

Richard Farber

And Then She Cursed

a theater play

There was famine in the landand Avram went down to Egypt. . . .and he said to Sarai thou art fair to look at . . . and the Egyptians shall say 'this is his wife' and will kill me, but thee they will keep alive. Say therefore that thou art my sister that it be well for me for thy sake and my soul shall live because of thee. [from Genesis XII, 10 - 13]

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cast: Avram He is no longer young.
Sarai She is a very young forty with fair complexion and red or
auburn hair [like King David].
Pharaoh A strong man, in the prime of life
Hagar His daughter, perhaps 16 -18 years old.
Shenhat Two Egyptian Ministers, vaudeville comedians.
& Nefru

duration: a full evening

locations: On a hill top overlooking the land of Egypt.
At the border.
Pharaoh's throne room. [also his sleeping room]
Sarai's room in the castle
Avram's room in the castle.

costumes: The costumes, might be rather realistic and strongly influenced by
period art.

In the opening numbers Avram and Sarai are dressed in long robes
perhaps like the Bedouin of a hundred years ago. Sarai is veiled.

The Egyptians are dressed in short costumes with arms and face bare.
This difference in clothing is important.

scenery: I would not suggest a naturalistic treatment of the scenery.

There could be Egyptian murals projected onto a scrim or back cloth.
There should be some statues in the throne room -- a bull, Iris etc.

Other scenery, bed, throne etc. as suggested by the text.

props: There is a camel that Avram is leading on the way to Egypt. Sarai hides in one of the side bags when they arrive at the border. I would suggest a wire construction on wheels. In the last scene, as they leave Egypt, the slaves and herds of animals can be a projection, but this time Avram and Sarai ride on the camel led by Hagar.

Other props as suggested by the text.

notes: The Egypt in the play is not the rich, lavish, grand, opulent land of some hundreds of years later that we picture at the time of Ramses and Moses but a poorer simpler land before the great pyramids.

Although this is a work for prose theater, I believe that some extensive music sections would work well in establishing the distance needed to relate to the time and the themes of the play.

Music interlude indicated a musical statement of some magnitude. This does not rule out brief musical bridges.

scene list:	name & location	time	participants
No. 1	Overture		
No. 2	“ . . .famine in the land.”summer Hill overlooking border		Avram & Sarai
No. 3	Music Interlude		
No. 4	“At the border” The Egyptian border	later that day	Avram, Sarai, Ministers
No. 5	Music Interlude		
No. 6	“The Mohar negotiation” The Throne Room	a week later	entire cast
No. 7	“Sarai’s lament” Sari’s room		that evening Sarai alone
No. 8	“Drinking beer” Throne room	Concurrent with 7	Avram, Pharaoh, Ministers
No. 9	Music Interlude 2		
No. 10	“The Henna ceremony” The Throne Room	next day at noon	entire cast
No. 11	“Avram proselytises” the Throne Room	continuation of 10	Avram. & Pharaoh
No. 12	Music interlude 3		
No. 13	“Hagar’s instructions & Sarai’s curse” Sarai’s room	just after No. 8	Hagar & Sarai
No. 14	“Avram prays” Avram's room	late that night	Avram alone
No. 15	Music Interlude 4		

No. 16	“Hagar’s Fury” Sarai’s room in the castle	next morning	Sarai & Hagar
No. 17	“Hagar visits her father” Throne room	later that day	Pharaoh & Hagar
No. 18	“Pharaoh’s dream” Throne room	that night	Pharaoh & Ministers
No. 19	“Avram’s prayer” Avram’ room	next morning	Avram and Nefru
No. 20	“Hagar is given by Pharaoh as a slave to Sarai” “Avram and Sarai are evicted from Egypt” Throne room	next morning	entire cast
No. 21	“Leaving Egypt” The hill in scene two	some time later	Avram, Sarai & Hagar
No. 22	“Pharaoh’s epilogue” The Throne Room	concurrent with No. 21	Pharaoh & Ministers

No. 1 Overture THE MUSIC SHOULD ESTABLISH A FEELING OF
DESERT & SOLITUDE. HUNGER AND ANGUISH SHOULD ALSO BE PRESENT.

No. 2 On a Hill overlooking the border of Egypt Avram and Sarai.

AT THE END OF THE OVERTURE AVRAM AND SARAI ENTER LEADING A CAMEL.
THEY LOOK AT THE LAND OF EGYPT IN THE DISTANCE. THE CAMEL MIGHT BE A
STYLISED WIRE STRUCTURE ON WHEELS.

AVRAM: A land of no morals
 A land of iniquity
 A land of sin.

SARAI: A land with food
 And water.

AVRAM: We should have stayed in Canaan. It was God's will.

SARAI: Was is God's will that we starve to death ?

AVRAM: No, it cant be.

SARAI: Our flocks are gone, our fields dry.

AVRAM: He promised.

SARAI: He promised many things
 Yet still I am barren as the land is now in drought.

AVRAM: He promised and he will fulfil.

SARAI: Amen, may it be his will.

AVRAM: Amen. [PAUSE]
 It is His will, I'm sure. And we must do His will.

SARAI: Barren. I am still barren.

AVRAM: You shall give birth, He promised,

SARAI: [CYNICAL] A great nation, a great name, blessed, our enemies
 cursed. [PAUSE] I would like just one son.

AVRAM: You shall have many. He promised.

SARAI: He promised us Canaan and gave us drought.

AVRAM: Yes. [PAUSE] Yes, He promised.

SARAI: He commanded that we walk from Ur, the land where the rivers meet, back home to Haran, and then finally reunited with my family, back with my sisters and my cousins you again have a dream and again we break our camp and walk and walk and walk to the promised land.

AVRAM: Our land, a beautiful land.

SARAI: When there is rain.

AVRAM: All right.

SARAI: And then we break camp again, what's left of it . . . and walk and walk and walk. Even the goats have died.

AVRAM: All right, enough ! We're almost there. [PAUSE] Its true what you say, not a single goat left, not a kid, not a sheep, just the one camel . . . but we're almost there

SARAI: And where is that? Where is this "almost there" that you speak of. Is it another "promised land".

AVRAM: No, It's not another promised land. It's the land of Egypt. Not our land.

SARAI: No, not our land. A land with water. I know what you say, a land with a river that never runs dry, a land where there is food for all and the people are kind to strangers. No, not Canaan.

AVRAM: Yes, a very kind land this Egypt. [BITTER] especially to their guests who are women.

SARAI: What do you mean?

AVRAM: There is a danger that I've heard about. Two ministers stand at the border and take any beautiful women who comes into the land as a gift to Pharaoh.

SARAI: [MAKES A GESTURE OF] It doesn't concern me.

AVRAM: And I have now come to know that you are a fair woman to look upon.

SARAI: You've now come to know ?! I've just spent three months walking the desert without a drop of water to wash my face and you've just now come to know . . . come to know what ?

AVRAM: That in the eyes of the Egyptians you will seem the sun at noon and the moon when it is full.

SARAI: Only in their eyes?

AVRAM: I love you Sarai. The trials of many journeys have not effected your beauty in my eyes.

SARAI: I asked you a question.

AVRAM: All women grow older under the burdens of life. Only you dear Sarai grow younger and younger as the years pass and our journeys grow longer.

SARAI: I asked you a question.

AVRAM: The Egyptians are like the people in the South of Canaan, small and dark, quick of movement . . . and you are tall and graceful and your hair is like that of you sisters in the mountains of Haran.

SARAI: But it is only you who sees my hair, only you who looks into my face. The sun hasn't seen my nose since I was a little girl shepherding goats for my father Lavan. And God willing, it wont.

AVRAM: Look again at the Egyptians in the valley bellow. Look again. Those are not only youths who dress like that. Some of them are women.

SARAI: God forbid.

AVRAM: The law in Egypt is that all must dress in the costume of the land. No one can conceal his face or wear robes where he might hide a weapon.

SARAI: But I ? Must I . . . ? My face is covered to all but you.

AVRAM: That is the law here.

SARAI: I wont go. I wont walk down the hill. I wont prostitute my face . . . not for a bowl of porridge or a cup of water. We're going back.

- AVRAM: There is nothing to go back to until the rains come. PAUSE Nothing but starvation
- SARAI: How can you do this to me ?
- AVRAM: But I wont. I have a plan. I will hide you in the saddle bag of the camel when we go down the hill. Only after we cross the border and enter into the land will you come out.
- SARAI: [WITH HOPE] The bags are almost empty as it is . . .
- AVRAM: Once we are in the land there is less danger, Pharaoh's men, as I was warned, wait at the border.
- SARAI: You knew, you knew before we set out.
- [PAUSE FOR ANSWER. THERE IS NONE]
- SARAI: I would not have come. [PAUSE] No. Not if I had known the danger to which you try my soul.
- AVRAM: To live - to fulfil God's will - takes precedent to any sin.
- SARAI: Alright then. We've come this far and we would not survive the journey back to Canaan.
- AVRAM: Then we've agreed.
- SARAI: [AFTER A PAUSE] [ALMOST A QUESTION] You would threaten my very being in order for us to live ?
- AVRAM: Yes. It is His will that we live.
- SARAI: [AFTER A PAUSE] His will ?
- AVRAM: Yes, His will that we shall live and from us shall come forth a great nation. [PAUSE] Then we agree !
- SARAI: [UNCERTAIN] Yes. [PAUSE] [MORE CERTAIN] Yes, we agree.
- AVRAM: Good, and remember the custom of our family when they go out with their flocks.

SARAI: Which custom?

AVRAM: If any Egyptian should look at you . . . look at you face . . . look . . . I mean to say with lust in his heart . . . you shall say that you are my sister. If the Egyptian would know that your are my wife they would kill me butsave you alive. Say, I beg of you, that you are my sister and it may be well for me for your sake. My soul shall live because of you.

SARAI: Yes I will do this because it is not a lie. You have given me your property to inherit when you die as if we were brother and sister to the same father and not to two brothers. You did this at the gate of the city of Ur before ten elders and I thank you for this forever. [PAUSE] Yes, I will do this thing that you may live.

AVRAM: If they catch us in the Land of Egypt we will stall for time. We'll find a chance to run away.

SARAI: God willing.

AVRAM: But with a little luck it wont be necessary, God willing. Come let us unpack the camel and find the best way to hide you.

No. 3 Music Interlude

No. 4 At the Border Avram, Shenhat & Nefru

ENTER AVRAM LEADING CAMEL. SARAI IS AS IF HIDDEN IN ONE OF THE TWO CAMEL BAGS. SHE DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE SCENE.

SHENHAT: Where from, friend ?

AVRAM: From the land of Canaan, North of Shur your vassal state.

NEFRU: You don't look a Canaanite. [SAY AS IF "YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE A JEW"]

AVRAM: And how are Canaanites supposed to look ?

NEFRU: Not like you old man.

SHENHAT: And where to ?

AVRAM: To Goshen, or perhaps further on, to the River of Egypt. I hear it is

magnificent.

NEFRU: It is.

SHENHAT: A wonder, a gift. Life that flows from the desert.

AVRAM: Not like the rivers in Canaan, dry half the year.

NEFRU: There's famine in your land I hear tell.

AVRAM: Yes.

NEFRU: And you're from Canaan ?

AVRAM: As I said.

NEFRU: [MOCK SORROW AND PATHOS] And there is famine in the land.

SHENHAT: What will you do in Egypt?

NEFRU: Beg?

SHENHAT: Starve?

NEFRU: Steal?

AVRAM: No lords, I've come to work.

SHENHAT: Sheep herding? Goats?

NEFRU: Camels? Y'haven't done a good job with that one.

AVRAM: Yes my lords but I also know the work of a builder, I can build of mud and straw.

SHENHAT: [SUSPICIOUS] Where did you learn that?

AVRAM: In Ur, from the Kasdim.

NEFRU: You said you're from Canaan . . .

SHENHAT: Get your story straight . . .

NEFRU: Don't lie to Pharaoh's ministers.

AVRAM: No, I was born in Haran, in the far North. I only lived a while in Ur where I learned to bake bricks and build with them.

SHENHAT: First you say that you are from Canaan and then you say that you are from the far North.

AVRAM: Yes my lords, high mountains and snow.

NEFRU: [MOCKING] Blue eyes and fair skin.

AVRAM: Yes, sometimes.

SHENHAT: And light hair, the color of gold, sometimes copper, sometimes brass.

AVRAM: Yes.

NEFRU: People from the North are barbarians, but their women are fair.

AVRAM: Yes, sometimes.

SHENHAT: And mighty Pharaoh has decreed that all the beautiful women be brought to him.

NEFRU: He has the right to choose.

AVRAM: Choose what, great sirs?

NEFRU: For his bed, and sometimes for ours.

AVRAM: Yes great sirs, but alas, there are no women here.

SHENHAT: No wife ?

NEFRU: No daughters ?

AVRAM: No, great sirs, no women,.

SHENHAT: Just one little moment. I don't understand.

NEFRU: He doesn't understand.

SHENHAT: First you say you are from Canaan . . .

NEFRU: . . . you did say that . . .

SHENHAT: . . . and then you said from Ur

NEFRU: . . . he said that too . . .

SHENHAT: . . . and then from the far North you said. . .

NEFRU: . . . the cold cold cold far North.

AVRAM: I am a wanderer sirs, and wanderers do go from one place to another.

SHENHAT: You said you lived in cities . . .

NEFRU: . . . a city dweller, not a wanderer . . .

SHENHAT: in fabled Ur . . .

NEFRU: . . . all towers and ziggernots

SHENHAT: Ziggerwhats?

NEFRU: . . . ziggernauts . . .zigerettes . . .

AVRAM: I lived there for a while but now I wander.

SHENHAT: Wander you say . . .

NEFRU: A moment ago you said you know how to build cities.

AVRAM: I do. I know how to build.

SHENHAT: Will you build us a city in Egypt?

NEFRU: Will you build us two great cities?

SHENHAT: Two cities of mud and straw . . .

NEFRU: . . . and a tower to reach the sky ?

AVRAM: Yes lords, if it is God's will.

SHENHAT: A city builder ?

NEFRU: Towers ?

SHENHAT: A wanderer in the desert with no sheep and no goats.

AVRAM: Yes, I lost my flocks, my sheep, my goats.

SHENHAT: All except this one camel.

NEFRU: He does look skinny.

AVRAM: Little water, less food.

NEFRU: But his bags are very very full.

AVRAM: All that I hold valuable in this world.

SHENHAT: And in the next ?

AVRAM: There is God.

NEFRU: Yes, many of them, but Ra is the greatest. . .

SHENHAT: . . . and he will protect you . . .

NEFRU: . . . when we find gold and silver in you camel bags.

AVRAM: No gold and no silver my friends.

SHENHAT: Just household belongings?

NEFRU: Nothing out of the ordinary?

SHENHAT: All within the costumes limit.

AVRAM: Exactly. Just household belongings. All my household . . .

SHENHAT: On the back of that one undernourished camel.

PAUSE. AVRAM GOES TO CAMEL AS IF TO TELL SARAI TO BE QUIET.

AVRAM: Yes, my household, my pearl, the straw to support me in my old age.

SHENHAT: I beg your pardon.

NEFRU: Pearls straw swine ?

NEFRU: Pearls did you say ?

AVRAM: No pearls, just a figure of speech.

SHENHAT: Should we have him unload ?

NEFRU: It is hot.

SHENHAT: And he didn't offer us anything to eat or drink.

AVRAM: I have nothing.

SHENHAT: Or a coin or two. . .

NEFRU: . . . to buy a sour bowl of beer

AVRAM: Alas my friends, I have nothing.

SHENHAT: Friends ?

NEFRU: First we are lords and then sirs . . .

SHENHAT: . . . and now we are his friends.

NEFRU: My friend ?

SHENHAT: His friend ?

NEFRU: Our friend ?

SHENHAT: We are not friends to barbarians from the North.

NEFRU: We're hardly friends to one another.

AVRAM: Love you neighbour as you would yourself.

SHENHAT: A good line.

NEFRU: A very good line.

SHENHAT: Catchy, pithy.

NEFRU: Pity

SHENHAT: It has impact.

NEFRU: But it wont help.

SHENHAT: Not with two loyal ministers of the great Pharoah . . .

NEFRU: That you didn't offer food to . . .

SHENHAT: Or a drink . . .

NEFRU: On this scorcher of an Egyptian day.

SHENHAT: Unload the camel !

AVRAM: God help me.

NEFRU: No, you can unload yourself.

SHENHAT: We wont help you, it's too hot.

NEFRU: And he wont . . .

SHENHAT: Not if you call Him twenty times.

AVRAM: Must I ?

NEFRU: No.

SHENHAT: You don't have too.

NEFRU: No, not at all.

SHENHAT: You don't have to unload the camel if you don't want too. Does he Nefru ?

NEFRU: No, my dear old Shenhat . . .

SHENHAT: We wouldn't want to inconvenience an uncalled for visitor . . .

NEFRU: . . . an uncouth Barbarian . . .

SHENHAT: . . . we won't inconvenience you . . .

NEFRU: . . . we can just kill you . . .

SHENHAT: . . . but then we would have to unload the camel ourselves . . .

NEFRU: . . . and it is hot . . .

SHENHAT: . . . a very hot summer . . .

NEFRU: . . . and very dry . . .

SHENHAT: . . . famine, they say in Canaan . . .

NEFRU: . . . so why don't you save yourself . . .

SHENHAT: . . . and my poor back

NEFRU: . . . all this trouble.

NEFRU & SHENHAT: Unload the camel !

AVRAM FIRST UNLOADS THE BAG WITHOUT SARAI IN IT. IS HAS A RUG, SOME CLOTHING, SOME UTENSILS.

SHENHAT: You could of course pay customs duties as if the bag was full of . . .

NEFRU: . . . peas ?

AVRAM: Agreed.

SHENHAT: . . . pepper corns ?

AVRAM: Agreed.

NEFRU: . . . pearls ?

AVRAM: Agreed.

NEFRU: Well then, we're all agreed.

SHENHAT: He doesn't have to unload the second bag. [PAUSE] Does he ?

NEFRU: No, we'll just stick a lance through it and report that we did a thorough investigation.

AVRAM: Alright, you've won. Sarai come out.

SHENHAT: Sarai, is that a women's name . . .

NEFRU: . . . a wife, a daughter ?

SHENHAT: . . . has your camel carried a little piece of mountain cold all the way from Haran?

AVRAM: My sister. [GIVING HER A CLUE] Come out my sister. Come out my sister waiting to be a bride.

SHENHAT: Pharaoh has us on the lookout for good looking women.

NEFRU: Yes.

SHENHAT: And perhaps we have found one fair enough for mighty Pharaoh.

No. 5 Music Interlude

**No. 6 Ministers bring Sarai and Avram before Pharaoh.
The Mohar [the dowry given by the groom to buy a wife].
The throne room some days later entire cast**

THE THRONE ROOM IS SMALL AND POOR. IT ALSO SERVES AS PHAROAH'S SLEEPING CHAMBER. THIS IS NOT THE RICH EGYPT OF THE PYRAMIDS. PHAROAH SITS ON A THRONE AND HAGAR, HIS DAUGHTER, SITS ON A SMALLER THRONE NEXT TO HIM.

ENTER THE TWO MINISTERS. AVRAM AND SARAI STAY BY THE ENTRANCE.

PHAROAH: Welcome my ministers

SHENHAT: Shenhat greets you mighty Pharaoh.

NEFRU: Nefru too greets you great one.

PHARAOH: The cause for you long dry journey from the border ?

SHENHAT: A woman, great Pharaoh.

NEFRU: From the land of Haran.

SHENHAT: A woman mighty one a daughter of that far off land.

PHARAOH: And where is that place that we have not heard of it?

AVRAM: [ENTERING] If I might speak, mighty one.

PHARAOH: Speak !

AVRAM: Haran, my lord, is in the mountains to the very far North. North of the city of Damsk near the source of the two great rivers that flow through Ur.

PHARAOH: Yes, Damsk pays tribute to me, and I trade with Ur and the people of Kasdim.

SHENHAT: My lord ?

PHARAOH: At least you have not brought me a wife from the sun or a concubine from the moon.

NEFRU: We have done as we were commanded.

PHARAOH: That we shall see soon enough. [PAUSE]
And who is he ?

SHENHAT: The brother, mighty Pharaoh

PHARAOH: [TO HIMSELF] And from the North shall evil come . . . [TO AVRAM] So you have brought me tribute from the barbarous mountains of the North.

SHENHAT & NEFRU: Yes mighty one.

PHARAOH: I speak to the brother !

SHENHAT & NEFRU: Yes mighty one.

AVRAM: Yes mighty one.

SHENHAT: Hidden in a camel bag.

NEFRU: We had to do a song and dance before we got around his tricks.

PHARAOH: [AS IF ANGRY WITH AVRAM] Hidden !

AVRAM: I brought her for you mighty Pharaoh, for you alone. I was just protecting her from the eyes of your slaves.

PHARAOH: How dare you speak of my men like that. These are not my slaves but my ministers -- my ministers for customs, my ministers for the treasury, and my ministers for . . . shall we say . . . procurement.

AVRAM: Sorry mighty one.

SHENHAT: Dressed from hair to toe, in a dusty rag . . .

NEFRU: Not like a cultivated lady at all.

AVRAM: A gift for my lord.

NEFRU: . . . wrapped in rags ?

SHENHAT: . . . hidden in a camel bag ?

AVRAM: A gift for my mighty lord.

SARAI: [ENTERING] No, my lord.

AVRAM: Quiet.

SARAI: No my lord. I am no man's gift.

SHENHAT: Quiet now !

NEFRU: Not a word, bitch !

AVRAM: My lord, my great and mighty king of kings.

NEFRU: Why is she wrapped again this way ? [HER FACE IS VEILED]

SHENHAT: She's more a mummy than Pharaohs mommy . . .

NEFRU & SHENHAT: . . . may she rest in peace

AVRAM: I . . . I . . . my mighty lord . . .

NEFRU: Uncloak!

SHENHAT: Take the wrappings off the gift . . .

SARAI: I dressed again as is the custom in my land to appear before strange men.

NEFRU: Uncloak I said !

SHENHAT: No one is permitted before great Pharaoh that could be concealing a weapon.

SARAI DROPS HER CLOAK AND HAS UNDER IT A TUNIC MORE OR LESS IN THE EGYPTIAN STYLE.

HAGAR: A witch !

PHARAOH: [AFTER A LONG PAUSE, LOOKING AT HER] Her hair, like the sun.

HAGAR: Father careful.

PHARAOH Oh Ra. the sun . . .

HAGAR: Father listen, please.

PHARAOH: [TO HAGAR] Shhh ! Pharaoh speaks.
[TO AVRAM] What is the custom in your land, between your people?

AVRAM: My lord ?

PHARAOH: . . . between a man, a woman and her brother ?

AVRAM: I . . . I . . . great Pharaoh . . .

PHARAOH: Do you mean that among your people a woman is a gift ?

AVRAM: No my lord. There is Moharu . . . Hammurabbi's code.

HAGAR: Great Pharaoh !

PHARAOH: [PATIENTLY] For the last time. Pharaoh speaks.

HAGAR: Yes, great one. Your daughter obeys

PHARAOH: Good, now again to you. You said Hammurabbi's code.

AVRAM: Yes, great Pharaoh.

PHARAOH: Good. We here follow it too.

SHENHAT: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] Three oxen . . . ?

NEFRU . . . or four ?

PHARAOH: There must be a code to govern the ways of men . . .

NEFRU: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] Five at least . . .

SHENHAT: . . . if not ten

PHARAOH: . . . to be sure that they behave honorably between themselves and not like animals.

SHENHAT: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] A loaf of silver !

NEFRU: Not less than two !

PHARAOH: What will you have for your sister ?

NEFRU: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] Gold !

SHENHAT: Gold ?

NEFRU De - fin - nite -lytoo.

SHENHAT: No, not gold.

NEFRU: With hair like that?

HAGAR: Quiet there ! You disturb the Pharaoh.

SHENHAT & NEFRU: Yes, great lady.

NEFRU: With hair like that in the North . .

SHENHAT: Who knows what lies down South.

HAGAR: Quiet !

AVRAM: Great Pharaoh, I have not thought . . .

SHENHAT: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] What about slaves ?

NEFRU: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] Handmaidens ?

HAGAR: Enough you two !

SHENHAT & NEFRU: Yes, great lady.

PHARAOH: I asked what you will have for your sister. Moharu, a simple question.

AVRAM: May I not give her to great Pharaoh as a gift ?

PHARAOH: [SOFTLY] A gift for me? For Pharaoh. [ANGRY] No. You may not.

SARAI: For you my Lord, yes, but for my brother . . .

HAGAR: Stop her !

SHENHAT: [TO NEFRU] Help me !

NEFRU: Out with you [TAKING HER AWAY] Out !

PHARAOH: Stop ! Bring her near ! Let me look closely at her !

NEFRU: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] Look the she donkey in the mouth . . .

SHENHAT: The gift mare . . .

NEFRU: The golden surprise . . .

SHENHAT: The bright shining eyes . . .

AVRAM: Great great pharaoh . . .

HAGAR: [TO AVRAM] On you face !

AVRAM: [FALLING TO THE FLOOR] Great merciful Pharaoh.

HAGAR: That's better,

PHARAOH: [LOOKS CLOSELY AT SARAI] [TO HIMSELF] She is glorious in her beauty.
[TO AVRAM] No. Arise. [TO HIMSELF] The sun . . . Thank you Ra.
[TO AVRAM] No, get up. If we are to be brothers-in-law you may stand.

HAGAR: [TO HERSELF AS IF TALKING TO AN ERRANT CHILD]
Again father ? Yet again ?

SHENHAT: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] Brothers in law ? Those two ?

NEFRU: . . . for a night or three.

SHENHAT: . . . month at least.

PHARAOH: Better yet, come sit with me.

SARAI: Pharaoh ? I want . . . [to beg your understanding]

HAGAR: Quiet !

PHARAOH: Sit down with your Pharaoh.

SARAI: Please hear me.

HAGAR: Quiet !

NEFRU: Speak not to Pharaoh.

SHENHAT: No words allowed

NEFRU: A groan or two from royal pleasure . . .

AVRAM: Great, mighty Pharaoh . . .

PHARAOH: And as I asked before, try not my patience, how is the Moharu conducted in your land?

AVRAM: Between man and brother ?

SHENHAT: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] Horse trader . . .

NEFRU: . . . whore monger . . .

SHENHAT: . . . talk about yourself !

NEFRU: . . . I'll talk of both of us . . .

SHENHAT: . . . yes, we did bring her in.

PHARAOH: Tell me what you will have for you sister ?

AVRAM: For my sister, lord ?

HAGAR: Stop answering a simple question with another question.

SHENHAT: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] . . . his grandmother too . . .

NEFRU: . . . if the price is right.

PHARAOH: Say a fair price and it is yours.

AVRAM: I wish to sojourn in the land of Egypt until the famine passes.

PHARAOH: That you have, for you and your sons and you son's sons.

SARAI: Amen, may it be his will.

HAGAR: . . . vipers to nest in our house.

PHARAOH: [DICTATING] Pharaoh proclaims . . .

NEFRU: A moment sire, please. [PAUSE]

SHENHAT: I've got the papyrus

NEFRU: . . . and you've got the quill

SHENHAT: Ready great Pharaoh.

PHARAOH: [DICTATING] Pharaoh proclaims that Avram the wanderer and his

descendants . . .

SHENHAT: . . . proclaims that Avram, the wanderer and his . . . [TO NEFRU] how do you spell descendants ?

NEFRU: Give it here ! [TAKES PAPYRUS AND QUILL] de . . . scen . . . dants . . . Ready great Pharaoh.

PHARAOH: [DICTATING] . . . forever may come and find food and safety . . . in the Land of Egypt . . . in times of famine or trouble.

AVRAM: Thank you magnificent one . . .

SARAI: . . . magnanimous one.

HAGAR: Did you record great Pharaoh's words ?

NEFRU: Yes, great lady.

SHENHAT: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] And ?

NEFRU: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] And . . . clink clink clink clink . . .clink [IMITATES SOUNDS OF HEAVY COINS.]

AVRAM: Pharaoh, she is yours if she wills it, and I ask nothing else of you.

HAGAR: She has no choice.

PHARAOH: Nothing, you ask nothing else ?

AVRAM: Your friendship, great one.

SARAI: Well said.

PHARAOH: The pharaoh's friendship?

SHENHAT: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] The next thing he'll want to be minister.

NEFRU: . . . No, he'll want to be chief privy advisor . . .

SHENHAT: . . . and teller of dreams.

PHARAOH: What of Hammurabbi's code, the Moharu ? Would you make me a

beggar, a receiver of gifts against the custom ? In my own land ?
Against the laws of men and gods?

AVRAM: I . . . no Pharaoh.

SARAI: [ASIDE, MOCKING] Avram, Gods chosen.

PHARAOH: Name a price and it shall be yours.

AVRAM: In my country it is the bridegroom who makes an offer.

SHENHAT: [BETWEEN THEMSELVES] And then he'll ask double . . .

NEFRU: . . . triple for a woman like that.

HAGAR: You've got no taste !

PHARAOH: So be it . . . done. You will receive the Moharu that I gave for the first
daughter of the king of Nubia.

SHENHAT: [TOGETHER] Sire, no !

HAGAR: [TOGETHER] Father !

NEFRU: [TOGETHER] The treasury !

AVRAM: It is too great a price !

PHARAOH: . . . and too beautiful a woman.

SHENHAT: No woman is too beautiful for Pharaoh.

NEFRU: Think of the treasury.

HAGAR: That is not beauty, that is witchcraft.

SARAI: [ASIDE] God, please . . .

NEFRU: Great, mighty pharaoh . . .

SHENHAT: It is too high a bride price.

HAGAR: The treasury was empty for over a year.

SARAI: [ASIDE] Avram careful.

AVRAM: It is too great a price. [AVRAM HAS BEEN TRICKED]

PHARAOH: If you say so, then I agree. [TO MINISTERS] Write this down:
Twenty sheep, ten goats, six head of cattle, two camels . . .

SHENHAT: Twenty sheep, ten goats, six head of cattle, two camels . . .

NEFRU: . . . he has one already, a female . . .

PHARAOH: . . . a single camel and some typical measures of corn and oil
and wine.

AVRAM: No slaves ?

PHARAOH: Not a one.

AVRAM: No handmaids ?

HAGAR: No Egyptian shall serve you. No, not a one.

AVRAM: Done.

PHARAOH: Done.

[PHARAOH AND AVRAM SHAKE HANDS IN A STYLISED FOREARM TO FOREARM
GRIP.]

SHENHAT: [ALoud] A fair price ! [ASIDE] no silver.

NEFRU: [ALoud] A very fair price ! [ASIDE] no gold.

SHENHAT: [ALoud] A very very fair price [ASIDE] no slaves.

PHARAOH: My brother, my bride . . .The henna ceremony will be tomorrow.

SARAI: [TOGETHER] Tomorrow ?

AVRAM: [TOGETHER] Tomorrow?

PHARAOH: Would you have it tonight? It could be arranged

AVRAM: But a month is our costume in Ur.

SARAI: Two weeks at least.

PHARAOH: And the month after that the wedding.

AVRAM: Yes.

SARAI: Yes.

PHARAOH: No. Tomorrow shall be the Henna ceremony. Tomorrow we shall be bound together, midday when Ra is high in the sky.

SARAI RUNS OUT OF THE ROOM.

HAGAR: Get her ! AVRAM MOVES TO RUN AFTER HER.

PHARAOH: No, let her go.

NEFRU: She is just exited. . .

SHENHAT: Expectant . . .

NEFRU: He is not called Great Pharaoh for nothing.

SHENHAT: Great as in a marble obelisk.

NEFRU: Great like a massive tree that we sometimes see that comes down on the Nile flood.

SHENHAT: A upstanding monument to all that is . . . [upstanding in Egypt]

HAGAR: Enough !

PHARAOH: Come, stop this wedding night humour.

SHENHAT: Spring . . . flood . . . massive . . .

NEFRU: Monumental ! Your sister will be a happy woman.

HAGAR: Men, they are children.

PHARAOH: We shall have a little celebration. The men in the castle . . .

HAGAR: Bye your leave father.

PHARAOH: You may go.

HAGAR May your grandfather Ra protect you . . . and all of us.

[HAGAR EXITS]

PHARAOH: There is this new drink we have. We call it biru. Come sit by my side brother in law and we shall drink it together. No, don't worry about your sister. She will slowly come to her senses. Pharaoh will take good care of her.

You have read the first six scenes of the play. For a complete copy and information about performance rights please contact me or Mr. Guido Huller at Drei Masken Verlag