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AND MARIAMNE: A TRAGEDY**

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**AMÉLIE RIVES**

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# HEROD AND MARIAMNE.

A TRAGEDY.

BY

AMÉLIE RIVES,

AUTHOR OF "THE QUICK OR THE DEAD?" "VIRGINIA OF VIRGINIA,"  
ETC., ETC.

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PHILADELPHIA:  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.

TO MY HUSBAND.

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LIPPINCOTT'S  
MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER, 1888.

HEROD AND MARIAMNE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—A hall in HEROD'S palace.

Enter JOSEPH and SOHEMUS.

*Joseph.* It hath come, good Sohemus. 'T hath come.

*Sohemus.* What, brother?

*Joe.* The king is summoned by Antonius  
Unto Laodicea concerning—

*Soh.* Well?

*Joe.* Lower, I pray you—why, concerning, sir,  
The death of Aristobulus.

*Soh.* Heaven save us!

What saith the queen?

*Joe.* Which queen, my Sohemus?

There are so many queens in Herod's palace,  
We needs must name them when we speak of them.  
By Moses' beard! the wild bees have more wisdom:  
They have one queen, where Herod houses four.  
There is his mother Cypros, and his sister  
My wife Salome: they do hate most violently  
His consort Mariamne, and her mother,  
The old king's daughter, Alexandra.

*Soh.* Nay,

All this I know by demonstration, sir.  
The information that I crave concerns  
Queen Mariamne. Doth she think her brother  
To have been murdered?

*Joe.* There, sir, lies the matter.

She doth not think so, while her mother doth.

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They have been wrangling o'er it all the morning,  
And wrangle yet. My wife and Cypros sulk  
Within their own apartments; and the king  
Is closeted with Antony's messenger.

*Soh.* Where is Hyrcanus?

*Jos.* Sleeping, sir, I think.  
The kind old king hath but that refuge now  
When the queens quarrel.

*Soh.* A most fitting refuge!  
For when queens quarrel kings are kings in vain.  
Soft, friend! is that not Mariamne's voice?

*Jos.* It is,—and Alexandra's. Let us go,  
Ere we be dragged into their mad dispute.

[*Exeunt.*]

*Enter MARIAMNE and ALEXANDRA.*

*Alex.* Art thou my daughter?

*Mar.* If thou dost tell truth.

*Alex.* Insolence! Wilt thou mock me? God of Moses!  
Almost I think that I unknowing lie  
And that thou art a changeling! Sure no blood  
Of mine makes blue those traitorous veins o' thine!  
To call him brother, and yet love the king  
Who murdered him!

*Mar.* Madam, I will not think it.

*Alex.* Not think it? Will not think it!

*Mar.* No, madam.

Nor hear it said. Therefore be silent.

*Alex.* Silent!

This unto me, thy mother? Silent? Oh,  
Would I were tongued like nature! thou shouldst hear  
A hundred thousand voices utter, "Murder!"  
Why, I do tell thee I have knowledge of it  
From ten reliable sources. It was planned—  
Ay, planned from first to last. And he, thy brother,  
So young, so fair, that even thou didst show  
Old and uncomefly by his side!

*Mar.* Good mother,  
None loved my brother more than I did love,  
And love him: therefore go I quietly,  
Thinking how did he live he would prefer  
That we should mourn him, not with cries and curses,  
But in the stillness of our hearts with prayer.

*Alex.* Prayers for his murderer? Oh, 'tis well! 'tis well!  
Thou art so eaten with unnatural love  
For this thy kingly sinner, that thy heart  
Hath no unoccupied cranny where might lodge  
Love natural for him whom he hath murdered.

*Mar.* I will not hear that word again.

*Alex.* Not hear it?  
Canst command deafness, that thou wilt not hear it?



I say that Herod hath thy brother murdered,—  
Murdered! Ay, murdered! murdered! Dost thou hear?  
Or, being queen, canst thou command thy ears  
That they drink not unwelcome sounds?

*Mar.* No, madam;  
But I can twenty hands command to take thee  
Where thy voice cannot reach my ears.

*Alex.* Ay, do it!  
Do it, I say! 'Twere well that Herod's wife  
Took Herod's way; 'twere well Hyrcanus' daughter  
Should be o'er-daughtered in Hyrcanus' palace;  
'Twere well the blood of Aristobulus  
Should not cry out, lest Herod seeking sleep  
Should be disturbed. O God of Israel,  
God of the widowed and the childless, hear!  
To Thee I turn, to Thee shall mount my grief;  
Thine ears shall drink this murder, and Thine arm  
Destroy the murderer.

*Mar.* Madam, have done.

*Alex.* Have done! Have done, didst say? When hell is  
finished,

Packed full, and the gates locked against new-comers,  
I will have done.—O Aristobulus,  
This was thy sister, and is wife to him  
Who had thee murdered.

*Mar.* Mother, be advised.  
My duty as thy daughter hath a limit.

*Alex.* Thy duty unto Herod hath no limit.  
What! wilt thou take his hand, lie by his side,  
Be mother of his children, and the blood  
Of the high-priest thy brother red between ye?  
I tell thee, woman, thou wilt know my pangs  
When thou hast brought forth sons for him to slay!

*Mar.* Mother, here comes the king! 'Twere best indeed  
He did not hear thee.

*Alex.* Ay, now it were best;  
But there will come a time, I tell you, girl,  
He'll curse the day that he was born with ears!

*Mar.* In truth, you'd best be silent.

*Alex.* I will go;  
Fear not but that I'll go. God blast these eyes  
If ever they are willing witnesses  
Unto thy dalliance with Herod!

[*Exit.*]

*Mar.* Nay,  
God knows I loved my brother, and do mourn him  
With a sore heart; but when my mother thus  
Doth lay his death upon the king my husband,  
She doth divide my pity with her hate,  
And makes my grief half Herod's. Ay, by heaven!  
Though he be rash, hot-natured, mad in wrath,

And prone to take occasion by the throat,  
 He is as little capable of murder  
 As this my heart of killing the great love  
 That I do bear him. Ah, he comes, and anger  
 Hot at his heels!

*Enter HEROD.*

*Herod. [Not seeing MARIAMNE.]* Herod commanded by a  
 Roman turn-coat!

Antony summon Herod! Antony,—  
 The by-word of all nations, the last toy  
 Of an Egyptian wanton! Who that reads  
 In future ages will believe it? Oh  
 That Antony had summoned me in person!  
 The Egyptian harlot had been loverless  
 In less time than she takes to make a kiss.—  
 Ah, Mariamne!

*Mar.* Shall I stay, my lord?

*Her.* Hath Herod ever bid thee from him?

*Mar.*

No.

But I can well imagine that this summons  
 Hath left thee with a love of loneliness.

*Her.* Come close. Give me thine eyes. Dost think with  
 Antony

Concerning this affair?

*Mar.* With Antony?

*Her.* Ay,—that thy brother's blood is on my hands.  
 Thou dost not think it?

*Mar.* As I live, my lord,  
 If I do think it, let me live no longer.

*Her.* Then I care not who thinks it. Mariamne,  
 I am not Herod when I am with thee.

*Mar.* What then, my lord?

*Her.* Why, Mariamne's lover.  
 I am no longer king, no longer soldier,  
 No longer conqueror, unless in truth  
 I rule thy heart.

*Mar.* Thou knowest that my heart  
 Is but thy throne.

*Her.* Let me be king of thee,  
 And God is welcome to the sway of heaven.

*Mar.* Do not blaspheme.

*Her.* Away! thy veins run milk  
 And make thy heart a baby. Not blaspheme!  
 Love cannot utter blasphemy, for Love  
 Is his own god and king of his own heaven.  
 Well, dost thou love me?

*Mar.* Thou dost know I do.

*Her.* Thou dost not! Thou dost make a pet of Duty,  
 And fatten him on what should be my food.

Love me? Not thou! Thou lovest the cold peace  
That's child of frozen virtue. I have fire  
To melt the Sphinx, but not to warm the blood  
Of one chaste woman.

*Mar.* Chaste I am, my lord,  
Yet for that chasteness do but better love thee.

*Her.* I tell thee no! Thou dost but use the word  
To play with, as a child its father's sword.  
Thou hast ne'er seen it scarlet with joy's death,  
Or smoking with the heart's blood of a thought.  
What! thou lie 'wake o' nights? Thou scorch thy brain  
With bootless wishing? Thou eat pictured lips?  
Thou feed regret with memory, and then rage  
Because he is not satisfied? Thou love?  
Nay, girl, the sun will set the sea afire  
Ere thy cool heart be set aflame with love.  
Moreover, look you, sooner shall the waves  
Of that same ocean cool the thirsty sun  
Than thy pale humor make me moderate.

*Mar.* I would not have thee love me less.

*Her.* Thou wouldst not?  
Why dost thou shrink, then? Look how thou dost pale  
And redden when I touch thee. Come, thine eyes,  
Thine arms, thy lips, still shrinking? Israel's God!  
Shall Herod coax his lawful wife for favors?  
I say thou dost not love me, yea, moreover,  
That thou dost lie when thou wouldst have me think  
Thou dost not blame me for thy brother's death.  
I know thou thinkest that I had him slain.

*Mar.* I do not think it, Herod. Dost thou think  
I would be here if I believed it?

*Her.* Where,  
Where wouldst thou be, then? Not here, say'st thou?  
Where then? Speak, woman! where?

*Mar.* Why, dead, maybe;  
But not with thee.

*Her.* Thou liest! Didst thou die,  
I'd have thy body brought into my chamber  
And make my bed thy sepulchre.

*Mar.* Ay, Herod,  
My body, but not me. Nay, my dear lord,  
Why waste such moments as are left in strife  
And harsh dissension? Soon thou wilt be gone,  
And Mariamne but a recollection.  
Why dost thou doubt me? Why should I not love thee,  
Who art the chief of men and lovers? Nay,  
If, as thou sayest, I shrink, it is because  
My love doth fear the violence of thy love,  
Not I thyself,—not Mariamne Herod.

*Her.* Love is not blind, as the Greeks fable it,