

A 10-page excerpt from

Søn of Abraham

A play about the life and martyrdom
of Søren Kierkegaard

by

Timothy Andrew McIntosh

Timothy Andrew McIntosh
16921 NE 97th Ave.
Redmond, WA 98052-3163
timamcintosh@gmail.com
timamcintosh.com
706-338-1684

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SYNOPSIS

After a mysterious year-long absence, Søren Kierkegaard emerges from hiding. While appearing to celebrate Danish society and the church, Kierkegaard pursues a secret plan to sabotage both. But his plan stumbles as he falls in love with the bright, young Regina Olsen.

SETTING

Copenhagen, Denmark, 1850-55.

STAGING

Demonstrate a change of locations through music, lighting, and light scrimms. Avoid bulky sets; the dialogue is bulky enough.

CAST (6m, 3f)

Søren Kierkegaard (SK), male, 30s.

*The temperamental philosopher. Angling for revenge.
One of the true geniuses of the 19th century.*

Regina Olsen, female, 20s.

*SK's romantic interest. The daughter of the governor.
Capable, social, strong.*

Fritz Schlegel, male, 40s.

*A military man recently returned from the front.
In love with Regina. Honorable, though a bit stiff.*

Pastor Mynster, male, 60s.

The religious head of Denmark. An object of SK's anger.

Frau Mynster, female, 50s or 60s.

Pastor Mynster's wife. A surrogate mother to SK.

Meir Goldschmidt/Heiberg, male, 30s.

*Editor and owner of The Corsair, a weekly paper.
SK's closest friend.*

Hans Christian Andersen, male, 30s.

The famous author. Down on his luck. A bit of a fop.

Jenny Müller/Maid, female, 40s.

A wealthy, conservative socialite. Andersen's companion.

Emil Boeson, male, 20s

A young soldier. Religiously devout. An innocent.

SCENE 2: REGINA OLSEN'S PARLOR - A FEW WEEKS LATER

The MAID waits as REGINA reads a note. A manuscript lays on a table.

MAID

He's quite insistent, ma'am.

REGINA

What time is it?

MAID

I should send him away. Herr Schlegel will be here very soon.

REGINA

What time is it, Natalie?

MAID

Half-seven. Herr Schlegel will be here any minute.

REGINA

Yes, send Kierkegaard away. --No, I will. Send him in. No, wait Natalie. Natalie, I need you to hear something. Come, sit down.

MAID

Oh, no, ma'am. (*for it's against regulations*)

REGINA

Yes, Natalie, sit. For the moment, you are not my helper, you are my friend. I need your advice.

MAID

Miss Regina needs no advice from me.

REGINA

Yes, I do, now sit. --You know what this is. (*taking up SK's manuscript*)

MAID

Herr Kierkegaard's manuscript. I've told no one that you have it.

REGINA

Good, now--.

MAID

Not a word that he's the mystery author. Not a word.

REGINA

That's fine, now, listen. I need to know his opinion of me.

MAID

He's not told me his opinion of you, Miss Regina.

REGINA

I'm sure he hasn't. But what do you think? Natalie, why does he visit me? He's been here almost every day for three weeks. Why?

MAID

(*beat, a safe answer*) To discuss books.

REGINA

But, Natalie.

MAID

I've seen nothing more, miss.

REGINA

Yes, but what do you think?

MAID

That's not my place, Miss Regina.

REGINA

I'm making it your place. I'm telling you to ... Listen, imagine a man was visiting your cousin Ingrid. Imagine he visited Ingrid everyday. And he acted like Herr Kierkegaard acted toward her. And imagine Ingrid wanted to know if that man liked her. What would you tell her?

MAID

That's not my place to tell.

REGINA

But I'm asking you.

MAID

If Herr Schlegel comes in, Miss Olsen.

REGINA

Nevermind Herr Schlegel. Leave him to me. Listen, I'm going to read you something. I want you to tell me what you think, yes? Not as my helper, but as my friend. (*finding a passage in the manuscript*) Here it is: "The poet's father confessed. The great rupture. Abraham and Isaac. And in this turmoil, God gave Isaac Rebekah as a gift. Caretaker to his heart. The afternoon she played the piano for him, he--".

MAID

(*leaping up*) That's about you!

REGINA
It's about me?

MAID
You're his Rebekah!

REGINA
How do you know?

MAID
Because I know. You must be *very* careful, Miss Olsen.

REGINA
But how do you know this is--?

MAID
The way he *watches* you play piano. The way he watches you! When he's not bragging like a poor man, when he's *quiet*, when you play the piano, he *watches* you! You should see his eyes. You *must* send him away.

REGINA
Send him away?

MAID
If Herr Schlegel ...

REGINA
Yes, yes, Herr Schlegel.

MAID
Herr Kierkegaard is in love.

REGINA
He is not in love.

MAID
He is in love. If any man I've ever has been in love, Herr Kierkegaard is in love.

REGINA
Then why hasn't he said so?

MAID
No man will say it with his mouth. Not unless he has to. But he says it with his eyes. The way he watches you. He's dangerous.

REGINA
He's not dangerous, Natalie.

MAID
He is! He burns one minute, he freezes the next. He's ... he's... (*searching for the word*)

REGINA
He's passionate.

MAID
Yes! No! He's...

REGINA
Confused?

MAID
Confused!, yes ma'am. He's very confused. Confused men are confused for a reason. For *some* reason. They are guilty or have desire or ... I don't know what it is, but it's bad.

REGINA
You think he loves me.

MAID
Oh I know he does!

REGINA
I should send him away.

MAID
Yes, you should. I'll tell him right now.

REGINA
No. I must return his manuscript.

MAID
I'll give him the manuscript.

REGINA
That wouldn't be proper. No, send him in.

MAID
Miss Olsen.

REGINA
Natalie.

MAID
Yes, ma'am.

*MAID exits. REGINA smooths her dress,
arranges a loose strand of hair.*

*MAID enters with SK who is removing his
coat.*

REGINA
Leave it on.

SK
My coat? No, impossible.

REGINA
Leave it on.

SK
It clouds the majesty of my figure. Look. (*having removed his coat, he sits in a pose*) Unencumbered, I have struck a princely pose. But I don't want to assume you agree. Please, say it with your own mouth.

REGINA
A moment please, Natalie. Natalie, a moment.

The MAID exits.

REGINA
Here's your manuscript. But you cannot stay. I have a guest.

SK
Does he know?

REGINA
Does who know?

SK
Herr Schlegel. Does he know about us?

REGINA
What is there to know about us? There is nothing to know about us.

SK
Did you find it?

REGINA
Did I find what?

SK
The passage in the manuscript.

REGINA
I don't know what you're talking about.

SK
Yes you do.

REGINA
Yes, I do. Yes, you're very clever, Herr Kierkegaard. But we cannot keep this up.

SK
Why, because of him?

REGINA
Because you don't believe what you wrote. Because you're playing a role. You're playing the dandy. The poet who tosses the girl upon Cupid's altar. I can't. I won't. I have bonds. To my family and to my station.

SK
And to him.

REGINA
So this cannot be. (*offers the manuscript*)

SK
You are right. It cannot be. (*takes the manuscript*) A foolish idea, really. Resolved it in the carriage over here. Foolish idea. Besides, too many mouths to feed. (*pointing to himself*) All my many mouths. The poet. The assassin. The lonely man who loves the young woman from the moment he saw her. The man who hates her because she bars his way. What, form an armistice with pastor -- is that what you want? Tolerate the church -- because of you? Merely because I love you? No! Abort my mission to listen to you play piano or prattle about the sparrows that light upon your windowsill or your lovely garden-walk with Miss Everybody or the new summer fashions? No, I don't want to hear it! (*he begins to cry*) I shall not have that -- dilution. You, born of blunting nature. With your lace and your roses and your soft strokes and gentle-lipped words. It cannot be. It will not be. (*grasps her hand, kisses it -- then*) No, I must go. And I will never come again. Never. (*gathers his coat*) Until tomorrow.

REGINA
Søren...

SK
Oh, you should know something.

REGINA
What should I know?

SK
You should know I joined the pastorate.

REGINA
You what?

SK

Denmark will love it. The prodigal son returns to become a pastor.

REGINA

A pastor!

SK

Twelve months a novice under Pastor Mynster. Then the exam. Then, Pastor Kierkegaard. They'll love me for it.

REGINA

You cannot become a pastor!

SK

I can. I will. In 12 months I shall.

REGINA

Don't you not read your own writing? (*grabs his manuscript*) "The Danish Church resembles true Christianity as an obituary resembles a living man."

SK

That's clever, I like that. (*REGINA hits him with the manuscript*) Ow! I doubt Beatrice attacked Dante with his own manuscript.

REGINA

If Dante was like you, she most certainly did. I don't understand you. Your books are against Christendom and yet you want to be a pastor.

SK

Its really quite simple. I love the church. I hate the church. There, easy. --Ah, look, my first commission from Pastor! (*digging an essay from his pocket*) He commissioned me to write this in Goldschmidt's paper. A critique of the book.

REGINA

What?

SK

A savage attack upon the mystery author.

REGINA

You are the mystery author.

SK

Thorny, isn't it! But I have a solution. Pastor proposed I critique the mystery author, who is me.

And for this critique of me, meaning me, I will summon upon all of my, meaning mine, all of my two-tongued powers. Here lies the solution. The mystery author is against Christendom. In response, this essay calls for its expansion. It's not enough to Christianize every single man, woman, and child. My essay in *The Corsair* calls for the Christianizing of horses.

REGINA

The Christianizing of horses.

SK

All domestic animals, actually.

REGINA

This is ... (*laughs*) almost wonderful.

SK

Cows, goats, dogs--. Oh, and brothels.

REGINA

You call for Christianizing of brothels?

SK

It shouldn't be difficult. They're already full of upright members, so.

REGINA

You are shameless!

SCHLEGEL enters with MAID.

SCHLEGEL

(*barging in*) Regina, Natalie says not to --. Oh.

REGINA

Fritz! You remember Herr Kierkegaard.