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**The Wanderer**

Novelized by William A. Page from Maurice V. Samuels' Great Biblical Drama of the Prodigal Son, presented at the Manhattan Opera House, New York.

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**CHAPTER VI.**

"In the house of Nadina." FOR days and nights Jether lived in the house of Nadina and counted neither cost nor time. Days of heavy and unsatisfying sleep were followed by nights of drinking and carousing, of dicing with the men of the gay throng who frequented the house of Nadina and of wonderful hours spent in the company of Tisha, who for his sake abandoned all others and listened not when they begged her to drink a goblet of wine with them.

And it was indeed a strange company who frequented the house of Nadina. The favorite of the visitors was Put, the son of the wealthy Absalom, a handsome and athletic young man with long, curly locks of hair that was almost black. Not only for his money, but for his good looks, was Put popular with the two score or more of fashionable ladies who found the house and garden of Nadina a comfortable resting place. Hadramut, an Arab horse dealer, who gambled heavily with Put at the dice table; Parsodias, a Mede, who tarried in Jerusalem on a secret mission, and Madia, the Egyptian, were other friends who spent much time in the home of Nadina.

One day Barzil, the tax collector for King Solomon, brought with him Haggal, a stern and solemn visaged Judean, who gazed disapprovingly at the statue of Ishtar, goddess of love, in the shrine in the garden. Haggal took Jether by the arm and sought to reason with him.

"Thou, too, art a son of Judea," said Haggal kindly. "Dost know that all of these people are idolaters, worshippers of the gods of Babylon, and that Nadina herself and her daughter Tisha are all Babylonians?"

But Jether, overcome by the fumes of wine, laughed. "What matter?" he cried. "What if they do worship these things of stone and wood? Does that make Tisha less fairer? I care not. I myself am a Judean."

Haggal shook his head sorrowfully and went his way. And there, too, came Sadyk, the jeweler, the crafty old man, with his wares always in the case before him hanging from his shoulders. Before and after each visit he spoke quietly and secretly with Nadina, and after a purchase by one of the men of a bauble or a golden bracelet for one of the young women Sadyk would give Nadina several coins for herself.

As for Jether, though his store of gold in the teakwood box was fast diminishing and he now hesitated to count the remaining shekels when placing coins in his purse, he reigned supreme in the household. For more days and nights than he could easily reckon he had lived there and cared naught for the future in spite of the warning of Toia that some day his store of gold would be exhausted and he should make plans to replenish his supply by sending word to his father in Hebron.

Thus it happened that one day as late in the afternoon Jether lay sleeping heavily upon a divan in the garden, with Nadina's handmaiden Borsippa lazily fanning him with a great ostrich feather fan, Ahab, the servant of the wealthy Put, entered through the archway. Observing that Jether still slept, he whispered to Borsippa that he had a message for the Judean from his master.

"Nay, I may not waken him," explained Borsippa. "I do but keep the flies and bees away while he sleeps, for my mistress, Tisha, became weary of him in his drunken sleep and bade me take her place. He sleepeth deep, as men do who revel through the night."

Ahab pointed to the purse which hung from Jether's girdle. "And have spent all?" he inquired. Borsippa frowned and shook her head. "Had he not gold in plenty, thinkest thou, fool, that he could still lord it in Nadina's house?" she demanded.

"Then he must trust thee well," retorted the crafty Ahab, drawing nearer to the sleeping Jether. "My own master never sleeps when gold is beneath my nose."

Borsippa threatened him with the fan. "Ere he fall into slumber he bade my mistress sit by him," she said. "Now, if any gold is missing I will be blamed."

Ahab stooped over the boy and listened to his heavy breathing. "If he be heavy with sleep what matters it? And if he is rich were it not well that we should be less poor?" His fingers groped within the purse, and several golden coins sparkled in the light. "Take not so much that he will miss it and blame me," whispered Borsippa. "Yet take enough to be content with half, for I must have my share."

Jether, who awoke angrily. He gazed about him in search of Tisha. She was not there, and he demanded angrily: "Where is thy mistress?" "But this moment gone within, my master," explained the girl. "Ahab, the servant of Put, is here with tidings from thy friends."

"My master bade me say," shortly Ahab, "that he will visit thee shortly, bringing some friends."

"Say that they will be welcome," cried Jether, struggling to his feet. "And do you, Borsippa, go and find thy mistress. I like it not that she does leave me so often."

Ahab bowed again as Borsippa sped away to find the absent Tisha. "My master bade me say further that in the cool of the day, for thy delight and his, he will bring with him a company of dancing maidens, the fairest in all Jerusalem."

Jether tossed him a coin and nodded in approval. "This for thyself," said Jether grandly. "And tell thy master he hath done well."

Ahab turned and departed just as from the house Tisha, in angry mood, approached Jether. The girl was in a fearful temper and stamped her foot.

"What now dost thou demand?" she cried. "I but left to make ready to greet thy friends, for some will surely come."

Jether, unsteadily moving toward her, for the wine was still within him, shook his head.

"I will not have thee greet my friends today," he said petulantly. "I have observed thy ways with them, Tisha."

The girl, who had picked up a peach from a basket of fruit near by and had already taken one bite of the morsel, splashed into the pool. She faced him defiantly. Jether sought to pacify her.

"Nay, be not angry, Tisha. What I say comes from my love of thee."

"What dost thou know of love?" retorted Tisha angrily. "Thou with thy maddened thirst to drink my lips. Dost never think I may grow weary of such sport?"

Jether tapped his girdle significantly, and the gold coins jingled. "Thy mother bade thee be my handmaid," he said authoritatively.

"And have I not obeyed?" inquired Tisha tersely. "For weeks now thou hast lived in my mother's house and claimed me ever. Tota when he brought thee to us told us how rich thou wert. Yet but for his word we might not know thee from a beggar."

"I have given freely," cried Jether, full of anger. "At my father's house we have all fed for a year for much less than I have spent already."

The girl flounced herself before him and laughed mockingly. "Why then didst thou not stay in thy father's house?" she sneered, with a scornful laugh. "O thou vain Judean, dost think we love thee for thyself alone? Thou comest here to occupy the richest room in my mother's mansion, and thou dost claim me as thy handmaiden, yet richer suitors by far

head in approval, as he beheld a possible sale of the necklace he held in his hand.

"I like not Sadyk, who deals in jewels," said Jether shortly. "Another time!"

Nadina laughed contemptuously and turned to her daughter. "It is just as I have told thee, Tisha. He loves thee not."

"I would be loved for myself and not for my gifts," retorted Jether spiritedly. "I would give my gifts for pleasure, not as a price."

Nadina motioned to Sadyk, and the sly, deceitful, cringing old rascal came to Jether and kneeled before him.

"O most noble prince, Sadyk implores thy favor," he whined.

Jether eyed him suspiciously and bade him rise. "What wouldst thou have of Jether?" he asked curtly.

The aged man rose to his feet and held out a necklace for Jether to examine.

"Wilt thou, O prince, as favorite of the gods, be first to gaze upon this necklace? It has been worn by one of the royal house of Egypt. I have refused for it a thousand shekels. But what of that? Should Tisha wear it—Tisha, the fairest offering of Babylon and thine own handmaiden—great would become the fame of Sadyk, who bath other things to sell. Take it for naught to give to her. Between me and thee, great prince, what is 400 shekels?"

gina, and behind her stood Sadyk, the jeweler.

Nadina came toward Jether, smiling, with Sadyk, the jeweler, close behind her. The aged man, bowing obsequiously, stroked his long white beard with one hand, while with the other he carefully guarded the tray of jewels which hung before him.

Jether turned, angry at the interruption, for time had taught him many things regarding Nadina, and he had not been slow to observe the ways of Sadyk on more than one occasion.

"Well, what seekest thou now?" he inquired, while Tisha, a new light in her eyes as she beheld the wonderful jewels of Sadyk, clung close to Jether.

"Ah, Jether, a wonderful necklace I have seen," cried Nadina joyously. "Such a necklace thou shalt give to Tisha, as Sadyk, the jeweler, hath just shown to me. Ever since childhood my love hath yearned for strings of golden beads. Now Sadyk has such an one, which, if given to her by thee, would ever hold thee in her thoughts even when richer and more generous men would win her from thee."

Jether angrily dismissed her with a wave of the hand.

"Nay, it is thy wish, not Tisha's, for thy thought is ever of gold," he declared.

"And is my Tisha worth less than gold?" demanded Nadina insistently. "Look at my child? Where hast thou seen a form like hers? Is a gazelle of equal grace? See how like a tower of precious ivory her neck upholds a head unmatched in beauty from Lebanon to Egypt. Thou must have seen many another maiden on thy travels. Was one like Tisha? Come nearer, daughter."

Tisha, laughing coquettishly, turned and cast a languishing glance toward Jether, then spun on one foot and bowed gracefully.

"To thy nostrils, Jether, does she not waft the fragrance of myrrh and of spikenard? Why, a god would envy thee the possession of such beauty. And hast thou ever seen a daintier foot? Yet though this priceless gem flashes for thee alone, thou dost begrudge her a paltry ornament she hath set her heart upon."

Jether turned abruptly upon the jeweler, who stood bowing and nodding his



**JETHER, THE PRODIGAL.**  
"I would be loved for myself, not for my gifts."



**AHAB, A MESSENGER.**  
"My master bade me say that he will visit thee shortly."

have I scorned and all because my mother bade me wait upon thee. Some day, I tell thee, my mother will go too far, and then her Tisha will rebel."

Jether drew back sharply as he realized the true sentiment behind her remarks.

"When first I came," he said slowly, "didst thou not say thy love was mine and mine alone? Yes, even the more because, unlike thy merchants and thy other suitors, I did not talk forever of gains and losses. Thou didst love to hear the simple tales of old Judea. Did not thy mother say it pleased her well to give me the best room in all her house and thee as handmaid? How have I changed? True, I have lived among the hills and lack some things they have who live in cities. Yet not one of them could love thee as I do," he added, seeking to take her in his arms.

Tisha eluded him. "Of all the friends who each day feast with thee not one would fall to show me greater kindness than thou," she retorted. "Take notice, thou Judean, I swear by our lady Ishtar, and she pointed to the statue, "I swear by our lady Ishtar, if thou wouldst have thy Tisha love thee longer, then must thou show thy love better."

"Tisha, I love but thee!" cried Jether, and would once more have taken her in his arms, but she eluded him. He sought to catch her, but she rounded the edge of the fountain, and when he had finally caught her and held her in his arms, he kissed her. The girl, her passion spent, her anger vented, hung softly in his arms until a voice made them both realize that they had been interrupted. They turned. It was Na-

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And further t ter the said 22n A.D. 1917, the e ced to distrib said deceased an titled thereto, w the claims of w have had notice executors shall persons whose tice not having them prior to s Andrew For Jackson, Execut Dated at Dur of November, 19

**For**  
**OYST**  
**E. A**