



THE BIG DEAL

By John Beebee

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PART 1

1 INT. SHEPARD CABIN, KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Ellen sits at the table as Ben wraps up a conversation on the phone. He's clearly upset.

BEN

Well, you have to understand
this is very awkward for me,
too. But it's just not right!

(beat)

Darryl, if that's how you
feel...then we really have
no choice.

(beat)

Okay then, I guess we'll
see what happens tonight.
G'bye.

Ben sighs.

ELLEN

(quietly)

So they won't change their
minds.

BEN

It doesn't look that way.
Ellen... are you sure about
this?

ELLEN

As sure as I can be about
anything we do, I guess.

(BEAT)

Are you sure?

This is page 1 of the script for the Fall 2000 season's premier

The Big Deal

The script looks exactly like the one used by the actors in the studio to record this show.

You can read this script or act it out with your friends.

If you perform it for an audience, just don't change it or collect any money for it.

And if you want to hear how the finished show sounds, read along with broadcast,
airing this weekend in Kids Radio!

BEN

Yes.

A car pulls up outside.

ELLEN

Oh, there's Aubrey. How
are we gonna tell her?

BEN

I don't know.

(SFX: CAR DOOR SLAM, CAR DRIVES OFF)

AUBREY (O.S.)

I can't believe it! I
can't believe it!

O.S.: Aubrey runs up the gravel drive to the door.

BEN

I don't know which is
worse: facing the board
or trying to tell Aubrey.

(SFX: DOOR BURSTS OPEN)

AUBREY

(coming on mic)
Mom! Dad! Guess what?
You're not gonna believe
this! I just...
(beat)
Whoa! Did somebody die or
somethin'?

BEN

No...We can talk about it
later. What's up?

AUBREY

Okay. Are you ready?

BEN

Yes.

ELLEN

Uh huh.

AUBREY

Are you sitting down?

Ben and Ellen are amused.

BEN

Yeah.

ELLEN

Yes.

AUBREY

I got the part! I got the
lead role in the play!

There's silence.

BEN

Oh boy.

AUBREY

Oh boy? I thought you
wanted me to...

(beat)

What's going on around here?

ELLEN

Aubrey...

BEN

Aubrey, we just read the
play you auditioned for.

AUBREY

"Cassidy's Last Supper."

BEN

Right. Have you read the
whole thing?

AUBREY

Sorta. Why?

ELLEN

Aubrey, this play
attacks everything we
believe in.

Ben pages through the script.

BEN

All through this thing,
the pastor and all the
Christians turn out to be
either frauds or
psychopaths. And worst of
all--well, you tell me.
What does Cassidy say at
the very end?

AUBREY

Um..."I guess I'll never
get to find God after all,
because he never was. God
is really all of us." So?
The playwright just
doesn't believe in God the
way you do. Big deal.

ELLEN

God isn't just some
philosophy, Aubrey. He's
a real person who loves us
deeply. And we love him,
too. We can't endorse
something that blasphemes
him or ridicules his
people. And we certainly
can't let you play the lead
in it.

AUBREY

But, Mom—

BEN

I know you're upset, but so
are we. We've called the
other board members at the
Playhouse to let them know.

AUBREY

To let them know...?

BEN

We've requested an
emergency board meeting

tonight.

(beat)

I'm asking them to drop
the production.

AUBREY

But you can't do that!

BEN

If they don't, your Mom
and I have already
decided--we're going to
resign from the board.

AUBREY

Resign?

AUBREY

Resign! Isn't that kind of
extreme? What about all
your friends at the
Playhouse? I mean, you guys
love that place! So do I!

BEN

(beat, softly)

I'm sorry.

AUBREY

Dad, I've waited so long
for a chance like this--
ever since I was a little
girl!

BEN

I know, Aubrey...

AUBREY

But you both told me I
should try out for this!

BEN

I should have read the
script more carefully when
I got it last week. I
just got busy and...well
that was my fault.

AUBREY

But I got the part! I was
the lead! You just...
(exasperated sigh)

Aubrey leaves.

ELLEN

(calls)
Aubrey.

(SFX: OFF MIC DOOR SHUT)

(MUSIC: BRIDGE)

2 EXT. MCALLISTER PARK - LATER

Aubrey vents as she walks along.

AUBREY

(to herself)
My one big chance. And
it's gone! Why can't they
leave things alone? Why do they
always have to...

Aubrey stops short. Whit is swinging on the swingset.

AUBREY

(to herself)
Good grief. Mr. Whittaker?

Whit whistles as he swings.

AUBREY

(to Whit)
Uh, Mr. Whittaker?

WHIT

(calling, slightly off
mic)
Oh hi, Aubrey! Pretty
day, isn't it?

AUBREY

It's, uh... (BEAT) You're

swinging.

WHIT

Uh huh.

AUBREY

Aren't you a little old to
be swinging on a swing?

WHIT

Well now...
How old do you have to be?

AUBREY

I don't know, but... I mean... there
aren't even any kids
around here. And you're
a...well, you know, grown up.

WHIT

So grown ups can't swing?

AUBREY

Well, I... never thought they
wanted to.

WHIT

I do. So I guess I'll keep
swinging. You oughtta try it.
Unless you think you're too old.
Are you?

AUBREY

Guess not.

Aubrey takes the swing.

WHIT

I don't know 'bout you,
but I like to get away
like this now and then.
It helps me whenever I
have some thinking to do.

Aubrey starts swinging.

AUBREY

So you're thinking deep
thoughts while you swing?

WHIT

Nope. Just the opposite.
Kinda funny, but I've
discovered that when I
stop thinking about my
problem is often when the
answer comes. I think
it's because when you step
away, you get a better
picture of where you are.

AUBREY

Hm.

[THEY SWING SILENTLY FOR A MOMENT]

WHIT

I've never seen anyone swing
with a frown on their face.
Most people smile. Is something
wrong?

AUBREY

Nothing you can help me with.

WHIT

Oh. Okay.

[THEY SWING SILENTLY A MOMENT.]

AUBREY

No offense. It's just that... I
know what you're going to say.
You'll side with my parents.

WHIT

Well, you may be right. Or maybe
you aren't. But you won't know
unless you tell me what's on your
mind.

AUBREY

See, I got the lead role in this
play.

WHIT

Uh huh.

AUBREY

And my parents won't let me be in it, just because it has a different viewpoint from what they believe.

WHIT

Hmmm.

AUBREY

They've even threatened to resign from the playhouse over it.

WHIT

Well, that's quite a dilemma, Aubrey.

AUBREY

Yeah.

Aubrey stops swinging.

AUBREY

It is.

(beat)

My parents are so...I just don't get them. Before they became Christians, they let me do pretty much whatever I wanted to do. We got along great.

Whit stops swinging.

WHIT

But now?

AUBREY

Now they make a big fuss over little stuff like this. Why's everything have to be such a big

deal?

WHIT

That's a good question.
Why do you think things
like this are such a big
deal to them? Why would
they risk their
friendships and their
involvement at the
Playhouse?

AUBREY

Because of what they
believe. But what about
what I believe?

WHIT

What do you believe, Aubrey?

AUBREY

(beat)

I...I don't know, but it's
not that stuff!

WHIT

Tell you what, Aubrey
-- if you're open to
it, there's somebody I'd
like you to meet.

3 INT. IMAGINATION STATION

Whit programs the scenario. Aubrey isn't sure about all
this.

AUBREY

The Imagination Station?
Uh, I already met somebody
in there. And I didn't
like him.

WHIT

Neither did I, to be honest.
But we've fixed all those
problems and re-configured
the whole thing.

AUBREY
(RELUCTANTLY) I don't know...

WHIT
(beat)
Tell you what.

Whit hits the Enter key with a flourish and the door opens.

WHIT
How 'bout if I go with you?

AUBREY
Well thanks, Mr.
Whittaker, but I don't need a
babysitter.

WHIT
Just trying to make you
comfortable.

AUBREY
At least give me a clue: who
is this person and what's he
have to do with my problem?

WHIT
It's better if he speaks for
himself.

AUBREY
(beat, reluctant)
Well... All right. I'll try it.

WHIT
Then, hop in!

Aubrey takes her seat inside.

(SFX: I.S. DOORS CLOSE)

WHIT (filtered V.O.)
Are you ready?

AUBREY
I guess so.

WHIT (filtered V.O.)
You know what to do.

AUBREY
(to herself)
Push the red button...

(SFX: I.S. START UP)

AUBREY
WHOOOOOOOOOOOOOAH!

(SFX: I.S. GOES FULL TILT, THEN WINDS DOWN)

4 EXT. WILDERNESS - LATE AFTERNOON

[THE IMAGINATION STATION WINDS DOWN AND THE DOORS OPEN, DEPOSITING
AUBREY...STRAIGHT INTO A RIVER.]

AUBREY
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

(SFX: SPLASH!)

Aubrey comes up spluttering.

AUBREY
Oh! Mr. Whittaker! Help!

MICAH
(off mic, calling)
Don't worry! I'll save
you!

AUBREY
What?

Micah dives into the river and swims heroically in
Aubrey's direction. As he swims, Micah calls out to
Aubrey between breaths.

MICAH
(approaching)
Hold on! Don't give up!

AUBREY

(sputters) Give up? But...

MICAH

(approaching)

Keep calm! Relax! Don't panic! Whatever you do, don't panic! I'm here to rescue you!

AUBREY

Um, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I'm not drowning.

MICAH

(beat)

You aren't?

AUBREY

No.

MICAH

Oh. How embarrassing. I thought I saw you fall into the river and I...well...

AUBREY

Yeah, well, I'm all right.

[THEY GET OUT OF THE WATER AS THEY TALK.]

AUBREY

This is a great start to my adventure. The least he could've done was warn me to wear a bathing suit.

MICAH

Huh? What do you mean?

AUBREY

Never mind. But... thanks for trying to save me,
[SENTENCE HANGS TO IMPLY SHE WANTS HIS NAME].

MICAH

Micah, son of
Agun [AY gun]. And you
are...?

AUBREY

Aubrey. Uh, daughter of
Ben. And Ellen.

MICAH

A pleasure to meet you.
But come, we need to hurry
back to shore. The
master's about to start!

AUBREY

The master?

The booming voice of John the Baptist echoes across the
rocky area.

JOHN

(O.S. preaching)
Repent! Repent!
The kingdom of God is
near! You must repent!

AUBREY

(aside)
Whoa! That's the master?
He's dressed like Fred
Flintstone.

JOHN

(O.S. preaching)
Come now, old and young,
soldier and tax collector,
beggar and Pharisee--come
and be baptized!

AUBREY

Baptized. Uh, I think
we'd better get out of the
water! Quick!

Aubrey and Micah make their way from the water to the
bank of the river. John's voice gets closer.

JOHN

(O.S. preaching to
crowd)

The ax is already at the
root of the trees! And
every tree that does not
produce good fruit will be
cut down and thrown into
the fire!

Aubrey and Micah make their way to the crowd, which is
remarking and reacting to John's words.

AUBREY

I guess he's not into
those "positive-thinking"
messages, huh?

MICAH

He's powerful--like a true
prophet! He will lead us
into a new kingdom!

CROWD GUY 1

Shhhhhhh! I want to hear!
Be quiet!

JOHN (O.S.)

(preaching)

Even Herod himself will
not be spared from God's
judgment!

The crowd gasps.

JOHN (O.S.)

Can our king flagrantly
mock the laws of our God?
Any man who takes his
brother's wife deserves to
die!

The crowd murmurs in excitement as if "Wow, that took a
lot of guts!"

CROWD 1

(whisper)

He speaks so openly against
Herod!

CROWD 2

(whisper)

You know this will get
back to the king! What
will Herod do to John then?

AUBREY

(whisper to Micah)

Prob'ly give him a shampoo.

MICAH

(whisper)

Aubrey! Quiet!

AUBREY

(whisper)

I wonder if this is the guy Mr.
Whittaker wants me to meet.

JOHN

(O.S., preaching)

You must repent from your
sins--all of you! For one
has come who is more
powerful than I. I am not
worthy to even untie his
sandals. He will baptize
you with the Holy Spirit
and with fire! So come
now, repent and be
baptized!

The crowd pushes forward to be baptized.

AUBREY

Okay, this makes sense.
He has the guts to stand
up against the king. So
maybe he can teach me how
to stand up to my parents!
Micah!

MICAH

Yes?

AUBREY

Can you get me to see "the master?" I need to talk with him.

MICAH

(cocky)

You ask if I can get you to the master? Ha! Of course I can!

AUBREY

So are you his disciple or something like that?

MICAH

(cocky)

You ask if I'm his disciple or something like that? Ha!

AUBREY

Well?

MICAH

(caves in)

I'm...something like that. But one day soon, I'll be his disciple. You wait and see! I'll be his best disciple ever!

AUBREY

So you can't really get me to see him, can you?

MICAH

Well, you'll never get through the crowds to talk to him now. But you can talk to him later. I know where his camp is.

AUBREY

You do? Can you take me

there?

MICAH

Right after the baptism.

(MUSIC: BRIDGE)

(SFX: FADE AMBIENCE INTO MOURNFUL DESERT WIND)

5 EXT. WILDERNESS - NIGHT

Aubrey is suspicious.

MICAH

There, see? His camp is
just over the ridge.

AUBREY

But isn't that the same
ridge we crossed an hour
ago?

MICAH

Well...it could be
the...then again...or
maybe we're...

AUBREY

We're what?

MICAH

(sheepish)
Lost?

AUBREY

Lost? What kinda follower
are you?

MICAH

A lost one. However, if
we just...wait!

Micah stops short.

AUBREY

(beat)
What is it?

MICAH
(whisper)
Did you hear that?

AUBREY
What?

MICAH
(whisper)
Shhh! Something behind us.

AUBREY
No.

MICAH
(whisper)
It must be them!

AUBREY
Them?

MICAH
(whisper)
SHHHHHH!

AUBREY
(whisper)
Who is them?

(SFX: SNARLING BEAST--IN YOUR FACE!!!)

Both Aubrey and Micah scream.

AUBREY
Run for your life!

MICAH
No, Aubrey!

AUBREY
What?

MICAH
(whisper)
Stay as still as you can!
Leopards will not chase

you if you do not run.
Stay perfectly still.

The leopard growls menacingly.

AUBREY
(whisper)
Leopard?

MICAH
(whisper)
They are common in this
region. Be still!

The growl comes nearer.

AUBREY
(whisper)
But he's coming closer!

MICAH
(whisper)
I know, I know, let me think.

AUBREY
(whisper)
But what are we gonna do?
He's coming this way!

MICAH
(whisper)
I...I don't know. Wait.
Maybe it's mountain
lions that won't chase you
if you stay still.

AUBREY
(whisper)
Micah!

MICAH
(whisper)
Get behind me! He's getting
ready to leap!

(SFX: ROAR OF LEOPARD)

Aubrey screams.

John's voice booms across the rocks.

JOHN

Be gone!

(SFX: SNARLING BEAST)

MICAH

It's the master!

(SFX: LOUD GROWL!)

JOHN

Be gone, you wicked beast!

The beast utters a begrudging growl then bounds away.

AUBREY

(quiet)

Wow! Did you see that?
He actually scared the
leopard away!

JOHN

(coming on mic)

Who are you children and
what are you doing out
here alone?

MICAH

(calling)

It's me, Micah! I was
defending this girl from
the leopard!

John's tone says he knows better.

JOHN

(coming on mic)

Ah, Micah - yes. How many
times have I told you not to
follow me out into the
wilderness?

MICAH

But this girl was desperate
to meet you.

AUBREY

I wasn't desperate.

JOHN

Ahhh. You're the girl who
fell in the river today,
aren't you?

AUBREY

That was me. Hi.

JOHN

I'm John.

MICAH

"John the Baptist."

AUBREY

Nice to meet you. I'm
Aubrey the Methodist.

(beat)

Or Episcopalian. I don't
exactly remember.

JOHN

I see.

(beat)

All right, Micah, you've
done your duty. Now go home
to your grandmother.

MICAH

But, Master... I want to be
your disciple! I can be
a great disciple, too,
sir! I can scout for
enemies and live in caves
and fight off leopards
and...do all kinds of things.

JOHN

Micah, you have much to learn.
(SIGHS)

It's too dark and dangerous
for you to go now anyway. Come
with me, both of you. The desert
grows cold quickly. My camp's
over there, between those
two rocks.

MICAH

(aside)

See, Aubrey? I told you!

AUBREY

(saracastic)

Right.

The group walks on.

JOHN

My disciples are in the
city, buying supplies. They
should return soon. You're
both welcome to eat with
them tonight.

AUBREY

Thanks. Wait. You aren't
eating with us?

JOHN

I need solitude after a
long day of preaching.

AUBREY

(disappointed)

Oh.

JOHN

But I can see you have
gone through much to find
me here and will take the
time to talk with you.

MICAH

What would you like me to do,
John?

JOHN

You... may stand guard as a
lookout.

MICAH

Oh, thank you, Master! I'll
be the best lookout scout you
ever had, sir! I'll keep on
close alert for any
invaders!

JOHN

Thank you, Micah. Just
don't go far - and be sure to
let us know when the
disciples get here, would
you?

MICAH

(going off mic)
Not to fear, my master!
I will stand guard and on
the alert!

JOHN

(calling)
You do that, Micah!
(aside to Aubrey)
Micah means well.

MICAH

(off mic, calling)
No danger yet, sir!

JOHN

(calling)
Thank you!
(aside)
But he has a vivid imagination.
He thinks the Romans are going
to attack us at any moment.

MICAH

(off mic, calling)
Absolutely nothing to
report yet, sir.

JOHN
(calling)
That's enough, Micah. Thank you!

John and Aubrey walk a short way to a cavern with a fire going inside.

AUBREY
Is this where you live?
A cave?

JOHN
Sit by the fire. It'll
keep you warm.

Aubrey sits by the fire as John the Baptist stokes it with a stick.

AUBREY
Thank you.

John sits down at the fire.

JOHN
You look hungry. Here,
have a little food to hold
you until my disciples
return.

John hands Aubrey some food from his leather pouch.

AUBREY
Thanks! I haven't eaten
all day.

Aubrey munches away.

JOHN
You're not from around here,
are you?

AUBREY
(still munching)
No.
(beat)
Hey, this stuff is pretty
good! What is it?

JOHN

Locusts.

AUBREY

(her mouth full)

Hmmmmph?

JOHN

They're especially good
with honey.

Aubrey gulps reluctantly.

JOHN

Would you like another
one?

John scrounges through his pouch.

AUBREY

Oh no. No thank you! No
thank you very much.
Water. Water would be
very good!

JOHN

Here.

John offers her a skin of water. Aubrey grabs it eagerly
and tries to gargle out the locust taste. She swallows.

AUBREY

Ahhhhh. Thank you.

JOHN

So, tell me, Aubrey, why
have you come to see me?

AUBREY

Oh. Well, to be honest,
I thought that was really
cool the way you blasted
the king today!

JOHN

"Really cool."

AUBREY

Well, yeah. You see, I've got this problem with my mom and dad. I really want to be in this play, but they won't let me. So, I want you to show me how I can stand up to them. You know, like you did with Herod.

JOHN

Why do you think I take a stand against Herod?

AUBREY

Well, you don't like what he's doing I guess.

JOHN

No. It's more than that.

AUBREY

What do you mean?

JOHN

I'm a messenger, Aubrey - a voice, crying in the desert.

AUBREY

Um... okay.

JOHN

I'm preparing the way.

AUBREY

The way for what?

JOHN

The way to meet God.

AUBREY

(beat)

Oh. But what does that have to do with Herod?

JOHN

He has turned his back
on God and sinned grievously.
My hope is that one day my
words may turn his heart
away from sin and towards God.

From a distance, Micah runs toward the cave as fast he
can.

MICAH

(approaching,
calling)
Master, master!

JOHN

Micah?

Micah runs, drawing closer.

MICAH

(approaching, calling)
They're coming this way!

JOHN

Who is coming, Micah?

MICAH

Soldiers! Hurry! You must
hide yourself! They're about
to...

Outside a soldier strikes Micah. He groans and falls.
John scrambles to his feet.

JOHN

Micah!

Troops storm the cavern. Chaos. Confusion. Aubrey screams.

AUBREY

No!

Roman troops storm the cavern. Aubrey screams as Rufus grabs her.

AUBREY

No! Let go of me!

RUFUS

Quiet, girl!

JOHN

Leave her alone.
What's this all about?

JARUS

(enters)

I think you know full-well
what this is all about, Baptist.

JOHN

Jarus.

JARUS

You're under arrest, in the name
of Caesar and our tetrarch.

JOHN

Jarus. What have you done to
the boy, is he all right?

JARUS

He will survive. Now come along
peacefully.

JOHN

You could have approached me in
the daylight, Jarus. Why must you
come under cover of darkness?

JARUS

I warned you Herod wasn't going to
put up with your rantings and
ravings against him.

JOHN

Do with me as you will. But
the two children are innocent
of any wrongdoing.

JARUS

I'm under orders by Herod himself.
Everyone I found with you was to be
arrested. Rufus!

RUFUS

Sir?

JARUS

Take them all to the fortress.

(MUSIC: UP AND OUT)

6 INT. PRISON - DAY

Aubrey, Micah and John the Baptist are in chains in their cell.

AUBREY

I don't get it. This can't
be what Mr. Whittaker wanted
to happen.

MICAH

My grandmother is going to
tan my hide for this. I should
have listened to you, Master.
I should have gone home.

AUBREY

I'm so confused.

JOHN

Why are you confused, Aubrey?

AUBREY

Well, you stood up for yourself
and they threw you in jail.
How's that going to help me with my
parents? I mean, what's the point?

JOHN

There's a difference between
standing up for something you want
and standing up for something
you believe in.

AUBREY

I don't understand.

JOHN

You will.

JARUS

(approaching)

All right, I've spoken to Herod.
We're ready to make a deal.

JOHN

A deal?

JARUS

I've convinced him to release
your friends.

Jarus unlocks the prison door and the chains on Aubrey and Micah.

MICAH

Great! Thanks! Thanks a whole
lot!

Aubrey's relieved as her chains drop to the ground.

AUBREY

Ahhhh! Those chains were
chafing my wrists.

JOHN

But what is the deal, Jarus?
I don't see my chains coming off.

JARUS

It's easy. All you need to do is
renounce what you've said about
Herod and God's laws, and he'll
release you also!

AUBREY

Wow. That sounds reasonable.

JARUS

Well, John?

JOHN

(quietly)

No, Jarus. Does Herod think
so little of God's message
that he thinks it could be
retracted so easily?

AUBREY

What?

JARUS

I don't think you grasp
your situation, John. Herod
could have you executed for
what you have said about him.

JOHN

Jarus, what was said were not
my words, but the words of God
from His Holy Law. This is what
I've been sent to do, to proclaim
His word so that all may repent
for forgiveness. So it must be for
Herod.

JARUS

Listen to me. I went out on a
limb for you. I asked Herod to
make this deal in order to save your
skin. And this is your gratitude?

JOHN

I appreciate your effort, Jarus.

JARUS

No. You don't!
(to Aubrey and Micah)
You two come this way.

AUBREY

John, why are you making such a
big deal over this? Won't it
be better for you to get out
of jail so you can keep preaching?
Forget about Herod.

JOHN

Poor Aubrey. You don't understand,
do you?

AUBREY

You're right. I don't.

JOHN

(quietly)

But you will. And when the time
comes, you must be brave, my
little sister!

The prison door slams shut.

JOHN

Jarus! One more moment! Please!

JARUS

What?

JOHN

I need to speak with Micah.

JARUS

Make it quick.

JOHN

(quiet aside)

Micah, there's something I need
you to do. It's very important.

(MUSIC: UP AND OUT)

THE END of Part 1

PART 2

1 EXT. MICAH'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Micah and Aubrey are busy preparing for their trip, packing up their donkeys.

MICAH

I'll go to meet John's
disciples and then journey
on to fulfill my errand.
I may not be back for a few
days. You've got John's
food ready?

AUBREY

Yes.

MICAH

Tell him I'll be back as soon as
I can. And if you need anything,
go to my grandmother's. She
believes in John and will do
whatever she can to help.

AUBREY

Okay. (BEAT) Micah, can you tell
me what the secret errand is now?

MICAH

(whisper)

Only if you don't tell anyone.

AUBREY

Okay.

MICAH

(secretively)

He wants me to find this traveling
teacher over in Nain and give him
a message.

AUBREY

That's it? You're going to deliver
a message to some teacher?

MICAH

He's no ordinary teacher, I guess.

AUBREY

Oh! He's going to lead an army back
to rescue John from the prison?

MICAH

I don't know. Wouldn't it be
wonderful if he did?

AUBREY

It'd be cool.

MICAH

(PONDERING) Cool. Cool. You're
going to have to explain that
to me one of these days.

AUBREY

Remind me when you get back.

MICAH

I will. Farewell.

AUBREY

Bye.

(MUSIC: SHORT BRIDGE)

2 INT. PRISON - AFTERNOON

Aubrey is upset.

AUBREY

What do you mean, John isn't here?

JAILER

He was ordered to appear before
Herod.

AUBREY

Herod? But why?

JAILER

Look, I'm his jailer, not
his social organizer. Herod

summoned him to talk.

AUBREY

That's it? Just to talk?

JAILER

Herod enjoys listening to
John. Though I don't know why.
It's all a lot of mumbo-jumbo to me.

AUBREY

But what do they talk about?

JAILER

God... politics... the weather. How am
I supposed to know?

AUBREY

I'd love to know what they're saying.

JAILER

Well, why don't you head up to the
palace and listen to the guy? If
you stand just outside, you can
hear 'im.

AUBREY

How can I get there?

JAILER

Just follow his voice—you sure
can't miss it.

AUBREY

'Bye!

Aubrey scurries off.

JAILER

(calling)

Hey! You forgot the food you
brought!

(beat)

Yeeuck! Locusts?

3 INT. HEROD'S PALACE-LATE AFTERNOON

Aubrey walks down the large hallway as John's voice echoes in the palace.

JOHN (O.S.)

I am the voice of one who
called in the desert, to
make straight the way for
the Lord. The Lamb of God
has come to take away the
sin of the world. He is
the one who came before me
and yet has surpassed me.

AUBREY

(to herself)

Yep. That's John all right.

John's voice gets closer as Aubrey walks toward the palace walls.

JOHN (O.S.)

I am the voice of one who
called in the desert, to
make straight the way for
the Lord. The Lamb of God
has come to take away the
sin of the world. He is
the one who came before me
and yet has surpassed me.

JOHN

(on mic)

I am merely his messenger, King
Herod.

HEROD

You are a messenger. And yet your
message is very puzzling.

JOHN

It is not lawful for you to have
your brother's wife.

HEROD

Ah. Now your message is too clear.

JOHN

Repent and turn from your sin.
God stands ready to forgive you,
O King.

HEROD

Hmmmm. Herodias, my love, what do
you make of all this?

HERODIAS

Well...

HEROD

Come now, feel free to
speak your mind.

HERODIAS

If you insist.

(beat)

This man is a wicked rebel, a
loud-mouthed hypocrite and
a meddling menace not fit to
live!

HEROD

(beat)

I seem to detect some hostility
on your part.

HERODIAS

(sweetly)

I'm sorry, my love.

HEROD

John happens to be a
righteous prophet, you know.
Very well-respected throughout
the region. You can readily
see why, can't you?

HERODIAS

I suppose. That is, if you
overlook his uncivilized,
self-righteous mannerisms
and those beastly garments of
his.

HEROD

See there, John? She's warming
up to you already.

Herod gets up to leave.

HEROD

Well, apparently that is enough
entertainment for today, John.

(calls)

Guards!

Herod claps twice, then exits.

HEROD

(aside)

You know, John, your words
are fascinating to me, but
you need to discontinue the
personal references, eh?

JOHN

(quietly)

I will pray for you, O king.

HEROD

(aside)

Yes, yes. You do that.

Herod exits.

HEROD

(going off mic)

I'll be in the courtyard, my dear.

HERODIAS

(sweetly)

Yes, my sweet. I'll join you in
just a moment!

Herodias blows a double-kiss. The king's huge palace door
shuts as Herod leaves. Herodias' sweet nature does a rapid
U-turn.

HERODIAS

Guards! Bring that scum here!

The guards bring John forward roughly.

JOHN

What do you want, Herodias?

HERODIAS

(viciously, under her
breath)

Mark my words, you rebel! If
I ever get the opportunity,
I will personally silence you
myself!

4 INT. PRISON - LATER

The Jailer slams the door of John's cell.

(SFX: PRISON DOOR SLAM)

Aubrey approaches John's cell as she hears him
cry out to God.

(MUSIC: SOFT, ALONE)

AUBREY

(quietly, timidly)

John?

JOHN

(quiet passion)

Yahweh, where are you? I'm
supposed to be your messenger--the
one who prepares the way for you!
But how can I prepare your way
when I'm here? I used to be the
Voice for you, "the voice of one
calling in the desert." But now,
no one is listening!

AUBREY

(beat, quietly)

Um...

(clear her throat)

JOHN

Who's there?

John--in chains--moves to the door to see.

AUBREY

It's me.

(sheepish as she moves
to the cell)

Hi.

JOHN

Aubrey.

AUBREY

They won't let me into the cell.

JOHN

I know.

AUBREY

You look cold. I brought you a
blanket, and some food too!

Aubrey hands John the blanket and the food.

JOHN

Thank you, Aubrey!

AUBREY

Micah helped me fix the food. I
don't do bugs very well.

JOHN

And what of Micah?

AUBREY

He went off to find that
teacher you were talking about.
Oops. That's supposed to be a
secret assignment, isn't it?

JOHN

Secret assignment? Ha! That
Micah! I told him it was an
important assignment. That boy.
(beat)

Aubrey, you have something
on your mind.

AUBREY

No. Here's your blanket.

JOHN

Come now, I can see it in your eyes. Out with it.

AUBREY

I just don't understand!
Why don't you let Herod believe
what he wants to believe and you
believe what you want to believe?
You know, live and let live!

JOHN

Is that the way we are to live?

AUBREY

But I heard what Herod said
to you. Herodias is so upset
that she wants to kill you.
Is that what you want?

JOHN

Dear child, this had nothing
to do with what I want. If
it were left to me, I'd be
living out in the desert
where it is quiet and peaceful.
But my entire life has been
dedicated to the service of
God. I answer to Him. I
always have. I know of no
other way to live that to
proclaim God's message.

AUBREY

I don't get it. You'd lose
your life for a message.

JOHN

I didn't say I'd lose my life.
How can I lose what belongs to God?
They can torture me, burn me,
whatever -- and still I will
live because He lives. Don't you
understand? What happens to me

is of no consequence when the Messiah is coming. Perhaps He is here.

AUBREY

Messiah?

JOHN

The teacher Micah has gone to.
If He is who I think He is, if He is the one I once baptized, then He is the one I have come to proclaim. He is the Messiah. And if He is, then you must flee this place. You must run with all your might to meet Him. Do you hear me, Aubrey? Run to meet the Messiah.

AUBREY

I can't leave you.

JOHN

Everyone must leave me. I will fade away, Aubrey. But He won't. In the Messiah is life. In Him is everything I've been preaching about. If He is the Messiah, then I am happy to die now.

AUBREY

No. I don't believe it.
This can't be what I came to see.
There has to be some way to stop it.

JOHN

Aubrey...

AUBREY

I'm going to Herod. I'm going to talk to him. He sounded reasonable just now. I just need to talk to him, that's all. Reason with him. Show him that it's not right to persecute people for what they believe. We're talking basic human rights here!

JOHN

You still don't understand.

AUBREY

It was you who told me there's a difference between standing up for what you want and what you believe.

JOHN

Yes...

AUBREY

Well, I think it's time to take a stand. Right now.

5 INT. HEROD'S PALACE - LATER

Aubrey's not doing so well with her plan.

(SFX: HEAVY PALACE DOOR SLAM)

DOOR GUARD

(from behind door)

I said, go away!

AUBREY

But I need to speak with Herod!
Don't I have rights as a citizen?

(SFX: CREAK OPEN DOOR A CRACK)

DOOR GUARD

Did you say "citizen?"

AUBREY

Uh, yes! Yes I did! I'm a citizen. And I have rights, don't I?

DOOR GUARD

In fact, yes, you do!

AUBREY

That's what I thought.

DOOR GUARD

You're a Roman citizen, right?

AUBREY

No, I'm actually not a Roman
citizen...

(SFX: DOOR SLAM)

DOOR GUARD

(from behind door)

Go away!

AUBREY

But, but...

(sigh)

Just great. How am I gonna get to
Herod now?

Aubrey hears someone singing--the voice of a girl about her
age. Salome [sa LO mee] is dancing as she imagines herself
in front of an adoring crowd. Salome is dramatic. She's also a
bit ditzy.

AUBREY

Singing? Who in the world
would be singing around here?

Aubrey walks around the corner to a large room. The voice of
Salome is clearer. Salome stops cold.

SALOME

Oh, hello. Who are you?

AUBREY

My name's Aubrey. What's your
name?

SALOME

You don't know? Guess.

AUBREY

Sorry.

SALOME

No. Salome [sa LO mee].

AUBREY

Nice to meet you, Salome.
You're a pretty good singer.

SALOME

I'm a better dancer. Watch!

Salome dances dramatically all around the room.

AUBREY

That's very nice.

SALOME

I know.

(beat)

You aren't like the other peasant
girls. They would say I'm a
fantastic dancer. The best in the
world. With moves so graceful, so
delicate, that you might even call
me...

Salome glides gracefully and delicately into a very large
vase that topples over with a loud crash!

AUBREY

...a klutz?

SALOME

Well don't just stand there! Help
me clean this up before my mother
finds out!

AUBREY

What?

SALOME

Hurry!

AUBREY

All right. Calm down. It's
just a vase.

SALOME

Just a vase! My mother
brought this with her from
our palace. It was given to

us by the Emperor himself!
There's no telling what my
mother will do if she ever...

HERODIAS
(approaching from far
off)
Salome? What was that I just
heard?

Herodias has the voice of Evil Incarnate.

SALOME
Um.
(calling)
I, um...

HERODIAS
(on mic)
Salome, I...
(suspicious)
Who is this?

SALOME
Oh, this is Aubrey. Mother, she
said my dancing was so beautiful
that I looked like a "klutz." I'm
not sure what that is, but I
suppose it's some kind of
beautiful bird or something.
Isn't that right, Aubrey?

AUBREY
You could say that. But I really
wouldn't.

SALOME
(proudly and
dramatically)
Mother, I'm a klutz!

HERODIAS
(sarcastically)
I'm so proud. Now would you
please step aside so I can see
what you're hiding?

SALOME

Hiding? I...

HERODIAS

Move aside, daughter. (PUSHES HER ASIDE)
My vase! You broke it! You evil child!

SALOME

But I...

HERODIAS

Silence! For this, you will be
prohibited from dancing at the
party!

SALOME

No! You can't do that! Mother,
I've looked forward to this since
I was a little girl! It's my
first opportunity to dance before
a royal audience!

HERODIAS

You should have thought of that
before you were so careless.

SALOME

Mother!

HERODIAS

Hold your tongue! I don't want to
hear another word about this!

Herodias storms out.

HERODIAS

(leaving, almost
crying)

My vase! My precious vase!

AUBREY

Here, Salome, I'll help you clean
up the rest of it.

Salome cries.

AUBREY

I know how you feel.

HERODIAS

It's not fair! I've been
waiting for so long to dance
for one of my Uncle's parties.

AUBREY

What makes your uncle's
parties so special?

SALOME

Are you teasing me?
King Herod throws the
greatest parties in the Roman
Empire. Everyone says so.

AUBREY:

Your Uncle is King Herod?

SALOME

Yes, you silly girl. Don't you
know anything?

AUBREY

I know an opportunity when I see one.

SALOME

What do you mean?

AUBREY

Salome! If I can work out a way
for you to dance at the party,
do you think you can get me in
to see your Uncle?

SALOME

Oh, of course! I'd do anything!

AUBREY

Leave it up to me.

SALOME

Tell me, tell me!

AUBREY

I'm thinking. (BEAT) I know.
How about if I take the blame
for your broken vase. I mean,
after all, I probably distracted
you, right? And if it's my fault,
then your mother has no reason to
stop you from going to the party.

SALOME

Yes, yes! Oh, Aubrey, thank you!
Let's go tell Mother!

[THEY MOVE OFF]

AUBREY

Uh, by the way, what's the
punishment around here for
breaking a vase?

SALOME

Nothing too severe. Ten lashes
with a stick. Come, let's go!

AUBREY

Um. How big is the stick?

SALOME

Oh, you are funny.

(MUSIC: BRIDGE)

6 INT. HEROD'S PALACE

The party is underway. Revelry, laughter, etc.

SALOME

Oh, Aubrey, now before we get
lost in all the revelry, I
want to say thank you again!
Your plan was perfect!

AUBREY

(in pain)

Yeah, maybe I'll agree with
you when I can sit down again.

SALOME

Come, meet my uncle!

AUBREY

All right.

(to herself)

Hope he's in a good mood.

Salome walks Aubrey over to Herod.

SALOME

Dearest Uncle, this is my friend
Aubrey. I told you about her,
remember?

HEROD

(distracted by the
fun)

Yes, yes.

SALOME

She has something she wants to say
to you.

HEROD

Does she?

SALOME

Yes, she does. Now please be
sweet and listen to her. Will
you, Uncle? Please?

HEROD

Hm? Oh, yes, for you anything,
my dear Salome. Well, get on with
it, girl. What do you have to say?

AUBREY

(clearly nervous))

Well, um, it's about John the
Baptist, see.

HEROD

What?

AUBREY

He...he doesn't deserve to be

in prison like that! He's
just standing up for what he
believes.

HEROD

Is this some kind of party joke?
It is. It must be. Herodias is
playing a prank.

AUBREY

No, honest, he's really a good man.
You know it yourself. Please, it's
time you let John go! You know in
your heart it's the right thing to do!

HEROD

Please... just go away. You're ruining
my birthday celebration.

AUBREY

But, King Herod—

HEROD

(FLUSTERED) No, stop. Not another
word. Oh, this is too much. On
my birthday, of all times.

AUBREY

But listen—

HEROD

(CALLS OUT) Salome! Salome,
my dearest niece. Sooth my
nerves. Dance for me, for all
my guests.

SALOME

Of course, my Uncle! It's
what I've been waiting to do!

HEROD

(calling to guests)
Hear, hear!

The crowd quiets.

HEROD

Welcome, all of you! I want you

to feast and drink to your heart's
delight. But first, for my
birthday, my lovely niece has
prepared a special treat. Salome
[sa LO mee] will now perform a
dance in my honor!

The crowd is delighted.

HEROD

Salome?

SALOME

In honor of the great King Herod!

The music begins as Salome dances.

AUBREY

But, King Herod, listen to me—

HEROD

(LOW AND HARSH) No, you listen to me,
girl. Go away from my sight before
I have the guards throw you out of one
of the windows!

AUBREY

Yes, sir.

(MUSIC: FADES DOWN, CROSS FADES INTO END AND UP TO END)

Enthusiastic applause from everyone!

HEROD

Beautiful! What an absolutely
beautiful dance! Salome, come
here, please.

SALOME

Yes, my king?

HEROD

Ask me. Ask for anything you
want, and I'll give it to you!

Gasps from the crowd.

SALOME

You're so kind, Uncle, but to
dance was enough pleasure for me.

HEROD

I swear by my own oath, that you
may have whatever you ask, up to
half of my kingdom!

SALOME

All right.

(beat)

With your permission, may I have
a moment to think it over?

The dinner guests laugh.

HEROD

(laughing)

Of course, of course!

SALOME

I'll be back!

AUBREY

(to herself)

Ah ha! This is my chance.

Salome heads out to the palace hallway. Aubrey follows her.

AUBREY

Oh, Salome? Salome!

SALOME

Aubrey, did you see? Wasn't I
simply fabulous?

AUBREY

Yes, but I was wondering...

SALOME

And the applause! Did you hear
the applause, Aubrey? It took my
breath away. It did! I'll
remember this day for the rest of
my life!

AUBREY

Salome, listen! Your Uncle said
he'd give you anything, right?
There's nothing you really need,
so... why don't you be really nice
and ask him to release John the
Baptist!

SALOME

Yes, how fun! Everyone will talk
about it. Oh! There she is!
(calling)
Mother! I've been looking for you!

HERODIAS

(approaching)
And I've been looking for you.
Well done, my daughter. Your dance
was marvelous. Rome itself cannot
boast of such dancing. In fact, I
would dare say the Emperor himself...
(BEAT, TO AUBREY) What do you want,
girl? Can't you see we're talking?
Oh - wait - you are the reprobate
that broke my vase. Where is a stick?
I'd like to give you another thrashing.

AUBREY

Um...

SALOME

Mother, she's my friend. Besides,
she's already paid the penalty.

HERODIAS

(to Aubrey)
It wasn't nearly enough.
(to Salome)
Now about this offer from your
uncle. I'm hurt that you didn't
seek me out directly so we could
discuss it.

SALOME

I was! I didn't see you in the
party so I came out here to find
you. But Aubrey came up with

a splendid suggestion.

HERODIAS

I have a splendid suggestion,
too. A perfect suggestion.
Would you like to hear it?

SALOME

Oh, yes, please.

HERODIAS

I want you to go and ask
Herod for John the Baptist.

AUBREY

What? Do you mean it?

HERODIAS

(wicked pleasure)
Of course I do. But, Salome,
you don't want all of John.
You just want his head.

SALOME

What?

AUBREY

No!

HERODIAS

Tell him you want the head of John
the Baptist. And, better still,
since it is his birthday, it
should be served on a platter!

SALOME

But, mother - isn't that rather
disgusting?

HERODIAS

Do as I say, daughter! Go at once!
(wicked aside)
Or I'll make sure you never dance
again!

AUBREY

Oh, Herodias! Please don't do

it! Please!

HERODIAS

Guards! Seize this wicked wretch
and throw her out! She's trespassing
here! She's an intruder!

Guards surround Aubrey and take her by force to the palace
gate.

AUBREY

No! Don't do this! You've got to
stop!

HERODIAS

(going off mic)

Now, Salome, let's go have a talk
with Herod, shall we?

DOOR GUARD

This way, you little waif!

AUBREY

(calling)

No!

(to guard)

You let go of me!

(calling)

Salome! Salome!

The palace gate slams shut.

AUBREY

They can't do this! They can't!

Aubrey pounds on the door.

AUBREY

Let me in! Let me in! Let me...!

Aubrey breaks down and weeps. Micah runs up,
excited.

MICAH

(approaching)

There you are! Aubrey, I saw him,
I saw him! I've found the

Messiah! I just told John about
it and he...

(beat)
are you all right?

AUBREY
They're going to execute John!

MICAH
What?

AUBREY
It was that terrible woman, Herodias!
She talked her daughter into it.
I tried to stop them, but I
couldn't!

MICAH
No. You must be wrong. I
just talked to John a few
moments ago. Everything
was all right. John said
so himself. He said I
should I become a disciple
of the Messiah!

AUBREY
Micah, listen to me. We've got to
stop them!

MICAH
But how?

AUBREY
(beat)
I don't know. Let's go to the
prison. Maybe we can find Jarus.
He liked John - I could tell he
did. Jarus can help us! Hurry!

(MUSIC: SUSPENSEFUL, CHASE BRIDGE)

7 INT. PRISON

Aubrey and Micah run.

MICAH

There he is!

AUBREY

Jarus! Jarus!

Micah and Aubrey stop, out of breath.

MICAH

Jarus, you've got to help us!

AUBREY

It's John!

(the reality starts
to sink in)

They're about to...to...

JARUS

You're too late.

AUBREY

(beat)

No! No!

JARUS

It's done.

AUBREY

No!

Aubrey's voice falls into an echo as the Imagination Station takes her back.

(SFX: IMAGINATION STATION)

Voices reverberate on the journey back.

WHIT

(reverb)

The executioner went and beheaded
John in the prison...

JOHN

(reverb)

I will fade away, Aubrey. But He won't.

WHIT
(reverb)
John's disciples came and took his
body...

JOHN
(reverb)
In the Messiah is life. In Him
is everything I've been preaching about.

WHIT
(reverb)
...and laid it in a tomb.

JOHN
(reverb)
You must run with all your might to
meet Him. Do you hear me, Aubrey?
Run to meet the Messiah.

John's echoing voice fades as the Imagination Station comes
in for a landing.

(SFX: I.S. DOORS OPEN)

WHIT
Aubrey? Are you all right?

AUBREY
(quiet)
Yes. I...I think so.

WHIT
I hope the program didn't upset
you.

AUBREY
It did.

WHIT
Aubrey, I'm sorry. I thought it
would help you to understand.

AUBREY
It did, Mr. Whittaker. But...
(beat)

WHIT

But what?

AUBREY

I don't know. There's so much
to think about.

WHIT

Do you want to talk about any of it?

AUBREY

No. Thanks, anyway. I think I want
to go home. I... I want to talk to
my parents.

WHIT

That's probably a good idea. Goodbye, Aubrey.

AUBREY

(beat)

Mr. Whittaker?

WHIT

Yes?

AUBREY

Thanks.

WHIT

You're welcome, Aubrey.
I'll see you at the swings.

(MUSIC: UP AND OUT)

THE END