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Comedy with 10 persons, David with
Bathseba in adultery, and [it] has five acts.

Act 1.

The herald enters and says:

You strict, noble and honorable,
Very wise, respectable and valued guests,
You modest women and maidens
And all, who want to see
[and] watch a story here,
you will be honored by it;
the comedy, which one
finds written down
in its entirety in the book of Kings
(the eleventh and twelfth need to be searched!)
[it] tells [us] how King David committed adultery
with Bathseba,¹ and when afterwards
Bathseba fell pregnant by him,
King David sent for Uria,
Her husband, to come to Jerusalem.
Because he [David] did not want to deal with him [Uria]
Regarding sleeping² with Bathseba,
[so] David gave him a letter,
Addressed to Joab, a few days after
Uria was slain.
Afterwards he [David] took Bathseba
As his wife.
God disliked this deal
And punished him heavily
through Nathan, God's prophet;
All can be found in the following.
Now, be quite and keep silent!
listen and watch diligently
how everything unfolds!

¹ Spelling of the name varies

² beschlafen implies a passivity on the side of the recipient of the action

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King David enters with his servants, sits down and says:

God made my kingdom
 Like no other on earth
 And [he] made me triumph luckily
 Over my enemies in all wars.
 I have slain the philistines,
 The Syrians succumbed under me
 When they wanted to help Hanon,
 The king of the children of Ammon;
 They also fled from us.
 Now they seek rescue
 In Raba, the strong capital.
 Now, we found in our council
 That the house of Israel
 Shall arm itself against Ammon
 Because the time has come again,
 The spring, in which the King needs
 to go to war again.
 You ,Joab, will be colonel³
 Against Raba of the Ammonites!
 Fight like brave knights!
 Win the city and destroy it!
 So Ammon's arrogance will stop!

Joab says:

Serene Highness, King, the men
 Are chosen; ready are also
 the battering ram, the weapons⁴, the slings in all shapes,
 The bulwark and ladders for storming.
 Tomorrow, the well-armed house
 Of Israel will leave.

David says:

Uria, you will come too, right?

Uria says:

Serene Highness, King, why not?
 What his royal majesty desires
 I will accomplish in word and deed,
 Sacrificing my body and life;
 I do not desire it differently.

³ literally: field captain

⁴ Werffzeug see Grimm Werfzeug

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King David says:

Go now! May God bless you
 In all doings in this war!
 I will stay in Jerusalem
 To attend and to deal with the kingdom's affairs.

They all leave. King David enters again with Abisay
 And his servants⁵ and says:

I got up from bed
 On which I rested for a bit.
 On the roof, on top of the king's house,
 I will take in the view for a moment
 And catch some fresh air.
 There, I look into an abyss⁶
 Of Jerusalem,
 Uncountable houses and alleys.
 Abisay, look! Who is this woman
 That washes herself naked,
 There in the pond in the green garden of trees?

Abisay looks down and says:

I think, I should know the pure, fragile [one]
 From somewhere.
 But I cannot recall her name.
 But now I can remember.
 It must be Bathseba,
 Daughter of Eliam, the knight,
 The wife of Uria, the Hittite.

David says:

Levi, go to the woman! Tell her
 To come! And bring her this
 Ring as a present from me!
 Go in secret and bring her with you!

Levi, the servant, leaves. David says:

my heart is drenched in love;
 like a burn, I painfully long
 for this noble delicate [woman].
 I will wait for her in this hall.

⁵ see Grimm Trabant, in the following servant is the translation for trabant

⁶ see Grimm Gruft and their discussion on its meaning of describing an natural or architectural indentation

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Abisay says:

Dear King, all things considering
 Do not be foolish here!
 Do not sleep with another man's wife!
 Otherwise, God will punish you.
 You will have to pay back everyone.

David says:

I know how to do it right.

Abisay says:

What great misery, love is blind,
 The heart easily won over,
 So one falls into sin and shame.
 Therefore, keep the bridle tight in your hand!⁷

Both leave. Bathseba enters and says:

Now, I have cleaned myself
 From sweat, now I will close my house (it is late)
 Like Uria, my dear husband,
 Has trustingly ordered me;
 The heart stays loyal like steal.
 May God give him a good night, tonight,
 Who⁸ does not suspect me of wrong doing!
 Therefore, go soon! Let the gates be closed!

The squire says:

They were closed everywhere.
 But afterwards it knocked,
 The door was opened for a servant.
 He comes up now without being shy,
 He has a royal order for you.

Levi, the servant, comes and says:

Bathseba, David, the King,
 sent me here, and it is his wish
 that you come to the court now,
 to take the ring as a present.

⁷ to keep the bridle tight in one's hand is a still popular proverb; unfortunately, I don't know an English equivalent

⁸ it could either refer back to God or Uria; Uria seems the better choice since he is the theme of the previous few clauses

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Bathseba says:

Return the King's present!
 Ask him to not be offended!
 It is late, [I] will not go out tonight
 Instead [I] will stay in my house
 Like my master ordered me.

Levi, the servant, says:

How can you be so disobedient
 To his royal majesty?

Bathseba says:

I worry about how my honor
 [will be commented] on by false tongues;⁹
 it is not appropriate for a noble young
 woman to go to the court now,
 while my husband is not at home.
 Therefore, ask the King on my behalf
 To not be angry with me
 For not wanting to damage my honor!

Levi, the servant, says:

What does it help you to resist
 The King, who can bring you to him
 With force soon?
 Therefore, do it willingly!

Bathseba says:

Well, may God protect my honor!
 I will go with you immediately,
 [just] putting on something else
 in order to step in front of the royal throne.

They all leave.

⁹ I suspect false tongues refer to gossip. I also think I vaguely remember this metaphor from somewhere in the bible

Act 2.

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The two servants enter, Levi says:
Seba, when will you come? From the army?

Seba says:

Well, we have not found much
Honor in front of Raba, the city.
In the camp, they talk about
The King, how he flirts
With the Hittite Bathseba.
(Dear, tell me, is that true!)

Levi says:

[They] talk about it in front of Raba?
Ey, ey, what great sin and shame!
Is it already known¹⁰ in the countryside
Even though the King keeps it quiet?
Love does not want to hide.
His court is full of it.

Seba says:

It does not suit the King well
That he did such a thing,
Seducing the wife of a devout man
Who risks his health and life in the army
For the honor of his King
That meanwhile sleeps with his wife;
Anyone is upset about such business,
When the high authorities
Give such deeply bad example,
The common people will follow it.
Then God's punishment¹¹ and revenge,
So God will punish an entire country.
Now, I must load provisions.
The captain sent me after them.
Tomorrow, I must be back.
I will go after my business now.

Levi says:

So I will go outside into the garden,
Where the King is talking a walk
with his knights and councilors.

¹⁰ see Grimm Ruchtbar

¹¹ plag literally: plague, probably following the sense of the plagues of Egypt though I translate it here more freely with punishment, feeling it makes more sense in the sentence

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They both leave. Bathseba enters and says:

Alas Lord, what have I done?
 Uria, my dearest husband,
 I broke my loyalty¹² to you!
 How can I redeem my sin?
 By God, I wish I had died
 Before the King sent
 For me, who seduced me with presents
 And half forced me to
 Act against order, honor and morality,
 That never came into my heart before him.
 Alas, my female honor!
 Another thing also worries me much;
 I am pregnant.
 I will send [the news] to the King
 And have it told to him freely
 That I am pregnant from him.
 Go! Bring this letter to
 The King quickly! Otherwise, keep quiet, on your life!

The squire speaks:

Yes, I will bring the letter
 To the King; he is taking a walk over there.

Bathseba says:

By God, what horrible news!
 I start to feel weak¹³
 Because of my shameful, heavy sin
 I am drowning in it.

The squire says:

Oh dear madam, be well!
 God is full of mercy
 He will forgive your sin.

Bathseba says:

But God is also just
 He punishes adultery heavily
 With death¹⁴ and eternal curse.
 That is why it bothers me so much
 That I cannot find rest anywhere.
 I will go into my room
 And cry because of my sin.

¹² German often uses only one word for loyalty and fidelity (Treue)

¹³ in the sense of physically lacking energy

¹⁴ of the earthly body

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Bathseba leaves. David enters and says:

Levi, ride to the camp before Raba!
 Tell Joab to quickly send
 Uriam, the Hittite, to Jerusalem!
 I need to talk to him.
 Tell him in secret, [keeping it] just between the two of you!

The servant leaves. David talks to himself and says:

Now that Bathseba is pregnant,
 I must use deceit immediately,
 For this [I] must bring Uria here
 So he will sleep with his wife
 So I can deceive him,
 So he will think the child is his.

Uria, the Hittite, enters and says:

Dear King, what is it that your majesty wants
 That you called me away from
 The camp before Raba?

David says:

Tell me, my dear Uria,
 How are things in the camp
 And how are the people doing
 Including Joab, my colonel!
 Tell me, do they lack anything
 In provisions or otherwise
 In order to force Raba, the city!

Uria says:

Dear King, all things are well
 [and] how they are supposed to be in a camp.
 The city is strong and well guarded.
 The citizens bravely defend and attack
 As it is the manner in war.
 We have quite some battles¹⁵ with them.
 Each thing takes its time.
 So the skirmishes and arguments are quite heavy between us.

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David says:

Uria, go home to your house!
 Clean yourself, eat and drink, rest yourself!
 Come back tomorrow! You will have
 To bring an order to the camp
 About how things need to be done.

¹⁵ see Grimm Strausz

Uria leaves. David says to his servants:

So take the royal present
Of passum,¹⁶ the sweet drink!
Bring it to Uria's house
So he will be very merry!

The servant enters with the present. David says:

Today, the one sleeping with Bathseba
Will be her married husband Uria,
Thus the adultery, that happened between us,
will be covered up.

Levi, the servant, enters again and says:

Dear King, Uria left
But did not go to his house
But [he] stays with the King's servants
[he] does not want to use the right
you gave him,
[he] wants to rest in the stables today.

The King says:

Go! Tell him to come to me!

The servant brings Uriam.¹⁷ David says:

My Uria, tell me! Why
Did you not go home?
Did you not come here across the field
From the camp?

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Uria says:

My dear King, this would
Not be appropriate because the Arc of Covenant
Lives badly in the tents
[which is] to Juda's and Israel's disadvantage
similarly, Joab and my master's
servants lie in the field
and I shall, as you said,,
go home to drink and eat
and [I] shall be lustful,
sleep with my wife?
As long as your soul is alive,
I will not do that,
Which you told me to.
I will not go to my wife this time.

¹⁶ zipperwein: I suspect an alternative spelling of zibebewein (wine made of raisins)

¹⁷ the added m in Uriam is probably a grammatical case marker

King David says:

My Uria, stay for the day!
You must eat with me at my court today.

Uria says:

Yes, very well, I forgot something.
Today, I will come for dinner.

David says:

Yes, go. I intend
To make Uria drunk at the table.
I think then he will go home
And sleep with his wife.
Then I will bring him back to the camp.
The [trumpets] sound;
Now I will leave
To trick this man.

David leaves. The servant enters with the herald and says:

The King seems merry today.
Don't you see, how he constantly
Offers one after the other?
They are both heavily drunk.
Uria staggers outside
But he doesn't go home
Instead he stays with the King's servants.

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Levi, the servant, says:

I am irritated by Uria's
Bad behavior,
That he does not go home
To have a good time,
Instead he lies in the hay there
Because he likes it better.

The herald says:

Come! The King left the table.
Come! Let us wait for orders.
He is walking through the garden of trees over there.

Both leave. King David enters, sits down and says:

My [plan] to deceive does not work.
I need to approach it differently.
I wrote a letter here
It contains the following:
Joab, place Uria in battle
Where the fight is the heaviest!
Then turn your back on him with your comrades
So Uria will be slain.

He shall not live anymore.
That is my wish. Stay well!

Uria enters and says:

Dear King, I am ready for the road,
To travel to the camp.

David says:

In this letter, I wrote him in detail¹⁸
What he needs to do.
Bring it to him, the brave colonel!
Tell him, to do it himself and no one else!

Both leave.

¹⁸ ein klein (a/in small) meaning described in the smallest details, similar expression is still used in German

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Act 3.

Joab, the colonel, enters with Seba, his servant, and says:

Listen to what the King wrote!
As soon as he [Uria] comes to the camp,
We shall put Uriam¹⁹ in the front line
Before Raba, the city,
To slay him through the enemy's sword.

Seba, the servant, says:

Alas, shall the loyal and pious [one]
Lose his life there?
That confuses me deeply.
What does the King gain by it?

Joab says:

Who knows what he did to the King
That he wants to kill him like that?
We are not allowed
to disrespect his orders
Otherwise it will cost me my life.

Seba says:

I think, I can guess why
The innocent, pious [one] needs to die.

Joab says:

My Seba, tell me the reason!

Seba says:

At court, the gossip²⁰ is
That the King woos his wife.
Now, I think, that he [David] takes his [Uria] life
So he can continue his courting
Without interruptions from now on.

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Joab says:

Alas, quite! You will get into trouble.
I heard what you said.
Whether it is true or not,
My Seba, it does not concern me.
Great masters do what they want.

Seba says:

¹⁹ see footnote 15

²⁰ literally: scream, shouting

But that won't serve²¹ him well
 To sacrifice [him] on the slaughtering block;²²
 This bothers me much.
 I am sad²³ for this pious man.

Joab says:

Quiet! There, he comes to us.

Uria comes, Joab says:

Come! Let us have a look close by
 At the city wall by the gate,
 If we can climb them today.
 But we must keep quiet about it
 So the enemy does not become [alert].

Uria says:

I hear the enemy arm itself inside
 Making noises with all their weapons.
 They may attack us.
 We are really in danger.

The enemy comes, Joab says:

There they come; come here, here, here, here!

There they fight with each other. Uria falls, they turn away from him.

Afterwards, they carry him out. Joab says:

Seba, ride to Jerusalem
 And tell King David about
 What happened before Raba, the city,
 During the battle
 And that Uria is dead!
 You will be a welcomed messenger.

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Both leave. David enters with Abisay and says:

How is the nation of Juda
 As it lies before the city of Raba?
 Joab, has not written to me in a while.

Abisay says:

This is not without reason.
 He has not managed to do
 Anything noteworthy in the meantime.
 Otherwise, he would have written.
 I think, a servant is approaching
 On this road, bringing news.

²¹ untrewlich literally: disloyal

²² Fleischbenck see Grimm Fleischbank

²³ tawert see Grimm Tauern

The servant Seba enters and bows before the King. David says:
 Are you coming from the camp?
 How are the people doing there?

Seba says:

I was sent by Joab.
 He informs you, King:
 He has lost many men
 Of his [majesty's] royal servants.

David says:

How did this happen? Tell me now!

Seba says:

We came to the city walls
 And many came out to attack us,
 Taking us down by force.
 That is why it did not work out.
 The shooters attacked us
 with arrows and also with weapons²⁴
 and slings from the city walls.

David says:

You should be smarter
 [and] not get that close to the city wall.
 Abimelech was hurt,
 by a single woman on the wall
 who threw a stone.
 You shall not get so close.

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Seba says:

Uria was also hurt
 The loyal, pious and brave knight.

King David says:

Is Uria, the Hittite, dead?
 Tell Joab, that he handled
 The matter very desirably!
 The sword eats this one now and then that one!
 Where there is war, one will lose men.
 But tell [him] to continue the fighting
 So the city will
 Be won and destroyed soon!
 This is what I desire.

²⁴ see footnote 4

Seba leaves with Abisay. David talks to himself again
and says:

Now I need to consider
To not implicate Bathseba,
The Hittite's wife.
Because her husband Uria
Is dead, my servants
Will think he is the child's father.
Once Bathseba has grieved,
I will lead her into [my] house,
Hold a royal wedding
And everything will be well.

David leaves. Bathseba enters in mourning clothes and says:

Oh, Uria, dearest husband,
I will never be happy again
Because I have lost you as well as
my female honor now;
my conscious
tortures and bites me very much.
I am worried all the time that I might be guilty
Of you losing your life.
The King seems to want to marry me.
I am not happy about that but fear
That God will punish such evil deed
That David committed here;
And I [caused it] as well with the wooing,
The disloyal betrayal,
That caused my husband to die.

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The squire says:

Alas, stop your grieving
Because things are much better for you now
[compared to] when your husband was still alive.
Before, you were only [the wife of] a knight
Now you will be a queen.
Alas, how can you be sad?

Bathseba says:

By God, if only my husband was alive.
I prefer him over any man.
Nothing makes me happy anymore; the royal crown
That I am about to receive
In sin and shame
From the King's bloody hands; it does not make me happy.
Forever, I regret [the loss of]
My pious husband and [my] female honor.

Bathseba leaves.

Act 4.

King David enters, sits down and says:

I hope everything is right now;
I have disgraced the woman
And killed her husband for honor,
So I can marry her now.

Nathan, the prophet, comes and says:

Dear King, judge this case!
Two men were in a city.
One was poor, the other rich,
he had many sheep and cows and such alike.
The poor [man] had only one small sheep
With which he feeds his children;
It ate from his meal²⁵
[and] also drank from his cup,
additionally, it slept in his lap
and he treated it like his daughter.
Then the rich man hosted a guest;
He spares his sheep
And also his cows; he does not
Prepare anything from them for the guest;
He took the poor man's sheep,
Preparing it for his guest. Name the punishment
For the rich man!

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David says:

Listen, you prophet! I swear by
The true [and] living God:
The man is destined for death.²⁶
Repaying the sheep four times!
Agreeingly he suffers such heavy punishment
Because he did such evil deed.

²⁵ Bissen literally: a bite

²⁶ literally: the man is a child of death

Nathan, the prophet, says:

David, this man is you.
 You spoke against your soul.
 The Lord, God of Israel, says:
 I anointed you as the King
 Of Israel and
 I had King Saul save you
 In addition, I gave you also
 King Saul's, your master's, house
 And his wives, too.
 I gave you the house of Israel,
 Juda, I gave you, too.
 Do you think this too little,
 So I must give you more to rule.

King David says:

God, the Lord, gave me enough;
 I do not desire anything more in my Life.

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Nathan says:

Why then did you disrespect
 God's, the Lord's, word there;
 That you committed such an evil deed
 In front of God's eyes without [even] lying [about it];
 You had Uria, the Hittite,
 Slain and murdered
 By the sword of the Ammonites
 And you weakened his wife Bathseba
 And [you] took her as [your] wife?
 Therefore, the bloody, earthly²⁷ sword
 Will not come onto your house.
 But you disrespected me,
 [you] took Uria's wife,
 so God decides of your body
 to awaken misfortune
 in your own home, to scare you,
 [he] will take your wives
 and give them to your neighbor.
 He shall sleep with them in broad daylight
 Right in front of your eyes;
 Which you did secretly.
 This is God's message.

²⁷ erdterich see Grimm Erdreich 1

David raises his hands and says:

Dear God, I committed sin
 Against God, my Lord.
 God, treat me at this time
 With your great compassion,²⁸
 Because your mercy is infinite!

Nathan says:

God took your sin.
 My David, you will not die.
 But this story made the Lord's
 Enemy gossip,
 made them despise him too;
 that is why the son, that was born to you,
 will die through God's anger.

The prophet leaves. David says:

I will go to the temple now
 To sacrifice an animal²⁹ for the Lord
 So he looks at me with mercy.

David leaves.

²⁸ harmhertzigkeit probably a misspelling of Barmhertzigkeit (mercy, compassion)

²⁹ sündopfer see 3 Moses 4-5: a sacrifice for a knowingly committed sin

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Act 5.

David enters with Abisay, sits down. The herald enters
And says:

Dear King, Bathseba tells you:
The Lord has put a difficult
And heavy illness on your child.
[I] fear [the child] will die.

The King leaves, falls down onto the ground and says:

Dear God, I sinned against you.
All your arrows are stuck into me.
You broke my bones completely
[like] an angry lion.
Your water floods run over me,³⁰
I lie buried under them.
Alas, Lord, let go of your anger
Of the child, that was born
By Bathseba, the Hittite's wife,
[the child whose] body³¹ is fatally ill!
My God, listen to me!

Abisay wants to pull him up and says:

My dear King, we beg you:
Let go of your wailing! Forget about the child!
Stand up! Oil yourself³², drink and eat!
Why do you want to be miserable?
Get up from the ground! Let yourself be comforted!
Take on what God sent you!

David says:

I beg you: All of you, leave me [alone]!
I will not take any comfort.
I will fast and [I will] not get up.
Therefore, do not make me sadder!
Let me live in my misery here!

³⁰ perhaps a proverb?

³¹ The stress of the death or illness of the body (compared to just naming the person) can probably be based on the distinction between an earthly, temporary body and an eternal soul in Christianity

³² I assume in the sense of antique cleaning rituals in which no soap but oil is used for cleaning the body

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They leave him. The herald enters and talks to them:
 You masters, the child is dead
 And passed away in great need.

Abisay says:

Be quiet, be quiet! Go your way
 So the King won't hear it!
 First the King will be struck by grief,
 [then] wail for the child even more.

David says:

What are you talking about? Tell me by God!
 Is the child alive or dead?

Abisay says:

Serene Highness, [the child] died.

David gets up and says:

Well, then I will have to be content.
 We shall go inside the hall
 To eat the meal together
 And afterwards [we shall] oil us and bath.

Abisay says:

I beg your royal Highness,
 To answer me one question.
 While the child was still alive
 You were obsessed with the pain of the heart,
 You did not want to drink nor eat,
 [you] lied crying [on the floor] and did not allow [anyone] to oil you
 and you constantly rejected [anyone's] comfort;
 Now, that the child is dead
 You get up and [you] want to eat bread,
 [you] want to bath again and oil yourself.

David says:

While the child was alive, I fasted,
 Prayed and cried and thought:
 Who knows? God may be merciful
 And let the child stay alive.
 Now, where he has died,
 No fasting, wailing or pleading will help.
 I cannot bring he back.
 I will eventually come to him
 But he will not come to me.
 Therefore, I have to accept it
 As God, my creator, ordered it.

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The herald enters and says:

Dear King, Bathseba, the chosen one,
Has born you another son
To comfort you.

David raises his hands and says:

Praise God on the highest throne!
The son shall be called Salomo!
Nathan, take him in your hand
And raise him to God's honor
In good manners and virtues!

Nathan, the prophet, says:

My dear King, I will do that.
God, the Lord, loves your son.
That is why I call him also
Jedidia here in this land.

Seba, the servant, enters and says:

Dear King, Joab, the colonel,
He tells you
That he conquered with his people
Raba, the royal city,
And the enormous water city;³³
And [he] says that you shall come
With the people that have remained with you
And you shall come with me
To take the city yourself
So that you will have your reputation³⁴
of having won the city by yourself.
The war council decided it.

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King David says:

Seba, go! Let the trumpet sound
In villages, on market squares and in cities
So everyone will assemble!
We shall leave tomorrow.
Abisay, you also have to come.

Abisay says:

My dear King, I will not miss it.
I am armed for the battle.
And if God leads us to victory,
We shall find with the King Hanon
A crown [made] of gold and gemstones,
Which weighs a hundredweight.

³³ compare 2 Samuel 12, 27 and see Grimm Wasserstadt

³⁴ literally name

We will put it on your head,
My King David, to honor you.

David says:

When the city is plundered and robbed
I will kill the Ammonites
horribly and bitterly
Because they destroyed Israel,
The land, with fire and murder.
Now let's go (it is about time)
Everyone who is ready for war!
The way to Raba is long.

They leave in order. The herald finishes:

This is how the story ends,
[it] shall be well remembered.
David shows
That a man must keep away
Of such lustful looks
Of women, otherwise
Inappropriate love breaks lose, that afterwards rages,
Breaks heart, soul and mind,
When it longs for such love.
[one] gets into adultery
thus one goes wild
and throws away body, honor and goods.³⁵
But should one try to cover up the adultery
With lies and deception all around.
With such shameless behavior
Much worse things will happen,
Murder and crime and betrayal,
Perjury, robbery and theft, too.
One is blinded by love
Until God's word brings
God's anger and punishment.
Only then does the sinner wake up from [his] sleep
And the bad conscious shows
How it is tortured and bitten.
Then his heart beats and pounds
Until he repents his sins,
Confessing them to God freely.
Then God will let go of his anger
Through the holy gospel,
Showing forgiveness towards the sinner,
Forgiving the sinner again
And protect him from eternal harm
So he [sinner] will not receive out of desperation
The eternal death, that wishes Hans Sachs.

³⁵ schlecht ... in d'schantz interpreted as in die Schantz (see Grimm Schänzelwort) schlagen; probably in the meaning of making oneself vulnerable to gossip

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The characters in this comedy:

1. Herald.
2. David, a King of Israel.
3. Nathan, the prophet.
4. Joab, the colonel.
5. Abisay, a count.
6. Uria, the Hittite.
7. Bathseba, his wife.
8. Levi,
9. Seba, two servants.