

# ESCLAVE

a dreamplay by Michael  
modelled on  
“The Bacchae”  
of Euripides

## Cast

|                   |                              |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Georgian Merchant | young master of the<br>house |
| Lacetta Merchant  | his wife                     |
| Esclave           | Lacetta's brother            |
| Heldis Jones      | their neighbour              |
| The Bouncer       | bodyguard for<br>Heldis      |
| Tearees           | housekeeper and<br>nanny     |

set in the entrance hall  
of Georgian's grand house  
with several doors leading off  
during the 1980s

Esclave:

I call myself: Esclave.

I am in England

visiting my sister, Lacetta.

She lives

in this house with her husband,

Georgian Merchant.

They have a serious problem

with their neighbour: Heldis Jones.

Heldis wants to unite their two

landed estates under his control.

God will hang Heldis upside down.

Tearees: Lacetta? Are you in there?

Lacetta: Dearest Tearees, I heard you as I  
was sleeping.

Let's go to the children

Tearees: They're dressed and ready to play  
with their mother.

Lacetta: The happiness they bring destroys  
our sad problems.

Tearees: I am old and can see how God  
shines through them.

Infants and aged play together,  
each teaching the other.

Lacetta: Hah, Heldis is attacking.

(They slip back into the room, not closing the  
door as Heldis bursts in through the main doors.)

Heldis: I've come for what I want.

Georgian Merchant will obey me,  
or I'll get rid of him.

My men say that brother-in-law  
of his is here.

Esclave's the name,

and soon it'll be his condition.

Effete dancing parasite.

He and God contribute nothing.

I'll clear them both

out of this place.

Well, old Tearees here,

and my ex-fiancee: Lacetta;

you should have

married me at the beginning.

The two of you clinging

to the outmoded faiths.

This is the modern world.

Intellect. Mind. Genius rule.

Not mumbling pleadings to things  
you can't even see.

Wasting the infancy of  
your children with it too, I bet;  
after all that pain in birthing them.

Tearees:      Clever fool, aren't you?  
  
Never knew how to respect others'  
privacy, did you?  
  
Always denying. Negating.  
  
It's easy to dupe  
those men of yours  
to limit their belief.  
  
But that limit is closing

in on you now.

You're being suffocated.

The loss of air is turning  
your brain and causing you  
to act with folly.

Look at your ridiculous clothes.

A mother's love never  
betrays a son, Heldis Jones,  
but if your mother were alive  
she would be very tempted.

God means caring respect.

Chase the sunshine if you must,  
but for you there are only clouds.

Lacetta: Heldis, listen to Tearees.

Believe us.

Heldis: Get away.

Go to your children.

I'll catch this fool Esclave,

and lock him up,

whilst I deal

with Georgian.

(Heldis leaves.)

Tearees: He's gone mad.

His name represents

where his mind torments him.

Come, the children are waiting.

(They leave.)

(The Bouncer enters with Esclave;

they are followed by Heldis.)

The Bouncer:

Boss, he gave me no trouble.

He's a harmless mystery to me

who maybe has no choice

over what he is.

It's up to you.

Heldis:       Keep searching for Georgian.

(the Bouncer departs)

Heldis speaks

to Esclave:   Where were you born?

Esclave:     The Northern valleys  
                  with their empty mills.

Heldis:       And what are you doing here?

Esclave:     Living the Christian life

Heldis: How did you learn of Christ?

Esclave: Amongst wooden pews,  
in a stone church  
others taught me His story,  
ceremonies and symbols,  
before I even noticed my  
own father,  
departed but remembered.

Heldis: What are these symbols?

Esclave: You have to seek them for yourself.

Heldis: What is His purpose?

Esclave: You can't know.

Heldis: What do people get from  
bothering with Christ?

Esclave: They know the answer to that.

Heldis: You evade.

Esclave: Of course.  
What are you going  
to do with me?

Heldis: Lock you in the cellar.

Esclave: I'll walk out freely.

Heldis: Hei!

(he calls to the Bouncer who appears,  
and all three go off to the cellar)

(appearing at the main doors)

Esclave: It was easy.

So dark in the cellar.

I had Heldis bumping  
into everything.

At one point he started  
to bind the Bouncer's hands.

I sat by the boarded window,  
and slipped through it  
when they collapsed  
amongst the boxes  
of fur coats and novels.

(Heldis rushes in)

Heldis:     You fool.

Esclave:     Quieten down.

Behave.

Heldis:     How did you get away?

Esclave:     I said I would.

Heldis:     But how?

Esclave:     God helps those who help God.

Heldis:     Know-all double-talk.

Esclave:     Everybody knows different bits.

(The Bouncer enters)

Esclave: But someone's come  
to tell you something.

The Bouncer:

Boss, I've found Georgian.

Heldis: Well?

The Bouncer:

I put a ladder on  
the annex at the back,  
and climbed up to look

through a tiny window  
at the very top of the house.

Heldis: I was about to order searches  
on the upper floors.

The Bouncer:

I saw a small attic room  
with a huge double bed.  
Old food and beer cans  
thrown aside everywhere.  
Books scattered about.  
Discs and musicassettes.  
Colour television switched on;

picture, no sound.

Giant mirrors on the walls

And there, on the bed,

lies the master of this house.

Merchant napping.

I couldn't believe it, boss,

with a look of peace on his face.

He looks contented, like I didn't

think possible.

So calm.

We can't disturb him.

Heldis:       Decadence of the desperate:

it'll destroy us too.

Make a stand with the men

at the back of the house.

Don't let him escape.

(The Bouncer leaves)

Esclave: My last offer, Heldis:

accept me,

accept God.

HELDIS: Refused.

Esclave: You'll destroy life?

Heldis: If necessary.

Esclave: Maybe not.

Heldis: How not?

Esclave: Would you like to speak  
to Georgian now?  
Would you like to get  
him to sign an agreement,  
whilst he is resting?

Heldis: Yes.  
Might work.

I'd like to try that.

Esclave: How will you find  
where he is?

Heldis: I'd forgotten,  
I don't know where he is.

Esclave: I know the place.

Heldis: Let's go then.

Esclave: He's not going to believe  
you in those clothes.

Calm down your appearance.

Heldis:      What with?

Esclave:     In the kitchen is my suitcase.  
                  Put on the suit that's inside it.

Heldis:      Good idea.  
                  Much better.  
                  Won't be a tick.

(Heldis leaves)

Esclave:     See how he falls.

(Esclave leaves  
and soon returns with Heldis)

Esclave:     Come along Heldis.  
                  (Guided by God are  
                  they who enjoy  
                  the here and now.  
                  I'll lead him by the shirt and tie.)

Heldis:     I feel clearer in my purpose.  
                  Your eyes...they glow

Esclave:     God is on your side  
                  and causes you

to feel well.

Heldis: Is this handkerchief all right?

Esclave: Never seen it better placed.

Heldis: Do I have the right posture?

Esclave: A little stiff,  
but you'll have to stoop  
to get into that room anyway.

Heldis: Does one leave this button undone?

Esclave: Only when in doubt.

Heldis: You'll lead the way?

Esclave: Your servant.

Heldis: I'll climb the heights of the house.

I feel giddy.

Esclave: That's your blood.

Heldis: And I'm trembling.

Esclave: That's your flesh.

Heldis: Will I be alright?

Esclave: Safe as houses.

Heldis: I'll unite us.

Esclave: You'll be united.

Heldis: Fulfillment at last.

Esclave: Dear Poor Heldis.

I would like to be  
beyond thinking of you  
in those terms.

But I'm not...

thank goodness.

I'll help you.

(Esclave and Heldis go upstairs)

(The Bouncer enters)

The Bouncer:

The Boss, who had  
the noblest concept,  
is dead.

What'll I do?

Through that tiny window  
I watched them  
enter the room  
without rousing Merchant.  
Esclave first.  
Then Heldis,  
who pushed the dancer  
into a corner,  
pulled out a knife  
and fell on Georgian.

But Esclave woke  
Georgian with a cry,  
and Georgian

caught the knife,  
and plunged it into  
Heldis' throat.

Heldis uttered the word  
“Mercy”,

but Georgian seemed  
impassioned ...

a beastly  
fury came from him,  
until he collapsed  
in Heldis' blood.

I'll take the body  
of Heldis home.

(The Bouncer leaves)

(Georgian appears at the top of the staircase  
and descends as he speaks)

Georgian: It's settled.

I couldn't have stood it  
much longer.

The cruel, boring, waiting.

The usurping atheist imposer  
of will has gone for ever.

And it was

I who killed him.

I, Georgian Merchant.

How good to breathe the air without  
disturbance.

Lacetta will be so proud  
of me.

Our children will learn of me  
as a hero,  
and grow up to be like me.

My sons, too, victors.

(Lacetta appearing at the top of the staircase,  
with the Bouncer carrying Heldis)

Lacetta: Georgian.

You're down there.

Georgian: Ha. Lacetta.

Yes, and you're with the  
vanquished.

No more from him.

Lacetta: Quiet, you don't realise  
we're beaten.

Georgian: Silly woman.

That's Jones.

Heldis Jones there.

His head below his feet,  
his hands below his head.

Ended.

Lacetta:     What I feel for you,  
                  love or what you  
                  call it,  
                  forces me to show you  
                  what you don't see.

Georgian:    What are you saying?

Lacetta:     Beware your exultation.

Georgian:    Oh, you think  
                  I'm a little carried away?

Lacetta:     Aren't you aware of

something having  
gone?

Georgian: Yes, a fool.

Lacetta: Look at him.

Georgian: He's even wearing  
that ridiculous suit.  
He must have borrowed it;  
it's such a bad fit.

Lacetta: Closer.

Georgian: The blood's a mess.

Lacetta: And as I look through  
that window above  
the doors into the sky,  
the furthest point  
that I can see beats  
a feeling to me....  
a feeling of loss,  
extinction,  
something's missing,  
a drop of life has gone,  
a drop of life

that once believed in God,  
that was a friend,  
that lost faith,  
and ultimately became a foe,  
driven to this...  
to this.....  
I'll have to leave this house.  
I can't stay.  
In your fury  
you lost yourself  
and my respect.

Georgian: He was a friend.

How can I grant him

a decent burial?

I should have

spared his life.

I didn't trust to God.

Now I'm ashamed of my pride.

No worse way can a friendship end.

(The Bouncer leaves with the corpse,

and Esclave appears at the top of the staircase)

Esclave: I think you'll be driven out;

but I believe

you shall return to unity

and perpetual peace;  
a peace of your choice.

(Esclave leaves the hallway to get his suitcase  
and returns)

Lacetta: You won't stay with us?

Esclave: No thank you.

Goodbye for now.

Lacetta: Bye, and take care.

Georgian: Goodbye...and,

Thank you.

(Esclave smiles at Georgian's remark  
and leaves through the main doors)

Lacetta: It's going to be hard.

Georgian: Yes, but we'll manage.

Lacetta: Let's get the children ready.

Georgian: And may God lead us safely.

(Lacetta follows Georgian up the stairs)

Georgian: With such twists,  
God strengthens  
the way things are.

THE END.

written

1981

