The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry  Cary supplied an Argument to the play, but the modern reader may be better served by a succinct summary of the historical situation and the play. Observing the unity of time, Cary brings the pressure of antecedent events and incorporates materials from other parts of the Herod story (drawn chiefly from Josephus’s *Antiquities*) to heighten dramatic tension. Before the play begins, Herod the Great, with the aid of Rome, has (in 39 B.C.E.) supplanted Hircanus, the hereditary king and priest of Judea, divorced his first wife, Doris, and married Hircanus’s granddaughter, the singularly beautiful Mariam, whom he loves with fierce intensity and jealous passion. To secure his throne he arranged a drowning to remove the new high priest, Mariam’s brother Aristobolus (35 B.C.E.), and had old Hircanus executed (30 B.C.E.). Cary’s play reverses these two events. Called to Rome to answer accusations leveled by Alexandra, the mother of Mariam and Aristobolus, Herod left orders with his uncle Josephus, who is also the husband of his sister Salome, to kill Mariam in the event of his death so no other man could possess her. Reinstated as king, Herod had Josephus killed for telling Mariam about the decree for her death, taking that as evidence supporting Salome’s false charge that the two were lovers. He then married Salome to Constabarus, who, unknown to Herod, had hidden away the sons of Babas, under sentence of death for their opposition to Herod. The play begins with Herod again in Rome, in danger of death as a partisan of the defeated and recently deceased Mark Antony. Before departing, he had left with his officer Sohemus another order for Mariam to be killed in the event of his death; Sohemus also reveals the decree to her.

Act 1, Scene 1 starts as news comes of Herod’s death, causing (during three acts) a sense of relief, liberation, and new beginnings under the joint rule of Mariam and her mother, Alexandra (in the minority of Mariam’s son). Mariam is at first torn between grief and joy but is relieved that the tyrant who murdered her kin and decreed her death will not return. Pheroras, Herod’s brother, who had been under command to marry an infant, now marries his true love, Graphina. The sons of Babas now come out of hiding to serve the state, and Constabarus is no longer in peril for having concealed them. Sohe-
mus will not suffer for his decision to let Mariam live in defiance of Herod’s command. Even those who regret Herod’s death benefit from it: his sister Salome, who had first plotted to have her second husband, Constabarus, killed by Herod so she might marry a new lover, now determines upon divorce instead—scandalous for a woman in Judea but hardly so wicked as murder.

At Herod’s unexpected return, all these hopeful new beginnings are crushed: Babas’s sons are executed; Sohemus is accused by Salome of adultery with Mariam and is executed for that (and for revealing Herod’s instructions); Mariam refuses Herod’s sexual advances and berates him for murdering her kin; Salome engineers a plot by which Mariam’s servant offers (supposedly from her) a cup of poison to Herod and then goads Herod to command her death. A messenger recounts the details of Mariam’s noble death, and Herod runs mad with grief and remorse, persuaded at last of her innocence and inestimable worth.

In this play Mariam is positioned against several foils. One is the chorus, which in this kind of Senecan tragedy speak from a partial, not an authoritative, vantage point: as a company of Jews, they judge Mariam by their own very conservative notion of a wife’s duty, that she owes entire subjection of mind and body to her husband. Another is Salome, who speaks forcefully for a woman’s right to divorce and for evenhanded justice for unhappy wives—though she herself is thoroughly wicked, denouncing the innocent Mariam for marital infidelity while she flaunts her illicit affairs and has two husbands killed when she is ready to replace them. Mariam herself recognizes that she has brought her death on herself by refusing to live by the accepted female triad of virtues: she is chaste but manifestly not silent or obedient. Other foils to Mariam are Graphina, Doris, Alexandra, and—by allusion—Cleopatra. Mariam challenges patriarchal control within the institution of marriage, claiming a wife’s right to her own speech—public and private—as well as to the integrity of her own emotional life and self-definition.
The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry

Written by that learned, virtuous, and truly noble lady, e.c.

The Names of the Speakers

HEROD, King of Judea
DORIS, his first wife
MARIAM, his second wife
SALOME, HEROD’s sister
ANTIPATER, his son by DORIS
ALEXANDRA, MARIAM’s mother
SILLEUS, prince of Arabia
CONSTABARUS, husband to SALOME
PHERORAS, HEROD’s brother

GRAPHINA, his love
BABAS’ FIRST SON
BABAS’ SECOND SON
ANANELL, the high priest
SOHEMUS, a counsellor to HEROD
NUNTIO
SILLEUS’ MAN
BU[TLER], another messenger
SOLDIER
CHORUS, a company of Jews

Act 1

scene 1

[MARIAM alone.]

MARIAM How oft have I with public voice run on
To censure Rome’s last hero\(^2\) for deceit:
Because he wept when Pompey’s life was gone,
Yet when he lived, he thought his name too great.

But now I do recant, and, Roman lord,
Excuse too rash a judgment in a woman:
My sex pleads pardon, pardon then afford,
Mistaking is with us but too too common.

Now do I find, by self-experience taught,
One object yields both grief and joy:
You wept indeed, when on his worth you thought,
But joyed that slaughter did your foe destroy.
So at his death your eyes true drops did rain,
Whom dead, you did not wish alive again.

When Herod lived, that now is done to death,

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1. The first edition, 1613, contains some obvious misprints here silently corrected.
2. Julius Caesar. At line 5 Mariam addresses the absent Caesar in apostrophe.
Oft have I wished that I from him were free:
Oft have I wished that he might lose his breath,
Oft have I wished his carcass dead to see.
Then rage and scorn had put my love to flight,
That love which once on him was firmly set:
Hate hid his true affection from my sight,
And kept my heart from paying him his debt.
And blame me not, for Herod’s jealousy
Had power even constancy itself to change:
For he, by barring me from liberty,
To shun my ranging, taught me first to range.
But yet too chaste a scholar was my heart,
To learn to love another than my lord:
To leave his love, my lesson’s former part,
I quickly learned, the other I abhorred.
But now his death to memory doth call
The tender love that he to Mariam bare.
And mine to him; this makes those rivers fall,
Which by another thought unmoistened are.
For Aristobulus, the lowliest youth
That ever did in angel’s shape appear,
The cruel Herod was not moved to ruth;
Then why grieves Mariam Herod’s death to hear?
Why joy I not the tongue no more shall speak,
That yielded forth my brother’s latest doom:
Both youth and beauty might thy fury break,
And both in him did ill befit a tomb.
And, worthy grandsire, ill did he requite
His high ascent, alone by thee procured,
Except he murdered thee to free the sprite
Which still he thought on earth too long immured.
How happy was it that Sohemus’ mind
Was moved to pity my distressed estate!
Might Herod’s life a trusty servant find,

3. Some editors emend to “loveliest,” given the great emphasis on his beauty.
4. Mariam here addresses the murdered Hircanus.
5. I.e., if Herod alive had been able to find trustworthy servants to kill me, my death had been joined to his.
50 My death to his had been unseparate.
Their thoughts have power, his death to make me bear,
Nay more, to wish the news may firmly hold:
Yet cannot this repulse some falling tear,
That will against my will some grief unfold.

55 And more I owe him for his love to me,
The deepest love that ever yet was seen:
Yet had I rather much a milkmaid be,
Than be the monarch of Judea's queen.
It was for nought but love he wished his end
Might to my death but the vaunt-courier\(^6\) prove:
But I had rather still be foe than friend,
To him that saves for hate, and kills for love.
Hard-hearted Mariam, at thy discontent
What floods of tears have drenched his manly face!

60 How canst thou then so faintly now lament
They truest lover's death, a death's disgrace:\(^6\)
Ay, now, mine eyes, you do begin to right
The wrongs of your admirer and my lord.\(^7\)
Long since you should have put your smiles to flight,
Ill doth a widowed eye with joy accord.
Why, now methinks the love I bare\(^8\) him then,
When virgin freedom left me unrestrained,
Doth to my heart begin to creep again,
My passion\(^8\) now is far from being feigned.

65 But, tears, fly back, and hide you in your banks,\(^9\)
You must not be to Alexandra seen:
For if my moan be spied, but little thanks
Shall Mariam have, from that incensèd queen.

\[\text{SCENE 2}\]

\[\text{MARIAM. ALEXANDRA.}\]

\text{ALEXANDRA} What means these tears? My Mariam doth mistake,

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6. I.e., her faint laments dishonor his death.
9. Your eyes.
The news we heard did tell the tyrant’s end:
What⁰ weep’st thou for thy brother’s murd’rer’s sake?
Will ever wight⁰ a tear for Herod spend?
My curse pursue his breathless trunk and spirit,
Base Edomite, the damnèd Esau’s heir.¹

Must he ere Jacob’s child the crown inherit?
Must he, vile wretch, be set in David’s chair?⁰
No, David’s soul, within the bosom placed
Of our forefather Abram,² was ashamed:
To see his seat with such a toad disgraced,
That seat that hath by Judah’s race been famed.
Thou fatal enemy to royal blood,³
Did not the murder of my boy suffice,
To stop thy cruel mouth that gaping stood,
But must thou dim the mild Hircanus’ eyes?

My gracious father, whose too ready hand
Did lift this Idumean from the dust:
And he, ungrateful caitiff,⁰ did withstand⁰
The man that did in him most friendly trust.
What kingdom’s right could cruel Herod claim,
Was he not Esau’s issue, heir of hell?
Then what succession can he have but shame?
Did not his ancestor his birth-right sell?
Oh yes, he doth from Edom’s name derive⁴
His cruel nature which with blood is fed:
That made him me of sire and son deprive,
He ever thirsts for blood, and blood is red.
Weep’st thou because his love to thee was bent,
And read’st thou love in crimson characters?
Slew he thy friends to work thy heart’s content?
No: hate may justly call that action hers.

¹. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, who sold his birthright (as firstborn) to his younger brother Jacob for a mess of pottage (Genesis 25. 29–34); Jacob also tricked his father into giving him the blessing intended for Esau. The Israelites were descendants of Jacob; the story was interpreted to signify God’s favor to them over Esau’s descendants.
². Abraham. David, one of Israel’s first kings (now dead and so said to be in Abraham’s bosom), is ashamed to see that throne occupied by Herod.
³. Herod, because he had Alexandra’s father, Hircanus, and her son Aristobulus killed.
⁴. Edom was thought to derive from a root meaning “red.”
He gave the sacred priesthood for thy sake
To Aristobulus, yet doomed⁹ him dead:
Before his back the ephod warm could make,
And ere the miter settled on his head:⁵
Oh, had he given my boy no less than right,
The double oil should to his forehead bring
A double honor, shining doubly bright;
His birth anointed him both priest and king.
And say my father and my son he slew
To royalize by right your prince-born breath:⁶
Was love the cause, can Mariam deem it true,
That Mariam gave commandment for her death?⁷
I know by fits he showed some signs of love,
And yet not love, but raging lunacy:
And this his hate to thee may justly prove,
That sure he hates Hircanus’ family.
Who knows if he, unconstant wavering lord,
His love to Doris⁸ had renewed again?
And that he might his bed to her afford,
Perchance he wished that Mariam might be slain.

MARIAM  Doris! Alas, her time of love was past,
Those coals were raked in embers long ago
In Mariam’s love and she was now disgraced⁹
Nor did I glory in her overthrow.
He not a whit his first-born son esteemed,
Because as well as his he was not mine:¹
My children only for his own he deemed,
These boys that did descend from royal line
These did he style his heirs to David’s throne;

5. Priestly vestments: the ephod is a linen garment; the headpiece is termed a “miter,” conflating it with a bishop’s miter.
6. To make Mariam (or her son) the rightful ruler.
7. I.e., If you think he killed to give you royal power, what about the commands for your death? Did Mariam command her own death?
8. Herod’s first wife.
9. The 1613 text reads “Of,” not “In.” With the emendation the line indicates that the “coals” of Herod’s love for Doris had become embers in the fire of his love for Mariam, so that she (Doris) was now out of favor, “disgraced.”
1. Herod cared nothing for his firstborn son by Doris (Antipater), since he was not Mariam’s son.
My Alexander, if he live, shall sit
In the majestic seat of Solomon;²
To will it so, did Herod think it fit.

alexandra Why, who can claim from Alexander’s brood
That gold-adornèd lion-guarded chair?

145 Was Alexander not of David’s blood?
And was not Mariam Alexander’s heir?
What more than right could Herod then bestow,⁴
And who will think except for more than right⁴
He did not raise them, for they were not low,

But born to wear the crown in his despite:
Then send those tears away that are not sent
To thee by reason, but by passion’s power:
Thine eyes to cheer, thy cheeks to smiles be bent,
And entertain with joy this happy hour.

155 Felicity, if when she comes, she finds
A mourning habit, and a cheerless look,
Will think she is not welcome to thy mind,
And so perchance her lodging will not brook.⁶
Oh, keep her whilst thou hast her; if she go,

She will not easily return again:
Full many a year have I endured in woe,
Yet still have sued her presence to obtain:
And did not I to her as presents send
A table,⁶ that best art did beautify,

165 Of two, to whom Heaven did best feature lend,
To woo her love by winning Anthony?
For when a prince’s favor we do crave,
We first their minions’ loves do seek to win:
So I, that sought Felicity to have,

Did with her minion Anthony begin.⁵

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². David’s son, whose kingship was even more glorious.
³. This Alexander was Mariam’s father and Alexandra’s husband; as he was of David’s blood, and Mariam was his heir, the throne was hers by right, not by Herod’s gift.
⁴. I.e., Herod had his own designs in elevating Mariam and her brother, so they will seem to owe their places to him, not to their own right.
⁵. In this little allegory, Alexandra, seeking Felicity, began by wooing her minion Anthony, by sending pictures of Mariam and Aristobolus, but he could not decide between them.
With double sleight I sought to captivate
The warlike lover, but I did not right:
For if my gift had borne but half the rate,\(^6\)
The Roman had been overtaken quite.

But now he farèd like a hungry guest,
That to some plenteous festival is gone;
Now this, now that, he deems to eat were best,
Such choice doth make him let them all alone.
The boy’s\(^6\) large forehead first did fairest seem,
Then glanced his eye upon my Mariam’s cheek:
And that without comparison did deem,
What was in either but he most did like.
And, thus distracted,\(^6\) either’s beauty’s might
Within the other’s excellence was drowned:

Too much delight did bare\(^6\) him from delight,
For either’s love the other’s did confound.
Where if thy portraiture had only gone,\(^7\)
His life from Herod, Anthony had taken:
He would have loved thee, and thee alone,
And left the brown Egyptian clean forsaken,
And Cleopatra then to seek had been\(^8\)
So firm a lover of her wanèd face:
Then great Anthonius’ fall we had not seen,
By her that fled to have him hold the chase.\(^9\)

Then Mariam in a Roman’s chariot set,
In place of Cleopatra might have shown:
A mart\(^6\) of beauties in her visage met,
And part in this, that they were all her own.\(^6\)

Not to be empress of aspiring Rome,
Would Mariam like to Cleopatra live:
With purest body will I press my tomb,
And wish no favors Anthony could give.

Let us retire us, that we may resolve

---

6. Aristobolus.
7. I.e., if she had sent only Mariam’s picture, Anthony would have loved her and left Cleopatra, “the brown Egyptian.”
8. Cleopatra would then have lacked (had to seek for) love.
9. Cleopatra, who abandoned Anthony at the battle of Actium.
How now to deal in this reversèd state:
Great are th’affairs that we must now revolve,
And great affairs must not be taken late.

scene 3

[MARIAM. ALEXANDRA. SALOME.]

SALOME  More plotting yet? Why, now you have the thing
         For which so oft you spent your suppliant breath:
         And Mariam hopes to have another king.
         Her eyes do sparkle joy for Herod’s death.

ALEXANDRA  If she desired another king to have,
            She might before she came in Herod’s bed
            Have had her wish. More kings than one did crave
            For leave to set a crown upon her head.

         I think with more than reason she laments,
         That she is freed from such a sad annoy:
         Who is’t will weep to part from discontent?
         And if she joy, she did not causeless joy.

SALOME  You durst not thus have given your tongue the rein,
        If noble Herod still remained in life:
        Your daughter’s betters far, I dare maintain,
        Might have rejoiced to be my brother’s wife.

MARIAM  My betters far! Base woman, ’tis untrue,
        You scarce have ever my superiors seen:
        For Mariam’s servants were as good as you,
        Before she came to be Judea’s queen.

SALOME  Now stirs the tongue that is so quickly moved,
        But more than once your choler have I borne:
        Your fumish words are sooner said than proved,
        And Salome’s reply is only scorn.

MARIAM  Scorn those that are for thy companions held.
        Though I thy brother’s face had never seen,
        My birth thy baser birth so far excelled,
        I had to both of you the princess been.

        Thou parti-Jew, and parti-Edomite,
        Thou mongrel: issued from rejected race,
The Tragedy of Mariam, Act 1

Thy ancestors against the Heavens did fight,¹
And thou like them wilt heavenly birth disgrace.

**Salome**  Still twit you me with nothing but birth,²
What odds betwixt your ancestors and mine?
Both born of Adam, both were made of earth,³
And both did come from holy Abraham’s line.

**Mariam**  I favor thee when nothing else I say,
With thy black acts I’ll not pollute my breath:
Else to thy charge I might full justly lay.
A shameful life, besides a husband’s death.

**Salome**  'Tis true indeed, I did the plots reveal,
That passed betwixt your favorites and you:⁴
I meant not, I, a traitor to conceal.

Thus Salome your minion Joseph slew.

**Mariam**  Heaven, dost thou mean this infamy to smother?
Let slandered Mariam ope thy closed ear:
Self-guilt hath ever been suspicion’s mother,
And therefore I this speech with patience bear.

No, had not Salome’s unsteadfast heart
In Josephus’ stead her Constabarus placed,
To free herself she had not used the art
To slander hapless Mariam for unchaste.

**Alexandra**  Come, Mariam, let us go: it is no boot⁵
To let the head contend against the foot.

Scene 4

[Salome alone.]

**Salome**  Lives Salome to get so base a style⁶
As “foot” to the proud Mariam? Herod’s spirit
In happy time for her endured exile,

---

1. Edom fought continually against Israel and occupied southern Judea; the Hebrew prophets denounced this as defiance of God's will (Ezekiel 25.13, Jeremiah 49.7–22).
2. Salome complains that Mariam scorns her for her Edomite descent.
3. Salome claims descent from the first father, Adam (whose name means red earth), and through Esau from the common patriarch of both Hebrews and Edomites, Abraham.
4. Salome had before caused Josephus’s death by malicious gossip that he and Mariam were lovers and were plotting against Herod; her inclusive statement hints that she may do as much with Sohemus.
For did he live, she should not miss her merit:  
But he is dead: and though he were my brother,  
His death such store of cinders cannot cast  
My coals of love to quench: for though they smother  
The flames a while, yet will they out at last.  
Oh blest Arabia,  
I by the fruit will censure of the tree:  
'Tis not in vain they happy name thou hast,  
If all Arabians like Silleus be.  
Had not my fate been too too contrary,  
When I on Constabarus first did gaze,  
Silleus had been object to mine eye:  
Whose looks and personage must all eyes amaze.  
But now, ill-fated Salome, thy tongue  
To Constabarus by itself is tied:  
And now, except I do the Hebrew wrong,  
I cannot be the fair Arabian’s bride:  
What childish lets are these? Why stand I now  
On honorable points? 'Tis long ago  
Since shame was written on my tainted brow:  
And certain 'tis, that shame is honor’s foe.  
Had I upon my reputation stood,  
Had I affected an unspotted life,  
Josephus’ veins had still been stuffed with blood,  
And I to him had lived a sober wife.  
Then had I never cast an eye of love  
On Constabarus’ now detested face,  
Then had I kept my thoughts without remove:  
And blushed at motion of the least disgrace:  
But shame is gone, and honor wiped away,  
And impudency on my forehead sits:  
She bids me work my will without delay,  
And for my will I will employ my wits.

5. I.e., Herod’s spirit is, happily for Mariam, exiled from his body, for if Herod were alive Mariam would get what she deserves.
6. Salome plays on the name “Arabia Felix,” which ancient geographers gave to the fertile parts of Arabia; the “fruit” of the “tree” Arabia is Salome’s new lover Silleus (next lines).
7. I.e., she has not blushed for shame in a long time.
He loves, I love; what then can be the cause
Keeps me [from] being the Arabian’s wife?
It is the principles of Moses’ laws,

For Constabarus still remains in life.
If he to me did bear as earnest hate,
As I to him, for him there were an ease;
A separating bill⁸ might free his fate
From such a yoke that did so much displease.

Why should such privilege to man be given?
Or given to them, why barred from women then?
Are men than we in greater grace with Heaven?
Or cannot women hate as well as men?
I’ll be the custom-breaker: and begin

To show my sex the way to freedom’s door,
And with an off’ring will I purge my sin;
The law was made for none but who are poor.⁹
If Herod had lived, I might to him accuse
My present lord. But for the future’s sake¹

Then would I tell the king he did refuse
The sons of Babas in his power to take.
But now I must divorce him from my bed,
That my Silleus may possess his room: place

Had I not begged his life, he had been dead,²
I curse my tongue, the hind’rer of his doom,
But then my wand’ring heart to him was fast,
Nor did I dream of change: Silleus said,
He would be here, and see, he comes at last.
Had I not named him, longer had he stayed.

---

8. A bill for divorce, allowed in Deuteronomy 24.1 only to men.
9. The opening chapters of Leviticus prescribe specific offerings for specific sins; Salome’s cynical comment is that the wealthy can afford such offerings and so buy release from any sin.
1. I.e., for the sake of my future husband, I would have told (next lines) Herod that Constabarus did not kill Herod’s enemies, the sons of Babas, but instead hid them.
2. Constabarus, while governor of Idumaea under Herod, sought to obtain that kingdom for himself; only Salome was able to persuade Herod to spare his life.
scene 5

[SALOME. SILLEUS.]

325 silleus Well found, fair Salome, Judea's pride!
Hath they innated\(^6\) wisdom found the way
To make Silleus deem him deified,
By gaining thee, a more than precious prey?
salome I have devised the best I can devise;
A more imperfect means was never found:
But what cares Salome? It doth suffice
If our endeavors with their end be crowned.
In this our land we have an ancient use,
Permitted first by our law-giver's\(^3\) head:
Who hates his wife, though for no just abuse,
May with a bill divorce her from his bed.
But in this custom women are not free,
Yet I for once will wrest it; blame not thou
The ill I do, since what I do's for thee,
Though others blame, Silleus should allow.
silleus Thinks Salome, Silleus hath a tongue
To censure her fair actions? Let my blood
Bedash my proper\(^9\) brow, for such a wrong,
The being yours, can make even vices good:
Arabia, joy, prepare thy earth with green,
Thou never happy wert indeed till now:
Now shall thy ground be trod by beauty's queen,
Her foot is destined to depress thy brow.
Thou shalt, fair Salome, command as much
As if the royal ornament were thine:
The weakness of Arabia's king is such,
The kingdom is not his so much as mine.\(^4\)
My mouth is our Obodas' oracle,
Who thinks not aught but what Silleus will.

---

3. Moses, who received the Ten Commandments from God.
4. The king of Arabia, Obodas, was said to be slothful; Cary's source, Josephus, said that he entrusted the kingdom's affairs to Silleus.
The Tragedy of Mariam, Act 1

355 And thou, rare creature, Asia’s miracle,
    Shalt be to me as it: Obodas’ still.  

salome  ‘Tis not for glory I thy love accept,
      Judea yields me honors worthy store: 
      Had not affection in my bosom crept,
      My native country should my life deplore.  

supply  Were not Silleus he with whom I go,
      I would not change my Palestine for Rome:
      Much less would I a glorious state to show
      Go far to purchase an Arabian tomb.

365 silleus  Far be it from Silleus so to think,
      I know it is thy gratitude requites
      The love that is in me, and shall not shrink
      Till death do sever me from earth’s delights.

salome  But whist; methinks the wolf is in our talk.  

hush  Begone, Silleus. Who doth here arrive?
      ’Tis Constabarus that doth hither walk;
      I’ll find a quarrel, him from me to drive.

silleus  Farewell, but were it not for thy command,
      In his despite Silleus here would stand.

scene 6

375 [salome. constabarus.]

constabarus  Oh Salome, how much you wrong your name,
      Your race, your country, and your husband most!
      A stranger’s private conference is shame,
      I blush for you, that have your blushing lost.
      Oft have I found, and found you to my grief,

consorted with this base Arabian here:
      Heaven knows that you have been my comfort chief,

5. The meaning is ambiguous. Line 354 ends with a question mark in the 1613 text. As emended here the passage suggests that Salome, Asia’s miracle, will be to him as his own will and will also rule Obodas and, thus, Arabia.
6. I.e., if I did not love you I would deplore the loss of my native land all my life.
7. I.e., crafty ears are listening.
8. For a woman to talk privately with a stranger is shameful.
Then do not now my greater plague appear.
Now by the stately carved edifice
That on Mount Sion makes so fair a show,\(^9\)
And by the altar fit for sacrifice,
I love thee more than thou thyself dost know.
Oft with a silent sorrow have I heard
How ill Judea’s mouth doth censure thee:
And did I not thine honor much regard,
Thou shouldst not be exhorted thus for me.
Didst thou but know the worth of honest fame,
How much a virtuous woman is esteemed,
Thou wouldest like hell eschew deserved shame,
And seek to be both chaste and chastely deemed.
Our wisest prince did say, and true he said,
A virtuous woman crowns her husband’s head.\(^1\)

**Salome** Did I for this uprear thy low estate?
Did I for this requital beg thy life,
That thou hadst forfeited to hapless fate,
To be to such a thankless wretch the wife?
This hand of mine hath lifted up thy head,
Which many a day ago had fallen full low,
Because the sons of Babas are not dead;
To me thou dost both life and fortune owe.

**Constabarus** You have my patience often exercised,
Use make my choler keep within the banks:\(^2\)
Yet boast no more, but be by me advised.
A benefit upbraided\(^\text{reproached}\) forfeits thanks:
I prithee, Salome, dismiss this mood,
Thou dost not know how ill it fits thy place:
My words were all intended for thy good,
To raise thine honor and to stop disgrace.

**Salome** To stop disgrace? Take thou no care for me,
Nay, do thy worst, thy worst I set not by:\(^\text{care not for}\)
No shame of mine is like to light on thee,

---

1. Proverbs 12.4, attributed to King Solomon.
2. I.e., may habit (“use”) make me control my anger (“choler”).
Thy love and admonitions I defy.
Thou shalt no hour longer call me wife,
Thy jealousy procures my hate so deep:
That I from thee do mean to free my life,
By a divorcing bill before I sleep.

**constabarus**  Are Hebrew women now transformed to men?
Why do you not as well our battles fight,
And wear our armor? Suffer this, and then
Let all the world be topsy-turvèd quite.

Let fishes graze, beasts swim and birds descend,
Let fire burn downwards whilst the earth aspires:
Let winter’s heat and summer’s cold offend,
Let thistles grow on vines, and grapes on briars,
Set us to spin or sew, or at the best
Make us wood-hewers, water-bearing wights:
For sacred service let us take no rest,
Use us as Joshua did the Gibonites.

**salome**  Hold on your talk, till it be time to end,
For me I am resolved it shall be so:
Though I be first that to this course do bend,
I shall not be the last, full well I know.

**constabarus**  Why then be witness Heav’n, the judge of sins,
Be witness spirits that eschew the dark:
Be witness angels, witness cherubins,
Whose semblance sits upon the holy Ark:
Be witness earth, be witness Palestine,
Be witness David’s city, if my heart
Did ever merit such an act of thine:
Or if the fault be mine that makes us part.
Since mildest Moses, friend unto the Lord,
Did work his wonders in the land of Ham,
And slew the first-born babes without a sword,

---

3. The 1613 edition reads “swine,” but the context dictates this emendation.
4. I.e., make us into women (“spin or sew”) or slaves (hewers of wood and drawers of water), such as Joshua made of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9.21).
5. Two gold cherubim were to adorn the mercy seat, placed above the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25.18–20).
In sign whereof we eat the holy lamb:6
Till now that fourteen hundred years are past,
Since first the Law7 with us hath been in force.
You are the first, and will, I hope, be last,
That ever sought her husband to divorce.
salome I mean not to be led by precedent,
My will shall be to me instead of Law.

450

455

constabarus I fear me much you will too late repent,
That you have ever lived so void of awe:
This is Silleus’ love that makes you thus
Reverse all order: you must next be his.
But if my thoughts aright the cause discuss,
In winning you, he gains no lasting bliss;
I was Silleus, and not long ago
Josephus then was Constabarus now:
When you became my friend8 you proved his foe,
As now for him you break to me your vow.8

460

salome If once I loved you, greater is your debt:
For certain ’tis that you deserved it not.
And undeserv’d love we soon forget,
And therefore that to me can be no blot.
But now fare ill,9 my once belov’d lord,
Yet never more belov’d than now abhorred. [Exit salome.]

constabarus Yet Constabarus biddeth thee farewell.
Farewell, light creature. Heaven forgive thy sin:
My prophesying spirit doth foretell
Thy wavering thoughts do yet but new begin.
Yet I have better scaped than Joseph did,
But if our Herod’s death had been delayed,
The valiant youths that I so long have hid,
Had been by her, and I for them, betrayed.1

---

6. Passover celebrates this last of the ten plagues by which Moses delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (the “land of Ham,” line 446).
8. I.e., not long ago I was in Silleus’s place as your lover and Josephus in my place as your husband; now for Silleus you break your marriage vow to me.
9. As opposed to “farewell.”
1. Babas’s sons.
Therefore in happy hour did Caesar give
The fatal blow to wanton Anthony:
For had he lived, our Herod then should live,
But great Anthonius’ death made Herod die.
Had he enjoyed his breath, not I alone
Had been in danger of a deadly fall:
But Mariam had the way of peril gone,
Though by the tyrant most belov’d of all—
The sweet-faced Mariam, as free from guilt
As Heaven from spots, yet had her lord come back,
Her purest blood had been unjustly spilt,
And Salome it was would work her wrack.°
Though all Judea yield her innocent,
She often hath been near to punishment. [Exit.]

CHORUS

Those minds that wholly dote upon delight,
Except° they only joy in inward good,
Still hope at last to hop upon the right, 2
And so from sand they leap in loathsome mud.
Fond° wretches, seeking what they cannot find,
For no content attends a wavering mind.

If wealth they do desire, and wealth attain,
Then wondrous fain° would they to honor leap:
If mean degree they do in honor gain, 3
They would but wish a little higher step.
Thus step to step, and wealth to wealth they add,
Yet cannot all their plenty make them glad.

Yet oft we see that some in humble state,
Are cheerful, pleasant, happy, and content:

2. To land upon the right foot was a portent of a good result.
3. The line begins with “Of” in the 1613 text. The emendation is indicated both by parallelism with line 499 and by the sense, i.e., that if persons attain but a moderate degree of honor they will wish for a higher degree, “step” (next line).
When those indeed that are of higher state,
With vain additions do their thoughts torment.
   Th’one would to his mind his fortune bind,
   Th’other to his fortune frames his mind.

To wish variety is sign of grief,
For if you like your state as now it is,
Why should an alteration bring relief?
Nay, change would then be feared as loss of bliss.

That man is only happy in his fate
That is delighted in a settled state.

Still Mariam wished she from her lord were free,
For expectation of variety:*4
Yet now she sees her wishes prosperous be,
She grieves, because her lord so soon did die.
   Who can those vast imaginations feed,
   Where in a property o contempt doth breed?

Were Herod now perchance to live again,
She would again as much be grieved at that:
All that she may, 5 she ever doth disdain,
Her wishes guide her to she knows not what.
   And sad must be their looks, their honor sour,
   That care for nothing being o in their power.

Act 2

SCENE 1

[PHERORAS and GRAPHINA] 1

PHERORAS  'Tis true, Graphina, now the time draws nigh
   Wherein the holy priest with hallowed right, o

---

4. The chorus assumes from its own limited perspective that Mariam’s disaffection from Herod must stem from a (stereotypically female) desire for variety. They impute to her Salome’s motives.
5. Whatever she in fact possesses she disdains.

1. Pheroras was Herod’s younger brother; Cary draws out the subplot of Pheroras and Graphina from a brief comment in Josephus that Pheroras refused to marry Herod’s daughter because he was in love with a slave girl. Cary makes Graphina a servant (“handmaid,” line 56; “vassel,” line 62) but not necessarily a slave.
The tragedy of Mariam, Act 2

The happy long-desired knot shall tie,
Pheroras and Graphina to unite:

5 How oft have I with lifted hands implored
This blessed hour, till now implored in vain,
Which hath my wishèd liberty restored,
And made my subject self my own again.
Thy love, fair maid, upon mine eye doth sit,

10 Whose nature hot doth dry the moisture all,
Which were in nature, and in reason fit
For my monarchal brother's death to fall:
Had Herod lived, he would have plucked my hand
From fair Graphina’s palm perforce: and tied

15 The same in hateful and despisèd band,
For I had had a baby to my bride:²
Scarce can her infant tongue with easy voice
Her name distinguish to another’s ear:
Yet had he lived, his power, and not my choice,

20 Had made me solemnly the contract swear.
Have I not cause in such a change to joy?
What though she be my niece, a princess born?
Near blood's without respect: high birth a toy,
Since love can teach us blood and kindred's scorn.³

25 What booted it⁰ that he did raise my head,
To be his realm's copartner, kingdom's mate?
Withal, he kept Graphina from my bed,
More wished by me than thrice Judea's state.
Oh, could not he be skilful judge in love,

30 That doted so upon his Mariam's face?
He, for his passion, Doris did remove;
I needed not a lawful wife displace.
It could not be but he had power to judge,
But he that never grudged a kingdom's share,

35 This well-known happiness to me did grudge:
And meant to be therein without compare.

2. Cary represents Pheroras’s intended bride, his niece, as still an infant and plays on the Latin infans, speechless.
3. I.e., love can teach scorn for high rank (“blood”) and the wishes of relatives.
Else had I been his equal in love’s host,\(^a\)
For though the diadem on Mariam’s head
Corrupt the vulgar judgments, I will boast
Graphina’s brow’s as white, her cheeks as red.
Why speaks thou not, fair creature? Move thy tongue,
For silence is a sign of discontent:
It were to both our loves too great a wrong
If now this hour do find thee sadly bent.\(^b\)

Mistake me not, my lord, too oft have I
Desired this time to come with wingèd feet,
To be enrapt with grief when ’tis too nigh.
You know my wishes ever yours did meet:
If I be silent, ’tis no more but fear
That I should say too little when I speak:
But since you will my imperfections bear,
In spite of doubt I will my silence break:
Yet might amazement tie my moving tongue,
But\(^c\) that I know before Pheroras’ mind.

I have admired\(^d\) your affection long:
And cannot yet therein a reason find.
Your hand hath lifted me from lowest state,
To highest eminency wondrous grace,\(^4\)
And me your handmaid have you made your mate,
Though all but you alone do count me base.
You have preserved me pure at my request,
Though you so weak a vassal\(^5\) might constrain\(^d\)
To yield to your high will; then last not best,\(^6\)
In my respect a princess you disdain;
Then need not all these favors study crave,
To be requited\(^7\) by a simple maid?
And study still, you know, must silence have.
Then be my cause for silence justly weighed,
But study cannot boot\(^d\) not I requite,
Except your lowly handmaid’s steadfast love

---

\(^a\) I.e., such elevation would have been a “wondrous grace” even for one of high station.
\(^b\) I.e., as your “weak vassel” you might have forced me to your bed.
\(^c\) I.e., that favor is even greater than your disdaining a princess for me.
\(^d\) I.e., must I not study how to requite (repay) all these favor?
The Tragedy of Mariam, Act 2

And fast obedience may your mind delight, I will not promise more than I can prove.

Pheroras That study needs not let Graphina smile, And I desire no greater recompense:

I cannot vaunt me in a glorious style, Nor show my love in far-fetch'd eloquence: But this believe me, never Herod's heart Hath held his prince-born beauty-fam'd wife In nearer place than thou, fair virgin, art,

To him that holds the glory of his life.8 Should Herod's body leave the sepulchre, And entertain the severed ghost again, He should not be my nuptial hinderer, Except he hindered it with dying pain.9

Come, fair Graphina, let us go in state, This wish-endear'd time to celebrate. [Exeunt.]

Scene 2

[Constabarus and Babas' sons.]

Babas' First Son Now, valiant friend, you have our lives redeemed, Which lives, as saved by you, to you are due: Command and you shall see yourself esteemed Our lives and liberties belong to you. This twice six years, with hazard of your life, You have concealed us from the tyrant's sword: Though cruel Herod's sister were your wife, You durst in scorn of fear this grace afford.

In recompense we know not what to say, A poor reward were thanks for such a merit,9 Our truest friendship at your feet we lay, The best requital to a noble spirit.

Constabarus Oh, how you wrong our friendship, valiant youth!

With friends there is not such a word as "debt":

8. I.e., Herod's heart does not hold Mariam closer than you are held by him (Pheroras) who in you holds "the glory of his life."
9. I.e., mere thanks would be a poor reward for such merit.
Where amity is tied with bond of truth,
All benefits are there in common set.
Then is the golden age with them renewed,
All names of properties are banished quite:
Division, and distinction, are eschewed:
Each hath to what belongs to others right.
And 'tis not sure so full a benefit,
Freely to give, as freely to require:
A bounteous act hath to glory following it,
They cause the glory that the act desire.
All friendship should the pattern imitate,
Of Jesse’s son and valiant Jonathan:
For neither sovereign’s nor father’s hate
A friendship fixed on virtue sever can.
Too much of this, 'tis written in the heart,
And needs no amplifying with the tongue:
Now may you from your living tomb depart,
Where Herod’s life hath kept you overlong.
Too great an injury to a noble mind,
To be quick buried; you had purchased fame,
Some years ago, but that you were confined,
While thousand meaner did advance their name.
Your best of life, the prime of all your years,
Your time of action is from you bereft.
Twelve winters have you overpassed in fears:
Yet if you use it well, enough is left.
And who can doubt but you will use it well?
The sons of Babas have it by descent:
In all their thoughts each action to excel,
Boldly to act, and wisely to invent.

BABAS’ SECOND SON Had it not like the hateful cuckoo been,
Whose riper age his infant nurse doth kill;
So long we had not kept ourselves unseen,

1. A variation on the ancient saying that friends hold all things in common.
2. The biblical David and Jonathan were constantly cited as an example of friendship, for which Jonathan defied the authority of Saul, both his father and his king (1 Samuel 18.4, 20.1-42).
3. The cuckoo hides its eggs in other birds’ nests, and, according to Pliny, the young cuckoos kill the birds that fostered them.
But Constabarus safely crossed our will:
For had the tyrant fixed his cruel eye
On our concealed faces, wrath had swayed
His justice so, that he had forced us die.
And dearer price than life we should have paid,
For you, our truest friend, had fallen with us:
And we, much like a house on pillars set,
Had clean depressed our prop, and therefore thus
Our ready will with our concealment met.
But now that you, fair lord, are dangerless,
The sons of Babas shall their rigor show:
And prove it was not baseness did oppress
Our hearts so long, but honor kept them low.

BABAS’S FIRST SON Yet do I fear this tale of Herod’s death
At last will prove a very tale indeed:
It gives me strongly in my mind,4 his breath
Will be preserved to make a number bleed:
I wish not therefore to be set at large,
Yet peril to myself I do not fear:5
Let us for some days longer be your charge,
Till we of Herod’s state the truth do hear.

CONSTABARUS What, art thou turned a coward, noble youth,
That thou beginn’st to doubt undoubted truth?
BABAS’ FIRST SON Were it my brother’s tongue that cast this doubt,
I from his heart would have the question out
With this keen falchion,6 but ’tis you, my lord,
Against whose head I must not lift a sword:
I am so tied in gratitude.

CONSTABARUS Believe
You have no cause to take it ill;
If any word of mine your heart did grieve,
The word dissented from the speaker’s will.
I know it was not fear the doubt begun,
But rather valor and your care of me;
A coward could not be your father’s son.

4. I.e., I have a strong presentiment.
5. The 1613 text reads “leare,” an evident mistake.
Yet know I doubts unnecessary be:
For who can think that in Anthonius’ fall,
Herod his bosom friend should scrape unbruised?
Then, Caesar, we might thee an idiot call,
If thou by him should’st be so far abused.

Babas’ second son  Lord Constabarus, let me tell you this,
Upon submission Caesar will forgive;
And therefore though the tyrant did amiss,
It may fall out that he will let him live.
Not many years ago it is since I,
Directed thither by my father’s care,
In famous Rome for twice twelve months did lie,  

My life from Hebrews’ cruelty to spare.
There though I were but yet of boyish age,
I bent mine eye to mark, mine ears to hear,
Where I did see Octavius, then a page,
When first he did to Juliius’ sight appear:
Methought I saw such mildness in his face,
And such a sweetness in his looks did grow,  
Withal, commixed with so majestic grace,
His phys’onomy  his fortune did foreshow:
For this I am indebted to mine eye,

But then mine ear received more evidence,
By that I knew his love to clemency,
How he with hottest choler  could dispense.

Constabarus  But we have more than barely heard the news,
It hath been twice confirmed. And though some tongue
Might be so false with false report t’abuse,
A false report hath never lasted long.
But be it so that Herod have his life,
Concealment would not then a whit avail:
For certain ’tis, that she that was my wife,

Would not to set her accusation fail.
And therefore now as good the venture give,

6. The 1613 text reads “live,” which does not rhyme.
7. Various classical writers, especially Suetonius, testified to the grace and youthful promise of the young
Octavius (Augustus Caesar, 63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.).
8. The 1613 text reads “phismony,” a misprint for “phys’onomy,” a contraction of “physiognomy.”
And free ourselves from blot of cowardice
As show a pitiful desire to live,
For, who can pity but they must despise?

BABAS’S FIRST SON    I yield, but to necessity I yield;
I dare upon this doubt engage mine arm:9
That Herod shall again this kingdom wield,
And prove his death to be a false alarm.

BABAS’ FIRST SON    I doubt it too: God grant it be an error,
’Tis best without a cause to be in terror:
And rather had I, though my soul be mine,
My soul should lie, than prove a true divine.1

CONSTABARUS    Come, come, let fear go seek a dastard’s nest,
Undaunted courage lies in a noble breast.    [Exeunt.]

SCENE 3

[DORIS and ANTIPATER.]

DORIS    You2 royal buildings, bow your lofty side,
And scope to her that is by right your queen:
Let your humility upbraid the pride
Of those in whom no due respect is seen:
Nine times have we with trumpets’ haughty sound,
And banishing sour leaven from our taste,
Observed the feast that takes the fruit from ground.3
Since I, fair city, did behold thee last,
So long4 it is since Mariam’s purer cheek
Did rob from mine the glory, and so long
Since I returned my native town to seek:
And with me nothing but the sense of wrong,
And thee, my boy, whose birth, though great it were,
Yet have thy after fortunes proved but poor:

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9. Upon this fear (“doubt”) of Herod’s return, I dare prepare to defend myself in arms.
1. I.e., I would rather be proved a liar than a true prophet in this case.
2. The 1613 text reads “Your,” but this is most likely an apostrophe to the buildings.
3. At the end of the feast of unleavened bread (associated with Passover), the first fruits of the harvest were offered to God (Leviticus 23.5–14).
4. I.e., nine years.
When thou wert born, how little did I fear
Thou should'st be thrust from forth thy father's door!
Art thou not Herod's right begotten son?
Was not the hapless Doris Herod's wife?
Yes: ere he had the Hebrew kingdom won,
I was companion to his private life.

Was I not fair enough to be a queen?
Why, ere thou wert to me, false monarch, tied,
My lack of beauty might as well be seen,
As after I had lived five years thy bride.
Yet then thine oath came pouring like the rain,
Which all affirmed my face without compare:
And that if thou might'st Doris' love obtain,
For all the world besides thou didst not care.
Then was I young, and rich, and nobly born,
And therefore worthy to be Herod's mate:
Yet thou ungrateful cast me off with scorn,
When Heaven's purpose raised your meaner fate.
Oft have I begged for vengeance for this fact,
And with dejected knees, aspiring hands
Have prayed the highest power to enact
The fall of her that on my trophy stands.
Revenge I have according to my will,
Yet where I wished this vengeance did not light:
I wished it should high-hearted Mariam kill,
But it against my whilom lord did fight.

With thee, sweet boy, I came, and came to try
If thou before his bastards might be placed
In Herod's royal seat and dignity.
But Mariam's infants here are only graced,
And now for us there doth no hope remain:
Yet we will not return till Herod's end
Be more confirmed. Perchance he is not slain;
So glorious fortunes may my boy attend.
For if he live, he'll think it doth suffice,
That he to Doris shows such cruelty:

5. The spoils taken from the vanquished and displayed in a triumphal procession.
The Tragedy of Mariam, Act 2

265 For as he did my wretched life despise,  
So do I know I shall despisèd die.  
Let him but prove as natural to thee,  
As cruel to thy miserable mother:  
His cruelty shall not upbraided be  
But in thy fortunes. I his faults will smother.  

ANTIPATER Each mouth within the city loudly cries  
That Herod’s death is certain: therefore we  
Had best some subtle hidden plot devise,  
That Mariam’s children might subverted be,  
By poison’s drink, or else by murderous knife,  
So we may be advanced, it skills not how:  
They are but bastards, you were Herod’s wife,  
And foul adultery blotteth Mariam’s brow.  

DORIS They are too strong to be by us removed,  
Or else revenge’s foulest spotted face  
By our detested wrongs might be approved,  
But weakness must to greater power give place.  
But let us now retire to grieve alone,  
For solitariness best fitteth moan.  
[Exeunt.]

SCENE 4

[SILLEUS and CONSTABARUS.]  

285 SILLEUS Well met, Judean lord, the only wight  
Silleus wished to see. I am to call  
Thy tongue to strict account.  

CONSTABARUS For what despite  
I ready am to hear, and answer all.  
But if directly at the cause I guess  
That breeds this challenge, you must pardon me:  
And now some other ground of fight profess,  
For I have vowed, vows must unbroken be.

6. I.e., only your restored good fortune will, by contrast, upbraid his cruelty to me and earlier to you; I will not do so.  
7. I.e., if they were not so strong, our detestable wrongs would justify even the ugliest revenge.  
8. I.e., excuse me from taking up your challenge.
silleus What may be your exception? Let me know.
constabarus Why, aught concerning Salome; my sword
shall not be wielded for a cause so low,
A blow for her my arm will scorn t’afford.
silleus It is for slandering her unspotted name,
And I will make thee in thy vow’s despite,
Suck up the breath that did my mistress blame,
And swallow it again to do her right.
constabarus I prithee give some other quarrel ground
To find beginning; rail against my name,
Or strike me first, or let some scarlet wound
Inflame my courage, give me words of shame;
do thou our Moses’ sacred laws disgrace,
Deprave our nation, do me some despite:
I’m apt enough to fight in any case,
But yet for Salome I will not fight.
silleus Not I for aught but Salome: my sword,
That owes his service to her sacred name,
Will not an edge for other cause afford,
In other fight I am not sure of fame.
constabarus For her, I pity thee enough already,
because of
For her, I therefore will not mangle thee:
A woman with a heart so most unsteady
Will of herself sufficient torture be.
I cannot envy for so light a gain;
Her mind with such unconstancy doth run:
As with a word thou didst her love obtain,
So with a word she will from thee be won.
So light as her possessions for most day
Is her affections lost, to me ’tis known:
As good go hold the wind as make her stay,
She never loves but till she call her own.
She merely is a painted sepulchre,

9. The 1613 text reads “expectation,” but this emendation is indicated by both sense and meter.
1. The syntax is obscure: the meaning seems to be that her affections are so light that the possession of her
lasts no more than a day.
2. A proverbial expression for impossibility.
3. I.e., she loves only until she possesses her lover.
That is both fair, and vilely foul at once:
Though on her outside graces garnish her,
Her mind is filled with worse than rotten bones. ⁴
And ever ready lifted is her hand,
To aim destruction at a husband’s throat:
For proofs, Josephus and myself do stand:
Though once on both of us she seemed to dote.
Her mouth, though serpent-like it never hisses,
Yet like a serpent, poisons where it kisses.

330  silleus  Well, Hebrew, well, thou bark’st, but wilt not bite.
constabar us  I tell thee still for her I will not fight.
silleus  Why then, I call thee coward.

335  constabar us  From my heart
    I give thee thanks. A coward’s hateful name
    Cannot to valiant minds a blot impart,
    And therefore I with joy receive the same.
    Thou know’st I am no coward: thou wert by
    At the Arabian battle th’other day,
    And saw’st my sword with daring valiancy,
    Amongst the faint Arabians cut my way.

340  The blood of foes no more could let it shine,
    And ’twas enamelled with some of thine.
    But now have at thee; not for Salome
    I fight, but to discharge a coward’s style: ⁵
    Here ’gins the fight that shall not parted be,
    Before a soul or two endure exile. ⁵ [They fight.]

345  silleus  Thy sword hath made some windows for my blood,
    To show a horrid crimson physiognomy: ⁶
    To breathe for both of us methinks ’twere good,
    The day will give us time enough to die.

350  constabar us  With all my heart take breath, thou shalt have time,
    And if thou list, a twelvemonth; let us end:
    Into thy cheeks there doth a paleness climb,
    Thou canst not from my sword thyself defend.

⁴ Echoes Matthew 23.27: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.”
⁵ I.e., until one or both of our souls depart our bodies.
What needest thou for Salome to fight?
Thou hast her, and may’st keep her, none strives for her:
I willingly to thee resign my right,
For in my very soul I do abhor her.
Thou seest that I am fresh, unwounded yet,
Then not for fear I do this offer make:
Thou art with loss of blood to fight unfit,
For here is one, and there another take.6
silleus I will not leave, as long as breath remains
Within my wounded body: spare your words,
My heart in blood’s stead courage entertains,
Salome’s love no place for fear affords.
constabarus Oh, could thy soul but prophesy like mine,
I would not wonder thou should’st long to die:
For Salome, if I aright divine,
Will be than death a greater misery.
silleus Then list,\(^o\) I’ll breathe\(^o\) no longer.
375 constabarus Do thy will;
I hateless fight, and charitably kill. Ay, ay, [They fight.]
Pity thyself, Silleus, let not death
Intrude before his time into thy heart:
Alas, it is too late to fear, his breath
Is from his body now about to part.
How far’st thou, brave Arabian?
silleus Very well,
My leg is hurt, I can no longer fight:
It only grieves me, that so soon I fell,
Before fair Salom’s wrongs I came\(^o\) to right.
380 constabarus Thy wounds are less than mortal. Never fear,
Thou shalt a safe and quick recovery find:
Come, I will thee unto my lodging bear,
I hate thy body, but I love thy mind.
silleus Thanks, noble Jew, I see a courteous foe,
390 constabarus Stern enmity to friendship can no art:7
Had not my heart and tongue engaged me so,

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6. I.e., probably, here is one wound (“take” of my sword) and there another.
7. I.e., stern enmity knows (“can” in the Old English sense) no way to turn into friendship.
I would from thee no foe, but friend depart.
My heart to Salome is tied too fast
To leave her love for friendship, yet my skill
Shall be employed to make your favor last,
And I will honor Constabarus still.

constabarus I ope my bosom to thee, and will take
Thee in as friend, and grieve for thy complaint:
But if we do not expedition make,
Thy loss of blood I fear will make thee faint.  [Exeunt.]

chorus
To hear a tale with ears prejudice,
It spoils the judgment, and corrupts the sense:
That human error, given to every state,
Is greater enemy to innocence.

It makes us foolish, heady, rash, unjust,
It makes us never try before we trust.

It will confound the meaning, change the words,
For it our sense of hearing much deceives:
Besides, no time to judgment it affords,
To weigh the circumstance our ear receives.
The ground of accidents it never tries,
But makes us take for truth ten thousand lies.

Our ears and hearts are apt to hold for good
That we ourselves do most desire to be:
And then we drown objections in the flood
Of partiality, ’tis that we see
That makes false rumors long with credit passed,
 Though they like rumors must conclude at last.

8. The 1613 text reads “so fast”; the emendation seems indicated by context.
9. I.e., every rank and condition of humankind is subject to and harmed by prejudice, but it is a greater danger to the naive and inexperienced.
1. Our wishful thinking (“partiality” to ourselves) is what makes us credit false rumors for so long.
The greatest part of us, prejudicate,
With wishing Herod’s death do hold it true:
The being once deluded doth not bate
The credit to a better likelihood due.
Those few that wish it not, the multitude
Do carry headlong, so they doubts conclude.2

They not object the weak uncertain ground,
Whereon they built this tale of Herod’s end:3
Whereof the author scarcely can be found,
And all because their wishes that way bend.
They think not of the peril that ensu’th,
If this should prove the contrary to truth.

On this same doubt, on this so light a breath,
They pawn their lives and fortunes. For they all
Behave them as the news of Herod’s death
They did of most undoubted credit call:
But if their actions now do rightly hit,°
Let them commend their fortune, not their wit.

Act 3

scene 1

[pheroras. salome.]

pheroras Urge me no more Graphina to forsake,
Not twelve hours since I married her for love:
And do you think a sister’s power can make
A resolute decree so soon remove?
salome Poor minds they are that honor not affects.°
pheroras Who hunts for honor happiness neglects.
salome You might have been both of felicity
And honor too in equal measure seized.°
pheroras It is not you can tell so well as I,

2. The many overwhelm the few who do not want Herod dead, so they give over their doubts.
3. The few doubters (”They”) do not object to the weak and uncertain grounds on which the multitude (”they”) constructed their tale of Herod’s death.
The Tragedy of Mariam, Act 3

10 What 'tis can make me happy or displeased.

Salome  To match for neither beauty nor respects.°

One mean of birth, but yet of meaner mind,

A woman full of natural defects—

I wonder what your eye in her could find.

15 Phororas  Mine eye found loveliness, mine ear found wit,

To please the one, and to enchant the other:

Grace on her eye, mirth on her tongue doth sit,

In looks a child, in wisdom’s house a mother.

Salome  But say you thought her fair, as none thinks else,

Knows not Phororas, beauty is a blast:°

Much like this flower which today excels,

But longer than a day it will not last.

Phororas  Her wit exceeds her beauty.

Salome  Wit may show

The way to ill as well as good, you know.

20 Phororas  But wisdom is the porter of her head,

And bars all wicked words from issuing thence.

Salome  But of a porter, better were you sped,

If she against their entrance made defense.1

Phororas  But wherefore comes the sacred Ananell,

That hitherward his hasty steps doth bend?

Great sacrificer, y’are arrivèd well,

Ill news from holy mouth I not attend.°

Scene 2

[Phororas. Salome. Ananell.]

Ananell  My lips, my son, with peaceful tidings blessed,

Shall utter honey to your list’ning ear:

35 A word of death comes not from priestly breast,

I speak of life: in life there is no fear.

And for the news I did the Heavens salute,

And filled the Temple with my thankful voice:

1. I.e., you would be better served by the porter ("wisdom") if it barred wicked words not only from issuing out from but also from entering into her head.
For though that mourning may not me pollute,²
At pleasing accidents I may rejoice.

pheroras  Is Herod then revived from certain death?
salome  What? Can your news restore my brother’s breath?
ananell  Both so, and so, the King is safe and sound,
        And did such grace in royal Caesar meet:
That he, with larger style⁶ than ever crowned,
Within this hour Jerusalem will greet.
I did but come to tell you, and must back
To make preparatives for sacrifice:
I knew his death your hearts like mine did rack,
Though to conceal it proved you wise. [Exit.]

salome  How can my joy sufficiently appear?
pheroras  A heavier tale did never pierce mine ear.
salome  Now Salome of happiness may boast.
pheroras  But now Pheroras is in danger most.
salome  I shall enjoy the comfort of my life.
pheroras  And I shall lose it, losing of my wife.
salome  Joy, heart, for Constabarbus shall be slain.
pheroras  Grieve, soul, Graphina shall from me be ta’en.
salome  Smile, cheeks, the fair Silleus shall be mine.
pheroras  Weep, eyes, for I must with a child combine⁶
salome  Well brother, cease your moans. On one condition
        I’ll undertake to win the King’s consent:
        Graphina still shall be in your tuition,⁶
        And her with you be ne’er the less content.
pheroras  What’s the condition? Let me quickly know,
        That I as quickly your command may act:
        Were it to see what herbs in Ophir grow,
        Or that the lofty Tyrus might be sacked.³
salome  ’Tis not so hard a task: It is no more
        But tell the King that Constabarbus hid
        The sons of Babas, done to death⁶ before:
². The Hebrew priests were forbidden to defile themselves by performing ceremonies for the dead, save for their near relations (Leviticus 21.1–2).
³. Ophir and Tyre were cities of great riches and power; Pheroras suggests that, however distant and inaccessible, he would explore or raid them to get whatever Salome might want.
And tell him more that we for Herod’s sake,
Not able to endure our brother’s foe⁴
Did with a bill our separation make,
Though loath from Constabarus else to go.

pheroras  Believe this tale for told, I’ll go from hence
In Herod’s ear the Hebrew to deface:
And I that never studied eloquence,
Do mean with eloquence this tale to grace. [Exit.]

salome  This will be Constabarus’ quick dispatch,
Which from my mouth would lesser credit find:
Yet shall he not decease without a match,
For Mariam shall not linger long behind.
First, jealousy—if that avail not, fear—
Shall be my minister to work her end:
A common error moves not Herod’s ear,⁵
Which doth so firmly to his Mariam bend.
She shall be charged with so horrid crime,
As Herod’s fear shall turn his love to hate:
I’ll make some swear that she desires to climb,
And seeks to poison him for his estate.⁶
I scorn that she should live my birth t’upbraid.
To call me base and hungry Êdomite:
With patient show her choler I betrayed,⁶
And watched the time to be revenged by sleight.⁶
Now tongue of mine with scandal load her name,
Turn hers to fountains, Herod’s eyes to flame:
Yet first I will begin Pheroras’ suit,
That he my earnest business may effect:
And I of Mariam will keep me mute,
Till first some other doth her name detect.⁶
Who’s there, Silleus’ man? How fares your lord,
That your aspects⁰ do bear the badge of sorrow?

silleus’ man  He hath the marks of Constabarus’ sword,
And for a while desires your sight to borrow.

⁴. The 1613 text reads “he” in line 73 and “our” in line 74, an evident error; the emendation seems the only way to make sense of these lines.
⁵. I.e., Herod would not pay any attention to charges of some common fault.
⁶. I.e., by holding on to my patience, I made her display her anger (“choler”).
salome  My heavy curse the hateful sword pursue,
     My heavier curse on the more hateful arm
     That wounded my Silleus. But renew
110  Your tale again. Hath he no mortal harm?
silleus’ man.  No sign of danger doth in him appear,
     Nor are his wounds in place of peril seen:
     He bids you be assured you need not fear,
     He hopes to make you yet Arabia’s queen.
salome  Commend my heart to be Silleus’ charge,
     Tell him my brother’s sudden coming now
     Will give my foot no room to walk at large,
     But I will see him yet ere night, I vow.  [Exit.]

SCENE 3

[mariam. sohemus.]
mariam  Sohemus, tell me what the news may be
120  That makes your eyes so full, your cheeks so blue?
sohemus  I know not now how to call them. Ill for me
     ’Tis sure they are: not so, I hope, for you.
     Herod—
mariam  Oh, what of Herod?
sohemus  Herod lives.
mariam  How! Lives? What, in some cave or forest hid?
125  sohemus  Nay, back returned with honor. Caesar gives
     Him greater grace than e’er Anthonius did.
mariam  Foretell the ruin of my family,
     Tell me that I shall see our city burned:
     Tell me I shall a death disgraceful die,
130  But tell me not that Herod is returned.
sohemus  Be not impatient, madam, be but mild,
     His love to you again will soon be bred.
mariam  I will not to his love be reconciled,
     With solemn vows I have forsworn his bed.
135  sohemus  But you must break those vows.
mariam  I’ll rather break
     The heart of Mariam. Cursed is my fate:
But speak no more to me, in vain ye speak. To live with him I so profoundly hate.

sohemus  Great queen, you must to me your pardon give,

140  Sohemus cannot now your will obey:
If your command should me to silence drive,
It were not to obey, but to betray.
Reject and slight my speeches, mock my faith,
Scorn my observance, call my counsel nought:

Though you regard not what Sohemus saith,
Yet will I ever freely speak my thought.
I fear ere long I shall fair Mariam see
In woeful state, and by herself undone:
Yet for your issue’s sake more temp’rate be,
The heart by affability is won.

MARIAM  And must I to my prison turn again?
Oh, now I see I was an hypocrite:
I did this morning for his death complain,
And yet do mourn, because he lives, ere night.

155  When I his death believed, compassion wrought,
And was the stickler ’twixt my heart and him:
But now that curtain’s drawn from off my thought,
Hate doth appear again with visage grim:
And paints the face of Herod in my heart,
In horrid colors with detested look:
Then fear would come, but scorn doth play her part,
And saith that scorn with fear can never brook. I know I could enchain him with a smile:
And lead him captive with a gentle word,

165  I scorn my look should ever man beguile,
Or other speech than meaning to afford.
Else Salome in vain might spend her wind,
In vain might Herod’s mother whet her tongue:
For I could overthrow them all ere long.
Oh, what a shelter is mine innocence,
To shield me from the pangs of inward grief:

7. Mariam’s sons by Herod, Alexander and Aristobulus.
'Gainst all mishaps it is my fair defence, 
And to my sorrows yields a large relief.

To be commandress of the triple earth,  
And sit in safety from a fall secure:  
To have all nations celebrate my birth,  
I would not that my spirit were impure. 
Let my distressèd state unpitied be, 
Mine innocence is hope enough for me. [Exit.]

sohemus Poor guiltless queen! Oh, that my wish might place
A little temper now about thy heart:
Unbridled speech is Mariam's worst disgrace,  
And will endanger her without desert.

I am in greater hazard. O'er my head, 
The fatal axe doth hang unsteadily:  
My disobedience once discoverèd
Will shake it down: Sohemus so shall die. 
For when the King shall find, we thought his death
Had been as certain as we see his life:
And marks withal I slighted so his breath,  
As to preserve alive his matchless wife—
Nay more, to give to Alexander's hand
The regal dignity; the sovereign power,

How I had yielded up at her command,
The strength of all the city, David's Tower—
What more than common death may I expect,
Since I too well do know his cruelty?
'Twere death a word of Herod's to neglect;
What then to do directly contrary?
Yet, life, I quit thee with a willing spirit,
And think thou could'st not better be employed:
I forfeit thee for her that more doth merit,
Ten such were better dead than she destroyed.

But fare thee well, chaste queen, well may I see

8. Probably Rome, Egypt, and Jerusalem.
9. An allusion to the sword of Damocles; Damocles was a courtier to Dionysius of Syracuse, who suspended a sword by a single hair over Damocles' head to illustrate the precariousness of a king's fortunes.
1. Mariam's son.
2. A fort Herod built by the western wall of Jerusalem; it was named David's Tower later, by the crusaders.
The Tragedy of Mariam, Act 3

The darkness palpable, and rivers part:  
The sun stand still, nay more, retorted be,  
But never woman with so pure a heart.  
Thine eyes' grave majesty keeps all in awe,  
And cuts the wings of every loose desire:
Thy brow is table to the modest law;  
Yet though we dare not love, we may admire.  
And if I die, it shall my soul content,  
My breath in Mariam's service shall be spent.

chorus  'Tis not enough for one that is a wife  
To keep her spotless from an act of ill:  
But from suspicion she should free her life,  
And bare herself of power as well as will.
'Tis not so glorious for her to be free,  
As by her proper self restrained to be.

When she hath spacious ground to walk upon,  
Why on the ridge should she desire to go?  
It is no glory to forbear alone  
Those things that may her honor overthrow.
But 'tis thankworthy if she will not take  
All lawful liberties for honor's sake.

That wife her hand against her fame doth rear,  
That more than to her lord alone will give  
A private word to any second ear,  
And though she may with reputation live,  
Yet though most chaste, she doth her glory blot,  
And wounds her honor, though she kills it not.

3. Darkness was one of the ten plagues called down on Israel by Moses; “rivers part” refers to the parting of the Red Sea that enabled the Israelites to escape from Pharaoh (Exodus 14.21–22).
4. Joshua commanded the sun to stand still (Joshua 10.12–14); Herod imagines it traveling backward.
5. Sohemus compares Mariam's brow to the tablets (“tables”) on which the Ten Commandments were engraved.
6. Cf. the speech which Antonio speaks of the duchess in Webster’s Duchess of Malfi 1.2.96–114.
7. I.e., the wife that gives a private word to any besides her husband may not lose her reputation but blots it.
When to their husbands they themselves do bind,
Do they not wholly give themselves away?
Or give they but their body, not their mind,
Reserving that, though best, for others’ prey?
No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own,
And therefore should to none but one be known.

Then she usurps upon another’s right,
That seeks to be by public language graced:
And though her thoughts reflect with purest light,
Her mind if not peculiar is not chaste.
For in a wife it is no worse to find,
A common body than a common mind.

And every mind, though free from thought of ill,
That out of glory seeks a worth to show,
When any’s ears but one therewith they fill,
Doth in a sort her pureness overthrow.
Now Mariam had (but that to this she bent)
Been free from fear, as well as innocent.

Act 4

SCENE 1

[Enter Herod and his attendants.]
Herod  Hail, happy city, happy in thy store,
And happy that thy buildings such we see:
More happy in the Temple where w’adore,
But most of all that Mariam lives in thee. [Enter Nuntio.]
Nuntio  She’s well, my lord, and will anon be here
As you commanded.
Herod  Muffle up thy brow,

8. I.e., when they fill any other ears (besides the husband’s) with speech to show their worth.
9. Except that she talked too freely to others.
Thou day’s dark taper. Mariam will appear,
And where she shines, we need not thy dim light,
Oh, haste thy steps, rare creature, speed thy pace:
And let thy presence make the day more bright,
And cheer the heart of Herod with thy face.
It is an age since I from Mariam went,
Methinks our parting was in David’s days:
The hours are so increased by discontent,
Deep sorrow, Joshua-like, the season stays:
But when I am with Mariam, time runs on,
Her sight can make months minutes, days of weeks:
And hour is then no sooner come than gone
When in her face mine eye for wonders seeks.
You world-commanding city, Europe’s grace,
Twice hath my curious eye your streets surveyed,
I have seen the statue-filled place,
That once if not for geese had been betrayed.
I all your Roman beauties have beheld,
And seen the shows your ediles did prepare;
I saw the sum of what in your excelled,
Yet saw no miracle like Mariam rare.
The fair and famous Livia, Caesar’s love:
The world’s commanding mistress did I see:
Whose beauties both the world and Rome approve,
Yet, Mariam, Livia is not like to thee.
Be patient but a little while, mine eyes,
Within your compassed limits be contained:
That object straight shall your desires suffice,
From which you were so long a while restrained.

1. The sun, described as a candle that will be darkened when Mariam appears.
2. I.e., in the days of King David, about a thousand years before.
3. At Joshua’s command, the sun stood still at Gibeon (Joshua 10.12) and so stopped the passage of time, while the Israelites destroyed their enemies.
5. Aediles: Roman officials who managed games and ceremonies.
6. Livia Drusilla, wife of Augustus Caesar, whom he married after divorcing his first wife and forcing Lina’s husband to divorce her.
7. The 1613 text places the comma after “little,” apparently a compositor’s error since the lines are an address to Herod’s eyes.
How wisely Mariam doth the time delay,
Lest sudden joy my sense should suffocate:
I am prepared, thou need’st no longer stay:

Who’s there? My Mariam, more than happy fate?
Oh, no, it is Pheroras. Welcome, brother.
Now for a while I must my passion smother.

SCENE 2

[HEROD. PHERORAS.]
PHERORAS All health and safety wait upon my lord,
And may you long in prosperous fortunes live
With Rome-commanding Caesar at accord,
And have all honors that the world can give.

HEROD Oh brother, now thou speak’st not from thy heart,
No, thou hast struck a blow at Herod’s love:
That cannot quickly from my memory part,
Though Salome did me to pardon move.
Valiant Phasaelus, now to thee farewell,8
Thou wert my kind and honorable brother:
Oh hapless hour, when you self-stricken fell,
Thou father’s image, glory of thy mother.

Had I desired a greater suit of thee
Than to withhold thee from a harlot’s bed,
Thou would’st have granted it: but now I see
All are not like that in a womb are bred.9
Thou would’st not, hadst thou heard of Herod’s death,

Have made his burial time thy bridal hour:
Thou would’st with clamors, not with joyful breath,
Have showed the news to be not sweet but sour.

PHERORAS Phasaelus’ great worth I know did stain
Pheroras’ petty valor: but they lie
(Excepting you yourself) that dare maintain
That he did honor Herod more than I,

8. Phasaelus, also a brother of Herod, when captured dashed his head against a rock rather than submit to
death from his enemies.
9. I.e., all are not alike that come from one womb: Pheroras has none of Phasaelus’s nobility.
The Tragedy of Mariam, Act 4

For what I showed, love’s power constrained me show,
And pardon loving faults\(^1\) for Mariam’s sake.

**HEROD** Mariam, where is she?

**PHERORAS** Nay, I do not know,

But absent use of her fair name I make:
You have forgiven greater faults than this,
For Constabarus, that against your will
Preserved the sons of Babas, lives in bliss
Though you commanded him the youths to kill.\(^2\)

**HEROD** Go, take a present order for his death,
And let those traitors feel the worst of fears:
Now Salome will whine to beg his breath,
But I’ll be deaf to prayers: and blind to tears.

**PHERORAS** He is, my lord, from Salome divorced,
Though her affection did to leave him grieve:
Yet was she by her love to you enforced
To leave the man that would your foes relieve.

**HEROD** Then haste them to their death. [Exit PHERORAS.] I will requite
Thee, gentle Mariam—Salom, I mean.
The thought of Mariam doth so steal my spirit,
My mouth from speech of her I cannot wean.

Scene 3

[HEROD, MARIAM.]

**HEROD** And here she comes indeed: happily met,
My best and dearest half: what ails my dear?
Thou dost the difference\(^\circ\)* certainly forget
'Twixt dusky habits\(^\circ\) and a time so clear.\(^\circ\)

**MARIAM** My lord, I suit my garment to my mind,
And there no cheerful colors can I find.

**HEROD** Is this my welcome? Have I longed so much
To see my dearest Mariam discontent?

What is’t that is the cause thy heart to touch?

---

1. I.e., faults committed for love.
2. Pheroras fulfills his contract with Salome, revealing that Constabarus hid the sons of Babas but pretending Herod already knows that.
Oh speak, that I thy sorrow may prevent.
Art thou not Jewry’s queen, and Herod’s too?
Be my commandress, be my sovereign guide:
To be by thee directed I will woo,
For in thy pleasure lies my highest pride.
Or if thou think Judea’s narrow bound
Too strict a limit for thy great command:
Thou shalt be empress of Arabia crowned,
For thou shalt rule, and I will win the land.

I’ll rob the holy David’s sepulchre
To give thee wealth, if thou for wealth do care:
Thou shalt have all they did with him inter,
And I for thee will make the Temple bare.

MARIAM I neither have of power nor riches want,
I have enough, nor do I wish for more:
Your offers to my heart no ease can grant,
Except they could my brother’s life restore.
No, had you wished the wretched Mariam glad,
Or had your love to her been truly tied:
Nay, had you not desired to make her sad,
My brother nor my grandsire had not died.

HEROD Wilt thou believe no oaths to clear thy lord?
How oft have I with execration sworn:
Thou art by me belov’d, by me adored,
Yet are my protestations heard with scorn.
Hircanus plotted to deprive my head
Of this long-settled honor that I wear:
And therefore I did justly doom him dead,
To rid the realm from peril, me from fear.

Yet I for Mariam’s sake do so repent
The death of one whose blood she did inherit:
I wish I had a kingdom’s treasure spent,
So I had ne’er expelled Hircanus’ spirit.
As I affected that same noble youth,

3. I.e., I neither have [desire] of power nor want riches.
4. I.e., since I was fond of Aristobolus (Mariam’s brother, murdered by Herod’s plot). There may be a line missing here, since the rhyme scheme is disrupted.
The Tragedy of Mariam, Act 4

In lasting infamy my name enroll
If I not mourned his death with hearty truth.
Did I not show to him my earnest love,
When I to him the priesthood did restore,
And did for him a living priest remove,
Which never had been done but once before?²⁵

MARIAM I know that, moved by importunity,
You made him priest, and shortly after die.

HEROD I will not speak, unless to be believed,
This froward⁰ humor will not do you good:
It hath too much already Herod grieved,
To think that you on terms of hate have stood.
Yet smile, my dearest Mariam, do but smile,
And I will all unkind conceits exile.

MARIAM I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught
My face a look dissenting from my thought.

HEROD By Heaven, you vex me, build⁰ not on my love.

MARIAM I will not build on so unstable ground.

HEROD Nought is so fixed, but peevishness may move.⁰

MARIAM 'Tis better slightest cause than none were found.

HEROD Be judge yourself, if ever Herod sought
Or would be moved a cause of change to find:
Yet let your look declare a milder thought,
My heart again you shall to Mariam bind.

HOW oft did I for you my mother chide,
Revile my sister, and my brother rate:
And tell them all my Mariam they belied;
Distrust me still, if these be signs of hate.

Scene 4

[Enter BUTLER.]

HEROD What hast thou here?

BUTLER A drink procuring love,

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5. Herod removed Ananelus from the priesthood to give it to Aristobolus; but such a removal had happened twice before.
The queen desired me to deliver it.

160 **MARIAM** Did I? Some hateful practice\(^6\) this will prove, plot
Yet can it be no worse than Heavens permit.

**HEROD** \([To the butler.]\) Confess the truth, thou wicked instrument
To her outrageous will, ’tis poison sure:
Tell true, and thou shalt scape the punishment,
Which, if thou do conceal, thou shalt endure.

**BUTLER** I know not, but I doubt it be no less,
Long since the hate of you her heart did seize.

**HEROD** Know’st thou the cause thereof?

**BUTLER** My lord, I guess
Sohemus told the tale that did displease.

170 **HEROD** Oh Heaven! Sohemus false! Go, let him die,
Stay not to suffer him to speak a word: \([Exit butler.]\)
Oh damned villain, did he falsify
The oath he swore ev’n of his own accord?
Now do I know thy falsehood, painted devil,
Thou white enchantress. Oh, thou art so foul,
That hyssop\(^6\) cannot cleanse thee, worst of evil.
A beauteous body hides a loathsome soul.
Your love Sohemus, moved by his affection,
Though he have ever heretofore been true,

180 Did blab forsooth, that I did give direction,
If we were put to death to slaughter you.
And you in black revenge attended\(^7\) now
To add a murder to your breach of vow.

**MARIAM** Is this a dream?

**HEROD** Oh Heaven, that ’twere no more,

185 I’ll give my realm to who can prove it so:
I would I were like any beggar poor,
So I for false my Mariam did not know—
Foul pith containèd in the fairest rind
That ever graded a cedar. Oh, thine eye

190 Is pure as Heaven, but impure thy mind,
And for impurity shall Mariam die.

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6. An herb used to treat lepers. “White enchantress” may allude to the Renaissance idea of a white devil, a fair-seeming hypocrite.
Why didst thou love Sohemus?

MARIAM

They can tell
That say I loved him, MARIAM says not so.

HEROD

Oh, cannot impudence the coals expel,
That for thy love in Herod’s bosom glow?
It is as plain as water, and denial
Makes of thy falsehood but a greater trial.
Hast thou beheld thyself, and could’st thou stain
So rare perfection? Even for love of thee

I do profoundly hate thee. Wert thou plain,
Thou should’st the wonder of Judea be.
But oh, thou art not. Hell itself lies hid
Beneath thy heavenly show. Yet never wert thou chaste:
Thou might’st exalt, pull down, command, forbid,

And be above the wheel of fortune placed.7

Hadst thou comploted Herod’s massacre,
That so thy son a monarch might be styled,
Not half so grievous such an action were,
As once to think, that MARIAM is defiled.

Bright workmanship of nature sullied o’er,
With pitchèd8 darkness now thine end shall be:
Thou shalt not live, fiend, to cozen more,
With heavenly8 semblance, as thou cozen’dst me.
Yet must I love thee in despite of death,

And thou shalt die in the despite of love:
For neither shall my love prolong thy breath,
Nor shall thy loss of breath my love remove.
I might have seen thy falsehood in thy face;
Where could’st thou get thy stars that served for eyes

Except by theft, and theft is foul disgrace?
This had appeared before, were Herod wise,
But I’m a sot, a very sot, no better:
My wisdom long ago a-wand’ring fell,
Thy face, encount’ring it, my wit did fetter,

7. I.e., you might have been able to do whatever you would and been exempt from the turns of fortune’s wheel.
8. The 1613 text reads “heavy,” but this emendation seems called for by the context.
And made me for delight my freedom sell.
Give me my heart, false creature, 'tis a wrong,
My guiltless heart should now with thine be slain:
Thou hadst no right to lock it up so long,
And with usurper's name I Mariam stain.

[Enter butler.]

herod Have you designed Sohemus to his end? dispatched
butler I have, my lord.

herod Then call our royal guard
To do as much for Mariam. [Exit butler.] They offend
Leave ill unblamed, or good without reward. [Enter soldiers.]
Here, take her to her death. Come back, come back,

What meant I to deprive the world of light:
To muffle Jewry in the foulest black,
That ever was an opposite to white?
Why, whither would you carry her?

soldier You bade
We should conduct her to her death, my lord.

herod Why, sure I did not, Herod was not mad.
Why should she feel the fury of the sword?
Oh, now the grief returns into my heart,
And pulls me piecemeal: love and hate do fight:
And now hath love acquired the greater part,
Yet now hath hate affection conquered quite.
And therefore bear her hence: and, Hebrew, why
Seize you with lion's paws the fairest lamb
Of all the flock? She must not, shall not, die.
Without her I most miserable am,

And with her more than most. Away, away,
But bear her but to prison, not to death:
And is she gone indeed? Stay, villains, stay,
Her looks alone preserved your sovereign's breath.
Well, let her go, but yet she shall not die;

I cannot think she meant to poison me:

9. Who leave.
But certain 'tis she lived too wantonly,
   And therefore shall she never more be free.  [Exeunt.]

scene 5

butler  Foul villain, can thy pitchy-colored soul
    Permit thine ear to hear her causeless doom,
And not enforce thy tongue that tale control,\(^\circ\)
   That must unjustly bring her to her tomb?
Oh, Salome, thou hast thyself repaid
For all the benefits that thou hast done:
Thou art the cause I have the queen betrayed,
Thou hast my heart to darkest falsehood won.
I am condemned, Heav’n gave me not my tongue
To slander innocents, to lie, deceive:
To be the hateful instrument to wrong,
The earth of greatest glory to bereave.

My sin ascends and doth to Heaven cry,\(^1\)
   It is the blackest deed that ever was:
And there doth sit an angel notary,
    That doth record it down in leaves of brass.\(^2\)
Oh, how my heart doth quake: Achitophel,

Thou found'st\(^3\) a means thyself from shame to free:
   And sure my soul approves thou didst not well;\(^4\)
All follow some, and I will follow thee.  [Exit.]

scene 6

[CONSTABARUS, BABAS’ SONS, and their guard.]

constabarus  Now here we step out last, the way to death;

---

1. Butler, like Cain after the murder of Abel, finds that the blood of Mariam cries out to heaven for vengeance (Genesis 4.10).
2. I.e., etched as on a brass tablet by the recording angel and thereby permanent.
3. Achitophel advised Absalom in his rebellion against his father, King David, and when his counsels failed, hanged himself. The reader would also think of Judas, who betrayed Christ and then hanged himself.
4. The line may mean, I agree, “approve,” that you did right to kill yourself because you did evil.
We must not tread this way a second time:
Yet let us resolutely yield our breath,
Death is the only ladder, Heav’n to climb.

**Babas’ First Son**  With willing mind I could myself resign,
But yet it grieves me with a grief untold:
Our death should be accompanied with thine,
Our friendship we to thee have dearly sold.⁵

**Constabarus**  Still wilt thou wrong the sacred name of friend?
Then should’st thou never style⁰ it friendship more:
But base mechanic⁰ traffic that doth lend,
Yet will be sure they shall the debt restore.⁶
I could with needless compliment return,
'Tis for thy ceremony I could say:
'Tis I that made the fire your house to burn,⁷
For but⁰ for me she would not you betray.
Had not the damned woman sought mine end,
You had not been the subject of her hate:
You never did her hateful mind offend,
Nor could your deaths have freed her nuptial fate.⁸
Therefore, fair friends, though you were still unborn,
Some other subtlety devised should be:
Whereby my life, though guiltless, should be torn.
Thus have I proved, 'tis you that die for me,
And therefore should I weakly now lament,
You have but done your duties; friends should die
Alone their friends’ disaster to prevent,
Though not compelled by strong necessity.⁹
But now farewell, fair city, never more
Shall I behold your beauty shining bright:
Farewell, of Jewish men the worthy store,
But no farewell to any female wight.⁰

---

⁵.  I.e., being friend to us has cost you dear.
⁶.  I.e., friendship is not vulgar commerce that lends only when certain of repayment.
⁷.  I.e., I could say as a courteous response to your self-blame that I am the cause of all your destruction.
⁸.  I.e., she cared nothing about your deaths as such, which would not affect her marital status (as my death would).
⁹.  I.e., such laments are “weak,” since friends should die simply (“alone”) to save their friends even if not compelled (as is the case here) by “strong necessity.”
The Tragedy of Mariam, Act 4

310 You wavering crew: my curse to you I leave,
You had but one to give you any grace:
And you yourselves will Mariam’s life bereave;
Your commonwealth doth innocence chase.

drive out

You creatures made to be the human curse,

315 You tigers, lionesses, hungry bears,
Tear-massacring hyenas: nay, far worse
For they for prey do shed their feignèd tears.
But you will weep (you creatures cross to good),
For your unquenchèd thirst of human blood:

opposed to

320 You were the angels cast from Heav’n for pride,
And still do keep your angels’ outward show,
But none of you are inly beautified,
For still your Heav’n-depriving pride doth grow.
Did not the sins of man require a scourge,

325 Your place on earth had been by this withstood:
But since a flood no more the world must purge,
You stayed in office of a second flood.
You giddy creatures, sowers of debate,
You’ll love today, and for no other cause

330 But for you yesterday did deeply hate;
You are the wreck of order, breach of laws.
Your best are foolish, froward, wanton, vain,
Your worst adulterous, murderous, cunning, proud:
And Salome attends the latter train,

except that

335 Or rather she their leader is allowed.
I do the sottishness of men bewail,
That do with following you enhance your pride:
’Twere better that the human race should fail,
Than be by such a mischief multiplied.

340 Cham’s servile curse to all your sex was given,

---

1. Hyenas were thought to weep “feigned tears” over their victims as they consumed them.
2. I.e., the angels who were cast out of heaven for rebellion against God.
3. The 1613 text reads “many,” but this emendation is called for both by meter and by meaning—i.e., if you women were not needed to scourge the sins of man, you would by this time have been erased from the earth. Constabarus’s tirade draws themes from a long tradition of misogynist writing.
4. Since God promised Noah never again to destroy the world by flood (Genesis 9.11), women do that office of punishment.
Because in Paradise you did offend:
Then do we not resist the will of Heaven,
When on your wills like servants we attend?
You are to nothing constant but to ill,

You are with nought but wickedness indued:
Your loves are set on nothing but your will,
And thus my censure I of you conclude.
You are the least of goods, the worst of evils,
Your best are worse than men: your worst than devils.

BABAS’ SECOND SON Come, let us to our death: are we not blessed?
Our death will freedom from these creatures give:
Those trouble-quiet\(^a\) sowers of unrest,
And this I vow, that had I leave to live,
I would forever lead a single life,

And never venture on a devilish wife. [Exeunt.]

SCENE 7

[HEROD and SALOME.]

HEROD Nay, she shall die. Die, quoth you? That she shall:
But for the means. The means! Methinks ’tis hard
To find a means to murder her withal,
Therefore I am resolv’d she shall be spar’d.

SALOME Why, let her be beheaded.

HEROD That were well,
Think you that swords are miracles like you?
Her skin will ev’ry curtl’ax edge refell,\(^6\)
And then your enterprise you well may rue.
What if the fierce Arabian notice take

Of this your wretched weaponless estate:
They answer, when we bid resistance make,
That Mariam’s skin their falchions did rebate.\(^7\)

---

5. Because he looked on the nakedness of his father Noah (Genesis 9.22, 25), Cham(Ham)’s descendants (Canaan) were cursed by being enslaved to his brothers and their descendants; Constabarus associates that curse with Eve’s punishment after the Fall, that “thy husband . . . shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3.16).
6. I.e., her skin will repel every slashing sword.
7. I.e., blunt their broadswords.
Beware of this, you make a goodly hand,
If you of weapons do deprive our land.
salome Why, drown her then.

herod Indeed, a sweet device.
Why, would not ev’ry river turn her course
Rather than do her beauty prejudice,°
And be reverted° to the proper source?
So not a drop of water should be found
In all Judea’s quondam° fertile ground.
salome Then let the fire devour her.

herod ’Twill not be:
Flame is from her derived° into my heart:
Thou nursest flame, flame will not murder thee,
My fairest Mariam, fullest of desert.
salome Then let her live for me.°

herod Nay, she shall die:
But can you live without her?
salome Doubt you that?
herod I’m sure I cannot; I beseech you try:
I have experience but I know not what.
salome How should I try?
herod Why, let my love be slain,
But if we cannot live without her sight
You’ll find the means to make her breathe again,
Or else you will bereave my comfort quite.
salome Oh ay: I warrant you. [Exit.]
herod What, is she gone,
And gone to bid the world be overthrown?

What, is her heart’s composure hardest stone?
To what a pass are cruel women grown! [Re-enter salome.]
She is returned already: have you done?
Is’t possible you can command so soon
A creature’s heart to quench the flaming sun,
Or from the sky to wipe away the moon?
salome If Mariam be the sun and moon, it is:
For I already have commanded this.
herod But have you seen her cheek?
salome A thousand times.
HEROD    But did you mark it too?
SALOME    Ay, very well.
HEROD    What is’t?
SALOME    A crimson bush, that ever limes
          The soul whose foresight doth not much excel.\(^8\)
HEROD    Send word she shall not die. Her cheek a bush—
          Nay, then I see indeed you mark’d it not.
SALOME    ’Tis very fair, but yet will never blush,
          Though foul dishonors do her forehead blot.
HEROD    Then let her die, ’tis very true indeed,
          And for this fault alone shall Mariam bleed.
SALOME    What fault, my lord?
HEROD    What fault is’t? You that ask,
          If you be ignorant I know of none.
          To call her back from death shall be your task,
          I’m glad that she for innocent is known.
          For on the brow of Mariam hangs a fleece,\(^9\)
          Whose slenderest twine is strong enough to bind
          The hearts of kings; the pride and shame of Greece,
          Troy-flaming Helen’s not so fairly shined.\(^1\)
SALOME    ’Tis true indeed, she lays them\(^0\) out for nets,
          To catch the hearts that do not shun a bait:
          ’Tis time to speak: for Herod sure forgets
          That Mariam’s very tresses hide deceit.
HEROD    Oh, do they so? Nay, then you do but well,
          In sooth I thought it had been hair:
          Nets call you them? Lord, how they do excel,
          I never saw a net that showed so fair.
          But have you heard her speak?
SALOME    You know I have.
HEROD    And were you not amazed?
SALOME    No, not a whit.
HEROD    Then ’twas not her you heard; her life I’ll save,

---

\(^{8}\) I.e., her hair is as a bush smeared with birdlime to catch unwary souls.
\(^{9}\) Invites comparison with the golden fleece that Jason undertook to fetch from its place in the sacred grove of Colchis.
\(^{1}\) Her tresses are also compared with those of Helen of Troy, whose beauty led the Trojan Paris to abduct her from her Greek husband, Menelaus, the act that sparked the Trojan War.
For Mariam hath a world-amazing wit.

**salome** She speaks a beauenteous language, but within
Her heart is false as powder: and her tongue
Doth but allure the auditors to sin,
And is the instrument to do you wrong.

**herod** It may be so: nay, 'tis so; she's unchaste,
Her mouth will ope to ev'ry stranger's ear:
Then let the executioner make haste,
Lest she enchant him, if her words he hear.
Let him be deaf, lest she do him surprise
That shall to free her spirit be assigned:
Yet what boots° deafness if he have his eyes?
Her murderer must be both deaf and blind.

For if he see, he needs must see the stars
That shine on either side of Mariam's face:
Whose sweet aspect will terminate the wars,
Wherewith he should a soul so precious chase.
Her eyes can speak, and in their speaking move;
Oft did my heart with reverence receive
The world's mandates. Pretty tales of love
They utter, which can human bondage weave.
But shall I let this heaven's model° die,
Which for a small self-portraiture she drew?
Her eyes like stars, her forehead like the sky,
She is like Heaven, and must be heavenly true.

**salome** Your thoughts do rave with doting on the queen.
Her eyes are ebon-hued, and you'll confess:
A sable star hath been but seldom seen.

Then speak of reason more, of Mariam less.

**herod** Yourself are held a goodly creature here,
Yet so unlike my Mariam in your shape
That when to her you have approachèd near,
Myself hath often ta'en you for an ape.

And yet you prate of beauty: go your ways,
You are to her a sun-burnt blackamoor.°

---

2. English writers typically conflated Moors and African blacks, and many supposed their dark pigmentation resulted from exposure to the sun.
Your paintings cannot equal Mariam’s praise,
Her nature is so rich, you are so poor.
Let her be stayed from death, for if she die,
We do we know not what to stop her breath:
A world cannot another Mariam buy;
Why say you ling’ring? Countermand her death.
salome  Then you’ll no more remember what hath passed,
Sohemus’ love and hers shall be forgot?
’Tis well in truth: that fault may be her last,
And she may mend, though yet she love you not.
herod  Oh God: ’tis true. Sohemus—earth and Heav’n,
Why did you both conspire to make me cursed
In coz’ning me with shows and proofs unev’n?
She showed the best, and yet did prove the worst.
Her show was such, as had our singing king,
The holy David, Mariam’s beauty seen,
The Hittite had then felt no deadly sting,
Nor Bethsabe had never been a queen.3
Or had his son, the wisest man of men,
Whose fond delight did most consist in change,
Beheld her face, he had been stayed again;4
No creature having her, can wish to range.
Had Asuerus seen my Mariam’s brow,
The humble Jew, she might have walked alone:
Her beauteous virtue should have stayed below,
Whiles Mariam mounted to the Persian throne.5
But what avails it all? For in the weight
She is deceitful, light as vanity:
Oh, she was made for nothing but a bait,
To train some hapless man to misery.
I am the hapless man that have been trained

3. David, to whom authorship of many of the Psalms is attributed, is the “singing king”; he sent Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah the Hittite, into the front lines of battle so his death (which occurred) would allow David to make Bathsheba his queen (2 Samuel 11).
4. Solomon, reputed the wisest king but also keeper of a thousand concubines and wives, would have stopped (“been stayed”) with Mariam had he known her.
5. Queen Esther (“the humble Jew”) would not have won favor with Ahasuerus and become queen (Esther 2) had Mariam been there.
To endless bondage. I will see her yet:
Methinks I should discern her if she feigned;
Can human eyes be dazed by woman’s wit?
Once more these eyes of mine with hers shall meet,
Before the headsman do her life bereave:
Shall I forever part from thee, my sweet,
Without the taking of my latest leave?

Salome  You had as good resolve to save her now,
I’ll stay her death; ’tis well determinèd.  
For sure she never more will break her vow,
Sohemus and Josephus both are dead.

Herod  She shall not live, nor will I see her face;
A long-healed wound a second time doth bleed:
With Joseph I remember her disgrace,
A shameful end ensues a shameful deed.
Oh, that I had not called to mind anew
The discontent of Mariam’s wavering heart:
’Twas you: you foul-mouthed Ate, none but you,
That did the thought hereof to me impart.
Hence from my sight, my black tormentor, hence,
For hadst not thou made Herod unsecure,
I had not doubted Mariam’s innocence,
But still had held her in my heart for pure.

Salome  I’ll leave you to your passion: ’tis no time
To purge me now, though of a guiltless crime.  [Exit.]

Herod  Destruction take thee: thou hast made my heart
As heavy as revenge; I am so dull,

Methinks I am not sensible of smart,
Though hideous horrors at my bosom pull.
My head weighs downwards: therefore will I go
To try if I can sleep away my woe.  [Exit.]

Scene  8

Mariam  Am I the Mariam that presumed so much,
And deemed my face must needs preserve my breath?
Ay, I it was that thought my beauty such,
As it alone could countermand my death.
Now death will teach me: he can pale as well
A cheek of roses as a cheek less bright,
And dim an eye whose shine doth most excel,
As soon as one that casts a meaner light.
Had not myself against myself conspired,
No plot, no adversary from without
Could Herod’s love from Mariam have retired,
Or from his heart have thrust my semblance out.
The wanton queen that never loved for love,
False Cleopatra, wholly set on gain,
With all her sleights did prove; yet vainly prove,
For her the love of Herod to obtain.
Yet her allurements, all her courtly guile,
Her smiles, her favors, and her smooth deceit
Could not my face from Herod’s mind exile,
But were with him of less than little weight.
That face and person that in Asia late
For beauty’s goddess, Paphos’ queen, was ta’en:
That face that did captive great Julius’ fate,
That very face that was Anthonius’ bane,
That face that to be Egypt’s pride was born,
That face that all the world esteemed so rare:
Did Herod hate, despise, neglect, and scorn,
When with the same, he Mariam’s did compare.
This made that I improvidently wrought,
And on the wager even my life did pawn:
Because I thought, and yet but truly thought,
That Herod’s love could not from me be drawn.
But now, though out of time, I plainly see
It could be drawn, though never drawn from me,
Had I but with humility been graced,

7. Venus.
8. The Egyptian queen Cleopatra was the beauty who captivated both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony (lines 547–48).
As well as fair I might have proved me wise:
But I did think because I knew me chaste,
One virtue for a woman might suffice.
That mind for glory of our sex might stand,
Wherein humility and chastity
Doth march with equal paces hand in hand.

But one, if single seen, who setteth by?\(^9\)
And I had singly one, but 'tis my joy,
That I was ever innocent, though sour:
And therefore can they but my life destroy,
My soul is free from adversary's power.

You princes great in power, and high in birth,
Be great and high, I envy not your hap.\(^9\)
Your birth must be from dust, your power on earth;
In Heav'n shall Mariam sit in Sara's lap.\(^9\)

doris  Ay, Heav'n—your beauty cannot bring you thither,
Your soul is black and spotted, full of sin:
You in adult'ry lived nine year together,
And Heav'n will never let adult'ry in.

mariam  What are thou that dost poor Mariam pursue,
Some spirit sent to drive me to despair?
Who sees for truth that Mariam is untrue?
If fair she be, she is as chaste as fair.

doris  I am that Doris that was once beloved,
Beloved by Herod, Herod's lawful wife:
'Twas you that Doris from his side removed,
And robbed from me the glory of my life.

mariam  Was that adult'ry? Did not Moses say,
That he that being matched did deadly hate:
Might by permission put his wife away,
And take a more beloved to be his mate?

doris  What did he hate for: for simple truth?
For bringing\(^9\) beauteous babes for love to him?
For riches, noble birth, or tender youth?
Or for no stain did Doris' honor dim?

\(^9\) Mariam envisions herself not in Abraham's bosom but in its female counterpart, the lap of Abraham's wife, Sarah.
Oh, tell me, Mariam, tell me if you know,
Which fault of these made Herod Doris’ foe?
These thrice three years have I with hands held up,
And bow’d knees fast naile’d to the ground,
Besought for thee the dregs of that same cup,
That cup of wrath that is for sinners found.
And now thou art to drink it: Doris’ curse
Upon thyself did all this while attend,
But now it shall pursue thy children worse.

Mariam  Oh, Doris, now to thee my knees I bend,
That heart that never bowed to thee doth bow:
Curse not mine infants, let it thee suffice,
That Heav’n doth punishment to me allow.
Thy curse is cause that guiltless Mariam dies.

Doris  Had I ten thousand tongues, and ev’ry tongue
Inflamed with poison’s power, and steeped in gall:
My curses would not answer for my wrong,
Though I in cursing the employed them all.
Hear thou that didst Mount Gerizim command,
To be a place whereon with cause to curse:
Stretch thy revenging arm, thrust forth thy hand,
And plague the mother much: the children worse.

Then be their nearest friends their overthrow,
Attended be they by suspicious hate.
And, Mariam, I do hope this boy of mine
Shall one day come to be the death of thine.

Mariam  Oh! Heaven forbid. I hope the world shall see,
This curse of thine shall be returned on thee:
Now, earth, farewell, though I be yet but young,
Yet I, methinks, have known thee too too long.

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1. A prophecy: Doris’s son, Antipater, does raise Herod’s ire against Mariam’s sons, Aristobolus and Alexander, by spreading slanderous tales.
CHORUS

The fairest action of our human life
Is scorning to revenge an injury:
For who forgives without a further strife,
His adversary’s heart to him doth tie.
And ’tis a firmer conquest truly said, 2
To win the heart than overthrow the head.

If we a worthy enemy do find,
To yield to worth, it must be nobly done:
But if of baser metal be his mind,
In base revenge there is no honor won.
Who would a worthy courage overthrow,
And who would wrestle with a worthless foe?

We say our hearts are great and cannot yield;
Because they cannot yield it proves them poor:
Great hearts are tasked 7 beyond their power but seld, 7
The weakest lion will the loudest roar.
Truth’s school for certain doth this same allow,
High-heartedness doth sometimes teach to bow.

A noble heart doth teach a virtuous scorn:
To scorn to owe a duty 7 overlong,
To scorn to be for benefits forborne, 3
To scorn to lie, to scorn to do a wrong,
To scorn to bear an injury in mind,
To scorn a freeborn heart slavelike to bind.

But if for wrongs we needs revenge must have,
Then be our vengeance of the noblest kind:
Do we his body from our fury save,

2. Forgiveness is proverbially said to be the noblest kind of vengeance, winning a conquest that is greater than physical victory could be.
3. I.e., given special treatment in recompense for former benefits.
And let our hate prevail against our mind?¹
What can 'gainst him a greater vengeance be,
Than make his foe more worthy far than he?

Had Mariam scorned to leave a due unpaid²
She would to Herod then have paid her love:
And not have been by sullen passion swayed.
To fix her thoughts all injury above
Is virtuous pride. Had Mariam thus been proved,
Long famous life to her had been allowed.

Act 5

Scene 1

Nuntio When, sweetest friend,¹ did I so far offend
Your heavenly self, that you my fault to quit
Have made me now relator of your end,²
The end of beauty, chastity and wit?

Was none so hapless in the fatal place
But I, most wretched, for the queen t’choose?
’Tis certain I have some ill-boding face
That made me culled³ to tell this luckless news.

And yet no news to Herod: were it new
To him, unhappy ’t had not been at all:
Yet do I long to come within his view,
That he may know his wife did guiltless fall:
And here he comes. Your Mariam greets you well.

[Enter Herod.]

Herod What? lives my Mariam? Joy, exceeding joy!
She shall not die.

¹. I.e., it is not enough merely to save an enemy’s body from harm; we must subdue hate in our minds.
². The chorus believes that Mariam should have acted “nobly” by forgiving Herod and paying the marriage debt (giving her sexual favors) to him. In the background is 1 Corinthians 7. 4–5: “The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. / Defraud ye not one the other.”
³. The messenger apostrophizes the dead Mariam.
⁴. The 1613 text reads “her” but the grammar requires “your.” Cary follows the classical practice of having violence occur offstage, to be reported by, in this case, a messenger.
The Tragedy of Mariam, Act 5

15  Nuntio     Heav’n doth your will repel.⁰
      reject

Herod     Oh, do not with thy words my life destroy,
      I prithee tell no dying-tale: thine eye
      Without thy tongue doth tell but too too much:
      Yet let thy tongue’s addition make me die,

20  Death welcome comes to him whose grief is such.

Nuntio     I went amongst the curious gazing troop,
      To see the last of her that was the best:
      To see if death had heart to make her stoop,
      To see the sun-admiring phoenix’ nest.³

25  When there I came, upon the way I saw
      The stately Mariam not debased by fear:
      Her look did seem to keep the world in awe,
      Yet mildly did her face this fortune bear.

Herod     Thou dost usurp my right, my tongue was framed
      To be the instrument of Mariam’s praise:
      Yet speak: she cannot be too often famed:
      All tongues suffice not her sweet name to raise.

Nuntio     But as she came she Alexandra met,
      Who did her death (sweet queen) no whit bewail,
      But as if nature she did quite forget,
      She did upon her daughter loudly rail.⁰

35  Why stopped you not her mouth? Where had she words
      To darken that, that Heaven made so bright?
      Our sacred tongue no epithet affords.

Herod     To call her other than the world’s delight.

Nuntio     She told her that her death was too too good,
      And that already she had lived too long:
      She said, she shamed to have a part in blood
      Of her that did the princely Herod wrong.

40  Base pickthank⁰ devil! Shame, ’twas all her glory,
      That she to noble Mariam was the mother:
      But never shall it live in any story—
      Her name, except to infamy, I’ll smother.
      What answer did her princely daughter make?

⁰ The mythical bird of the sun lived five hundred years, then in its nest immolated itself in fire, and a new phoenix emerged from the ashes. For Christians it became a symbol of Christ’s death and resurrection.
nuntio  She made no answer, but she looked the while
As if thereof she scarce did notice take,
Yet smiled, a dutiful, though scornful, smile.

herod  Sweet creature, I that look to mind do call;
Full oft hath Herod been amazed withal.
Go on.

nuntio  She came unmoved, with pleasant grace,
As if to triumph her arrival were:
In stately habit, and with cheerful face:
Yet ev’ry eye was moist but Mariam’s there.
When justly opposite to me she came,

herod  What, did she name thee? Happy, happy man,
Wilt thou not ever love that name the better?

nuntio  But what sweet tune did this fair dying swan

herod  Afford thine ear? Tell all, omit no letter.

nuntio  “Tell thou my lord,” said she—

herod  Me, meant she me?
Is’t true, the more my shame: I was her lord,
Were I not mad, her lord I still should be:

nuntio  But now her name must be by me adored.
Oh say, what said she more? Each word she said
Shall be the food whereon my heart is fed.

nuntio  “Tell thou my lord thou saw’st me loose my breath.”

herod  Oh, that I could that sentence now control.

nuntio  “If guiltily, eternal be my death”—

herod  I hold her chaste ev’n in my inmost soul.

nuntio  “By three days hence, if wishes could revive,
I know himself would make me oft alive.”

herod  Three days: three hours, three minutes, not so much,
A minute in a thousand parts divided;
My penitency for her death is such,

4. The swan was thought to sing most sweetly (or only) before its own death.
5. I.e., if I had not been her (tyrannical) lord, I still would be her husband and lord.
6. Mariam predicts that Herod will wish her alive after three days, with apparent allusion to Jesus’ prediction that he would rise from the dead after three days.
As in the first I wished she had not died.
But forward in thy tale.

**NUNTO**  Why, on she went,
And after she some silent prayer had said,

She died as if to die she were content,
And thus to Heav’n her heav’nly soul is fled.

**HEROD**  But art thou sure there doth no life remain?
Is’t possible my Mariam should be dead?
Is there no trick to make her breathe again?

**NUNTO**  Her body is divided from her head.

**HEROD**  Why, yet methinks there might be found by art
Strange ways of cure; ’tis sure rare things are done
By an inventive head, and willing heart.

**NUNTO**  Let not, my lord, your fancies idly run.

It is as possible it should be seen,
That we should make the holy Abraham live,
Though he entombed two thousand years had been,
As breath again to slaughtered Mariam give.

But now for more assaults prepare your ears—

**HEROD**  There cannot be a further cause of moan,
This accident shall shelter me from fears:
What can I fear? Already Mariam’s gone.
Yet tell ev’n what you will.

**NUNTO**  As I came by,
From Mariam’s death, I saw upon a tree

A man that to his neck a cord did tie:  
Which cord he had designed his end to be.
When me he once discerned, he downwards bowed,
And thus with fearful voice he cried aloud,
“Go tell the King he trusted ere he tried,”

I am the cause that Mariam causeless died.”

**HEROD**  Damnation take him, for it was the slave
That said she meant with poison’s deadly force
To end my life that she the crown might have:

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7. In the first thousandth of a minute.
8. Recalls the manner of Judas’s suicide after his betrayal of Jesus (Matthew 27.5).
Which tale did Mariam from herself divorce.\(^9\)

Oh, pardon me, thou pure unspotted ghost,
My punishment must needs sufficient be,
In missing that content I valued most:
Which was thy admirable face to see.
I had but one inestimable jewel,\(^1\)

Yet one I had no monarch had the like,
And therefore may I curse myself as cruel:
'Twas broken by a blow myself did strike.
I gazed thereon and never thought me blessed,
But when on it my dazzled eye might rest,

A precious mirror made by wondrous art,
I prized it ten times dearer than my crown,
And laid it up fast folded in my heart:
Yet I in sudden choler\(^7\) cast it down,
And pash'd\(^7\) it all to pieces: 'twas no foe

That robbed me of it; no Arabian host,
Nor no Armenian guide hath used me so:
But Herod's wretched self hath Herod crossed.
She was my graceful moiety;\(^8\) me accursed,
To slay my better half and save my worst.

But sure she is not dead, you did but jest,
To put me in perplexity a while;
'Twere well indeed if I could so be dressed:°
I see she is alive, methinks you smile.

If sainted Abel yet deceasèd be,
'Tis certain Mariam is as dead as he.

Why, then go call her to me, bid her now
Put on fair habit, stately ornament:
And let no frown o'ershade her smoothest brow,
In her doth Herod place his whole content.

She's come in state weeds\(^8\) to please your sense,
If now she come attired in robe of Heaven:
Remember, you yourself did send her hence,

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9. The Butler's accusation that Mariam was plotting to take over the throne from Herod is not in Cary's chief source, Josephus's *Antiquities*.

1. Proverbs 31.10 calls a good wife more precious than jewels. Cf. *Othello* 5.2.346–47: “one whose hand / (Like the base Indian) threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe.”
And now to you she can no more be given.

**HEROD** She’s dead, hell take her murderers, she was fair.  

Oh, what a hand she had, it was so white,

**HEROD** It did the whiteness of the snow impair. 

I never more shall see so sweet a sight.

**NUNTIO** ’Tis true, her hand was rare.

**HEROD** Her hand? her hands; 

She had not singly one of beauty rare,

But such a pair as here where Herod stands,

He dares the world to make to both compare.

Accursèd Salome, hadst thou been still,

My Mariam had been breathing by my side:

Oh, never had I, had I had my will,

Sent forth command, that Mariam should have died.

But, Salome, thou didst with envy vex,

To see thyself outmatchèd in thy sex:

Upon your sex’s forehead Mariam sat,

To grace you all like an imperial crown,

But you, fond fool, have rudely pushed thereat,

And proudly pulled your proper glory down.

One smile of hers—nay, not so much—a look

Was worth a hundred thousand such as you.

Judea, how canst thou the wretches brook,

That robbed from thee the fairest of the crew?

You dwellers in the now deprived land,

Wherein the matchless Mariam was bred:

Why grasp not each of you a sword in hand,

To aim at me your cruel sovereign’s head?

Oh, when you think of Herod as your king,

And owner of the pride of Palestine,

This act to your remembrance likewise bring:

’Tis I have overthrown your royal line.

Within her purer veins the blood did run,

That from her grandam Sara she derived,
Whose beldame age the love of kings hath won;
Oh, that her issue had as long been lived.
But can her eye be made by death obscure?
I cannot think but it must sparkle still:

Foul sacrilege to rob those lights so pure,
From out a temple made by heav’nly skill.
I am the villain that have done the deed,
The cruel deed, though by another’s hand;
My word, though not my sword, made Mariam bleed,

Hircanus’ grandchild died at my command—
That Marian that I once did love so dear,
The partner of my now detested bed.

Why shine you, sun, with an aspect so clear?
I tell you once again my Mariam’s dead.

You could but shine, if some Egyptian blowse,
Or Aethiopian dowdy lose her life:
This was—then wherefore bend you not your brows?—
The King of Jewry’s fair and spotless wife.

Deny thy beams, and, moon, refuse thy light,
Let all the stars be dark, let Jewry’s eye
No more distinguish which is day and night:
Since her best birth did in her bosom die.

Those fond idolaters, the men of Greece,
Maintain these orbs are safely governèd:
That each within themselves have gods apiece,
By whom their steadfast course is justly led.

But were it so, as so it cannot be,
They all would put their mourning garments on:

To me that is the cause that Mariam’s gone.

4. Sara, wife of Abraham, was at least sixty-five when she attracted Pharoah and almost ninety when King Abimelech sought her favors. “Beldame” suggests one very ancient, but Cary may also evoke the French “belle dame.”

5. I.e., you [sun] could shine in the same way only if a beggar’s prostitute [blowse] or shabby old woman [dowdy] died; “Egyptian” and “Aethiopian” mark them as dark-skinned (not fair like Mariam) and may allude to Cleopatra.

6. Ptolemaic astronomy held that the spheres holding the various planets were guided by intelligences or spirits; Herod supposes they thought the god for whom the planet was named was that intelligence.
For though they feign their Saturn melancholy,\(^7\)
Of sour behaviors, and of angry mood:
They feign him likewise to be just and holy,
And justice needs must seek revenge for blood.

Their Jove, if Jove he were,\(^8\) would sure desire,
To punish him that slew so fair a lass:
For Leda’s beauty set his heart on fire,
Yet she not half so fair as Mariam was.
And Mars would deem his Venus had been slain;

Sol to recover her would never stick:\(^9\)
For if he want the power her life to gain:
Then physic’s god is but an empiric;\(^1\)
The queen of love would storm\(^2\) for beauty’s sake;
And Hermes too, since he bestowed her wit;\(^1\)
The night’s pale light for angry grief would shake,
To see chaste Mariam die in age unfit.
But, oh, I am deceived, she passed\(^\circ\) them all
In every gift, in every property:\(^\circ\)
Her excellencies wrought her timeless\(^3\) fall,
And they rejoiced, not grieved, to see her die.

The Paphian goddess did repent her waste,
When she to one such beauty did allow:\(^2\)
Mercurius thought her wit his wit surpassed,
And Cinthia\(^3\) envied Mariam’s brighter brow.

But these are fictions, they are void of sense;\(^\circ\)
The Greeks but dream, and dreaming falsehoods tell:
They neither can offend nor give defence,\(^4\)
And not by them it was my Mariam fell.
If she had been like an Egyptian\(^5\) black,

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7. Saturn was said to produce cold and excessively severe temperaments (saturnine), but also he was the god who presided over the Golden Age of plenty, justice, contentment, and peace.
8. I.e., if there were such a supreme god as Jove.
9. Sol (Apollo) was also god of medicine (“physic”).
1. Venus, “queen of love” and also beauty, would rage to see such beauty as Mariam’s destroyed; Hermes (Mercury) is the god of wit and eloquence.
2. Venus (“the Paphian goddess”) regretted both her own wastefulness in bestowing all her beauty on Mariam and the waste of that beauty in Mariam’s death.
3. Goddess of the moon.
4. The Greek gods cannot give harm or protect against it.
5. Another allusion to Cleopatra.
And not so fair, she had been longer lived:  
Her overflow of beauty turnèd back,  
And drowned the spring from whence it was derived.  
Her heav’nly beauty ’twas that made me think  
That it with chastity could never dwell.\footnote{The idea that chastity and beauty cannot co-exist is a misogynistic commonplace.}  

But now I see that Heav’n in her did link  
A spirit and a person\footnote{Herod addresses himself.} to excel.  
I’ll muffle up myself in endless night,  
And never let mine eyes behold the light.  
Retire thyself, vile monster, worse than he\footnote{Cain, who murdered Abel.}  
That stained the virgin earth with brother’s blood.\footnote{The play takes place in one day, thereby observing the neoclassical unity of time.}  
Still in some vault or den enclosed be,  
Where with thy tears thou may’st beget a flood,  
Which flood in time may drown thee: happy day  
When thou at once shalt die and find a grave;  
A stone upon the vault someone shall lay,  
Which monument shall an inscription have,  
And these shall be the words it shall contain:\footnote{EXIT.}  
*Here Herod lies, that hath his Mariam slain.*  

CHORUS  
Whoever hath beheld with steadfast eye,  
The strange events of this one only day:  
How many were deceived, how many die,  
That once today did grounds of safety lay!  
It will from them all certainty bereave,  
Since twice six hours so many can deceive.  

This morning Herod held for surely dead,  
And all the Jews on Mariam did attend:  
And Constabarus rise\footnote{rose} from Salom’s bed,  
And neither dreamed of a divorce or end.
Pheroras joyed that he might have his wife,
And Babas’ sons for safety of their life.

Tonight our Herod doth alive remain,
The guiltless Mariam is deprived of breath;
Stout Constabarus both divorced and slain,
The valiant sons of Babas have their death,
Pheroras sure his love to be bereft,
If Salome her suit unmade had left.¹

Herod this morning did expect with joy,
To see his Mariam’s much belovèd face:
And yet ere night he did her life destroy,
And surely thought she did her name disgrace.
Yet now again, so short do humors last,
He both repents her death and knows her chaste.

Had he with wisdom now her death delayed,
He at his pleasure might command her death:
But now he hath his power so much betrayed,
As all his woes cannot restore her breath.
Now doth he strangely, lunaticly rave,
Because his Mariam’s life he cannot save.

This day’s event were certainly ordained,
To be the warning to posterity:
So many changes are therein contained,
So admirably strange variety.
This day alone, our sagest Hebrews shall
In after times the school of wisdom call.

¹. Pheroras avoided losing his Graphina only because of his nefarious bargain with Salome (which morally destroyed him).