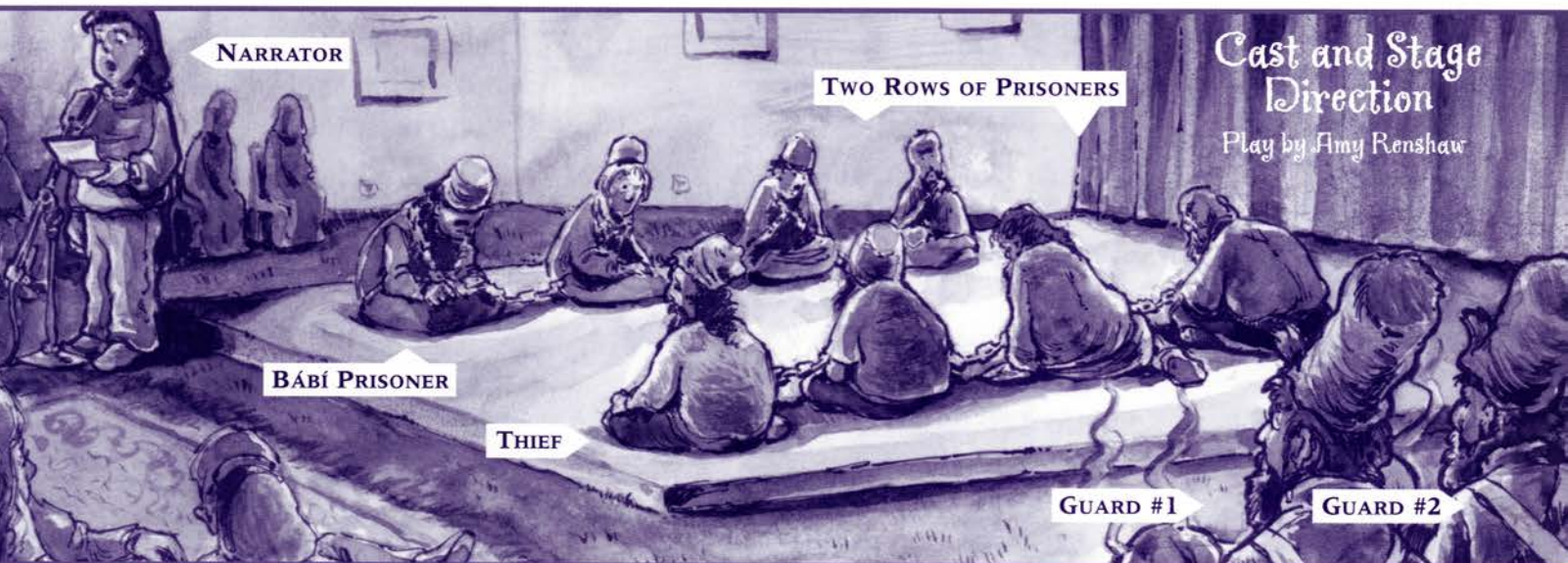


Dawn Breaks in the Prison

What was it like in the Black Pit? This is a play about imagined conversations between a Bábí and one of the thieves who were Bahá'u'lláh's fellow-

prisoners. After you read or perform the play, think about what might have happened next to the characters. Try writing your own play or story.



Cast and Stage
Direction
Play by Amy Renshaw

SCENE 1

Narrator: In 1852, remarkable events took place below the streets of Tihrán. In a cold, filthy dungeon called the “Black Pit,” followers of the Báb were taken prisoner. One of them, Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí, would later be known as Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God.

Bahá'u'lláh told amazing stories of His days in the prison. We do not know if any of the Bábí prisoners spoke to the criminals among them. We can only imagine what they might have said.

(Bábí Prisoner and Thief turn slightly to face audience)

Thief *(groaning)*: These chains are killing me. And the smell! I can't stand it in here.

Bábí: Take heart, friend.

Thief: Why are you Bábís so cheerful? The guards take one of you every day to be killed. Aren't you afraid?

Bábí: I would gladly give my life for this Faith.

Thief *(shakes his head)*: The Bábís seem happy to go to their death. And each one talks to that Man before he leaves.

Bábí: That is Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí.

Thief: Yesterday He gave His shoes away to a man about to be killed. Why would He do such a thing?

Bábí: He teaches us love and kindness, even here.

(Thief and Bábí turn back to their rows)

Row 1 *(singing)*: God is sufficient unto me; He verily is the All-Sufficing!

Row 2 *(singing)*: In Him let the trusting trust.

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SCENE 2

(Thief and Bábí face audience)

Thief: How can you sing at a time like this?

Bábí: God has a plan for each of us.

Thief: You're in a filthy dungeon. You could be killed at any minute. Can't you see that God has forsaken you?

Bábí: God is always with us, even here.

Thief *(sniffing the air)*: Do you smell that? It smells like—meat! I haven't eaten meat in months. I must be imagining things.



(Guards enter, carrying a tray of roast meat)

Thief: It is meat! *(to guards)* Give me some! Over here!

Guard #1: No, it's a gift for the Bábís, from the sháh.

Guard #2: We're taking it to their Leader.

(Guards walk past them and offstage)

Thief: Whoever heard of the sháh sending a gift like that to a Prisoner?

Bábí: He's not just any prisoner.

Thief: I guess not. Did you see the man who came to visit Him yesterday? He looked important.

(Guards walk by again, carrying the meat)

Thief: Where are you going? Leave that here!

Guard #1: He didn't want it. He said, "We can well dispense with this gift."

Guard #2: Now we can eat it ourselves.

(Guards exit with the meat)

Thief *(calling after them)*: Wait! Leave some for us! *(shakes his head)* What's

going to happen to me?

Bábí: God will provide, friend—in this world or the next.

Thief: I've killed men like you. What would God want with me?



Bábí: God will never forsake those who seek Him.

(Thief and Bábí turn back to their rows)

Row 1 *(singing)*: God is sufficient unto me; He verily is the All-Sufficing!

Row 2 *(singing)*: In Him let the trusting trust.

SCENE 3

Narrator: Those were mysterious days in the sháh's

dungeon. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that, in the midst of the gloom and misery, He saw a glorious Vision.

(Pulls out a scroll and reads as music plays)

“While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden . . . suspended in the air before Me. . . . Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: ‘By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, . . .’ ”

We can only wonder if Bahá'u'lláh's fellow-prisoners sensed the spiritual power that visited the prison. He told no one about His Vision.

Row 1 (singing): God is sufficient unto me; He verily is the All-Sufficing!

Row 2 (singing): In Him let the trusting trust.

SCENE 4

Narrator: After four long months, Bahá'u'lláh and the remaining Bábís were

released. Bahá'u'lláh was banished to Baghdád. He waited 10 years before announcing that He was the Promised One.

(Guards enter and pull chains off of some prisoners, who stand and stretch. Thief and Bábí turn to face audience)

Bábí: We go today, friend.

Thief: I didn't think you'd make it.

Bábí: God has other plans for me. And perhaps for you as well.

Thief: Me? You think so?

Bábí: If you find yourself free again, come and find me. You have a friend among the Bábís.

Thief: But—it's dangerous—so many Bábís have been killed.

Bábí: God is sufficient unto me; He verily is the All-Sufficing!

Thief (looks at Bábí for a moment, then says): In Him let the trusting trust.

THE END ✨

Performance Tips

- Out of respect, Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá should never be shown in a play or other work of art. No changes should be made to this play to try to show Bahá'u'lláh.

- Speak up! When speaking, take a deep breath, then speak clearly and slowly. Speak loudly, as if talking to someone at the back of the room.



- Because the prison was dirty, use makeup to give the prisoners dirty faces.

- For costumes, the prisoners can wear tattered, dirty robes. The guards can wear pants and long jackets, tall hats, and boots. The guards could wear belts or sashes.



- Long paper or plastic chains can be wrapped around the rows of prisoners.

- Use a bright flashlight for a spotlight. Shine it on the prisoners who are talking, and keep the rest of the stage dim. This will show how dark and gloomy the prison was.

- Make a backdrop using a large sheet of paper or cardboard. Paint it to look like a gray stone wall.

- You can find music for the Bábís' song on page 18. ✨