

## The York Play of the Crucifixion

*Cast of Characters*

JESUS

FOUR SOLDIERS

[*Calvary*]

1ST SOLDIER.	Sir knights, take heed hither in hie, <sup>o</sup> This deed on dergh we may not draw: <sup>1</sup> Ye woot <sup>o</sup> yourself as well as I	<i>haste</i> <i>know</i>
5 2ND SOLDIER.	How lords and leaders of our law Has given doom that this dote <sup>o</sup> shall die. Sir, all their counsel well we know. Sen <sup>o</sup> we are comen to Calvary, Let ilk <sup>o</sup> man help now as him awe. <sup>o</sup>	<i>fool</i> <i>since</i> <i>each/ought</i>
10 3RD SOLDIER.	We are all ready, lo, This forward <sup>o</sup> to fulfill.	<i>agreement</i>
4TH SOLDIER.	Let hear how we shall do, And go we tite theretill. <sup>2</sup>	
1ST SOLDIER.	It may not help here for to hone, <sup>o</sup> If we shall any worship <sup>o</sup> win.	<i>delay</i> <i>honor</i>
15 2ND SOLDIER.	He must be dead needlings <sup>o</sup> by noon.	<i>of necessity</i>
3RD SOLDIER.	Then is good time that we begin.	
4TH SOLDIER.	Let ding <sup>o</sup> him down, then is he done: He shall not dere <sup>o</sup> us with his din.	<i>strike</i> <i>annoy</i>
1ST SOLDIER.	He shall be set and learned soon <sup>3</sup> With care <sup>o</sup> to him and all his kin.	<i>sorrow</i>
20 2ND SOLDIER.	The foulest dead <sup>o</sup> of all Shall he die for his deeds.	<i>death</i>
3RD SOLDIER.	That means cross <sup>o</sup> him we shall.	<i>crucify</i>
4TH SOLDIER.	Behold, so right he reads. <sup>o</sup>	<i>speaks</i>
25 1ST SOLDIER.	Then to this work us must take heed, So that our working be not wrang. <sup>o</sup>	<i>wrong</i>
2ND SOLDIER.	None other note to neven is need, <sup>4</sup> But let us haste him for to hang.	

1. We may not delay the time of this deed.

2. And let's get to it quickly.

3. He'll be put in his place and taught quickly.

4. There is no need to mention any other business.

	3RD SOLDIER.	And I have gone for gear good speed, <sup>5</sup>	
30	4TH SOLDIER.	Both hammers and nails large and lang. <sup>o</sup>	<i>long</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Then may we boldly do this deed. Come on, let kill this traitor strong. <sup>o</sup>	<i>flagrant</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	Fair might ye fall in fere <sup>6</sup> That has wrought on this wise. Us needs not for to lear <sup>o</sup>	<i>learn</i>
35		Such faitours <sup>o</sup> to chastise.	<i>fakers</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	Sen ilk a thing is right arrayed, The wiselier <sup>o</sup> now work may we.	<i>more skillfully</i>
	4TH SOLDIER.	The cross on ground is goodly graid, <sup>o</sup>	<i>prepared</i>
40	1ST SOLDIER.	And bored <sup>7</sup> even as it ought to be. Look that the lad on length be laid, And made be fest <sup>o</sup> unto this tree. <sup>8</sup>	<i>fastened</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	For all his fare he shall be flayed: <sup>o</sup> That on assay <sup>9</sup> soon shall ye see.	<i>beaten</i>
45	3RD SOLDIER.	Come forth, thou cursed knave, Thy comfort soon shall keel. <sup>o</sup>	<i>grow cold</i>
	4TH SOLDIER.	Thine hire here shall thou have.	
	1ST SOLDIER.	Walk on, now work we weel. <sup>o</sup>	<i>well</i>
	JESUS	Almighty God, my Father free, <sup>o</sup>	<i>noble</i>
50		Let these matters be made in mind: Thou bade that I should buxom <sup>o</sup> be, For Adam <sup>o</sup> plight for to be pined. <sup>o</sup>	<i>obedient</i> <i>Adam's/tortured</i>
		Here to dead <sup>o</sup> I oblige me <sup>1</sup> Fro <sup>o</sup> that sin for to save mankind, And sovereignly beseech I thee, <sup>2</sup>	<i>death</i> <i>from</i>
55		That they for me may favor find. And from the Fiend them fend, <sup>o</sup> So that their souls be safe, In wealth <sup>o</sup> withouten end.	<i>defend</i> <i>welfare</i>
60		I keep <sup>o</sup> nought else to crave.	<i>care</i>

5. Quickly.

6. May you all have good luck together.

7. I.e., bored with holes for the nails, which were probably wooden.

8. I.e., the cross. "Fare": behavior.

9. I.e., in actual experience.

1. Render myself liable.

2. And above all I beseech thee.

1ST SOLDIER.	We, <sup>3</sup> hark, sir knights, for Mahound's blood. Of Adam-kind° is all his thought!	<i>mankind</i>
2ND SOLDIER.	The warlock waxes worse than wood. <sup>4</sup> This doleful dead° ne dreadeth he nought.	<i>death</i>
65 3RD SOLDIER.	Thou should have mind, with main and mood, <sup>5</sup> Of wicked works that thou hast wrought.	
4TH SOLDIER.	I hope° that he had been as good° Have ceased of saws that he up sought. <sup>6</sup>	<i>think/well off</i>
1ST SOLDIER.	Those saws° shall rue° him sore	<i>sayings/repent</i>
70 2ND SOLDIER.	For all his sauntering <sup>7</sup> soon. Ill speed them that him spare <sup>8</sup> Till he to dead° be done.	<i>death</i>
3RD SOLDIER.	Have done belive,° boy, and make thee boun,° And bend thy back unto this tree. [ <i>Jesus lies down.</i> ]	<i>at once ready</i>
75 4TH SOLDIER.	Behold, himself has laid him down, In length and breadth as he should be.	
1ST SOLDIER.	This traitor here tainted° of treasoun, Go fast and fetch him then, ye three. And sen he claimeth kingdom with crown,	<i>convicted</i>
80 2ND SOLDIER.	Even as a king here hang shall he. Now certes I shall not fine° Ere his right hand be fest.°	<i>stop fastened</i>
3RD SOLDIER.	The left hand then is mine: Let see who bears him <sup>9</sup> best.	
85 4TH SOLDIER.	His limbs on length then shall I lead,° And even unto the bore° them bring.	<i>stretch hole</i>
1ST SOLDIER.	Unto his head I shall take heed, And with my hand help him to hing.°	<i>hang</i>

3. "We": an exclamation of surprise or displeasure. "Mahound's": Mohammed's; the sacred figures of other religions were considered devils by Christians in the Middle Ages; the soldier is swearing by the Devil.

4. This devil grows worse than crazy.

5. You should think, with all your strength and wits.

6. I.e., to have ceased of the sayings that he thought up.

7. ? Behaving like a saint.

8. Bad luck to them that spare him.

9. Handles himself.

90	2ND SOLDIER.	Now sen we four shall do this deed, And meddle° with this unthrifty° thing,	<i>deal/ unrewarding</i>
		Let no man spare for special speed, <sup>1</sup> Till that we have made ending.	
	3RD SOLDIER.	This forward° may not fail,	<i>agreement</i>
		Now are we right arrayed.°	<i>set up</i>
95	4TH SOLDIER.	This boy here in our bail° Shall bide° full bitter braid.°	<i>control abide/treatment</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Sir knights, say, how work we now?	
	2ND SOLDIER.	Yes, certes, I hope° I hold this hand.	<i>think</i>
100		And to the bore I have it brought, Full buxomly° withouten band.°	<i>effortlessly/cord</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Strike on then hard, for him thee bought. <sup>2</sup>	
	2ND SOLDIER.	Yes, here is a stub° will safely stand: Through bones and sinews it shall be sought.°	<i>nail driven</i>
		This work is well, I will warrand.°	<i>warrant</i>
105	1ST SOLDIER.	Say, sir, how do we thore?°	<i>there</i>
		This bargain may not blin. <sup>3</sup>	
	3RD SOLDIER.	It fails° a foot and more, The sinews are so gone in.°	<i>falls short shrunk</i>
	4TH SOLDIER.	I hope that mark° amiss be bored.	<i>hole</i>
110	2ND SOLDIER.	Then must he bide° in bitter bale.°	<i>wait/woe</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	In faith, it was over-scantly scored: <sup>4</sup> That makes it foully° for to fail.	<i>badly</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Why carp° ye so? Fast° on a cord And tug him to, by top and tail. <sup>5</sup>	<i>complain/fasten</i>
115	3RD SOLDIER.	Yea, thou commands lightly° as a lord: Come help to haul, with ill hail. <sup>6</sup>	<i>readily</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Now certes° that shall I do Full snelly° as a snail.	<i>certainly quickly</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	And I shall tach° him to Full nimby with a nail.	<i>attach</i>
120			

1. Let nobody slacken because of his own welfare.
2. Drive the nail in hard, for him who redeemed thee: a splendidly anachronistic oath.
3. This arrangement may not fail: the arrangement is of the four soldiers at the four ends of the cross.
4. It was overcarelessly bored.
5. And stretch him to it, head and toe.
6. With bad luck to you.

		This work will hold, that dare I heet, <sup>o</sup> For now are fest <sup>o</sup> fast both his hend. <sup>o</sup>	<i>promise fastened hands</i>
	4TH SOLDIER.	Go we all four then to his feet: So shall our space <sup>o</sup> be speedly <sup>o</sup> spend.	<i>time/well</i>
125	2ND SOLDIER.	Let see, what bourd his bale might beet: <sup>7</sup> Thereto my back now will I bend.	
	4TH SOLDIER.	Ow! this work is all unmeet: <sup>o</sup> This boring must be all amend.	<i>wrongly done</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Ah, peace, man, for Mahound, <sup>o</sup> Let no man woot <sup>o</sup> that wonder.	<i>Mohammed know</i>
130		A rope shall rug <sup>o</sup> him down, If all his sinews go asunder.	<i>jerk</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	That cord full kindly can I knit, <sup>o</sup> The comfort of this carl <sup>o</sup> to keel. <sup>o</sup>	<i>knot knave/cool</i>
135	1ST SOLDIER.	Fest on then fast that all be fit. It is no force <sup>o</sup> how fell <sup>o</sup> he feel.	<i>matter/badly</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	Lug on, ye both, a little yit, <sup>o</sup>	<i>yet</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	I shall not cease, as I have seel. <sup>8</sup>	
	4TH SOLDIER.	And I shall fond <sup>o</sup> him for to hit.	<i>try</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	Ow, hail! <sup>o</sup>	<i>pull</i>
140	4TH SOLDIER.	Ho, now I hold <sup>o</sup> it weel. <sup>o</sup>	<i>think/well</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Have done, drive in that nail So that no fault be found.	
	4TH SOLDIER.	This working would not fail If four bulls here were bound.	
145	1ST SOLDIER.	These cords have evil <sup>o</sup> increased his pains Ere <sup>o</sup> he were till <sup>o</sup> the borings brought.	<i>badly before/to</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	Yea, asunder are both sinews and veins On ilk a side, so have we sought. <sup>o</sup>	<i>afflicted</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	Now all his gauds <sup>o</sup> nothing him gains: His sauntering shall with bale be bought. <sup>9</sup>	<i>tricks</i>
150	4TH SOLDIER.	I will go say to our sovereigns Of all these works how we have wrought.	
	1ST SOLDIER.	Nay, sirs, another thing Falls first to you and me: <sup>1</sup>	

7. Let's see, what trick could increase his suffering.

8. As I may have good luck.

9. His acting like a saint (?) shall be paid for with pain.

1. You and I must do first.

155		They bade we should him hing <sup>o</sup> On height that men might see.	<i>hang</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	We woot well so their words were, But sir, that deed will do us dere. <sup>o</sup>	<i>harm</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	It may nought mend <sup>o</sup> for to moot <sup>o</sup> more:	<i>improve</i> <i>argue</i>
160		This harlot <sup>o</sup> must be hanged here.	<i>rascal</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	The mortise <sup>2</sup> is made fit <sup>o</sup> therefore.	<i>ready</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	Fast on your fingers then, in fere. <sup>3</sup>	
	4TH SOLDIER.	I ween <sup>o</sup> it will never come there.	<i>think</i>
		We four raise it not right to <sup>o</sup> -year.	<i>this</i>
165	1ST SOLDIER.	Say, man, why carps thou so? Thy lifting was but light. <sup>o</sup>	<i>easy</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	He means there must be mo <sup>o</sup> To heave him up on height.	<i>more</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	Now certes I hope it shall not need To call to us more company.	
170		Methink we four should do this deed, And bear him to yon hill on high.	
	1ST SOLDIER.	It must be done withouten dread: <sup>o</sup>	<i>doubt</i>
		No more, but look ye be ready, And this part shall I lift and lead. <sup>o</sup>	<i>carry</i>
175		On length he shall no longer lie.	
		Therefore now make you boun: <sup>o</sup>	<i>ready</i>
		Let bear him to yon hill.	
	4TH SOLDIER.	Then will I bear here down, And tent his toes untill. <sup>4</sup>	
180			
	2ND SOLDIER.	We two shall see till either side, For else this work will wry <sup>o</sup> all wring. <sup>o</sup>	<i>turn out</i> <i>wrong</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	We are ready.	
	4TH SOLDIER.	Good sirs, abide,	
		And let me first his feet up fang. <sup>o</sup>	<i>take</i>
185	2ND SOLDIER.	Why tent ye so to tales this tide? <sup>5</sup>	

2. A hole in the ground shaped to receive the cross.

3. Fasten your fingers on it, all together.

4. Then I'll carry the part down here and attend to his toes.

5. Why are you so intent on talking at a time like this?

	1ST SOLDIER.	Lift up! [ <i>All lift the cross together.</i> ]	
	4TH SOLDIER.	Let see!	
	2ND SOLDIER.	Ow! Lift along!	
	3RD SOLDIER.	From all this harm he should him hide° And° he were God.	<i>protect</i> <i>if</i>
	4TH SOLDIER.	The Devil him hang!	
	1ST SOLDIER.	For great harm° I have hent:° My shoulder is in sunder.	<i>injury/received</i>
190	2ND SOLDIER.	And certes I am near shent,° So long have I born under. <sup>6</sup>	<i>ruined</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	This cross and I in two must twin°— Else breaks my back in sunder soon.	<i>separate</i>
195	4TH SOLDIER.	Lay down again and leave° your din. This deed for us will never be done. [ <i>They lay it down.</i> ]	<i>cease</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Assay,° sirs, let see if any gin° May help him up, withouten hone.° For here should wight° men worship win, And not with gauds° all day to gone.	<i>try/trick</i> <i>delay</i> <i>strong</i> <i>pranks</i>
200	2ND SOLDIER.	More wighter° men than we Full few I hope° ye find.	<i>stronger</i> <i>think</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	This bargain° will not be,° For certes me wants wind.	<i>arrangement/work</i>
205	4TH SOLDIER.	So will° of work never we wore.° I hope this carl some cautels cast. <sup>7</sup>	<i>at a loss/were</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	My burden sat° me wonder sore: Unto the hill I might not last.	<i>vexed</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Lift up and soon he shall be thore.° Therefore fest° on your fingers fast.	<i>there</i> <i>fasten</i>
210	3RD SOLDIER.	Ow, lift!	
	1ST SOLDIER.	We, lo!	
	4TH SOLDIER.	A little more!	
	2ND SOLDIER.	Hold then!	
	1ST SOLDIER.	How now?	
	2ND SOLDIER.	The worst is past.	
	3RD SOLDIER.	He weighs a wicked weight.	
	2ND SOLDIER.	So may we all four say,	

6. So long have I borne it up.

7. I think this knave cast some spells.

215		Ere he was heaved on height And raised on this array. <sup>o</sup>	<i>way</i>
	4TH SOLDIER.	He made us stand as any stones, So boistous <sup>o</sup> was he for to bear.	<i>bulky</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Now raise him nimbly for the nonce, <sup>8</sup> And set him by this mortise here;	
220		And let him fall in all at once, For certes that pain shall have no peer. <sup>o</sup>	<i>equal</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	Heave up!	
	4TH SOLDIER.	Let down, so all his bones Are asunder now on sides sere. <sup>9</sup>	
		[ <i>The cross is raised.</i> ]	
225	1ST SOLDIER.	That falling was more fell <sup>o</sup> Than all the harms he had. Now may a man well tell <sup>o</sup> The least lith <sup>o</sup> of this lad.	<i>cruel</i>  <i>count</i> <i>joint</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	Methinketh this cross will not abide Nor stand still in this mortise yit. <sup>o</sup>	<i>yet</i>
230	4TH SOLDIER.	At the first was it made overwide: That makes it wave, thou may well wit. <sup>o</sup>	<i>learn</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	It shall be set on ilk a side, So that it shall no further flit. <sup>o</sup>	<i>move</i>
235		Good wedges shall we take this tide, <sup>o</sup> And fast <sup>o</sup> the foot, then is all fit.	<i>time</i> <i>fasten</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	Here are wedges arrayed <sup>o</sup> For that, both great and small.	<i>prepared</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	Where are our hammers laid That we should work withal?	
240			
	4TH SOLDIER.	We have them here even at our hand.	
	2ND SOLDIER.	Give me this wedge, I shall it in drive.	
	4TH SOLDIER.	Here is another yit ordand. <sup>o</sup>	<i>ready</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	Do take <sup>o</sup> it me hither belive. <sup>o</sup>	<i>give/quickly</i>
245	1ST SOLDIER.	Lay on then fast.	
	3RD SOLDIER.	Yes. I warrand. <sup>o</sup>	<i>guarantee</i>

8. For the purpose.

9. Are pulled apart on every side.



		I thring them sam, so mote I thrive. <sup>1</sup> Now will this cross ful stably stand: All if he rave they will not rive. <sup>2</sup>	
	1ST SOLDIER.	Say, sir, how likes thou now	
250		The work that we have wrought?	
	4TH SOLDIER.	We pray you, say us how Ye feel, or faint ye aught? <sup>3</sup>	
	JESUS	All men that walk by way or street, Take tent—ye shall no travail tine <sup>4</sup> — Behold mine head, mine hands, my feet, And fully feel now ere ye fine <sup>o</sup>	<i>cease</i>
255		If any mourning may be meet Or mischief <sup>o</sup> measured unto mine.	<i>injury</i>
		My Father, that all bales may bete, <sup>5</sup> Forgive these men that do me pine. <sup>o</sup>	<i>torment</i>
260		What they work woot <sup>o</sup> they nought: Therefore my Father I crave Let never their sins be sought, <sup>o</sup> But see their souls to save.	<i>know</i> <i>searched</i>
265	1ST SOLDIER.	We, hark! he jangles like a jay.	
	2ND SOLDIER.	Methink he patters like a pie. <sup>o</sup>	<i>magpie</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	He has been doand <sup>o</sup> all this day, And made great mening <sup>o</sup> of mercy.	<i>doing so</i> <i>talk</i>
	4TH SOLDIER.	Is this the same that gun <sup>o</sup> us say That he was God's son almighty? <sup>6</sup>	<i>did</i>
270		Therefore he feels full fell affray, <sup>7</sup> And doomed this day was for to die.	
	2ND SOLDIER.	Vath! <i>qui destruis templum!</i> <sup>8</sup>	
	3RD SOLDIER.	His saws <sup>o</sup> were so, certain.	<i>sayings</i>
275	4TH SOLDIER.	And, sirs, he said to some He might raise it again.	
	1ST SOLDIER.	To muster <sup>o</sup> that he had no might, For all the cautels <sup>o</sup> that he could cast;	<i>exhibit</i> <i>charms</i>

1. I press them together, so may I thrive.

2. Even if he struggles, they will not budge.

3. Or do you feel somewhat faint?

4. Take heed, you shall not lose your labor.

5. My father, who may remedy all evils.

6. That he was the son of almighty God.

7. For that he suffers a full cruel assault.

8. In Faith thou who destroys the temple (cf. Mark 14.58, John 2.19).

		All if he were in word so wight, <sup>9</sup>	
280		For all his force now is he fast.	
		All Pilate deemed is done and dight: <sup>o</sup>	<i>accomplished</i>
		Therefore I read <sup>o</sup> that we go rest.	<i>advise</i>
	2ND SOLDIER.	This race must be rehearsed right <sup>1</sup>	
		Through the world both east and west.	
285	2ND SOLDIER.	Yea, let him hang here still	
		And make mows on the moon. <sup>2</sup>	
	4TH SOLDIER.	Then may we wend <sup>o</sup> at will.	<i>go away</i>
	1ST SOLDIER.	Nay, good sirs, not so soon.	
		For certes us needs another note: <sup>3</sup>	
290		This kirtle would I of you crave.	
	2ND SOLDIER.	Nay, nay, sir, we will look <sup>o</sup> by lot	<i>see</i>
		Which of us four falls <sup>o</sup> it to have.	<i>chances</i>
	3RD SOLDIER.	I read <sup>o</sup> we draw cut <sup>o</sup> for this coat.	<i>advise/lots</i>
		Lo, see now soon, all sides to save. <sup>4</sup>	
295	4TH SOLDIER.	The short cut <sup>o</sup> shall win, that well ye woot,	<i>straw</i>
		Whether it fall to knight or knave.	
	1ST SOLDIER.	Fellows, ye thar not flite, <sup>5</sup>	
		For this mantle is mine.	
	2ND SOLDIER.	Go we then hence tite, <sup>o</sup>	<i>quickly</i>
300		This travail here we tine. <sup>6</sup>	

9. Even though he was so clever in words.

1. This course of action must be repeated correctly.

2. And make faces at the moon.

3. For surely we have another piece of business to settle.

4. See now straightway, to protect all parties.

5. Fellows, you don't need to quarrel.

6. We're wasting our time here.