means waking up next to him in the morning, pitilessly examining his face while he is still sleeping. No, there is only one sure way of getting someone out of the next room, whether she's still asleep or not, and that is to call her name.

(Shouting.)

Judith! Judith!

(JUDITH enters, wearing HOLOFERNES'S cape. John turns away.)

SUSANNA. Is that you, Judith?

JUDITH. It's me, or almost me. What time is it?

(SUSANNA walks to doorway and pulls back the flap.)

SUSANNA. Look!

JUDITH. Yes, there's no doubt about that. A pincushion of blood on the horizon. A cold wind blowing through the hair of a poor soldier lying dead on the battlefield. A sky all gangrene and gold, and a soldier with a sword full of rusty menace . . . and Judith full of shame and happiness. As they say, it's the dawn.

(She comes back into the room. JOHN turns, as if to sneak out. JUDITH stops him.)

John!

JOHN. "John!" Did you enjoy yourself last night?

SUSANNA. John, don't!

JOHN. You're not as curious as I am, Susanna. Judith, did you have a good night's sleep?

JUDITH. It was brief.

JOHN. And you are no longer . . .

JUDITH. No longer.

JOHN. All Israel knows you have betrayed us.

JUDITH. I'm glad you know. I was trying to think of a way to tell you.

JOHN. They have stoned your servants, burned your house. Your uncle is wounded. The people curse your name.

JUDITH. I no longer belong to them.

JOHN. To whom do you belong? To Holofernes?

JUDITH. To death.

JOHN. Death is not far away. It's on its way here now.

JUDITH. And it's welcome! Draw your sword, if you like. I'm ready for it.

JOHN. My sword has a cleaner mission to perform. But unless you want to die, leave this place. The rabbis are going to make one last effort to appease Holofernes. The prophets have formed a procession. They are on their way here now.

JUDITH. What't that to me?

JOHN. Even if Holofernes massacres them, here in this tent, before they die they will find some way of punishing you first, Judith. You have been unfaithful to God.

JUDITH. You has been unfaithful, God or Judith? That's something we don't yet know.

JOHN. Ah -- the panther has sharpened her claws!

JUDITH. Then for once in your life have the courage to be a hunter instead of a mere soldier taking orders. You have a sword. Use it!

JOHN. He's in there, I suppose. Asleep!

JUDITH. Like a piece of marble. Silent and asleep.

JOHN. Then God has not failed me!

(JOHN draws his sword. He disappears into HOLOFERNES'S chamber at rear of the tent.)

JUDITH. Poor John! He couldn't possibly understand what has happened. But you do, Susanna. You've already guessed.

(JOHN returns. Stands stunned in the doorway.)

JUDITH. . . .

(JOHN makes an attempt to move, but is transfixed.)

JUDITH. Put away your sword now.

(JOHN runs to JUDITH.)

JOHN. Judith, can you ever forgive us? Blessed be every hair on her head! Blessed be the hatred in Judith's heart! I'll make myself worthy of you, Judith. You'll see.

(He runs to HOLOFERNES'S chamber. SUSANNA kneels in front of JUDITH.)

JUDITH. You'll spoil your dress . . .

SUSANNA. Judith, you are a saint.

JUDITH. Get off your knees.

SUSANNA. You killed him.

JUDITH. Kill? Assassins kill.

SUSANNA. Even God knows no other word for what you've done.

JUDITH. Then God has a very limited vocabulary. I hope you understand why I killed him.

SUSANNA. You did it because God transformed you into hatred itself!

JUDITH. Hatred? Do I look like hatred?

SUSANNA. A kind of hatred we've never seen before.

JUDITH. Do you really believe I could have killed him out of hatred, at dawn, a few hours after he made me his wife?

SUSANNA. I believe that Judith has been true to her mission.

JUDITH. Far from it! The moment Judith struck that blow was the moment she forgot who she was, where she came from, and what she was supposed to do.

SUSANNA. But you are alive and he is . . .

JUDITH. If I am alive it is because I knew that sooner or later the guards would kill me anyway . . . Now that I have lived to tell my story, I want you to be my witness before the judges when they arrive. I want you to tell them that Judith's story did not end in hatred. The truth is that what died in that chamber was a man and a woman in love.

SUSANNA. But you killed him!

JUDITH. I'd been sleeping, Susanna. No more than a few winks, but it was all the night to me. And then I awoke, and for the first time in my life I saw myself at dawn next to another human being. Everything had already happened! Now all I could look forward to was losing him . . . Even if it were possible to make him mine, really mine in face of all the Jews and the Assyrians. Even then every morning there would be this awful moment when he'd rise, face this light, leave me and go back to the world of living and fighting. So you see, there was no other way to keep it perfect, the way it was last night. . . . Hasn't the sight of a sleeping body next to yours ever made you think that perhaps murder is the tenderest and most enduring embrace of all?

SUSANNA. That's what murderers call it. But for centuries to come, Judith will be known to history as the one chosen by God to kill a man she hated because he was the enemy of her people.

JUDITH. Never! I'll tell them everything, Susanna. Listen! Those voices . . . They're coming to punish me. You'll tell them how it was, won't you? Please! If I give you a kiss? You won't recognize the kiss I gave you last night. That was nothing at all.

SUSANNA. I refuse to listen.

JUDITH. All right, stop up your ears. I don't need them.
Stupid that I am, there is a man in the room. Guard,
wake up!

SUSANNA. He's drunk.

JUDITH. Drunk or not, he has ears to hear with. And in
each ear there's a little hammer to beat on a little
anvil and make sound on a little drum. That's all I
need to transmit my story down through the ages.
Guard!

GUARD. I'm asleep.

JUDITH. Asleep! Listen to me.

GUARD, half awake. Who says I'm asleep? Not on duty!

JUDITH. Wake up and I'll make it worth your while.

GUARD. Oh, a woman! Hurrah for women!

JUDITH. Do you know what this woman has done?

GUARD. What has she done?

JUDITH. She has killed your King. She has killed Holo-
fernes.

GUARD. What did she do?

JUDITH. Killed.

GUARD. Killed him? Oh, that's bad!

JUDITH. Do you know why? Because she loved him!

GUARD. Because what?

JUDITH. Because she loved him.

GUARD. Loved him? Oh, that's good!

JUDITH. You see, Susanna!

GUARD, going back to sleep. You see Susanna!

JUDITH. I've hammered the truth into the head of a
sleeping man. Some day it will come out again. May-

be it will take centuries, but it will come out again to plague the generals and the rabbis. They're coming here for me, aren't they? Can you see them yet?

(SUSANNA goes to the entrance and looks out of the tent.)

GUARD, in his sleep. Because she loved him, she killed Holofernes. But what was her name?

JUDITH, leaning over the guard. Judith!

GUARD. But why didn't Holofernes kill Judith?

JUDITH. Don't worry, Judith will be killed.

GUARD. That's good.

SUSANNA. It's the Jews! Joachim and the prophets are leading the procession.

JUDITH. Let them come. Let them tie my hands, spit on me, beat me, insult me with each lash of the whip! That's what I want from them. And with each lash of the whip I'll lash back with my tongue. Blow for blow, I'll make them listen to each joy I've known until I am whipped unconscious.

(The Jews burst into the tent. JOACHIM, THE PROPHET of Act One (anyone knows all prophets look alike), and a group of cantors. They speak in the rounded liturgical tones of men who live in a world of scriptures.)

PROPHET. Praise be to Judith! Glory to her name!

FIRST CANTOR. Pray for me, Judith.

JUDITH. I don't understand.

JOACHIM. Hatred ruled in the heart of Judith and vanquished the enemy of Israel. Israel shall be saved and we prostrate ourselves at the feet of Judith.

SUSANNA, to Judith. Don't say a word.

FIRST CANTOR. Holofernes is already deserted by his allies. Even now Lieutenant John runs in their camps showing the severed head of the mighty King that Judith killed.

SECOND CANTOR. We have captured whole caravans of food and great casks of wine, and when Judith gives the word all Israel shall drink.

SECOND CANTOR. Judith is the bread we eat.

THIRD CANTOR. Judith is the water we drink.

JUDITH. Jews!

JOACHIM, intervening. What are you going to tell them?

JUDITH. The truth!

JOACHIM. They already know the truth. God's truth. Judith's truth does not interest them now. Listen to the cantors. Listen to what they know is true.

(The two CANTORS step forward.)

FIRST CANTOR. And for two days Judith did carry a sword under her mantle. It did cut into her flesh with each step she took, striking her knees like the pendant of a temple bell.

SECOND CANTOR. And Judith did cross the field of battle before the moon did rise. And the better to find her way she did follow the blood red stream of Esau like an angry beast of prey. For hers was the righteous wrath of the Lord our God.

JUDITH. But God was no longer in her heart.

JOACHIM. Silence, girl!

CANTORS IN UNISON. What does Judith say?

FIRST CANTOR. And Holofernes in his tent did have a dream, and he turned from the whore who shared his couch.

SECOND CANTOR. And Holofernes did turn away from the Queen in Damascus crowned, who was painted and rouged down to her heart.

FIRST CANTOR. He did turn from Pharoah's daughter.

SECOND CANTOR. From the hundred naked Muscovites dancing lewd dances around his couch.

THIRD CANTOR. From the great tiger of Bengal, all gar-

landed with wreaths of arms and legs and human breasts.

TWO CANTORS IN UNISON. And it was then that Holofernes saw Judith, fairest of the fair.

JUDITH. Lies! Myths! Legends for children! Holofernes was alone, all alone like a priest at the altar.

JOACHIM. Silence, girl.

(Chanting like the CANTORS.)

"Judith alone, only Judith," the great king cried.
"Judith alone is sweetness and light."

TWO CANTORS IN UNISON. Judith alone is balm. Only the touch of Judith's hand, only the velvet touch of Judith's hand caressing lightly from the knee . . .

FIRST CANTOR. And yet she was poison.

SECOND CANTOR. Hardened steel.

THIRD CANTOR. A trap with teeth of iron.

FIRST CANTOR. Vitriol.

SECOND CANTOR. With fangs of a serpent.

SUSANNA. To sting with hatred when the moment came.

JUDITH. Susanna, that's a lie and you know it. Jews!
Listen to me!

JOACHIM, to CANTORS. Finish the psalm!

FIRST CANTOR. He did lay her naked on the couch.

SUSANNA. But God did cover her nakedness.

SECOND CANTOR. God did clothe her with air and with light.
Of transparency God made for Judith a veil.

JUDITH. That's not true!

JOACHIM to the CANTORS. The psalm! The psalm!

FIRST CANTOR. Naked he saw her on the couch and looked into her face.

JOACHIM. Face to face, that's true, isn't it, Judith?

JUDITH. Is it true? Yes, it's true.

JOACHIM. Did you hear that? She says it's true!

CANTORS IN UNISON. Glory be to Truth, purest of the pure,
fairest of the fair!

SUSANNA, in the manner of the CANTORS. But suddenly God
did make the monster weak, weak in all his limbs.
And Holofernes no longer had the strength to possess
our Judith.

CANTORS IN UNISON. He did not possess her! He did not
possess her!

JUDITH, stepping forward. He did possess her! And she
was so full of love for him that there was no room for
anyone else, even for God!

FIRST CANTOR. What did she say?

JOACHIM. Silence! Leave us. Judith wants to talk to me
alone.

JUDITH. No, rabbis, don't go. It's you I want to talk
to. If you'd stop singing your tribal lies, I could
tell you the truth. This Jewess lay willingly with
Holofernes on his couch and pleased herself.

ALL THE CANTORS. Don't say it, Judith! It's blasphemy!

JOACHIM. Judith, you are destroying us.

JUDITH. And it wasn't a couch like the one in your psalms.
It was a real bed with real pillows and real sheets,
and down feathers that blew through the air, mixing
memories of home and childhood with every excess of
passion.

THE PROPHECY. Vengeance!

JUDITH. She sought pleasure on that bed and pleasure she
got. And in the first chill of the morning she
awakened and piously pulled the corners over Holofernes
in the manner prescribed for the dutiful wife.

ALL THE CANTORS, wailing in unison. Lost, lost, all is
lost. The girl has destroyed us!

SUSANNA. It's true, rabbis, it's true! But it was I,
Susanna, who did these things. Not her! He never
touched her!

(JUDITH strikes SUSANNA. SUSANNA falls to the ground.)

JOACHIM. Outside! All of you! I must explain to Judith how she is to act when we enter the city.

THE PROPHET. Then hurry, rabbi, Israel waits.

SECOND CANTOR. Israel waits.

PROPHET. Israel waits on the day of the prophets.

(All leave except JOACHIM, JUDITH and the GUARD.)

GUARD. There goes Susanna.

(Silence while the group disappears out the doorway.)

JOACHIM. What are your conditions?

JUDITH. On what conditions will I tell a lie?

JOACHIM. On what conditions will you live and hold your tongue?

JUDITH. Do I look like someone anxious to live and hold her tongue?

JOACHIM. The slightest slip of that tongue and you deprive the people of their miracle.

JUDITH. And the people must not be deprived of their miracle!

JOACHIM. We quite understand that after what has happened you may want to live apart in solitary contemplation. You know the municipal palace in the gardens by the lake? It's yours. We'll see to it that no one comes to bother you, that no one ruffles your desire to retire from the world. But you must come with us this morning and walk at the head of the procession.

JUDITH. Do you really think that I could be satisfied with a cottage in the park, magnolia trees and a private beach? That is the sort of thing a man gives his mistress when she's outlived her usefulness. Rabbi, I am twenty years old.

JOACHIM. How proud you are this morning!

JUDITH. And I suppose He's not proud!

Joachim. Who's that?



Joachim: "The slightest slip of that tongue
and you [Judith] deprive the people
of their miracle."

JUDITH. God! I've killed a man in the name of someone else, and now God writhes with jealousy. That divine hypocrite, I can feel Him all around me, grasping, trying to take all the credit for Himself. If I were willing, He'd even accept me as His emissary to the Jews, let me live in a palace by the lake, and give me a halo to wear as long as I live. But I know God! He'd only take it away from me later.

GUARD, in his sleep. She killed him because she loved him.

JUDITH. Did you hear that?

JOACHIM. What?

JUDITH. The guard.

JOACHIM. You're hearing things. He didn't say a word.

JUDITH. Oh, yes he did. He told you why I killed Holofernes.

JOACHIM. Why you think you killed him. But what you think doesn't matter now. My dear girl, the point is that the deed is done . . . and done just the way the church predicted it.

JUDITH. Did you also predict the joy it would bring me?

JOACHIM. Please! Spare us the details.

JUDITH. Did you spare me any details yesterday when you were describing Holofernes the monster? That's what is missing to drown your triumph, isn't it? You want me to swear under oath that Holofernes was bestial and deformed. Well, he wasn't. His eyes were clear, his body was smooth and strong. There is only one human word to . . .

JOACHIM. My dear girl, you forget we've seen his head on the end of a stick.

JUDITH. I'll get even with John for that!

JOACHIM. If it's revenge you want, Judith, you must **live.**

GUARD. Judith, Judith.

JUDITH, suddenly turning to the GUARD. What's that the

guard is saying?

JOACHIM. Nothing, I assure you. He's asleep.

JUDITH. Then why is he sitting up? Why does he stare at me like that?

JOACHIM. You're imagining things. He's sound asleep. Judith, your very hesitation is a crime against God, since you hesitate between Him and His most hated enemy.

JUDITH. I choose my own kind of hatred.

JOACHIM. Girl, girl! There is a limit to our patience.

JUDITH. Then lose your patience. God won't mind. Not once since last night have I felt His presence in this tent. I waited for Him to turn me into an archangel. He didn't. But you got your miracle just the same. Why is that man sitting up again? What does he want?

JOACHIM. The man is sound asleep on the bench.

JUDITH. Do you think it's a reflection I see?

JOACHIM. Reflection of what? Stick to the subject, Judith. Hasn't God given us exactly what we prayed for? Us and you?

JUDITH. How do you know what I prayed for?

JOACHIM. Can you deny that a miracle has taken place, and by your hands?

JUDITH. Your miracle is a fraud. God gave it to you cheap with a minimum of innocence, and all because I'm rich and spoiled and my name is great enough to conceal the deception.

JOACHIM. You want God to stay a virgin too? This is beyond all reason. You are destroying every means of retreat and cutting yourself off. Don't say more. Suppose that . . .

(The two churchmen freeze in preposterous positions, breaking their speeches in mid-sentence. Only JUDITH is left alive on the strangely lighted stage. Slowly, she turns to the bench where the drunken GUARD is sleeping.)

(The GUARD sits up. Grins at JUDITH.)

GUARD. Excuse me, Judith. I don't want to butt in, but . . .

JUDITH. Child of light, who are you?

GUARD. That's no way to talk to a guard.

JUDITH. But there's such a brightness and warmth about you!

GUARD. Brightness? That's because we've reached the moment when sour smells sweet, black is white, when you say clear as mud and mean transparent.

JUDITH. No, I see you as you really are, draped in purples and gold . . .

GUARD. Oh, you're more perceiving than I thought. Very well, Judith, it's just us now. A fight to the finish.

JUDITH. But why just us?

GUARD. Because you are God's enemy, Judith, and I know exactly what holds to use on women like you.

JUDITH. I don't understand.

GUARD. Tell me, Judith, since you left home last night, has that lovely body of yours wanted for anything -- food, drink, or anything?

JUDITH. . . .

GUARD. No, I think not. Did the bloody water of Esau's stream leave a stain on your dress? Did the mud on the battlefield soil your sandals? Did the thistles in the fields scratch your legs? Look at your hands. Is there a trace of murder left on them? Yes, rub them. See if you can make a spot of blood appear. Rub away, my dear. As long as you live, Judith, your hands will remain white and pure. Not a mark to mar the perfection of your body.

JUDITH. And what about the mark, the mark made by Holofernes?

GUARD. Even that can be disputed. You might as well face it, Judith. You are still a virgin.

JUDITH. What right have you to talk to me like this?

GUARD. Obstinate girl! Ever since you left the city the heavenly hosts have been beating their wings around you, guiding you, pitying you, building a sacred cathedral in the air over you. And, one after another, you have forced them to turn away their faces. And of all these hosts of heaven only I remain and I am reduced to making myself visible -- vulgarly visible, in the heavy, sweaty vestments of a drunken guardsman.

JUDITH. Who are you? If you are God talking to me at last, it is too late.

GUARD. Do you really think that God is ever going to talk to you? Do you think that God is ever going to talk to any man? No, Judith, it is not in words that God is articulate. Those chosen by Him are anointed with thistle oil, their ears ring with the silence of the night, they stumble across the battlefields and where they pass even the dying cease to cry. In the streams the cold water and hard pebbles flow silently around their legs, and watchdogs turn the other way without a single bark. Can you truthfully say you felt none of this presence along your path last night?

JUDITH. Don't stop. Tell me more.

GUARD. That's our message to Judith, fairest of Israel's daughters, chosen by God.

JUDITH. Forgive me.

GUARD. Oh, so you can hear me now!

JUDITH. Forgive me.

GUARD. Tell Israel the truth and God will forgive you.

JUDITH. But what truth?

GUARD. That you killed the enemy of GOD just as God ordained, because you hated him.

JUDITH. But you know yourself that it is not so?

GUARD. Not so?

JUDITH. Weren't you there? Didn't you see what happened?

GUARD. Think back over your night, from the beginning. When you entered the alcove, what did you see?

JUDITH. I saw a couch, that's all.

GUARD. Even God hesitates to ask a woman to stay on her feet when she fights.

JUDITH. I went to him.

GUARD. And we rejoiced because we saw only your sharp nails, your teeth, and every angle of your body.

JUDITH. And then I reached out to touch him and he was real. It was a revelation to me!

GUARD. God does not object if the divine voice occasionally emanates from vulgar bodies or coarse skins. But such things are only filters. God had long before decided that Holofernes would never truly touch you and He draped you in a transparent cloak. The angel Michael was on your lips. Ephraim was the flower in your hair. I was your right hand thrown around his neck. And all night long heaven was a mold enveloping you and your delirium. And in the morning God gave you the idea of killing . . .

JUDITH. Killing myself!

GUARD. If you like. But then you lost sight of everything except a little white circle on the sleeper's chest. As if a tiny mirror, like the one you played with as a child, were concentrating light from above onto that spot in the center of the man you thought you loved. And that spot of light, you struck at it . . . it was a target for you. Isn't that true, Judith?

JUDITH. Maybe.

GUARD. Isn't that true?

JUDITH, low. Yes, it is true.

GUARD. And tears of joy flowed in heaven to see hatred on your body. And we forged rivets which would prevent you from withdrawing the dagger once you had plunged it to its mark.

JUDITH. I only wanted to scratch him, prick the skin.

GUARD. And when you raised the dagger in your hand, that circle of light filled your thoughts, multiplied them by ten hundred. Didn't you feel the presence then, Judith?

JUDITH. Oh, was that you?

GUARD. Me and an avalanche of other spirits. And after the deed was done and you were awaiting death, like a bee who dies after stinging its enemy, we returned you to the world of nature. And you heard the spider spinning its web and the mole burrowing his tunnel in the ground under the bed. Then you heard a human voice. That was Susanna. And this, ungrateful child, is what God has done for you. Now open the flaps and go back to your people. Israel is waiting.

JUDITH. No, no! They'll make me into a martyr.

GUARD. Who said you were a martyr?

JUDITH. Since the day I was born everyone knows God intended me for love.

GUARD. Don't be stubborn, Judith. There is love in your story, but that chapter belongs to Susanna.

JUDITH. Do you think I'd suffer like this if I weren't made of tenderness? And why must this miracle be an afterthought? Why must you take a night of blasphemy and make it look as if it were something holy?

GUARD. That is for God to worry about. From where He sits, a thousand years away, God reserves the right to project saintliness on sacrilege and purity on self-indulgence. It's all a question of knowing how to light the stage.

JUDITH. Those lights are so bright they're scorching me.

GUARD. And this is only the beginning. Wait until the sun rises. There it comes now. Rise, sun! And you, Judith, to the city!

JUDITH. The city! In one night I've lost everything I ever lived for. No friends, no . . .

GUARD. You can live without your friends.

JUDITH. And my memories?

GUARD. What memories?

JUDITH. If I am to grow old, what is my desiccated old body to do with the memories of the happy, warm, breathing thing it once was? What will I keep of

Holofernes? Shall I have a son? You could at least tell me that?

GUARD. I've said all I can say to Judith before taking up my own life of disgrace. For in order to convince you, I've betrayed God's most hidden secret, and in doing so I've lost my place in heaven.

JUDITH. You, too! You too betrayed God. But what made you do it?

GUARD, with an angelic smile. Love?

JUDITH. Love for me?

GUARD. Love for love. I don't see why Judith shouldn't tell her people that somewhere outside the gates of heaven there is a fallen angel who still believes that Judith is a name for tenderness. But you must do as I say, immediately, or else I shall have to seize you and press your throat until I've squeezed out the truth.

JUDITH. The truth?

GUARD. The truth, Judith, is God's lie to the world! And you must shout it, for all to hear!

(Then he flops back onto the bench and sinks back into a drunken sleep.)

JOACHIM. Judith beware. You are breaking the bond that binds you to God. Beware!

JUDITH, blinded. Is that you, Joachim?

(Enter JOHN. A flash of light as he opens the tent flap attracts JUDITH'S attention. She turns.)

JUDITH. Oh, it's you -- John!

(She walks to him, as if trying to imagine that he is someone else. JOHN recoils.)

Did you . . .? Holofernes . . . Did you?

(JUDITH makes a gesture of appeal to JOHN. After protecting the object in his arms with the cape, he draws his sword to prevent her approach. The rest of the scene is a pantomime played in counterpoint against the dialogue of the churchmen.)



Guard: "The truth, Judith, is God's lie to the world! And you must shout it, for all to hear!"

When JUDITH replies to JOACHIM'S questions she does so in a tired, faraway voice -- as if she were replying to JOHN.)

JOACHIM. If anybody ever finds God's hiding place in the universe, my girl, it won't be you!

JUDITH, looking at JOHN. Don't worry, I'm going with you.

JOACHIM. To the city?

FIRST CANTOR. Where you can stir up this scandal all over again? Oh no, we don't leave this tent until everything is settled between us. What are your conditions?

JUDITH, still staring at JOHN. I told you, I'm coming with you. With no conditions at all.

JOACHIM. We have conditions. We have to protect ourselves against a relapse.

JUDITH, still to JOHN. Whatever they are, I agree to them in advance.

JOACHIM. You will live in the synagogue. You will see neither friends nor family.

JUDITH, still to JOHN. That won't be difficult. God has already crowded them out of my life.

JOACHIM. If any last words of love or pleasure remain in your mouth, say them now. Spit them out here before entering an everlasting silence. Come on, child, spit!

JUDITH, backing away from JOHN. My mouth is dry.

JOACHIM. If you wish we can call a servant who will bathe you before we go.

JUDITH, turning away from JOHN. My body is dry, too.

JOACHIM. Starting tomorrow morning Judith shall sit in judgment over disorderly families, immoral professors, and prostitutes. She will prescribe their punishments.

JOHN. She will know how to punish them.

JOACHIM. And you will select those who are to fast and pray and wear the sackcloth in her company.

JOHN. She accepts.

JUDITH. I accept.

FIRST CANTOR. Then glory to Judith. Let me put this cloak over her shoulders. What is more seeming for the bride of God?

GUARD, drunk. She told me she was a widow. Holofernes's widow!

JUDITH. What did he say?

FIRST CANTOR. Nothing.

GUARD. She loved him. She killed him because she loved him.

JOACHIM. Well, Judith, what are you waiting for?

JUDITH. John, someone should cut out this man's tongue.

GUARD. Her name was Judith. She had a body made for love. All night long, without a break.

JUDITH. And when the soldiers cut out his tongue, make sure that someone puts wax in their ears.

(The GUARD rises again from the bench.)

JUDITH. What's he doing now?

FIRST CANTOR. It's a kiss. But what does it mean?

GUARD. What does it mean? It means that I am Judith, the whore!

JUDITH. John, you had better have him killed.

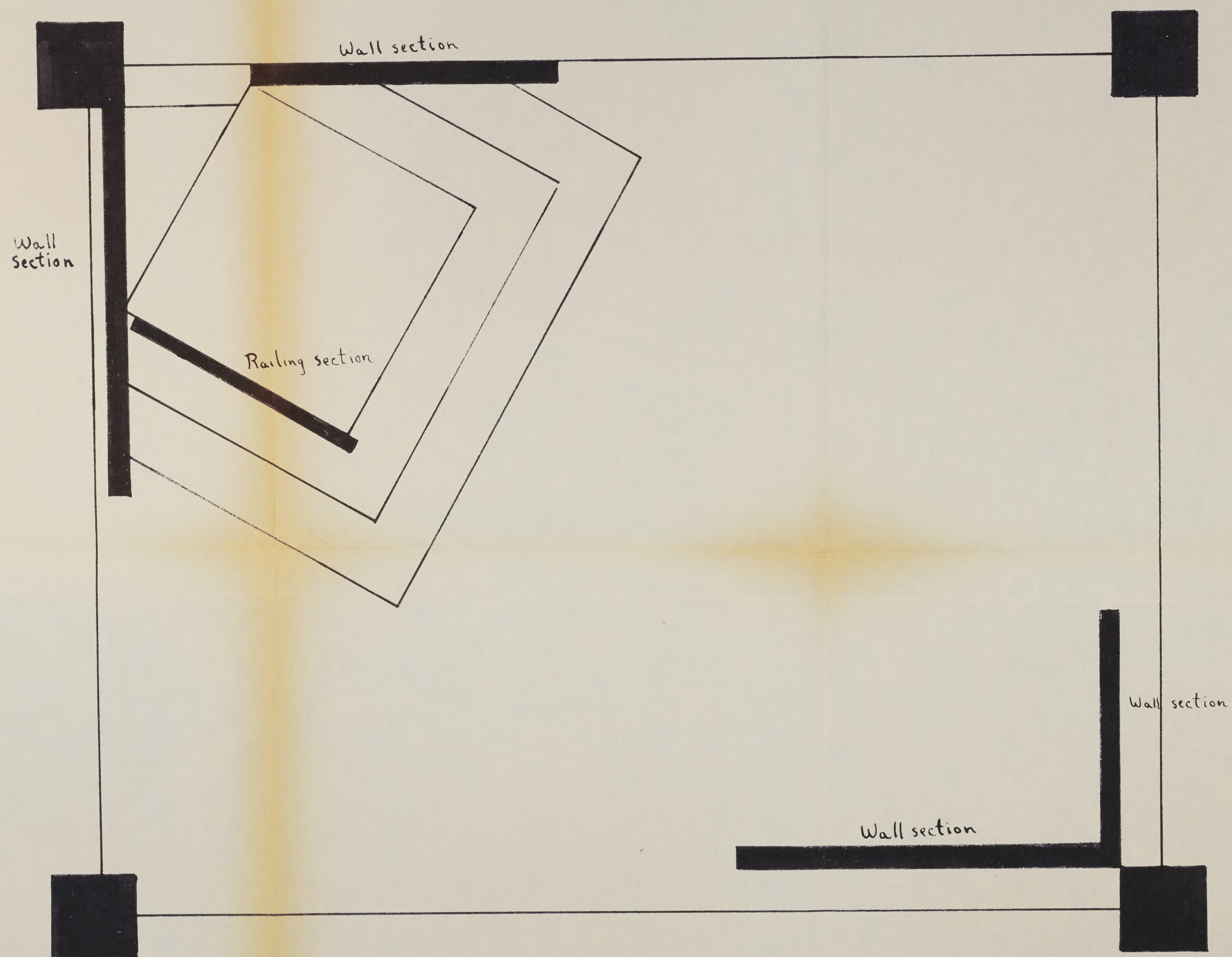
JOACHIM. He shall be killed.

JUDITH, after a last look at the guard. Then let the world make way for Judith-the-Saint!

(JOACHIM and CANTORS lead exit; JUDITH follows.)

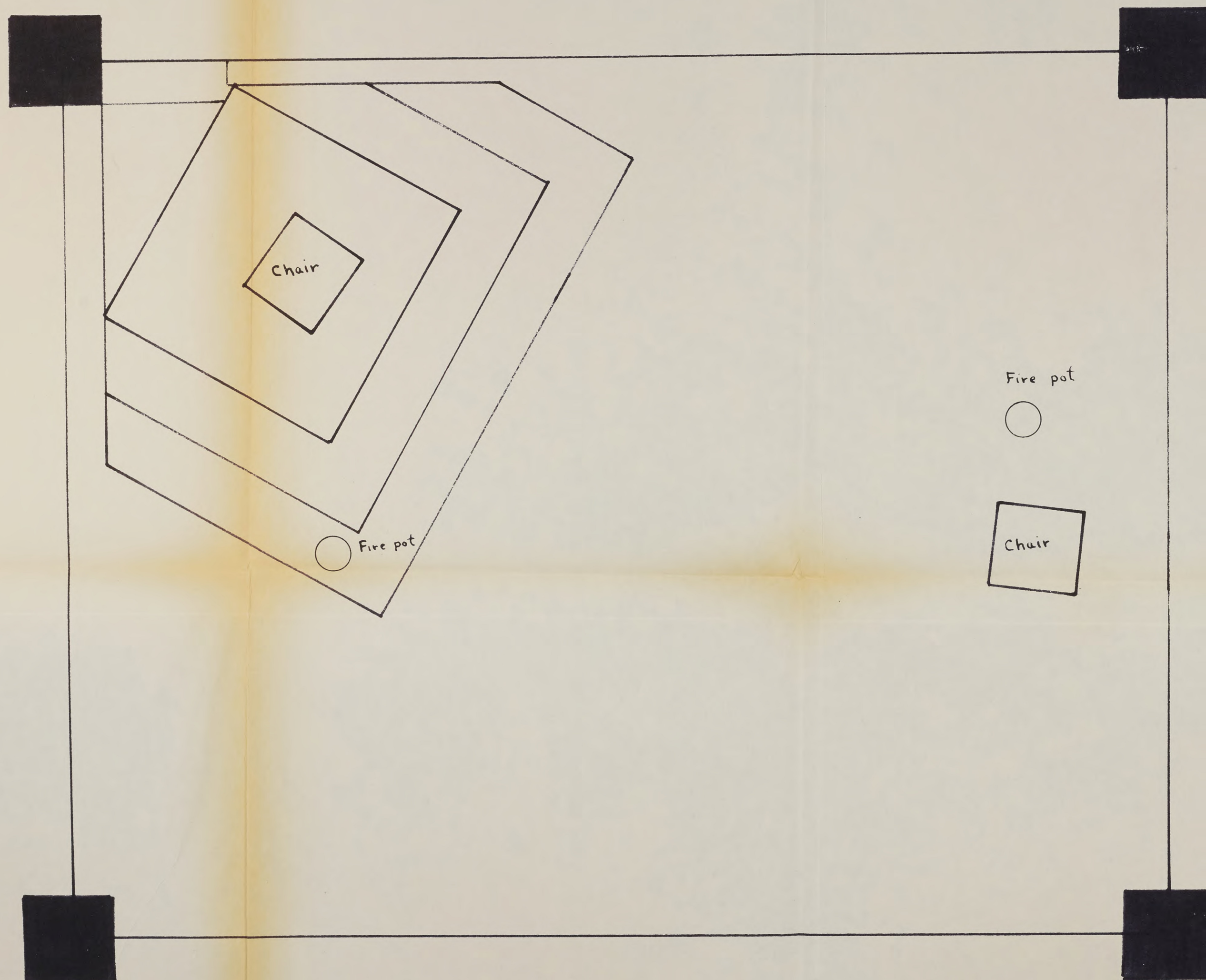
CURTAIN

FLOOR PLAN - ACT ONE



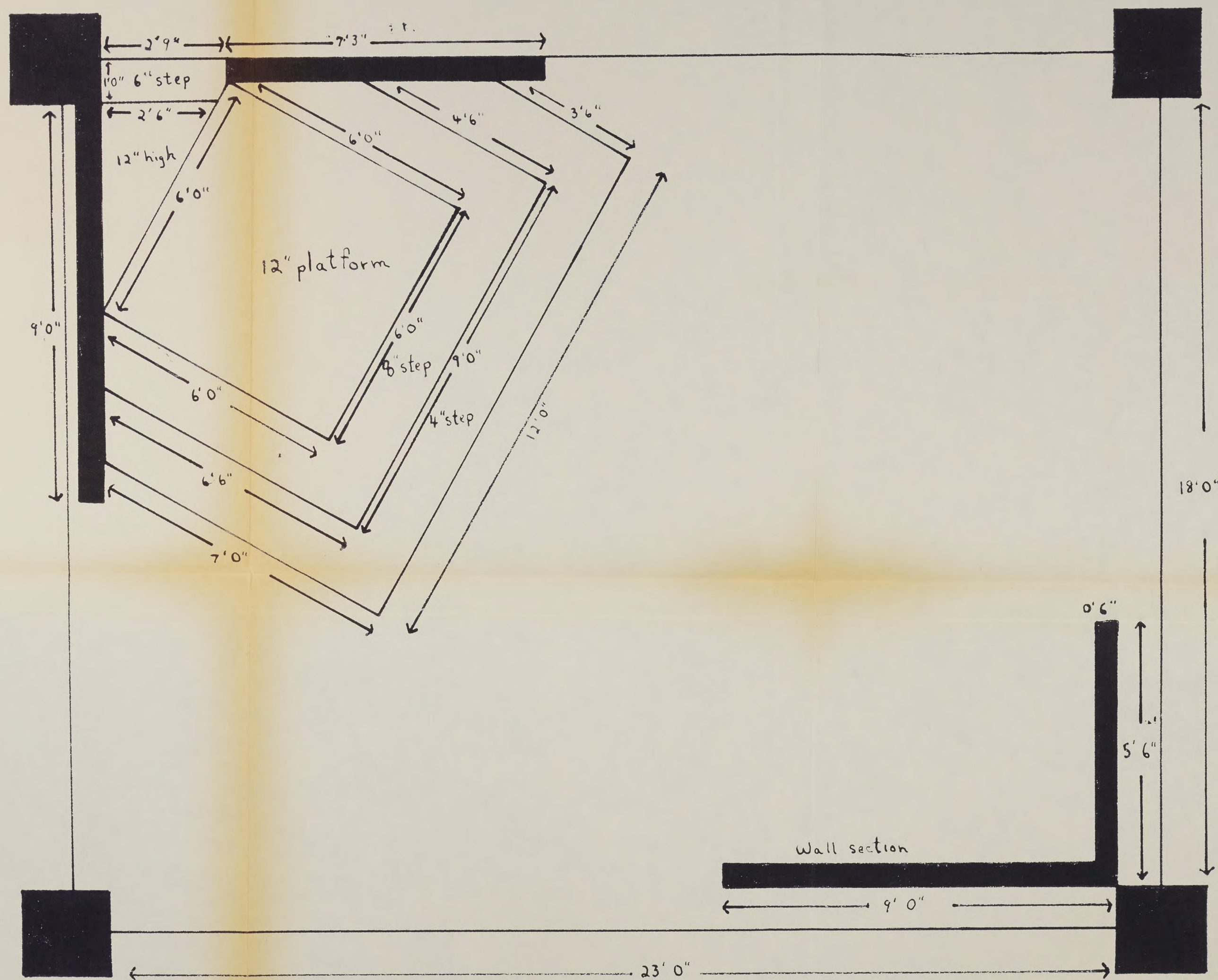


FLOOR PLAN
ACTS TWO AND THREE





CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS





LIGHTING PLOTS

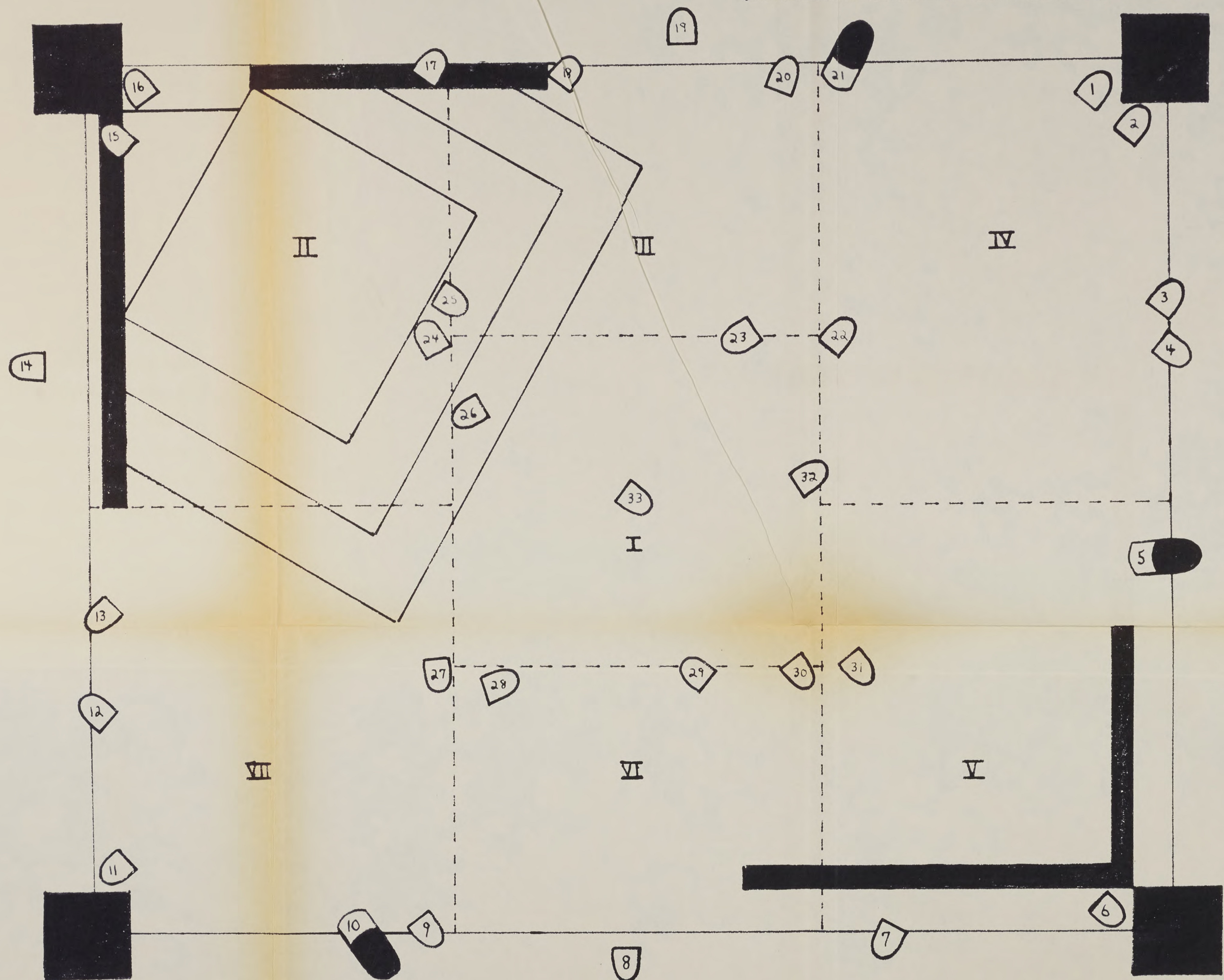
INSTRUMENT SHEET

NUMBER	INSTRUMENT	LAMP	PURPOSE	COLOR
1	6" Fresnel-Lens	500w.	area 4	no color blue
2	" " "	"	area 1	no color straw
3	" " "	"	area 5	" " "
4	" " "	"	area 4	no color blue
5	6" Leko	"	area 1 - prologue 2	white
6	6" Fresnel-Lens	"	area 1	no color blue
7	" " "	"	area 5	" " "
8	" " "	"	area 6	no color straw
9	" " "	"	area 7	no color blue
10	6" Leko	"	area 7 - prologue 1	white
11	6" Fresnel-Lens	"	area 1	no color blue
12	" " "	"	area 7	no color straw
13	" " "	"	area 2	no color blue
14	" " "	"	platform	" " "
15	" " "	"	area 2	no color straw
16	" " "	"	area 1	" " "
17	" " "	"	platform	no color blue
18	" " "	"	area 2	no color straw
19	" " "	"	area 3	" " "
20	" " "	"	platform	no color blue
21	6" Leko	"	area 3 - prologue 3	white
22	6" Fresnel-Lens	"	platform	no color blue
23	" " "	"	area 4	no color straw
24	" " "	"	area 6	" " "
25	" " "	"	guard spec.	no color blue
26	" " "	"	area 3	" " "
27	" " "	"	platform	" " "
28	" " "	"	area 7	no color straw
29	" " "	"	area 5	no color blue
30	" " "	"	platform	" " "
31	" " "	"	area 3	no color straw
32	" " "	"	area 6	no color blue
33	" " "	"	area 2	" " "
34	6" Leko	750w.	sunrise spec.	red

DIMMER SHEET

DIMMER	INSTRUMENT NUMBERS	CIRCUIT	AREA
1	2, 6, 11, 16	1 2	1
2	13, 15, 18, 33	1 2	2
3	19, 26, 31	1 2	3
4	1, 4, 23	1 2	4
5	3, 7, 29	1 2	5
6	8, 24, 32 34	1 2	6 A (sunrise)
1	9, 12, 28	1 2	7
2	14, 17, 20 10	1 2	C (platform) B ₁ (prologue)
3	22, 27, 31 21	1 2	C (platform) B ₂ (prologue)
4	25	1 2	D (guard)
5	house lights house lights	1 2	
6	house lights 5	1 2	B ₃ (prologue)

Name - Vance Paul	
Description - Light Plot	
for Judith	Scale - $\frac{1}{2}" = 1'$





CHAPTER III

This Chapter will contain comments regarding the physical production of the play Judith. The setting, lighting, costumes, make-up, and music are integral elements of any production and when these elements are well handled they can greatly enhance a production. The opposite is also true, when these elements are not well handled they have a tendency to hinder instead of to contribute to the over all effectiveness of the play.

Setting

Because Judith is a "listening" play, it was felt that the setting should be as simple and unobtrusive as possible. Also a complicated scene change is awkward in the Michigan State University arena theatre. Giraudoux's concentration on character and idea make a complicated set unnecessary: only suggestions of locale were necessary. For these reasons, Joseph's house in Act I was staged with two set pieces that suggested two corner wall sections of a house. These gradated walls were placed diagonally to one another at the limits of the playing area. One section had a window frame designed into it and the other section had an opening to suggest a door that led to some other part of the house. A low platform pro-

jected out from the doored wall section toward the opposite wall section. This eight by eight foot platform was one foot high with two surrounding steps leading up to it. These steps were twelve inches wide. The platform covered approximately one-fifth of the acting area. A railing was placed on the platform to suggest house decor. The reason for the platform was to give strength and variety to blocking throughout the play.

Act II and Act III took place in an Assyrian tent. The railing and the wall sections were removed and the platform remained to suggest a throne area. Two firepots, two throne-like chairs and fur pieces were added to suggest a barbaric tent and to give color.

The platform, steps, railing, floor, and walls were not painted realistically, but were painted a textured brown so they would be unobtrusive. There was no consistent critical comment regarding the set; however there may have been more elaborate possibilities that could have been considered. It did serve its purpose to suggest locale and to give the actors the needed image to perform their roles.

Lighting

To help establish the mood of the play a prologue was added. The wailing of the people of Israel called for in the original script seemed too much of a distraction in the close quarters of the arena. To establish

a strong and lasting impression of the desperate state of the people, three people in succession were brought on stage, each in his own harsh white light.

Act I was presented in unobtrusive mellow general light. These straw colored lights were dimmed out at the end of the Act and a stark white light illuminated the murder of the prophet.

Act II was lit in the same mellow light used in Act I. The only change in lighting occurred at the end of the Act when the lights were dimmed down and blue lights were brought up to establish an unnatural, dream-like quality around Judith.

Act III opened with a streak of red light to suggest passion as well as to suggest newness and change. The general illumination was the same as it was in Acts I and II. This lighting lit the remainder of the Act until the appearance of the Guard. Then the general illumination was dimmed down and the same unreal blue light of Act II was raised on the Guard. When the Guard faded from Judith's mind, the blue light was dimmed down and the general lighting was raised to light the remainder of the play.

The lighting in the arena is not the most desirable because the lights cannot be raised high enough to achieve the most effective use of the lighting instruments. However, the general lighting for Judith was adequate

even with certain shadows on the actors. The specific lighting added to the general mood of the play and did much to indicate change, emotion, and time.

Costumes

The costumes were patterned after Second Century B. C. Jewish and Assyrian clothing. There was a certain amount of poetic license taken in the designing of the costumes, especially with the Jewish costumes. Most of the Jewish clothing of the Second Century seemed drab. What was needed for this play were costumes that were pleasant to the eye, interesting in appearance and portrayed character and variety.

Most of the costumes were consistent to the director's and costumer's conception, costumes were to compliment and accent character relationship; however, this did not entirely occur.

The color blue was chosen for Judith's costume because of its non-down-to-earth quality. The costume was first conceived as being flowing in nature to suggest exuberance, restlessness and individuality. Due to a break down in communication between the costumer and the director, the actual costume was close-fitting and immobile. The costume gave Judith a rather sedate and regal appearance and hindered her movement.

Susanna's costume contrasted with Judith's costume nicely. It was brash and designed to indicate her

profession and her relationship to Judith. The only adverse criticism would be that the costume paralleled a 1920 flapper dress with its string fringe and the gold trim may have been too brash.

A costume of off-white with gold trim was designed for Holofernes. There was no symbolic intent in the choice, but with his dark skin and the costume's flowing quality, it set him off impressively as a superhuman.

Egon's costume was to be a cheap imitation of Holofernes' costume. However, this was not achieved. Instead he was costumed in a yellowish Assyrian officer's uniform that by itself was fine, but it did not indicate the character relationship intended.

Joseph's costume was too flat. Although the costume was to suggest a tiered, full-length gown, the material was too flimsy to suggest wealth, weight, and depth. The costume remained two-dimensional.

The color of Joachim's costume was the authentic purple color worn by a rabbi of the Second Century B. C. However, the costume appeared incomplete due to the lack of cleric decor. A shortage of time in preparation seems to have been the difficulty in perfecting the cleric dress.

Finally, the green color of Daria's costume was distorted by the blue light she appeared in. The blue light used did not enhance her costume.

Make-up

Basically there were no problems in make-up because most actors were playing their approximate ages. The only make-up problems were with Daria and the Cantors. Daria's age make-up was too heavy and the Cantors did not appear mature enough.

Music

With the lack of suitable and appropriate Assyrian and Jewish music, Turkish music was used to set the mood of each act. The Act I music was chosen to suggest the waiting quality of the Jewish people and then a change in music to establish the building frenzy of the same people. The opening of Act II was preceded by music that was to suggest the sensual attitude and excitement of the Assyrian camp. The Act III opening music attempted to establish a sad, expectant, and melancholy atmosphere.

CHAPTER IV

The production of Judith proved to be an exciting and interesting endeavor. There were successes within the play, but there were also observable weaknesses regarding the actors, the director, and the playwright.

Such critics and authors as Laurent LeSage and Donald Inskip recognize weaknesses in Judith. There simply is not enough time devoted to the development of character. Judith and Joachim present no great interpretation problem after one has thoroughly studied the script, but an audience does not always have this advantage. Another problem is presented in the quick changes in mood. Giraudoux's witty jibes in serious situations many times ruin whatever dramatic tension that is building. Perhaps the greatest problem with this technique is that it is too abrupt for an audience to follow. Perhaps this is his technique to heighten situations by extreme contrast. An audience familiar with Giraudoux should be able to anticipate his method of presenting characters and philosophies. This is as much a part of Giraudoux's philosophy as it is a part of his drama: we should be able to stand aside from anything and look at it objectively and even perhaps find some humor.

This technique places a heavy burden on the actors and it takes a competent actor to meet this challenge. The actor must be able to delineate the humorous from the serious ideas for the audience since the language of the script does not. The characters generally must not appear to be aware of the humor in their situations, but must convey this contrast in mood to the audience.

The burden of Act I is placed upon Joachim and especially Judith. Judith must be childlike, spoiled and fickle in the beginning of Act I. We must see that she is retaliating against Joachim because she had not gotten what she wanted. She must appear shallow and selfish with only her best interests as her concern. It establishes an ambiguity in her character. She does not know what she is so she is very changeable. Joachim's appeal to her pride, as savior of her country and God, excites her imagination and her fancy. This childlike quality was never obtained in Act I by the actress performing Judith's role.

The actress entered as a mature woman. The sensualness was obvious, but it was of the wrong quality. She appeared experienced rather than virginal and high strung. She commanded situations when she should have appeared to be contending with superior forces. Part of this inadequacy, however, was due to the inadequacy of

the actor performing the role of Joachim.

One scene in the first act that establishes Judith's childishness is a scene with Joachim. It is when he manipulates her into agreeing to go to Holofernes. The actor did not convey the nuances of Joachim's character. There was not enough shrewdness. He appeared to be very ordinary but holy. Joachim's character is a complex one, as already has been explained in the analysis of the play.

What further weakened a scantily written, inadequately acted first act was unmotivated blocking. Actors were sometimes moved so they could be seen from different portions of the audience. The acting inadequacy, too, is partially a directorial inadequacy. Perhaps another approach, further discussion and further rehearsal could have developed the acting into something more satisfactory.

Judith's lack of childishness in Act I detracted from her fine acting in Act III. Judith performed her scene with the Guard admirably, but her regression here seemed a little unwarranted without the establishment of it in Act I. In the production her character appeared to take on a new facet, and this added a needless complication to a scene that is difficult enough to grasp in itself. If it had not been for the competency of the actors in this scene, it might have been quite unaccep-

table.

The actor performing John's role was consistent and performed adequately. Although the actor gave some very nice line deliveries, it was sometimes apparent that he lacked experience and polish. His acting, however, did not really detract from the production. Joseph's role was in many ways like John's, straightforward and ordinary. The actor who performed Joseph was adequate and fit the part physically. He performed his function in the play quite adequately. The boy who performed Little Jacob was competent enough. He delivered his lines well and seemed realistic. The servant was adequate.

Otta and Uri did an acceptable job. It was notable that they were inexperienced actors, but they were quite believable. Inexperience hindered Daria's role which demands instant intensity. The same is true for the actors performing as cantors. They simply did not have the experience or training to develop their characters completely and fully.

Susanna did an excellent job of acting. She was a fine contrast to Judith. She was sympathetic and noble to the correct degree. Sarah's role was a standard one performed competently. Egon, the effeminate contrast to Holofernes was satisfactory, many of his speeches revealed genuine talent. However, the actor was somewhat

hampered by his youth and strong physical appearance in a role which demanded more of a lithe intellectual.

The Prophet's movement and physical being were very satisfactory. His vocal quality depicted well the desperation of the people of Israel.

Judith's performance in Acts II and III, the Guard and Holofernes did excellent polished acting, performing to the director's expectations. From the beginning of Act II to the end of Act III, Judith built her character to full capacity. The scenes with Egon, Holofernes and the Guard were the most excellent. She achieved some remarkable intensity in many instances.

Part of this is due to her superb supporting actors. Holofernes captured in every way Giraudoux's natural humanistic man. The actor's polish, experience and thorough understanding of Giraudoux made his performance outstanding.

The Guard's performance was captivating, one could almost detect Giraudoux's demonic smile. The spirit of Giraudoux was clear and entertaining. The competency of the Guard and Holofernes contributed greatly to the overall satisfactory production of Judith. It is in these two roles that Giraudoux composed a substantial portion of his philosophy. The role of Joachim served as a contrast to his philosophy, but it is felt that this contrast to his philosophy never came through. This role

was not performed to the best advantage of the play.

Because of an incomplete portrayal the audience may have been somewhat mystified by the characterization of Judith. This may have detracted from the meaning of the play, but Judith was competent and intense enough at other times to make her portrayal significant and entertaining. Although her portrayal was not done exactly to the director's expectation, the characterization which was presented was done well enough. Although Judith lacked satisfactory interpretation in parts, there were many scenes in the production which contained exciting and artistic acting.

The scene with the Guard may have been somewhat ambiguous, but overall it was felt that Giraudoux's point came across. Part of his attraction is his ambiguity and room for diverse interpretations. Consequently, it was felt that traces of ambiguity should be apparent in the production. After all, the beauty of Giraudoux is that he is never cornered and/or exact.

CHAPTER V

Many Gem Roles In 'Judith' Debut

THE PERFORMING ARTS COMPANY
of
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
presents

"JUDITH"

By Jean Giraudoux

Directed by Vance Paul

Technical Direction by Allen White

Costumes by J. Michael Bloom

CAST (in order of appearance)

Joseph	Charles Cassel
First Servant	Louis Bauer
Second Servant	Henry Steffes
The Prophet	Jere Kimmell
Joachim	George Kovach
Joseph	Terry Williams
Judith	Earlene Bates
Little Jacob	Joseph Duckwall
Susanna	Chilton Cunningham
Sarah	Marianne Lubkin
Holofernes	David Stevens
Econ	Ed Oldani
Holofernes	Emmet Faulkner
Dana	Eberle Thomas
Guard	Harriett Nowell
First Cantor	R. Mack Miller
Second Cantor	Henry Steffes
	Ed Steele

★ ★ ★

By DICK MURAY

State Journal Arts Writer

Cecil B. DeMille wasn't the only showman to infuse a Biblical theme with a heavy dose of sensuality.

French playwright Jean Giraudoux does it, too, in "Judith," which debuted Tuesday night in Michigan State's Arena Theater.

This drama, based on the story of the Hebrew heroine who sacrifices her virginity to save her people, is a Thespian's tour de force. Nearly every role, big or small, is an acting gem — and Director Vance Paul's cast has given the play a splendid performance.

Earlene Bates, remembered as Maggie in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," portrays a charmer of a different age, in a different context. To the character of Judith she gives warmth and radiance — a woman who slays her people's arch enemy through love, not hate.

Eberle Thomas is excellent as Holofernes — the conqueror who is not the monster Judith imag-

ined, but a magnetic personality with depths of understanding and sympathy. Thomas' diction and gestures, his stage presence, all bespeak the polished actor.

The authority and dignity which marked the high priest's historic role in Jewish history are well exemplified by Terry Williams' portrayal of Joachim.

A gray beard has become almost stock makeup this season for Jere Kimmell. He is again effective as another old man — the Prophet.

Emmet Faulkner, as the effeminate Econ, who mocks Judith by impersonating Holofernes, and R. Mack Miller, as the guard who doubles as an angel, make their scenes memorable.

Chilton Cunningham wins audience sympathy as Susanna, the prostitute who strives to protect Judith. And Marianne Lubkin makes Sarah, the procuress, convincingly venomous.

Eleven-year-old Joseph Duckwall shows dramatic promise as the youngster who refuses to break his fast.

Several exceptional players in this cast are making their farewell appearances at MSU. They will be missed next year — both by directors and audiences.

SUPPORTING CAST FAILS

Leads Prevent Mediocrity

By BRYAN F. CARPENTER
State News Reviewer

Judith is a girl. Judith is a saint. Judith is a murderess. Judith is a woman. Existentialist Jean Giraudoux's "Judith" opened Tuesday night in the Arena Theater as all these things and more in a stark philosophical tragedy.

The Performing Arts Company arena production was well adapted to the "round" stage by Director Vance Paul. Lighting and sound work, as usual with the PAC, was polished and effective, but the costuming, while beautifully done, appeared overly colorful for the play's mood.

Giraudoux's message, however, depends not on his setting but on the expression of his characters. Each character must "live" his role to bring the full meaning to Judith's tragedy. The supporting cast failed to do this. Many characters moved and spoke in monotone and static expression.

Earlene Bates as Judith, Eberle Thomas as the conqueror, Holofernes, and Chilton Cunningham as Susanna kept the show above mediocrity with the only

'JUDITH'

consistent, believable, involved characterizations of the evening.

Miss Bates became Judith as she hated, feared and loved with every word and thought. Petulant,

silent, proud, furious, cowering and courageous, she held the audience awaiting the change of her mind, the swish of her hair, the shift of her fate.

The interplay between Judith and Holofernes picked up the pieces of a near-boring first act and began to build or rebuild the conflict. Thomas' smooth accomplished delivery and characterization once again attest to his popularity and versatility. Miss Cunningham's feeling for the noble prostitute's character added emotional depth to Judith's tragedy.

A message or moral is not spelled out for the viewer. Giraudoux has superimposed saintliness on sacrilege, purity on self-indulgence and allowed Judith's fate to judge her. With a starkly simple framework and outstanding characterization, "Judith" emerges from mediocrity to a moving and profound climax.

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