

# ***HIS GENTLE TOUCH***

*By David Dunlap*

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Malchus, a high priest's servant, has his ear severed by Peter during the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, but after Jesus heals him, Malchus' hatred and rejection of Jesus disappear. Later, when he hears the news of Jesus' resurrection, he accepts Him as the Messiah, as does his wife Elizabeth and daughter Tabitha, even though in doing so she must give up her boyfriend, Gideon, the son of a high priest. Neither Malchus' mother-in-law nor his cousin, however, can believe that a convicted criminal is truly the Son of God. A strong story of Christian conversion with characters you'll feel you know - both believers and non-believers.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(4 m, 5 w)*

**MALCHUS:** Trusted servant of the high priest, Caiaphas, middle-aged.

**ELIZABETH:** Wife of Malchus, also middle-aged.

**TABITHA:** Malchus' and Elizabeth's daughter, late teens to early twenties.

**GIDEON:** Boyfriend of Tabitha and son of Caiaphas. About Tabitha's age.

**EUNICE:** Aged mother of Elizabeth. She is a hypochondriac.

**ENOS:** A younger cousin of Malchus.

**IRIS:** Galilean friend of Elizabeth and follower of Christ.

**ADAM:** Messenger from Caiaphas' house.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

**SCENE 1:** The courtyard, midday, Thursday before Passover.

**SCENE 2:** The courtyard, later that night.

**SCENE 3:** The courtyard, Sunday morning.

**TIME:** Passover week, just before and after the arrest and trial of Jesus.

**PLAYING TIME:** Approx. 40 minutes.

## **SETTING**

A courtyard behind the home of Malchus and Elizabeth, middle class Jewish residents of Jerusalem. The back of the house can be seen, SL. The rest of the courtyard is enclosed by a low, stone wall. Directly behind the wall is a walkway, beyond which can be seen trees and other houses. This walkway leads to an exit, SR, and to one SL, behind the house. There is an entrance into the house, SL, and a gate in the stone wall, USR. The courtyard is neatly decorated with potted plants, flowers, and statues. There is a large stone table with benches or chairs around it, CS.

## **SET PROPS**

Low stone wall; potted plants; flowers; etc.; statues; table; chairs; benches.

## **HAND PROPS**

Cane; two baskets; fruits; vegetables; bread; shawl; small bundle; folded pieces of paper; small lamp; two pebbles; sword in a sheath; pouch with coins in it; large wicker basket with laundry; watering can; broom; stack of rugs; carpetbag.

**SCENE 1**

*(AT RISE: The set is brightly lit but empty. EUNICE enters from behind the house, USL. She uses a cane to walk, but moves quickly. She is carrying a basket with fruits, vegetables, and bread. She walks across the stage, behind the stone wall and enters the courtyard through the gate, USR. She then walks to the table, CS and drops her basket on it.)*

EUNICE: *(Calling off SL.)* Elizabeth! Would you hurry up. Fiddlesticks! I've never seen anybody move so slow.

ELIZABETH: *(Hurrying in USL, out of breath.)* Mother, what's your hurry? *(SHE also carries a basket of food. She walks slowly to the gate USR and enters the courtyard.)* I can barely keep up with you.

EUNICE: Fiddlesticks! You should be ashamed. Can't even keep up with an old woman like me. *(Holding up HER cane.)* A crippled one at that.

ELIZABETH: *(Sitting at the table.)* Sometimes I think Malchus is right. I don't think you need that silly old cane any more than I do.

EUNICE: Wait till you get to be my age. You'll see just how sore your old bones get. *(Puts HER cane down to remove her shawl.)*

ELIZABETH: Whatever you say, Mother.

EUNICE: Malchus shouldn't say such nasty things. And speaking of your "dear" husband, shouldn't he be home for lunch soon? *(As this conversation continues, EUNICE walks around the courtyard, without her cane, checking and fluffing up the potted plants.)*

ELIZABETH: Who knows. Ever since he's been working for Caiaphas, I never know when he'll be home.

EUNICE: *(Scolding.)* You shouldn't complain.

ELIZABETH: I don't mean to. I just wish Malchus had more regular hours.

EUNICE: You know, Elizabeth, I must admit, when you married Malchus, I never thought he'd amount to anything.

*His Gentle Touch*

- 6 -

ELIZABETH: (*Standing.*) I know. You made that very clear on more than one occasion. (*Starting to sort the vegetables.*)

EUNICE: But now, to hold such an important position in the home of the high priest of the Sanhedrin. I'll have to say, I am pleasantly surprised.

ELIZABETH: I always had faith in Malchus.

EUNICE: (*Ignoring HER remark.*) And it will be important for my granddaughter, too.

ELIZABETH: Tabitha? How?

EUNICE: Tabitha's at the age when a betrothal is in order. It will be easier to find a good husband for her now that Malchus holds such an important position.

ELIZABETH: Oh, Mother. There's no hurry for that.

EUNICE: Fiddlesticks! I was already married and expecting my first child when I was her age.

ELIZABETH: But that was a long time ago. Things have changed.

EUNICE: Nevertheless, with Malchus' new contacts, you may even be able to arrange a marriage to a son of one of the members of the Sanhedrin.

ELIZABETH: Malchus isn't that important.

EUNICE: By the way, Elizabeth, who was that woman you were talking to while I was picking out the vegetables this morning?

ELIZABETH: Oh. That was Iris, a good friend of mine from Galilee. She's in town for the Passover tonight.

EUNICE: I don't think I know her. She sure didn't look very prosperous. Are you sure you want to be seen with someone like that?

ELIZABETH: What?

EUNICE: I mean, if a prospective husband thinks Tabitha's family associates with low life, he may no -

ELIZABETH: Mother! You're becoming a real snob.

EUNICE: Oh, fiddlesticks!

ELIZABETH: Iris may not be rich, but she isn't low life. Don't forget, we weren't any too prosperous until a few years ago. So don't get uppity.

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