

Samaritan

by

Michael Bettencourt

67 Highwood Terrace, #2, Weehawken NJ 07086
201-770-0770 • 347-564-9998 • m.bett@verizon.net
<http://www.m-bettencourt.com>
(Copyright © by Michael Bettencourt)

Samaritan

DESCRIPTION

Based on two biblical stories -- the parable of the Samaritan [Luke, chapter 10, verses 25-37] and the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well [John, chapter 4, verses 4-42] -- the play examines answers to the main question of the parable: "And who is my neighbor?"

CHARACTERS

- SAMARITAN
- VICTIM
- THREE ROBBERS (also play PRIEST, LEVITE, DISCIPLES, TRAVELERS, POLICE, JUDAS)
- JESUS CHRIST

Samaritan

Scene 1

VICTIM and THREE ROBBERS: tableau in preparation to attack him, weapons in hand.

Then they savage him and steal his belongings.

ROBBER 1
(bowing)

Thank you.

ROBBER 2
(bowing)

Thank you.

ROBBER 3
(bowing)

Thank you.

They leave him naked and unconscious by the side of the road.

A day passes. PRIEST, going from Jerusalem to Jericho, hustles past.

A night passes.

Day again. LEVITE, going from Jericho to Jerusalem, hustles past.

A night passes.

SAMARITAN enters, dragging a cart behind her.

SAMARITAN stops, unharnesses herself from the cart, removes her headscarf. She does not approach VICTIM.

THREE ROBBERS appear again. SAMARITAN regards them.

ROBBER 1

We did that.

ROBBER 2

We did that --

ROBBER 3

-- to him.

ROBBER 1

We can do it to you.

ROBBER 2

And worse.

ROBBER 3
(sniffing the air)
Especially to a Samaritan.

They spit.

ROBBER 1
(sniffing the air)
And to a Samaritan cunt.

They spit.

ROBBER 2
Unless you give us everything --

ROBBER 3
(pointing to VICTIM)
That --
(pointing to SAMARITAN)
you -- that's your fate, drab --

ROBBER 1
Ass up -- face down -- your fate --

They laugh.

ROBBER 2
Well?

SAMARITAN
How do I know he's not one of you?

ROBBER 1
Look at him!

ROBBER 3
What, him, like that, he's gonna leap up and join
in?

SAMARITAN
Just checking.

ROBBER 3
Just checking --

SAMARITAN
I will give you something.

ROBBER 2
(dismissive)
Something --

SAMARITAN moves toward her cart.

ROBBER 3

Not something, deaf-slut! Everything! Hey, hey, stand down!

SAMARITAN

You will like this.

SAMARITAN pulls a pistol-crossbow from her cart, cocked and loaded. She fires a bolt into ROBBER 3's groin, which drops him to the ground. While he howls in pain, SAMARITAN reloads and aims.

SAMARITAN

A lesson here for all of us, a lesson about mercy.

ROBBER 3

You ragged cunt!

(to others)

Help me, you dickheads!

But the two ROBBERS disappear. ROBBER 3 sits up. SAMARITAN squats in front of him, presses the pistol-crossbow against his heart.

SAMARITAN

A lesson about mercy.

ROBBER 3

Then have some of that for me -- then have [some]
-- have --

SAMARITAN fires the bolt through his heart. ROBBER 3, surprised, keels over.

SAMARITAN

I don't think so. You, I do not consider friend.

SAMARITAN looks over at VICTIM.

SAMARITAN

You, on the other hand --

SAMARITAN walks to VICTIM, pokes him. No movement.

SAMARITAN

Definitely not going to leap up and join in.

SAMARITAN kneels down and puts her ear to his mouth, then puts the flat of her hand between his shoulder blades.

SAMARITAN

Breath in breath out -- a pulse is a plus.

SAMARITAN stands, crossbow in hand, and moves to her cart.

SAMARITAN

Dust in dust out dust into dust --

JESUS enters followed by two DISCIPLES. SAMARITAN points the cross-bow at JESUS. JESUS raises his right hand in the classic Jesus gesture as a way to say, "Don't."

SAMARITAN

I know you already "of Nazareth" -- the one with all those obnoxious mangy little parables.

SAMARITAN gestures at the scene.

SAMARITAN

This is right up your allegorical alley --
parable away!

SAMARITAN, cross-bow still in hand, takes out a kit, moves to VICTIM.

JESUS looks at dead ROBBER 3, then walks over to him and gives him a hard hard kick. ROBBER 3 sputters to life. SAMARITAN watches.

ROBBER 3, surprised at his resurrection, stands up, the bolt that had been in his heart now in his hand. He points to the wound in the groin. JESUS heals it -- ROBBER 3 now holds two cross-bow bolts. Healed, ROBBER 3 starts to take off, then inches back.

ROBBER 3

Do you mind -- if I just -- hang with you all --
just for a bit -- I hear you don't mind my likes
--

ROBBER 3 gets in line with DISCIPLES. They don't like it but don't say anything.

SAMARITAN stands, points the cross-bow at ROBBER 3.

ROBBER 3

Don't let her again -- I have found it, truly I
have, remorse --

SAMARITAN

(indicating VICTIM)

Anything, parable-grinder, dead-raiser, you could
do for [him] --

JESUS shrugs, smiles, does nothing.

SAMARITAN

Can I at least get my bolts back? Not easy to make and not cheap -- the times being what they are --

JESUS nods at ROBBER 3, who minces over to SAMARITAN and hands her the bolts. JESUS moves off, followed by DISCIPLES and ROBBER 3.

SAMARITAN goes back to VICTIM. She manages to get him sitting up, though still unconscious -- he is a bloody mess. She drapes her scarf over his groin, begins to clean him up and bandage him with the materials from her kit. She sings as she does this.

PRIEST, going from Jericho to Jerusalem, enters.

SAMARITAN

Busy today between Jericho and Jerusalem.

PRIEST

What are you doing?

SAMARITAN

My question is: Why are you not here doing it with me, rabbi?

PRIEST

Is he still alive?

SAMARITAN

Still?

PRIEST

I mean -- earlier on my way --

SAMARITAN

And the rabbi didn't [stop] --

PRIEST

Who are you to talk to me like that?

SAMARITAN

I'm a Samaritan -- dirt and piss to you Jews -- like him -- which gives me the freedom [to] --

PRIEST

I couldn't touch him then -- when I -- I can't touch him now -- it would make me unclean --

SAMARITAN

I would say not touching him makes you the unclean one -- but then, mine's a minority opinion --

PRIEST

You shouldn't be touching him --

SAMARITAN comes up to PRIEST, who shrinks back.

SAMARITAN

Should I be touching you instead, rabbi, is that what you mean that's what you mean, isn't it?

PRIEST

You have no right --

SAMARITAN

Where would you like to be touched give me latitude and longitude I'm accommodating --

PRIEST

He's unclean -- you're a woman --

SAMARITAN

You noticed.

PRIEST

Unclean --

SAMARITAN

My monthly blood slicks the insides of my thighs -- do you want to --

PRIEST

Just stay [away] --

PRIEST goes to leave, but SAMARITAN grabs his sleeve to stop him.

PRIEST

Don't you [dare] --

SAMARITAN

You are not worth making unclean you are not worth being anyone's neighbor he's lucky you passed him by he's lucky he wasn't touched by such a sick man.

SAMARITAN releases him.

SAMARITAN

You should wash yourself after touching yourself because the law the rabbi loves requires it after touching the dead flesh of a corpse. Go follow your law. Corpse. Go.

PRIEST hesitates.

PRIEST

Will he -- I am not indifferent --

SAMARITAN

Once he gets you out of his sight, he will be healed and indifferent to you much blessed he will be on both counts.

PRIEST leaves. SAMARITAN moves back to VICTIM.

SAMARITAN

(as she moves)

Priests -- they're like tits on a bull --

SAMARITAN ministers to VICTIM. She lays out a cloth, then moves VICTIM onto it. She moves the cart in place behind VICTIM, pulls out a canopy with supporting poles that puts a roof over his head, and, when finished, sits under the canopy with him.

Night comes. Perhaps she lights a fire. Night passes.

* * * * *

Scene 2

Morning light arrives in slow bits.

VICTIM lays on his back, still unconscious, still draped with SAMARITAN's scarf, now bandaged. SAMARITAN kneels by him, slowly covered by the morning light.

SAMARITAN

I don't know what else to do I don't know how else to heal you I don't have the knack that the parable-spinner has misapplying it as he does to certain people to trick you back into breathing into knowing yourself whoever you are stranger bent and broken and I have been trying to understand why I stopped it is not in my nature to do so on this road since I am always hunted even if at first I am not what they came to hunt women are always such prey but stranger broken and bent on the roadside drew me perhaps to make a difference but what tripe is such a thought in a madhouse-world where good intentions can become a kind of hell -- stop.

SAMARITAN shakes her head.

SAMARITAN

I cannot heal you without honesty I am doing this because in part in part it does me good to grind

against the grain of the world and the world is more than willing to guard its comforts and keep the mind dark so it pleases me to make my life an obscene gesture against it to pump up my ego by good works and plug a thumb in its eye by doing what I'm told not to do like saving damaged almost-dead men by the side of the road -- stop.

SAMARITAN takes a breath.

SAMARITAN

I help you to feed my ego I help you because you need mercy as do I as do all though not all deserve the gift of it such as robbers and priests same class different clothes I have to stop thinking and saying such things no matter how satisfying it is to say them and I am just blathering on because I do not know what else to do until you know what else to do to --

VICTIM's hands shoot out and grab SAMARITAN by the throat or hair, and before SAMARITAN can protect herself, VICTIM has her on the ground.

VICTIM

Who are you who are you who are you --

SAMARITAN is quick. She bucks him off and jumps to her feet.

They fight, but it is not hard for her to subdue him, since he is exhausted and ill. She subdues him and lowers him to the ground.

SAMARITAN straddles him, pinning his arms down. Waits.

A TRAVELER hustles by, looks, runs on.

VICTIM dry-humps her but not with much vigor.

VICTIM

You shouldn't stop what you've started.

SAMARITAN slaps him, then re-pins his arms. VICTIM stops moving; instead, he laughs. Then coughs.

VICTIM

Water water --

SAMARITAN hesitates, but his cough is harsh. She rolls off him, retrieves a canteen, lifts VICTIM's head, gives him water. Takes a bit of water in her hand and wipes his face, dries it with her scarf.

Waits.

VICTIM

I need to take a piss roll me on my side so I'm
not pissing myself --

SAMARITAN rolls him on his side, and he pees -- screams as he does.

SAMARITAN

There's blood.

VICTIM

I'm not surprised -- aaaahhhh -- everything --
needs -- a -- sacrifice --

VICTIM finishes. SAMARITAN rolls him back onto his back, moves to her
cart, pulls out something to rest under his head, sits apart from him
so he can't see her.

VICTIM

That was refreshing ah careful ah better I can't
see you --

SAMARITAN

Don't try.

VICTIM

Your voice --

SAMARITAN

Stop it.

VICTIM waits.

VICTIM

Did they get everything -- they got everything
didn't they -- you're not informative.

SAMARITAN

You need something to wear.

SAMARITAN moves to her cart.

VICTIM

Why didn't you dress me sooner -- what were you
looking at --

SAMARITAN

Don't flatter yourself --

VICTIM

At least they didn't take that --

SAMARITAN

They'd've gotten half your brain if they had.

VICTIM

What's the other half?

SAMARITAN

You're lying on it.

SAMARITAN pulls out a rough cotton shift, throws it on him.

VICTIM

Why did you even stop at all -- what were you looking for -- I can smell you -- I can smell myself, yow! -- I can smell that you're not of the usual type --

A TRAVELER hustles by, takes in the scene, moves on. Light is now a much brighter morning light.

SAMARITAN

Put it on -- stop embarrassing the world --

VICTIM puts on the shift.

VICTIM

Does that mean you?

SAMARITAN

I'm not embarrassed by your piece of string --

VICTIM

You're not giving me what I need to know --

SAMARITAN

Shut up.

VICTIM

All right.

VICTIM collapses, out cold.

SAMARITAN

I didn't mean like that.

SAMARITAN waits, then approaches VICTIM with a knife in her hand.

But VICTIM doesn't stir. SAMARITAN kneels down by him. JESUS comes along, alone. He wears a knapsack and sports a parasol. There is a second parasol attached to the knapsack.

JESUS

We need to get him out of the sun.

SAMARITAN

Why would you care --

JESUS

I care about everything.

JESUS slips off the knapsack, puts down the parasol.

SAMARITAN

You passed him up the last time --

JESUS

You had everything perfectly under control --

SAMARITAN

Where are your hang-dogs?

JESUS goes to VICTIM's head, indicates for SAMARITAN to take his feet.

JESUS

I gave them the day off -- come on I'll help you
-- they need a break from rejecting the world --

They move him under the canopy.

JESUS

Hefty --

SAMARITAN

You like 'em hefty "of Nazareth"?

JESUS

A razored tongue --

SAMARITAN

Only when something needs cutting.

JESUS

You have something to sit on?

SAMARITAN

We are done here.

JESUS

I took the day off, too, so I've got time --

With a jerk and a sneer, SAMARITAN pulls two camp stools out of her cart while JESUS examines VICTIM.

JESUS

Look at all you've done for him -- bound him
rebuilt him -- you have the physician's touch --
if I had done back then what I can do --

SAMARITAN

Giving robbers back a life so they can go back
and rob --

JESUS hands SAMARITAN the second parasol, which she takes.

JESUS

If not done for robbers why do it for anyone --

SAMARITAN

Why not done for him then?

JESUS

If I had done what I can do when you asked me to
do it then you wouldn't have done what you could
do and then you wouldn't have come to know all
that you can do for someone like him -- who said
there's only one way of getting to a redemption?

SAMARITAN

You have said -- you say it all the time.

JESUS

I change my mind a lot about that no matter what
spills out of my mouth -- you have anything to
eat?

SAMARITAN

Do you ask everyone you happen across to take
care of you?

JESUS

I have no visible means of support -- see --

SAMARITAN goes to cart, pulls out a bag of dates or figs, offers them.
JESUS eats.

SAMARITAN

Because, the way I hear it, you just knot
together some language and stuff it into people's
ears -- like a wasp-buzz like a sting -- and I
hear people don't always like it --

JESUS

Not up to me if they like it -- these are good --

SAMARITAN

I just know this, that the robbers had given him
what he didn't deserve --

JESUS

About which you know much --

SAMARITAN

-- being a Jew-cursed Samaritan -- what are you
looking at -- do you curse me --

JESUS

Ah, good!

SAMARITAN

What?

JESUS

That look on your face --

SAMARITAN

I asked you if you curse me.

JESUS

Not interested in that -- that look --

SAMARITAN

What look?

JESUS

You just came up with an answer didn't you --
part of answer at least -- an answer to the why
of why you are here three days later and not a
lone self with no one else at one end of this
road or at the other.

SAMARITAN

You're a Jew -- I'm a Samaritan -- why you even
stop to talk to me is another question I have.

JESUS

When I -- you -- reach out to those that everyone
hates you -- I -- can find friends anywhere -- an
asset in my line of work.

SAMARITAN

I am not your friend.

JESUS

Didn't ask you to be -- but that shouldn't stop
us --

VICTIM coughs.

JESUS

"And who is now included as my friend?" is always
a question on the air.

VICTIM coughs himself into sitting upright. He sees the two of them
talking.

VICTIM

What is your line of work -- what is your line of
work --

VICTIM passes out cold again.

SAMARITAN

What is your line of work?

JESUS

Maybe it's to help people fill in what they don't
know -- maybe it's get them to know what they
already know -- on the other hand maybe my line
of work is to end up being nobody at all --

SAMARITAN

You couldn't be nobody if you wanted to --

Two DISCIPLES come along. SAMARITAN stands.

SAMARITAN

I thought you gave them the day off.

JESUS

They don't always give me the day off.

SAMARITAN

You need new disciples then --

JESUS

The two of you? What's your line of work?

SAMARITAN

You don't remember me, do you?

JESUS stands.

JESUS

Of course I do -- by the well -- we talked by the
well -- the Samaritan woman offered to get me
water.

SAMARITAN

My husband didn't much care for me talking to a Jew --

JESUS

I remember him.

SAMARITAN

-- especially one calling himself what you call yourself.

JESUS

Also recall he wasn't your husband.

SAMARITAN

I'd had five of those --

JESUS

None of them very durable, eh?

SAMARITAN

It was hard to endure them --

JESUS

Marriage is such sweet sorrow --

SAMARITAN

I was looking for a different arrangement with his likes --

JESUS

And you found?

SAMARITAN

That marriage or not changes nothing in the natures of men -- you find me here, not there -- enough said --

JESUS

I offered you the living water, eternal life.

SAMARITAN

At that point I'd've settled for a decent bath and men keeping their cocks locked up.

JESUS

And now?

SAMARITAN

I still have no guarantee that eternal life wouldn't be a cheat just like this one.

VICTIM sits up again.

SAMARITAN

You came back here -- by choice --

JESUS

Wanted to see how the unexpected -- look at that
-- was coming along --

VICTIM stands.

VICTIM

I was coming along this road to find you -- you
that's right -- when --

SAMARITAN

Why don't you take him with you?

JESUS

Already got a full house.

SAMARITAN

Chuck him into the basement --

VICTIM

I didn't want to go with you -- I don't want to
go with you -- I was supposed --

SAMARITAN

What's your line of work?

VICTIM

I was supposed to kill you --

This statement strikes VICTIM.

VICTIM

Not you, him -- you, you're nothing -- did I
really hear that -- say that -- I fully can't
remember but I have echoes of such words bullying
me -- commands -- money in hand -- "take him out"
-- like that --

JESUS

Any memory of who --

VICTIM

Night -- hooded -- snarls for words -- knife at
my throat for command -- coins dumped in the dirt
so I'd have to grovel -- you don't know how many
have a taste for your absence --

SAMARITAN

This is your line of work?

VICTIM says nothing.

JESUS

I would say the unexpected is turning out just
fine --

(to DISCIPLES)

Let's go --

SAMARITAN

You're not going to --

JESUS

Finders keepers --

The three move off. SAMARITAN, discovering the parasol in her hand,
takes a step to pursue JESUS but decides not to.

VICTIM

He's not dead -- I failed --

SAMARITAN ignores him. She sits on the camp stool, parasol in hand.

VICTIM fidgets.

VICTIM

I have to piss again --

VICTIM moves around to the back of the cart, pisses, screams as he
does so.

SAMARITAN

Good.

* * * * *

Scene 3

VICTIM standing in moonlight. THREE ROBBERS in the darkness around him. SAMARITAN asleep, fitful. Dream.

ROBBER 1
You found him yet?

VICTIM
No.

ROBBER 2
You tracked him down?

VICTIM
Getting closer.

ROBBER 3
You measured out his life's thread?

VICTIM
You're too poetic for this work.

ROBBER 1 strikes him.

ROBBER 2
Those who have paid --

ROBBER 1
-- for his dispatch --

ROBBER 3
-- are displeased --

ROBBER 1
-- they think --

ROBBER 3
-- you've lost --

ROBBER 2
-- the appetite and only --

ROBBER 1
-- want to keep --

ROBBER 3
-- the money --

ROBBER 2
-- could that be true of you --

VICTIM

I grew up wanting the merchant's ability to turn simple things into value and trade and yet I find myself at this turn in the midst of a painful road where I can claim nothing of any worth cannot claim to have made anything with a claim of worth which includes my life both in part and entire and now reduced to auctioning off muscle for assassination and consorting with bottom-feeding scum who do nothing but give the lie to the ideal that people have a divine spark that at any moment can ignite the universe in a blaze of peace and more peace and I am talking such nonsense to delay the pain you have come to bring me because yes I cannot do this work any more I cannot make slaughter my reason for sloughing off the bedsheets in the morning I cannot be a butcher with a smile don't take pleasure in savaging me just quickly do it so that I can bleed in measured bursts of agony and lose consciousness sooner rather than later --

ROBBER 1

Assuming we've been allowed to let you live --

VICTIM

I've spent none of what I was paid consider it a downpayment on your new-found taste for mercy --

ROBBER 2

We'd already thought of that --

ROBBER 3

-- and decided to redeem ourselves --

ROBBER 1

-- since there seems a glut of redeeming going on these days --

ROBBER 3

-- beggars healed --

ROBBER 2

-- cripples raised --

ROBBER 1

-- and the last inch of life not beaten out of depleted assassins --

ROBBER 2

-- the world is definitely --

ROBBER 3

-- getting better --

ROBBER 1

The money --

VICTIM kneels and digs out a hole, pulls out a bag, holds it up.
ROBBER 1 takes it. ROBBERS take up tableau position as in Scene 1.
Dream over.

VICTIM screams. SAMARITAN awakes.

VICTIM

Hold me. Hold me.

SAMARITAN

I can't.

VICTIM

Is that can't as won't or can't as can't -- what
vile dreams --

SAMARITAN

Why should you be saved from them -- can't as
won't --

VICTIM

Why not?

SAMARITAN

Holding men has always disappointed me.

VICTIM

Perhaps it was how you held the men.

SAMARITAN

Perhaps it was how the men didn't know how to be
held.

VICTIM

If raw need is a knowing-how then I know how --

SAMARITAN

Just because you've had a bad dream you think you
deserve holding --

VICTIM

By you at least --

SAMARITAN

You would not get much from me in any case -- I have not the gift of comfort about me -- and you are an assassin after all --

VICTIM

"If not done for robbers why do it for anyone" --

SAMARITAN

You heard that?

VICTIM

An echo in the rattle-trap of my head -- he said it didn't he -- after all you did stop -- after all you did stay after learning -- that confuses you --

SAMARITAN goes to the cart, takes out something, throws it to VICTIM.

SAMARITAN

Eat -- it's the closest you'll get to being held at the moment -- I need to get rid of you --

VICTIM

I am not everything you think I am --

SAMARITAN

I don't want to think about you at all --

VICTIM

You killed as well -- through the heart -- bang -
- we are both killers -- that links us --

They muse. SAMARITAN kneels in front of him.

SAMARITAN

You've killed others --

VICTIM

Yes --

SAMARITAN

Did you acquire a -- taste for it?

VICTIM

Did I like it --

SAMARITAN

Not just "like," a taste -- an appetite --

VICTIM

Did I crave?

SAMARITAN

Yes -- yes --

VICTIM

No. Yes. After the first, yes. The first -- the usual -- vomiting, disgust, self and otherwise, fear of failure especially since my recruiters had no misgivings about wasting me if I needed waste management so to speak, still even more disgust as I came closer to the punctuation of eliminating one who walked the earth --

SAMARITAN

I can see that in your face --

VICTIM

Sorry --

SAMARITAN

No -- please -- don't hide it -- after the first --

VICTIM

Even during the first --

SAMARITAN

More --

VICTIM

You ask a lot of someone you're ready to throw away --

SAMARITAN

More --

VICTIM

A knife -- nothing done from a distance -- with a knife you have to smell the garlic on his teeth, the citric sweat on his unwashed skin, it cements you to the task, no not-seeing the light draining from his guttering eyes -- a knife intimates you, not unlike love but not love at all, is it, but still intimate, still penetrating -- can't believe I said that -- all edges erased melted together, same thing, until the only difference is who the knife slices and who slices with the knife but that then makes all the difference since I will walk away and he or she --

SAMARITAN

Or she --

VICTIM

Or she will not and I will walk away with the
rush that comes from walking away --

SAMARITAN

And walking away knowing --

VICTIM

That I survived, yes, not just survived but
caused to happen a change in the world, I willed
the change (who cares if for money or not), my
will made the world shift -- his world shift --

SAMARITAN

Her world --

VICTIM

Hers, yes, and how could this not intoxicate with
a taste for tasting that intoxication again, the
burning jump in the belly, the wild relief from
surviving, the bruised delight of doing what is
not permitted the ordinary to do -- take charge,
bend the world's orbit to my own uncoiling energy
-- I felt free, freed, not under the thumb of a
stupid stumbling meaningless life angling towards
disaster and disappearance, ending up as no more
than a stain on the pavement evaporating -- I
talk too much --

SAMARITAN

But what about after the first --

VICTIM

I've talked too much -- you should have left me
behind -- I think I should -- go -- I think I
should -- leave --

VICTIM stands, manages to stay standing. He turns, exits.

SAMARITAN

That leads to Jericho, if you want to know --

VICTIM reenters.

VICTIM

I can't go to Jericho.

VICTIM points.

SAMARITAN

Jerusalem.

VICTIM shakes his head.

SAMARITAN

You are faced with a pickle up your ass in the middle of this road.

SAMARITAN walks up to VICTIM.

SAMARITAN

What about after the first?

VICTIM

Leave me --

SAMARITAN

What about after the first?

VICTIM

Either the first kills you or it doesn't --

SAMARITAN

And if it doesn't kill you?

VICTIM

I have to --

SAMARITAN

If it doesn't --

VICTIM

I have to --

SAMARITAN

-- kill you?

VICTIM

"After the first" can turn you into a cheap god -
-

SAMARITAN

Is there anything better? Anything else? Answer me!

VICTIM

Get your hands [off me] --

SAMARITAN

Answer me!

VICTIM

Or what -- you going to off me as your second?

SAMARITAN
Killing you would be my third.

VICTIM
Your third.

SAMARITAN
A man --

VICTIM
I'm not surprised --

SAMARITAN
My somewhat husband --

VICTIM
Husbands can be a kind of robber -- I hear --

SAMARITAN
This one was a thief of happiness --

VICTIM
Too big a mouth?

SAMARITAN
Too heavy a hand -- too heavy both hands --

SAMARITAN pulls up her shirt to show a belly crisscrossed with livid scars. VICTIM stares at the belly.

SAMARITAN
Lift up the back of my shirt --

VICTIM
I can't --

SAMARITAN
Do it!

VICTIM does, finds the same. VICTIM pulls her shirt down, hesitates, then smoothes the cloth, as if calming by caress.

VICTIM
All your interrogation of me --

SAMARITAN
The first was not hard --

VICTIM
Don't have to tell me anything --

SAMARITAN

I did it after he had spoken to me -- that meat you were supposed to butcher for your pay? The one who sat here, "of Nazareth"? Him.

VICTIM

Don't have to voice it so crudely --

SAMARITAN

If meat is meat, then call it meat --

VICTIM

He's not just "meat," even I know that --

SAMARITAN

How far your blasted soul has come --

VICTIM

Enjoy sharpening that tongue on me?

SAMARITAN

By the well -- where I lived -- in Sychar -- Jacob's well -- I don't know if it was Jacob's fucking well, but they plastered his name to it - - I offered to get him water -- he offered me eternal life in return -- "living waters" --

VICTIM

Did you take his deal? I think you gave him the better deal -- actual water --

SAMARITAN

And then off he goes --

VICTIM

He's like that, I hear -- swoops in, sprays his words around --

SAMARITAN

Shut up!

VICTIM

You keen on him?

SAMARITAN

Not that I wasn't tempted. By his looks? Eh. But by his offer? Who wouldn't be tempted -- trade this gut-bag in for a light-weight well-furnished forever --

VICTIM

I like your gut-bag --

SAMARITAN

Shut up -- but a -- smugness in his way of saying
this pushed me away -- his certainty that his
here-after would be better than my here-now --
even if he was right -- that the calcified us
would be transformed, reformed --

VICTIM

Deformed --

SAMARITAN

Shut up -- we could shuck off the meanness sucked
into us through the birth cord just like that --

(snaps her fingers)

-- he came close, though, to tipping me over the
tipping point --

VICTIM points to her belly.

VICTIM

But what about all that --

SAMARITAN

I know the someone who had told the man I was
living with that he'd seen me talking to him --
to another man -- a Jew -- at the well --

VICTIM

My half of the species --

SAMARITAN

I know what crouched for me inside my doorway --
so I began proclaiming --

VICTIM

The somewhat husband's meanness, brutality --

SAMARITAN

Do you know anything about who gets to be on top
these days?

VICTIM

Just wondering --

SAMARITAN

If I had proclaimed that, would've saved the
somewhat some trouble by slitting open my own
throat -- no, the other's messiah-ness -- the
messy messiah-ness -- I bruted it about the town
-- "Come and see a man who told me everything I
have ever done!" -- all innocence in saying shit

like "He cannot be the Messiah, can he? Can he?"
running from person to person with this open-
mouthed dumbled-down look on my face --

SAMARITAN demonstrates the face; VICTIM mimics it.

SAMARITAN

I had to buy some time -- to keep the somewhat's
inevitable claws off me, the unavoidable leather
isolated from my skin --

VICTIM

But he did get to you -- un-isolated you --

SAMARITAN

"He's the Messiah, he told me everything about my
life, he knows, he knows, follow him, he has
come" in this breathy stupefied voice --

SAMARITAN goes to her cart, pulls out a quirt.

SAMARITAN

His presence, though, his being-there -- in an
odd way, cupped me, held me in a gentle suspense
-- a breathing-in, a breathing-out -- made
everything, everyone, pause -- my fellow
Samaritans cozying up to the Jew that didn't hate
them -- a new thing for them, an unhating Jew --
they sucked it down like babies -- that's what he
does --

VICTIM

It didn't work --

SAMARITAN

I had to go home -- I had no place else --

VICTIM

Assassins come in so many shapes.

SAMARITAN tosses the quirt to VICTIM. She pulls up her shirt.

SAMARITAN

Add your mark.

VICTIM

Why would I do that?

SAMARITAN

Because I asked you to do it.

VICTIM

I can't do that.

SAMARITAN

I saved your life, so you have no way to refuse me.

VICTIM

I won't do it -- anything like it --

SAMARITAN

You're a murderer, don't think you have a right to perform a decent act -- do it --

VICTIM

I murder, but I'm not a murderer --

SAMARITAN

I am a murderer --

VICTIM

No you're not --

SAMARITAN

I cut his throat --

VICTIM

He cut his own throat --

SAMARITAN

Why do you think you find me finding you on this road --

VICTIM

Why shouldn't you be on this road --

SAMARITAN

Who better to take away the taste --

VICTIM

You don't have the taste --

SAMARITAN

You are as dense a clod as I have ever met --

VICTIM

You need to get out more --

SAMARITAN

Do it!

With a scream, instead of hitting her, VICTIM hits himself. SAMARITAN shudders. A line of blood appears on her stomach. VICTIM hits himself again. SAMARITAN shudders. Another line of blood on her back.

VICTIM throws the quirt on the ground.

VICTIM

You stopped to fix up my carcass, goddamn you!
What else do you need to fucking know?

SAMARITAN grabs him and looks straight at him.

SAMARITAN

Say that again.

VICTIM

You fished my carcass [out of] --

But before he can finish, SAMARITAN embraces him. Hard. VICTIM lets himself be embraced. Hard. Then he embraces her back. Hard. She lets him embrace her back. Hard.

* * * * *

Scene 4

JESUS appears, a walking staff in hand.

JESUS

Well -- progress of a sort -- I have come to warn
you.

SAMARITAN

You spend a hell of a lot of time trolling this
road.

SAMARITAN busies herself in preparing to leave.

JESUS

You're being looked for.

SAMARITAN

For what, all-knowing one?

JESUS

You know for what.

SAMARITAN

That is something I do not know.

(to VICTIM)

Give me a hand.

(to JESUS)

Because what is it that I have done, really?

JESUS

They say you --

SAMARITAN

I've done nothing compared to what your father
has done, if you're who you say you are and he is
who he is -- floods, plagues, slaughter of
innocents -- palming off his only begotten son on
us -- how much he does love you! -- compared to
that, I neutralized a venom -- I deleted a hatred
--

They are ready to leave.

SAMARITAN

No one deserves to die, but some earn the
deserving, and some who do that get what they
deserve.

(to VICTIM)

Let's go.

Three POLICE arrive.

SAMARITAN

(to JESUS)

Except for you, does everything arrive in threes?

POLICE 1

Do I need to say, "Stop, don't move!", or is my
asking the question sufficient to make our
intentions known?

SAMARITAN

I don't know what your intentions are.

POLICE 2

(to JESUS)

We're not after you -- yet -- so you should screw
off --

POLICE 3

While the screwing off is good.

JESUS
I'll screw off when I want to.

POLICE 1
Ah, your messiah-ness is truly whatever --
(to SAMARITAN)

As for you --

POLICE 1 moves to arrest SAMARITAN. VICTIM intercepts. As POLICE 2 and POLICE 3 move in to help, JESUS puts them to sleep with his walking staff.

VICTIM and POLICE 1 engage in a vicious fight. SAMARITAN gets her pistol cross-bow, moves in to help, but JESUS holds her back. The outcome is doubtful until VICTIM pins POLICE 1 to the ground.

They gasp as they speak.

POLICE 1
I know who you are, I know what you've done --

VICTIM
First part wrong, second part right --

POLICE 1
Who is she to you?

VICTIM
I am not talking to you.

POLICE 1
So what do we have here? Eh?
(sees the other two)
Are they --

JESUS
They are not.

POLICE 1
(laughing)
Good for them you're the messiah! Well, fellow beings?

VICTIM and JESUS and SAMARITAN all exchange glances.

SAMARITAN
You have to let him up.

JESUS
Blessed are the peacemakers.

POLICE 1
I still have a duty.

SAMARITAN
Do it.

VICTIM
I told you that you don't have the taste --
VICTIM gets off POLICE 1.

VICTIM
I was attacked along this road -- beaten hard --
see these wounds --

VICTIM gives JESUS a look that says, "Don't say a word about what you know."

VICTIM
-- left in a very good likeness of death along
the roadside --

POLICE 1
(to JESUS)
Could you, you know -- I don't wish to remain
outnumbered longer than I have to be --

JESUS revives POLICE 2 and POLICE 3.

VICTIM
As I was saying --

POLICE 1
All well and good --

VICTIM
My point is --

POLICE 1
My point is, "I'm sorry for your loss, but piss
off -- "

VICTIM
My point is, she rescued me -- others saw me
damaged, passed me over -- a priest! -- a priest!

POLICE 1
He -- he couldn't have touched you -- broken his
law --

VICTIM

Then the law is broken that lets him charged with
caring-for others slip past without drafting his
soul into the execution of his duty --

(to JESUS)

Isn't that right?

JESUS

I think "execution" is an interesting choice of
words --

POLICE 1

Answer his question.

(to POLICE 2 & 3)

You all right?

POLICE 2

He got a drop on us --

JESUS

Sorry --

POLICE 3

-- but we're feeling no pain.

POLICE 1

He's a messiah -- special privileges and powers
and such -- you're lucky --

POLICE 3

Wouldn't mind having some of those in our line --

POLICE 1

(to JESUS)

Answer his question -- you're all about from what
I hear for making the old new, old law into new
law -- me, I'm all about law, old or new --

JESUS

Just two laws, really --

POLICE 2

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and
with all your soul and with all your strength and
with all your mind" --

POLICE 1

I'm impressed --

POLICE 2

I'm not entirely unbooked --

POLICE 3
And "Love your neighbor as yourself" -- ditto --

POLICE 1
And ditto --

JESUS
And ditto --

POLICE 1
By these lights --

JESUS
(indicating VICTIM)
He's right.

POLICE 1
You'd do away with the priests?

VICTIM
Not us do away with --

SAMARITAN
They've done away with themselves --

JESUS
They're irrelevant if they have no charity --

POLICE 1
Charity -- justice and charity --
(to SAMARITAN)
So what am I going to do with you?
(to them all)
What advice would you give the law? She's killed
a man.

VICTIM
Who would have killed her.
(to SAMARITAN)
Show him.

SAMARITAN
No.

VICTIM
She has scars across --

SAMARITAN
No --

VICTIM
-- her belly --

SAMARITAN

No --

VICTIM

-- and back --

VICTIM fumbles in the cart for the quirt.

VICTIM

Where the fuck [is] --

SAMARITAN

No --

POLICE 1

Might want to let him make a case --

VICTIM pulls out the quirt.

VICTIM

Christ! I'm trying to do for you what you --

SAMARITAN pulls up her shirt.

SAMARITAN

Here. Here!

They all look as she parades in front of them.

SAMARITAN

This is how he signed his property --

POLICE 2

She is a woman, after all --

POLICE 3

Sshh --

POLICE 2

She is --

SAMARITAN walks right up to POLICE 2, pulls her shirt even higher.

POLICE 2

I'm just stating --

SAMARITAN

Want to add a tag?

VICTIM offers POLICE 2 the quirt.

VICTIM
Only a woman, as you say --

SAMARITAN
Do it!

VICTIM
Nothing charged against you --

SAMARITAN
What's a woman compared to the majesty of the
law?

POLICE 3
Seems we are being challenged on the laws we just
spouted.

(to POLICE 1)
Well, sir?

SAMARITAN
Enough?

POLICE 1
Enough.

SAMARITAN pulls her shirt down.

SAMARITAN
(to VICTIM)
Put it away.

VICTIM
Woman, yes, but --

JESUS
I think you've made your case. Has the case made
them?

POLICE 1
What is the case you've made?

VICTIM
He beat her.

POLICE 1
He beat her -- clear -- but he didn't kill her.

VICTIM
He would have.

POLICE 1
Can't know that --

VICTIM

Things follow, one from the other --

POLICE 1

(indicating JESUS)

Maybe he can know, but you can't -- I'm faced
with events of two unequal weights --

(to JESUS)

Your father says "don't kill" --

SAMARITAN

Doesn't follow his own rules --

POLICE 1

So what? Rule still stands. It's clear,
designed. Broken, it demands punishment to mend
it.

SAMARITAN

How can a rule demand?

POLICE 1

His family howls in pain.

SAMARITAN

And my death by decree --

VICTIM

Don't give him --

POLICE 1

Your decreed death will do nothing for them --
and it won't stop someone else from killing --

VICTIM

So then [why] --

SAMARITAN

(cutting him off)

Then my death is useless.

POLICE 1

Useless it is -- but still necessary, like the
rule itself -- they howl, they hooowwwlll into
judgmental ears --

As the argument continues, SAMARITAN backs away to the cart, unearths
a knapsack, hoists it on, and oozes out of the scene.

VICTIM

You say you know what I've done --

POLICE 1
You're hired to employ waste management
techniques --

VICTIM
They contracted me to waste him --

POLICE 1
Really?

VICTIM
That's what put me on this road -- in wait --
they say it's "necessary" -- and what is it that
he has done to make his deletion necessary --

POLICE 2
No one ever gives up power -- always have to grab
it to get it back --

VICTIM
What?

POLICE 2
(pointing at JESUS)
That's his crime --

VICTIM
Can I finish --

POLICE 2
He's getting people to get grabby -- at least
they think --

VICTIM
Please --

POLICE 2
(to POLICE 1)
Don't look at me like that --

VICTIM
I'm trying [to] --

POLICE 1
Do I have a revolutionist on my watch?

VICTIM
Listen --

JESUS
(to VICTIM)
Good luck --

POLICE 2

I'm just saying --

POLICE 3

I told you, you over-think these things --

VICTIM
(overloud)

Can I get back to --

Everyone falls silent.

VICTIM

Just that -- about her -- her initial "crime" --

POLICE 1

Go on, assassin --

VICTIM

I'm trying to --

POLICE 1

Her original sin, you were saying -- and I'd be a bit more lower-decibel'd, if I were you.

VICTIM

Her original sin, then, is missing a cock --

POLICE 3

Ah --

VICTIM

-- and those that have that added-on just want to hold on to it --

POLICE 2

That's a good one -- well, it is!

VICTIM

Keep the power --

POLICE 2

A good cock-hold -- power grip -- fits my thesis --

POLICE 1

Your thesis?

VICTIM
(indicating JESUS)

What are his laws about but a re-thinking of power --

(to POLICE 2)
Like you said, yes? His crime? Breaking the
cock-hold power grip --

JESUS
He's got me on that one.

POLICE 1
He almost did get you.

VICTIM
Never in danger from me -- I backed out --

POLICE 1
And looks like punished for having qualms --

POLICE 2
Punishment all around -- endless supply --

VICTIM
Not the point --

POLICE 3
Endless demand --

VICTIM
(louder)
Not the point! My point --

POLICE 1 gestures for lower decibels.

POLICE 1
Inside voice --

VICTIM
My point -- we can --
(to POLICE 1)
You can -- break the grip -- here and now --
regarding her --

JESUS
(to POLICE 1)
Are you any closer?

POLICE 1

Let us reflect upon choices.

(counts on fingers)

To make believe it didn't happen -- to make believe I couldn't track her down -- to slip in the "higher law" thing as my defense --

JESUS

You're not any closer, are you?

POLICE 1

-- or, as its twin, she is justified through self-defense, giving justice to a woman in the implacable face of men's accusations --

VICTIM

Think of Hannah, Esther --

POLICE 1

That appeal never washes in court.

POLICE 2

Never.

POLICE 3

Ever.

POLICE 1

And then there's you -- and you -- not the best sort of witnesses for her defense -- I am faced, as someone once said, with a pickle up my ass in the middle of this road.

They all look around for SAMARITAN. VICTIM looks in one direction, then the other, then back and forth.

JESUS

Maybe this solves your problem.

POLICE 1

You know that's not true -- the pickle is still there.

VICTIM

What are you going to do?

POLICE 1

She can't have gone far.

VICTIM

Who says she even stayed on the road? She's got
a head-start --

JESUS

Don't look at me -- limited repertoire -- can't
do geo-locations, only, it seems, resurrections
of one sort or another --

VICTIM goes to the cart, straps on the harness, and takes off -- but
it's slow going -- the cart is heavier than he expected, and he's
certainly not fully recovered. They watch him.

POLICE 1

(to JESUS)

I actually have a major bone to pick with you.

JESUS

Jerusalem or Jericho?

POLICE 1

Are you saying we shouldn't pursue?

JESUS

How powerful is his family?

POLICE 1

Not very.

JESUS

What problems can they cause?

POLICE 2

He would've killed her, probably --
(rubbing his stomach and back)
-- she did show us --

POLICE 1

Assuming they were from him --

POLICE 3

No disrespect, but those were old scars --

POLICE 1

I know -- I'm just looking for --

POLICE 3

And we've seen that again and again on our watch,
haven't we?

JESUS

(to POLICE 1)

And if he had killed her, what serious outcome for him? Your face speaks your answer. So. So -- Jerusalem or Jericho?

POLICE 1

The first.

(to POLICE 2 & POLICE 3)

You two go on ahead. I have words to exchange.

POLICE 2 & POLICE 3 exit.

JESUS

A bone to pick, you say?

They move off, POLICE 1 gesturing.

JESUS

(barely heard)

Is that so? Let me tell you a parable about that bone you want to pick --

* * * * *

Scene 5

SAMARITAN alone, knapsacked, trudging, muttering. Off to the side in shadow is the body of a TRAVELER, which SAMARITAN does not notice.

SAMARITAN

Who can trust these bastards all cock-ridden rule-heavy leaning always towards punishment righteous judging judging judging smug butchers braying verdicts in slaughterhouse lingo "the law" "what is right" "retribution" "society" all I know is he would have killed me believed he had the right to kill me maybe not intending to but maybe a heavy hand heavier than he meant maybe a knife brandished that spears me almost of its own accord the whip laid on thicker than he planned as his anger boils his brain to a stupid mush of all the crap he'd been fed about his dignity and superior protrusions --

SAMARITAN stops, listens. She slips off her knapsack, opens it, takes out a pistol cross-bow and a bolt. Waits.

VICTIM heaves into view dragging the cart.

VICTIM

I -- don't -- understand -- how -- you -- manage
-- to -- move -- this -- fucker --

VICTIM slips out of the harness.

VICTIM

Of course I'm not at one-hundred percent but --
fuck, that thing is heavy -- must be all the gold
you have ha ha ha -- are you going to use that --
on me --

SAMARITAN

Did they follow you?

VICTIM

I don't think so -- I think the parable-maker
headed them off -- he's good at -- diversions --
diversionary tactics -- are you going to use that
on me -- I hope you are not going to use it on me
though given my past life and everything recently
discussed about paying for one's sins --

SAMARITAN

Shut up.

VICTIM

Agreed --

They wait.

VICTIM

We have had our intimacies --

SAMARITAN

Shut up.

VICTIM

I'm just [saying] --

SAMARITAN cuts him off with a gesture. They wait.

VICTIM

I'm not offering --

SAMARITAN

Shut up.

They wait. A groan. A look passes between them. Another groan.

VICTIM

How often do you think this happens?

Another groan, with more pain.

VICTIM

What are the possibilities here? Someone planted to get us if we go to the rescue -- ambush --

SAMARITAN

We?

VICTIM

A real victim but one who won't be grateful for our actions --

SAMARITAN

Our?

VICTIM

Or we simply ignore all of these and provide what we can provide because it needs to be provided, regardless of all --

SAMARITAN

Will you zip it shut?

VICTIM

No.

A groan, louder.

VICTIM

I'm saying we cannot choose to have no choice in this matter.

SAMARITAN puts away the pistol-crossbow, shoulders her knapsack. VICTIM moves to her. Together, they go to TRAVELER, lift him, carry him downstage.

SAMARITAN

You know what to get.

VICTIM goes to the cart, pulls out the medicine kit and a canister of water. Together they wash TRAVELER's wounds. Bind TRAVELER's wounds.

TRAVELER rests. They rest.

SAMARITAN

(indicating the cart)

You should bring it closer.

VICTIM

Please.

SAMARITAN

Please.

VICTIM brings the cart closer. While he does this, SAMARITAN brushes the hair back from TRAVELER's forehead. VICTIM positions the cart, unrolls the canopy, and sets it over TRAVELER.

SAMARITAN pulls the pistol-crossbow and a bolt from her knapsack.

SAMARITAN

Get the other one.

VICTIM gets the other one from the cart.

SAMARITAN
(to TRAVELER)

What's your name?

TRAVELER

My name?

VICTIM

What does the world call you?

TRAVELER

Water please.

VICTIM gives him water.

TRAVELER

Excellent -- thank you -- what does the world call me. I am from Kerioth.

SAMARITAN

You're far.

TRAVELER

I'm looking for someone. My name is Judas, traveling to Jerusalem.

TRAVELER groans in pain.

TRAVELER

Please -- I need to rest -- you are both so kind
--

VICTIM lays TRAVELER down. SAMARITAN and VICTIM look at each other, check their cross-bows, guard the beaten man.

BLACKOUT