

The Desert

A One-Act Play

By Ed Young

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DEDICATION

To my wife Elva and my mother Mary.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Here is an inspired dramatization of the temptation of the Christ in the wilderness. It sets forth the clash between absolute goodness and diabolical evil as personified in the main characters, Yeshua, the Hebrew version of the name Jesus, and Satan, the Prince of Demons and god of this world. The play seeks to bring into relief the struggle between good and evil that tugs at the heart of all of us. In a thought-provoking way, we see afresh the timely message of Jesus to a fallen and desperate world.

This is a strong and moving piece, and in the hands of skilled directors and actors, is intensely affecting. This could be a tour de force for the two actors, especially when Daemon becomes possessed and Yeshua struggles against his weaknesses. The visual of Satan entering with a mask and veil is also quite striking.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m)

YESHUA: Yeshua is the Jewish version of the name Jesus and He is Jesus of Nazareth.

DAEMON: A foot soldier lost in the desert. He later is possessed and in fact becomes Satan.

SCENE

Some remote wilderness location within Palestine.

TIME

Around 30 CE.

(CE refers to Common Era, used more often now than AD.)

SETTING

A small encampment in the remote Palestinian desert. The camp area has only the barest of essentials: a sack containing scrolls, a water jug, cooking bowls of that period, blankets, a long cloak, and a stack of firewood. The camp has a fire pit and is bound on each side by large boulders and scruffy brush. Upstage of the camp are sand dunes that are graduated and ascend as steps, rising to a height of several feet above the stage.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: It is mid-morning. YESHUA enters dragging DAEMON who is bleeding from a wound in his side. Both men are dirty and drawn from the ordeal. Yeshua prays for Daemon's wound to heal. Yeshua takes a scroll from the sack and reads it. He then rolls the scroll up and meditates as Daemon begins to come to.)

DAEMON: What happened? Where am I?

YESHUA: I found you, a ways from here...

DAEMON: Aye, it's coming back to me...the sandstorm.

(Beat.) So, you found me?

YESHUA: You'd been beaten up by the looks of things.

(DAEMON is interrupting YESHUA'S meditation.)

DAEMON: *(Stands to his feet and looks around.)* What a godforsaken place. How'd you know I was out there?

YESHUA: Just a hunch...

DAEMON: My battalion...did you see any of the other boys?

YESHUA: No, you were alone.

DAEMON: All I remember is we were marching to this outpost. We came upon a band of marauders and chased 'em into the desert. We attacked them. But two of them jumped me. Then the sandstorm hit. I thought one stabbed me. It seems to have healed. That's strange. How long have I been here, lad?

YESHUA: Not long.

DAEMON: Where is this place?

YESHUA: *(Becoming annoyed.)* It's nowhere, really.

DAEMON: We near a city or town? I'd like to whet me whistle.

YESHUA: This is a place where men come *to get away* from the world.

DAEMON: Well, well, and could it be, you're lost too, lad?

YESHUA: *(Laughs.)* No, I'm not...lost.

DAEMON: Well then, where are you from?

YESHUA: *(Giving up on meditating, puts scroll in the sack.)*
Maybe that's what I'm trying to figure out. Well, put it this way, birds have nests, foxes their holes, but you know, I don't have any place I call home.

DAEMON: So, what are doing here? You got a death wish or something?

YESHUA: *(Getting water from the jug in his sack.)* I was led here, or driven depending on how you look at it.

DAEMON: It's fit, you being here, lad. I would've died out there, no doubt. Look, if you're on the run from the law something like that, you saved me life. Don't worry, I'll not be turning you in.

YESHUA: *(Laughs.)* No, I'm not "running from the law." You're thirsty, have some water.

(YESHUA hands the jug to DAEMON.)

DAEMON: Thanks. *(Drinks.)* That's good as the water from the Tiber. Warm, sandy and all. Who are you anyway?

(HE hands jug to YESHUA who puts it back.)

YESHUA: Who are you?

DAEMON: Daemon, that's Sergeant Daemon, His Majesty's 1st Battalion. *(Beat.)* Well, cat got your tongue? You must have a name, ain't ye?

YESHUA: Yeshua.

DAEMON: OK, Yeshua, level with me. Whatcha doing in this hell hole?

YESHUA: Let's see...call it, a retreat.

DAEMON: Retreat? How long have you been here, lad? This ain't no place for holiday.

YESHUA: It'll be...forty days.

DAEMON: Forty days? Nothing could live out here for forty days. Ain't nothin' here. Nothin' but sand, sand, more sand and heat.

YESHUA: *(Picks up scroll.)* That's the idea.

DAEMON: There's better ways to kill yourself, lad. There's an old saying "If you're a mind to drown, don't torture yourself in shallow water."

YESHUA: No, actually, the quietness and solitude helps you discover who you are, what you really believe in and why you're here on this little dust ball.

DAEMON: Don't know I follow you, lad. Like, some kind of...I don't know -- test?

YESHUA: *(Sits and opens scroll.)* And as every good soldier knows, you're tested before battle.

DAEMON: Aye, but truth be told, I prefer the city, a pint of grog, a lady on me arm and a table full of food. That's me. That's who I am.

YESHUA: Is that it?

DAEMON: Is that what?

YESHUA: Is that really all you are?

DAEMON: *(Begins looking around for food.)* I'm a soldier. I do what soldiers do, and we live fast and die hard.

YESHUA: *(Reading from the scroll.)* So, it's like that old saying, "Apple trees bear apples. A thorn bush bears thorns..."

DAEMON: Speaking of food, I'm fairly starvin'. Could you spare some grub, lad?

YESHUA: I'm sorry, there's no food. At least, not the kind you're seeking.

DAEMON: *(HE points to the scroll.)* I figure you're one of those religious types, ain't ya? You're no crook or murderer. That's easy to tell. You're out here gazing at your navel and trying to figure out the true meaning of life -- why we're all here? All that religious claptrap, right?

YESHUA: *(HE stands.)* So, you think I'm seeking the truth? It's not so much what I think, it's who I am.

DAEMON: *(Chuckles.)* Oh, it's who you are. Isn't it written down somewhere...? *(HE starts to rummage frantically for food.)* "Help your neighbor; if he's hungry feed him"?

YESHUA: Hungry for what, Daemon? How about the Bread from Heaven?

End of Freeview

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