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*Dramatic Publishing*

HENRY VAN DYKE'S

# The Other Wise Man

Dramatized by  
RUTH SERGEL



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(THE OTHER WISE MAN)

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# The Other Wise Man

*A Play in Four Scenes*

FOR ELEVEN MEN, FOURTEEN WOMEN AND EXTRAS \*

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## CHARACTERS

THE DREAMER.....	who tells the tale
ARTABAN.....	one of the Magi
ABGARUS.....	his father
TIGRANES.....	his elder brother
BEOR.....	his servant
CYRUS.....	a jewel merchant
AMOS.....	a stricken wayfarer
HANNAH.....	a middle-aged woman of Bethlehem
SARAH.....	her daughter, a young mother
ESTHER.....	younger daughter of Hannah
A ROMAN CAPTAIN.....	of Herod's soldiers
LEAH.....	an elderly woman of Jerusalem
TAMAR.....	her middle-aged daughter
ANNA.....	her younger daughter
JUDITH.....	a Parthian girl
TWO MACEDONIAN SOLDIERS	TWO MERCHANTS OF
A WOMAN OF JERUSALEM	JERUSALEM
A YOUNG GIRL	THEIR WIVES
TWO WOMEN OF JERUSALEM	
CROWD	

\* NOTE: Additional characters may be used as desired to supply the crowds in the streets of Jerusalem, or they may be omitted. All the above have speaking parts, although in some instances they consist only of a line or two. It is possible, by doubling, to reduce the size of the cast. The Roman Captain may serve as one of the Macedonian Soldiers, as may Tigranes, Cyrus, Amos or Abgarus. Any of these, by changing headdress or robe, may serve in the crowds that throng the streets of Jerusalem in the last scene.

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## NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

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**THE DREAMER:** She should preferably be a woman of some beauty and a thoughtful manner, with a clear, pleasing voice. She may wear white robes, Grecian in type, or gray draperies. She should avoid jewelry, except perhaps for a plain gold fillet in her hair. Her hair may be loose and flowing or drawn back in a simple chignon. This part requires very little memorizing as most of it is read from a scroll.

**ARTABAN:** The text calls for white woolen robes and a pointed white cap with ear tabs, and the winged circle of gold, the sign of the fire-worshipper, on the breast. These may be modified. Sheets may be used instead of wool, though cream-colored cotton flannel is better. A self-color girdle or cloth sash holds the robes in place. An ordinary cap with tabs may be used as the basis for constructing the white pointed cap, which is simply stitched in place over it. The gold insignia may be a felt cutout sprayed with gold glitter and simply pinned in place. In the last scene he wears a white wig or powders his hair and seems stooped and feeble.

**ABGARUS:** He wears a costume similar to that of Artaban. He is old but not feeble.

**TIGRANES:** He is dressed like Artaban, but his manner is in direct contrast. Where Artaban is thoughtful and spiritual in manner, Tigranes is brusque, practical and impatient. He is the typical man of action.

**BEOR:** He is a devoted servant to Artaban. Beor is shorter than his master and younger. His clothing is dark in color and simple.

**CYRUS:** He is an older man, quick and alert for a good business opportunity. He is aware that he is getting the better of the bargain in his dealing with Artaban. Still, the jewels are as he has represented them, extremely valuable. He wears

dark robes drawn in with a cord at the waist and wears a square white head scarf over his head, around which is wound a dark cord to hold it in place.

AMOS: He is thin almost to emaciation. Any loose garment will do, as he never stands up but lies where he has been stricken by illness.

HANNAH: She is middle-aged and shows it. She wears dark, loose garments and a head scarf such as are shown in Bible pictures. She is cheery and talkative in manner until she is frightened by the coming of the soldiers.

SARAH: She is a young wife and mother. She is beautiful and rather tall. She wears robes in which dark blue and red are combined, but there is no suggestion of parallelism with the Virgin.

ESTHER: She is in her teens, scarcely out of childhood. She may wear pastel colors.

THE ROMAN CAPTAIN: He is greedy and merciless—a tightly-knit young man who likes his trade. He must have a short sword, which may be cut out of wood. He should wear shorts and a belted tunic which reaches half way to his knees. If he has a shield, it should be small and round. Shield, tunic and sword may be painted with silver radiator paint. He wears sandals that lace up on his legs.

LEAH: She is an elderly woman of Jerusalem, wearing the dark robes and head scarf familiar in Bible pictures. She is not heartless in any sense, but the Crucifixion is simply a break in the monotony of life—a spectacle and an excuse for an outing.

TAMAR: She is dressed much like her mother, but with a bit more style. Like her mother, she feels no special significance in the event. Yet her essential kindness is seen in her attitude toward the aged Artaban and in her willingness to help him.

ANNA: She is younger than her sister but a stronger character and dominates the others. She must be able to project her mood of dismay and sorrow, for she is the spokesman of those who love the Savior.

JUDITH: She is beautiful. Her hair is loose and she may wear a gold fillet in it. She wears white robes. She is gently born and reared, and she foresees with utter horror the life that awaits her as a slave. She is never strident but there is desperation in her voice, and then an icy calmness when Artaban refuses to help her.

THE FIRST *and* SECOND MACEDONIAN SOLDIERS: They are brusque, competent soldiers, schooled in their trade. Though they are rough with Judith, it is only because she resists arrest. They are indifferent to her. They have seen too many captives to care. They wear modifications of the costume worn by the Roman Captain.

THE MERCHANT OF JERUSALEM, HIS WIFE, *and* THE WOMAN WITH THE YOUNG DAUGHTER: All wear typical biblical costumes of the time.

## NOTES ON STAGING

An elaborate production may be given if desired. However, since the interest lies wholly in the action, it is possible to present the play just as effectively on a bare stage, with draperies for background.

Scene One requires only three benches. If desired, there may be a pointed window through which Artaban and Abgarus watch for the rising of the star. Or, since this is an open court, they may show by their upward glance that the court is open to the sky.

Scene Two requires only the suggestion of the date palm grove. One cutout tree showing the typical outline of a date tree suffices for this, or more may be used. The trunks may be painted brown and the tops green. There should be no attempt to reproduce details. Amos lies under the tree. A folded blanket with a piece of dun-colored tarpaulin over it will give him enough elevation to make him visible to the audience.

In Scene Three, the three benches are used again. There is a crib or cradle for the child, with a blue woven blanket over it.

In Scene Four, flats may be used to suggest a house at the

corner of a street opening on a busier street, along which a miscellaneous crowd may hurry. This allows Artaban and the groups he approaches to talk, while the illusion of hurrying crowds is maintained in the background.

For the jewels, large pieces of deep blue and deep red broken glass may be used for the sapphire and ruby, or small stones may be sprayed with colored glitter and pearl lustre. Paste jewels are preferable if they can be obtained in sufficient size.

For the scrolls, plain wallpaper cut into long strips seven inches wide and rolled on a wooden base will suffice.

### SPECIAL EFFECTS

The effect of horses galloping at the beginning of Scene Two can be dispensed with entirely. However, hollowed-out cocoanut shell halves tapped lightly on a table give a fairly realistic sound of galloping horses.

The sound of thunder and the approaching storm is available on a sound record. Thunder effect can be achieved with a kettle drum or a thunder sheet—a long sheet of tin suspended by a rope and shaken. In the final scene, the stage lights should be diminished gradually as the storm approaches. The tile falling from the roofs actually need not be shown. We hear the noise of falling objects offstage, and the characters on the stage cower, as if to avoid them. A floodlight on a dimmer is used off D L to represent the Light. It should be a bright white light and it is brought up gradually, till at the final curtain it is strong and brilliant.

### PRODUCTION NOTE

Nothing adds more to the polish of a production than the quick picking up of cues. Unless there is a definite reason for a pause, train your actors to come in with their speeches "on the heels," so to speak, of the preceding speeches. When a production lags, audience interest likewise will lag.

It is always advisable during the last week of rehearsals to hold one or more sessions during which the actors merely sit



around in a circle and go through lines only with the express purpose of snapping up cues.

### PROPERTIES

**GENERAL:** Three benches, cradle and blanket.

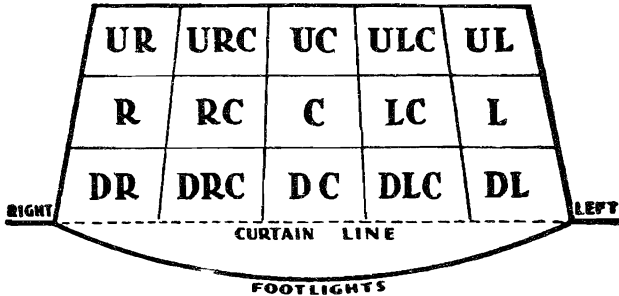
**DREAMER:** Scroll.

**BEOR:** Two scrolls, cup of water, small chest with medicine (among them two paper packets containing a powder), robe, dagger.

**CYRUS:** Casket containing three jewels.

**ARTABAN:** Two small rolls of parchment, small bag of gold, jewels in girdle.

## CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



### STAGE POSITIONS

*Upstage* means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

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## SCENE ONE

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THE DREAMER [*entering before curtain, carrying a scroll but not unrolling it at once, speaking directly to audience*]. You all know the story of the Three Wise Men of the East and how they came from afar to offer their gifts at the manger cradle in Bethlehem. But have you ever heard the story of the *Other Wise Man*, who also saw the star in its rising, and set out to follow it? I bring you the story at this holy season, for though there are the fortunate ones like Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, who bring their gifts directly to the Savior and receive the blessing, are there not many others who knew the way as children but have lost it since? Or who fail because they fear that their gifts are too little or brought too late? For them especially I tell this tale. So, listen now to the story of the *Other Wise Man* as I have written it here exactly as I heard it in the Hall of Dreams. [*Unrolls scroll and reads from it.*] "In the days when Augustus Caesar was master of many kings and Herod ruled in Jerusalem, there lived in the city of Ecbatana in Persia, a man named Artaban. He wore the white robes and cap that showed he was of the ancient order of Magi, called fire-worshippers, and his dwelling place was near the royal palace. On an evening in late September he awaited his father and his brother whom he had summoned to his house, but first he hoped to complete a matter of business." [DREAMER *goes out.*]

[*The curtain opens, revealing the court of Artaban's house. The roof is presumed open to the sky or, if desired, there may be an arched window U C that opens on the evening sky. No furnishings are required except three benches. One bench is U C, in front of the window. Another is placed at*

*an angle L C, while the third bench is at R stage, facing L.*  
ARTABAN *enters D L.*]

ARTABAN. Beor! . . . Beor!

[BEOR *enters U R with a scroll.*]

BEOR. Yes, master? [*Comes C.*]

ARTABAN [*crossing C*]. Have you completed your task?

BEOR. My lord, I have finished checking the household goods—it remains only to list the horses. That will be quickly done.

ARTABAN. And your count agrees with that of the servant of the merchant Cyrus?

BEOR. It does, master.

ARTABAN. Then let me examine what you have done while you complete the count of the horses.

BEOR [*handing him scroll*]. As you command, master.

ARTABAN [*turning to go D L*]. Remember, the merchant Cyrus is to receive all my Arabian horses, save only Vasda and the horse you ride.

BEOR. I will remember.

ARTABAN. One thing more . . . [*Hesitates.*]

BEOR [*waiting*]. Yes, master?

ARTABAN. I await my father and my elder brother. [*Pauses.*]

I wish them to hear nothing of this transaction—until I tell them myself. It might disturb them.

BEOR. But, master, the jewel merchant Cyrus comes here at once.

ARTABAN [*confidently*]. He will be gone before my father and brother arrive. [*Turns again to go and pauses.*] If by chance they should arrive first, I will receive them in the inner chamber. [*Briskly.*] Now complete your task with all dispatch. The jewel merchant will soon be here!

BEOR. I go, master. [*Goes out U R.*]

ARTABAN [*pausing a moment, frowning over scroll, then reading, as if to himself*]. "I transfer my house and all its fur-

nishings, consisting of chests, hangings . . ." [*Goes out D L slowly, scanning scroll and murmuring to himself.*]

[*ABGARUS and TIGRANES enter U R in troubled discussion.*]

TIGRANES. My father, you must believe me! It is necessary that we act at once. [*They come C.*]

ABGARUS. How can I believe? Your brother has always managed his affairs prudently and well. [*Proudly.*] We saw his fertile fields as we came along, his olive groves and now— [*Gestures about him.*—this house.

TIGRANES. He is selling everything.

ABGARUS [*with wave of his hand, crossing L C*]. Some business venture—

TIGRANES. No, Father. It is whispered in the bazaars that my brother squanders all he has to buy—*jewels!*

ABGARUS. Jewels! Some woman has bewitched him!

TIGRANES [*crossing to him*]. Worse than that, my father!

ABGARUS. Worse? How worse?

TIGRANES. A woman can be dealt with. I fear an illness of the mind.

ABGARUS. An illness of the mind?

TIGRANES. My brother has absented himself from all gatherings and at night he studies, or watches the stars.

ABGARUS [*relieved*]. I knew it! All gossip. The buzzing of the bazaars. A student has no need of jewels!

TIGRANES. It is more than gossip! We passed Cyrus, the jewel merchant, just now. [*A knocking is heard off U R.*] That may be he. Stand with me here in the shadow that you may satisfy yourself. [*They move U L. Knocking is repeated off U R.*]

BEOR [*off U R*]. Enter.

[*BEOR enters U R with CYRUS, the jewel merchant.*]

BEOR [*as they enter*]. Wait here. [*Starts D L.*] I will summon my master.

CYRUS [*complacently placing casket of jewels on bench U C*].

I have here treasures for your master, such as are seldom seen. [BEOR ignores this and goes out D L. Unaware of his absence, CYRUS continues to speak as he removes first one jewel and then another from casket, looks at each and polishes it on his sleeve or edge of his head scarf.] Here is a great sapphire! Blue as an ocean's depth and as clear! [Holds sapphire to light, then replaces it and takes out ruby and repeats process.] And this great ruby is as a child to me! What say you to this jewel, boy? [There is no answer. Looks for BEOR and sees he has been wasting his talk on the air.] Hmmp! [Replaces stone and folds his arms as if offended.]

[ARTABAN enters D L, followed by BEOR.]

ARTABAN. Welcome, good jewel merchant. [Comes L C.]

CYRUS [coming C, bowing]. Greetings, my lord. I have faithfully executed your commands.

ARTABAN. Good! Beor, the deeds. [BEOR bows and goes out U R.] You chose the finest and largest? [Crosses U C with CYRUS.]

CYRUS. Sir, not even an emperor wears finer jewels in his crown. [Takes stone.] Here is the sapphire—clear as ocean water and as blue.

ARTABAN [taking stone, examining it and seeming satisfied]. The sapphire, yes. And the ruby?

CYRUS [handing him the stone]. Note but the size and the weight!

ARTABAN [speaking with more enthusiasm]. And the color and the fire at its heart!

CYRUS [sincerely]. 'Tis the best.

ARTABAN [putting ruby on bench with sapphire]. And the pearl?

CYRUS [extending pearl in his cupped hands as if it were the greatest treasure of the three]. Gaze upon it, my lord. A matchless stone. Smooth as oil!

ARTABAN [moved by beauty of stone]. Ah, yes! White as the

snow on Mount Orontes! [*Takes pearl in his cupped hands, tilting it to and fro and admiring it.*]

[*BEOR enters U R with a scroll.*]

BEOR [*crossing U C*]. The scroll, master.

ARTABAN [*motioning him to give it to CYRUS*]. Your fee, merchant. My house, my lands—all that I own is yours.

ABGARUS [*hurrying forward, followed by TIGRANES, as CYRUS takes scroll*]. My son, forbear! What madness is this?

ARTABAN [*startled*]. My father—my brother!

CYRUS [*holding scroll close and edging toward U R*] Sir, have I your leave to withdraw?

ABGARUS. My son, detain him. Force him to take back the useless stones.

TIGRANES [*seizing CYRUS*]. Not so fast, fellow. Restore the "deed."

CYRUS [*trembling and speaking to ARTABAN*]. Is it your wish, master? It is not too late to return the jewels.

ARTABAN [*firmly, to TIGRANES*]. Brother, do I interfere in your transactions? Let him go. [*TIGRANES reluctantly releases CYRUS, who edges nearer U R. ARTABAN turns to ABGARUS.*] My father, I summoned you and my brother to give you full explanation of the course I have chosen. [*To CYRUS.*] Leave us now, good merchant.

CYRUS [*more confidently*]. I go, but I shall return at dawn to take possession here—as we agreed——

ARTABAN. At dawn I shall be far away. So farewell now. Beor! [*Motions toward U R.*]

CYRUS [*delighted to be out of it*]. I go, my lords. Peace be with you.

OTHERS [*mechanically*]. And on you, peace. [*CYRUS goes out U R, attended by BEOR.*]

ARTABAN [*gesturing to bench L C*]. My father, my brother, rest yourselves.

ABGARUS [*sitting L C in limp despair*]. How shall I rest, knowing that you have stripped yourself of house and lands—and for these baubles. [*Indicates jewels.*]

ARTABAN [*coming C*]. Father—the merchant is honest. These are jewels of great value.

TIGRANES [*sitting laut and impatient on bench R*]. A thief could waylay you and bear them away. What then?

ARTABAN. Be patient with me while I explain it all. We Magi are called fire-worshippers—[*Touches symbol on his breast.*]—and yet we worship not the fire but Him of whom it is the chosen symbol. Is this not true?

ABGARUS. It is true. The enlightened are never idolators. We lift the veil of form and go in to the shrine of reality. New light and truth come to us continually through the old symbols.

TIGRANES [*impatiently*]. So you taught us as children, my father. Need it be repeated again?

ARTABAN [*speaking with enthusiasm*]. It is well that we recall it now, for by diligent study of the stars I have discovered a new thing.

TIGRANES [*skeptically*]. By studying the stars? Brother—[*Gestures about him.*]—beyond our horizons are constellations of stars unseen by us. How then shall we learn truth of the stars?

ARTABAN [*with intense conviction, moving toward TIGRANES*]. Our sacred books confirm it. They say that men shall see the brightness of a great light——

TIGRANES [*springing up impatiently*]. But your house—your lands——

ARTABAN [*crossing toward ABGARUS*]. My father, what says the prophecy of Avesta?

TIGRANES [*striding U R and D R in exasperation*]. There is a time for such talk on the holy days—not now. [*Pauses.*] Father——

ABGARUS [*sternly motioning him back to bench*]. My son, listen and disdain not our sacred books! [*Impressively.*] The prophecy of Avesta says that the Victorious One shall arise in the east country and——

TIGRANES [*sitting R again, reluctantly*]. Still——

ABGARUS [*silencing him with a gesture*]. —around him shall



shine a mighty brightness and he shall make life everlasting and incorruptible, and the dead shall rise again.

ARTABAN [*proudly*]. And it is for this reason that I leave all behind and ride into the east country—to seek the Victorious One!

TIGRANES [*half rising, speaking with a despairing gesture*].

To seek the Victorious One! This is madness! Command me, my father. Shall I not seize and bind him?

ABGARUS. Let him finish. [*To ARTABAN, as TIGRANES sits again.*] You have known this prophecy since you were a boy. Why do you act now?

ARTABAN. Does a man sell his home—does he part from those he holds most dear—lightly? There are other prophecies. Listen. [*Sits right of ABGARUS, draws from breast of his tunic two small rolls of parchment and unfolds them carefully on his knee. He takes up top one.*] Stay a moment while I find the lines. [*Glances a moment at scroll and then reads impressively.*] “There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel.”

TIGRANES [*contemptuously*]. The tribes of Israel are scattered. From them neither star nor sceptre shall arise!

ARTABAN. Yet the Hebrew Daniel was loved and honored by our great King Cyrus. Hear his prophecy. [*Reads from second scroll.*] “Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore Jerusalem, unto the Anointed One, the Prince, the time shall be seven and three-score and two weeks.”

ABGARUS [*doubtfully*]. But, my son, these are mystical numbers. Who can interpret them?

ARTABAN. That has been the task of Caspar, Melchior, Balthazar and myself. It falls this year. [*Rises, moves c, silencing them with a gesture as they start to interpose objections.*] Nay, let me finish. We studied the stars and in the spring we saw two of the greatest planets draw together. [*Pauses impressively.*] It was in the sign of the fish!

ABGARUS [*intently*]. That is the House of the Hebrew!

TIGRANES [*objecting*]. Still——