

# SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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SON  
OF MAN

A Play

DENNIS POTTER

SAMUEL



FRENCH

LONDON

NEW YORK TORONTO SYDNEY HOLLYWOOD

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## SON OF MAN

*Son of Man* originated as a television play. The television version was first shown as the BBC 1 Wednesday Play on the 16th April, 1969.

The stage version of *Son of Man* was first produced on the 22nd October, 1969, at the Phoenix Theatre, Leicester, with the following cast of characters:

<b>Jesus</b>	Frank Finlay
<b>Peter</b>	David Daker
<b>Andrew</b>	Stanley Lebor
<b>James</b>	Nicolas Chagrin
<b>John</b>	Graham Berown
<b>Pontius Pilate</b>	Joseph O'Connor
<b>Commander</b>	David Henry
<b>Captain</b>	Noel Collins
<b>Centurion</b>	Roy Boyd
<b>Soldiers</b>	Paul Jaybee, Miles Greenwood, Michael Sadler, Noel Collins
<b>Boxers</b>	Paul Jaybee, Roy Boyd
<b>Caiaphas</b>	Ian Mullins
<b>Judas</b>	Stephen MacDonald
<b>First Priest</b>	Douglas Storm
<b>Second Priest</b>	Stephen MacDonald
<b>Zealot</b>	Andrew Neil
<b>First Money-changer</b>	Douglas Storm
<b>Second Money-changer</b>	Roy Boyd
<b>First Heckler</b>	Noel Collins
<b>Second Heckler</b>	Andrew Neil
<b>Leper</b>	Miles Greenwood
<b>Dove Seller</b>	Andrew Jarvis
<b>Brigand</b>	Andrew Neil
<b>Procla</b>	Linda Polan
<b>Ruth</b>	Liane Aukin
<b>Serving Girl</b>	Penelope Nice

The Play directed by Robin Midgley

## ACT I

- SCENE 1 The wilderness
- SCENE 2 A narrow square near the Temple
- SCENE 3 The wilderness
- SCENE 4 A street
- SCENE 5 Pilate's residence
- SCENE 6 On the shore of the Sea of Galilee
- SCENE 7 Outside Jerusalem
- SCENE 8 The hills in Judaea
- SCENE 9 The Temple in Jerusalem
- SCENE 10 Pilate's residence
- SCENE 11 A track into Caesarea
- SCENE 12 The hills of Judah

## ACT II

- SCENE 1 Pilate's residence
- SCENE 2 The Temple in Jerusalem
- SCENE 3 A hillside
- SCENE 4 Pilate's residence
- SCENE 5 The Temple in Jerusalem
- SCENE 6 Pilate's residence
- SCENE 7 The Temple in Jerusalem
- SCENE 8 Gethsemane
- SCENE 9 The Temple in Jerusalem
- SCENE 10 Gethsemane
- SCENE 11 The Temple in Jerusalem
- SCENE 12 Pilate's residence
- SCENE 13 Golgotha

# ACT I

## SCENE 1

*Darkness. Scattered shouts from the auditorium: "He is coming!" "He—is—coming!" "Coming!" Howling wind. The Lights go up to reveal the wilderness. A Light picks out Jesus huddled into himself, high on a rock. The wind shifts up into a desolate whine. We feel that it is cold. The figure moves, but very little. He speaks in a dry-mouthed croak. He has been here forty days*

**Jesus** Is it me? Is it . . . ? Is it time? *Time?*

*Silence. He huddles closer into himself. Then he lifts his head, like one listening*

Time. Time for—I hear you. (*Pause*) I am listening. I am—oh, speak. Speak! Please, my father. Speak to me. Speak to *me-e!* My God. My God! God of Abraham and Mos . . . (*He gabbles*) He is coming. It is time. It is time—time—time—time . . .

*The word, repeated over and over, dies into him. He sinks down into himself, virtually comatose. Silence; then the Light fades*

## SCENE 2

*A narrow square near the Temple in Jerusalem in Roman-occupied Judaea. Day*

*A wild Jewish Agitator, of the Zealot party, is haranguing a sympathetic but rather nervous Crowd of compatriots. As he rants a small troop of Roman Soldiers take up positions on the fringes of the Crowd, virtually surrounding them*

**Agitator** He is coming! He is coming! Have no fear! He will soon be here and in among us.

**Crowd** He is coming!

**Agitator** We are under the yoke. We are contaminated by unclean rulers and bullying heathens. But the God of Abraham and Moses and Joshua has not forsaken his children. The signs are in the heavens. *The Messiah is coming!*

*The Crowd gives a low moan, half fear, half joy*

**Crowd** He is coming!

**Agitator** Yes! Yes! And the Prophets tell us . . . What do they tell us?

**A Man in the Crowd** Clear a straight path!

**Agitator** Yes! Yes!

**Voices** Prepare a way for the Lord!

**Agitator** Yes! Yes!

*The Crowd starts a moaning, rhythmic chant*

**Crowd** He—is—com-ing . . . He—is—com-ing . . .

*They press closer in to each other, and the Agitator whirls into a screaming fury of threats and oratory*

**Agitator** The Romans have brought their blasphemous standards into the Holy City—banners of war which glory the divinity of their distant and unclean Emperor. It is a sign! God will come down upon them! The Kingdom of Heaven is upon us. The vengeance of our God is nigh!

*The Crowd make a soft moaning noise and press closer into each other*

**Crowd** Save us!

**Agitator** (*more frenziedly*) The Roman blasphemies are an insult to God and to the people of God.

**Crowd** Deliver us!

**Agitator** The Sadducees of the Temple and Caiaphas the High Priest are hand in glove with the blasphemers and idolators! Until Pontius Pilate the Roman soldiers always covered their standards when in the Holy City. But not now. Not now! They spit on us! They spit on our God! He sees. He sees! He will *not be* merciful . . .!

**Crowd** Save us!

**Agitator** Are we to swallow this dirt, like Caiaphas swallows this dirt? Are we to grovel before Pontius Pilate rather than kneel before the Lord our God? If we submit to the idolator what shall we do when the day of reckoning comes? For the day of reckoning *is* coming—is *now* upon us—now . . .!

**Crowd** He is com-ing. He is com-ing.

*The Roman Soldiers start to push their way into the crowd, very roughly*

**Agitator** The sword will not pierce him. Flames will not burn him. Hypocrites and liars and belly-crawling traitors will not touch him, not one hair of his head . . .

**Crowd** He is com-ing!

*The Soldiers start pushing the people away, hitting and kicking them brutally*

**Agitator** The idolators will be overthrown! The day of reckoning is coming! The Messiah will come down to his suffering people . . .

*Screams as the Romans slash into the crowd with their short swords*

**Agitator** (*screaming*) Clear a path for him, the King of the Jews! He is coming! He is com . . .!

*The Captain of the troop claps his mailed hand over the Agitator's mouth. The Crowd shout in fear*

**Crowd** Leave him alone—leave him . . .

*Two Roman Soldiers lift him kicking and struggling to carry him away. They are grinning*

**First Soldier** Wiry little devil, 'ent he?

**Crowd** Leave him alone—leave him alone . . .

**Captain** (*shouting*) Go home! Go home you stupid people or else you will be put to the sword! Get off the streets!

*As he speaks, the Captain draws his long sword. The Crowd subside into a sullen, barely held down silence. The Agitator is dragged roughly away through the crowd, one Soldier holding him by the hair*

**Crowd** (*murmuring*) Deliver us!

*The Agitator, kicking and struggling all the while, gains a momentary release. He screams out in defiance*

**Agitator** He is coming! The Messiah is coming!

*Harassed by the Crowd, and flustered, the Captain plunges his sword into the Agitator's stomach. The Crowd gives a moan of pity and terror*

**Captain** I told you! I told you!

*On his knees, and gurgling blood, the Agitator lifts up his hands to God*

**Agitator** The one who is coming is mightier than I am. Clear a path for him. Clear . . .

*One of the Soldiers has kicked him viciously*

Ach!

**Soldier** He'll end up where you're going, old friend!

**Crowd** (*hissing*) He—is—coming. He—is—coming . . . The Messiah . . . The Messiah!

### SCENE 3

*The wilderness. As before*

*Jesus stirs, trying to get on to his knees*

**Jesus** Is it—TIME! Is it—me? Me? (*He half pulls himself up. He begins to babble, almost demented by hunger, thirst and his sense of divinity*) Me? Me? Time has come. Me? It is—It is me, it is me, it is me, it is me . . . (*He stops. He stands, swaying. Silence. Then he speaks, more slowly and clearly*) He went up into the wilderness. He went up—I went up and spoke to . . . Make straight the way. Clear a path. The Kingdom of Heaven is upon—ME? (*Pause. Then he screams with the agony of the thought*) ME!?! It—is—me-e-e!

*Silence. He looks about him, as though for the first time*

Bread—oh, bread—br . . . (*He stops, pierced by a thought—the first challenge*) If it is me . . . (*He picks up a stone, almost falling as he does so, being so weak*) Bread—oh, to eat some bread . . . (*He caresses the stone. He puts it up to his cheek*) He who is to come and fulfil the prophecies can surely turn stone into—into . . . (*He bites on the stone. But, evading the challenge, he hurls it away in almost the same gesture*) Ach! The Devil speaks! *I shall not listen!*

*Pause*

I tasted—bread—bread?

*Pause*

It is me. It is. They are waiting and I must go to them . . . (*He stumbles away, too weak to walk properly*) I must go to them. The Son of—the son of—(*he falls*)—a—carpenter?

*A shrill, harsh, almost demented laugh as the Light fades on Jesus and he begins to crawl*

#### SCENE 4

*A street. A Leper slowly passes, dragging himself along on a stick. His face and arms a scabby mess. His call is mechanical, matter-of-fact, mere routine*

**Leper** Unclean!—Unclean—Unclean—Unclean . . . ! (*He stoops and picks up a scrap of something, pushing it hard into his mouth. He carries on the automatic cry, his mouth full*) Unclean. Unclean.

#### SCENE 5

*Pontius Pilate's residence at Caesarea, in Judaea*

*Pilate, the Roman Prefect, is addressing his senior military commanders. There is no doubt about his dominance, or his intellectual authority*

**Pilate** I do not expect military commanders necessarily to accept the proposition that all Empires, past, present and yet to come, are based upon nothing more substantial than bluff. Mere bluff.

*The senior Commander makes a tiny gesture, almost concealed, of dissent*

Speak.

**Commander** Pardon me, my Lord . . .

**Pilate** You may speak.

**Commander** I was only going to suggest, with respect, my Lord, that—well, that the soldiers . . .

**Pilate** (*raising his hand*) The soldiers lend *plausibility* to the bluff. Of course they do.

**Commander** Yes, my Lord.

**Pilate** But when the battles are won and the territory is—pacified, then the civil power—here in this place expressed in the authority of myself, the Prefect of Judaea—has the far more difficult and perhaps unrewarding task of making citizens instead of corpses.

*They laugh*

That is not meant to be a witticism.

*Silence*

And the fact that you, the senior and therefore *presumably* the most intelligent officers should have considered my remark amusing only serves to emphasize what I have been saying.

*Pause*

My orders have been and *are* quite explicit. They have not been obeyed in spirit, even though perhaps in letter. The soldiers are not to harass the people in their religious observances. They are not to approach the Temple in Jerusalem. They are not to exercise on the Jewish sabbath day.

*A Servant enters*

There is to be less deliberate provocation and less . . .

**Servant** My Lord!

**Pilate** I am *speaking!*

**Servant** My Lord—but it is the High Priest . . .

*Pause*

**Pilate** (*to the Officers*) *Dismiss!* Oh—Commander—I would like you to stay.

*The Officers leave*

**Commander** Sir.

**Pilate** Perhaps it will help you to see.

**Commander** Sir?

**Pilate** To see the point where the lance cannot penetrate. (*To the Servant*) Announce the High Priest.

*The Servant bows out*

*Pilate seats himself*

All the soldiers on earth will not destroy what this Caiaphas represents. Stay standing. And stay *silent*.

*The Servant enters*

*The Commander tightens his face in disapproval as Caiaphas is announced*

**Servant** Caiaphas, High Priest in Jerusalem, my Lord.

*Caiaphas enters. The Servant leaves*

*Pilate stands: Caiaphas stands still. They exchange glances for a moment*

**Caiaphas** I have come, Prefect, to request an audience of the civil power.

**Pilate** The audience is granted. We are pleased to see you here in Caesarea, Caiaphas.

*Caiaphas gives a tiny bow, little more than a nod, of acknowledgement. Pilate sits. Only when Pilate is seated does Caiaphas begin to speak*

**Caiaphas** Pontius Pilate, my people are in distress.

*Pilate looks at him, steadily*

**Pilate** I am listening.

**Caiaphas** Your soldiers have brought their standards into Jerusalem.

**Pilate** Yes?

**Caiaphas** Standards which have idolatrous emblems . . .

**Pilate** Idolatrous?

*Slight pause*

**Caiaphas** To us. Yes.

**Pilate** I do not understand.

**Caiaphas** (*angrily*) The Emperor is *not* divine.

**Pilate** Are you denying his authority over this land and this people?  
(*Silence*) *Are you?*

**Caiaphas** No.

**Pilate** Well then . . .

**Caiaphas** (*quickly*) But we deny his divinity and we will not deny the claims of God . . .

**Pilate** *Your* God, Caiaphas.

**Caiaphas** God.

**Pilate** But Caiaphas, listen to me. The standards of the Roman soldiers have been carried to every corner of this earth. We are proud of them. They are our history, our blood, our bravery. And our mission.

**Caiaphas** I understand that . . .

**Pilate** Are you sure that you do? You prefer the claim of a God you cannot see and will not even name to the fact of conquest or the flesh and blood of the men who bear the standards.

**Caiaphas** Jerusalem is a Holy City.

**Pilate** We are not denying it. The Jews have been granted concession enough. And yet still the land is full of agitators and terrorists.

**Caiaphas** There is tension in the air. The people are waiting.

**Pilate** I know. I know. They await a new leader.

**Caiaphas** Not in any way that you might understand, Pontius. It is not rebellion or insurrection that . . .

**Pilate** Five terrorists were executed today. All of them died with the threat on their lips that there was one to follow who was greater than they. *Who* are they waiting for? What treason is being hatched? And is the Temple a— a centre for rebellion? We have not entered it or

# WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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