

JUDAS ISCARIOT AND OTHERS

Leonid Andreyev

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JUDAS ISCARIOT AND OTHERS

CHAPTER I

Jesus Christ had often been warned that Judas Iscariot was a man of very evil repute, and that He ought to beware of him. Some of the disciples, who had been in Judaea, knew him well, while others had heard much about him from various sources, and there was none who had a good word for him. If good people in speaking of him blamed him, as covetous, cunning, and inclined to hypocrisy and lying, the bad, when asked concerning him, inveighed against him in the severest terms.

"He is always making mischief among us," they would say, and spit in contempt. "He always has some thought which he keeps to himself. He creeps into a house quietly, like a scorpion, but goes out again with an ostentatious noise. There are friends among thieves, and comrades among robbers, and even liars have wives, to whom they speak the truth; but Judas laughs at thieves and honest folk alike, although he is himself a clever thief. Moreover, he is in appearance the ugliest person in Judaea. No! he is no friend of ours, this foxy-haired Judas Iscariot," the bad would say, thereby surprising the good people, in whose opinion there was not much difference between him and all other vicious people in Judaea. They would recount further that he had long ago deserted his wife, who was living in poverty and misery, striving to eke out a living from the unfruitful patch of land which constituted his estate. He had wandered for many years aimlessly among the people, and had even gone from one sea to the other, no mean distance, and everywhere he lied and grimaced, and would make some discovery with his thievish eye, and then suddenly disappear, leaving behind him animosity and strife. Yes, he was as inquisitive, artful and hateful as a one-eyed demon. Children he had none, and this was an additional proof that Judas was a wicked man, that God would not have from him any posterity.

None of the disciples had noticed when it was that this ugly, foxy-haired Jew first appeared in the company of Christ: but he had for a long time haunted their path, joined in their conversations, performed little acts of service, bowing and smiling and currying favour. Sometimes they became quite used to him, so that he escaped their weary eyes; then again he would suddenly obtrude himself on eye and ear, irritating them as something abnormally ugly, treacherous