



Maud Hart and Delos Wheeler  
Lovelace Family Papers.

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Dear Nannine;

Here you are, and good luck go with us all.

This has been an unexpected adventure. The result is a book I never ~~expected~~ <sup>intended</sup> to write. The difference, of course, is the different Mary. ~~I had always intended to present her in this one, as in Journey, as a thoroughly earthly, nothing more than mortal mother of a ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ son. The trick which Mrs. Lubell has persuaded me to adopt makes Mary mystical, also. Well, in a manner of speaking, she was by reason of her relation to her son if by nothing else, although in fact I'll never believe this myself. I deny any truth in the dogma that there was a Divine purpose in the Assumption. I deny the Assumption and, of course, any antecedent evidence leading~~

A very different Mary from the young, simple dependant mother in Journey. However, I

~~"And he~~

~~"For a fact, Elizabeth had said, Mary stayed serene~~  
through everything.

~~"And how stubborn Joseph had stayed," she had~~

For a fact, Elizabeth had said <sup>wife</sup> in affectionate <sup>pride</sup>boasting, Mary had remained serene through everything. Then she had ~~swolded~~ again, reversing her mood so abruptly that ~~xxxxxx~~ Judith laughed and lost most of her fear.

"The soldings don't mean much at all," Judith had told herself. "She is really as kind as can be. #

#But that Joseph!" Elizabeth had said. "He stayed stubborn. I wanted to <sup>was</sup>change Mary from the stable to my own home, but Joseph said the house of a senior priest, <sup>beseiged by</sup> ~~suburb~~ petitioners, would be too full of hustle and bustle. So I had to track down a little place a quarter of a mile away."

~~They reached they stable as Elizabeth was finished speaking,~~  
~~and Joseph was there and she gave him an indignant look.~~

CHAPTER ONE.

At intervals, while an early sun continued its bold climb, the strapping, copper-haired girl glanced toward the curtain which cut off a corner of the room she was cleaning from top to bottom. No sound came from that quarter. The baby behind the makeshift partition did not rouse to cry and his mother there turned on an invisible pallet only once, so softly that it scarcely rustled.

The copper-haired girl was named Judith and she was a girl only in years. She had been a wife for all of twelve months and her own fifteen-day-old son blinked placidly on a shepskin in the middle of the newly swept dirt floor. She glanced again and, reassured again by silence, soundlessly got open the room's small window to coax in more warmth.

Outdoors, the sun now was pouring such warmth down on the surrounding green hills, green from winter rains, that the night frost had all melted except in a few cold pockets.

"A pity," Judith told the sun, recalling her earlier chilly walk a few hours before, "that you couldn't have been up to warm us when we brought them here."

Her strong voice was a little breathless. That was understandable. She had been on the go since before sun-up, helping the two behind the curtain from their stable under the inn, and

*as the morning advanced* *Collected* *aloud*

*draws*

*4/10*  
*to*  
*the*  
*first*  
*had*  
*been*  
*seen*

*understandably*

*and then*

and then putting to rights this not much better one-room house of field-stones set in mortar.

at ?

unpleasant

Dawn had been a long way off when a gaunt, compelling woman had joggled her from sleep. A woman gaunt, Judith had decided, from the wear and tear of an ingrained determination never to take "No," for an answer when she wanted, "Yes." The woman had said her name was Elizabeth.

poor

"The innkeeper was right," Elizabeth had said in a warm, winning voice, "You are easily big enough. Do come along."

Elizabeth required, she had explained, just such help as big, strong Judith could easily give to move a cousin of hers from the inn's stable. The cousin, she was named Mary, had given birth to a son there two nights before.

"Which Mary?" Judith had asked drowsily. She knew a dozen Marys around Bethlehem. It was one of the commonest names in all Judea. But she hadn't known any of them was bearing.

"Mary of ---" Elizabeth had said, naming a down and then sensibly had added, "north of Sebaste."

Judith had never heard of Elizabeth's Mary, or of Mary's town which she promptly forgot. Just some crossroads village; and since it was north of Sebaste why would she have known it? Few around Jerusalem ever travelled even as far north as Sebaste, although everybody had certainly heard of that. This was because Herod had drafted someone from almost every Bethlehem family to rebuild the city in his unceasing effort to keep in the favor of the Emperor Augustus in Rome.

some confused

that the Sebaste was a village in the north of Jerusalem

o-o-o

It turned out that Mary had a tall husband, sun-blackened

and strong enough for anything.

"But without even sense enough to make sure of a place for Mary in the inn before every room was taken," Elizabeth had said to Judith. She was not, she added, trusting the delicate assignment at hand to the likes of him.

Judith had wanted to point out that her own hands already were full and overflowing with her own work. She had a husband, too, as well as a constantly demanding new baby. But the wife of a young farmhand did not stand out against the wife of a senior priest of Jerusalem's great Temple.

"I am the wife of Zacharias, senior priest of the Division of Abijah," Elizabeth had been so pat with the impressive identification that Judith had been sure it was used often. "Do come along. There'll be a donkey to carry Mary and the walk won't seem a step to a girl like you."

The walk had been considerably more than a mile, but after meeting the mother, Mary, with her baby, and the husband, Joseph, Judith had lost her inclination to point out the bother of the chore imposed by Elizabeth. Even though she had seen, as soon as she came on them, that Joseph was a Galilean, and though all Galileans, because of crude ways but particularly because of their outlandish dialect, were laughed at all over Judea, Judith had been glad that she had been called.

Galileans or not, I'd no more refuse these people than I would my own sister and brother, or mother and father. (If I grow as old as Simeon who spends his days in devotion at the Temple, or as Anna who has lived up there, fasting and praying, since her

not  
1. Mark

not  
1. Mark

this is  
said later  
not  
necessary  
now

*your wife* "But Joseph, don't you want to tell Mary yourself? She *could not* will be so proud." Judith knew how proud she, herself, would have been to hear from her own man that he had been employed by Vedius Rusco Philippicus. Quite apart from the security of a selection guaranteeing work at such good wages would have been the honor of a link, however humble, with an ex-soldier whose legendary exploits rivalled those of the Jews' own Joshua.

*omit making peace* Joseph looked toward the curtains and shook his head. *secretly*

"Let them sleep," he said.

Mary already knew that the Road Commissioner had offered work, and not even details she would be glad to hear were worth disturbing the rewarding picture which, he knew, the curtain concealed.

Mary would be lying on her pallet with the brown brook of her bright hair flowing over gently curving breasts and over her blue dress embroidered in mellow yellow. One hand, almost surely, would be touching the spindle which was usually near, whether at home in Nazareth or away. With it she had spun all the way to Bethlehem. Close by, in the shallow chest drafted into duty as a crib, would be the child, firmly snuggled into his swaddling-cloth and sleeping, in that safe, white cocoon, the solid sleep of infancy.

A craft perfectionist, Joseph nodded approval as he recalled the skill with which Mary had drawn the swaddling cloth free of every wrinkle and had criss-crossed its band from head to toe. Smiling, he nodded again as he turned to the door.

"I came just to see if there was anything any of us could do to help," Esrom said. "But I can see not."

~~Just 2:5~~ ~~also said~~ ~~also~~ ~~same~~ ~~12-17~~  
 Jail  
 14  
 21  
 22  
 24

CHAPTER TWO

Elsewhere in Judea there were puzzles far bigger than  
 a few beggars on a road not likely to yield alms. Puzzles had  
 been sprouting throughout the whole country ever since the strange  
 radiance over Bethlehem -- the star, moon, sun, fire or whatever  
 it had been. More and more, thousands were remembering and  
 puzzling over the promise of the old prophets. Micah, Isaiah,  
 Jeremiah, others too, had made the promise. Each had used  
 different words but the promise had been the same.

~~Behold a king shall reign~~ ~~2:5~~  
 "...he shall reign as king."  
 "...ruler of Israel."  
 "...the Lord whom ye seek shall come  
 to his temple."  
 "...and unto him shall the obedience of  
 the people be."  
 "...and the government shall be upon  
 his shoulder."  
 "And his name shall be called Wonderful  
 Counsellor...Prince of Peace."

Each had promised in a long-gone day of oppression.

Each had kindled the hope of freedom. Could it be that the time of fulfillment was at hand? ~~Why~~ not? What better time than now, when Israel lay under a double oppression, the conquering sword of Rome and the tyrant heel of Herod the Great?

Herod in his palace remembered only "...he shall reign as king", and braced himself against the threat. Well, by guile and treachery he had got rid of more than one pretender to the throne on which he had sat for so long. He knew how to get rid of one more.

*The Palace and most of all*

He was too guileful to involve himself openly in the riddance. These touchy Jews were trouble enough under merely normal afflictions: taxes, labor drafts, land seizures, the quartering of mercenary troops and such. If they ever suspected that their tyrant had struck at prophecy there would be no holding them.

*He resolved to use his chief Eunuch. <sup>The man</sup> He worshipped*

But the thing could be done without involving the palace. This was a chore for a Jew. So Herod had sent for the rich Sadducee, Tibni-ben-Ginath. And Tibni, back in his mansion, had sent for two others who were now on their way.

Throughout all

~~Elsewhere in Judea there was confusion far more  
puzzling than a few beggars on a track not likely to yield alms.~~  
Confusion had been spreading through the whole country ever since  
the strange radiance ... the star, moon, sun, fire or whatever it  
had been ... over Bethlehem. More and more, thousands were  
remembering, and puzzling over, the promises of the prophets. Micah,  
Isaiah, Jeremiah, others, too, had made the promise. Each had used  
his own words but the promise had always been the same.

"Behold, a king shall reign."

" .. ruler of Israel."

" .. the Lord whom ye seek shall come  
to his Temple."

" .. and unto him shall the obedience  
of the people be."

Throughout all Judea confusion, and a fog of danger, had been spreading ever since the strange radiance over Bethlehem -- the star, moon, sun, fire or whatever it had been. Many were afraid of what they could not understand. <sup>Many and</sup> ~~Many~~ many more, thousands, more, were remembering <sup>and puzzled over</sup> the promises of the old prophets, and puzzling over it. ~~them~~. Micah, Isaiah, <sup>and</sup> Jeremiah, others, too, had <sup>made</sup> had the promise. Each had used different words but the promise had been the same.

<sup>foretold in the earth</sup> "Behold .. a King shall reign." <sup>and shall execute judgment and</sup>  
".... a ruler in Israel."  
".... the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple."  
".... his feet shall stand ... upon the Mount of Olives."  
"....the government shall be upon his shoulder."  
"..and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the Prince of Peace."

Each had promised in a long-gone day of oppression. <sup>ye</sup> Each had kindled the hope of freedom. Could it be, men everywhere were asking, that the time of fulfillment was at hand? Why not? What better time than now, when Israel lay under a double oppression, the conquering sword of Rome, and the tyrant heel of Herod, the client king who ruled Judea by permission of <sup>Rome's Emperor</sup> great Caesar Augustus, Rome's emperor?

It was because of Herod's tyranny that many feared, they could not have said exactly why.

In his Palace at Jerusalem Herod had raged after his Chief Eunuch came hurrying to report the confusion and to repeat the prophecies on lips everywhere. Herod repeated, "'Behold .. a king shall reign," and braced himself against the threat.

Each had promised in a long-gone day of oppression. Each had kindled the hope of freedom. <sup>When every wish was now asking,</sup> Could it be that the time of fulfillment was at hand? Why not? What better time than now, when Israel lay under a double oppression, the conquering sword of Rome and the tyrant heel of Herod? <sup>the cheat (king who ruled Judea by permission of the Roman Emperor, Caligula Augustus)</sup>

In his Palace at Jerusalem the tyrant Herod was enraged after his hurrying Chief Eunuch had reported the widespread confusion and had quoted the prophecies suddenly so popular. Herod repeated "behold, a king shall reign," and braced himself against the threat. Well, by guile and treachery he had got rid of more than one pretender to the throne on which he had sat so long. He knew how to get rid of one more.

He was too guileful to involve himself openly in the riddance. These touchy Jews were ~~too~~ ready to explode <sup>soon afterward</sup> when he was ~~involved~~ on merely normal afflictions. Taxes, labor drafts, land seizures, the quartering of mercenary troops. If they suspected that their tyrant was striking at prophecy there would be no holding them.

He resolved to use his Chief Eunuch. He had one other servant he might have used; he had Soemus, his intimate companion since both were young. ~~But in a matter involving a baby he was~~ sure that his Chief Eunuch would have fewer scruples. The completion of the assignment, of course, would need to be given to someone else. The Chief Eunuch was a Jew and no Jew could be counted on to complete such a chore. Moreover, if the Chief Eunuch's hand was seen plainly his master could not fail to be involved. But the Chief Eunuch would serve to find men to carry the assignment

12A

from Confucius's bedaves

since both were young. But from the start Soemus would be deterred,  
 by the tie he had wryly admitted long ago. His Ishmaelite blood.  
 All Ishmaelites were sprung not only from Hagar but from Abraham,  
 Progenitor of all Jews. Some still worshipped The Jewish god. Even  
 Soemus, who worshipped elsewhere, would balk at bringing harm to  
 this new, so-called Messiah. The Chief Eunuch, however, worshipped  
 only <sup>its</sup> a goddess who gave such as himself her special <sup>care</sup> love. He would  
 cheerfully track down a Jesiwh Messiah. <sup>advance a plot to</sup> But even he could not be  
 continued in the pursuit to the end. <sup>because</sup> He had too close a tie with  
 the Palace. If his hand <sup>was</sup> revealed, his master would be involved.  
 He could, however, be <sup>depended on</sup> used to find men who would carry the assignment

through and even, in the course of it, to give them some secret direction.

So the tyrant gave his order and the Chief Eunuch went to another part of the city, to a <sup>house</sup> ~~house~~ kept for his master's purposes. There he sent for a reliable man who was now on his way.

---x---

curtain from their stable under the inn, across hilly  
 country to this ~~small~~ house. It was a small  
~~limestone~~ humble house, built of limestone, ~~with~~  
 It had the usual flat roof, topped by layers of brush, reeds, mud, grass and clay all rolled flat, and it blended so inconspicuously  
 into the ~~ka~~ countryside that passers-by scarcely saw it and certainly  
 forgot it as soon as they got out of sight.

1) *dated section for Mary Beth.*

~~That in fact~~  
~~is a~~

and killed so many of their people as sacrifices. The chiefs gave ~~pay when very high taxes and took so many people as sacrifices to the gods.~~ The chiefs had given ~~him~~ advice and supplies and even Indian warriors. the Spanish commander advice and supplies and even Indian warriors.

Nevertheless the triumph of the Spanish captain was astounding. It seemed clear that Narvaez was pursuing a tricky and dangerous foe.

"We'd better get started," said Juan and the other sailors and soldiers. But their careless, conceited commander only sniffed.

"Cortés!" he said. "I don't give a chestnut for him. I'll go after him and catch him when I'm good and ready."

Like the fat Governor, Narvaez did not understand Cortés. Cortés, up in Mexico City, <sup>had</sup> heard about the ships from Cuba. Indian runners had brought him the news. While Narvaez and his army of almost a thousand dawdled in one of the gardenlike towns, Cortés took a few of his best fighters and started for the coast.

He left most of his army behind to guard the captive Montezuma. This force was in charge of Pedro de Alvarado. Tonatiuh, the Indians called this man, because that meant in their language The Sun, and Alvarado was golden-haired and gay. But he was a cruel man. (You will hear about this encallera.)

Cortés and his little band stole down the mountain trails. They slept on their arms, we are told, which means they kept their spears and bows and muskets beside them night and day. The officers wore metal armor but the men were protected only by quilted cotton jackets, a kind of armor they had copied from Indian warriors. They knew it could be easily pierced by the balls from Narvaez' cannon.

"We are doing fine, thanks just the same," Joseph said. His gaze twinkled at Judith recalling all the orders Elizabeth, to make sure they both did fine according to her notions, had flung around before rushing off to her own small son.

"I'll go along then," Esrom said. "I have an errand in Bethlehem."

"We can walk together for a little," Joseph said. "But then I swing east and north."

"Have you forgotten your beggars?" Judith asked at his back.

He turned, and she heaped his hands with slabs of bread and a wedge of yellow cheese until he had to hook the cinnamon-scented staff over one shoulder. He went out.

There were four beggars now.





Dawn had been a long way off when Judith and her husband had been wakened by a lantern and ~~the~~ a tall thin woman named

~~voice~~ named Elizabeth. or the warm hoarse voice of the woman named Elizabeth

She was the wife of Zacharias, a senior priest of the temple at Jerusalem, she said, explaining that she needed a helper and the inn keeper had suggested Judith who worked for him sometimes.

She was a tall spare

She needed, she explained, the help of a strong girl in moving a cousin of hers from the inn's stable

She needed a helper, she explained, and the inn keeper had suggested Judith who worked for him sometimes. The wanted wished to move ~~her~~ a cousin of hers, from the inn's stable. The cousin - she was named Mary - had given birth to a son there two nights ago.

"Which Mary?" Judith had asked sleepily. She knew a dozen Marys around Bethlehem but she hadn't known that any of them was near bearing.

The priest's wife was a tall spare woman, very determined in manner, and forever giving people ~~receiving~~ headaches. Judith was in awe of her, at first. But ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ the gray eyes were gay and friendly, the hoarse voice warm.

She rebuked Mary's tall sun-blackened husband for having let the baby be born in an inn





<sup>a</sup>  
curtain from their stable under the inn, across hilly country to this small, limestone and plaster house which she was so vigorously cleaning.

The house had needed cleaning. It had been <sup>long</sup> vacant ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~long that~~ lacy cobwebs had festooned every nook and corner. ~~But~~ <sup>if</sup> there were no cobwebs now. Judith looked around in satisfaction. Not one! She turned to look again at the boldly rising sun.

For a fact, Mary had remained serene through everything,  
Elizabeth had said, Affection <sup>softening</sup> had softened her voice, but then she  
had begun to scold again, <sup>and the abrupt reversal of mood had made</sup> reversing her mood so abruptly that  
Judith had had to laugh, and in the laughter had <sup>lost</sup> lost most of her  
fear. "But ~~that~~ Joseph. He remained stubborn. I wanted to move Mary  
into my own house, but he said a senior priest's big place, ~~packed~~  
with <sup>so many</sup> petitioners, would be too full of hustle and bustle. So I had  
to track down ~~it~~. It was pure luck that I found a little place

20-A

191A

-20-

CHAPTER TWO

*bright sun reached further indoors*

At intervals, as the morning advanced, the strapping, copper-haired girl glanced toward the curtain which cut off a corner of the room she was cleaning. ~~from top to bottom~~ No sound came from that quarter. The baby behind the makeshift partition did not rouse to cry and his mother there turned on her invisible pallet only once, so softly that it scarcely rustled.

The copper-haired girl was named Judith and she was a girl only in years. She had been a wife for more than ~~a year~~ *twelve months* and her own ~~month-old~~ *six-week-old* son blinked placidly on a sheepskin in the middle of the newly swept dirt floor. She glanced again and, reassured again by silence, soundlessly opened wider the shutters of the room's single window to coax in all possible warmth.

Not one. She turned to look again at the boldly climbing sun.

The sun had been bwlot the dark horizon when she and her husband had been awakened on their pallet by a woman's warm, hoarse voice.

The woman was Elizabeth, she had said, and she needed help. She wished to move a cousin of hers out of the inn's stable. The cousin -- she was named Mary -- had given birth to a son there two nights before.

"The innkeeper was right," Elizabeth had added with approval

Elizabeth had explained.

That tax! Judith and her Aram had had to pay it, too. But <sup>since</sup> they lived in Bethlehem it had not upset the pattern of their lives as it ~~was~~ had upset <sup>the town</sup> Mary and the many other strangers pouring into Bethlehem. What had upset even Bethlehemites, however, had been the great strange light ~~in~~ the other night. That had filled the sky, and Judith's house, and <sup>had</sup> spread over the hills for miles around. ~~and miles around.~~

And saw this visit from  
these strangers &

Four-fifths naked and seemingly half-starved, Peleg had proved the biggest braggart Joseph had ever met. He had drawn jeers from the travelling party which had formed for mutual protection against robbers, and even before Mary took his part he had become her adorer, as so many did on first sight or almost that soon.

But Peleg, Joseph remembered, had turned west for Meggido, hardly a quarter of the distance from Nazareth to Sebaste. How then could he be so soon down here?

Joseph decided that he had been deceived by a singular resemblance. His confusion at so many beggars, however, held on. He had seen beggars in all sorts of places but always there had been a plain reason. Judea's powerful Beggars' Guild sent its members everywhere. But he could see no reason for their presence in this remote spot. He had hardly reached this conclusion when he was struck by a reason which was startling, although anything but plain. Plain? It was impossible! Just the same it stuck like a burr. He looked toward the curtain.

"I read a thing once," he said to one in particular. "Or maybe someone said it to me. Or," he pulled down the corners of his strong mouth to deprecate in advance what he was about to add. "Maybe I thought it up for myself. It is this: When something is to be defended, it is always the poor who first stand forth. They can afford to be brave, having only their lives to lose."

Judith flung both hands high.

"Holty-toity! Aren't we thinking big thoughts. Something, indeed! And whose lives?"

~~"You are one of the four who came to see the baby. But where are the others?"~~

~~"Well, of course, somebody has to stay with the flocks."~~

~~"From what Elizabeth told me you must be Esrom."~~

"That's Beor, all right. And Obed is the quiet one."

Zorobabel gets excited."

But see here!" Judith threw the exclamation like a stick. "We didn't say at the inn where we were going. And on the way we met not a single soul. So how did you know where to come?"

"Where else would I come?" Esrom asked mildly.

o o o

The door was opened again. Tall, sunblackened Joseph stooped clear of the lintel, his crisp black beard bright with drops from the well where he had drunk after watering the donkey. Looking at him Judith could not see, for the life of her, why Elizabeth had refused to depend on a man so plainly capable, and gentle, too.

*mis reading*

Judith!" Joseph keyed his voice to the curtain. "Do we run to a little spare bread and cheese? A man can't turn his back on beggars strayed into such an out-of-the-way spot as this. And there are two outside."

Tardily, he noticed the shepherd. *"Why, good morning, Esrom."*

~~"Esrom? Good morning. What gets you up so early, Esrom?"~~

~~"Peace!" Esrom touched hand to head and heart. "Oh, I came just to --"~~

"Two beggars!" Judith broke in. "You mean one!" she went again to the window. *"Why, there are three!"*

Joseph went. Sure enough, there were three. And the most distant -- skinny, barefooted and wearing only a ragged loinloth -- resembled Peleg, the odd beggar who had walked worshipfully by Mary for part of the journey down from Nazareth.

*Blue & yellow - granite*

GILBERT

07  
"You are one of the four who came to the inn that first night," Elizabeth whispered. <sup>Elizabeth</sup> "Joseph told me about you. The day before, he said, you saw three Wise Men in Jericho."

"The wise men are still in Jericho."

Young John, with a triumphant gurgle, threw his rattle across the room again and his mother seemed glad of a chance to vent her feelings in action. She ran to chase the toy and then began to poke and pat her son. Pats and pokes found nothing amiss. He was as dry as a bone.

One of the lambs gave a broken "Baa-a" and scrambled out of the blankets. His stiltlike legs buckled, bent and

"I doubt it. After such a night," Joseph said, but he tiptoed to the curtain. He pulled it aside a small space and looked into the gloom within.

Mary was still asleep. He could tell by her soft breathing. He could see the brown brook of her hair flowing over her blue dress embroidered in mellow yellow. It flowed as serenely as she slept.

Between her pallet and the shallow chest which had been pressed into service as a crib lay a spindle and a bundle of wool. He remembered her happily spinning as she rode on Briar's back on the journey down to Bethlehem.

He tiptoed to the crib. Tiny and still, the baby slept

*Judith widened her eyes as Thirkeid's*

Elizabeth flung both hands high.

"Hoity-toity! Aren't we thinking big thoughts! Something indeed! And whose lives?"

Joseph smiled at Esrom and took a staff of ~~storax~~ wood, from beside the door. It exuded a faint cinnamon odor. *He had made it of storax and wood bark. That nice, lost its pleasant*

"Well," he said, "Briar is tethered just a little way off, in plain sight. And since I'm sort of unnecessary around here, I'll get to work."

"Joseph, have you found work so soon?" Elizabeth demanded.

X

70

*spicy  
stimuli*

## CHAPTER ONE

At intervals, while the bold sun climbed above the horizon, Elizabeth had been dosing the wobbly new lambs, hoping, in spite of their discouraging weakness, that she had rescued them in time.

"Sillies!" she said under her breath. "Even three-day old-lambs ought to have sense enough to stay with their mothers!"

She pulled the rag teat from Number One and gave it to Number Two. She bundled both into a blanket and was pushing them within range of the heat thrown off by a brazier when Number One baa'd forlornly.

"Ssh!" said Elizabeth and glanced toward a curtain that cut off a far corner of the room. There was no sound from that quarter. Not a creak! Not a rustle! And Number One drowsed off, and his twin drowsed. "Now keep shushed," she added, shaking her red head rebukingly.

Always sure that she could improve any state of affairs, Elizabeth was forever giving something or someone a rebuking, corrective headshake.

She walked to the window, pulled open the shutters and shook her head now at the sun. It was growing warmer so that the

brown hills were beginning to push through a scanty night fall of snow.

"A pity," she murmured to the sun, "that you couldn't have helped a few hours earlier!"

A third headshake disapproved a beggar slouching along the unfrequented byway which passed the house. "A beggar outside this humble lonely place! Whatever is he doing here?"

A sudden clatter caused her to whirl about. Her six months-old-son who had reddish hair like his mother's and the build of an infant Samson, sat staunchly on a sheepskin in the center of the room. He had thrown the toy he had been playing with, a stoppered bottle with red and green beads inside. Delighted with the noise, he crowed, and Elizabeth shook her head at him.

At first blush Elizabeth seemed to be a tyrant, but closer acquaintance revealed her as not at all formidable. Tall, spare and gaunt, she was graceful as well; her thin wind-roughened cheeks had a sculptured charm; and her warm blue gaze always betrayed that, however duty-bound she felt to correct things and people, she understood and forgave the worst of both.

Elizabeth always ended by forgiving. Her time, her strength, and -- often to her husband's mild dismay -- the family goods belonged to anyone. No friend was ever refused aid; no beggars ever turned empty handed from her door.

Softly she retrieved the toy. There was still no sound from behind the curtain. Mother and baby still slept.

And why not, after the time they had had, Elizabeth reflected? She thought back to the stable at the inn, <sup>in Bethlehem</sup> and said,

"tch-tch-tch!" in disapproval of that beginning of everything.

Of all places to have a baby! A cave, stabling cows, horses, goats, even a couple of camels! And afterwards through two nights and a day, what fuss and confusion! People coming. People going. People Oh-ing and Ah-ing! Only Mary had not been upset. She was serene as always. And the baby had slept through everything.

Elizabeth congratulated herself afresh that she had found this house, such as it was, for Mary. Her own house was only a half mile away, a spacious one to do credit to a Temple priest of consequence. Zacharias, as Elizabeth always managed to make new acquaintances aware, was not merely one of the obscure hosts on duty in the great, golden edifice which Herod was slyly rebuilding in the shadow of the Fortress of Antonia in Jerusalem, although admitting only repairs lest he be accused of sacrilege. Zacharias was a senior priest of the hand-picked division of Abijah.

But the house of a senior priest was too full of bustle and hustle, Joseph had decided. So Elizabeth had found this one and had brought Mary and her son here this very morning.

She had brought them before sun-up and getting them settled had not been easy. Of course Joseph had helped, but it hadn't been a man's work and she scarcely knew what she would have done without that big copper-haired girl from the inn, who had come along to lend a hand.

Judith! That was the girl's name. She wasn't, as a matter of fact, a girl except in name. She had had her own baby

sidestepped but he staggered half across the room before collapsing.

The shepherd lifted the slack woolly morsel, sniffed and looked up in amazement.

"This lamb is tipsy!" he whispered hoarsely.

"He's just had a few sucks from a rag teat," Elizabeth whispered in indignant denial.

"You gave the lamb wine?"

"They both got lost last night. I found them stone cold in the snow. They looked as though they'd never pull through, so I gave them what Zacharias always takes to warm himself."

"You gave the lambs WINE?"

"Now see here! What's wrong with that?"

The shepherd put the lamb down. It balanced doggedly. Then, drawn by the scent of its kind, it staggered back to the blanket and "Baa-aaed" again at not finding the expected natural substitute for the rag teat. The shepherd wrapped it in the blanket, felt the twin, and turned back to Elizabeth.

"I guess it's all right." He could not help smiling.

"I mean, such stuff for lambs. A man certainly does live and learn. You can give the pair back to their mother."

"I knew I was doing the right thing." Elizabeth was full of confidence now that she had confounded an expert. "But where are the rest of you?" she asked. "The other three who came with you before?"

"Well, of course, somebody had to stay with the flocks."

"I don't remember your names, though Joseph told me."

only a few days earlier than Mary. But she was one of those wonders, so hearty that they are up and about almost before the midwife's back is turned.

Judith

The house in which ~~she~~ had helped Elizabeth settle Mary and her son was indeed humble. Its single room was large but it did not offer even the decent elevated section of dirt floor which in most houses kept human occupants a few inches higher than their beasts, at night. <sup>The donkey</sup> / ~~Small~~ Briar, Mary's mount all the way from Nazareth, had stood that morning as high as his mistress until Joseph hauled him outside to forage.

The house had the usual flat roof, and limestone walls. It blended so inconspicuously into the countryside that passersby scarcely saw it, and certainly forgot it as soon as they got out of sight. And there were few passersby, for no road ran before it, only the byway on which Elizabeth had noticed the loitering beggar.

A gentle knock fell on the door.

"If it's that beggar," Elizabeth said, "he'll get a piece of my mind!" And she jerked the door open with her most forbidding headshake.

X

not much but she was

(11) Believe it or not, Mary remained serene through everything, Elizabeth had said. That was Mary's way, she had added in a softer voice. But then she had begun to scold again.

"I wanted, them, to move, into my own home. We have plenty of room."

But Mary's husband had said that a senior priest's house, with petitioners coming at a 1 hours, was too full of hustle and bustle. The husband was named Joseph.

"So I had to track down another place, for them. It was pure luck that I came upon a little house less than a quarter of a mile from my own. But it isn't cleaned. That's why mainly why I need you. You are good to come."

Her scolding doesn't mean a thing," Judith had told her self as they walked. "She's as kind as can be."

Her liking for the wife of the senior priest had increased with every step, and she had liked ~~Mary's husband~~ too. He had been waiting outside the stable with the donkey on which his wife would ride to her new dwelling. He had rolled two blankets, and tied them with cords. They made a sort of seat (for ~~her~~ lying).

The stable yard was still dim, although the rim of brightness along the horizon was widening.

"I'll call you when we need you," Elizabeth had said, one hand on the latch of the cave-stable door, and had scooped to Mary.

Joseph had nodded his willingness to wait.

When Judith had finally come through the door to report that his wife was ready to start, the wider light at the horizon had turned crimson and ~~dark~~ overhead, on the eaves of the inn, many doves were beginning to send forth their soft consolations.

22

The sun had been below the dark horizon when she and her husband had been awakened by the warm, insistent voice of a woman.

"I am Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias," the woman had said.

She needed a helper. She must move a cousin of hers out of the inn, <sup>stable</sup> ~~stable~~. <sup>The Cousin with a wife</sup> ~~stable~~  
The cousin had given birth to a son there two nights before.

While Judith, on her pallet, rubbed sleep from her eyes the woman had looked down anxiously in the light of the wall lamp.

<sup>(1) The innkeeper had said about you.</sup>

"Do come. Please! I'll pay a penny." And then, as an

~~afterthought, she had added that her cousin was named Mary.~~

"Which Mary?" Judith had asked drowsily. She knew a dozen Marys around Bethlehem, but she <sup>hadn't known that</sup> ~~didn't know~~ any of them was <sup>near</sup> ~~near~~ bearing.

"My cousin is from Nazareth," Elizabeth had said.

Judith, of course, did not know any Mary from that distant <sup>place</sup> ~~place~~. ~~little spot~~. She had barely heard of Nazareth, just a few houses, she had been told ~~was~~, around a crossroads farther north than most Judeans ever bothered to go. She did not give it a thought now, what with the surging excitement caused by the wonderful offer of a penny.

<sup>cause</sup>

"She ~~is come~~ <sup>came</sup> to Bethlehem, with her husband, because of the tax," Elizabeth had explained.

~~That tax!~~ Judith and her Aram had had to pay it, too. And

Temple  
 Division of Abijah," she had said, <sup>and explained that she</sup> ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~  
<sup>She</sup> ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~  
<sup>needed help and</sup> ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ needed the help of a strong girl, and the  
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ inn keeper, had suggested ~~xxxx~~ Judith who worked for him  
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ sometimes.

<sup>The priest's wife</sup>  
 Elizabeth needed, she explained, the help of a strong  
 girl in moving a cousin of hers from the Inn's stable. The cousin  
 -she was named Mary - had given birth to a son there two nights  
 ago.

<sup>slightly</sup>  
 "What Mary?" Judith had asked eagerly. She knew a  
 dozen Marys around Bethlehem, but she hadn't known that any of them  
 was near bearing.

Elizabeth's cousin and her husband, it seemed, came  
 from a town in Galilee. They were among the many strangers crowding  
 Bethlehem or who had come to Bethlehem to pay the tax Herod had  
 had ordered. <sup>Judith was dead</sup>

"I'll have to take my baby," Judith said.

"Oh, of course." ~~The priest's wife had grown kindly.~~  
~~or was kindly.~~ "The inn keeper told me you had a very young  
 baby. But he said <sup>you were</sup> she you strong."

"Oh, I am. Very strong." Judith <sup>had bounced from bed and</sup> ~~was already~~ ~~xxxxxxxx~~  
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ <sup>or brushing</sup> braiding her heavy bright hair ~~and~~  
<sup>and rubbing her face</sup> ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ She was very glad to go. Not only because she  
 and her young husband, Aram, could use the money she would be paid;  
 but because work was a pleasure to Judith. It was part of living and  
 she loved all living - making a meal, sweeping a floor, <sup>digging in the earth,</sup> having a  
 husband, having a baby, ~~xxxx~~ nursing him, swaddling him. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

<sup>Elizabeth</sup>  
 The priest's wife had a young son, too, she ~~xxxxxxxx~~  
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ said. Judith was in awe of the priest's wife at first.  
 She was tall, spare and brisk, and forever giving people reproving







when Judith and her husband had wakened by ~~the~~ a lantern, ~~the~~ and the warm throaty voice of the woman named Elizabeth.

Judith, whose husband was a small farmer, ~~often~~ worked from time to time at the inn, and the inn keeper had Division of Abijah," she had said, ~~and~~ explaining that she suggested her to this tall, spare, commanding woman. Elizabeth needed the help of a big strong girl in moving a cousin needed, she explained, the help of a strong girl in moving a cousin of hers from the inn's stable. The cousin - she was named Mary - had given birth to a son there two nights before.

"Which Mary?" Judith had asked drowsily. She knew a dozen Marys around Bethlehem. It was one of the commonest names in Judea. But she hadn't known that any of them was near bearing.

This Mary, it developed, came from a town in Galilee. She was one of the many strangers crowding and overcrowding the ~~the~~ She and her husband Joseph had come to Judith's home town of Bethlehem. Bethlehem to pay the tax Herod had ordered.

"I am the wife of Zacharias, senior priest of the Division of Abijah," Elizabeth had said. She had at first seemed formidable. ~~Not~~ Tall, ~~spare~~ and ~~spare~~ She did seem duty bound to ~~formidable~~. ~~Not~~ Not for long. ~~Not~~ She was graceful, as well, correct things and people, and was always shaking her head rebuking, but and her warm blue gaze always betrayed that, however duty-bound she felt to correct things and people, she ~~always~~ understood and forgive the worst of both.

Always sure that she could improve any state of affairs Elizabeth was forever giving something or someone a rebuking, corrective headshake. She was very rebuking toward Mary's tall, sun-blackened husband

when Judith and her husband had <sup>been</sup> awakened by ~~the~~ a lantern, ~~the~~ and the warm throaty voice of the woman named Elizabeth.

Judith, whose husband was a ~~small farmer,~~ <sup>farmer</sup> ~~affair~~ "I am the wife of Zacharias, senior priest of the ~~Division of Abijah,"~~ she had said, ~~and~~ explaining that she suggested her to this tall, spare, commanding woman. Elizabeth needed the help of a big strong girl in moving a cousin needed, she explained, the help of a strong girl in moving a cousin of hers from the inn's stable. The cousin - she was named Mary, had given birth to a son there two nights before.

"Which Mary?" Judith had asked drowsily. She knew a dozen Marys around Bathlehem. It was one of the commonest names in Judea. But she hadn't known that any of them was near bearing.

This Mary, it developed, came from a town in Galilee. She was one of the many strangers crowding ~~and overcrowding the~~ <sup>city</sup> She and her husband Joseph had come to Judith's home town, ~~of~~ Bethlehem, ~~Bathlehem~~ to pay the tax Herod had ordered.

"I am the wife of Zacharias, senior priest of the ~~Division of Abijah,"~~ Elizabeth had said. <sup>Tall, spare and gaunt, spare,</sup> She had at first seemed formidable. ~~But~~ not for long. ~~She~~ She was graceful, as well, correct things and people, and was always shaking her head rebuking, but and her warm blue gaze always betrayed that, however ~~duty-bound~~ she felt to correct things and people, she ~~always~~ understood and forgive the worst of both.

Always sure that she could improve any state of affairs Elizabeth was forever giving something or someone a rebuking, corrective headshake. She was very rebuking toward Mary's tall, sun-blackened husband

*Tell me Judith*  
*Judith had bounded from bed*  
*always eager to help, as well as ever*  
*ready, but*  
*"It said your baby was very young, but*

"Oh, very strong" said  
had laughed and ~~laughed~~ ~~laughed~~  
straight she ~~was~~  
was ~~very~~ glad of ~~her~~ etc. she  
dote pleasure to work

at part of being, and she  
into ~~the~~ <sup>curly</sup> ~~curly~~ ~~curly~~  
sweeping a floor. Having a  
baby, nursing him. Swaddling  
him. Digging in the soil.  
and moved, he ~~was~~ ~~was~~ ~~was~~  
"I'll have to talk

"my baby"

"Oh, of course" The

poor's wife's voice had  
sounded. "The man keeps  
told me you had a very  
young baby. But he  
said you were ~~not~~  
sorry

Cortez could afford to arm only a few of his soldiers with the crossbow. It was an expensive weapon. It was also powerful. Except in close fighting an enemy with only sword or spear could not hope to win against it. Cortez had another powerful weapon, a kind of musket. It was called the arquebus and its noise frightened the Indians, especially at first. But the arquebus never did as much harm as the crossbow.

A crossbow weighed about twenty-five pounds. A score or so of heavy arrows added more weight, and a soldier tired quickly until he learned to carry the whole load on his back.

The bow was made of steel. This was set crosswise into a heavy ~~shaft~~ stock. The steel was so stiff that a crank was needed to bend it and draw the thick bowstring back until it caught on a hook. An arrow was layed in a groove in front of the string and when a trigger pulled the hook down the released string drove the arrow at the target.

The arrow was not like the graceful arrow of the longbow. It was a short, thick bolt, but it hit so hard that it went through armor. Indeed it made such a terrible wound that Christians were not supposed to shoot it at other Christians. But Cortez was fighting savages, he said, and many, many of these were killed by the few picked men that he was able to arm with the crossbow.

Aram strong, solid, burly young husband,

Judith in temple chapter....her swaddled son, hugging him;  
her beam; also

Judith's pleasures came from every day things. Making  
a meal. Sweeping a floor. Having a husband. Having a baby. Nursing  
him. Swaddling him. Digging in the earth. Things that had to do  
with ordinary things. But her memory of that morning was a  
peculiar treasure pleasure. About helping that other young  
mother and the trip from Bethlehem there had been a  
joy, Judith had not tried to explain even to Aram.

Judith's own mood was to hurry. Strong with  
fluent muscles, and deep breast and firm legs and thighs,  
she smiled over a shoulder at Aram.

Strode along beside Aram, hugging her baby and  
smiling.

"Aren't we lucky?"

Smiled broadly. Their plans for plenty of babies.

Reverent.

Munched companionable.

Hated Herod.

Nervous in the temple, but soon got over it.

at Jerusalem. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Judith was in awe of <sup>the tall spare woman</sup> her at first,

~~for~~ <sup>she</sup> the priest's wife, a tall spare woman, was very determined in <sup>always seemed to be scornful. She was</sup> manner and ~~always~~ forever giving ~~reproving~~ <sup>smelling reproving</sup> headshakes.

~~She~~ <sup>Elizabeth scolded her</sup> shook her head because <sup>her husband's cousin's</sup> ~~Mary's~~ <sup>Mary's</sup> husband had not been able to find a <sup>a room</sup> room in Bethlehem

<sup>a stable</sup> in which the child could be born. The idea, she said, of

letting the child be born in a stable. Of all places for a child to be born! It hadn't been even a real stable. Just ~~that~~ a limestone cave under the inn, full of cows horses, goats, and even a couple of camels. And afterwards, according to the

~~story~~ Elizabeth had indignantly told in her warm winning voice, through two nights and a day, what fuss and confusion! People coming. People going. People ~~oh-ing and ah-ing.~~ <sup>well</sup> Only Mary had been not been upset, <sup>Elizabeth</sup> She was serene as always.

And the baby had slept through everything.

But although Elizabeth thus scolded, her gray eyes were <sup>xxxxx</sup> ~~very~~ <sup>gay</sup> ~~warm~~ and friendly. <sup>She was very kind.</sup>

"She doesn't mean a word of it," Judith thought. <sup>she liked</sup>

<sup>she</sup> liked her, and <sup>the poorest carpenter</sup> Mary's husband, a tall sun-blackened ~~man,~~ <sup>he</sup> a carpenter, he said, who waited for him with <sup>he told Judith</sup> the donkey on which, ~~his wife~~ <sup>his wife</sup> would ride. <sup>at a house Elizabeth had found for them.</sup>

There had been Judith gathered, an argument earlier. <sup>Elizabeth had invited them to go to her, in her own house. But</sup> Joseph had not wished them to go to Elizabeth's house. The house of

a senior high priest was too full of hustle and bustle he had <sup>said. So Elizabeth had found this smaller house, which stood alone, with no neighbors.</sup>

"Such as it is!" she said indignantly, and it was certainly humbl el. Its single room was large but it did not offer

at Jerusalem. Judith was in awe of her at first, for the priest's wife, a tall spare woman, was very determined in manner and always forever giving reproving headshakes.

She shook her head because her husband's husband had not been able to find a room in Bethlehem in which the child could be born. The idea, she said, of letting the child be born in a stable. Of all places for a child to be born! It hadn't been even a real stable. Just that a limestone cave under the inn, full of cowen horses, goats, and even a couple of camels. And afterwards, according to the story Elizabeth had indignantly told in her warm winning voice, through two nights and a day, what fuss and confusion! People coming. People going. People coming and going. Only Mary had been not been upset. She was serene as always. And the baby had slept through everything.

But although Elizabeth thus scolded, her gray eyes were very warm and friendly.

"She doesn't mean a word of it," Judith thought. She liked her,

and Mary's husband, a tall sun-blackened carpenter man, a carpenter, he said, who waited for him with the donkey on which, his wife would ride.

There had been Judith gathered, an argument earlier. Joseph had not wished them to go to Elizabeth's house. The house of a senior high priest was too full of hustle and bustle he had said. So Elizabeth had found this smaller house, which stood alone, with no neighbors.

"Such as it is!" she said indignantly, and it was certainly humbler. Its single room was large but it did not offer

*At the  
middle, however*

CHAPTER TWO

At intervals, as the morning advanced, the strapping copper-haired girl glanced toward the curtain which cut off a corner of the room she was cleaning. No sound came from that quarter. The mother ~~xxxx~~ turned on an invisible pallet ~~only~~ once, so softly that it scarcely rustled, and the baby did not rouse to cry.

The girl smiled at her own fifteen-day-old son, blinking placidly on a sheepskin in the middle of the newly swept dirt floor. Copper-haired Judith was a girl only in years. She had been a wife for all of twelve months *mw*.

She glanced again at the makeshift partition and, still reassured by silence, soundlessly ~~gax~~ opened the shutters of the room's single window more widely, to coax in all possible warmth.

Outdoors, the dooryard frost had melted and the brown hills were beginning to push through a scanty nightfall of snow.

"It's too bad," Judith told the sun, recalling the chilly walk of a few hours before, "that you couldn't have been up to warn us when we brought them here."

Her voice was understandably breathless. She had been on the go since before sun-up, helping the two behind the curtain from a stable under the inn, across hilly country to this small house which she was now ~~vixousky~~ <sup>vigorously</sup> putting to rights.

Dawn had been a long way off when Judith and her husband had been wakened by a lantern and the warm ~~husky~~ hoarse voice of the woman named Elizabeth. ~~She had sounded very determined~~ sounding very determined, She needed a helper, she <sup>had</sup> explained and the inn keeper had suggested Judith who worked for him sometimes. Elizabeth wished to move a cousin of hers ~~from~~ out of the inn's stable. The cousin - she was named Mary - had given birth to a son there two nights ago.

"Which Mary?" Judith had asked sleepily. She knew a dozen Marys around ~~the~~ Bethlehem but she hadn't known that any of them was near bearing.

<sup>The</sup> Elizabeth's cousin ~~and her husband~~ <sup>eliz. explains</sup> it seemed, came from a <sup>Astuce hazer</sup> town in Galilee. She and her husband were among the ~~many~~ horde of strangers who had come to Bethlehem to pay the new tax.

~~But~~ Judith ~~had~~ already bounced from bed and ~~from~~ <sup>was</sup> braiding her heavy bright hair. She was glad to <sup>help</sup> go. Aram, her young husband, was only a farm hand, and they could use ~~extra~~ the money she would be paid. Besides, work was a pleasure to Judith. It was part of living and she loved all living - ~~making~~ <sup>making a meal</sup> a meal, sweeping a floor, digging in the earth, having a husband, having a baby, nursing him, swaddling him.

"I'll have to take my baby," she <sup>had</sup> said. "<sup>of</sup> course. The inn keeper told me you had a ~~young~~ baby. But he said you were very strong."

"<sup>yes</sup> I am!" Judith ~~gloried~~ in it. Elizabeth had a young son, too, ~~she said~~. She was the wife, she told Judith, of Zacharias, a senior priest of the temple

o-o-o-o-o-

Leaning from the window, ~~Judith~~ and thinking  
of the <sup>walk</sup> journey, Judith ~~had~~ smiled. ~~It~~ had been wonderful. ~~Somehow~~ In no time the  
sky had been as blue as the robe, ~~embroidered~~ embroidered  
in <sup>mellow</sup> yellow, worn by Joseph's young wife. ~~Somehow~~ She hadn't m  
minded the ~~long~~ lengthy walk. <sup>It was wonderful</sup>  
The little house was certainly humble, as Elizabeth  
had said.

0-0-0-0-0-

The house in which Judith had helped Elizabeth settle the little family, was indeed humble. It ~~hadxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ was small, plastered with limestone, and had the usual flat roof, topped by <sup>mixed clay, wool and grass</sup> layers of brush, reeds, mud, grass and clay, all rolled flat, ~~and~~ it blended so inconspicuously into the ~~xxxxxxx~~ countryside that passersby scarcely saw it, and certainly forgot it as soon as they got out of sight. There were few passersby, <sup>was</sup> No road ran before it, only a byway.

P  
187  
June

Judith looked down the by-way, thinking of the ~~that~~ early walk. In no time <sup>had was</sup> the sky had been as blue as the robe, embroidered in mellow yellow, ~~xxxxxxx~~ worn by Joseph's young wife, ~~xxx~~ as she rode along on the donkey.

Judith looked down the by-way now. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Joseph had gone out to tether the donkey, and Elizabeth had gone, only a little while before, to make sure that servants in her <sup>nearby</sup> own home, a quarter-mile away (or nearby home) were giving proper care to her own six-months-old son.

"Babies, babies!" Judith whispered merrily. Everyone was having babies in ~~the warm sunny world~~ this now warm and sunshiny world. The sky was as blue as the robe, embroidered in mellow yellow, worn by Joseph's young wife as <sup>she</sup> ~~he~~ rode along ~~the~~ on the donkey ~~on~~ that early morning ~~xxxx~~ trip.

"I loved coming here," Judith thought.

There was no sign of Elizabeth, but a beggar slouched into Judith's view along the unfrequented <sup>byway.</sup> highway. A beggar outside a house so humble and lonely! Whatever was he doing here, <sup>Judith</sup> she wondered. He must believe he could get blood from a stone.

even the decent elevated section of dirt floor which in most houses kept human occupants a few inches higher than their beasts at night.

humble. It had the usual flat roof, topped by layers of brush, reeds, mud, grass and clay, and it blended so inconspicuously into the surrounding hills that they scarcely passed by into the countryside that passerby scarcely saw it, and certainly forgot it as soon as they got out of sight. ~~and~~ There were few passerby, for no road ran before it, only <sup>a</sup> byway.

Judith looked down the byway now to see if Elizabeth was in sight. She had gone off to make sure that the servants in her own home, a quarter mile away, were giving her six-months-old son proper care.

"Babies! Babies!"

Everyone had babies, Judith thought merrily. She had had a wonderful morning. That trip from Bethlehem, with the dew still on ~~the~~ the world, and these people....

There was no sign of Elizabeth but a beggar had slouched into sight along the unfrequented byway. ~~was~~ A beggar outside ~~the~~ a house so humble and lonely? ~~was~~ Whatever is he doing here, Judith wondered.

*Foot. & eye  
wink  
hey*

or

~~Judith looked down the byway now but instead of Elizabeth she saw~~

O-O-O-

his

Her baby on the sheepskin murmured hungrily.

Judith whirled,

"Not much, but she was serene through everything." That was Mary's way. Elizabeth had added in a softer tone. But ~~Her scolding doesn't mean a thing,~~ Judith had told herself as they walked. "She's kind as can be." then she had begun to scold again.

"I wanted, ~~xxxx~~ of course, to move them into my own home. We have plenty of room."

But Mary's husband, a carpenter named Joseph, had said that a senior priest's house, with petitioners coming at all hours, ~~was~~ too full of hustle and bustle.

"So I had to find another place. It was pure luck that I came upon a little house less than a quarter of a mile from my own. But it isn't much of a <sup>place</sup> ~~xxxx~~, and it isn't cleaned. That's mainly why I need you. You are good to come," she had added warmly.

Her scolding ~~doesn't~~ mean a thing, Judith had decided as they walked. She's kind as can be."

Her liking for the ~~xxxx~~ wife of the senior priest for the priest's wife had increased with every step, and she had liked the carpenter too. ~~xxxxxxx~~ He had been waiting outside the stable with the donkey on which his wife would ride to her new dwelling. He had rolled two blankets and tied them. The stable yard was still dim, although the rim of brightness along the horizon was widening. Do with cords to make a sort of seat for her.

"I'll call you when we need you," Elizabeth had said to him, one hand on the latch of the cave-stable door. The yard was still dim although the rim of brightness along the horizon was widening. Doves were beginning to send forth their soft consolations.

The tall man had nodded his willingness to wait.

"A pity we're taking her

CHAPTER TWO

At intervals, as the bright morning sun reached farther through the window, the strapping copper-haired girl glanced toward the curtain which cut off one end of the room she was cleaning. No sound came from that quarter. The baby behind the makeshift partition did not rouse to cry and his mother there turned on her invisible pallet only once, so softly that it scarcely rustled.

The copper-haired girl was named Judith and she was a girl only in years. She had ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ was a wife, and her own six-weeks-old son blinked placidly on a sheepskin in the middle of the newly swept ~~xxxxxx~~ dirt floor. She glanced again and, reassured again by silence, soundlessly opened wider the shutters of the room's single window to coax in more warmth.

curtain from a stable under the inn , across hilly country to this small house which she was so vigorously cleaning.

The house had needed cleaning. It had been vacant so long that lacy cobwebs had fastrooned every nook and corner. There were no cobwebs now. Judith looked around in satisfaction.

There was only a single room , although it offered ~~xxxxxxx~~ the decent elevated section which at night kept human occupants a few inches higher than the beasts they brought in for safety from leopards and wolves.

The new tenants had no beasts, except for a donkey which named Briar/~~xxxx~~ the master was tethering now, Judith saw, as she turned to look again at the boldly rising sun.

O-O-O-O-O-

"The scoldings don't mean much at all," Judith had told herself. "She is really as kind as can be."

"But that Joseph!" Elizabeth had said. "He stayed stubborn. I wanted to move Mary to my own home, but he said a senior Priest's place, besieged by petitioners, would be too full of hustle and bustle. So I tracked down a little house a quarter of a mile off."

They had come to the stable, and the thin bright rim around the horizon was spreading and glowing and nightingales were spilling song all around.

CHAPTER TWO

At intervals, as the bright morning sun reached farther into the ~~one-room~~ house, she was cleaning the strapping, copper-haired girl ~~looked~~ glanced toward the curtain which cut off one ~~end of the~~ <sup>corner</sup>. No sound came from that quarter. The baby ~~behind~~ the makeshift partition did not rouse to cry and his mother there turned on ~~her~~ <sup>the</sup> invisible pallet only once, so softly that it scarcely rustled.

The copper haired girl was named Judith and she was a girl only in years. She had been a wife for ~~more than twelve~~ <sup>sixteen</sup> months and her own six-weeks-old son blinked placidly on a sheepskin in the middle of the newly swept floor. She glanced again and, reassured <sup>wider</sup> again by silence, soundlessly opened ~~the~~ <sup>more</sup> the shutters of the room's single window to coax in ~~all possible~~ warmth.

Aram strong, solid, burly young husband,

Judith in temple chapter...her swaddled son, hugging him;  
her beam; also

Judith's pleasures came from every day things. Making a meal. Sweeping a floor. Having a husband. Having a baby. Nursing him. Swaddling him. Digging in the earth. Things that had to do with ordinary things. But her memory of that morning was a peculiar ~~traxurax~~ pleasure. About helping that other young mother and the trip from Bethlehem there had been a joy, Judith had not tried to explain even to Aram.

Judith's own mood was to hurry. Strong with fluent muscles, ~~and~~ deep breast and firm legs and thighs, she smiled over a shoulder at Aram.

Strode along beside Aram, hugging her baby and smiling.

"Aren't we lucky?"

Smiled broadly. Their plans for plenty of babies.

Reverent.

Munched companionable.

Hated Herod.

Nervous in the temple. but soon got over it.

CHAPTER TWO

~~He~~ ~~was~~ ~~climbing~~, a few miles south of Jerusalem  
The bold Judean sun climbed above

Elsewhere in Judea, the bold climbing sun  
and ~~ordinary~~ <sup>ordinary</sup> ~~or~~  
shone on a small ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ humble house. It was  
~~plastered in lime and~~ <sup>it</sup> had the usual flat roof, topped by  
layers of brush, reeds, <sup>mud</sup> and grass and clay, <sup>and</sup> all rolled  
flat. It blended so inconspicuously into the countryside that  
passers-by scarcely saw it and certainly forgot it as soon as  
they got out of sight. <sup>and</sup> There were few passersby for no road ran ~~before~~  
before it, only a byway.

~~There was only~~  
Inside, it was humble too. A single room, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~  
~~xx~~ although its  
dirt floor provided the decent elevation which at night kept  
human occupants a few inches higher than the beasts they  
brought in for safety from leopards and wolves.

This elevation was now curtailed off, and at intervals,  
as the morning advanced, <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ strapping copper-haired girl  
who was cleaning the room <sup>the</sup> glanced toward ~~the~~ curtain. No sound

*No, wait.*  
(For a fact,

Mary had remained serene through everything, Elizabeth had said, affection~~ing~~ softening her voice. But then she had begun to scold again, and her abrupt reversal of mood had made Judith laugh and in laughter lose most of her fear. "But that Joseph. He remained stubborn. I wanted to move Mary into my own home but he said that a senior priest's big place, with so many petitioners, would be too full of hustle and bustle. So I had to track down another. It was pure luck that I found a little place less than a quarter of a mile away. *from mine.*"

"Her scolding doesn't mean a thing," Judith <sup>had</sup> told herself as she walked and the thing bright rim at the horizon had spread and crimsoned. "She is really as kind as can be."

Her liking for the wife of the senior priest had increased with every step and she had liked Joseph, too. Mary's husband had been waiting at the stable, with the donkey on which his wife would ride to her new dwelling. *outside*

"Such as it is," Elizabeth had said.

"I'll call you when we need you," she had gone on, one hand on the latch of the stable door. "He is a Master carpenter," she had added to Judith, not seeming to mind because he could overhear, "And he says a good one, but he is no master of the kind of business we'll be doing inside." *tell some words to her*

Joseph had not been offended, nodding his willingness to wait, and drooping an eyelid as ~~Judith~~ <sup>Elizabeth</sup> talked on. And when Judith finally had come through the stable door to report that all was ready he had had the donkey all ready to bear Mary to the home of Elizabeth's finding. The widened light above the horizon was still crimson and nightingales were singing all around.

For a fact, Mary remained serene through everything, Elizabeth had said <sup>Affection had softened her voice but then</sup> with affectionate pride. Then she had begun to scold again, <sup>had</sup> this time about Joseph, her mood reversing so abruptly that Judith had laughed and had lost most of her fear. "But that Joseph! <sup>the good sister</sup> I wanted to move Mary to my own home, but he said a senior priest's place, besieged by petitioners, would be too full of hustle and bustle. So I had to track down ~~another house~~ <sup>another house</sup>. I was lucky to find ~~one~~ a little one a quarter of a mile off."

"The scoldings don't mean much at all," Judith had told herself. "He is really as kind as can be."

Her liking for the senior priest's wife had increased with every step, and she had liked Joseph, Mary's husband, a tall sun-blackened carpenter. He had been waiting for them at the stable, <sup>with</sup> holding the lead rope of the donkey ~~on which his wife would ride.~~

The thin bright rim around the horizon had begun to spread and glow widely, and nightingales were spilling song all around.

"I'll call you when we need you," Elizabeth had said to Joseph ~~at the stable entrance.~~ "He may be a Master carpenter," she had added to <sup>Judith</sup> Joseph, <sup>believing</sup> not ~~trying~~ to keep her voice low, "but he is no master of this kind of business."

Joseph had ~~not~~ <sup>seems to understand, nodding</sup> minded. ~~He had nodded~~ his willingness to await Elizabeth's call, <sup>and dropping</sup> had dropped an eyelid quizzically at Judith while Elizabeth scolded, and when Elizabeth <sup>when Judith had</sup> ~~had called from inside the stable~~ <sup>was all over it</sup> had gently prodded the donkey into position to receive Mary, when she should emerge to be borne to the house of Elizabeth's finding. <sup>come out</sup>

The sun had been below the dark horizon when she and her husband ~~were~~ <sup>had been</sup> awakened by the warm, insistent voice of a woman--a woman by the name of Elizabeth, she had said.

The woman <sup>had</sup> needed a helper. She must move a cousin of hers out of the inn. The cousin had given birth to a son there two nights before.

~~While Judith had rubbed sleep from her eyes the woman had waited in the~~

While Judith roused on her pallet and rubbed sleep from her eyes the woman had ~~waited~~ looked down and ~~waited~~ anxiously in the light of the wall lamp."

"Do come," she had urged. "Please. I'll pay a penny." And then, as an after thought, she had added that her cousin was named Mary.

"Which Mary?" Judith had asked drowsily. She knew a dozen Mary's around Bethlehem, but she didn't know any of them was near bearing.

"My cousin is from Nazareth," Elizabeth had said. Judith, of distant, little town. She barely couse, did not know any Mary from that ~~faraway town~~ <sup>just a few hours, she had heard,</sup> ~~just a few hours~~ around a crossroads farther north than <sup>any</sup> Judean bothered to travel. She did not give it a second thought now, what with the surging excitement ~~it~~ caused by the wonderful offer of a penny.

"She is come to Bethlehem, with her husband. because of the tax," Elizabeth had explained.

That tax! Judith and her Aram had had to pay it, too. And

o-o-o-

The sun had been below the dark horizon, when she and her husband ~~had been~~ <sup>were</sup> awakened by the warm, insistent voice of a woman.

"I am Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias," <sup>she</sup> ~~the woman~~ had ~~ex~~ said. <sup>and had added that</sup> She needed a helper.

While Judith, on her pallet, ~~had~~ rubbed sleep from her eyes the woman had looked down anxiously in the light of the wall lamp.

"The innkeeper told me about you. Do come. ~~I'll~~ I'll pay a penny." She must move a cousin of hers out of the inn's stable, she had said. <sup>- her name was Mary -</sup> The cousin had given birth to a child there two nights before. ~~The cousin was named Mary.~~

*brings in  
as the scene*

*that moment*

*H*

*X*

~~and when she had arrived at the inn~~

curtain from their stable under the inn, across hilly country to this small, limestone house which she ~~had been~~ <sup>was</sup> so vigorously cleaning.

~~The house~~ <sup>long</sup> had needed cleaning. It had been <sup>long</sup> vacant, ~~so long~~ that lacy cobwebs <sup>had</sup> festooned every nook and corner of the single room. But there were no cobwebs now. Judith looked around in satisfaction. Not one! She turned to look again at the <sup>boldly</sup> rising sun.

o-o-o

The sun had been below the dark horizon when she and her husband ~~had been~~ <sup>were</sup> awakened by ~~a woman's voice~~ <sup>the</sup>, warm, ~~and~~ <sup>insistent</sup> ~~voice~~ <sup>voice of</sup>

~~The woman~~ <sup>by the name of</sup> ~~was~~ Elizabeth, she had said, and she needed help. She must move a cousin of hers ~~from~~ <sup>out of</sup> the inn's stable. The cousin ~~she~~ <sup>who</sup> was named Mary, ~~she~~ <sup>she</sup> had given birth to a son there two nights before. ~~The woman~~ <sup>she</sup> ~~wailed~~ <sup>waited</sup> ~~anxiously~~ <sup>in the light</sup> ~~of the wall~~ <sup>of the wall</sup> ~~lamb~~ <sup>lamb</sup>

~~"The innkeeper was right,"~~ Elizabeth had added with ~~approval and satisfaction~~ <sup>after inspecting Judith by the light of the wall lamb</sup>. "You are easily strong enough. Please come. I'll pay a penny." ~~The cousin~~ <sup>she had said and then</sup> ~~she~~ <sup>she</sup> had added on an after thought, ~~That~~ <sup>That</sup>

"Which Mary?" Judith had asked drowsily. She knew a dozen Marys around Jerusalem. But ~~not one~~ <sup>she had not known that any of them was</sup> near bearing.

"My cousin is ~~of~~ <sup>from</sup> Nazareth," Elizabeth had said. Judith ~~had never heard of any Mary of Nazareth.~~ <sup>she never did not know from</sup> She had barely heard of Nazareth, just a few hours around a crossroads farther north than any Judean bothered to travel, ~~and now of less consequence~~ <sup>she did not give it a second thought</sup> ~~than ever~~ <sup>how's what with the surging excitement caused by</sup> alongside the wonderful offer of a ~~whole~~ penny.

"She is come to Bethlehem, with her husband, because of the tax," Elizabeth had explained.

That tax! Judith and her Aram had had to pay it, too. And

A woman --

betwixt was, wailed wailing

cut the whole

Bethlehem in

arrived in time to find

cousin's husband because her ~~husband~~ had not been prompt about finding a proper room in the inn.

A stable! Of all places for a child to be born! It wasn't even a real stable, just the limestone cave under the inn, full of horses, cows, goats, even a couple of camels. And afterward what fuss and confusion! People coming. People going. People ~~Oh-ing.~~

People Oh-ing and Ah-ing. "Your poor cousin," "Poor Mary!" Judith had said. "Could she find a single restful moment?" *Did she get any rest at all!*

But Mary, from the start, <sup>was</sup> had remained serene through it all, Elizabeth had declared, and the boy, believe it or not, had not cried even once. Elizabeth had <sup>been</sup> so gently pleased and proud that Judith had lost her fear.

"Her scolding doesn't mean a thing," she had told herself. "She is really as kind as she can be."

Her liking for the senior priest's wife had increased with every step and she had liked <sup>Joseph</sup> Mary's husband, a tall, sun-blackened carpenter. A Master carpenter, Elizabeth had boasted again. He had met them leading a donkey on which his wife would ride to the house ~~Elizabeth's~~ of Elizabeth's finding.

"Not much of one," Elizabeth had said.

She had tried to make Joseph change over to her own <sup>A short quarter-mile away</sup> home, but Joseph had decided that the home, of a senior priest, full of petitioners, would be too full of hustle and bustle. So Elizabeth had tracked down the smaller place.

"Such as it is," she had said when it came into sight at the end of their journey.

*John again*

*not expected yet*

*affirmative talking back at them*

000

widowhood, I doubt I shall ever forget them.

Warmed by such an unanticipated surge of liking, Judith had not minded the cold. She had not minded the long walk. Nor the house cleaning although the house had been so long vacant that spiders squatted in every nook and cranny. She had not minded even <sup>did</sup> an extra delay now because Elizabeth was gone to make sure <sup>that</sup> servants in her own home, a quarter mile away, were giving her six-months-old son proper care.

Everybody had babies, Judith thought merrily as she stood at the window. Then merriment changed to surprise. A beggar slouched into sight along the unfrequented by-way which passed the house. A beggar outside a house so humble and lonely? He must believe he could get blood from a stone!

o-o-o

Judith was still marvelling at such unwarranted optimism when her own baby, on his sheepskin, murmured hungrily. He whirled, stooped for her treasure and, coming erect, uncovered <sup>93x</sup> a blooming breast and filled his rosebud mouth before any louder sound could disturb the two behind the curtain. Mother and child there slept on.

And a good thing, after the time they had had! Judith thought back to the stable and said, "Imagine!" as her son nuzzled for a good hold and then sucked with a will. Of all places for a baby to be born. It hadn't been even a real stable. Just that limestone cave under the inn, full of cows, horses, goats and even a couple of camels. And afterward, according to the story Elizabeth had indignantly told in her warm, winning voice as the

They needed help!

long mile unwound, endless fuss and confusion. People coming. People going. People aching. People ohing. But the mother and child serene in spite of so much. The boy, believe it or not, had not cried once.

Judith had not thought of doubting even this extravagant detail of Elizabeth's story. Of course Mary and her son would be undisturbed. They had been no bother at all during the journey, and both had dropped instantly into soft sleep on reaching the house, such as it was, that Elizabeth had hunted down when Joseph, to her exasperation, had decided that the bigger home of a senior priest, besieged by petitioners, would be too full of hustle and bustle.

The house which Elizabeth had found was nothing to brag about. Standing alone, without even one near neighboring house, it did have a well. But its dirt floor did not even offer the decently elevated section which, in almost any house, kept human occupants at night a few inches higher than the beasts they brought in for safety from leopards, wolves and whatever. The donkey, Mary's mount all the way from that Galilean village Judith forgot so easily, had stood that morning as high as his mistress until taken out to forage.

The house had the usual low flat roof of cheap sycamore beams topped by layers of brush, reeds, mud grass and clay, and it blended so inconspicuously into the surrounding hills that passersby scarcely saw it, and certainly forgot it as soon as they got out of sight. There were few passersby. No real road ran near, only the by-way on which Judith had noticed the beggar.

A gentle knock fell on the door.

Judith settled her son, now overflowing with his milky

sling. The sling swung alongside. But in spite of all this he seemed only kind, perhaps because he carried under one arm a set of pipes with their promise of gentle music.

"We thought there might be something we could do," he said. A brown hand <sup>waved vaguely</sup> circled to indicate how uncertain "they" were of what might be needed, but how willing <sup>no matter what</sup>.

"I think I've heard <sup>about</sup> of you!" Judith whispered excitedly, then glanced ~~toward the curtain~~ in a signal for him to keep his ~~own voice low~~. "You are one of the four who came to the stable that first night. But where are the others?"

"Well, of course, somebody has to stay with the flocks."

"From what Elizabeth told me, you must be Esrom."

"I am, and the others are Obed, Zorobabel and Beor."

"Elizabeth said Beor had a yellow beard like a half-moon."

It is something I just happened to run into," Joseph  
said and Judith was relieved. His tone did not indicate that he had  
sensed any ~~envy~~ <sup>for anyone</sup> at all. "If Mary asks, say I am only a little way  
off, a mile or so, toward Jerusalem, repairing a room in the new  
villa of Vedius Rusco Philippicus."

"Of the Road Commissioner?" Judith gasped, ~~not envious~~  
but certainly impressed.

~~117th~~ <sup>that is - Primus Pilus was</sup>  
Vedius Rusco was the one Roman of rank in Judea whom most  
Jews admired, sometimes to the point of adoration. The great  
ex-Primus Pilus of the Tenth Legion, where he had been replaced by  
one Helius Naepor whom no Jew admired, he was now, by direct choice  
of the Emperor, in charge of highway building all around Palestine.

Judith had measured out his name slowly, as was fitting  
when one spoke of a man so favored by Caesar Augustus himself, but  
good manners kept her from asking how in the world two Galilean  
peasants had gained the help of so lofty an Imperial official.

having babies, in this wonderful, <sup>warm</sup> ~~brightly~~ sunny world. <sup>But only</sup> And the few luckiest ones were earning a whole penny.

*Judith's* There was no sign of Elizabeth, but a beggar glouched into view along the unfrequented by-way ~~which passed the house.~~

A beggar outside a house so humble and lonely? He must believe he could get blood from a stone.

*The sturdy son of straw* o-o-o

~~Her~~ baby, on his sheepskin, murmured hungrily. Judith whirled, stooped for her treasure and coming erect uncovered a blooming breast and filled his rosebud mouth before any louder *complaint* ~~sound~~ could disturb the two behind the curtain. Mother and child there slept on.

And a good thing, too, after the time they had had! Judith

---4---  
"Poor Mary," Judith had said, "She couldn't <sup>she just</sup> have found a single restful moment."

But Mary, Elizabeth had declared, ~~remained~~ from the start remained serene through it all. The boy, believe it or not, had not cried even once. <sup>Elizabeth's heart had been pleased and proud</sup>

"Her scoldings <sup>don't</sup> mean a thing," Judith had <sup>told herself</sup> and had given over being afraid. "She doesn't mean a word of <sup>it</sup> them. She is really as kind as can be."

Her liking for the <sup>senior</sup> priest's wife <sup>had</sup> increased with every step, and she <sup>had</sup> liked Mary's husband, a tall, sun-blackened man, a <sup>master</sup> carpenter, Elizabeth <sup>had</sup> boasted, <sup>boasting again. He had</sup> who met them leading the donkey which would carry his wife to a house Elizabeth had found.

"Not much of a one," Elizabeth had said. She had tried to make Joseph <sup>come to</sup> ~~change to~~ her own home. But he had said that the house of a senior priest, besieged by petitioners, would be too full of hustle and bustle. So Elizabeth had run down the smaller place.

"Such as it is," she had said when it came in sight of the end of their journey.

It was certainly humble. <sup>T</sup> It had the usual flat roof, topped by layers of brush, reeds, mud, grass and clay all rolled flat, and it blended so inconspicuously into the countryside that passersby scarcely saw it, and certainly forgot it as soon as they got out of sight. There were few passersby. <sup>was</sup> No road ran before it, only a by-way

Judith looked down the by-way now <sup>to see if Elizabeth was</sup> in sight. She had gone, a little while before, to make sure that the servants in her own home, a short quarter of a mile away, were giving her own six-months old son <sup>proper</sup> care.

"Babies, babies!" Judith <sup>thought</sup> merrily. Everyone was

Dawn had been a long way off when ~~Judith~~<sup>she</sup> and her husband had been awakened by a lantern and the warr ~~yxxxxxx~~<sup>hoarse</sup> voice of the woman named Elizabeth. ~~She had sounded very xxxxxxxx~~  
 sounding very determined,  
 She needed a helper, she explained <sup>^</sup> and the inn keeper had suggested Judith who worked for him sometimes. Elizabeth wished to move a cousin of hers ~~xxxxxx~~ out of the inn's stable. The cousin - she was named Mary - had given birth to a son there two nights ago. ~~before~~.

"Which Mary?" Judith had asked sleepily. She knew a dozen Marys around ~~xxxxxxx~~ Bethlehen but she hadn't known that any of them was near bearing.

<sup>Her</sup> Elizabeth explained, Elizabeth's cousin ~~xxxxxxx~~ <sup>Magally</sup> came from a town in Galilee. She and her husband were among the ~~xxxxxxx~~ horde of strangers who had come to Bethlehen to pay the new tax.

~~xxxx~~ Judith had already bounced from bed and from ~~was~~<sup>help</sup> braiding her heavy bright hair. She was glad to ~~see~~ Aram, her young husband, was only a farm hand, and they could use ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ the money she would be paid. Besides, work was a pleasure to Judith. It was part of living and she loved all living - ~~making~~<sup>making a meal</sup> a meal, sweeping a floor, digging in the earth, having a husband, having a baby, nursing him, swaddling him.

"I'll have to take my baby," she ~~said~~<sup>had</sup> ~~family~~<sup>family</sup>.  
 "Of course. The inn keeper told me you had a young baby. But he said you were very strong."

"Yes, I am!" Judith glories in it.  
 Elizabeth had a young son, too, she said. She was the wife, she told Judith, of Zacharias, a senior priest of the temple

That <sup>beautiful</sup> ~~xxxxxx~~ light that had <sup>home</sup> spread/<sup>all</sup>over the sky the other night had made Judith's ~~xxxxxx~~ <sup>peaceful</sup> town ~~xxxxxx~~ seem quite unlike its usual ~~xxxxxx~~ <sup>ly</sup> peaceful humdrum self for a day or so.

"I'll go." Judith had already bounced from ~~bed and~~ <sup>her pallet and</sup> was braiding her heavy bright hair. She was glad to go. Aram, her young husband, was only a farm hand, and they could use the money she would earn. Besides, work was a pleasure to Judith. It was part of living and she loved all living - sweeping a floor, making a meal, digging in the earth, having a husband, having a baby, nursing him, swaddling.

"I'll have to take my baby," she said importantly.

"Oh, of course. The inn keeper told me you had a baby. But he said you were very strong."

"Yes, I was up and about almost before the midwife's back was turned," Judith answered with a laugh.

Elizabeth had a young son, too, she said. She was a much older mother than Judith, a tall spare woman, or

She seemed old to have a baby, Judith thought. Her face was worn, ~~xxxxxx~~ except for the gay friendly eyes. But her tall, spare body was strong and graceful.

She was the wife, she told Judith, of Zacharias, a senior priest of the temple at Jerusalem.

Judith was ~~xxxxxx~~ in awe of Elizabeth at first. Her manner was very determined, and she always seemed to be scolding someone or something. She scolded now ~~xxxxxx~~ because her cousin's husband had not ~~xxxxxx~~ been able to find a room in Bethlehem. A stable! Of all places for a child to be born. It hadn't even been a real stable. Just a limestone cave under the inn, ~~xxxxxx~~ <sup>full of</sup> stabling.

It was very small. It had not even the decent elevated  
section of dirt floor which in most houses kept human occupants  
a few inches higher than their beasts at night. The donkey,  
browsing now outside, would have to  
Briar, / ~~be left to the mercy of leopards or wolves, must~~  
vacant  
sleep inside It had been ~~unused~~ so long ~~that~~ that spiders had  
squatted in every nook and cranny until ~~she~~ <sup>she</sup> began her work.

It was very small. It had not ~~the~~ even the decent elevated  
section of dirt floor which in most houses kept human occupants  
at night a few inches higher than the ~~beasts~~ <sup>beasts</sup> they brought indoors  
for safety from leopards and wolves. But these householders,  
fortunately had only the small donkey, Briar, who was browsing  
now outside.

This was on the upper level of the single room's hard-packed floor....the decent elevated ~~kn~~ section of dirt floor which ~~kept human occupants a few inches higher than their beasts at night.~~ in most houses kept human occupants a few inches higher than their beasts at night.

or

kept human occupants at night a few inches higher than the beasts they brought indoors at night ~~from~~ for safety from leopards and wolves.

lacy cobwebs has festooned every nook and corner of the single room, the lower section, where the sheepskin was spread, and the ~~decent~~

with its decent elevated section of dirt floor. That kept human occupants a few inches higher than the beasts they brought indoors for safety from leopards and wolves.

CHAPTER TWO.

At intervals, as the morning advanced, the strapping, copper-haired girl glanced toward the curtain which cut off a corner of the room she was cleaning from top to bottom. No sound came from that quarter. The baby behind the makeshift partition did not rouse to cry and his mother there turned on her invisible pallet only once, so softly that it scarcely rustled.

The copper-haired girl was named Judith and she was a girl only in years. She had been married for more than a year and her own month-old son blinked placidly on a sheepskin in the middle of the newly swept dirt floor. She glanced again and, reassured again by silence, soundlessly opened <sup>wider</sup> ~~more widely~~ the shutters of the room's single window to coax in all possible warmth.

Outdoors, the sun now was pouring warmth <sup>All around</sup> ~~down~~ and on the surrounding brown hills ~~and~~ the night frost had all melted except in a few cold pockets.

"It's too bad," Judith told the sun, recalling the chilly walk of a few hours earlier, "that you couldn't have been up to warm us when we brought them here."

Her voice was a little breathless. That was understandable. She had been on the go since before sun-up, helping the two behind the curtain from their stable under the inn, across hilly country to this ~~xxxxxx~~ small, limestone house which she had been so vigorously cleaning.

<sup>It had</sup> It had needed cleaning! It had been vacant so long that <sup>lasy</sup> cobwebs festooned every nook and ~~xxxxxxx~~ corner of the single, ~~xxxxxxx~~ room. But <sup>There were</sup> it had no cobwebs now. Judith looked around with satisfaction.

horses, goats, even a couple of camels. And afterwards ~~what fuss~~  
~~and confusion!~~ People coming. People going. People Oh-ing and  
Ah-ing.

"Was your cousin upset?" *through it all, But what*  
"Oh, no. She was serene ~~as she always is.~~"

She had scolded next because her cousin's husband,  
a carpenter named Joseph, would not bring his family to her own  
spacious house. He had absolutely refused, she said. He had  
thought the house of a senior high priest was too full of hustle and  
bustle for a mother and new baby *fuss and confusion!*"

*yet*, although Elizabeth thus scolded, Judith ~~xxxxxxx~~  
stopped feeling afraid.

"She doesn't mean a word of it," Judith thought.

*really* "She's very kind," Judith thought.

She liked the ~~high~~ priest's wife, and she liked  
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Mary's husband, a tall sun-blackened  
carpenter who had waited *in the morning twilight* ~~for them outside the stable~~ with a  
donkey ~~xxxxxxxx~~ ready to carry his wife to a house Elizabeth had  
found ~~for them.~~

"Not much of a house!" Elizabeth scolded, but Judith  
understood her now. She had wished the family to come to her own  
spacious ~~xxxxx~~ home. But Joseph had <sup>firmly</sup> refused, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~  
~~xxxxx~~ The house of a senior high priest, he had said, was too  
full of hustle and bustle for a mother and new baby. So Elizabeth  
had found this smaller place.

"Such as it is!" she had grumbled when it came in  
sight *at the end of their journey,* ~~at last.~~ It was certainly humble. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~  
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ It had the usual flat roof, topped by layers of  
brush, reeds, mud, grass and clay, and it blended so inconspicuously

*rolled flat,*

even the decent elevated section of dirt floor which in most houses kept human occupants a few inches higher than their bests at night.

humble. It had the usual flat roof, topped by layers of brush, reeds, mud, grass and clay, and it blended so inconspicuously into the surrounding hills that they ~~sxfixx~~ passersby into the countryside that passerby scacely saw it, and certainly forgot it as soon as they got out of sight. And there were few passersby, for no road ran before it, only the byway