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Dramatic Publishing





Comic tragedy by Thomas Bradshaw

Job

Comic tragedy. By Thomas Bradshaw. Cast: 5m., 3w. Meet

Job, the wise and powerful judge of an ancient Israelite tribe. Satan bets God that he can make Job blaspheme God through ever-escalating violence and loss. Will Job question God's promise to reward the righteous, even when his prayers for mercy go unanswered? In this dark, twisted comedy, Thomas Bradshaw brings us an honest, uncynical adaptation of the book of Job. "Both entertaining and repulsive, Job is simultaneously a faithful retelling of the titular biblical tale and a raucous spoof of it ... Part of what I love so much about Bradshaw's plays is that he forces his audience to look at our lives, the mundane and the profound, with newly jaded eyes." (*Show Business*) *Flexible staging. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Code: J67.*

Cover: *The Flea Theater, New York City, featuring (l-r) Chester Poon, Abraham Makany, Adam Lebowitz-Lockard, Timothy Craig, Sean McIntyre. Photo: Hunter Canning. Cover design: Jeanette Sergel.*

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Comic tragedy

by

THOMAS BRADSHAW

Please Note: This excerpt contains
violence and sexual situations.



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“*Job* was originally commissioned by Soho Rep., Sarah Benson, artistic director, and originally produced by The Flea Theater, New York City, 2012.”

Job

CHARACTERS

(Doubling possible so that only eight actors are needed.)

JOB

SARAH: Job's wife.

JOSHUA: Job and Sarah's son.

MATTHEW: Job and Sarah's son.

RACHEL: Job and Sarah's daughter.

GOD

SATAN

JESUS

DIONYSUS

ESTHER

JONAS

ANDREW

DAVID

MIRIAM: David's daughter.

JOSEPH

JEREMIAH: Joseph's son.

SON 1

SON 2

MESSENGER

NEW WIFE

SETTING

Ancient Israel, 513 B.C.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Portions of the script are excerpted from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*.

Job

SCENE 1

AT RISE: *JOB is sitting onstage in his house, in a thronelike chair, with RACHEL. JOSHUA and MATTHEW enter with JONAS.*

JOSHUA. Father, we caught this man stealing bread from the market.

MATTHEW. The shopkeeper was an old man who couldn't run very fast, so we apprehended him, returned the bread to the shopkeeper and brought him to you.

JOB. Have my sons given an accurate account of your crime?

JONAS. Yes, sir.

JOB. Why did you steal bread from the market?

JONAS. I don't have any money, sir, and I have two small children to feed, with another on the way.

JOB. What do you do for a living?

JONAS. I'm a shoemaker, sir, but work has been slow lately. I didn't know what else to do. (*Gets on his knees.*) Please pardon me. I beg your forgiveness.

JOB. Stealing is a sin. What's your name?

JONAS. Jonas.

JOB. I don't ever want to hear of you stealing again, Jonas. It defiles the word of God. If you're ever in need of food again, come to my house and you will be provided for.

JONAS. Thank you, Job. You are a wise and righteous man. Thank you for your kindness and generosity.

JOB. Rachel, fetch Jonas 10 loaves of bread and some cheese.

RACHEL. Yes, Father.

(RACHEL leaves and returns with the food. She gives the food to JONAS.)

JONAS. Thank you.

JOB. If you're ever caught stealing again, I will cut off both of your hands.

JONAS. Yes, sir. I understand, sir. *(Leaves.)*

JOB. Matthew, was there anyone else waiting to see me when you came in?

MATTHEW. Yes, Father. There is a widow who wishes to have a word with you.

JOB. Send her in.

MATTHEW. Yes, Father.

JOB. Joshua, take the oxen out to graze.

JOSHUA. Yes, Father.

(MATTHEW brings in the widow, ESTHER, who kneels.)

JOB. What is your name?

ESTHER. Esther.

JOB. Why have you come to see me?

ESTHER. My husband died a week ago and his brother came and demanded that I marry him. When I refused, he threw my newborn child and me off of our property.

JOB. Why did you refuse him? It is the custom for a widow to marry the brother of the deceased.

ESTHER. This is true. But I am still in mourning for my dead husband, and I feel that it is a sacrilege against his memory to re-marry so soon after. They say that you're the wisest and most righteous man in the land, so I came to seek your counsel.

JOB. My heart goes out to you and your child. Even though you have rebuked custom, I don't believe that you have sinned against God. Therefore, you will come and live with us.

MATTHEW. I'll go and make her a bed in the stable.

JOB . You will do no such thing. She is a woman. Not an animal! She will sleep in the house with us. Make up a bed in one of the spare rooms.

MATTHEW. Yes, Father.

ESTHER. Thank you, great Job.

JOB. I'll see you at dinner.

MATTHEW. Follow me.

(ESTHER follows MATTHEW offstage.)

RACHEL. She seems like a righteous woman.

JOB. She does. I want you to make her feel at home. Treat her as if she were your sister.

RACHEL. I will, Father.

(Shouting is heard in the background.)

JOB. What's that noise?

(JOSHUA enters practically dragging ANDREW. MIRIAM, who is badly injured, enters with them.)

ANDREW. Let me go! I haven't done anything! Let me go!

JOB. What's the meaning of this, Joshua?

JOSHUA. I was about to take the oxen out to graze in the field when I saw this man in the distance attacking this young girl. He was hitting her in the face and ripping off her clothes.

ANDREW. He's lying! That little slut was coming on to me! She was swaying her butt back and forth and even showed me her breasts. She was begging for it!

JOB. Silence! You'll have your turn. Keep going, Joshua.

JOSHUA. Forgive me, Father. I wasn't fast enough. When I reached them, the girl was unconscious and he was raping

her. I tried to pull him off, but he wouldn't stop. Finally, I knocked him in the back of the head with my cane and the villain ceased attacking the innocent girl. We fought and I knocked him unconscious. Then I threw some water on the girl's face and woke her up, helped her get her clothes back on and brought them to you.

JOB. Girl, what's your name?

MIRIAM. Miriam, sir.

JOB. How old are you?

MIRIAM. Thirteen.

JOB. Is what my son said true? Did this man attack you?

MIRIAM. Yes, sir.

JOB . What were you doing alone in the field?

MIRIAM. I was letting my father's goats graze.

JOB. You must no longer go into the fields alone. There are too many heathen's around. Do you understand?

MIRIAM. Yes.

JOB. Rachel, tend to Miriam. Wash her, give her some clean clothes and let her rest. I'll contact her father.

ANDREW. Can I say something, master Job?

JOB. Yes.

ANDREW. Your son's not telling the whole story! First of all, I was not raping her. She was beggin' me for it. She likes it rough is all. And after he knocks me off of her, he got on top of her and had his way with her too! So if you're going to punish me, then you've got to punish him also!

JOSHUA. This man is a vile liar and a heathen! I would never do such a thing!

ANDREW. You did! You did too!

JOSHUA. I did not!

MAN. Did too! You raped her!

JOB. Silence. I believe you, Joshua. I know that you would never do such a thing. As for you, what is your name?

ANDREW. Andrew, sir.

JOB. As for you, Andrew, not only have you defiled the honor of an innocent girl, you have attempted to slander my son's good name with your false accusations. You have offended God with your gross iniquities, and therefore must be stoned to death. Matthew! Matthew! Come down here.

(MATTHEW runs in.)

MATTHEW. Yes, Father.

JOB. You and Joshua must tie this man up in the field. He is to be stoned to death for his iniquity. I am going to summon the girl's father so that he can have the honor of throwing the first stone.

SCENE 2

(GOD is alone onstage, sitting on the floor with his legs crossed. He is deep in meditation. The stage should be bathed in white light. SATAN enters, but does not say anything. A full minute passes, then GOD opens his eyes and turns around.)

GOD. Stop picking your nose.

SATAN. Why?

GOD. It's annoying me. *(Pause.)* You better not flick that on my floor. *(Pause.)* How is everything?

(They hug.)

SATAN. Very good. And how are things with you?

GOD. Can't complain. *(Shouting.)* Jesus! Dionysus! Your uncle's here!

(JESUS and DIONYSUS enter.)

DIONYSUS. What, Dad?

GOD. Your Uncle Satan is here.

JESUS. Hi, Uncle Satan.

(JESUS hugs SATAN.)

SATAN. Hi, Jesus.

DIONYSUS. How are you?

(DIONYSUS hugs SATAN.)

SATAN. Good. Good. It's good to see you.

DIONYSUS. You too.

GOD. Jesus, why don't you go get us some wine.

JESUS. Yes, Father.

(JESUS exits and comes back with wine and some wine glasses. JESUS hands out the wine glasses and pours everyone wine.)

GOD. Let's not all stand here like a bunch of idiots! Let's sit.

(They all sit.)

GOD *(cont'd)*. So, Satan, what have you been up to?

SATAN. Oh you know, walking to and fro, to and fro, back and forth along the earth.

GOD. How is everything down there?

SATAN. Oh you know, the usual.

GOD *(laughing)*. I know how things are when you're there. Death, destruction, lying, cheating and stealing!

(Everyone laughs.)

DIONYSUS. This wine tastes a little bitter, doesn't it?

JESUS. Yes, it does.

DIONYSUS. I think maybe it's turned into vinegar.

GOD. Dionysus is right. Jesus, fetch us another bottle. And get us some new glasses will you.

JESUS. I got the bottle last time. Why can't Dionysus do it?

DIONYSUS. You wouldn't have wine if it weren't for me.

(JESUS and DIONYSUS are about to fight.)

GOD. Stop it, boys! Jesus is right, you go get the bottle, Dionysus.

DIONYSUS. Yes, Father.

(DIONYSUS exits and then comes back with a new bottle of wine and some glasses. He fills everyone's cup except JESUS'.)

DIONYSUS *(cont'd)*. Fill your own.

(JESUS fills his own cup.)

GOD. You'd think that they would have out grown that by now.

SATAN. Give them another couple thousand years. I'm sure they'll grow out of it.

(They laugh.)

GOD. So anyway, did you see my servant Job while you were down there on earth?

SATAN. Yes, in fact, I did.

GOD. He's incorruptible, isn't he?

SATAN. I wouldn't say that.

GOD. You mean to tell me that you've seen Job engaging in iniquity?

SATAN. No, I haven't seen Job engage in a single sinful act. However, how do you expect a person to act when you've given them everything? He has two sons and one daughter who are in excellent health. You've given him 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 she-asses. And you've made him the richest and greatest man in the East!

GOD. So what? Isn't that what I promised man? That if you fear God and shun evil, then you shall be rewarded. He fears me and shuns evil, so I reward him.

SATAN. Yes, but wouldn't you agree that it is much easier for a man to be righteous when things are going well for him than when things are not going well for him.

GOD. I suppose that's true.

SATAN. All I'm saying is that if Job faced some adversity, I doubt that he would continue to be the righteous man that he is today. As a matter of fact, I guarantee that he'll curse you to your face if his material possessions are taken away.

GOD. What do you think about this, Jesus?

JESUS. Uncle Satan has a point.

GOD. Dionysus?

DIONYSUS. I agree with Jesus.

GOD. OK, Satan. I give you permission to introduce adversity, hardship and calamity into Job's life. All that he has is in your power, only do not cause him any physical harm.

SATAN. Your wish is my command, dear brother. I'll be back soon to report on our wager. Good bye, Jesus.

(JESUS and SATAN hug.)

SATAN (*cont'd*). Good bye, Dionysus

(DIONYSUS and SATAN hug.)

SATAN (*cont'd*). Good bye, dear brother.

(*GOD and SATAN hug.*)

SCENE 3

(*Everyone is onstage, celebrating and drinking wine after stoning ANDREW to death. Everyone is dancing a ritualized dance. When the dance is over, JOB clinks his glass for a toast.*)

JOB. The villain is dead!

ALL. The villain is dead!

JOB. Praise God!

ALL. Praise God!

JOB. Let us thank the almighty for bringing justice to Miriam and her father, and for punishing the wickedness of the sinful Andrew.

ALL. Here here!

(*Everyone drinks.*)

JOB. Let us make a burnt offering to the God of Israel for the fairness and justice that he bestows.

ALL. Here here!

JOB. Rachel, go fetch a healthy lamb for us to slaughter.

RACHEL. Yes, Father.

(*RACHEL leaves. She returns a moment later with a lamb.*)

JOB. Let's go outside and make a bonfire!

ALL. Yaaaay!

(*Everyone exits the stage dancing.*)

JOSHUA and RACHEL re-enter the stage with SATAN following. JOSHUA and RACHEL are laughing.)

RACHEL. What did you want to talk to me about?

JOSHUA. As your older brother, I wanted to discuss your chastity.

RACHEL (*laughing*). You're drunk. I'm going back outside.

(She tries to leave, but he grabs her arm.)

JOSHUA. I'm serious, Rachel. Have you been chaste?

RACHEL. Of course I've been chaste. Now let me go.

(She tries to leave, but he grabs her again.)

JOSHUA. There have been rumors that you were immodest with a shepherd named Ezekiel.

RACHEL. That's nonsense, Joshua! You're drunk. You should go to sleep.

(She tries to leave, but he grabs her and kisses her. She pushes him away.)

RACHEL (*cont'd*). What are you doing?!

(He kisses her again and she pushes him away.)

RACHEL (*cont'd, forcefully*). Stop, Joshua! I'll tell Father! You're acting possessed!

JOSHUA (*distraught*). You must have been possessed when you destroyed this family's honor by sacrificing your virginity.

(He strangles her to death. Then he lifts up her dress and his robe and starts to have sex with her corpse. SATAN watches silently.)

JOSHUA (*cont'd*). Oh, Rachel, you should have respected your chaste treasure. Oh, Rachel, you shouldn't have given this away to another man. You should have respected your chaste treasure! I love you.

(He has an orgasm.

MATTHEW enters.)

MATTHEW (*horrified*). What's going on here?

JOSHUA. I—I—Well—

MATTHEW. Rachel! What's the meaning of this? Rachel? (*Realizes that she's dead.*) Oh, Rachel. My poor sister. (*To JOSHUA.*) What have you done!?

(MATTHEW grabs a ceramic water jug and hits JOSHUA in the face with it. It shatters everywhere. JOSHUA falls to the ground.

MATTHEW then breaks a broomstick over his leg. He takes the top part of the broom and sodomizes JOSHUA with it. He's pushing the broomstick up as far as he can and JOSHUA is making sounds of extreme pain.)

MATTHEW (*cont'd*). How does it feel, Joshua!? How do you like it!? How do you like it!?

(JOB enters with the crowd. Everyone gasps, then all are silent and in shock.

MATTHEW stops and sees them, is still for a moment, then takes out his knife and slits his brothers throat. JOB grabs his chest and gasps. MATTHEW runs out of the room. Everyone is in shock.

Then JOB goes over to JOSHUA, and SARAH goes over to RACHEL.)