

SARAH
WOMAN OF GENESIS
by
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Based on the novel by
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EXT. PLAINS NEAR HEBRON - NIGHT

An old woman, SARAH, walks with the assistance of a staff outside her camp. She reaches a spot in the clearing and looks up into the night sky where millions of stars sparkle.

SARAH (V.O.)

Every one of God's creations is known to him. Even the small ones. Even the doubters. I should know. In all my years of wandering, He never once forgot about me.

FADE TO:

TITLES UP

EXT. GRASSLANDS, UR-OF-THE-NORTH - DAY

Semi-arid meadows roll across a broad, treeless landscape.

CRANE DOWN TO:

WEDDING CANOPY

Bright and exquisitely woven. In its shade stands LOT (20), the finely dressed yet visibly concerned groom. TERAH, Lot's aging grandfather, stands beside the table and looks impatiently at Lot, who smiles weakly.

EXT. FATHER'S CAMP - DAY

The WEDDING PARTY sits quietly on the earth in front of the canopy, fanning themselves and sighing. A sheep BLEATS. Flies BUZZ.

INT. QIRA'S TENT - DAY

QIRA, dressed for the wedding and weeping into her pillow.

QIRA

My own father hates me!

FATHER

I don't hate you, Qira.

QIRA

Then why marry me to a desert man?

FATHER

Lot is Terah's grandson, heir to his great and ancient priesthood. Not to mention the greater portion of his herds. You will not find a better husband.

QIRA

Then let Sarai marry him.

FATHER

Your sister is godspoken. You know that.

QIRA

I will not live in a tent!

FATHER

Fine! If I make that a condition of the wedding will you stop shaming me?

Qira suddenly stops crying and considers this.

EXT. CANOPY - DAY

The wedding is in progress. Terah officiates. Having won her demands, Qira is all smiles.

Sitting at the front of the congregation is SARAI - young, beautiful, and a master of feminine poise. Her eyes wonder a moment to ABRAM (20), who's staring at her. He smiles. She immediately looks back to the wedding, blushing.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

The wedding feast is a hearty celebration complete with roasting lamb, dancers, musicians, laughter. Abram, broad and handsome, finds Father alone.

ABRAM

Tell me. Did your wife only bear you beautiful daughters or are you hiding the ugly ones?

Father sees whom Abram is looking at: Sarai sits nearby with some WOMEN of the camp. Father laughs and motions her over.

FATHER

Sarai!

She comes.

FATHER

Abram, I would have you meet my
youngest daughter, Sarai.

She kneels before Abram with bowed head then rises.

FATHER

(introducing him)
Sarai, Abram, Lot's uncle.

SARAI

Uncle? And so young.

ABRAM

Lot is the son of my much elder
brother. And the same age as me.
I'm more of a brother to him than
an uncle.

FATHER

(smiling)
I hear you two had a wager.

ABRAM

Yes, and I won that wager; he
married first.

Father laughs. Lot and Qira dance by the campfire.

ABRAM

And married well, I see. Perhaps I
will someday enjoy the same
blessing.

He smiles as Sarai, who blushes.

FATHER

Don't get thoughts. Sarai is spoken
for by the goddess Asherah. She's
to be a temple servant.

Abram's smile fades.

SARAI

You disapprove?

ABRAM

You will forgive me if I do not share your father's enthusiasm.

SARAI

To be a priestess of Asherah is a woman's highest honor.

ABRAM

Is it? I think your mother would have disagreed.

SARAI

(shocked)

Speak you ill of my mother?

ABRAM

I merely mean to say that to bear a child as beautiful and as obedient as yourself would be any woman's greatest honor.

Sarai blushes yet again. Father laughs.

FATHER

It's a wonder Lot married first with words such as yours. But you speak truth, Abram.

He takes Sarai's by the shoulders.

FATHER

You, daughter, are everything your mother ever hoped for, truly a princess worthy of her title.

Their moment is spoiled by the rumbling of a CHARIOT into camp.

The festivities grind to a halt as everyone watches the Egyptian SUWERTU dismount and approach, flanked by two GUARDS.

ABRAM

Friend of yours?

FATHER

Suwertu. Priest of Pharaoh here in Ur-of-the-North.

Sarai bows as Suwertu reaches Father.

SUWERTU

Please. Do not permit my visit to disturb your celebration.

Father waves at the BAND, and slowly the party resumes.

SUWERTU

(to Sarai)

Rise, child. Preserve your propriety for your father the king.

Sarai rises.

FATHER

A king-in-exile, Suwertu. Pray, to what do we owe this honor?

SUWERTU

(wicked smile)

My curiosity.

INT. FATHER'S TENT - NIGHT

The tent flaps are open in the front and the rear. The two Egyptian Guards stand post at the front. A shrine of idols sits in the corner. Suwertu sits before Father while Sarai serves tea and dates.

SUWERTU

The legend of your daughters' beauty is a true one, I see.

FATHER

God has blessed me.

Sarai takes her place behind Father.

SUWERTU

By God I trust you mean Osiris, he who died and was brought back to life by his son Horus and the goddess Isis.

FATHER

I know little of the Egyptian names for the gods.

SUWERTU

Then perhaps by God you meant Pharaoh.

He drinks from his tea, never taking his eyes off Father.

EXT. FATHER'S TENT - SAME

Abram is outside trying to listen. The Guards subtly warn him with their staffs to get lost. He backs off.

INT. FATHER'S TENT - SAME

SUWERTU

I wonder, why would a man of such wisdom as yourself, O King, give your daughter to an obscure family of Amorites?

FATHER

The Amorites, Suwertu, are barbarians who destroy what they cannot conquer. As we know to our sorrow. Terah and his sons are peaceful shepherds.

SUWERTU

Shepherds? All the more intriguing.

FATHER

They are of the lineage of Noah, who the Sumerians call Utnapishtim, he who rode above the flood.

SUWERTU

Priests then?

SUWERTU

There's is the birthright if that's what you mean.

SUWERTU

(laughs)
Their priesthood is falsely claimed, King. Only Pharaoh can say such.

ABRAM (O.S.)

You're half right.

Abram is squatting in the rear doorway.

ABRAM

Pharaoh *is* a descendent of Noah, but through a son who was denied the birthright and therefore given no authority.

He takes a seat beside Father. Suwertu shoots the guards a look, who apparently are shirking in their duties.

SUWERTU

(to Abram)

You deny that Pharaoh holds the power of God?

ABRAM

Does Pharaoh make such a claim? The priesthood is the power to do what God says for men to do in his name. Not to act as god.

SUWERTU

Perhaps you've spent too much time in the sun, young shepherd. To insult Pharaoh is a crime punishable by death.

ABRAM

To insult the one true and living God is a far greater offense.

SUWERTU

One God?
(motioning to the idols)
And yet you pray to so many?

ABRAM

I pray to no idol.

SUWERTU

But your father does. As does the king.

ABRAM

Then we disagree.

SUWERTU

(to Father)

This is your priest? Even he denies your Gods.

(to Abram)

Tell me, if Pharaoh does not possess the power of God then by what power did he raise his father from the dead and lift him into heaven?

ABRAM

I can only assume it was the power of his imagination.

Sarai's face registers shock. Suwertu stands.

SUWERTU

Guards!

They enter.

SUWERTU

Seize this man.

They do.

FATHER

Abram is my guest!

SUWERTU

And an enemy of Pharaoh. Forgive me, King, but his rights as your guest do not give him sanctuary from crimes against Egypt.

He storms out. The guards manhandle Abram out as well.

EXT. FATHER'S TENT - NIGHT

Father and Sarai follow them to the chariot. The party immediately halts because of the commotion.

FATHER

Suertu, wait. Abram will retract his words.

(to Abram)

Abram. Please.

Suertu stops. A crowd gathers. Abram is silent.

SUWERTU

Well?

ABRAM

Let it be witnessed that I speak alone. The king and his daughters are guiltless of any crime.

SUWERTU

(to the Guards)

Bind him.

They bind his hands. Terah muscled through the crowd.

TERAH

What is this?

ABRAM

Peace, Father. I'll be fine.

SUWERTU

Naively spoken, shepherd.

(to the crowd)

For giving offense to Pharaoh,
Abram is sentenced to death.

LOT

No!

Lot tries to attack, but is held back.

SUWERTU

However, if Terah will deny his
claim of birthright, I will excuse
this youth's impudence.

All eyes turn to Terah, who's at a loss. He looks at Abram,
who only smiles kindly at his father.

SUWERTU

Very well. Then you can use that
priesthood to raise him from the
grave.

He cracks the whip, and the chariot moves forward. Tied to it
is the rope bound to Abram's hands. He walks behind, looking
over his shoulder at Sarai until he disappears into darkness.

INT. FATHER'S TENT - NIGHT

All the men are gathered.

LOT

There were only two soldiers.

FATHER

More are near. Be sure of it.

LOT

Yes, but if we hurry-

TERAH

No. Bloodshed only brings more
bloodshed.

EXT. FATHER'S TENT - SAME

Sarai is by the flap, listening.

INT. FATHER'S TENT - SAME

FATHER

Terah's right. Suwertu will sacrifice your wives and daughters if you oppose him.

LOT

Sacrifice?

TERAH

Religion is a weapon of oppression in these lands, Lot.

LOT

You mean human sacrifice?

FATHER

Why do you think I promised Sarai to Asherah? Having her work in the temple protects her from Suwertu. He wouldn't dare sacrifice a priestess.

Sarai gasps. No one hears her.

LOT

So we do nothing? We let Abram die?

EXT. FATHER'S TENT - SAME

QIRA (O.S.)

Always the nosy one.

Sarai turns to face Qira, puts a finger to her lips, and pulls her away from the tent out of earshot.

SARAI

Did you hear?

QIRA

Hear? How could I hear? I've been alone, crying in my wedding tent.

SARAI

Qira, Suwertu is a murderer.

QIRA

Good. I hope his next victim is this Abram.