

# SALOME

(A Monodrama)

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*(The stage is only very dimly lit. It represents a prison cell, a dungeon, an old unused cellar or something of the kind. Salome enters through the only door, which is somewhere at the back. She is wearing an old, shabby, dark tunic in the style of the period (Roman Empire, Emperor Caligula's reign). The dress underneath is of a lighter colour than the tunic, which she takes off in the course of the performance, but both are equally shabby. The dress underneath still shows evidence of former luxury. Somewhere in the folds of her dress she may have some hidden jewels that she can pin on to adorn herself with later. She also has a little tambourine concealed there and perhaps the remains of some humble food or a little jug of water. After a while she moves nearer to the proscenium and looks around her. She stops and hesitates for a moment. In the middle of the stage there is something that looks like the remains of a tombstone. She goes right up to it.)*

Salome: Here it is. So I've come after all. Is it a return or a vicious circle? Brr. It's cold in here. Desolate, famous castle of Macherus, welcome the one who was once almost your ruler! Didn't you recognise me? I'm not surprised. I'm desolate, too. So desolate that sometimes I can't even recognise myself. Well. Hal-lo! Nothing. No fanfares, no flags, no one to welcome me, no dignitaries swoon at the sight of my beauty. It's a long time since anyone swooned at the sight of my beauty. *(She looks around her.)* Darkness, cold, death. How strangely quiet it is here. Maybe time has stopped in this place. It no longer passes. I left here when I was seventeen. Ten years ago. Since then time has not moved on. It stopped at the point when it happened.. Yes, yes... outside time is passing, I'm growing older, one day I shall wither altogether, but there will be nothing left in my life  
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by then. There was nothing anyway. The only important thing remained here, in this cell. The only important thing in my life - death. Death, which I brought to you, Jokanaan. Everything reverved around that point, but everything stopped, too. Why have I come here? To this place, the castle of Macherus, a magnificent fortress with thick walls, invincible defences, spacious halls and crowded dungeons. Brr. So this is the prison they threw you in. Here you spent half a year of your life, which I brought to an end with my mad wish. Jokanaan! Where are you...? This is the bloody place which witnessed so many events - terrible, violent, stupid... Probably nothing has changed here underground. What can change in a prison except the bodies that fill it and the people in power who throw them into it: Those in power have changed, it's true. But the prisoners are either executed immediately, or they are hidden away in other cells. Tibereus was replaced by Caligula, Herod Antipas by Herod Agrippa.. it's all the same! Macherus Castle! You are now desolate. Where are those onetime ceremonial fanfares, the pompous sounding of trumpets,

the festivities before an attack on the enemy and the gluttonous feasts after a victorious battle... How your present ruler has neglected you! Now the people in power make do with intrigues, lies and quiet deceptions, secret murders... and maybe they are so weary of so many wars and devastation, that they don't celebrate them any more. After all, why hold pompous ceremonies and noisy feasts to mask so much vileness, treacherous betrayals, lecherous murders... like that last one, which I seasoned with your death, Jokanaan.

*(Trumpeting heard in the distance. Salome looks around her, startled.)*

*Salome: (continuing) They are closing the gates of Jerusalem. That means I'll have to stay here until the morning. Here in my past, among the corpses.*

Why did I come here in fact? I've no one left alive. Maybe I'm not alive either. What am I doing here? What am I looking for in this desolate military fortress? Why didn't I avoid this town, this castle I haven't been in for over ten years, that I swore I would never set foot in again? This piece of ground that remembers my youth, my beauty, even my innocence...

Charming Salome

Lovely Salome

Deceitful Salome

Innocent Salome

*(While uttering these words Salome walks around the walls of the tomb, her speech is rhythmical and accompanied by a hint of dancing. She pauses at a barred window, through which bright moonlight is penetrating.)*

*Salome: (continues) Ah, how quiet it is here! At least I can rest for a while. After so many dusty roads, noisy inns and stinking stables... Maybe I should stay here for ever. In this silence and coldness. Far from all those lecherous men and shrieking, jealous women...*

There is a full moon. How beautiful she is. She is silent, too. My sister. Cool and chaste in the dark blue sky. Like a virgin. An eternal virgin. Not one whose passions are aroused and she cannot wait. No. She has never abandoned herself to men. She is quite different from the other goddesses... from other women... from Salome...

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Salome the beauty

Salome the wicked

Salome the wretched

Salome, who they all had

Salome, who had them all

*(Relaxed at the beginning, she gradually becomes tense.)*

... all of them! First on a whim, then for sensual pleasure, then out of revenge, and now *(a despairing laugh)* now - for money!

What are you staring at me like that for? You bore me! You make me sick. Those watery eyes like dead fish! *(Quickly.)*

Even as a little girl I noticed that all of you - dignitaries, generals, high priests, governors, kings, philosophers, you all have terribly empty, watery eyes. The dead look of rotting fish...

You bore me! You only know how to bristle when you are pursuing a quail... at the sound of drums and trumpets... you

hound her to death, snap at her... hunting hounds, which let them selves be excited by a simple cry! I hate you! All of you who chased after me. You used me to while away the time. Boring, bedraggled dogs, sniffing at their prey. You are repulsive, loathsome and slimy when you shine with your purchased wisdom, while thinking only of how you can cleverly sniff your prey and lick it with your red tongues. Politicians, thinkers, generals, rich men, you are fools. You are all fools! You are excited by every movement of a young body. I twitch my hips, wiggle my bottom and you will forget all your systems of philosophy, your duties as rulers, all your idols and divinities. The same over and over again. Are you not tired of it yet? I am. Have been for a long time. But there is nothing left for me but to humiliate you with my own humiliation, to deceive you with my own deception, to disgrace you with my own disgrace

ace ...

Shameless Salome

Shri velled Salome

Lost Salome

Sh runken Salome

Desp a i ring Salome

*(Mad laughter. A short pause. )*

Salome: *(continues)* "Already the axe is laid to the roots of the trees; every tree that fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire"... will be cut down and thrown on the fire... will be cut down and thrown on the fire... will be cut down and thrown... on the fire...

But it's cold in here. Damp. And it stinks of mould. Like in a tomb. It must be terrible to live in such a cell. To die in such a cell. Jokanaan!!! *(After a pause, quietly.)*

Your body was buried alongside the prophets Elisha and Obadiah, but your head was hidden in the ground somewhere here... somewhere here... Your handsome head... It's here somewhere. Maybe only a skull now. Why did I come here? What am I doing here? Jokanaan!

*(She quotes, as if she were repeating words she has known a long time. )* "Rise from the bed of your abominations, from the bed of incestuousness and hear the voice, the voice crying in the wilderness: Repent your sins... their cup is full... the wretched, the confounded, the desolate... When you cry for help, no amount of idols will save you. The wind shall bear them all away... You turn to Moloch, you amass worldly possessions, you draw the curtains back from your beds. Who is it you fear when you tell lies?... Look, you are covered with gold and silver, but you have no soul within... I can take my body in my teeth and my life in the palm of my hand... Man shall fall to pieces like a robe eaten by moths... As waters that disappear from a lake or a river that shrivels and dries up, so will man lie down and not rise again... Who can gain something pure from what is impure?..."

*(Towards the end she may hold her head in despair and painfully repeat the words she had once heard from Jokanaan - John the Baptist. She continues after a short pause, during which she gazes blankly ahead of her. )*

"Already the axe is laid to the roots of the trees... is already

laid... and every tree that fails to produce good fruit ... ”

No! Life is not worth much, but it is better than death .

Jokanaan! You chose your death . You chose it with your life. I only killed you . I killed you , my beloved , someone had to kill you . And I killed you from love... Only I don't know why I'm here now. How do I come to be here?

Salome the lamb

Salome the she-wolf

Salome the lovely deer

Salome the tiger...

*(She throws off her tunic, revealing her dress, which was once beautiful and expensive , but is now shabby and dirty . )*

Jokanaan! I've come to see you! After such a long time... Aren't you glad? *What a precious meeting. You see. Ten years have passed in a flash and we are here again together... no, not together. We were never together, except in my dreams. I am here beside you , even though you are no longer here. You are not here and so you cannot drive me away. You cannot stop me talking to you . Reproaching you , declaring my love . I have so much on my mind...*

Jokanaan! Your name sounds like a gong. Pure . Manly. Solemn . Purpl e . That night I secretly followed you as far as the Jordan , you told the crowd they needn't be afraid of the truth . But what if the truth that I know consists of nothing but lies, murders ... no, no... That 's not what I wanted to say to you now. Jokanaan ! You preached that people would no longer be slaves. That they would be brothers and sisters. Then I, too, am your sister, aren't I? Why even adulteresses repented before you . And you forgive them. Then forgive me too! Yes , I am a trespasser, I sell my love... love? Ha!

But even lepers came to see you and you never turned them away. Then why me... *( Dreamily.)* I am a young, beautiful, pure girl . Innocent , unhappy *( Laugh s.)* Without mother or father. How can you be so cruel to me, prophet? Yes , you are cruel . You are unobservant . You rise above our earthly sins. But who is completely without blame? Who, apart from you ? Here , somewhere here they buried your head, but you aren't here . You can't see me. You can't hear me. It 's only me who keeps hearing your thunderous voice and seeing your fiery eyes.

Your voice , your eyes , your body... There is nothing in the world more beautiful than the human body. Only it can conjure up that miracle called love . Jokanaan! Look at me! I love your body. Your body is white like a lily in a field that the mower has never mowed . Your body is white like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judea. The roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as your body. Let me touch your body. Look at me! Love is eternal . Prophecies pass, tongues fall silent , but love remains...

Jokanaan! Before you stands Salome!

Desirable Salome

Enticing Salome

Salome , the priestess of love -

Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth,

For your love is better than wine.

I am black, but comely.

My own vineyard I have not kept.  
Tell me, you whom my soul loves ,  
Where you feed your flock,  
Where you make it rest at noon.  
Set me as a seal upon your heart ,  
As a seal upon your arm .  
For love is as strong as death .  
Jealousy is cruel as the grave .  
Many waters cannot quench love ,  
Neither can the floods drown it.  
If a man would give  
All the riches of his house for love ,  
It would be utterly condemned.  
My beloved stands out among ten thousand.  
His head is as the finest gold.  
His locks are bunches of palm flowers  
And black as a raven .  
*His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the water ,*  
Which are washed with milk  
And live in luxury.  
His cheeks are as a bed of spices,  
His lips like lilies. His body is as ivory,  
Overlaid with sapphires.  
His hands are as gold rings ,  
His legs are as pillars of marble.  
Honey and milk are in his mouth.  
I opened to my beloved ,  
But my beloved turned and was gone.  
My soul failed when he spoke,  
I sought him, but found him not.  
I called him, but he gave me no answer.  
I will rise now and go about the city,  
In the streets and in the broad ways ,  
I will seek him whom my soul loves .  
I charge you , oh you daughters of Jerusalem ,  
That you stir not nor awake my love , until he shall please.  
Ah , Jokanaan . You never gave me your mouth. When they  
brought your head on a golden plate , I could kiss it as much  
as I wanted . I wanted to bite it like ripe fruit .  
Yes , I'll bite your lips, I'll kiss you... but why don't you look at  
me? Why are your eyes closed and lips shut tight? Why can I  
smell blood on them? Your eyes , which were so terrible , so full  
of rage and scorn , are closed now. Open them! (*She comes to  
her senses.* )  
Why did I come back here, when I know that my eyes will  
never see you again? Why did I enter these walls , which remember  
me as a young, beautiful , innocent girl? Why did I en-  
ter , tainted with many adulteries , sprayed with your blood,  
which sealed my fate and with the echo of your words in my  
ears ?  
I hear your words through amorous whispers and sighs, I wish  
to drown them with passion, I wish to escape, lose myself ...  
Your voice is so terrible , so terrible on my journeys in search  
of love , which I am leaving further and further behind. Only in  
this cell does your voice make sense. Only here does it not  
drive me mad. At least for a while. Your voice belongs in this

c e l l .Your head is in this cell. And now I am here too. S a l o m e .

Irresponsible Salome

S hrivelled Salome

Faithless Salome

Helpless Salome

Your voice... your words... No. I shall never relinquish them.

W h at if there should be some secret hidden in them, which I

d o n 't know? And perhaps will never know? Maybe you knew.

Or at least knew that somewhere there is a secret that should be sought... Although at that time I listened to you with all my soul and with eve ry pore of my eager body, ye t ...

H e ave n s , m aybe I didn't understand yo u . After all, you neve r u n d e rstood me! We are two worlds that can never meet.You are my curse! And my love for you... a misunders t a n d i n g ...

*(Salome sits down on the gr o u n d , takes out her jewels and begins to play with them.)*

Once I was beautiful, yo u n g, I didn't know the value of life.

N ow I know that life has no va l u e . People die like flies. Like in- s e c t s . *Their lives are wo r t h l e s s . They live like insects. T h e y*

m ate like insects.They fly towards the light and frizzle up like

i n s e c t s.Where now is the powerful tetrarch of Galilee? And his

w i f e , my wanton mother, who never stopped at anything? T h e y

h ave perished like stray dogs under a hedge. No splendid

t o m b s , no honours , pompous ceremonies, n o t h i n g . One wave of the emperor's little finger and they were both in exile.

They came here to Galilee as barbari a n s . I d u m a e a n s , f r o m

somewhere in A r a b i a . S a v a g e s , who had made no culture of

their own and that they acquired by deceit they only knew how

to drain, not improve . They came to power through murders ,

to which there was no end.They killed each other wo r s e than

the wild beasts in the desert , but it didn't help them any way.

Each Herod left behind him a pile of corp s e s , streams of blood.

M o t h e r , b r o t h e r s , s o n s , innocent babes, their own wive s , t h e y

stopped at nothing. Not even Herod the Great , nor my stepfather

Herod A n t i p a s , nor A g r i p p a , who took his place. If they

a c h i e v e d any t h i n g , then it was only through dead bodies. A n d

this civilizati o n , this culture allowed them to do it. At the emp

e r o r 's court in Rome it's just the same, but on a larger scale.

Perhaps done with gr e a t e r delicacy.

Herod A n t i p a s , who are all the people you killed or had killed?

Who could count them all? Not even your own viziers dared

t r y . Neither curs e s , innocence nor your own blood could stop

yo u . Old cut-throat that you we r e , the only person you had any

respect for was Jo k a n a a n . The strange prophet, Jo k a n a a n . H e

was the only one you dared not kill.Yet this truthful prophet,

blazing with the fire of revenge and justice, t o r m e n t e d yo u

c r u e l l y .

Jo k a n a a n . You were a thorn in the flesh for so many! High

p r i e s t s , P h a r i s e e s , rich men at the court , but my mother above

a l l . And I, who hung on your wo r d s , f o l l o w e d yo u eve ry w h e r e

and almost prayed to yo u , I asked for your head on a golden

p l a t t e r .

T h at was too much even for the murderer Herod. T h at old, e x p

e r i e n c e d killer visibly trembled when I, a young and seemingly

innocent and inexperienced gi r l , pronounced my request.

I could have asked for what e v e r I wished. " E v e n half my kingd

o m " were Herod's wo r d s. The fool. As if the kingdom were his to gi ve . A wretched little piece of land. A couple of parched towns and villages. W h at could I ask for, I , i n s at i a b l e , s at i at e d S a l o m e , p e r v e r t e d Salome, spoiled Salome, whose eve ry wish, e ven the most impossible, had been granted ever since the cradle? Precious stones? A palace? A new litter? Some rare foreign animal? I had all this and I took it more than for gr a n t e d . But another's life! I hadn't had that ye t . Nor real, human love . A f f e c t i o n , at t a c h m e n t , sincere... T h at I hadn't had. I could h ave had any one of the magnates at Herod's court . I could h ave left for Rome and enjoyed myself with any young men I w i s h e d . I could have had a slave whipped for the pleasure of it. I could have had a woman slave dragged over the ground by her h a i r . I could have watched lions with golden manes tear the body of an antelope to pieces, while it writhed in agony. I could h ave surrounded myself with young girl slaves when I felt sad, I could have enjoyed the company of little children and felt majestic and gr a c i o u s . I could have done all kinds of things. B u t I couldn't appropri ate the life of a prophet who preached beside the River Jo r d a n :

"A voice crying aloud in the wildern e s s :  
E ve ry ravine shall be filled in,  
And eve ry mountain and hill leve l l e d ."

*T h at I could not do. I couldn't force him to be mine. I could not gi ve myself to him, because he did not want me. He alone. O t h e r w i s e , they all wanted me, e ven my own stepfat h e r . I could not make him speak his words for me alone. When he preached to the crow d , I could listen to him, but I couldn't talk to him. And the more reserved he wa s , the more his presence fired me. I gave myself to them all, to quench my desire for him. I wa n t e d to forget him. But he was eve ry w h e r e . The streets, s q u a r e s , public gat h e rings and markets were full of him, e ven in Herod's palace they talked about nothing but the prophet clothed in camel hide, who lived in the wildern e s s , feeding on locusts and wild honey, who baptised people in the River Jordan with the wo r d s : "Repent your sins..."*

You were eve ry w h e r e . Only not beside me, in me. And I wa n t e d to have you so happily. At first by fair means. But you didn't k n o w I existed. For you I was just one of the crow d . So I made you mine another way. Prophets are strong and even kings are afraid of them. But kings and their concubines have the p o w e r to execute prophets. They use this power whenever the prophet is a threat to them, w h e n e v e r he becomes a nuisance. T h at 's w h y I asked for your head. I was excited by the thought of having power over life and deat h . I know eve ryone is afraid of d e at h . I am afraid of it, t o o . But I didn't ask for the head of a general or a high pri e s t . They didn't interest me. I wanted to k n o w how a prophet would die, a prophet who threat e n e d people with the wo r d s : "Already the axe is laid to the roots of the trees and eve ry tree that fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire."

I wanted yo u , Jo k a n a a n . I couldn't have you alive , so I got yo u d e a d . Jo k a n a a n , the dead prophet. Your voice sounded like thunder beside the River Jo r d a n , in Je r i c h o , w h e r e v e r you we n t . People loved you and feared yo u . You called down retri bu t i o n on them, you judged them and they listened to yo u . I listened

to you , t o o . E ven that old monster Herod could listen to yo u  
for hours on end. Po t - b e l l i e d , swollen with an excess of carn a l  
p l e a s u r e , greasy food and heavy wines, smeared all over with  
precious oils to suppress the stink of his rotting body - he listened  
to you with awe , you - an unshave n , long-haired Je w , t a l l ,  
yo u n g , we l l - built and sinewy. Jo k a n a a n . You accused him outright  
of forn i c a t i o n and he nodded his head uneasily and admitted  
you were ri g h t . My mother was bu r s t i n g with rage. A n d  
when at last she managed to get you thrown into jail - allegedly  
for inciting people to revolt - let someone try to explain  
to me what that is - then he guarded you in pri s o n , not to make  
sure you didn't escape, but because he was afraid Herodias  
might have you secretly exe c u t e d . He even had you brought  
from prison from time to time and listened guiltily to your furious  
condemnations and rebu k e s .

If we hadn't murdered the prophets, future generations wo u l d  
k n o w nothing about us. R u l e r s , k i n g s , s t a t e s m e n . And their harl  
o t s , of cours e . M e , for example. In order not to be left out, I ,  
t o o , made my mark on history. H o w else - by murder. S a l o m e .  
Jokanaan... you were handsome, w i s e , e n i g m a t i c , w i l d , u n f e t t  
e r e d . I don't belong to that philosophising nat i o n , which calc  
u l a t e s eve r y t h i n g , which even negotiates with God and to  
whom you said: " You vipers ' brood! Who wa r n e d you to escape  
from the coming retri bution?"... To them I am a barbari a n , a  
s a v a g e . They are educat e d , I only pleasure-seeking. They read  
wise books, I... no mat t e r . You were different. Not educat e d ,  
but wise. You seemed ve r y wise to me then. D a r i n g , m a n l y .  
H o w many times did I listen in wonder to yo u , when Herod  
summoned yo u . H o w many times, disguised in poor garm e n t s  
*did I mix with the crowd , so that I could be near you at least.*  
Your large black eyes blazed, as if they were really on fire. Yo u r  
whole self was bu r n i n g . Jokanaan! W h a t were you bu r n i n g for?  
For the truth? For justice? I was bu r n i n g for you and you d i d n ' t  
e ven want to know about me. I , who had known sensual love in  
more va r i e d forms than you could possibly imagi n e , I wa s  
bu r n i n g for yo u , for a man who had never looked at a wo m a n  
with the eyes of a man. You didn't even see me. My exotic  
beauty drove eve r y one mad at my stepfat h e r ' s court , but yo u  
d i d n ' t see me... I liked that at firs t . All those would-be mol  
e s t e r s . A l w a y s the same. Without fantasy and without love .  
O r d i n a r y lecherous men. You were different. C h a s t e , a u s t e r e .  
Sensuality was unknown to yo u . Your chastity was so terri b l y  
at t r a c t i v e ...

You took no notice of me. It was I who had you beheaded! !!  
!! You don't even know that! You don't even know who is  
S a l o m e , t h a t a Salome even exists!... I, S a l o m e , wanted to have  
yo u , if not alive , then dead. No one allowed me to go and see  
you in pri s o n . My stepfather was afraid I might kill you on the  
o r d e r s of my mother. On the orders of my mother? I hated her!  
On account of my fat h e r , on account of her lasciviousness and  
p e r v e r s i t y . She was even jealous of me! She could never get  
enough of the glory of the royal court . My father was not a  
k i n g . So she went over to Herod. She behaved as if she had  
gone out of her senses. I wanted terribly to humiliate her. I provoked  
Herod, I lured lecherous generals and rich men away  
from her, but that was not enough. I could do nothing of real



significance.

For her I would n't have killed so much as a fly that bothered her while she lay under the palm trees after lunch, and certainly not you, my dear... goodness, I'm going mad.

Jokanaan! I really did love you. You're the only one I loved. I would have done anything for you. Although... I would never have set you free. I was glad you were in prison, under the same roof as me. Here in Macherus Castle, in this magnificent, imposing fortress, fit for grand celebrations, as well as for executions.

My heart is grieving  
and has withered like the grass,  
I even forget to eat my bread.

My loud sighs have made  
My bones cling to my body.  
I am like a pelican in the desert,  
Like an owl in a ruin.

I stay awake like the lonely bird on a roof.

I mix my drink with tears  
And eat ashes like bread.

My days are like a long shadow  
And I wither like a plant.

When my stepfather told me to ask for whatever I desired, I went to my mother. I needn't have asked her. I knew what she longed for and who stood in her way. Jokanaan's words about adultery were a thorn in her side. She was afraid that under the influence of those words that weakling, Herod, would one day send her packing... She was truly afraid of that. She was afraid of the black-haired prophet, the wild prophet, the indomitable prophet. I knew very well how much she feared him. I asked my mother, because I knew for certain that for me there would be no point in asking for the prophet Jokanaan to be set free. You were more mine in prison than if you had been free. What use

*would your freedom be to me? So that I could once more follow you around like a little dog? Listen to your angry denunciations beside the River Jordan? A voice crying in the wilderness: what use is a voice to me? I want your body! Your eyes!*

Let them look at me! At Salome! At your Salome! I want your mouth! Let it kiss my body, my mouth! I want your arms! I want to feel your arms around me! What use is your thunderous voice to me, your terrible voice, which has haunted me for ten years now? Go away! Do you hear? Disappear, go away, to the fires of hell! Have mercy on me! Leave me in peace! Where can I turn - I - empty, without love, without you, with only your thunderous voice in my ears? Please leave me in peace at last! No, I didn't want you to belong to me like this. I wanted to have you in a different way. Alive, like the others... No! Not like this! How? You are all the same. Generals, mercenaries, vagrants...

Why was I the one who had to kill you? Your life is not mine, nor is your death mine, nor your severed head, which they brought me on a golden platter, that was never mine either.

Even I am not mine now.

Salome weeping

Salome starving

Salome calling

Salome despairing

Why did I not die when I was born,

Not perish the moment I left my mother's loins?  
Now I would be sleeping, sleeping in peace.  
Like children who never saw the light of day.  
My heart beats wildly, my strength has left me.  
Even the light of my eyes  
Is no longer with me.

What a magnificent feast it was. How they all boasted. Herod was celebrating his birthday. Such a heap of filth celebrating his birthday and everyone behaving as if they were out of their minds. I among the first! I learned that dance from our Idumaean girls. That dance really stirred up Herod's blood. I was young and seemingly innocent. But somewhere inside, in my veins, in which the blood of a savage flows, I felt that if I wanted to achieve anything, I must do all in my power for it. And I knew what I wanted to achieve. I knew that dancing would be the best way. And my blood carried this will to achieve, to own, to have to my calves, my hips, my breasts... I danced that despairing dance of the vanquished with a smile on my face. With a seductive smile on my face. Despair changed into passion, passion into madness. I danced a mad dance, which mad King Herod and his court rightly appreciated. Rightly, that is, highly. Otherwise that bloodthirsty and stupid heap of vices and weaknesses had no idea of my purpose. He only saw my body, erotically addressing him in the language of movement, the language of the limbs. He thought that the dance was for him. And of course I let him think so. I was only dancing for you! Only for you! But I let my eyes flash for all those around me and I flung Herod the most passionate of my glances. I knew I would get what I wanted. My blood knew it. Jokanaan! In that dance I was saying goodbye to you, I was saying goodbye to you in a language, which you never even tried to understand. You had never seen me dancing. And even if you had seen me, you would have turned your angry gaze away from this young sinner. Maybe you would have begun to condemn sensuality and maybe you would not even have noticed me. That is why I did not mind your not being there. Not seeing my graceful, alluring, tempting movements, movement full of promise. You could not stop me with that fiery, repudiating look of yours. You could not forbid me to dance just for you. You could not refuse me. You had to accept me, me, your loving murderess. You had to take death from my hands. My mouth in fact. Although you never learned of it. You thought it was malice that killed you. That you died for the truth. For an ideal! No! You died only because I waved my little finger. And at my order King Herod had you beheaded. It looked as if it was my mother's order. But only looked. Why shouldn't all three of us bear the guilt for this murder? The executioner brought me your head on a golden platter. Brought me! Me! Me! Your dead, severed head. Before I handed it over to my mother, I wanted to kiss you on the mouth. But it was so firmly sealed. Your mouth... it only knew how to curse, call down retribution, revenge... It had never learned to kiss.

Awake, O north wind  
Come, southern breeze.  
Blow upon my garden,  
Let its balms waft around.

Let my beloved enter my garden,  
Let him taste its precious fruit .  
How much better is your love than wine  
And the smell of your ointments than all spices.  
Your lips are like honeydew,  
Honey and milk are under your tongue  
And the scent of your garments  
Is like the scent of Lebanon.  
My beloved is mine  
And I am his.  
Before the evening breeze blows  
And the shadows disappear,  
Come back, my dear  
And be like a young stag.  
Ah! You did not want to give me your mouth, Jokanaan . Not  
even after death! Look, I will kiss it now. I will bite your lips  
like a ripe fruit... Why do your eyes not look at me? Why are  
your eyelids closed? And your tongue - it does not move and  
does not speak. You rejected me. But I am still alive . It is you  
who are dead! Prophets must die, because they never choose  
life . It was you who chose death . By your life you chose it! I -  
I only killed you . If I had not done it, someone else would . I at  
least killed you from love . You are dead, but chaste. Prophet ,  
marry . I am still alive .  
Jokanaan . You were the only one I loved . All other men were  
hateful to me. Why did you hide your face behind a curse? You  
covered your eyes with the veil of a man who would see his God  
and you never saw me. I am thirsty with desire for your beauty  
and hungry for your body. There is neither fruit nor wine in  
the world that could quench my thirst , there is no man in the  
world who could appease my desire.  
When I pressed my lips to your dead, sealed lips, there was a  
bitter taste on them...  
My crazed mother opened your mouth by force and pierced the  
tongue that , when alive , had rebuked her, insulted her, give  
her no peace...  
I wanted to escape from them. But I had nowhere to go. I began  
to be in my mother's way. At the sight of me Herod would  
*roll his eyes* . I became a dangerous rival for her. Yet all three of  
us were bound together by a crime that cried out to the heavens  
- the murder of Jokanaan . Herod's kingdom was soon too small  
for my mother; she urged him to go to the emperor and ask for  
more lands... She miscalculated . Herod's mad and stupid govern-  
ment was already getting on the nerves of that pervert in  
Rome - Tibertius . He sent both of them into exile in Galilee.  
From there they escaped to Hispania, where they died one  
after the other in poverty and from loathsome diseases. Perhaps  
it was a punishment for your death . They say it does not pay to  
kill prophets... What punishment will befall me?  
We did what we liked with you . When they brought your head  
on a golden platter , the feast was suddenly over. Yet all those  
generals and magnates had seen far more brutal sights. The  
head of a dead prophet had that effect.  
Herod's power and glory were over. Although Jokanaan had  
said to his face things no one else had dared to say, he did him  
no harm while he was alive . A dead prophet has far more power

than a living one.

It was you who determined our fate .We are nothing, mere instruments of death .

Jo k a n a a n .Your voice thunders on. I can hear it.Yo u , a prophet,  
you belong to no one bu t , I suppose, to your God. And I, l o s t ,  
a b a n d o n e d , enraptured by yo u , you who have vanished... Yo u r  
black eyes stab my back, my kidneys, I feel them eve ry w h e r e .  
I killed him, but he is not mine.You remained free. And I drag  
you around with me like a millstone round my neck.

Already the axe is laid to the roots of the trees and eve ry tree  
t h a t fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on  
the fire.Will be cut down and thrown ...

There is no one to forgi ve me,

There is no one to punish me,

There is no one to pity me.

There is no house that belongs to me,

There is no man to love me.

If I knew that death would bring me relief,

I would choose deat h .

But you would not have me even after deat h

And your voice would not fall silent.

You are my hell on eart h

And I have no way of freeing myself of yo u .

If I could kill you once more,

If I could silence you at least after deat h ...

I travel the roads from town to tow n ,

But never meet people.

W hy should I wander like this?

This fortress is my place of refuge,

As the gallows is a home for the dead.

Lying on an anthill,

Would be easier for me.

I shall cry to the wo r l d : "I am Salome!"

It is I who killed the prophet!"

M aybe it will bring me relief.

Do what you wish with me,

I will accept the reward from your hands.

Your punishment will be my redemption

And your anger sweet nectar!

But no one listens to my pleas and my curs e s.

They have forgotten the prophet that I killed,

Forgotten him who told them the tru t h .

I alone cherish him in my mind and in my heart ,

*To me alone does he speak in his powerful vo i c e ,*

The voice crying in the wildern e s s.

But his words rebound from me as from the rocks.

I am his echo, which has no place of its ow n .

Tru m p e t i n g .The gates of Je rusalem are opening... I shall slip

away from here. Go any w h e r e . I have already passed through

m a ny towns like this, with no purp o s e . I am going.

The En d