The York Play of the Crucifixion

Cast of Characters

JESUS
FOUR SOLDIERS

[Calvary]

1ST SOLDIER. Sir knights, take heed hither in hie, haste
This deed on dergh we may not draw:1
Ye woot you yourself as well as I
How lords and leaders of our law
Has given doom that this dote shall die. fool

2ND SOLDIER. Sir, all their counsel well we know.
Sen we are comen to Calvary,
Let ilk man help now as him awe. each/ought

3RD SOLDIER. We are all ready, lo,
This forward to fulfill. agreement

4TH SOLDIER. Let hear how we shall do,
And go we tite theretill.2

1ST SOLDIER. It may not help here for to hone, delay
If we shall any worship win.

2ND SOLDIER. He must be dead needlings by noon. of necessity

3RD SOLDIER. Then is good time that we begin.

4TH SOLDIER. Let ding him down, then is he done:
He shall not dere us with his din. annoy

1ST SOLDIER. He shall be set and learned soon3
With care to him and all his kin. sorrow

2ND SOLDIER. The foulest dead of all
death
Shall he die for his deeds.

3RD SOLDIER. That means cross him we shall. crucify

4TH SOLDIER. Behold, so right he reads. speaks

25 1ST SOLDIER. Then to this work us must take heed,
So that our working be not wrang. wrong

2ND SOLDIER. None other note to neven is need,4
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.
And I have gone for gear good speed,
Both hammers and nails large and long.

Then may we boldly do this deed.
Come on, let kill this traitor strong.

Fair might ye fall in fere
That has wrought on this wise.

Us needs not for to lear
Such fakers to chastise.

Sen ilk a thing is right arrayed,
The wiselier now work may we.

The cross on ground is goodly graid,
And bored even as it ought to be.

Look that the lad on length be laid,
And made be fest unto this tree.

For all his fare he shall be flayed:
That on assay soon shall ye see.

Come forth, thou cursed knave,
Thy comfort soon shall keel.

Thine hire here shall thou have.
Walk on, now work we well.

Almighty God, my Father free,
Let these matters be made in mind:
Thou bade that I should buxom be,
For Adam's plight for to be pined.
Here to dead I oblige me
Fro that sin for to save mankind,
And sovereignly beseech I thee,
That they for me may favor find.

And from the Fiend them fend,
So that their souls be safe,
In welfare withouten end.
I keep nought else to crave.

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

\textsuperscript{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.  
\textsuperscript{4} This devil grows worse than crazy.  
\textsuperscript{5} You should think, with all your strength and wits.  
\textsuperscript{6} I.e., to have ceased of the sayings that he thought up.  
\textsuperscript{7} ? Behaving like a saint.  
\textsuperscript{8} Bad luck to them that spare him.  
\textsuperscript{o} Handles himself.
2ND SOLDIER. Now sen we four shall do this deed,
And meddle\(^o\) with this unthrifty\(^o\) thing,
Let no man spare for special speed,\(^1\)
Till that we have made ending.

3RD SOLDIER. This forward\(^o\) may not fail,
Now are we right arrayed.\(^5\)

4TH SOLDIER. This boy here in our bail\(^o\)
Shall bide\(^o\) full bitter braid.\(^6\)

1ST SOLDIER. Sir knights, say, how work we now?
2ND SOLDIER. Yes, certes, I hope\(^o\) I hold this hand,
And to the bore I have it brought,
Full buxomly\(^o\) withouten band.\(^o\)

1ST SOLDIER. Strike on th'en hard, for him thee bought.\(^2\)
2ND SOLDIER. Yes, here is a stub\(^o\) will safely stand:
Through bones and sinews it shall be sought.\(^9\)
This work is well, I will warrand.\(^o\)

4TH SOLDIER. I hope that mark\(^o\) amiss be bored.
2ND SOLDIER. Then must he bide\(^o\) in bitter bale.\(^o\)
3RD SOLDIER. In faith, it was over-scantly scored:\(^4\)
That makes it foully\(^o\) for to fail.
1ST SOLDIER. Why carp\(^o\) ye so? Fast\(^o\) on a cord
And tug him to, by top and tail.\(^5\)

3RD SOLDIER. Yea, thou commands lightly\(^o\) as a lord:
Come help to haul, with ill hail.\(^6\)
1ST SOLDIER. Now certes\(^o\) that shall I do
Full snelly\(^o\) as a snail.
3RD SOLDIER. And I shall tach\(^o\) him to
Full nimbly with a nail.

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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,\(^6\) promise
For now are fest\(^8\) fast both his
hend.\(^9\) fastened

4TH SOLDIER. Go we all four then to his feet:
So shall our space\(^9\) be speedly\(^9\) spend.\(^7\) time/well

125 2ND SOLDIER. Let see, what bourd his bale might beet.\(^7\) wrongly done
Thereto my back now will I bend.

4TH SOLDIER. Ow! this work is all unmeet.\(^9\) wrongly done
This boring must be all amend.

1ST SOLDIER. Ah, peace, man, for Mahound,\(^o\) Mohammed
Let no man woot\(^o\) that wonder.
A rope shall rug\(^o\) him down,
If all his sinews go asunder.

2ND SOLDIER. That cord full kindly can I knit,\(^o\) knot
The comfort of this carl\(^o\) to keel.\(^o\) knave/cool

135 1ST SOLDIER. Fest on then fast that all be fit.
It is no force\(^o\) how fell\(^o\) he feel.\(^o\) matter/badly

2ND SOLDIER. Lug on, ye both, a little yit,\(^o\) yet
3RD SOLDIER. I shall not cease, as I have seel.\(^5\) try
4TH SOLDIER. And I shall fond\(^o\) him for to hit.
2ND SOLDIER. Ow, hail!\(^o\) pull

140 4TH SOLDIER. Ho, now I hold\(^o\) it weel.\(^o\) think/well
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\(^o\) increased his pains badly
Ere\(^o\) he were till\(^o\) the borings brought.

2ND SOLDIER. Yea, asunder are both sinews and veins before/to
On ilk a side, so have we sought.\(^9\) afflicted

3RD SOLDIER. Now all his gauds\(^o\) nothing him gains:
tricks
His sauntering shall with bale be bought.\(^9\)

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.\(^1\)

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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.
They bade we should him hing
On height that men might see.

2ND SOLDIER. We woot well so their words were,
But sir, that deed will do us dere.

1ST SOLDIER. It may nought mend for to
moot more:

This harlot must be hanged here.

2ND SOLDIER. The mortise is made fit therefore.

3RD SOLDIER. Fast on your fingers then, in fere.

4TH SOLDIER. I ween it will never come there.

We four raise it not right to-year.

1ST SOLDIER. Say, man, why carps thou so?
Thy lifting was but light.

2ND SOLDIER. He means there must be mo
To heave him up on height.

3RD SOLDIER. Now certes I hope it shall not need
To call to us more company.

1ST SOLDIER. It must be done withouten dread:
No more, but look ye be ready,
And this part shall I lift and lead.

On length he shall no longer lie.
Therefore now make you boun:
Let bear him to yon hill.

4TH SOLDIER. Then will I bear here down,
And tent his toes untill.

2ND SOLDIER. We two shall see till either side,
For else this work will wry all

3RD SOLDIER. We are ready.

4TH SOLDIER. Good sirs, abide,
And let me first his feet up fang.

2ND SOLDIER. Why tent ye so to tales this tide?

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!

[All lift the cross together.]

4TH SOLDIER. Let see!

2ND SOLDIER. Ow! Lift along!

3RD SOLDIER. From all this harm he should him hide, protect if And he were God.

4TH SOLDIER. The Devil him hang!

1ST SOLDIER. For great harm, injury/received I have hent:

My shoulder is in sunder.

2ND SOLDIER. And certes I am near shent, ruined So long have I born under. 6

3RD SOLDIER. This cross and I in two must twin, separate Else breaks my back in sunder soon.

195 4TH SOLDIER. Lay down again and leave your din. cease This deed for us will never be done.

[They lay it down.]

1ST SOLDIER. Assay, sirs, let see if any gin try/trick May help him up, withouten hone, delay For here should wight strong men worship win,And not with gauds all day to gone.

2ND SOLDIER. More wighter strong men than we stronger Full few I hope ye find.

3RD SOLDIER. This bargain arrangement/work will not be For certes me wants wind.

200 4TH SOLDIER. So will of work never we wore, at a loss/were I hope this carl some cautels cast. 7

2ND SOLDIER. My burden sat me wonder sore: vexed Unto the hill I might not last.

1ST SOLDIER. Lift up and soon he shall be thore, there Therefore fest on your fingers fast.

210 3RD SOLDIER. Ow, lift! fasten

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.
Ere he was heaved on height
And raised on this array.°

4TH SOLDIER. He made us stand as any stones,
So boistous° was he for to bear.

1ST SOLDIER. Now raise him nimbly for the nonce, 8
And set him by this mortise here;
And let him fall in all at once,
For certes that pain shall have no peer.°

3RD SOLDIER. Heave up!
4TH SOLDIER. Let down, so all his bones
Are asunder now on sides sere. 9

[The cross is raised.]

1ST SOLDIER. That falling was more fell°
Than all the harms he had.
Now may a man well tell°
The least lith° of this lad.

3RD SOLDIER. Methinketh this cross will not abide
Nor stand still in this mortise yit.°

4TH SOLDIER. At the first was it made overwide:
That makes it wave, thou may well wit.°

1ST SOLDIER. It shall be set on ilk a side,
So that it shall no further flit.°

235 Good wedges shall we take this tide,°
And fast° the foot, then is all fit.

2ND SOLDIER. Here are wedges arrayed°
For that, both great and small.

3RD SOLDIER. Where are our hammers laid
That we should work withal?

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.°
3RD SOLDIER. Do take° it me hither belive.°

1ST SOLDIER. Lay on then fast.
3RD SOLDIER. Yes. I warrand.°

8. For the purpose.
9. Are pulled apart on every side.
The York Play of the Crucifixion

I thring them sam, so mote I thrive.\(^1\)
Now will this cross ful stably stand:
All if he rave they will not rive.\(^2\)

1ST SOLDIER. Say, sir, how likes thou now
The work that we have wrought?

4TH SOLDIER. We pray you, say us how
Ye feel, or faint ye aught?\(^3\)

JESUS All men that walk by way or street,
Take tent—ye shall no travail tine\(^4\)—
Behold mine head, mine hands, my feet,
And fully feel now ere ye fine\(^5\) cease
If any mourning may be meet
Or mischief\(^6\) measured unto mine.
My Father, that all bales may bete,\(^7\)
Förgive these men that do me pine.\(^8\) torment
What they work woot\(^9\) they nought:
Therefore my Father I crave
Let never their sins be sought,\(^9\) search
But see their souls to save.

1ST SOLDIER. We, hark! he jangles like a jay.
2ND SOLDIER. Methink he patters like a pie.\(^5\) magpie
3RD SOLDIER. He has been doing so\(^6\) all this day,
And made great mening\(^9\) of mercy.
4TH SOLDIER. Is this the same that gun\(^8\) us say
deid
Therefore he feels full fell affray,\(^7\)
And doomed this day was for to die.

1ST SOLDIER. Vath! qui destruis templum!\(^1\)
2ND SOLDIER. His saws\(^9\) were so, certain.
3RD SOLDIER. And, sirs, he said to some
He might raise it again.

4TH SOLDIER. To muster\(^9\) that he had no might,
For all the cautels\(^9\) that he could cast;

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.
All if he were in word so wight,⁹
For all his force now is he fast.
All Pilate deemed is done and dight:⁸
Therefore I read⁶ that we go rest.

2ND SOLDIER. This race must be rehearsed right¹
Through the world both east and west.

285 2ND SOLDIER. Yea, let him hang here still
And make mows on the moon.²

4TH SOLDIER. Then may we wend⁸ at will.
1ST SOLDIER. Nay, good sirs, not so soon.

For certes us needs another note:³
This kirtle would I of you crave.

290 2ND SOLDIER. Nay, nay, sir, we will look⁸ by lot
Which of us four falls⁸ it to have.
3RD SOLDIER. I read⁸ we draw cut⁸ for this coat.
Lo, see now soon, all sides to save.⁴

295 4TH SOLDIER. The short cut⁸ shall win, that well ye woot,
Whether it fall to knight or knave.
1ST SOLDIER. Fellows, ye thar not flite,⁵
For this mantle is mine.
2ND SOLDIER. Go we then hence tite,⁶
This travail here we tine.⁶

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.