

CHOSEN

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draft – May.2007

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CHARACTERS

Sami – A slave from Ndovu, which has been conquered by the Egyptians within the last 20 years. Visibly more “ethnic” in some way than Abraham, Isaac and Sarah. Late 20s. Smart and Sarcastic, with a mind that spins.

Akaad – An Egyptian slave in Abraham’s house. Has been here for many years and has always been a slave. Easy going and slightly older than Sami.

Abraham – Over 100 years old. Has been both rich and poor. An enormous potential for grandeur.

Sarah – Around 100 years old and beautiful. Determined. Isolated. She knows.

Hajira – People look at her and think about having sex. She didn’t ask for it to be that way, but she knows it is and doesn’t have a problem with it. No push over. Mid-Late 40s.

Isma’il – The older brother. Smart and forces himself to stay humble. Emphasis on learning and knowledge. Mid-Late 20s.

Isaac – Around 10 yrs old. Curious and our sweet baby boy. He’s cute and we love him. “Only the best for Isaac, thank you.” Learning to abuse his power.

TWO NOTES

1. When a character’s text is double bracketed like so, “[[I’m screaming on the inside!]]” that means that the text inside the brackets is communicated, but not spoken aloud.
2. a ? alone means that the character experiences a quizzical moment, a moment of questioning, a sort of pause in the energy.

1. – A Sacrifice

(Sarah enters and addresses the audience)

SARAH

I was raped in Egypt.

Before we had money and property.

We went there together as man and wife, Abraham and I. We were poor. We couldn't live out here anymore, we were failing at providing for ourselves. So, we went into the city. We intended to make some money. Abraham said, the night before we arrived, Abraham kissed my neck softly and said, "You're too hot."

(beat)

We were younger then.

We were saying things like that to each other. We had just finished being together. I was giving. I gave myself to him. I told him he was my king. I wanted him to feel confident so he would make some money. We were starving. We were dying from our lack. I had offered to sell myself in the market in Egypt and he took it as an insult. "Men are simple," I told him. "They think with their pricks. We need the money."

He said no. He looked defeated. Oh, fragile confidence.

So, I let him have me, I gave myself, and after he was done he said

(Abraham appears, kisses Sarah's neck.)

ABRAHAM

You're too hot.

SARAH

What?

ABRAHAM

You're too hot. I can't take you into town with me.

SARAH

(to us)

I didn't trust him, but I kept giving. He said,

ABRAHAM

Okay, we'll bring you into town, fine, but we'll say you are my sister.

SARAH

?

ABRAHAM

If they think that I stand between them and you, they will kill me. You're too hot. The filthy Egyptians can't control themselves. They'll kill me, they'll rape you.

SARAH

(to us) He said

(to Abraham) They don't rape men's sisters in Egypt?

ABRAHAM

They do, but they also marry them. They don't marry already married women. The odds are better.

SARAH

I will stay here. (to us) I said.

ABRAHAM

Then you will surely die.

SARAH

(to us) I paused. He looked at me intently. He does it whenever he's bargaining. It's his, "convincing you" look, I know it well. But, it works all the same. So I agreed.

We pretended I was his sister while we were in Egypt. We struggled. There was no money to be had. From far away, cities always seem so full of promise. But, we were hungry. In the market, one of the Pharaoh's men saw me. He raped me – my first – then summoned me to the Pharaoh's court. I asked to bring my brother – he would not have made it to court without me - and the man obliged.

The Pharaoh was kind.

His touch was forced like the other's, but it was softer and came with worldly pleasures. Grapes and figs. Fine wines and liqueurs. Spiced coconut and dates. I had never tasted such things. And neither had Abraham. We are country people and not accustomed to luxury. But, we all knew what was happening. All 3 of us knew. And Abraham did nothing to stop it.

ABRAHAM

(to Sarah)

What could I do?

SARAH

(to us)

He could have tried something, but he did nothing. Eventually God came, He came to the Pharaoh in his dreams. He told him that he must let Abraham and I go. At first the Pharaoh beat me. "Slut," and he spit. He was mad at me for being in his dreams.

But, they continued.

And eventually, the Pharaoh banished us from Egypt.

Abraham had made money selling skins in the marketplace by then. The Pharaoh had sent men to buy them. The Pharaoh had given him the skins. The Pharaoh overpaid. He

SARAH (cont'd)

said I was better when I was happy. I told him I couldn't be happy while my brother suffered.

Abraham has always been good with money and when we left Egypt, we were rich. Rich with cattle, with silver, with gold.

When we were riding out of Egypt, a group of animals and slaves behind us, Abraham and I were silent. After we rode nearly 10 miles, I heard him whisper to himself,

ABRAHAM

(to us)

I was right.

SARAH

(to us)

I looked up.

ABRAHAM

(to Sarah)

If you had been my wife we would both be dead. I was right.

SARAH

(to us)

“So unforgiving,” I thought to myself. So selfish, so crude. “He did nothing,” I thought. “He deserves nothing.” I’m the one who made everything happen. I’m the one who suffered. But he was right. A husband would defend his wife and die. A married woman would not have made it to the Pharaoh’s court, she would starve in the marketplace. I am alive, and now I have my home, and now I have Isaac.

2 – First Day

(The scene begins with just Abraham lit. He has a brief moment alone in which he prays, taking a deep breath and focusing himself. The stage fills around him with Sarah and Sami. Sami has got a rope around his neck.)

SARAH

Is it time for another sacrifice?

ABRAHAM

I got him because he knows how to build tools. He’s a blacksmith.

SARAH

We don’t have the resources to support another person, Abram.

ABRAHAM

It’ll be fine.

SARAH

What is he going to build?

ABRAHAM

He can build axes and knives, rods – anything made out of metal.

SARAH

Can he fix the tent?

ABRAHAM

Tents aren't made of metal.

SARAH

But it's something we need, so was this man a waste of money or not? You've got to stop doing this. We're feeding them bones as it is. You can't bring someone on and not care for them.

ABRAHAM

He can make us a knife for slaughtering goats.

SARAH

Fine.

Does he speak?

ABRAHAM

He talks.

SARAH

He hasn't said anything yet. (to Sami) Say something. (Sami looks. Abraham hits him.)

SAMI

Hello.

SARAH

What's your name?

ABRAHAM

We can call him whatever we want.

SAMI

Sami

SARAH

He's got a name already, see? You don't have to be so nasty about everything. Sami – what's that, where's that from?

SAMI

Samir. It's short for Samir.

ABRAHAM

He's from Egypt. Sarah, please.

SARAH

How much did you pay for him? We could have taught Akaad to build things.

ABRAHAM

Who was going to teach him? I don't have time to do that.

SARAH

Why? Where are you going?

ABRAHAM

I have to leave again tomorrow morning.

SARAH

You just got back.

ABRAHAM

Sarah. I have to listen. I have to make myself available to receive the word.

SARAH

I wish there were somehow you could be available while here.

ABRAHAM

No. You talk too much. I can't hear anything else.

SAMI

Huh. Ha ha.

(they look at Sami.)

SARAH

Tomorrow?

ABRAHAM

At sunrise.

SARAH

You're going to see Isaac before you go.

ABRAHAM

I am.

SARAH

Don't be rude to them in front of Isaac, okay? He's picking it up.

ABRAHAM

Sarah, please.

SARAH

Is he going to start building things tomorrow? Am I supposed to show him what to do?

ABRAHAM

I'll get Isma'il to show him.

SARAH

What's he going to build?

ABRAHAM

I told you. He can build knives, and axes, shovels – these are things we need.

SARAH

You should get him to train someone else so that he's not the only one who knows how to build things. Get Akaad to help him.

ABRAHAM

Yes. Good idea.

(pause)

SARAH

Well?

ABRAHAM

Well what?

SARAH

Did you bring me anything?

ABRAHAM

What would I have brought?

SARAH

Don't do this. Did you get my cloth or not? I want to fix the tent.

ABRAHAM

I got it.

SARAH

Let me see.

ABRAHAM

It's outside.

SARAH

Okay – put it in Hajira's tent.

ABRAHAM

I will.

SARAH

And then come back.

ABRAHAM

I have to bless the new one.

SARAH

What's his name, again?

ABRAHAM

Samir.

SAMI

Sami.

SARAH

Welcome Sami. Don't make an ass of yourself.

3. – Bonding

(Abraham and Sami.)

ABRAHAM

Here, take this off. (Sami gets naked.) You know the first rule when you buy a slave? Check the penis. That's what they say. Check the penis and the balls. If they are too big, you're in trouble. You don't want a slave with sexual desires, you don't want one who is producing too much juice. They say once a slave has sex, you have to kill them. They're like an animal that develops a taste for meat – they can't stop once they've tried it.

You can relax though, because I don't believe in this. I think that it is natural for all men to have sexual desires and I believe that slaves are men too, just in a different role.

I can see past their beliefs. I can see their faults, because I am a part of something bigger, a part of a world that I will let you see, if you behave. And it has its own beliefs.

The first rule if you are a man in this house is what I am about to show you. It is a symbol of our bond and I take nothing more seriously than my bond.

(Abraham grabs Sami's penis.)

If you fight me right now, I will kill you. For both our sakes.

(Abraham circumcises Sami. Sami screams silently.)

This was done in the name of God. Welcome.

(Abraham embraces Sami.)

4. – People's Dinner

(Sami and Akaad and Hajira sitting and sucking on bones. Sami and Hajira's eyes keep meeting.)

AKAAD

We eat better when Abe's in town.

HAJIRA

This is good, right?

AKAAD

They're done already? Usually we don't get to eat til later.

HAJIRA

He's leaving early tomorrow, so they ate early.

AKAAD

(to Sami) We eat after they're done. Usually it's later. (to Hajira) Where's Isma'il?

HAJIRA

He's gathering more wood, so that their fire will run all night.

AKAAD

He ate?

HAJIRA

With them.

AKAAD

Really? How'd you pull that off?

HAJIRA

He deserves it. He's spending more time with them now that he's taking care of Isaac.
(handing some food to Sami) Here.

(pause)

AKAAD

You don't talk much yet, huh? I got a feeling you're a talker though.

SAMI

I-

AKAAD

He did that thing to your dick right?

SAMI

(nods)

AKAAD

It stops hurting.

SAMI

When?

AKAAD

Give it a few days.

You lucked out actually. He did it just you and him, right?

SAMI

Yeah.

AKAAD

The first time he did it, when he did it to all of us, he made us all get naked outside the house, standing against the wall of the tent in a line. Then he went around the corner and called us one by one to come around. He was over there with a stool, a sheet and a blade. He didn't say what he was going to do, he just did it. Nobody knew what to expect when they went around the corner. It was crazy.

Later that night, he called us all out there again, same positions. We all had our dicks in our hands and were scared out of our minds. Then he took his robe off and did it to himself.

SAMI

Why? What's the bond?

AKAAD

God.

SAMI

Which god?

AKAAD

The god behind the sun and the moon, the god of gods – the one who runs everything.
Abraham talks to him.

SAMI

(to Hajira) Did he cut you too?

HAJIRA

No, I don't have one of those.

AKAAD

He cut the whole thing off! (laughs)

HAJIRA

(hits Akaad, then, to Sami) No. I *never* had one of those. Akaad is an idiot.

AKAAD

(to Sami) If I could tell you one thing, it's this, friend; don't mess with Hajira. She'll mess you up.

(smiles all around.)

5. – How to Kill a Goat, part one: Catch it

(Isaac just misses a goat he's chasing.)

ISMA'IL

(laughing) One day you'll catch one.

ISAAC

I will. Then you'll teach me how to kill it, right? Like you said?

ISMA'IL

That's right. That's a deal.

ISAAC

Are there different ways to do it?

ISMA'IL

To kill it? Sure. You can kill things all kinds of ways.

ISAAC

You can die from lack of water.

ISMA'IL

Right, that's right, but it would ruin the taste of your meat. The body releases poisons.

ISAAC

You could die from getting lost.

ISMA'IL

That's not exactly right. You can still live if you're lost but it gets much more difficult. It's hard to find water and to find things to eat. How else?

ISAAC

You're teeth could rot and fall out and then you couldn't eat any food, so you'd slowly get weaker and weaker and weaker and weaker until you died. Only God could save you. Maybe Dad.

ISMA'IL

Wow. I suppose that's correct.
Though, you can never eat the goat you kill until you learn how to catch it.

(enter Akaad and Sami)

AKAAD

Hello Gentlemen.

ISMA'IL

Akaad. How are you?

AKAAD

I'm fine.

ISMA'IL

Who's this?

AKAAD

This is Samir.

ISMA'IL

Hello.

SAMIR

Hello.

ISAAC

Are you a slave?

SAMIR

Yes.

ISAAC

Come here.

ISMA'IL

Isaac, please. It is polite to call them by name. This is Samir.

SAMI

Sami, I prefer.

ISMA'IL

Okay, Isaac?

ISAAC

Bend over. (Sami does. Isaac inspects his hair.)

ISMA'IL

Where are you from?

SAMIR

I'm from Ndovu.

ISMA'IL

Is that in Egypt?

SAMIR

It is now.

AKAAD

(to Isma'il) He's funny, right?

ISAAC

Let me see your hands.

ISMA'IL

You'll have to excuse Isaac. He's fascinated by Egyptians.

SAMI

I'm not Egyptian.

ISMA'IL

Right.

ISMA'IL

It's okay. Kids are curious, it's in their nature.

AKAAD

Abraham bought him because he's a blacksmith. He can build tools and things with metal.

ISMA'IL

I see. That's good. My knife has gone dull and I've promised Isaac that I would teach him how to kill a goat if he can ever catch one.

ISAAC

You're arms are burned.

SAMI

That's from blacksmithing. It's from melted metal.

(Isaac slaps Sami in the face. All, but Isaac, look to Isma'il for direction.)

ISMA'IL

(with anger) Isaac. NO. You can't do that.

(then, more composed) Excuse me. Please stop this, I mean.

ISAAC

(to Sami) I'm free. I'm the only one here.

ISMA'IL

(beat)

How'd you learn to be a blacksmith?

SAMI

It's in my family. My dad.

ISMA'IL

Well, I hope you like it here. We could use a good blacksmith. Our tools are dull. Do you have whatever you need for the work?

SAMI

Just need something to bang with, something to bang against and something to bang.

AKAAD

This guy is great.

SAMI

And a fire.

ISMA'IL

You've seen the fire then, yes?

SAMI

Yes.

ISMA'IL

You can use that and set something up near there if that's what you need.

AKAAD
I can show him.

SAMI
Thank you.

ISMA'IL
(to Isaac) You want to go find a goat? See if you can hold onto it this time?

ISAAC
(after a brief pause) Yeah

ISMA'IL
Let's go.

(all exchange nods)

ISMA'IL
(to Sami)
You'll do well to have a lot done by the time Abraham returns. He hates idleness.

6. – Abraham Rides Off

(Abraham, preparing his camel, or loading his things, addresses the audience. Maybe Hajira appears in a separate space washing clothes.)

ABRAHAM
Before we ever made love, Hajira was, well
Hajira was one of the angriest women I'd ever met.
Which is not to say that I'd really met her – of course, I met her in some ways, I guess, I bought her.
In Egypt, I saw her at the marketplace and I thought she looked strong and she had some food for sale and we needed a woman to help around the house, to help with Sarah's things, in the kitchen, sewing, making pots – house work. So, I bought Hajira to help Sarah with her things. Sarah and I were, well,
we were having difficulty making a child – which is really unacceptable. I have known for all my life that I am to have a child. Some people, I think, wonder if they should have a child, wonder what the desire is, where it comes from, question if they want the responsibility – not just literally, in the way that you have to feed and shelter a child, but also cosmically – how you take on the responsibility of producing the next generation, of creating unborn kingdoms, of having lineage throughout all time – the responsibility of not dying.
My father and I disagreed on many things. We traveled together. A lot. I always felt he was more my travel companion than my father. He taught me many things, for which I am grateful, but he did not teach me the things for which I am the most grateful.
My father

ABRAHAM (cont'd)

believed in the temporary. He believed in awe, in the spectacle, in showmanship, in things that are well crafted. I chose the eternal over the temporary. I chose not to believe in the moon or in the sun, which rise and fall, but instead to believe in the force behind them, to believe in the force, the love that is pulling the strings that hold the moon. And this eternal power gazed into me and I gazed into it and it made me a promise. It said, "I will make you into a great nation." It said, "Kingdoms will come from your seed." This confirmed my beliefs, confirmed that righteousness lives in the eternal, not in that which rises and falls. And so the difficulty in producing a child with Sarah, lead me not to question the eternal, not to question my faith – which is eternal – but instead to question my bond with Sarah. She was my father's choice for me. And I agreed. She is a beautiful woman, and kind in more ways than one. She was a good choice, my father is not to be blamed. I have benefited greatly from our bond and she is an attentive woman. But, is she eternal? Or is she like my father? She is one of his daughters after all.

She asked me one night, if I would like to spend the night in Hajira's tent. I paused. And before I responded, she told me that there was no bed for me in my tent. She said that.

And I had
noticed

Hajira's charms. I'd seen her wash clothes and the water splash against her robe, making it hold on to her in certain ways. I had noticed. But, she always seemed so angry. One time, just once, after dinner, I saw her in the back yelling at some of the other slaves, deriding them, very angry and I wanted to force myself on her. To take her power away. To show her that she is mine, that a greater power lives in me. That she must respect it. But, it was just a passing thought. I took no action.

As I went to her tent that night, I remember walking over there a little afraid actually. Scared, or grateful?, in the face of temptation, the temptation to force myself on her, to be commanding and claim her as mine. But, I did none of this. I entered her tent – she has her own tent, she is our only female slave – she was sleeping. She was startled at my presence and I saw that her anger isn't there when she sleeps. I saw her lower that mask when she woke, but for an instant, it wasn't there. I didn't know what to say, so I said nothing. I disrobed and got into her bed. She lay there, probably confused, so I told her to wash my feet. I can't sleep without it and it is only sanitary. She went to get some water and she came back and washed my feet. We didn't speak. When she was done, she looked at me with some kind of question, as if she didn't know what to do. I told her that it was okay and that she was to sleep in her bed the same as any other night.

But, when she came to bed, I was overwhelmed by her musk. The smell in her tent was neither the smell of my tent, nor that of the slaves, but something unique and different – the smell of Hajira, I suppose – an independent smell that hadn't mixed with others'. It was strong. It was Egyptian, but unique. I put my nose to her throat, to smell, and her soft skin seemed to welcome me. I don't know if she wanted it or if she took it as a command, but she went straight for my parts and began touching me. And, I was aroused. She is very skilled. I began touching her, which only seemed to feed the flame

ABRAHAM (cont'd)

and it felt good – I was surprised. We seemed a perfect match. Her strength was palpable and I thought that maybe what I had taken as anger was truly pride or..

or, I don't know

She has an eternal spirit. And it is tangible.

It was incredible to be inside her. I still think about it. I was glad that I did not force myself on her. It seemed to get her excited that I left room, left room for us to go somewhere without my command, some place new. Afterwards, I was surprised – she seemed so young, like a child. She held onto me, she seemed to burrow inside me, to hide in my chest, to seek shelter in my arms. We would stay up for hours afterwards talking and making jokes.

Whatever I had done, I had done right. She belonged to me, not just the body, but the insides as well.

7. seduction number one

(Hajira is in the kitchen, chopping and salting some pig meat. It's bloody. Sami is standing out of sight watching her. He thinks she doesn't see him.)

HAJIRA

I look better from up close. Come in.

SAMI

I was just watching you work.

HAJIRA

Yes, this is not the first time I've seen you hiding.

SAMI

I thought maybe I could give you this new hatchet for you're work.

HAJIRA

That's for me?

SAMI

If it's useful.

HAJIRA

You made that for me?

SAMI

Yes.

HAJIRA

Give it to me.

(He does.)

HAJIRA

For chopping the meat.

SAMI

Right.

(She chops off a piece)

HAJIRA

This is good. You should make something that salts it too.

SAMI

I wish I could.

HAJIRA

You like watching me, huh?

SAMI

[[yes]]

HAJIRA

Everyone around here looks at me like that you know. I'm the only woman for miles. Except for Sarah, but she's too old to get those looks.

(pause)

You made the hatchet though huh?

You've got a skill, so you're better than everyone else. Is that what you think?

SAMI

[[maybe]]

HAJIRA

Say something. Tell me why.

SAMI

Why what?

HAJIRA

Why you hide, looking at me like that and why you want me to look back at you with the same eyes.

SAMI

Because I want you.

HAJIRA

Yes, but you hide behind things.

(pause)

You know how to salt the meat?

SAMI

(nods no)

HAJIRA

Come here and I'll show you. You can help me finish.

SAMI

Okay.

HAJIRA

First you chop off a piece. (she does) You put it over here on top of the salt. Put the big pieces of salt all over it. Put on more than you think you need. Then, when it's covered like this you pound the salt in with the mallet. (She takes a wooden mallet and starts pounding.) You see?

SAMI

Yeah.

HAJIRA

But?

SAMI

But, why? It will taste terrible, right?

HAJIRA

It's to preserve them.

SAMI

Why preserve them? There are plenty of goats, plenty of pigs and sheep.

HAJIRA

You haven't been on one of Abraham's trips yet.

SAMI

No

HAJIRA

He leaves for many days. He has to take food with him. This way it will travel.

SAMI

He's gone now.

HAJIRA

It takes days to salt all the meat, and it lasts for months afterwards. He'll come back and then leave again. This way the meat will be ready.

SAMI

You like the meat?

HAJIRA

It has to sit longer with the salt, this isn't ready yet.

SAMI

But, when it's done you like it?

HAJIRA

Yeah.

SAMI

And the hatchet will help you right?

HAJIRA

Yes.

SAMI

If I give you more presents, you'll come to love me.

HAJIRA

Is that how it works?

SAMI

That's how it will work with us.

HAJIRA

It's childish to think that you can command someone's heart.

SAMI

But, I can see that you want me to.

HAJIRA

How's that?

SAMI

Because you told me to come in.

HAJIRA

I don't like being watched. Especially when the watcher thinks they are being clever.

SAMI
[[you like me though]]

HAJIRA
There is something charming about your youth.

SAMI
You like me because I'm quiet. If I remind myself not to speak, you'll be charmed.

HAJIRA
I like you because you think you're clever, but I can see right through you.

SAMI
[[oh, yeah? How about you let me kiss you.]]

HAJIRA
Reminding yourself not to speak?

SAMI
[[yup]]

HAJIRA
Come and kiss me then if you're so charming.
(a good kiss. A pause.)
So, that was nice, eh?

SAMI
Yes, very good.

HAJIRA
Now you have expectations, right?

SAMI
I plan to give you more things so that you'll come to love me.

HAJIRA
I don't think we're going to be allowed to love each other.

SAMI
Why not?

HAJIRA
I'm promised to someone else.

SAMI
[[who?]]

HAJIRA

I'm promised to Abraham.

SAMI

Abraham has Sarah.

HAJIRA

Abraham has who he wants.

(Pause. He kisses her.)

We'll have to stop when he returns.

SAMI

Might as well enjoy it now.

(they kiss more and more.)