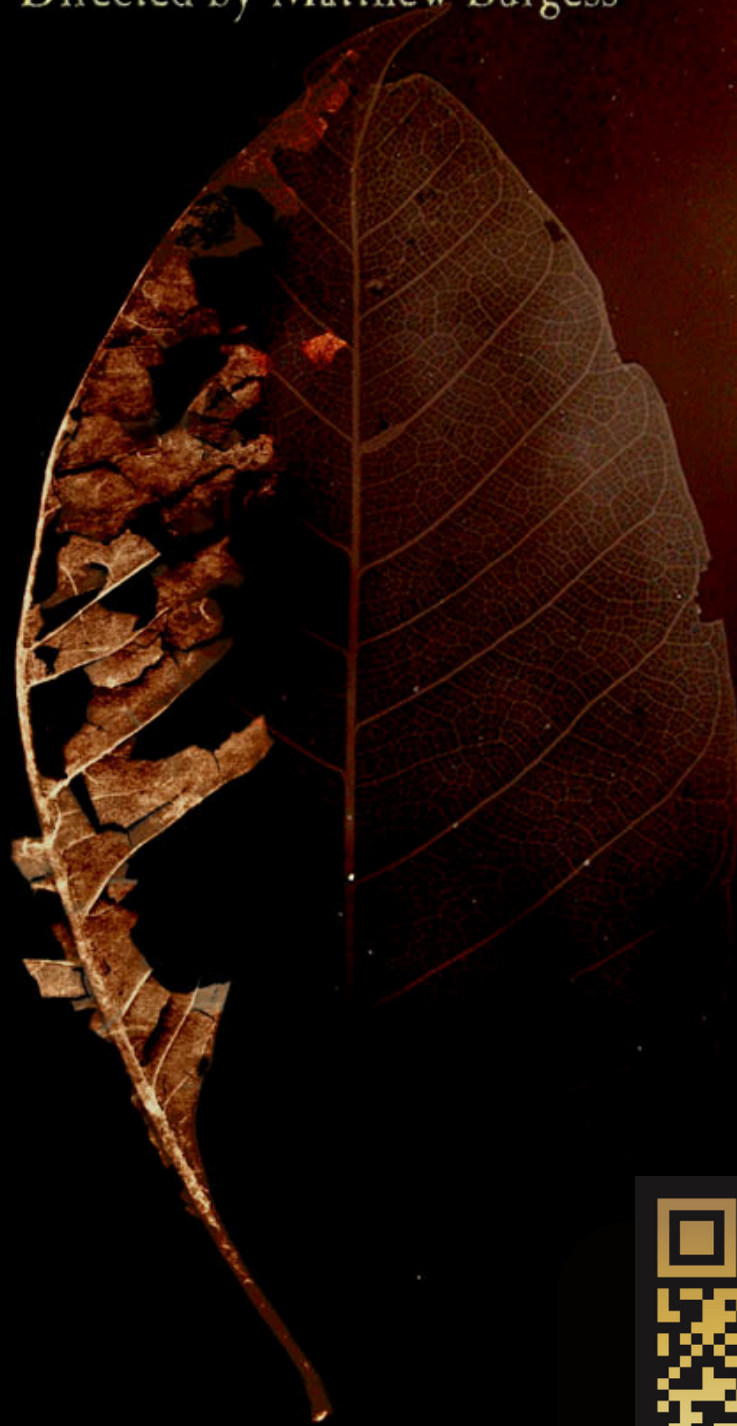


Magdalene Theatre and Resolute Gopher Productions present:

# The Keeper

Written by Tim Hildebrand

Directed by Matthew Burgess



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watch scenes from the play!

*The Keeper*

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## Production History

The original production of *The Keeper* opened at The Remai Arts Centre *Backstage Stage*, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, on April 10, 2009, at 8 pm. Matt Burgess directed the Equity-approved co-op, featuring the following cast:

Shealtiel	- Tim Hildebrand
Havilah	- Kristina Hughes
Gehazi	- Mark Oddan
Livni/Peter	- Matt Josdal
Martha/Tamar	- Ashley Turner
Dinah, et al.	- Courtney Lato
Naboth, et al.	- Jaron Francis

The stage manager for the production was Jennifer Obchansky, who also shared lighting and sound responsibilities with Jennifer Rathie-Wright. The assistant stage manager was Brandon Snowsell, and Sarah Lozinsky acted as backstage costume assistant.

Subsequent work on the play includes a workshop led by Heather Inglis, and sponsored by the Saskatchewan Playwright's Centre, Jan. 9, 2010. It also includes co-op and student productions by the Rosthern Station Arts Centre, directed by Trevor Schmidt, and Rosebud School of the Arts, directed by David Snider. Finally the play benefitted from a Saskatchewan Arts Board-funded retreat, culminating with a workshop on Dec. 10-11, 2012. A special thanks to all the professionals and organizations mentioned above for their input, much of which has directly or indirectly affected the final draft you hold in your hand.



## Author's Notes

“Sheal” v. t.: To take the husks or pods off from; to shell; to empty of its contents, as a husk or a pod.

/ indicates the suggested point at which the next line interrupts, when the dialogue following is considered important.

( ) indicates that the dialogue contained in the brackets is offered as a suggestion to help the actor understand the through-thought of the sentence. These words can be said in their entirety, trailed off, cut off sharply, or switched with other words as the actor sees fit.

... indicates that a sentence trails off. However, if an actor's line ends with... and their next line begins with ...it means that they don't stop speaking, and that the other actor's intervening line is said over top.

A quick word about stage directions. Stage directions are becoming a thing of the past, and as an actor myself I find that sad. Not because I think they should be rigidly followed; we know that can destroy a performer's authenticity. But as an actor I always used stage directions to understand the flavor of a line or moment without feeling constrained by their specifics. For instance, if the line is “I'll see you next Thursday”, and the stage direction is “He flicks his cigarette into the other man's face”, you learn *a lot* about the subtext. And that's all it is, a learning opportunity; you don't have to copy the action. Conversely, I've seen actors black out the stage directions on their first day with a script, then make choices so disconnected from the writer's intention that they paint themselves into a corner. By the end of a given scene, their lines make no sense at all.

So as a playwright I've used stage directions to signal intention, which frees me from having to be over-precise with the dialogue...just as in real conversation much is seen instead of said. Hopefully the stage directions in this script gift the actors with insight without becoming line readings. Contextual understanding is the aim, not physical adherence.

A suggested floor plan can be requested as an appendix, for companies wishing to do a realistic interpretation. Some stage directions correspond to that map.

If an intermission is required, the recommended placement is between scenes 6 and 7.

Characters:

Shealtiel BarDavid (30s)  
Havilah BarDavid (late 20s)  
Gehazi (30s or 40s)  
Livni (50s)  
Martha (mid/late 30s)  
Orpah (40s)  
Dinah (late 30s)  
Tamar (late teens, early 20s)  
Orpah (40s)  
Decimus (30s)  
Silicia (30s)  
Naomi (20s)  
Naboth (30s)  
Clement (20s)  
Bethany (20s)  
Peter (20s)  
John (20s)  
VO

This play can be performed with anywhere from 7 - 18 actors, or more if you have the resources for extras.

Suggested casting for 7 actors:

Actor 1: Shealtiel BarDavid, VO

Actor 4: Livni, Peter

Actor 2: Havilah BarDavid

Actor 5: Martha, Tamar

Actor 3: Gehazi

Actor 6: Dinah, Orpah, Silicia, Naomi

Actor 7: Naboth, Decimus, Clement, John

# The Keeper

## Scene 1 - Sheal's Inn

[We are in a Jerusalem hotel, circa 30 CE. The Inn is medium-sized and growing, due to the careful stewardship and shrewdness of its owner Shealtiel BarDavid, and the enthusiasm and work ethic of his wife Havilah. There is also a staff of three; Dinah, Tamar and Gehazi, who have been together long enough to have become a strong and cohesive team, despite whatever conflicting traits and eccentricities they might have. Havilah is at the counter, finishing some task...perhaps putting stitches on a torn curtain. It's late afternoon. Dinah, a mature maidservant, enters the front main entrance of the hotel briskly but professionally.]

Dinah: He's coming m'am. The master's coming.

Havilah: Oh? How far is he?

Dinah: He's at the Potter's.

Havilah: O.k., better start on supper. We'll have the beef. [Dinah nods and exits UL.] Oh, [Dinah stops] and send in Gehazi. [Dinah nods and continues off.] **Tamar?** [Havilah goes back to working. A few moments later, a second much younger maidservant appears.] Sheal is coming home, so do you still have that list / I gave you?

Tamar: Yes. [waits] Yes M'am. I kept it right here in / my sash.

Havilah: It's time, then. [Smiles] Make it look nice.

Tamar: Yes M'am. [Tamar leaves in the direction of Sheal and Havilah's quarters, UR.]

[Havilah continues her task as Gehazi enters from UL, spattered with mud and dirt from prepping the garden beds for Sheal's soon-to-arrive acquisitions.]

Gehazi: I'm here.

[He wipes his hands on his thighs and goes behind the counter for the water pitcher and cups that are always kept on hand.]

Havilah: How's it coming?

Gehazi: The back strip and both sides are done. I'm...I'm just starting the corner patch and then I'm finished.

Havilah: Just starting?

Gehazi: It's turned! I've turned it! I just haven't dug the holes yet. Or watered them.

Havilah: [Trace of frustration] Well he's here, so...

Gehazi: He's back?

Havilah: Yes, so go get dressed ok?

Gehazi: [Takes a drink] Ok.

Havilah: Hurry!

Gehazi: Ok! Yes. [Finishes his drink]

Havilah: Gehazi go! GO!

Gehazi: Going!

[Gehazi hastily exits UL. Havilah approaches the DR front door to check how far away Sheal is just as he walks in. He's carrying large baskets full of small, baby trees, the bottoms of which are wrapped and tied in wet sackcloth.]

Havilah: Oh hi!

Sheal: Hi.

[Sheal places the baskets down and heads outside for another load.]

Havilah: You got them!

Sheal: [Offstage] Yeah.

[Havilah kneels down and carefully fingers through the trees as Sheal re-enters with another load of bags and bundles. She rises and goes to him, embraces and kisses him. The kiss is short. A peck.]

Havilah: Welcome back.

[In the background, we hear "the beef" mooing rebelliously.]

Havilah: Did you get everything?

Sheal: Yeah, the rest are outside. Oh, except those Lebanese olives. They didn't have any small enough to bring back so I got the Syrian ones.

Havilah: Oh. If you loved me, you would have brought *one* of those back...

[The mooing briefly escalates...]

Sheal: They were huge...

[...and stops.]

Havilah: I'm joking. [She mostly is.] We've just started supper, so it'll be another hour or so.

Sheal: I'll get Gehazi to give me a hand bringing these in.

Havilah: Oh, he's just getting dressed... [Is trying to decide whether or not to recall Gehazi. Sheal notices the floor in the UR entrance.]

Sheal: The floor.

Havilah: Yes.

Sheal: When did this happen?

Havilah: While you were gone, obviously.

Sheal: Yeah, but...

Havilah: What do you think?

Sheal: It's right. It's the right floor. [Havilah smiles.] Who did this?

Havilah: Naphath and his boys.

[Sheal steps on the stones, testing solidity.]

Havilah: In exchange for the fencing.

Sheal: He agreed to that?

Havilah: Yep.

Sheal: [Really does like the floor.] Very impressive. Thank you.

[Havilah smiles. She begins carrying the newly arrived baskets, bags and bundles off toward the UL exit.]

Havilah: So what do you want to do first, clean up?

Sheal: In a bit. Are we ready for the Syrians?

Havilah: We're almost done the bedrooms on the main floor. We'll get the last few after supper. It took longer than usual to stock the supply room...

Sheal: Right.

Havilah: The baths are full. And Gehazi worked really hard to get the gardens ready out back, so planting should go fast. Upstairs bedrooms are tomorrow's job. And the atrium.

Sheal: Maybe I'll put in a little time there before supper. [Sheal walks over to the counter] I'm going by Livni's after.

Havilah: Oh?

Sheal: [Sees a small scroll on the counter, tied with simple string.] What's this?

Havilah: Oh, that arrived from your father.

Sheal: Mm.

Havilah: I better go help with supper. [Reminds him] Baths are full.

Sheal: Yes.

Havilah: Welcome back Sheal.

Sheal: Thanks.

[Havilah exits.]

Sheal: Gehazi!

[Waits. Toys with the scroll. Puts it down. Gehazi enters, now wearing a cleaner, more tastefully ornate outfit kept for special occasions.]

Gehazi: Welcome back!

Sheal: I want to do some work in the atrium before supper. What needs to be done?

Gehazi: Uuhh...well, the floors of course. The impluvium. And the bird cages need to be re-lined, they're awful.

Sheal: Hmm... [He pulls the two sticks out of the "dad" scroll and hands the parchment to Gehazi.] You can use this. I'll see what else I got. [He goes behind the counter and rummages a bit.] Mmm...maybe in the house. I'm sure I've got something. Bring the rest of the trees around back and I'll meet you in there.

Gehazi: [Wilts a little, but only a little.] Right. [Begins rolling up his sleeves and heads out the DR front entrance.]

[Sheal takes a moment to soak in the fact that he's home. He fetches a cup from behind his counter and fills it. He drinks and breathes deeply. Begins walking across his main room. Lights change...]

## Scene 2 - Livni's Hotel

[...and we are in the once-opulent hotel and tavern belonging to Livni, Sheal's business rival and former mentor. Livni, his partner Martha, Shealtiel and their hotelier friend Orpah are enjoying drinks and catching up. It's late.]

Sheal: Ten fig, ten date, some grapes. Fifteen olive...

Orpah: Fifteen?

Sheal: They're pretty finicky. Some might not take.

Livni: Yeah, but still...are you making oil?

Sheal: I couldn't get the ones Havi wanted, so I got a couple different kinds.

Orpah: I'd divorce you.

Livni: How's your place, Orpah?

Orpah: Just kill me. Just put a sword through me.

Martha: What's wrong?

Orpah: Oh, those **greasy** little Arameans. I hate them.

Sheal: Stop buying them.

Orpah: **They're cheap!** But you get what you pay for. Leave it to the Arameans, to sell me bad Arameans. [She drinks] If they're not helping themselves in the storeroom, they're ogling the female servants. I caught two of them making the beds with dirty linens! Can you believe it? They didn't wash them...they were just going to throw them back on there. Like I wouldn't notice. Disgusting. How do you fire slaves?

Livni: With a heavy rock. [Laughs at his own joke.]

Orpah: Do you got one?

Martha: Our field is full of them. It's his excuse for not doing anything with it.

Livni: Next / year.

Martha: ...Year. Right.

Orpah: Well, if it gets much worse, I'll borrow one. Actually, I'll get my slaves to pick them for you, then when they're not looking...Bam!

Martha: How was Jericho, Sheal? How many days were you there?

Sheal: Just overnight.

Martha: Did you see the city at all? Anything...

Sheal: No, not really. I got the plants and came home.

Martha: Oh, too bad.

Sheal: Well actually, there was a bit of a thing...

Orpah: What?

Sheal: There was a rabbi in town, and people were all stirred up about it. It was like a...parade. Jesus? From Capernaum?

Martha: Really? He was in Jericho?

Sheal: Yeah. You've heard of him?

Martha: Yes. [Pause] You haven't?

Sheal: No.

Livni: He's a big deal up north. Our friends from Cana talk about him / all the...

Martha: ...all the time. Did you see him?

Sheal: Yeah. He walked right past me.

Orpah: What was he like?

Sheal: I only saw him for a minute...are you all...have you *all* heard of this guy? [They all agree that they have.]

Sheal: Three days ago I'd never heard of him, and now it seems like everybody knows about him, or...is talking about him.

Orpah: Have you been living under a rock?

Sheal: No, I've been running an inn. [Orpah, Livni and Martha laugh.]

Orpah: Sheal, you need to get out more.

Livni: You really / do.

Orpah: You're a workaholic.

Sheal: But if he's that big of a deal, you'd think I'd have heard *someone* talking about him...

Martha: You never answered the question, what was he like?

Sheal: I don't know. He walked past. That was it. [Short pause] There was a funny...there was a tax collector sitting in a tree.

Orpah: A / tax collector?

{Overlapping} Martha: What? Livni: Really?

Sheal: I mean, he was...gold chains, expensive clothes, beard perfectly trimmed...and he was sitting up on this tree branch watching the whole thing.

Orpah: On a tree branch? Like a monkey? Oh my god...

Sheal: Yes.

Livni: Why was he in the tree?

Sheal: I don't know. Maybe just to see, I don't know. There was a pretty big crowd. But anyway, Jesus says...Jesus says *to him*..."come down from there"...he says the guy's name, I don't remember it..."I'm coming to your house".

Livni: But why was the tax collector in the tree?

Sheal: I don't know.

Orpah: Did he come down?

Sheal: Well, the crowd roars. They love it. They think Jesus is making fun of him.

Martha: Pretty easy target.

Orpah: [To Martha] Literally. Speaking of rocks.

Sheal: But after a few seconds everyone realizes he's serious, and the guy comes down, and off they go to lunch.

[Pause. Disbelief.]

Orpah: He *knew* him?

Sheal: I guess. I don't know.

Martha: Oh brother.

Livni: Well, what...

Orpah: What a joke.

Livni: So, they *knew* each other?

Sheal: Must have.

Orpah: Disgusting. It makes you wonder...who *wouldn't* he eat with?

Livni: Well, maybe there's hope for the rest of us. [Laughs]

Martha: [In fun] Not for you. [Then points at Sheal] *Or* you! We heard Jesus *hates* innkeepers.

Sheal: Does he?

Orpah: Well, you're not Jewish honey, so from what I hear, he won't be buying *you* flowers either.

Sheal: [Smiling] Why does he hate innkeepers?

Martha: An innkeeper tried to kill him once.

Sheal: What?

Orpah: I thought his father was an innkeeper? Or was that / someone else?

Livni: No, no no no no no. The story is, that when his mom was pregnant with him, an innkeeper turned her away in the middle of the night, and she had to give birth out in a barn. And he almost froze to death, or something.

{Overlapping} Sheal: What? Martha: Oh right, right. That's it.

Sheal: In a barn?

Livni: Right.

Martha: That's right.

Orpah: Is *that* the story?

Martha: Yeah.

Sheal: Is it true? Was he actually...was he...

Livni: No one knows. No one knows anything about him. People say things. People who like him say he heals people just by touching them. People who hate him say that he eats babies. It depends who you talk to.

Sheal: But why do people hate him? And why do they like him? I mean, I don't know anything about him.

Orpah: He's a rabbi, he's controversial...

Livni: Who knows, who knows. He may hate me, but I think he's just fine. To Jesus!  
[They all raise their mugs, say "to Jesus", and imbibe.]

Sheal: So I'm curious. In the story, why does the innkeeper turn her away?

Livni: All full up. No rooms.

Sheal: No other hotels?

Livni: All full. It was a...holiday or something.

Sheal: And the husband didn't book ahead?

Livni: [Thinks about it] Guess not.

Sheal: Figures. And it's all the innkeeper's fault. [Drinks]

Orpah: It's the *innkeeper's* fault, for not dragging somebody out of bed and saying "thanks for being responsible, but I have to give your room to an *idiot*...who brought his wife here on a holiday without booking ahead."

[They laugh]

Orpah: And why is he travelling with a wife whose 9-months pregnant? [The rest laughingly agree.]

Livni: Were they walking, or on horseback?

Martha: Either way...

Livni: Well that's what I'm saying...

Martha: Of course she's going to give birth. Can you imagine?

Orpah: Maybe it's some kind of new birthing technique. [She climbs up on her bench and begins bouncing up and down, while doing deep lamaze breathing] "Just another mile honey, the contractions are still 5 minutes apart! GIDDYAP!"

[Tipsy from the wine, Orpah starts to teeter and is helped down.]

Sheal: And do you really want the son of a man that dumb *teaching* you anything?

[They all have a good laugh, and the topic tapers off.]

Orpah: What time is it?

Livni: It's gotta be about midnight.

Martha: It's past. I heard the watchman call it while I was in the kitchen.

Orpah: That's it for me, darlings. I'm up at dawn tomorrow. [Not excited about it.]  
Milking.

Martha: *You're* milking? Why not get the slaves to do it?

Orpah: They'll drink it straight from the cow! [Group reacts] *I'm not kidding!* It's happened. And I need every drop this week.

Martha: [Stifles a laugh] You're joking...

Orpah: No, I'm not.

Livni: Good luck.

Orpah: [Stands still, checks her balance] I do NOT want to walk home. I need to stop drinking.

Livni: Don't you dare.

Sheal: No, you need to stop drinking *here*.

Livni: Stop it. She's welcome anytime.

Orpah: I'm flattered. Good night kids.

Livni: Good night Orpah.

Sheal: Good night.

Martha: I'll walk you out. [She puts her hand on Orpah and walks with her offstage.]

[Table gets quiet]

Sheal: She's quite something, isn't she?

Livni: Isn't she? She'll be single for the rest of her life.

Sheal: Yup.

[They drink.]

Livni: So?

[Sheal drinks again. They sit.]

Livni: So how's the Inn?

Sheal: It's good. Lately it's been really good.

Livni: How so?

Sheal: The new garrison.

Livni: Aaah, right. Your baths. The Romans love you...that was really smart.

Sheal: Doesn't feel smart when we're hauling the water.

Livni: "We"?

Sheal: The girls. Takes them all day. Every week we go through this.

Livni: Great system though, irrigating your garden with the old bath water. You're making money both directions.

Sheal: [Shrugs] You give the people what they want. [He drinks.]

[Pause. Beat.]

Livni: When are we gonna stop competing, you and me?

Sheal: You don't ever quit.

Livni: It makes no sense Tealy. Why not partner up? Like the old days?

Sheal: Because in the old days you made money.

Livni: You're cold. That's cold.

Sheal: That's business. [Pause] What do you make in a month?

Livni: [Caught off guard] Enough.

Sheal: This property is 4 times the size of mine, what do you make?

Livni: I make plenty.

Sheal: How much?

Livni: *Plenty!* Drink your drink.

[Silence]

Sheal: Livvy, I want you to think about something.

Livni: What?

Sheal: I wanna buy your place.

Livni: [Laughs] Right.

Sheal: I wanna buy it. And I'll hire you to manage.

Livni: [Pause] Hire me?

Sheal: Yes.

Livni: Hire me to manage?

Sheal: Yes.

Livni: *This* hotel?

Sheal: Yes.

[Pause as it sinks in.]

Livni: You've got pretty big balls Tealy...

Sheal: Livvy...

Livni: To sit at *my* table, and drink *my* booze, and tell me you're going to hire me / to manage (this hotel!)

Sheal: How much debt do you have?

Livni: ***I helped you get started!*** I taught you how to run a business / how to pay taxes on a business...

Sheal: How much debt do you have?

[Martha re-enters, but pauses at the doorway.]

Livni: Who cares? And who says I have debt?? Everyone has debt!

Sheal: Livvy...

Livni: I don't!

Sheal: The city, the well, the *portico*...?

Livni: [With disdain] Oh...

Sheal: Nadab, BenMalkiel...what do you owe BenMalkiel, like half of this whole place? You still owe *me* for the Tent Festival...

Livni. THE CARAVAN DIDN'T COME IN!!! You don't got your stuff, I don't got mine!

Sheal: Then write me a check.

Livni: [Stares at Sheal] This is me! This is *me*, here! You can't squeeze me out like the other guys, so you're gonna try to buy *me*!? ***The answer is no, okay!? No!***

[Silence. Sheal is unmoved.]

Livni: ***I'll send over your money! Tomorrow morning! First thing!*** [Moves to the exit] ***Now get out!*** [Livni leaves.]

[Sheal goes to pick up his outer cloak. Martha ventures in.]

Martha: What was that about?

Sheal: Weeeee started talking business. And he left.

Martha: It sounded serious.

Sheal: Just an idea I had. [Looks at her] I knew he wouldn't like it.

Martha: You did that on purpose...to make him leave...

[He comes to her and kisses her.]

Martha: [Quietly, looking back down the hall] Tealy...

Sheal: I know. [Kisses her] Thursday?

Martha: Thursday. [They kiss briefly but passionately.]

Sheal: Goodnight.

Martha: Goodnight.

[A final kiss and Shealtiel exits, with Martha watching after him. Once he leaves, she exits.]

### **Scene 3 - Sheal's Inn, same night**

[Sheal enters, surprised to see Havilah still awake and working.]

Sheal: You're still up?

Havilah: Hi. We got a message that the Syrians are coming early. They'll be here tomorrow for lunch.

Sheal: Tomorrow? You should have sent someone over...

[Dinah enters with a basket of soiled cloths. She pauses and bows slightly to Sheal, but doesn't look at him. Then turns to Havilah.]

Dinah: This is the last of them M'am.

Havilah: Just put them in the laundry room for now.

Dinah: Yes m'am.

Sheal: [Crosses to Havilah and the basket] What are these?

Havilah: Just dirty cloths. [To Dinah] It's ok.

Dinah: Goodnight M'am. [Dinah doesn't look at Sheal.] Sir.

Havilah: Goodnight.

[As Dinah exits Havilah also gathers to leave.]

Havilah: Phineas sent a message, they're ready to submit / the paperwork...

Sheal: Why didn't you get me?

Havilah: We handled it. It's ok.

Sheal: Yeah, but...

Havilah: You just got home. I knew we could handle it, so it's done.

[Pause]

Sheal: [Heads to the counter] Thanks.

[Pause]

Havilah: Sheal?

Sheal: Yeah?

Havilah: What goes on at Livni's place is your business. But when you walk in past the *servants* smelling like Martha's perfume, it's hard not to be insulted.

Sheal: What are you talking about?

[Pregnant pause]

Havilah: I'm going to bed, are you coming? [Sheal says nothing.]

[Havilah exits. Sheal remains. Lights fade.]

#### **Scene 4 - Sheal's Inn, next day**

[Sheal is deep in thought while standing behind the counter. Gehazi is picking up the dinnerware off the table as a man, Naboth, gets up to move towards the counter.]

Naboth: Thanks.

Gehazi: Don't mention it.

Naboth: [Moves to the counter] Great food.

Sheal: Mm? Thanks.

Naboth: Slow day today.

Sheal: Yup.

Gehazi: [Pauses with his plates and things.] It's the calm before the storm. There's an artisan's festival starting in a few days, so it'll pick up.

Naboth: Hey, can you tell me how to get to a pottery place called Mudhi Han-Shahk? It's nearby, it's around here I think...

Gehazi: "Art for everyday use"? That place?

Naboth: Yeah! That one.

Gehazi: It gets confusing, there's a few of those around here...I think the one you want is just down this street, and when you get to a fish market, turn left for two or three blocks. There's another place just past the fish market, don't / go there.

Naboth: Another pottery place?

Gehazi: Yeah. Don't get confused and go there. Turn left at the fish market.

Naboth: Left.

Gehazi: Right. I mean...correct.

Naboth: Got it. [Gehazi leaves with the dishes. Naboth turns to Sheal.] So, what do I owe you?

Sheal: 17 and 5.

[Naboth opens his travelling bag. He feels around, looks in, then continues fishing.]

Naboth: That's weird...

[Fishes more. Peers in.]

Naboth: I can't find my money...

[Sheal says nothing.]

Naboth: I don't...[He looks around, walks back to the table, looks underneath.] I don't know where it is.

[Gehazi re-enters with a cloth to wipe down the table]

Naboth: [Embarrassed] I'm sorry. I must have left it at one of the shops this morning.

[Sheal considers him. Gehazi starts working a little harder.]

Naboth: I don't know what to do. Should...should I leave my bag here?

Sheal: Don't worry about it.

[Gehazi slows.]

Naboth: I don't even know where to start looking...

Sheal: It's on the house. [Gehazi looks over.]

Naboth: On the house?

Sheal: Yeah.

Naboth: Are you sure?

Sheal: Yeah. Enjoy your afternoon.

Naboth: Thank you. Thank you very much.

[Naboth gathers up his bag and exits. Gehazi beholds Sheal in a slight fit of disbelief.]

Gehazi: I've never seen you do *that* before.

Sheal: It's pretty quiet. Why don't you take an early lunch.

Gehazi: Have you *ever* forgiven a tab before?

Sheal: It's business. Give a little now, take a lot later. He'll be back.

Gehazi: Along with anyone he talks to, who wants a free meal.

Sheal: Go to lunch.

Gehazi: I'm joking. I actually thought what you did / was really commendable.

Sheal: Will you go to lunch?! **Go. To. Lunch!** / Will you go? Go!

Gehazi: Ok, Ok, I'm going. [He hurries out.]

[Sheal goes back to work.]

## Scene 5 - Thursday

[Sheal and Martha recline among pillows, beverages, bowls of fruit, potted and hanging plants. They kiss quietly and laugh at each other's stories, enjoying this stolen intimate moment in a private setting.]

Martha: ...so finally he's up there himself, balanced on a stack of boxes, cleaning off these massive pillars with a milk rag. [Sheal laughs with her] All that money. On these huge, carrara pillars. And we can't even afford / to have them cleaned.

Sheal: [Chuckling] Oh Livvy. His Roman paradise. If Jerusalem had a Greek garrison, they'd be at your place every day. Honestly. Writing songs about how beautiful that portico is. But Romans...uh-uh. They need something they can use.

Martha: Like baths.

Sheal: [Acknowledges the compliment with a small smile, and lets it go.] But that's Livni. He's always had a weakness for outlandish beauty. [He kisses her.]

Martha: How old were you when you started with him?

Sheal: I don't know...11? Yeah, 11 years old.

Martha: And you came all the way here from *Gennesaret* by yourself?

Sheal: Yeah.

Martha: Why did you come here so young? [Trying to remember] Something about your father? If it's none of my business...

Sheal: No, it's... [Shrugs] my dad disappeared when we were young. My little brother was taken in by a family, but I wanted to be on my own, so I came to Jerusalem. Figured I'd find something.

Martha: "Disappeared"? Haven't I heard you talk about your father...?

Sheal: Sorry. I mean, [Taps his head] he "disappeared". After mom died he lost it. Couldn't function.

Martha: I'm sorry.

Sheal: Dad would say he was going fishing...that's what he did...that's what we did...then he would go out and just sit on the rocks. Looking at the water. Everyday. "I'm going fishing boys!" [Gives a thumbs up.] Go get 'em dad.

Martha: He really loved her.

Sheal: Oh, it...yeah. It sounds poetic, doesn't it? But this went on and on...we were little kids making our own meals. Money ran out. My brother and I wore the same clothes to school for 3 years. 3 years! The neighbors had to start feeding us...

Martha: That's awful.

Sheal: I mean, dad was never the driving force in our home, mom was the organizer, but dad was robust. He was hard working. People liked him. And then he just, fell apart.

Martha: Yeah, but you can kind of understand / if he really loved her...

Sheal: I know, I know. A guy loses his wife, it's awful. I get that. But eventually you gotta pull yourself together! You have kids depending on you! I mean, *we* lost a mother *and* a father!

Martha: Yeah...

Sheal: It's a pretty miserable thing to be the man of the house at 9 years of age, when the *real* man of the house is living *in* the house. [Pause. Martha strokes him. Comforts him.]

Martha: And then you moved here.

Sheal: Yep. I traded up.

[Pause]

Martha: Do you ever hear from him...?

Sheal: Sure, when he's broke. And the last thing I need in my life is another drinking buddy. Or a leach.

Martha: I understand.

[Pause. Beat.]

Sheal: I think I just figured something out...

Martha: What?

Sheal: [To himself] Huh. [To her] The tax collector in the tree, remember?

Martha: Uhh, yes...

Sheal: Jesus is itinerant, right? Moves from place to place?

Martha: Is he? Our (friends say he's from...)

Sheal: Absolutely, that's what I'm told. Moves from town, to town, to town. What does that tell you?

Martha: He doesn't get along with his wife? I don't know.

Sheal: He's walking down the road. People all around. He sees a man who is *clearly* wealthy...fancy clothes and jewelry...sitting in a tree. Obviously very interested. So what does he do? He says some really nice things to the guy in front of everybody, the guy gets all mushy 'cause [Major understatement] he's "not well-liked", and boom: Jesus is staying in the nicest house in town.

Martha: You think it's a scam?

Sheal: It's brilliant. It's *disgusting*, but it's brilliant. Oh my god I hate people like that.

Martha: How did we get talking about this?

Sheal: I don't know, we were talking about my dad leeching. Wait, you started it. Why did you want to know about my dad?

[Martha is quiet]

Sheal: What? Is there actually some big reason? [Pause] What?

Martha: Oh Sheal...

Sheal: What?

Martha: [Short pause] I don't know if I should even bring this up.

Sheal: Is this about Livni?

Martha: No. Well, yes...but no. Not really. [Pause] Did you know that my name means "lady of the house".

[Pause]

Sheal: Martha...

Martha: Just hear me out, ok? [Struggles] It means "lady of the house". And ever since I was a kid I always assumed it was...I mean, not even prophetic, that sounds arrogant...but...a foreshadow. A prediction. I mean, marriage is just a given, every girl

assumes that. But it's always been just out of reach for me. It's my *name*...but every time I get close, it gets snatched away, and I thought with Livni it might be different. But Sheal I'm almost 40...

Sheal: What do you mean "snatched away"?

Martha: If we lose the Inn...*when* we lose the Inn... / I'll be right back where I started. Again.

Sheal: Lose the...? [Waits for her to finish] I offered to buy. He thinks he can make it work.

Martha: Sheal. Why would you keep someone as the manager, when he's the one who managed the property into foreclosure? He knows you better than that.

Sheal: We...we'll work together. I'll be reviewing...things. He'll still manage, but under my supervision. No more porticos. [Laughs]

Martha: You asked me why I brought up your dad. I think deep down we both want the same thing. To know where home is. To have a safe place, to have a family...

Sheal: Martha, the man practically raised me, I'm not going to throw him out on the street. He would stay on as manager. You'd both stay right where you are.

Martha: I want to trade up.

[Pause]

Sheal: So many things have to happen / before I can...

Martha: I want to trade up. [She kisses him] I want to be with you. [She kisses him again. The kissing becomes passionate as lights fade to black.]

## Scene 6 - Sheal's Inn

[Filtering into the Inn from outside are the sounds of a jubilant artisan's festival: instruments, the bustle of crowded streets, people singing, laughing and talking, animals braying and clucking, etc. Sheal is scrolling through his reservations for the day, making notes about departure times. Havilah arrives with a large jar which she puts on the shelves behind the counter, then joins Sheal to quietly talk tasks for the day. She shows him a small, open scroll.]

Havilah: Phineas wants to know when he can come by to talk. Did you invite him *here*?

Shealtiel: No...no of course not.

Havilah: Oh, good.

Shealtiel: I'll send him a message. We'll meet at Shimei's.

[Gehazi enters UR.]

Havilah: Ok.

Gehazi: Orpah wants to know if we can spare some lamb?

Sheal: No, we can't.

Gehazi: [Cautiously] I thought Lamb is the one thing we *do* have...

[Sheal looks over to Havilah, who explains on his behalf.]

Havilah: If she gets desperate, she'll ask again. And if she thinks we don't have enough, she'll pay a lot more. The answer is no.

[Decimus enters]

Decimus: Hello.

Sheal: Hello.

Decimus: I'd like a room please.

Sheal: Sorry, we're full.

Decimus: Oh...do you have *anything*? We're here kind of unexpectedly...there was a death in the family.

Sheal: We're full.

Decimus: And there isn't anything / you can do?

Sheal: I'm sorry.

[Sheal goes back to his paperwork. Decimus's wife Silicia enters. She's in the final month of her pregnancy. Sheal sees her.]

Decimus: They're full.

Silicia: [It's been a long, hot day.] Again?

Decimus: Do you need to sit?

Silicia: No, let's just find something. [They turn to leave.]

Decimus: We'll ask at that fish stand.

Sheal: Wait! [Moves out from behind the counter and approaches the couple.]

Sheal: I'm very sorry. I didn't realize...ob-obviously this...this...this...is a different, um, thing. [Havilah and Gehazi are watching Sheal.] I mean, we can't... [Gestures to her stomach] Please, please, sit. [Gets them seated] Right. Um. In any hotel, there are rooms that are "out of order"...you know, little things like a small stain or a damaged piece of furniture that hasn't been fixed yet, and normally...we...it's...we don't offer those rooms. But in an *emergency*, if people can put up with those little, you know, things, we'll we'll we'll we'll we we'll make an exception. [Smiles] So, does that sound...

Decimus: [To Silicia] What do you think?

Silicia: [Hopeful. She wants the journey to be over.] It can't hurt to *look*...

Decimus: What do you have?

Sheal: Gehazi, how many rooms are out of order?

Gehazi: I don't think we have any. [Goes to the master scroll]

Sheal: [More to Decimus than Gehazi] No, I'm sure that we do...

[Gehazi scrutinizes the parchment.]

Havilah: Shealy, Gehazi doesn't read...

[Sheal remembers, breathes out in slight disgust, and moves to the counter as Gehazi sheepishly steps aside.]

Sheal: Let me see. [Pours over it] Hmm. [An idea, but how to go about it?] **Girls!**  
Havilah, would you get a beverage for our guests, and send the girls?

Havilah: Ok... [To the guests] What can I get you?

Decimus: Umm...honey wine, if you have it.

Havilah: Of course. [Tamar enters.]

Silicia: Just some water please.

Havilah: We just brought up some cool milk from the cellar...?

Silicia: That would be nice, thanks.

Havilah: Sure. I'll be right back. [She exits.]

Sheal: [Not aware she's standing nearby] **Tam / ar...!!!**

Tamar: Yes sir? [Sheal is startled.]

Sheal: We need to uh, we need to make up some beds for our guests here. Can you uh, [Checks to make sure Havilah's out of earshot] change the linen in the, uh, the **large** room beside the staircase, with the big door?

Tamar: The big door? Just through here? [Points UR]

Sheal: Yes.

Tamar: At the *bottom* of the staircase? The *big* door?

Sheal: Yes, please. Take Dinah with you. Please make sure it's nice and tidy. Here we go. [Claps his hands. Tamar leaves quickly.]

Sheal: [To Decimus] It won't be long. So...is...is...this a male child, or a female child?

Decimus: [Confused pause] How could we possibly know?

[They look at Sheal. He hasn't thought about this, and now does.]

Sheal: Um...aren't there ways?

Silicia: I don't think so.

Sheal: [Laughs] Well what would I know, I've never owned a child. **HAD**...heh, "own"...I would never buy a child. We haven't *had* our own children, we prefer them inside other people. **Inside other families!** We prefer other peoples' children just...because...we haven't had our own.

[Havilah enters.]

Decimus: This is our first.

Sheal: Right.

Havala: Here you go. [She serves them their beverages.] So did you find a room?

Silicia: Yes, it looks like it.

Havilah: Oh, you're lucky. I thought we were full. Shall I take them?

Sheal: Uhh they're still getting it ready.

Havilah: Ok, well then, we'll wait till they're done.

Sheal: You know Havi, I was thinking, this might take a while, so if you have other things you need to be doing...

Havilah: [No problem] Oh goodness no, they can wait. [Settles] So where are you from?

[Overlapping] Decimus/Silicia: Ptolemais.

Havilah: Ptolemais? That's quite the trip. Did I hear you say you're in town for a funeral?

Silicia: Yes, my father.

Havilah: Oh, I'm so sorry. Was he...

Decimus: He was sick, but...we didn't expect it to happen this fast.

Havilah: Well, I'm very, very sorry. It's never easy is it?

[Tamar enters.]

Silicia: No.

Tamar: The linen is changed sir.

Havilah: Well, I'm glad we can help you out with this at least. Is this all the luggage you have? [Havilah picks up the bags.]

Decimus: Yes.

Sheal: I uhh, I thought maybe the girls could take them in, so I could keep you here and explain...how...we're / going too...

Havilah: Oh no, I'll be right back. Which room is it?

Sheal: It's the room...it's the, uuhhh...it's the LARGE room...the honeymoon suite...with the large door, at the foot of the stairs.

[Pause]

Havilah: The large door at the foot of the stairs?

Sheal: Yes.

[Pause]

Havilah: I believe it's occupied.

Sheal: No....no, it's available. We've changed the sheets.

Havilah: The uh, the "honeymoon suite"...at the foot of the stairs...with the large door? And the counter just inside? With the water pot?

Sheal: Yes.

Havilah: And the bedrooms? On the left?

Sheal: Yes, that's right.

Silicia: "Bed-rooms"?

Havilah: And the paintings? Of *our* families?

Sheal: Yes. [To Decimus and Silicia] It's something we do to make it more personal. You would never actually *know* / that it's *our*...

Decimus: I'm afraid we can't afford a honeymoon suite...

Sheal: Oh no, we'll only charge you for a double. It's the only thing available.

Havilah: Weren't there things left behind by the *previous occupants*? Like jewellery...?

Tamar: Dinah's just making sure we've gathered those things up, m'am.

[Tense pause]

Havilah: Tamar, [Passes off the bags] I think you better show our guests to their room.

Decimus: Praise God!

Sheal: [Quietly] Oh boy...

Silicia: Thank you so much, we really appreciate this.

Decimus: Thank you!

[Decimus and Sicilia move to UR exit with Tamar.]

Silicia: Imagine, *us* in a honeymoon suite...

Havilah: Oh you'll love it. It's very homey.

[Havilah turns to face Sheal. Ugly pause.]

Gehazi: I'll go help. [Hurries out]

[Sheal is left with Havilah, her expression demanding an explanation.]

Sheal: Uhh...

[Lights fade]

## Scene 7 - The Well

[Tamar is turning the handle of the well to bring the water bucket up, which she uses to fill her vessel. Another young woman, in elaborate dress and partial veil, approaches the well with a large transport jar.]

Naomi: Hey Tamar.

Tamar: Oh, hi Naomi!

Naomi: Hey. How's things?

Tamar: We're still trying to recover from the festival.

Naomi: Wasn't it crazy? / Us too!

Tamar: I know! How are things at Nahor's?

Naomi: It isn't SO bad once you get inside, but you know those bums that loiter out front?

Tamar: You've mentioned them...

[At some point as they talk, Tamar finishes filling her vessel and moves aside so Naomi can draw water.]

Naomi: They totally multiply like rabbits during big events like this. [Tamar: Really?] You leave the house for errands and when you come back you have to shuffle past them, and they're, like, grabbing you, and they stink, [Tamar: Ewww.] and you don't know *what* diseases they have...

Tamar: Why do you stay there?

Naomi: Cuz *inside* the tips are good. Because they think that entitles them, right?

Tamar: Yuck. Partying with the tax collectors. [Shudders] I couldn't do it.

Naomi: Well... [Pause] ...at least Caleb is nice.

Tamar: NAOMI!

Naomi: No! I would *never*! I'm just saying, for a tax collector, he's kind.

Tamar: [Eyeing Naomi with playful suspicion.] Yes, he *is* nicer than most.

Naomi: So...I heard you had a sleepover? [Tamar isn't sure what to say.] Havilah, right?

Tamar: Yeah.

Naomi: She really slept in your *room*??

Tamar: Yeah...

Naomi: Someone showed up, who was important or something...?

Tamar: No, just some couple from up north.

Naomi: Oh please. The tax collectors at our place say Sheal is doing business with one of them...Phineas BenMalkiel? Was it him?

Tamar: No, no, he *would never!* We don't even serve tax collectors. The travelers were just normal people. They acted like they didn't expect to be treated well.

Naomi: Weird. Then why did he do it?

Tamar: I don't know what's going on. Gehazi says our Master was already acting strange with the customers before this.

Naomi: You could ask Dinah, she might know?

Tamar: Even if she did know something, she'd never tell. Are you almost done? If I'm late she stands and waits at the door. It makes me feel *terrible*.

Naomi: Just a second, I'm like, *almost* finished. [Finishes pouring the well bucket into her jar.] Ok done. Ooh, goodbye lovely!

[Naomi goes to embrace Tamar, but Tamar cringes and steps back, pointing at Naomi's hands.]

Tamar: I know where those have been.

Naomi: Oh STOP it! It's a *job!* What am I / supposed to do?

Tamar: [Laughs] I'm joking! [Tamar hugs her friend.] I love you Naomi.

Naomi: And I love you! Ooh. [The two women head on their way.] So, what was it like rooming with Havilah?

Tamar: Awwwwwkwaaaaaard.

Naomi: I'll walk with you till the fish market?

Tamar: Sure.

Naomi: Who slept on the floor?

Tamar: She did, actually. She totally insisted.

Naomi: Really?

Tamar: Yeah.

Naomi: Does she snore? [They both laugh.]

## Scene 8 - Sheal's Inn

[Sheal is at the counter. Clement Horatianus, a Roman governmental messenger, enters with a medium-sized scroll bearing ornate ribbon and an official seal.]

Clement: Shealtiel BarDavid?

Sheal: Yes...

Clement: A letter from the Praetorium.

[This is unexpected. Sheal takes the scroll and opens it, begins reading. Clement goes to leave.]

Sheal: Wait. Wait wait wait wait wait wait wait! [He comes out from behind the counter and strides toward Clement] What is this!?

Clement: The engineer Praetus has been recalled to Rome. Quintus Sulla has been appointed head engineer, and has cancelled all vendor contracts related to the Aquaduct.

Sheal: All v...*all!*?

Clement: All. Good day. [Clement turns to leave.]

Sheal: **Wait!** I have a contract! [Sheal moves quickly behind the counter and rummages for the document.] I have a letter from Pilate, signed, / guaranteeing...

Celerius: Quintus Sulla speaks for the Emperor himself. Following the Treasury riot, all contracts with Jewish vendors are void.

[Sheal is stunned. He looks around to make sure no one's in ear shot. He lowers his voice and approaches Clement.]

Sheal: I'm purchasing a *major property* in the southeast. Without a direct water line it's useless to me. This is a new / *Roman bath* (complex I'm making. *For Rome.*)

Clement: All objections can be submitted to Engineer Sulla for review, next year.

Sheal: Next...there's a lot of moving parts / to this deal.

Clement: Good day.

[Clement exits. Sheal is gobsmacked. He looks at the paper in his hand and makes his way back to the counter with this head spinning. Havilah enters.]

Havilah: Shealy...Dinah just told me we're hosting a banquet tonight.

Sheal: Yeah. Yeah...there was some overflow at Baasha's.

Havilah: How many?

Sheal: About 20. Some men / from Bethany, (that area.)

Havilah: 20?

Sheal: Yeah. They were scheduled for supper, but there was a mix-up. I think they were overbooked.

Havilah: Sweetheart, how are we going to feed them?

Sheal: We make extra.

Havilah: But the caravan didn't come in, remember? We don't *have* extra.

[Sheal realizes. Gehazi enters.]

Gehazi: We're hosting some shepherds?

Havilah: We're running short...shepherds?

Sheal: Oh no.

Havilah: You're bringing shepherds? Here?

Gehazi: My thoughts exactly. We just cleaned the place.

Sheal: [To Gehazi] Will you shut up?

Havilah: Sheal... [Collects herself] Ok. First, we have a *policy* about shepherds.

Gehazi. M-hmm.

Havilah: Second, honey, we're running short of supplies for our *own* guests. Baasha's going to have to fend for himself.

Sheal: We have lamb...

Havilah: Passover's coming, we need to save the lamb.

Gehazi: Shepherds eating lamb? That seems wrong...

Havilah: We don't have anything.

Sheal: What time is it?

Havilah: Half past. Everything's closed.

[Sheal groans. Tamar enters.]

Havilah: Can Baasha just do a later sitting?

Sheal: No...he...he can't.

Gehazi: Baasha? These are shepherds from Baasha's?

Havilah: Why not?

Sheal: Maybe he already is. I don't know. These people are out of luck, that's all I know.

Gehazi: Eber told me about these guys. They stiffed Baasha on a bill last time they were here, that's why he won't have anything to do with them.

Tamar: I heard the same thing.

Havilah: Sheal, is this true?

[They're all looking at Sheal.]

Sheal: [Deep breath] Baasha called in an IOU from their last visit, even though it hadn't reached the deadline, and wanted them to pay for both events tonight. They couldn't, so he cancelled their meal, *after* they were already here. It was a pressure tactic, but they genuinely couldn't pay. For both. Look...they're 20 customers we haven't had here before. This is an opportunity. So we're going to treat them like anyone else. Let's get ready!

[Sheal claps his hands and the servants leave. He begins preparing. Havilah speaks quietly to him.]

Havilah: What do you know that Baasha doesn't know?

Sheal: Nothing.

Havilah: Tell me.

Sheal: Go put on your hosting stuff, ok?

Havilah: They couldn't pay their IOU...can they pay for tonight?

Sheal: Yeah, I think so.

Havilah: You *think* so?

Sheal: Yes. They can. Can I explain later?

Havilah: I'm still a bit stiff from sleeping on the floor, and I never got an explanation for *that* one. [No answer] Where are you getting the food?

Sheal: I'll worry about the food. I'll...go talk to Livni. Please. Look...

[He puts his hands on her shoulders.]

Sheal: Trust me, okay Havi? Trust me.

Havilah: Of course I trust you. I'm just really, *really* curious.

[Havilah leaves to get changed. Livni is, of course, the last person Sheal can approach. He sits. Looks up to God in a rare moment of helplessness.]

Sheal: Help me.

Livni: [From main entrance] Hello?

[Sheal looks to the door.]

Livni: Hello? [Livni comes in, holding two large bags of grain.]

Sheal: Hi. What's this?

Livni: [**Not** happy] Here's what I owe you for the tent festival. The rest of it is outside.

[Sheal runs to the door and looks.]

Sheal: All of it???

Livni: Yeah, of course.

[Sheal stares at Livni, then runs back to the UL entrance.]

Sheal: **Gehazi! Dinah!**

Livni: So we're clear? I don't want to hear about it anymore.

Sheal: Thank you! [He embraces Livni emphatically, kissing him on both cheeks. Gehazi and Dinah appear.]

Livni: What's that smell?

[Sheal smells the air above Livni's shoulder-something isn't right. The embrace releases awkwardly. Sheal inspects the bags of grain, smelling them. Livni steps to the door and looks outside.]

Livni: Oh my god, shepherds! They're coming this way. Hurry. Hurry!

[Havilah appears half-dressed in a gorgeous and glittering period gown to see what's happening. Gehazi pulls his shirt up over his nose and Dinah presses her veil against her face as they head outside with Livni, with Havilah following behind. Alone, Sheal picks up the bags of grain and turns to the kitchen. He stops and thinks. Looks at the bags, then looks up to God. His thoughts are interrupted as the servants, Havilah and Livni come rushing back in with assorted baskets, sacks, birds and animals. Sheal moves ahead of them towards the UL entrance, while the sound of men talking bawdily begins to fade in from outside. Lights down.]

## Scene 9 - Livni's Inn

[A knock at the door. Martha crosses and opens it, revealing Sheal.]

Martha: Sheal...

Sheal: Hi.

Martha: [Looks back in the direction of the hallway] Umm...

Sheal: I'm here to see Livni.

Martha: Oh. What about?

Sheal: Business.

Martha: Oh...he's in the bath... [Sheal doesn't move] Do you...want me to get him?

Sheal: Yeah. [She heads for the hallway. Sheal whispers loudly:] No!

[Martha stops. She looks at him. Sheal steps toward her.]

Martha: [Quietly] I can't Sheal. Not here.

Sheal: I don't want you to.

Martha: Then what...

Sheal: Ever. Ever again. I'm not going to see you anymore.

Martha: What? Sheal... [She goes to him, but he backs away.]

Sheal: No. No. I'm sorry.

Martha: Sheal...? What's going on? [She tries to put her arms around him. Sheal blocks her.]

Sheal: It's done. We're done. I'm sorry.

Martha: [Searches him] ...done? You just came...to tell me? That...

Sheal: Yeah.

Martha: Oh. [Realizes] And next you have to talk to Livni.

Sheal: Not right away, I... [Pause] I'm sorry.

Martha: I see. So they accepted your offer?

Sheal: Offer?

Martha: [Biting sarcasm.] It's very kind of you. To take care of this *formality* before evicting us.

Sheal: [Realizes] No, no, I'm not here for that.

Martha: Do you need us out right now, or can we at least stay the night?

Sheal: I'm...I'm here to help him figure out his debt.

Martha: "*Help*" him?

Sheal: Here. Give him this. [Hands her the small scroll.] I have ideas about how we can deal with the city, and I *know* BenMalkiel...I think we can work something out.

Martha: I *bet* your tax collector friend is a part of this.

Sheal: He's not my friend...

Martha: You don't think we know you've talked to him? He owns more of / this place than we do.

Sheal: He has nothing to do with this, except that I... / we...can talk to him.

Martha: How stupid do you think I am?! I know what this is.

Sheal: It's not an eviction / notice, it's...

Martha: [He's lying!] Oh Sheal...I'm going to know what it is as soon as he / opens it.

Sheal: It's a gift.

Martha: [Pause] A gift.

Sheal: Yeah. But it has to go towards debt.

Martha: A "gift". At what rate?

Sheal: Nothing. None. No interest. And no deadline, it's a gift. A *gift*.

[Her eyes investigate him.]

Martha: What is this? What's going on?

Sheal: I don't...I don't even...I've been a terrible friend and I, I...I gotta go. Whatever you do, don't rip that up without looking at it, ok? [Beat] Oh Martha...

Martha: This didn't mean anything.

Sheal: It *did*.

Martha: Then Sheal...

Sheal: But it can't. [Searches her. Gives up.] Tell him to get in touch with me. [Sheal exits.]

Martha: ...Ok.

[Martha holds the scroll. She opens it. Her eyes widen, and she gasps. Gripping it tightly she hurries to the bathroom. Lights down.]

## Scene 10a - Sheal's Inn

[A couple days later. Sheal is cleaning some bowls behind the counter. Gehazi comes from UL with some twine and a hook, and sits at the bench.]

Sheal: What are you doing?

Gehazi: I dropped a key down the grate in there...I'm going to try to lower this down and get it.

Sheal: Good luck.

[Gehazi ties the hook to the string as he exits CL. Sheal finishes wiping his bowl and starts another as Havilah enters. She puts down a bucket and wipes the table. Sheal contemplates her. Her determination to continue. Her beauty. He considers speaking, but can't.]

Gehazi: [Offstage] Rats!!! [Sheal is distracted, and Havilah finishes and leaves. Gehazi enters...] The hook came off. [Crosses stage towards the UR exit. Sheal chuckles.]

Gehazi: What?

Sheal: [Waves it off]

Gehazi: [Wants to hear] What?

Sheal: [Relents] You've heard us talk about my father right? Sitting out by the sea?

Gehazi: I remember. He would say he was going fishing, but leave his nets at home...?

Sheal: Well after about a year, he starts taking string with him. Twine, whatever. And little pieces of metal and hooks. And he ties the hooks and metal to the end of the string, and throws it as far out into the water as he can. Then he just starts pulling it back.

Gehazi: He lost something in the water?

Sheal: No...he thought he was *fishing*.

Gehazi: What??

Sheal: Yeah. So I'm saying...you should be careful, because you might be... [Starts twirling his finger around his ear.] ...losing it.

Gehazi: Wait...so he would attach hooks to his net?

Sheal: No, there was no net. He was sure that he could convince the *big* fish...that his *hooks* were little fish swimming towards the shore. And then if the big fish bit, they would catch themselves.

Gehazi: Did it work?

Sheal: Of course not, it's *ridiculous*. [Disdainfully] Fishing with a hook. And even if it did...catching one fish at a time? It makes no sense, how do you make a living doing that?

Gehazi: That poor man.

Sheal: Although he was hardly attempting to make a living. I think he just needed something to do. You can only sit there looking at water for so long. He told us he thought it was healing his mind. Just a ridiculous man.

Gehazi: [Thoughtfully] It sounds like he wanted to stop hurting. [Sheal looks at him, then goes back to work.] Find a way out, maybe?

[Sheal says nothing.]

Gehazi: [More bold than he would normally be] Did it work? Did he ever start / getting better?

Sheal: No. It didn't.

Gehazi: What's he like now?

Sheal: He's a stupid, crazy old man. Completely self-absorbed. Not a capable father.

Gehazi: So why does he write you so often?

Sheal: Maybe he needs money! I don't know. **It's time to get back to work!** [Gehazi leaves upstage right. Sheal goes back to wiping out bowls. Chuckles to himself dismissively. Gehazi returns with a box full of plain little scrolls.]

Sheal: What's this?

Gehazi: There are some of us who would love to receive letters like this. It's a little bit heartbreaking to see you throw them all away.

[Gehazi leaves the box and exits. Sheal contemplates the box. He places it behind the counter. As he goes back to cleaning dishes, lights dim on the Inn, save for a faint glow on Sheal at the counter. Lights up on the well. Dinah is pouring water into her handled jar.]

## Scene 10b – The Well

[As Dinah fills her vessel from the well, Martha approaches with her own jar. With the possible exception of an initial glance, Dinah doesn't look directly at Martha as she speaks.]

Martha: Good afternoon Dinah.

Dinah: Oh, good afternoon M'am.

Martha: How's things?

Dinah: Fine thank you M'am. I can withdraw if you'd like / to proceed...

Martha: Oh no, that's fine. Go ahead. We're preparing for a trip back to my home in Sychar and I just wanted to get away from the packing for a while. There won't be servants there, and I'm out of practice.

Dinah: [Goes back to work] Ahh. Spending the holiday, M'am?

Martha: Yes, and...um...yes. So, I heard Mr. BarDavid hosted Baasha's shepherds a few days ago.

Dinah: Yes. Thank goodness Master Livni showed up with supplies, or we'd have been in trouble.

Martha: [Brief pause. *In the Inn, Sheal looks down towards the box.*] I've been hearing stories lately...that your Master's made some interesting decisions...

Dinah: Well, they don't pay me to understand decisions M'am. Just to carry them out.

Martha: I know. [Carefully] But...is he going through something...

Dinah: I don't / think so.

Martha: ...is he okay?

Dinah: I think he's fine, M'am.

[Martha nods. *During the silence that falls between the women, Sheal lifts the scroll box up to the counter.*]

Dinah: [Finishes her pouring] I should be going.

Martha: Dinah, what do you know about Sheal...Mr. BarDavid's father?

[Dinah's not sure how to answer. *Sheal lifts out the stickless "dad" scroll rescued by Gehazi from the bird cage. As Martha continues, Sheal unrolls it and begins to read.*]

Martha: [Chooses her words carefully.] How did he...when he went...what sort of things did he do, when people realized that he wasn't well? I mean, was it sudden, or...more...

Dinah: I really don't know enough about it M'am. The Master doesn't talk about it.

Martha: Please don't tell him I asked. But Livni and I are just concerned. It seems like he's making some strange decisions...

Dinah: [Makes eye contact with Martha for the first time] Master Livni's concerned, M'am?

[Pause]

Martha: I'm concerned.

[Pause]

Dinah: I have to go M'am. *Mrs. BarDavid* is waiting for me.

[There is a hint of ice on the word "Mrs." Dinah stiffly but respectfully withdraws. Martha watches her go and sits on the edge of the well. Lights down.]

## Scene 11 - Sheal's Inn

[Lights back to full on the Inn. Sheal is reading the scroll from his father. Havilah enters from UR.]

Havilah: I sent Tamar home. [Sheal looks up] I let her go.

Sheal: What?

Havilah: I went to the cash box to pay her and there was nothing there, so I sent her home.

Sheal: Well go get her and tell her to come back!

Havilah: I will not. They're not slaves, they're servants, and I won't have people here if we can't pay them. I told her –

[Sheal hastens to the exit to try to catch Tamar before she leaves.]

Sheal: What are you / *doing*?

Havilah: I told her not to look for anything else just yet, just go stay with her parents, and we'd send for her in a few weeks when we've sorted things out.

Sheal: So who's doing laundry now? You?

Havilah: [Firm] What's going on?

Sheal: What do you mean what's going on?

Havilah: I mean *what's going on*? Where's the money?

Sheal: I told you, I was giving Livni a loan...

Havilah: *You didn't say you were going to clean us out!* And why *him* of all people?

Sheal: The Romans cancelled our contract.

Havilah: [Stunned] What?

Sheal: They cancelled it.

Havilah: When? Why?

Sheal: It just happened. There's a new guy in charge, it's retaliation for the riots. All Jewish water contracts. Gone.

Havilah: Why didn't you tell me?

Sheal: It just happened!

Havilah: Is Phineas still going to foreclose?

Sheal: There's no water line to Livni's! We could never haul enough water for a / bath that big.

Havilah: *I understand that*, but have you told Phineas so he doesn't go ahead with the foreclosure?

Sheal: Yes. I messaged him two days ago.

Havilah: I thought this just happened!?

[Sheal gathers his papers and tries to leave but Havilah snatches them from his hand, surprising him.]

Havilah: I want to know what's going on! I want to know! You have made more bad decisions in the past month than I've seen you make in your entire life. I feel like I'm living with somebody I don't even know!

[Sheal is trapped. There is an ugly, pregnant pause. How does one even put this into words?]

Sheal: When I was in Jericho...I...saw something.

Havilah: What?

Sheal: [Sheal finds his way to the table and sits down.] Jesus...you know....

Havilah: Yes.

Sheal: ...was in Jericho, and there was sort of a parade for him. It wasn't a parade...people lined up...to see him. Like a parade.

Havilah: Yes...

Sheal: And...[Gathers himself] Ok, there was a tax collector sitting in a tree.

Havilah: In a tree.

Sheal: Yes. And Jesus calls him / down and...

Havilah: Why was he in the tree?

Sheal: I don't know. He was short. He probably couldn't see. Anyway...Jesus stopped and talked to him. Like he was a friend.

Havilah: Friends with a tax collector.

Sheal: Well, not just a tax collector...this guy was the head of the whole show. Gold jewelry, beard perfectly trimmed. The guy beside me said that he's the boss of the whole thing. The chief. And he's sitting in a tree to watch.

Havilah: That doesn't make sense.

Sheal: And Jesus calls him down and they went for lunch.

Havilah: [Silent]

Sheal: And...and...

Havilah: I don't understand.

Sheal: The rabbi walked off with a tax collector.

Havilah: So he's corrupt.

Sheal: No! It was important. He was nice to him.

Havilah: But *why* is that important?

Sheal: *Because he's a tax collector!* Look how we treat Phineas... "don't come by the hotel," "don't tell people we're working together," "don't associate with us in public" because people don't like him and he's bad for business. This is how *we* do business with a tax collector.

Havilah: This is how we do business with a rival's creditor, *despite* the fact that he's a tax collector.

Sheal: That's what I mean. We have laws Havi...we have laws forcing us to treat them badly. Did you know Phineas isn't allowed in the temple? He's not allowed. And they're not *allowed* to testify in court! And they're *not allowed* to do any other job, because if the Romans trust a tax collector, then by law his sons have to be tax collectors! But the Romans still treat them like garbage because they're Jews, and we treat them like garbage because they're collaborators...

Havilah: They *steal* from people!

Sheal: ...*and* because they're criminals, yeah, I know. And because we hate them, and because...we're allowed to. But Jesus looked up into that tree and he said "Come down from there, I'm coming to your house today." And it was a statement. He wasn't being corrupt! He did it in front of everybody, and he said it loud. I mean, *why?* It's a *tax collector!* Everybody hates them. Jesus could have had *the whole crowd* in the palm of his hand if he'd said something mean; they would have *loved* it. But that little guy came apart. He broke down and cried in front of everyone, and he promised to pay back every penny he'd stolen. And Jesus looked at us, and he said "isn't this man as much a son of Abraham as any of you?"

Havilah: [Silent]

Sheal: "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." And it was so beautiful. It was a *beautiful* moment. And **I want** that. [Breaking down] But I don't even know what I'm lost from.

[Havilah softly approaches Sheal and sits beside him.]

Havilah: Sheal. I want to understand. So you're trying to find...that moment? By being good? Are these *vows* you've taken...the loan? That's what's...

Sheal: I don't know.

Havilah: You're discovering religion?

Shealtiel: I don't know. I - I don't. I...maybe? It...it seems like religion, but it's making religious people really angry. I don't know. But a rabbi and a tax collector walked off to have lunch. They might as well have been holding hands. And I - I think I'm seeing glimpses of something...of what I can be...but...I don't know what to do. [Laughs, despite himself, and devolves into tears. Havilah instinctively embraces him to comfort.]

Havilah: Sheal...

[Silence]

Havilah: I love you.

[Silence]

Havilah: When did your dad start to become...the way he is?

Sheal: [Breaks away from her] I'm not becoming like my dad...

Havilah: I'm not saying that you are. But I'm worried about you.

Shealtiel: Don't be.

Havilah: This isn't you. Indecision. Confusion.

Sheal: I-I'll-I'll figure this out. I think.

Havilah: [Readies herself] I don't know if I believe you.

[Sheal says nothing.]

Havilah: It seems like you're getting more and more confused.

Sheal: I'm...this is a really big thing that I'm trying to understand!

Havilah: Sheal, you're a decision maker. You're *excellent* at business. You're decisive, and aggressive.

Sheal: I know...

Havilah: You're *good* at making money...

Sheal: I know! You're right, I am. I know that. And you know why that is? Because I understand people. I know what makes them scared, and what makes them euphoric, and I know how to profit from that. And I know how to anticipate people's reactions to things. And I spot trends before other people do. And when I write an agreement I know how to word it to my own advantage without sounding biased. Those are *abilities* that I have.

Havilah: Those are abilities that you're *losing*!

Sheal: And there may come a time / when I'm able to take...what...I'm...learning and merge it...

Havilah: Sheal I just let an employee go whose been with us for five years!

Sheal: ...merge it all together into something... / some kind of life. Somehow.

Havilah: I'm watching you do things...make decisions that I don't understand and that *aren't working*. / And I've always understood you even when I didn't agree with you, I understood why you were doing the things [overpowers Sheal] ***you were, but now I'm really scared!***

Sheal: / don't even know what this is...that I'm becoming...or learning...I've got to (figure out what this *is*.)

Sheal: Why!?

Havilah: Because you're throwing our future away! Your dad may be a crazy man who lives by the sea and looks at water all day, but my dad is dead and buried! This is all the future I have! This is *my life!* I have *poured* myself into this marriage. Into this business. This business of a marriage.

Sheal: It's isn't just a business...

Havilah: Sheal. I didn't marry you because I thought every night would be chrysanthemums and softly-sung songs. I married you because my father knew, and I knew, that whoever married you would always have nice clothes to wear and a good roof over their head. This has *not* been an easy marriage! And if you're going crazy...

Sheal: I'm not going crazy!

Havilah: Well it looks a lot like you are! It certainly seems to be the consensus opinion! *There's no money in the chest! You gave it away!* Whether this is you going crazy, or whether it's completely true, it's still having the same *effect* as crazy. I am watching my future disappear! And I can't sit by and let that happen. You know me Sheal, you know I *won't* sit by and watch that happen.

[Sheal is stunned and silent.]

Havilah: That's why you love me right? It's why we're such a good team. No nonsense.

Shealtiel: [Takes her by the shoulders] This will work out.

Havilah: [Moves toward the door] I'm going to go stay with my mother for a while.

Sheal: What...?

Havilah: Yes.

Sheal: Your mo...what will you do there?

Havilah: Not go broke as fast. [Pause] I need to make some decisions.

[Havilah moves to the exit. Sheal is dumbfounded. She pauses at the doorway.]

Havilah: Say something to make me stay!

Sheal: ...you're leaving?

[Havilah exits. Sheal remains. Lights down]

## Scene 12 - Sheal's Inn, next day

[Sheal stands at the counter, reviewing the week's figures. Gehazi enters.]

Gehazi: [Tentative] You called?

Sheal: Yeah. [Puts down paper] Dinah and Tamar are going to be on leave for the next few weeks. We're experiencing some...snags. Havilah's going to be staying with her mom for a while.

Gehazi: I heard.

Sheal: Who told you?

Gehazi: No, I mean I *heard*...I was doing laundry right there. [Points beyond the wall behind the counter] You were yelling.

Sheal: I really lost my head yesterday. This has nothing to do with anything but different ideas about business.

Gehazi: Business?

Sheal: Yeah. Look, I'm not going to be able to pay you...for a while. But if I lose you, I can't keep this thing going. Can you give me a couple weeks? We can work out an interest system on whatever days / go beyond (this last pay period.)

Gehazi: Don't worry about it. Where am I gonna go? I'll stay. I'm happy to do it.

Sheal: Thanks. [Sheal moves to the counter to get back to work.] We're going to need some water, first off.

Gehazi: Water?

Sheal: Yes.

Gehazi: ...You mean me? I get it?

Sheal: Yeah.

Gehazi: But...I'm a man.

Sheal: How are we going to run this place without water? Someone needs to get it.

Gehazi: I'm all for equality, but that's women's work!

Sheal: [Broken] Will you just go?

Gehazi: [Sees Sheal is hurting] Ok. I'll go.

[Gehazi walks out. Sheal moves to the table, sits, and tries to look at the numbers again, but can't. Gehazi appears in the doorway again, with a water pitcher, and watches. Sheal buries his face in his hands.]

Gehazi: [Tentatively] I've heard of people suffering for what they believe, but I've never heard of someone suffering this much for something they *don't* believe.

Sheal: What is belief? [To no one] I wouldn't know how to believe in something if I wanted to.

[A pause.]

Gehazi: I think belief is just trusting your hope.

Sheal: "Trusting your hope"?

Gehazi: Yeah. You hope that bench will support you. You think it will. Sitting on it is belief. Better to put your hope in a well-*made* bench, of course...

Sheal: Maybe. [Beat] Are you *religious*?

Gehazi: No. I don't think I am. I always assumed anything I could do couldn't be good enough to be what religion actually is. So I just try to hope and trust where I can.

Sheal: Hm.

[Silence.]

Sheal: A rabbi and a tax collector. Isn't that something?

Gehazi: [Sits and confides] My favorite Jesus story is the one about the man who throws a banquet. And the rich people are all too good or too busy to make it. So the man invites anyone who wants to come...the poor, the bums, the beggars. I don't really understand what it means, but isn't that a nice story?

Sheal: Yeah.

[They sit silently.]

Sheal: Dad's using nets again.

Gehazi: [Big smile] Is he?

Sheal: Yeah. He's been back in the business for years. I don't know how many.

Gehazi: Well that's great.

[Pause.]

Sheal: Gehazi, what would you do if there was no inn? Where would you go?

Gehazi: I have a brother in Ephraim who keeps telling me to come work with him.

Sheal: You have a brother? I didn't know that.

Gehazi: Well, I don't talk about him much... [Makes a "crazy" gesture, moving his finger in circles around his ear.] He used to tell everybody that human beings would fly one day. Then he'd glue feathers to his arms and jump off of rooftops. [Hastily adds] When he was young, when he was young.

Sheal: What does he do now?

Gehazi: He's paralyzed. [Pause] I'm kidding! Not really. Olive oil. Presses it. It's kind of the family business. We all did it growing up. What about you?

Sheal: I don't know. I'd like to see what shape Dad's business is in.

Gehazi: [Intrigued] Really?

Sheal: Yeah. I think I would. Maybe spend a year out there fishing. See if I could make it profitable.

Gehazi: [Thoughtful] Really...

Sheal: Yeah. [Realizes. Quietly surprised at himself.] Hm. That's funny. That's what I want to do. [Pause] Hey... [Walks over to the box of scrolls] What's the deal with this one?

[He lifts the scroll box up onto the counter and pulls out a board, which has pieces of a torn up letter arranged on it and glued like a puzzle.]

Gehazi: That's the one you got at tax time. You were kind of in a mood.

Sheal: Ah. I thought you couldn't read?

Gehazi: Uhh...I just followed the lines. And Dinah helped me.

Sheal: [Meaningfully] Thanks for this.

[Gehazi shrugs. Pause.]

Sheal: Weee still need that water.

Gehazi: I know. I'll... [Struggles to say it] I'll...go get it. [He leaves.]

[Sheal scans the puzzle letter, chuckles, and puts it down. He gets up and goes to the table and brings his record-parchments back to the counter to put them away. He contemplates the box of scrolls. He keeps one blank parchment page out, which he sets on the counter. He then takes a pen-reed out of a jar of ink and comprehends the stationary.]

Sheal: Wow.

[He puts the quill in the jar, and then writes the words "Dear Dad".]

Sheal: [Big exhale] Wow. [He begins to write again, but hears a sound at the opening up-right, and looks over.] Gehazi! **Come here!**

[Gehazi comes in wearing Tamar's dress and veil. They stand looking at each other for several moments.]

Sheal: What...are you doing?

Gehazi: I don't want them to know it's me.

[Pause]

Sheal: It fits you really well.

Gehazi: Thank you.

Sheal: **Now take it off.**

Gehazi: [In a woman's voice] But you haven't even bought me dinner....

Sheal: Go put on your normal clothes!

Gehazi: The potters will eat me alive!

Sheal: Here. [Reaches under the counter] Take some salt.

[Gehazi moans loudly and exits. Sheal contemplates the task before him again. He begins to write. Lights fade.]

### Scene 13 – Home

[Gehazi is behind the counter, and several bags are tied up and leaning against it, waiting for transport. Sheal enters from the front entrance in his outdoor travelling clothes.]

Sheal: It's done.

Gehazi: How was it?

Sheal: Livni's thrilled...he couldn't stop offering me drinks.

Gehazi: How about you?

Sheal: I'm still choking on the irony. But I feel good. I feel good.

Gehazi: You got a good price?

Sheal: Havilah got an excellent price.

Gehazi: That was good of you.

Sheal: [Slumps onto the bench] It's a good deal for everybody. This place is a better fit for Livni. Smaller. More manageable. And he's making a bundle selling his place, so...between that and what I gave him...[Finishes his sentence with a nod]

Gehazi: Did you go by?

Sheal: She wouldn't see me. I left the money with her mom. [Pause] Kept a little start-up capital, I hope it's enough. If this fishing thing works out with Dad I'll write to her, and...I don't know. I don't know.

[Sheal is exhausted. He looks up.] Help me. [He looks over at the door where Livni entered in scene 8. Gehazi looks too, not understanding. They wait...]

Gehazi: I think this is one of those "the Lord helps those who help themselves" moments.

Sheal: [Snaps out of it] Right. [Notices the bags] You're all packed.

Gehazi: Not quite. Getting there.

Sheal: You know, he would probably keep you on...

Gehazi: No, it's time. I'd like to be with family for a while. Try something new.

[They take in the building silently.]

Gehazi: It's the end of an era.

Sheal: Yeah.

[Pause]

Gehazi: So...where are you going to celebrate Passover?

Sheal: [Amazed at himself] I completely forgot. Do you have a place?

Gehazi: [Doesn't want to make Sheal feel bad] Oh, I'm...I'm ok. Really.

[Sheal pauses.]

Sheal: Let's do your meal.

Gehazi: What meal?

Sheal: Your down-and-outer banquet. That story you like. [Gehazi catches on.] Let's go out with a bang. We'll throw whatever's left in the kitchen into a meal, and we'll get the bums from in front of Nahor's, and whoever else is around. I know we have lamb...enough for at least 14 or 15 of us. I mean we gotta clear it out anyway, right? Waddaya think?

Gehazi: I love it!

Sheal: We're going to need water.

Gehazi: Let them starve. [Pause] I'm kidding! I'm kidding. Ok.

Sheal: We'll set up the banquet room. The full treatment.

Gehazi: [Thoughtfully] Our last hurrah.

Sheal: Yeah.

Gehazi: It's a great idea.

Sheal: [Chuckles at it all. Awkward pause.] Well, if we're going to do it...

Gehazi: Alright, I'm off.

Sheal: I'll start setting up.

[Gehazi leaves to find a large water pitcher. Sheal begins opening up cupboards and bringing out his best plates and goblets, which he carries out the UR entrance. Gehazi exits the hotel with water jar in hand. Quietly, soft music fades in. Sheal returns, and as the music continues and builds slowly, we watch a very different Sheal making one trip after another to the entrance, preparing a meal for which he will never be paid. Please take your time with this, there's no rush. Let the audience believe this is the end of the play. The music that inspired this part of the scene was "Jesus Remember Me" by Taize. Then...]

Voiceover: Luke chapter 22, verses 6 to 13. Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked. He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you."

[Two men, Peter and John, enter the inn behind Gehazi and approach Sheal, who is collecting a stack of the same goblets seen in DaVinci's famous "Last Supper" painting. As they talk to Sheal, a look of surprised realization crosses his face.]

Voiceover: "Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there."

[Shealtiel BarDavid has been found. He becomes noticeably emotional, and sinks to the floor as the surprised disciples try to reassure him. Lights fade to blackout.]

Voiceover: "They left and found things just as Jesus had told them."

**The "End"**

Curtain Call

## Scene 14 – Upper Room

[The following scene takes place after the curtain call and brief subsequent blackout, like a bonus scene that appears after the credits of a movie. A spotlight comes up on one end of a long table, parallel to the apron. A lush tapestry hangs behind. We are in the upper room. John and Peter occupy the only two seats visible, at the end of the table. Sheal is filling Peter's cup. The actors may have to play quietly for a moment while the audience calibrates to the fact that a scene is happening.]

Sheal: ...both of you?

John: Yes.

Sheal: You're *both* fishermen?

John: Yes.

Peter: Yup.

Sheal: By trade?

Peter: Well, up until three years ago when we started doing this.

Sheal: I've got some questions for you...

John: [To Peter] Wait. [To Sheal] Sorry. [To Peter] This reminds me, dad says he's tired of storing your boat. You just left it there.

Peter: Ooooooh shoot. [Half jokes to Sheal] Know anyone who could use a boat and some gear for cheap?

Sheal: For cheap?

John: It's way up in Genessaret though.

Sheal: *Genessaret?*

Peter: [Eating] Yeah. You know someone?

[Sheal takes this information in.]

Sheal: Yeah. [Smiles] Yeah I do.

[Blackout.]

**The End**

