

HEROD

Episode 2: "Justice"

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EXT. SEPPHORIS FORTRESS - NEARBY HILL - DAY

The family members stand horrified, wide-eyed, facing the crosses on the hilltop. They stare at the men, hastily crucified. Some are naked, unconscious, bruised. Some have been slaughtered. Some are still alive.

A few beats, then they let out a terrible cry and run at the crosses. They are stopped by Jacob's horsemen.

In the middle of the field of crosses, Hezekiah's body is displayed, his severed head planted on top of the cross, his eyes turned to the horizon.

Herod, who was watching this all, gallops on his horse up to the fortress.

INT./EXT. SEPPHORIS FORTRESS - BRIDGE AND REAR GATE - DAY

Costobarus, awakened by the cries, comes out of his room in his underwear.

COSTOBARUS

What was that? Who's
screaming?

He notices Soeimos up on the lookout bridge, and walks out to him.

COSTOBARUS (CONT'D)

Where are the prisoners? Where
are the cages? They escaped in
the night!

Soeimos points to the hill.

SOEIMOS

Herod crucified them. He took
apart the cages and made them
into crosses.

Soeimos and Costobarus look at each other.

COSTOBARUS

Why?

Herod rides up to the fortress's rear gate. He looks up at Costobarus and Soeimos.

HEROD

Good morning, Soeimos. Go let the governor in Syria know that the problem has been solved. Costobarus, deploy men around the fortress. I'm going to sleep.

COSTOBARUS

But we had decided to take them to Jerusalem. Why did you kill them?

HEROD

"We" decided?

COSTOBARUS

Yes, last night. We hadn't decided when yet, but we decided--

HEROD

(cuts him off, to Soeimos)

I told you Costobarus would find it difficult to accept the authority of younger men.

(to Costobarus)

"We" don't decide anything, Costobarus. I am the one who make the decisions. I listen to your opinions, and then I decide. Alone.

Herod gallops into the fortress's courtyard.

COSTOBARUS

(to himself, quiet)

Then you shall pay the price alone as well.

EXT. JERUSALEM - TEMPLE MOUNT - COURTYARD BY HALL OF HEWN STONES - DAY

The mothers of the murdered men from the Galilee sit by the entrance to the Temple, facing the Sanhedrin's Hall of Hewn Stones. They're wailing and demanding justice. A crowd gathers around them curiously - passersby, bums, beggars, litigants awaiting trial, money changers and pigeon merchants from the nearby stands, and Priests and Levites on their lunch breaks. Several Temple Guards, in their dark uniforms, keep an eye out.

At the center of the group of women is Talia, Hezekiah's wife, with her 8-year-old son Yuda. She quotes scripture, and the mothers reply. It's a quiet, tense protest.

TALIA

"How the faithful city has become a harlot. She who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, but now murderers."

MOTHERS

Justice!

TALIA

"May your priests be clothed with your righteousness; may your faithful people sing for joy. For the sake of your servant David, do not reject your anointed one."

MOTHERS

Justice!

TALIA

"Lord of the Heavenly Armies, the righteous judge, the one who tests feelings and the heart."

MOTHERS

Justice!

INTERCUT: TOWER TO NORTH OF TEMPLE MOUNT

Antipater, the governor of Judea, and his son Phasael, governor of Jerusalem, watch with concern from the tower.

ANTIPATER

I have made a terrible mistake.

Phasael looks at him and nods silently.

BACK TO COURTYARD:

Talia recites another verse.

TALIA

"Hear the right, Oh Lord,
attend unto my cry; give ear
unto my prayer. Let my
judgment come forth from Your
presence."

MOTHERS

Justice!

TALIA

"Let me see your vengeance on
them, for I've committed my
cause to you."

MOTHERS

Justice!

INT. HASMONEAN PALACE - HALLWAY (JERUSALEM) - DAY

The High Priest John Hyrcanus walks toward the Council's Hall, accompanied by six Temple Guards. His advisor, Malachi, walks with him.

MALACHI

You are apathetic! They're
taking over and you are
apathetic. They've left you
with the title alone. It's not
just your chair that's in
danger - your life is in
danger.

HYRCANUS

In danger from whom?

MALACHI

If he feels confident enough
to break the laws of our
forefathers and crucify
Jews...

They head into the Hall.

INT. HASMONEAN PALACE - COUNCIL HALL - CONTINUOUS

The members of the High Priest's small council are already in the hall. FELIX - in charge of the fortresses; BEN GADYA - commander of the guard, wearing a dark uniform; LYSIMACHUS - the minister of foreign affairs; DOSITHEOS - head of the secret police. They rise from their seats and sit back down after the High Priest has

taken his place.

HYRCANUS

These Jews hurt Roman soldiers, burned villages in Syria, robbed Nabatean convoys to Damascus. And Julius Caesar himself asked me to take out these gangs.

MALACHI

Only the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem has the authority to judge capital offenses, and that was stated by Julius Caesar as well. We have no political rights. We pay taxes to Rome, but the right to judge is ours and ours alone. And this Edomite puppy Herod, this brash, hotheaded fool can't be cutting heads off on his own accord, and he can't be crucifying men whenever he feels like it. John Hyrcanus, you are the High Priest, you are the leader of the Jewish people, and you have to explain this, not only to Rome, but to Antipater as well, the brute's father.

The other council members nod in agreement.

HYRCANUS

Antipater is the governor of Judea, appointed by Julius Caesar.

MALACHI

The "governor of Judea" is a clerk. He can collect taxes, pave roads and fix walls. All over Judea people are saying - and I apologize for this - that they control you. That you are a pawn in their hands, like a toy for a child.

The door opens. A GUARD announces:

GUARD

Antipater the governor of
Judea and Phasaël, son of
Antipater, governor of
Jerusalem.

Antipater and his son Phasaël walk in, looking severe.
Antipater bows with a curt nod.

HYRCANUS

Antipater. Join us. We've
started a bit early.
Dositheos, what have you heard
from your secret police?

DOSITHEOS

My men say the people are
angry over the breach of the
High Priest and Sanhedrin's
authority. The people claim
that the governor of the
Galilee should have brought
the detainees to trial in
Jerusalem, that he had no
right to execute them without
trial. People say it is a
breach of the laws of our
forefathers.

ANTIPATER

This is what the people say?
The people expressed
themselves so eloquently?

DOSITHEOS

There's the smell of rebellion
in the air. The mothers of the
victims are sitting outside
the temple on the Sanhedrin's
doorstep and demanding
justice. And their cry fills
the land.

HYRCANUS

Yes, I have seen the women.
Ben Gadya, you have the
situation under control?

BEN GADYA

For the time being. More and more people are gathering there. The Temple Guards are making sure it doesn't turn into a riot. These are grieving women - I cannot exert force.

HYRCANUS

Antipater.

ANTIPATER

This is interesting, because I have my own reports from tax collectors, and no one else seems to smell a rebellion the way people here are trying to convince us. On the contrary. Most people--

HYRCANUS

(cuts him off)

What happened out there? Why did he kill them?

ANTIPATER

I haven't had the time to get to the bottom of it yet.

MALACHI

Because you knew what you would find there...

ANTIPATER

Let me continue. Tax collections have been regular. The borders are quiet. Trade is recovering thanks to improved security. People are getting ready for the Sukkot pilgrimage. There is some unrest in the Galilee, but there, too, the people are happy that the marauders have been dealt with.

MALACHI

The people do not see them as marauders but as heroes, and every day that passes without a response from you makes them greater heroes, greater martyrs.

HYRCANUS

And yet they are a group of murderers and robbers. Supporters of the rebel, Antigonus.

MALACHI

I warned you not to send a novice for this job. But someone decided to set up his son with a job, a wedding gift.

ANTIPATER

Would you prefer it if I stepped out of the room so you could defame me freely?

MALACHI

We are not afraid to say the truth to your face, and you have no choice but to hear it. The borders are quiet. This is true. The Syrians and the Romans are quiet as well. But the people of Judea burn with rage.

PHASAEL

Because someone is sure to add fuel to the fire.

They tense up.

HYRCANUS

The governor of Jerusalem, Phasael, shall speak. I don't understand.

PHASAEL

Some people are fanning the flames. Some of the leaders sitting here with us right now sit with the mothers at night, doing everything to incite them, advise them, support their claims, instead of trying to calm things down.

MALACHI

And you are speaking, of course, as the governor of Jerusalem, not as the biased brother of the man who crucified their family members.

HYRCANUS

How can things be calmed down?

PHASAEL

As it is written in Ecclesiastes, "And money speaks to everything". We'll offer them compensation, maybe an exemption from taxation, a waiver for all debts.

MALACHI

They don't want a waiver! They demand justice because they have been wronged. And it makes no difference who advises them at night. Only justice can calm injustice.

HYRCANUS

Alright. We have to settle this matter before the holiday of Sukkot. Lysimachus, our master diplomat, go to the mothers and look into the possibility of compensation or any other arrangement. But make sure they don't take it too far.

LYSIMACHUS

I'll need money.

HYRCANUS

Of course. Antipater will give it to you.

DOSITHEOS

This is exactly how, during Sukkot, the people rebelled against your father, Alexander Jannaeus. It started with some nonsense or other, and ended with thousands dead.

HYRCANUS

I remember the rebellion. I was a boy back then. All of my maternal cousins ended up on the cross. I don't like this cross business. He should not have crucified them. Not my father, and not your son.

ANTIPATER

I will get back to work, with your permission.

HYRCANUS

That's alright. We'll discuss matters of the temple. You may leave. You too, Phasaël.

Phasaël and Antipater leave the hall.

MALACHI

(to Hyrcanus)

You're not going to get out of this by compensating the families. Herod must report to Jerusalem and face public punishment, before the holiday.

HYRCANUS

The governor in Syria will not let him come to Jerusalem, and he won't let us touch him.

MALACHI

Sukkot is coming up. A hundred thousand Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem. If the mothers keep wailing out there, we'll have riots flooding the land. How many Roman legions will it take to quell them? Even the Roman governor in Syria can do the math.

HYRCANUS

You are all too eager. You mean to harm Antipater, but you will collapse the house on my head.

EXT. TEMPLE MOUNT - COURTYARD BY HALL OF HEWN STONES - DAY

The crowd in the courtyard facing the Hall of Hewn Stones has grown larger since the morning. Talia reads out passages from scripture, and is answered not only by the mothers but by others gathered round. The number of guards has grown as well.

TALIA

"How is the faithful city become a harlot! She that was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers."

CROWD

Justice!

TALIA

"May your priests be clothed with your righteousness."

CROWD

Justice!

TALIA

"Lord of the Heavenly Armies, the righteous judge, the one who tests feelings and the heart."

CROWD

Justice!

TALIA

"But with righteousness shall
He judge the poor, and decide
with equity for the meek of
the earth; and He shall smite
the earth with the rod of His
mouth; and with the breath of
His lips shall he slay the
wicked."

CROWD

Justice!

In the crowd, we spot Dositheos, head of the secret police, dressed like a commoner, keeping an eye out on the gathering.

A tall FARMER whose garb covers his face puts a knife to Dositheos's back. Dositheos opens his eyes wide in terror.

FARMER

Don't move. Don't say a word.

Dositheos nods.

FARMER (CONT'D)

Are you the head of the secret police? Are you the famous Dositheos?

DOSITHEOS

Don't hurt me.

The Farmer smiles.

FARMER

Heaven forbid. I just wanted to tell you that if you hear one day that I've become king, don't come to me asking for a job. You're quite careless. Any farmer could get to you.

DOSITHEOS

Antigonus... have you lost your mind? What are you doing here?

Dositheos turns to him. The Farmer smiles. He is none other than Mattathias Antigonus, the High Priest's nephew, challenger to the throne of Judea.

ANTIGONUS (FARMER)

I've come to watch from up
close.

EXT. ANTIPATER'S COURTYARD - DAY

As Antipater and Phasaël enter the courtyard, their family rushes out, concerned. Cypros, Joseph, Pheroras, Salome, and Doris, Herod's teen wife. Antipater does not answer any questions. He heads straight into the house. They head in after him.

Cypros blocks Doris from going in.

CYRPOS

Don't go inside. Keep an eye
on Salome.

Doris is shocked as the door is slammed shut in her face. She turns to Salome.

SALOME

Would you like to come see the
pigeons with me?

INT. ANTIPATER'S OFFICE - DAY

It is a war council for Antipater's family. Everybody has the right to speak.

CYPROS

What did they want him to do,
kiss them on the forehead?

PHASAEL

No, mother. They wanted him to
bring them to Jerusalem, to
stand trial.

CYPROS

That's what the noise and the
wailing is all about?

JOSEPH

Wouldn't you do the same? If
anyone touched any one of us
you'd rip their eyes out.

CYPROS

What do they want?

PHASAEL

Herod's head.

CYPROS

You are the governor of
Jerusalem, you are the
governor of the entire land.
Can't you scatter yellow
scorpions out there and
silence them once and for all?

ANTIPATER

It's my head they want, not
Herod's. This is politics -
they're using these mothers to
get to Herod, and so get to
me, and so get to Rome. They
hate Rome. They want revenge
against me for bringing the
Romans here and tying them to
Hyrchanus. That is all.

CYPROS

And Hyrchanus, that milking
sheep, is he with us or with
the vipers?

ANTIPATER

Hyrchanus is with himself. They
are inciting the people
against him. Threatening him
with a rebellion.

PHASAEL

He needs to decide who he's
going with - us and Rome, or
the mob against Rome.

ANTIPATER

Yes, we are all very smart.
The Romans appointed us to
restore order and maintain the
peace. If riots break out in
Judea now, they will appoint
someone else and toss us back
to Edom. To the desert.

Silence. Then, Cypros snaps.

CYPROS

I told you not to send him. I
told you to keep him in
Jerusalem.

ANTIPATER

I was wrong not to listen to you.

CYPROS

What did you say?

PHASAEL

He was wrong not to listen to you. He should have sent me to the Galilee and not Herod, that savage hothead. That's enough of that.

JOSEPH

What's going to happen now? What are they planning?

ANTIPATER

A trial.

CYPROS

Trial for what?!

ANTIPATER

What difference does it make? They demand that he bring Herod to Jerusalem and put on a spectacle. They want everyone to see how the son of Antipater, the Edomite foreigner, the most powerful man in Judea, is humiliated while he stands by helplessly, unable to do a thing.

CYPROS

Then you let Herod know he cannot come here under any circumstances. They can put their own mother up on trial, those wh--

JOSEPH

Mother--

CYRPOS

They can throw us back to Edom, I don't care. You think he's stupid, that he'll come and play court jester for these Jewish dogs and their politics? I'll go out and stop him myself.

ANTIPATER

Yes. I'm sorry, Cypros. Maybe for your Nabatean ancestors out in Petra, in their convoys, in the desert, it makes sense for a man to leave his home on a camel for three years, come back and not even recognize his own children.

CYPROS

Watch it!

The sons smile. They know what's coming next.

ANTIPATER

For us Edomites it's different. Nothing is more powerful than family. After family comes the tribe. Then the people. Then the self. And now, your crazy son, who's gotten us all in trouble, will have to decide whether his blood runs more Edomite or Nabatean. No, you don't get to talk right now.

Cypros mumbles in a scratchy foreign tongue, that sounds like frightening spells and curses directed at some God or other.

ANTIPATER (CONT'D)

If Hyrcanus decides to hold a trial - we'll have a trial. The question is, what kind of a trial will it be?

PHASAEL

Meaning?

ANTIPATER

Meaning we will only go to trial after we know who the judges are and what decision they will make.

JOSEPH

And if Herod doesn't want to come?

ANTIPATER

He has no choice. His older brother will make a special trip out to see him and convince him.

Cypros turns to Phasaël, who is surprised.

Salome runs in with a small leather pouch. Doris walks in after her, looking insulted.

SALOME

Father, we got a pigeon from Herod. He's in Syria. The governor invited him to the palace to thank him.

INT. SYRIAN GOVERNOR'S PALACE - BATHHOUSE - DAY

Sextus Caesar, the Roman governor in Syria, and Herod are bathing in the pool along with several young women. Herod is beaming with pride. Phasaël stands by the edge of the pool and quietly suffers Sextus Caesar's berating.

SEXTUS

And when your brother rides through villages and towns from the Golan to Damascus, the people cheer him like a king, like Hercules who saved them from the monster. So you can go back to Hyrcanus and your father and let them know that Sextus Caesar, proquaestor pro praetor of the Syrian province, announces that from now on Herod is under my protection, and anyone who dares harm him is harming Rome. Zoilos!

Sextus Caesar comes out of water toward Phasaël.

SEXTUS (CONT'D)

(to Phasael)

You'll be getting that in an official letter to your father and the High Priest in Jerusalem.

Zoilos walks in.

SEXTUS (CONT'D)

(to Zoilos)

Come with me to the office.

Sextus Caesar and Zoilos leave the bathhouse.

HEROD

(to Phasael)

Can't we get the mothers out of there? Can't you shut down the Temple Mount?

PHASAEL

No.

HEROD

Then outlaw gatherings. You are the governor of Jerusalem.

PHASAEL

I don't own Jerusalem. I'm responsible for taxes and water.

HEROD

I should have killed the women that night too. It would have spared us all this commotion.

Herod whispers into the ear of one of the young women, who smiles. She comes out of the water and approaches Phasael.

PHASAEL

Father says you have to come to Jerusalem and stand trial.

HEROD

Trial? Who will judge me?

PHASAEL

Father is taking care of that.

The young woman starts to fondle him. Phasael turns to her.

PHASAEL (CONT'D)

(to young woman)

You are beautiful, but my wife
doesn't like it when strange
girls touch me.

HEROD

I am a citizen of Rome. We are
Romans. I don't have to stand
trial for a local court. I can
demand to be tried anywhere -
here, with the governor, in
Rome, wherever I decide.

PHASAEL

Rome may not punish you, but
they will seek a replacement
for you. For all of us. We
have a lot to lose.

HEROD

So you are sacrificing me for
the sake of the family.

PHASAEL

The proceedings will be
symbolic. Hyrcanus wouldn't
dare harm you.

HEROD

That loser. That wretched man.
That stupid, weak, crushed old
man.

PHASAEL

How is your wife doing?

The young women in the pool with Herod are surprised.
Herod reacts as if he forgot he had a wife:

HEROD

How is my wife?

PHASAEL

Mother says she vomits every
morning, but her face is
smooth and beautiful. That's a
sign of a son.

Herod is stunned. A smile on his face grows broader,
stronger. He can't speak for a few beats.

HEROD

A son?

He gets out of the water, in the nude. He hugs Phasaël excitedly, getting him very wet.

PHASAEL

You can caress her stomach
when you get home.

INT. HASMONEAN PALACE - BATHHOUSE SAUNA ROOM - NIGHT

Hyrchanus is sweating profusely. He's sitting on a stone bench, looking at a letter from Sextus Caesar, the Roman governor in Syria. Malachi is by his side, his fat exposed, wearing a towel around his crotch. Unlike the bathhouse in the Syrian palace, this place is filled entirely with bearded men.

HYRCANUS

He threatens that if a hair
should fall off Herod's head,
we will suffer the
consequences.

MALACHI

Meaning he is not opposed to a
trial. He simply warns us
about its results.

HYRCANUS

He says that Herod is a
citizen of Rome. He is not
obliged to report to us.

MALACHI

Herod is the governor of the
Galilee. If he does not obey
the law - no one will obey the
law. Even in Rome, senators,
generals and consuls are tried
for much smaller crimes.

HYRCANUS

Then he must be found
innocent.

MALACHI

This punk will stand on his feet for an entire day facing the court, sweating like a mule, shaking in fear that he's about to be convicted, and then we can acquit him by a margin of a single vote. That will teach that whole family the difference between those who rule and those who are but clerks.

HYRCANUS

What do we charge him with?

MALACHI

(gets out of steaming bath)
Murdering prisoners. Breaching the authority of the Sanhedrin and the High Priest. Treason.

HYRCANUS

Treason?

Malachi dries himself off with a towel.

INT. HIGH PRIEST'S COUNCIL HALL - DAY

Hyrchanus and Antipater are alone in the large hall. They are mid-conversation:

ANTIPATER

Who will the judges be?

HYRCANUS

The regular court. The small Sanhedrin, 23 judges, with me as head judge. We'll settle the vote in advance with them.

ANTIPATER

No, no, no. It's enough for a few of them to disobey and everything will get out of hand. The mothers and the children are sitting on their doorstep at the Hall of Hewn Stones. They hear their crying and mourning from dawn to dusk, and their hearts are

(MORE)

ANTIPATER (CONT'D)

breaking. They're biased. It's too dangerous.

HYRCANUS

Why did he do it? Why did he kill them?

ANTIPATER

I don't know.

HYRCANUS

He's a good boy. I don't want him to get hurt.

ANTIPATER

I have an idea. This might be the solution.

HYRCANUS

I'm listening.

ANTIPATER

This isn't a family matter between me and you, and this isn't a political matter between me and your friends. This is between all of us and the powerful kingdom, and the tiniest mistake could cause a huge disaster.

HYRCANUS

What do you suggest?

ANTIPATER

Convene the large Sanhedrin. 71 judges.

HYRCANUS

Who will serve on it?

ANTIPATER

The standing court, along with our people. People who will rule as we want them to. We'll hold a trial, draw it out, the whole thing will melt like butter in the sun.

HYRCANUS

What people?

ANTIPATER

Respected men, popular men -
but men with their own
interests in mind. Men who
understand a wink.
Representatives of the
merchants, the writers, the
heads of Jerusalem's quarters,
military commanders - people
who have got something to
lose.

HYRCANUS

I want only Jews of Jewish
descent, no Edomites.

ANTIPATER

Of course.

HYRCANUS

And we'll add the Pharisees'
Sanhedrin, the Torah Sages -
23 more judges. They represent
the people. The people love
them. They trust them.

ANTIPATER

Absolutely not the Torah
Sages. How can we control
them? If they think that
according to the Torah Herod
must be executed--

HYRCANUS

You're wrong. They don't care
about the state. The last time
they meddled in affairs of the
state my father Alexander
Jannaeus killed thousands of
them and crucified 800 right
in front of their families'
eyes. Since then, their
Sanhedrin deals with matters
of purity and impurity - what
to eat, how to eat it, things
like that. They'll do whatever
I ask, as long as it keeps
them out of trouble.

ANTIPATER

I thank you.

HYRCANUS

It's a good idea. Good advice.
It will be a large Sanhedrin
that represents all the
people, and does what we tell
it to do. Draw up your lists.
Antipater, we have been of one
mind for over twenty years.
We've managed to survive. We
will survive this as well.

ANTIPATER

God willing.

INT. ANTIPATER'S HOUSE - COLUMBARIUM - DAY

A pigeon flies into Herod's columbarium. Little Salome walks up to it. She pets it and pours water and seeds for it to drink and eat. While the pigeon is drinking, Salome unties the small leather tube from its leg and pulls out a paper scroll.

INT. ANTIPATER'S HOUSE - ROOM - DAY

Antipater, Phasaël and his aides are looking through the lists of candidates for the Sanhedrin.

ANTIPATER

Do you know any of these Torah
Sages?

PHASAEL

Simple men. The president of
their Sanhedrin is named
Hillel. A lumberjack. Came
from Babylon. A kind man. He
busies himself with studying
the Torah and doesn't mess
with the government.

ANTIPATER

A wise man.

PHASAEL

The other is an architect,
Shammai, the presiding judge.
A sharp, meticulous, stubborn
man. His students fear him.

Antipater seems concerned.

ANTIPATER

I don't like rabbis who are
too stubborn or sharp.

PHASAEAL

And he doesn't like
dignitaries or clerks or
priests or any Hasmonean. I'm
not sure he'll agree to share
the court with the other
judges.

ANTIPATER

Find ways to convince them.

Little Salome runs inside with the rolled-up scroll the
pigeon brought.

SALOME

He's coming! Herod will come
to Jerusalem.

She hands the scroll to Antipater and says to Phasael:

SALOME (CONT'D)

Herod asks that you two meet
him on the Mount of Olives the
night before the trial.

Phasael and Antipater exchange a glance.

ANTIPATER

(to Salome)

Since when can you read?

INT. OLD HILLEL'S STUDY HALL - NIGHT

It's a large hall, filled with benches and tables. By the
walls, shelves are packed with parchments and papyrus
scrolls. Dozens of students are gathered in groups of
four or five, conversing in a quiet murmur. Here and
there, an argument heats up, and someone raises his
voice.

In the corner, set apart from the students, HILLEL and
SHAMMAI confer in secret. Hillel is a squat man with a
flat head and kind eyes. Shammai is lean, with sharp
features. Hillel holds a rolled-up letter. The
synagogue's SHAMASH - the warden - makes sure they are
not disturbed.

HILLEL

Why should we stick our noses in matters of the state? Has the honor of the Torah been violated here? No. Has the honor of the Torah Sages been violated here? No. Who has been violated? The High Priest and his Sanhedrin. Shammai, what have we got to do with them? This is not a matter of the Torah.

SHAMMAI

Everything is a matter of the Torah. And if the High Priest requests our opinion, it is the honor of the Torah.

HILLEL

They want our signature, not our opinion. All they expect is for us to add our signature as the representatives of the people to acquit this punk and silence those mothers crying out there.

SHAMMAI

And if he really is innocent?

HILLEL

And if he is guilty? Must I be the one to convict him? Our rabbis ordered us not to go anywhere near the authorities and not to cooperate with them. Can you stick your head in the lion's mouth and live to tell the tale? If the Sanhedrin convicts Herod, we will incite the wrath of the great beast, of Rome. And if it acquits him, we will lose the people's faith. We cannot take part in this trial.

SHAMMAI

What shall I tell my students?
That Hillel, the wisest of
Israel's men, was asked to
judge and was overcome with
fear? Was it not you who said
"Where there are no men -
strive to be a man?"

HILLEL

I am not afraid of judging. I
am afraid of you.

SHAMMAI

Of me?

HILLEL

I am ready to swallow my pride
and judge as they wish. But
you, Shammai, the burning
torch of truth, if, heaven
forbid, you believe someone is
trying to twist the truth, to
bend justice, you will demand
judgment without compromise,
etc. etc., and you will bring
disaster upon us, the students
and the Torah.

Shammai smiles.

SHAMMAI

I promise to control myself.

SHAMASH

Hillel, I'm sorry, some people
are...

PTOLEMY, a supervisor on behalf of the city ruler, has
walked into the study hall, along with a group of armed
bodyguards. Ptolemy looks around. He examines the walls,
knocks on the ceiling with his staff and watches the
mortar crumble. He announces:

PTOLEMY

This building must be
evacuated.

HILLEL

Why?

PTOLEMY

Are you in charge here? Are you Hillel?

HILLEL

I am Hillel.

PTOLEMY

There is a risk of fire and collapse here. You see these cracks, here and here? This building is about to collapse, and you must evacuate it by tomorrow morning. It is the building supervisor's decision.

Ptolemy hands him a written warrant. Shammai gets up and studies the walls.

HILLEL

Where should we go? We have dozens of students here.

PTOLEMY

Precisely. We fear for their lives. When you're done with your inspection, we'll come have a look. If you're approved, you can return.

SHAMMAI

(incensed)

You're lying. These are barely cracks in the mortar. Go back to whoever sent you and tell them this building stands on stone, and it will remain standing even after your and his great-grandchildren are gone.

Hillel watches this with concern. He tries to gesture to Shammai to calm down.

PTOLEMY

You can appeal, of course.

Shammai grits his teeth. Ptolemy turns to leave, then comes back.

PTOLEMY (CONT'D)

And one other matter - the population commissioner wishes to let you know that all of your students who are not residents of Jerusalem must register and apply for a permit, otherwise we'll have to deport you and perhaps, who knows, even shut this place down.

Ptolemy and his guards leave. The hall is silent.

HILLEL

(to students)

Get back to your studies.

The murmurs are heard again from the students.

HILLEL (CONT'D)

(to Shammai)

Well. It seems our discussion is over, and that the decision has been made for us.

EXT. JERUSALEM - MOUNT OF OLIVES - NIGHT

It's the top of the mountain, overlooking Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, where a fire always burns. Antipater and Phasaël warm themselves by a campfire, with their horses nearby.

They hear the SOUND OF HORSES coming. Many horses. They look around, seeing nothing in the darkness.

Herod approaches them. They hug.

ANTIPATER

What is this army? Have you come to stand trial or wage a war?

HEROD

I haven't come to stand trial.

ANTIPATER

You have no choice. Our enemies are inciting the people against us, and Hyrcanus cannot take the pressure. We can't prevent the trial, but we can--

HEROD

(cuts him off)

Go in tonight, grab them from their beds, tie them to the tails of my horses and drag them through the streets of Jerusalem.

PHASAEL

Who?

HEROD

Our enemies. My judges. And the High Priest John Hyrcanus, their leader. I know of only one way to deal with enemies.

ANTIPATER

Hyrcanus is not your enemy.

HEROD

Really? If you hadn't formed a bond between that pitiful man and the Romans, he'd be rotting underground as we speak, worm feed, a High Priest in the Kingdom of Hades. This man dares to try me for doing what he asked of me? For that he should be slaughtered, along with the hypocrites who surround him. And if you're scared, I have the power, and I--

Antipater slaps him.

ANTIPATER

Shut up!

HEROD

What?!

ANTIPATER

Shut your mouth!

Dozens of horsemen ride out of the darkness, waiting for Herod's command. He does not blink. The tension between father and son is terrible.

HEROD

(quiet)

You're lucky you're my father.

ANTIPATER

No. You are lucky I'm your father.

PHASAEL

Not in front of the soldiers.

ANTIPATER

There is one reason for our standing in this land, and that is the High Priest John Hyrcanus. He is worthy of royalty, son of House Hasmonean, leader of the Jewish people and friend and ally to Rome. You are nothing more than a wheel in the chariot that carries him. And the second you forget that again, you'll be replaced like a broken wheel. Do you understand what I'm saying to you?

HEROD

(terrifyingly cold)

More than you can ever imagine, sir. I have no right to exist without my father, and my father has no right to exist without the master he serves. And owing to that, I will be sentenced to death tomorrow.

ANTIPATER

The trial tomorrow is for show. It's a comedy. It's all been decided in advance. The large Sanhedrin will sit there, listen and deliberate - and then it will acquit you. Tomorrow morning you will report to the Hall of Hewn Stones with your men and wait to be called inside. And then you will go in, modest, quiet, confident, like a man fulfilling his duty - neither arrogant nor fearful. When you are asked questions you will answer them politely, and if anyone speaks out against you, you will not respond and you will not lash out. You are the governor of the Galilee, a man of honor, not a goddamn Edomite punk.

HEROD

(chilling, not a muscle moves
in his face)

It'll be alright, father.

Phasaël tries to hug Herod, but Herod does not give in to the hug.

PHASAEL

Herod, mother has asked that you come home. Everybody misses you. Especially your wife.

ANTIPATER

Only if he comes alone, without this army. I don't need any civil wars in Jerusalem on the night before his trial. Leave the soldiers here and come home to sleep.

INT. HASMONEAN PALACE - ALEXANDRA'S ROOM - DAY

Alexandra wakes up from sleep with a start, and finds Herod there watching her.

ALEXANDRA

How did you get in here?

He smiles. She gets out of bed, wearing a skimpy nightgown, her hair down.

She opens the door and finds the guard unconscious on the floor. She pushes him with her foot, trying to wake him. Soeimos, standing in the shadow, speaks up:

SOEIMOS

He's not asleep, my lady. He's unconscious.

Alexandra gives up. She walks back into the room and gets in bed. She turns to Herod.

ALEXANDRA

Are you going to stand there until the trial begins? Come here.

He walks over to the bed. She takes his shirt off.

ALEXANDRA (CONT'D)

I've missed you.

HEROD

I know. It's hard, being a young widow.

Alexandra pulls him to the bed. She pins him to her, then rolls him over and gets on top.

ALEXANDRA

My friend Cleopatra, from Egypt, says a woman should find a husband more noble than she is, and a lover beneath her. In your case, it is the exact opposite - your wife is beneath you, while your lover is a noble princess.

She pins his hands behind his head. She kisses him, teases him. He gives in, allows her to take the lead and do as she wishes.

She rubs up against him and rides him, her eyes closed, focused on herself, until she climaxes and rolls over. In spite of the great passion, this is not an act of love. Alexandra has satiated her hunger.

ALEXANDRA

Not bad for a man about to stand trial. I was sure the fear would soften you.

HEROD

You were wrong. I am not afraid of your father or the eunuchs who surround him.

ALEXANDRA

Is that so.

HEROD

Yes, it is. They belong to the past. I am on my way to the future.

ALEXANDRA

And where is this future?

HEROD

Rome. I am a citizen of Rome. I can get on a ship tomorrow and get off in Brundisium two weeks later and start my life. I am a protégé of Sextus Caesar, a relative of Julius Caesar. I will not stay here to serve your father.

ALEXANDRA

And to serve me?

HEROD

You I fuck, Alexandra. With all due respect, you're not really a noble royal family going back generations upon generations. You're just a family of lowly priests from a remote village who was able to seize power in a tiny country in Asia.

ALEXANDRA

You mean the Hasmonean dynasty.

HEROD

Exactly. Why should I stay here, with you, on the conquered side, the side that surrenders and pays taxes, when I could be there, in the center of the world?

ALEXANDRA

Have you ever asked yourself why the crow walks so oddly, like it was dancing?

HEROD

What?

ALEXANDRA

A little story for you, before you get on that ship to Rome, assuming they don't hang you tomorrow. The crow noticed that the dove had a more beautiful walk than any of the other birds, and it was awfully jealous. It decided to imitate the dove's walk. It tried and tried and practiced until its bones bent out of shape and it fell, while all the other animals in the forest mocked it. It tried to go back to the way it used to walk, and it couldn't. It was stuck forever with its ridiculous dancing walk.

HEROD

And what does that have to do with me?

ALEXANDRA

Because you, my sweet toy, are already ridiculous. How can you walk like a Roman, when you can't even walk like a Jew? Come, honey, do what you do well. Where are you going? Are you tired?

HEROD

My young wife is waiting for me.

ALEXANDRA

Then tell your friend waiting by the door to come in and see me.

HEROD

He prefers men. But I can fetch my horse.

He leaves the room. Soeimos joins him.

EXT. ANTIPATER'S COURTYARD - NIGHT

Herod and Soeimos walk into the empty courtyard. The sound of KNOCKING coming from the kitchen draws their attention. They turn to the kitchen.

INT. ANTIPATER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Several male and female slaves are busy preparing for the next day - they pluck the feathers off pigeons, knead piles of dough, chop up spices. When Herod and Soeimos walk in, Habub rushes up to greet them.

HABUB

Herod! They said you wouldn't be here tonight.

HEROD

What is this, what are you preparing in the middle of the night?

HABUB

A feast. For tomorrow, after the trial.

HEROD

Feed Soeimos, he's starving. Come here for a second.

Habub comes closer.

HEROD (CONT'D)

Is Doris here? Where does she sleep?

INT. ANTIPATER'S HOUSE - DORIS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Herod shuts the door quietly behind him and takes his clothes off. Doris opens her eyes. She sees Herod, and is certain she's dreaming. She shuts her eyes.

DORIS

You came back to me...

HEROD

Yes.

DORIS

Are you here to take me up north?

HEROD

Not yet... first you'll give birth.

He lies down by her side and puts his head on her stomach.

DORIS

It's small, you can't feel it yet. Everybody says it's a boy.

Herod caresses her.

HEROD

Are you resting? What do you do all day?

DORIS

They won't let me work. I play with Salome.

He kisses her. She hugs him.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Today it won't hurt?

HEROD

No, Doris, I won't sleep with you today.

DORIS

Why not? I want you.

Herod sighs helplessly, then laughs.

HEROD

I'm tired. I rode straight
through from the Galilee, and
tomorrow I stand trial. And I
don't want anybody to hear us.
And it's not healthy for the
baby.

He kisses her breasts and glides down her stomach.

DORIS

You've got so many excuses...
what are you doing... what...
what are you doing to me?

HEROD

Eating you.

EXT. ANTIPATER'S COURTYARD - DAY

Antipater, Cypros, and Herod's siblings are there -
Phasael, Pheroras, and Salome. The men are all ready to
leave for the courthouse. Doris sits to the side with a
Mona Lisa smile on her lips, eating shelled nuts out of a
bowl, detached from her surroundings.

ANTIPATER

Is Joseph ready? I want to
leave.

JOSEPH (O.S.)

(from inside house)

You can head out, I'll be
there. I know the way.

CYPROS

Your father wants you to
arrive together, in one group.
Like a fist. Like an Edomite
family...

JOSEPH

By my calculation, we're
missing a finger.

SALOME

No you're not. I'm here. The
pinky. I'm coming with you.

Bagohi the eunuch comes up from behind, grabs her in his
arm and keeps walking with her flailing in his arms.

BAGOHI

You're not going with them.
You're staying with me and
Habub and helping us get the
courtyard ready. After the
trial, many people will come
here to celebrate, all the
people who have disappeared
lately.

SALOME

Then why are we inviting them,
if they're not our friends?

Bagohi puts her down.

BAGOHI

Because we are politicians,
sweetheart. We're politicians.
Where'd you run off to again?!

EXT. TEMPLE MOUNT - COURTYARD BY HALL OF HEWN STONES - DAY

The courtyard is packed. The families of the dead are in a circle in the center. They chant the bible verses about justice, and the crowd answers them. The Temple Guards in dark uniforms, headed by Ben-Gadya, maintain order. The 23 judges of the standing Sanhedrin arrive in groups of 3 to 5 men. They are clearly part of Jerusalem's aristocratic elite.

Malachi arrives, accompanied by tough, efficient guards who pave the way for him through the crowd. He acts like a candidate at a campaign rally, and several people in the crowd cheer him on. He stops, gets up on a rock and addresses the crowd.

MALACHI

You, the orphans and widows
and mothers of the Galilee
heroes, your voice will be
heard. You demanded justice,
and justice shall be done.
Here, in the place where the
Judgment of Solomon was heard
over a thousand years ago, the
man who executed your loved
ones will stand trial.

Malachi's gaze meets the eyes of Mattathias Antigonus, who is standing in the crowd dressed like a beggar.

Antigonus smiles at him and winks. Malachi falls silent for a beat.

Now, the members of the Pharisees' Sanhedrin arrive, 21 Sages dressed in simple garbs, led by Hillel and Shammai. Shammai's group walks first, cutting through the crowd like a warm knife through butter. Hillel's group is calmer. They surround their rabbi Hillel.

Malachi has gotten over the shock of seeing Antigonus, and he gets back to his speech:

MALACHI (CONT'D)

No one is above the laws of our forefathers. Certainly not an Edomite who converted, no matter who his father is, how much money he has, or how many supporters he has back in Rome.

(louder)

"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow."

HILLEL

"And loves the foreigner residing among you."

MALACHI

What?

HILLEL

If you are going to quote the Torah, quote it correctly. "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you." Especially the Edomite foreigner. The Lord said, "Do not despise an Edomite, for he is your brother."

MALACHI

Then after we are finished
with the Edomite foreigner,
honored guests, we shall be
free to deal with the
Babylonian Sage.

Laughter in the crowd. Malachi gets off the rock and
walks on with his men.

HANNAH, one of the women, whom we last saw trapped in the
cave in the lower Galilee after bringing back water,
blocks Hillel's way.

HANNAH

Hillel, the blood of your
brothers shouts out to you
from the ground.

HILLEL

And what does it tell me?

Little Salome is seen in the crowd, stunned by the hatred
toward her father and brother she hears from those around
her.

HANNAH

That if you acquit the Edomite
dog, you are killing them all
over again. We demand justice.

HILLEL

What justice? To sentence him
to death before the trial?

HANNAH

He killed my husband without a
trial too.

HILLEL

Which is why he is on trial
today. Would you like them to
try me for the same crime as
well? Do unto others as you
would have them do to you -
this is the whole Torah.

MAN IN CROWD

They've bought him too. The
Edomite dog has bought them
too. What did they promise
you, Hillel? Lower taxes?

Shammai returns and stares the Man down, fire in his eyes.

SHAMMAI

This is a trial, not an execution, and we are judges, not executioners. Moses commanded us, "Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of anyone, for judgment belongs to God."

Hillel looks at him, concerned.

VOICES IN CROWD

Don't let them through!
Get them!

Hillel and Shammai tense up and quickly leave, but the crowd was not talking about them. They were talking about Antipater, his sons and their guards, who walk up in a tight group and are sneered at and booed.

Little Salome, who has made her way to the center of the circle, looks at Yuda, who stands by his mother Talia. Their eyes meet. He smiles at her.

Guards clear a path through the crowd to allow the judges passage, and Yuda is nearly crushed. Salome pulls him out. He looks around for his mother, lost in the commotion.

From afar they see Dositheos, the head of the secret police, brief the witnesses, a man and two women. One of the two women is Talia.

ON DOSITHEOS

DOSITHEOS

When the time comes, we will call you. You will stand before the judge and give the answers we have agreed upon. Let's go in.

He leads them inside through a side door. Talia hesitates, she looks around for Yuda, but the crowd stands between them. She walks in.

Yuda makes it to the door, but it is slammed shut.

INT. HALL OF HEWN STONES - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dositheos leads the witnesses down the hallway and into a windowless room.

DOSITHEOS

Sit here until you're called.

He leaves, locks the door and posts a guard at the door.

INT. HALL OF HEWN STONES - HYRCANUS'S ROOM - DAY

The noise from the crowd outside cannot reach the room where John Hyrcanus, wearing his High Priest garbs, lies on a fainting couch, awaiting the trial. Two armed Temple Guards stand by the door, with four standing outside the door. Hyrcanus chews on almonds from a bowl on a small table, and sips wine. A servant pours more wine, overfilling the cup and spilling a few drops on Hyrcanus's robes.

HYRCANUS

Clean that up!

The servant takes the robe off of Hyrcanus and tries to remove the stain. The COURT CLERK enters and announces:

COURT CLERK

Everybody has arrived. All the judges are in the courtroom.

HYRCANUS

All seventy of them?

COURT CLERK

All of them.

HYRCANUS

The defendant?

COURT CLERK

The defendant is here. He's waiting outside.

Hyrcanus gets up. The servant wants to put the wet robe back on him. Hyrcanus is annoyed.

HYRCANUS

Leave it. It's wet. Leave me alone. I'll go in without a robe.

He heads out to the hallway and marches, surrounded by Temple Guards, all the way into:

INT. HALL OF HEWN STONES - CONTINUOUS

The Hall of Hewn Stones is round. The judges' seats are three rows arranged in a semicircle facing the entrance, like a Roman theater. A stage in the center has the High Priest's chair and the presiding judge's podium.

TRUMPETS BLOW. John Hyrcanus walks in, and everybody stands up to honor him. The Temple Guards stand behind him.

COURT CLERK

(declares to court)

The High Priest John Hyrcanus of House Hasmonean, the leader of Judea and the Jewish people, the president of the large Sanhedrin. Be seated.

HILLEL

So many titles for one man.

MALACHI

Where is his robe?

Eliezer Ben-Gamla, 60, the PRESIDING JUDGE, walks over to his spot next to John Hyrcanus.

PRESIDING JUDGE

The large Sanhedrin, the special court of Jerusalem, has convened to judge on the charges brought against the governor of the Galilee, Herod son of Antipater. The court orders the defendant be brought in.

Murmurs and whispers ripple through the crowd of judges. There's a ruckus by the door. The guards standing there are pushed aside, and twenty of Herod's armed guards in uniform invade the hall. They stand in a rectangular formation, terrifying everyone present.

Herod walks into the court. He's dressed in royal splendor, wearing a crimson robe, his long hair combed back as if this were his coronation ceremony. Everybody present is surprised by his appearance. Shammai is frozen. Hyrcanus is alarmed. Antipater's family is embarrassed. Herod stands in front of his men and looks around with a smile.

HEROD
 (joking heavily)
 You called me?

No one answers.

HEROD (CONT'D)
 Everybody's sitting and I'm
 the only one standing? Where
 is my chair?

PRESIDING JUDGE
 (to Court Clerk)
 Give him a chair.

A chair is brought out for Herod. He sits down. The crowd falls silent. The Presiding Judge looks at John Hyrcanus. He gestures for him to begin. The Presiding Judge reads the charges:

PRESIDING JUDGE
 While serving as governor of
 the Galilee, sent by the
 Judean government in
 Jerusalem, Herod, son of
 Antipater, captured the gang
 led by Hezekiah the Galilean,
 who were known to rob, pillage
 and murder. The prisoners were
 locked in the Sepphoris
 Fortress, and while they
 awaited transfer to Jerusalem
 to stand trial before the
 Sanhedrin, the defendant
 decided to crucify them in
 front of their families.

INT. HALL OF HEWN STONES - HALLWAY AND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Salome and Yuda run down the hallways. They pass by the guard standing outside the room with the witnesses. They open a door to a room where Alexandra watches the trial from above.

ALEXANDRA
 Get out of here.

They back out of the room and walk into another, from which they can watch the Sanhedrin hall:

INT. HALL OF HEWN STONES - CONTINUOUS

The Presiding Judge continues his account:

PRESIDING JUDGE

In his action, he broke the law of our forefathers, forbidding us from executing any man without a trial. The laws of our forefathers allow us to judge our fellow man only in Jerusalem. According to the laws of our forefathers, only a king may kill without a trial.

MALACHI

Maybe the laws of his forefathers are different...

PRESIDING JUDGE

Herod, son of Antipater. You are accused of murdering prisoners and breaching the authority of the High Priest. You are accused of breaching the authority of this Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. You are accused of treason.

HEROD

Treason? Who have I committed treason against?

HYRCANUS

It's fine. Go on.

HEROD

No need. I think everybody's got it. I haven't got all day.

HYRCANUS

Call the witnesses to the stand.

PRESIDING JUDGE

The court calls Ahikam son of Yosha, a garrison officer at the Sepphoris Fortress.

The Court Clerk walks in.

COURT CLERK

He's disappeared.

HYRCANUS

Disappeared?

COURT CLERK

He was outside, waiting by the door. Now he's not there.

HYRCANUS

Call your next witness.

PRESIDING JUDGE

He is the only one who agreed to come here and testify today. The others did not show up for some reason.

HEROD

They've had second thoughts. I spoke to them. Meaning, first I spoke to them, and then they had second thoughts.

Laughter in the audience.

PRESIDING JUDGE

We have female witnesses. The mothers. The women.

SHAMMAI

A woman's testimony is invalid. Women cannot testify.

HYRCANUS

How can we judge a man if no one will testify as to what happened there?

YUDA (O.S.)

I'll testify.

At first, it is unclear who said that.

HYRCANUS

Who was that? Who just spoke?

INT. ROOM OVERLOOKING HALL OF HEWN STONES - CONTINUOUS

Yuda speaks from the room above them.

YUDA

I can testify. I was there,
and I saw it all. I can tell
you what happened.

Salome is stunned.

SALOME

You were there?

Yuda runs out of the room.

INT. HALL OF HEWN STONES - CONTINUOUS

Hyrcanus looks up.

HYRCANUS

Who is that? Who said he would
testify?

Yuda enters the hall from the same back door that John
Hyrcanus entered earlier. The Temple Guards turn to grab
him.

HYRCANUS (CONT'D)

Come closer. Bring him here.

Yuda walks up and stands before the Sanhedrin. He points
at Herod.

YUDA

This man grabbed me while I
was playing with my dog. He
held a knife to my throat and
called my father out.

HYRCANUS

Hold on. What is your name?

YUDA

Yuda, son of Hezekiah the
Galilean. He promised that if
they came out and surrendered
he would transport them to
Jerusalem to stand trial.
Then, at night, he murdered
them.

A murmur ripples through the audience.

INTERCUT: In the room overlooking the hall, Salome is
stunned.

Hillel and Shammai whisper among themselves. The

Presiding Judge walks over to them.

HYRCANUS
What is it? What is the
problem?

The Presiding Judge walks over to him and whispers
something in his ear.

HYRCANUS (CONT'D)
(to Yuda)
How old are you?

YUDA
Eight. Ten.

The Presiding Judge shakes his head.

HYRCANUS
A minor's testimony is
invalid. Take him away.

YUDA
But I was there. I saw it all.

Salome walks into the hall through the same back door,
and she waves at Herod, trying to get his attention.

PRESIDING JUDGE
The court will ignore the
young boy's words. A minor's
testimony is invalid.

SHAMMAI
No. The bible commands us,
"Hear both small and great
alike. Do not be afraid of
anyone." We heard what we
heard.

HYRCANUS
If there are no further
witnesses--

HEROD
(cuts him off)
There is no need for
witnesses.
(gets up)
I admit I executed them. I am
willing to describe in detail
to the honorable court how I
(MORE)

HEROD (CONT'D)

killed them, why I killed them, and why, after I killed them, I crucified them. I would be happy to describe in detail how I killed this adorable child's father, as well. I was sent to take out the lawless marauders, and I crushed them. I was sent to bring peace to the Galilee, and I brought peace to the Galilee and the Golan. The Roman governor in Syria, who was threatening to invade the Galilee with his legions, has calmed down. He asked me to relay to you that he is grateful to you and to me. And to my soldiers, who stand with me here today.

A murmur of agreement ripples through the judges.

HEROD (CONT'D)

You have gathered 71 judges here, turned this into a grand spectacle, even prepared an altar to sacrifice me on. The only problem is, you have no authority to judge me. I am a Roman citizen. I demand to be tried in Syria by the governor. Not by you. And that is what I have come here to say to you.

Herod sits down. The judges are embarrassed. They realize the trial is over, and they prepare themselves to leave. The Presiding Judge scrambles to figure out what to do next.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Alright... we can put the matter of authority up for vote. The Sanhedrin can decide if it has jurisdiction here. On the other hand, if there are no witnesses and there is no possibility of holding a trial...

Shammai gets up suddenly.

SHAMMAI

I wish to speak before we vote. I turn to you, my fellow judges, and ask you, have you ever seen, has there ever stood before you, in all the trials you have ever judged, a defendant who behaved like this man? When a man stands trial before the Sanhedrin he is humble, his hair matted, his clothes a mourner's black. He bows his head in awe, asks for the court's mercy, and fearfully awaits its verdict. Not this man. This playboy, Herod, who has been called to stand before us and answer to a terrible, grievous accusation, comes wrapped in a royal crimson robe, made up like a peacock, combed like an Egyptian pimp, surrounded by armed soldiers ready and willing to slaughter us if we convict him. And he tells you, like a man speaking to his slave - you, the leaders of Judea, you worm Jacob, are unworthy of judging me.

Herod sits there, amused.

SHAMMAI (CONT'D)

I have no problem with him. His own wellbeing is more important to him than your honor. But I have a problem with you and the president of this Sanhedrin, the High Priest John Hyrcanus, for you are allowing him to humiliate you in this way. Do not delude yourselves - this man that you are about to acquit, for whom you have made a mockery of law and order, he will return and

(MORE)

SHAMMAI (CONT'D)

have his revenge on you, and settle his debt with each and every one of you - you too, mister High Priest. If you do not give him a fair trial right now, he will try you with his sword, as he tried the prisoners in the Galilee.

VOICES IN AUDIENCE

Amen.

SHAMMAI

We have no need for more witnesses. The truth is clear. We have the faith of the widows and orphans, and we just heard the defendant's confession, more powerful than a hundred witnesses. "Do not be afraid, you worm Jacob," said the prophet Isaiah. "Those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish."

MORE VOICES IN AUDIENCE

Amen.

SHAMMAI

"Don't be afraid of anyone," said Moses to the judges of Israel. "Because the ruling belongs to God". And justice shall pierce the mountain.

MOST VOICES IN AUDIENCE

Amen.

SHAMMAI

And you, the defendant,
(roars)
Rise on your feet!

Herod obeys instantly and gets up. The look of amusement has been stricken from his face. He is anxious. The soldiers behind him are tense. The court is in an uproar. The Presiding Judge is embarrassed.

The door opens, and dozens of the Temple Guards swarm in and surround Herod's men.

PRESIDING JUDGE

Shall we take a vote?

The judges call for an immediate vote. They are like a pack of hounds, like sharks smelling blood in the water - Herod's blood. It's clear that if the vote is held now, Herod will be executed in moments. The men behind the trial - Hyrcanus, Malachi, Dositheos, Antipater - realize they are on the brink of disaster, but they are helpless. They have no clue how to stop this from happening.

Hillel gets up now. He walks over to John Hyrcanus and whispers in his ear. Hyrcanus nods, and hurries up, gesturing to the Presiding Judge to come over quickly. The Court Clerk calls for silence.

Hillel, Hyrcanus and the Presiding Judge whisper among themselves while Shammai watches them with a frown. The Presiding Judge returns to his place and announces loudly, almost hysterically:

PRESIDING JUDGE

According to the laws of our forefathers, if the Sanhedrin has decided after its first hearing to acquit the defendant, we do not hesitate, but deliver our ruling and allow the defendant to leave for his home.

VOICES IN AUDIENCE

We didn't acquit!

PRESIDING JUDGE

According to the laws of our forefathers, if we are about to convict the defendant, we do not deliver the verdict on the same day, but postpone it to the next - perhaps in the night, his innocence shall be found. We will end our hearing right now and reconvene tomorrow morning. The members of the Sanhedrin will ponder the verdict over the night. Put the defendant under house arrest. You may go with the guards to your father's house

(MORE)

PRESIDING JUDGE (CONT'D)

to visit your wife, and
tomorrow morning we shall have
a ruling for you. This meeting
is adjourned.

TRUMPETS BLARE. Hyrcanus hurries out of the door he came
in from, along with his guards.

The Temple Guards surround Herod, standing between him
and his men, who stand awkwardly awaiting his orders.

The Sanhedrin judges quickly slip out the side and back
doors, because the front door is blocked.

Shammai stares furiously at Hillel, who smiles at him. He
looks like a wolf whose prey was snatched from his jaw.

Herod is led to the back door.

Malachi pulls Dositheos to him.

MALACHI

Take your men. Strip them of
their uniforms and wait for
him on his way home. Stones,
sticks and small knives. Leave
now. The witness who
disappeared, what is his name?

DOSITHEOS

Ahikam son of Yosha.

MALACHI

Make sure he speaks to no one.

DOSITHEOS

Don't worry. He will never
speak to anyone again.

Antipater, who was watching Malachi and Dositheos,
quickly leaves after Hyrcanus.

INT. HALL OF HEWN STONES - ROOM - DAY

Hyrcanus is on his fainting couch when Antipater walks in
with Herod.

HYRCANUS

As the saying goes, one fool
may throw a stone into a well
which a hundred wise men
cannot pull out. 71 judges are
doing everything they can to
acquit him, and he takes the
rope and puts it around his
neck. An arrogant fool. Get
him out of here, tonight. Make
him disappear. The first
chance you get, appoint a
replacement for him as
commander of the Galilee.

ANTIPATER

Who will replace him?

HYRCANUS

A scarecrow, as far as I'm
concerned. The way he's
behaving, a rabid wolf could
replace him. God knows how
we'll deal with the mothers in
the square and the rage on the
streets tomorrow. Goodnight.

He turns to leave, then stops.

HYRCANUS (CONT'D)

And one more thing, Antipater.
You will send your tax
collectors out right now
across the land and announce a
twenty percent tax cut for the
next year. Hopefully that can
distract them.

ANTIPATER

Who will make up for that
deficit?

HYRCANUS

You will, with your own money.
If you have another way of
silencing them, tell me in the
morning.

He leaves. Herod turns to leave as well.

ANTIPATER

Where are you going?

HEROD

(embarrassed)

Home. To mother...

ANTIPATER

You aren't going home. You're waiting here for the moon to go down, you're getting on a horse and getting out of Jerusalem. I'll make sure the north gate will be open for half an hour, no more. The other option is for you to go home to your mother and get killed by your many admirers on the way.

HEROD

Where should I run to?

ANTIPATER

Maybe to Syria. To your new friend, Sextus Caesar. Stay with him for a few months.

HEROD

I want my men.

ANTIPATER

You men will stay here, with the one who pays them.

HEROD

Then I'll stay here as well, for the hearing tomorrow morning.

ANTIPATER

You'll get six horsemen, no more. Herod.

HEROD

Yes, father.

ANTIPATER

You are not my firstborn, but I had hoped that in time you would inherit me. Do not let me down again.

HEROD

(whispers)

I'm sorry, father. Tell mother
I asked for her forgiveness
too.

Antipater pulls him in for a long, loving hug. Little Salome pops up suddenly. She calls out to the hallway.

SALOME

He's here!

Then she runs up and jumps onto her brother. Herod hugs her. Herod's brothers - Phasaël, Joseph and Pheroras - walk into the room.

SALOME (CONT'D)

(to Herod)

I've prepared some pigeons for
you to take up north.

HEROD

Take care of them. I'll be
back soon to get them.

EXT. TEMPLE MOUNT - COURTYARD BY HALL OF HEWN STONES -
NIGHT

It's late at night. It's the last watch for the families of the crucified men from the Galilee - some sleep in tents, others sit around a dying campfire, monotonously mumbling verses from Psalms.

Little Yuda wakes up to the sound of HORSES GALLOPING. He comes out of the tent and notices seven horsemen, their faces covered. They march their horses quietly past the sleepy courtyard.

The gate opens and the riders gallop out.

ON CITY WALL

Mattathias Antigonus, Malachi and Dositheos watch from above the city walls as the horses ride off and out of sight.

ANTIGONUS

It'll be much easier from now
on.

Yuda runs after the riders, but the gate is shut. He turns to a GUARD.

YUDA

Who were those? Who just left?

GUARD

Go to your mother, boy. The party's over. You're going home.

Yuda turns around and sees dozens of Temple Guards surrounding the courtyard. They tear down the tents, rudely awaking the people from their sleep and piling them onto carts waiting nearby.

EXT. ANTIPATER'S COURTYARD - NIGHT

Antipater, Phasaël, Joseph and Pheroras return to their home. Phasaël carries Salome, who is asleep. They walk into the yard. The tables are set. Torches are still lit. Cypros, Doris, Bagohi and Habub get up when they see them.

CYPROS

Where is Herod? Why isn't Herod here?

PHASAEL

Take it all down and go to sleep. No one will be coming tonight.

INT. HASMONEAN PALACE - NIGHT

Malachi and Dositheos walk up to the door to Hyrcanus's room. Two GUARDS stand there.

MALACHI

Is he asleep?

GUARD

He's waiting for you.

The door opens. Hyrcanus is sitting on the bed, wearing a simple night gown. He looks worried, and very old.

HYRCANUS

Did he get out?

MALACHI

Snuck out quietly like a mouse. That family has learned a lesson it will not forget for a very long time.

HYRCANUS

How will the people take it?

MALACHI

The people understand the situation. The people support you; they're proud of you.

HYRCANUS

And the mothers will still be shouting tomorrow morning.

DOSITHEOS

Don't worry. My men put them on carts and took them south to the Galilee.

HYRCANUS

South? The Galilee is to the north.

DOSITHEOS

It was dark. The driver took a wrong turn. It'll take them a very long time to get home.

EXT. QUMRAN - NORTH OF DEAD SEA - DAWN

Herod and his six horsemen are riding east in silence. The sun is coming up as they make it to Qumran, along the northern shore of the Dead Sea.

Under the first rays of light, they spot hundreds of people dressed in white and wearing sandals, standing at the water and facing east. One of them, the CANTOR, blesses the rising sun, and the others respond in song. It's a hypnotizing sight.

CANTOR

Blessed art thou, God of Israel, creator of light and darkness. Maker of peace, creator of all.

MEN

Amen. Amen.

CANTOR

We praise Thy Name for the light You have renewed, you have brought us joy with the light of day.

MEN

Amen. Amen.

CANTOR

In mercy Thou has given light
to the earth and to them who
dwell upon it. And in Thy
goodness renewed the creation
every day continually. How
many are your works, Lord! In
wisdom you made them all; the
earth is full of your riches.

MEN

Amen. Amen.

CANTOR

And we your allies shall
praise your Name with all the
troops of light.

MEN

Amen. Amen.

CANTOR

For the creator of great
lights.

MEN

For his mercy endures forever.

CANTOR

The sun to govern the day.

MEN

For his mercy endures forever.

CANTOR

And the moon and the stars to
govern the night.

MEN

For his mercy endures forever.

CANTOR

The morning stars sang
together and all the angels
shouted for joy.

MEN

For his mercy endures forever.

CANTOR

A new light shall shine on
Zion, and we will all be
blessed with His light.
Blessed be the God of Israel,
creator of the lights.

MEN

Amen. Amen.

They bow deeply to the east, then turn west toward the mountains, where we see tents, a large awning, ritual baths and several structures. Cave openings are seen on the side of the mountain.

The men pass by Herod and his horsemen without saying a word. The Cantor stops next to Herod, who has gotten off his horse. This is MENAHEM, the leader of the Essenes cult.

MENAHEM (CANTOR)

Why have you come here, Herod?

HEROD

I'm hungry, Menahem. I'd like
to eat with you.

MENAHEM

(smiles)

Gladly. You are welcome.
You'll just have to give up
all your earthly possessions,
study our Torah and our laws,
and in three years, if you
pass all the tests, you will
cleanse in the bath, be
purified, and then you can eat
with us. Why are you here?

HEROD

To tell you that the prophecy
you gave me has never been as
false as it was tonight. I
just escaped moments before
being sentenced to death.

MENAHEM

(smiles)

What did I tell you back then,
when you were a boy? What
would be the sign that the
prophecy will be fulfilled?

HEROD

You hit me on my left leg and
told me to remember the pain.
You said it would be the sign.

MENAHEM

And has the pain disappeared?

HEROD

A long time ago.

MENAHEM

Then here's a new one.

Menahem raises his staff and strikes Herod hard on his left thigh. The horsemen tense up and reach for their swords. Herod calms them down, while groaning in pain.

A young man in sandals walks over from the buildings at the foot of the mountains. He's carrying a wicker basket with several loaves of bread and dried dates.

HEROD

Where should I run to? East,
to the Nabataeans, to my
grandfather? South to Edom, to
my father's family? North to
Syria, to the governor?

MENAHEM

It doesn't matter. You are not
a master of your own actions.
You can only fulfill that
which has already been
determined for you. God
preordained that you would be
the king of Judea, and what is
decided by God shall come to
be. Unfortunately.

Menahem turns to leave. Herod makes his decision:

HEROD

North.

They gallop to the north.

END OF EPISODE 2