

THUNDER OVER THE HOUSE

By Alberta Hawse

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Enoch is a respected physician in Jerusalem now but he can't forget how he was laughed out of his home in Capernaum. He had declared a child dead and Jesus, saying she was just sleeping, made her live. It's a bitterness in Enoch's soul that neither his wife, Julia, nor his niece and trusted assistant, Michal, can help him forget.

When Malchus, an assistant to the high priests, asks Enoch to testify at Jesus' trial, Enoch hesitates. But he decides to do so when Michal, after seeing proof of Jesus' healing powers, gathers up sick children to see Him.

In Act II, the storm-filled hours of the crucifixion, Malchus returns to the house a changed man. He tells Julia and Michal about Jesus' trial and how the Savior restored his cut-off ear. Michal is called next door to assist at a difficult birth and moments later Enoch finally comes home. But he cannot help with the delivery, for his right arm is now limp and lifeless. It is the arm he used to strike Jesus at the trial. Although Julia begs Enoch to seek forgiveness while Jesus still lives, he refuses. Then, as the storm crescendos with a violent crash of thunder and lightning, Julia says, "Now it is too late. Too late."

In Act III, the resurrection day, Enoch receives a petition to come back to Capernaum but with only one good arm, he feels useless. When the neighbor comes over with the sick infant that was recently delivered, Enoch declares there is nothing anyone can do to save it.

But Malchus enters with the joyful news that Christ has risen. Finally Enoch understands. Holding the baby in his good arm, he prays asking the Lord to forget healing his arm and help the child instead. His prayer is answered, both for the baby and his arm. Laying his guilt at the foot of the cross, he is restored.

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SYNOPSIS

Act I: Wednesday of Passion Week, late afternoon.

Act II: Friday, during the dark hours of Crucifixion.

Act III: Early afternoon of Sunday, Resurrection Day.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2m, 3w, 1 g)

ENOCH: A respectable, middle-aged doctor who has come from Capernaum where he feels he has been disgraced because of Jesus.

JULIA: His wife. A warm-hearted woman who understands her husband's animosity toward Jesus. She is lovely and beautifully dressed. Very womanly.

MICHAL: *(pronounced Mi'shell or Michael.)* Julia's niece and Enoch's assistant. She dresses like a maid servant in first act and then more colorfully in the other acts. She is impulsive, dramatic, funny and sensitive.

MALCHUS: *(A real Bible character, John 18:10; Luke 22:50,51.)* A very pompous, richly dressed young man who learns the errors of his ways. He is chief servant, or spokesman, for Caiaphas, the high priest.

HULDAH: A neighborly grandmother whose many children keep her well informed about everything. Plainly dressed.

REBECCA: Huldah's granddaughter, about 8-10.

PLACE: Home of a prosperous, but unhappy physician in Jerusalem.

PLAYING TIME: 60-70 min.

SETTING

All scenes take place in the main living room of Enoch's house, which is well furnished. There are two exits. One in UC leads to outside and one at SR leads to inner rooms.

Against the wall, SR of rear entrance, is a tall open-faced medicine cupboard. (*A small bookcase on a table works well.*) The shelves are filled with bottles of colored liquids, apothecary jars containing all manner of pills, herbs, etc. One jar holds pieces of sponge. At left of rear entrance is a clothes tree. Michal's cloak is on it.

The stage has two main groupings of furniture which on most stages would follow an inverted V line with the open end facing front. At SR, near the front is a small table with bench behind it and a chair in front of it. Other chairs, benches, and stools can be scattered about room. Space should be left behind furniture so actors can move behind and around it. Room can be decorated with flower pots, candelabra, pretty vases, etc. Heavy draperies, tied back, can be used at both rear and side exits.

COSTUMES

Typical Biblical garb. Slight changes in costumes are suggested to show the change in days. Cloaks are needed for Enoch, Michal, and Huldah.

HAND PROPERTIES

Small box-like tote tray with compartments filled with medicine bottles, instruments, etc. (*Similar to carpenter box*)
A pouch-type shoulder bag, with side compartments, holding rolled bandages
A narrow bandage for Rebecca's hand
Several plain bath towels
Wash cloths or strips of white flannel for compresses
Large wooden bowl or basin
Several bean bags (as hot salt compresses)
A shallow basket for greens
Coins
Sewing basket with folded garment or mantle
Small scroll
Red washable paint or stage blood for Rebecca's wound
Baby doll wrapped in blanket
Cup of herbal tea

SOUND EFFECTS

Thunder and baby crying. Thunder can be made by shaking a sheet of tin or found on sound effects record. Care must be taken not to cover speeches with thunder. Baby crying can be recorded from actual crying or found on sound effect record.

LIGHTING

Regular stage lighting. Second act is dimmed and perhaps candles used. Lightning flashes can be from several flashlights. (*Although candles were not known in Biblical times audience will accept their use.*)

ACT I

(AT RISE: It is Wednesday, late afternoon, of Passion Week. ENOCH and MICHAL enter from outside. Enoch carries his medicine case. Michal has a pouch type bag over her shoulder. Rolled bandages can be seen in a side compartment. Both of them are rather rumpled and weary.)

MICHAL: *(As SHE hangs her bag on the coat tree.)* What a day! If I never see another boil, it will be too soon. *(SHE flops onto chair or divan, notices a stain on the front of her robe and rubs at it.)* Uncle Enoch, why is it that some of your medicine leaves stains that last longer than some of your patients?

ENOCH: *(Lifts things from HIS tray and sets them on shelves of the open cupboard.)* My dear Michal, when you learn to wash a simple wound without giving yourself a bath, you will have no trouble with stains.

MICHAL: *(Grins.)* If I am so clumsy, why do you ask me to help close the arteries?

ENOCH: *(Smiles.)* It is a good way to keep you out of trouble.

MICHAL: If I had not been there today to stop the bleeding, Jerusalem would have one less fish peddler. *(Holds up index finger.)* As it is, he's one finger short. *(Pantomimes slicing off the finger.)*

ENOCH: *(Relaxing on chair opposite HER.)* His place would be filled twice over with the twins you have promised the barber's wife. Next I will hear you prophesying as to whether they be male or female.

MICHAL: *(Sure of HERSELF.)* She is going to deliver twins. You wait and see.

ENOCH: *(With mock seriousness.)* Already the pupil knows more than the teacher. Must I remind you that the size of the cloud is no indication of how much rain to expect.

MICHAL: *(Laughs.)* And sometimes the smallest donkey lets out the biggest bray.

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