

The Passion
According to Mary Magdalene

Adapted from and inspired by
The Gospel of Mark

Also inspired by the teachings of
Dr. Rev. Bonnie Perry
Rev. Emily Williams Guffey
Dr. Dominic Crossan
Dr. Marcus Borg
Madeleine L'Engle
John O'Donohue

by
Paula Stevens-Contey

Paula Stevens-Contey
Paulacstevens@gmail.com

SCENE ONE

Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. We hear jubilant music and celebratory crowd noise. Mary enters. She is caught up in the excitement of the crowds. Her memories are told without reverie or self-pity, remaining connected to the present hope and expectation. Occasionally, she takes out notebook and pen and writes her thoughts.

MARY

Jerusalem! I had no idea it could be so grand, so alive, so hopeful! Not my usual experience. To be honest, I stopped making my yearly pilgrimage some time ago. No secret there, I suppose. But he makes all the difference. Always has, from the beginning.

It was the first time anyone looked at me with anything other than disgust, if they looked at me at all. But that day, it was like I woke from a nightmare to look into the face of --- like being on Moses' great mountain and seeing the face of --- There are some things you do not, cannot say. That is what they battered into me: shut your mouth, child. Those voices are still there, still buzzing around inside, just not as deafening anymore. And not alone. Not since the day he held out his hand and said my name: Mary.

Mary, he said. I'd almost forgotten it. And there is so much more, he said. So I went with him to look for More, and -- oh my God, this is it, this is the turning, this is how it happens -- wait, I have to write this down, I can't forget, I have to remember all of this, every face, every -- Yes! It's all going to be okay, it's really, finally --

STREET URCHIN emerges from the crowd and picks Mary out. S/he tries to play it cool, but underneath the precociousness, needs Jesus to be the real deal.

STREET URCHIN

Spare some change?

MARY

Oh, um...(she checks her person) Sorry.

STREET URCHIN

Thought so. It's all just a sham, isn't it? You can be honest with me, I can take it.

MARY

What's a sham?

STREET URCHIN

All this. (indicates the procession) You are one of them, aren't you? With him.

MARY

Well yes, yes with him, but --

STREET URCHIN

So are you rich? Is he rich?

MARY

He has an abundance of life.

STREET URCHIN

Because the neighbor lady said he served dinner to her and five thousand of her closest friends in the middle of nowhere. Either he's rich or she's hallucinating from too much sun.

MARY

Or he blessed what food there was, broke it, and fed five thousand people.

STREET URCHIN

No way.

MARY

Why not?

STREET URCHIN

'Cause it couldn't happen, it doesn't happen, not to us. I know because I've asked --

MARY

For food? --

STREET URCHIN

And there's still not enough, there's never enough.

MARY

I'm sorry. I know how that feels.

STREET URCHIN

Whatever. This is stupid. Should've gone with my brother.

MARY

Your brother?

STREET URCHIN

He's on the other side of town checking out Pilate's army. Reconnaissance.

MARY

I see.

STREET URCHIN

If this guy's the Messiah like people say, I figure we should be ready. I'm gonna make a great sidekick - to my brother, I mean. Between you and me, he's a little hapless. He'll need me to keep from getting killed.

MARY

Killed?

STREET URCHIN

Happens in war.

MARY

War? What, no, this isn't war. Like with killing, war? No, the way of Jesus is one of peaceful resistance.

STREET URCHIN

Peaceful resistance? What even is that? Is this guy the Messiah or not?

MARY

Is he the --? Well, I don't know if you can call him that exactly.

STREET URCHIN

Then what can I call him? 'Cause I'd like to know what I can hope for. What's he going to do?

MARYJ

Do?

STREET URCHIN

Yeah, like what's his strategy? To make any of it different, better. You don't seem to know much.

MARY

A lot less than I'd like. (A slight caress of her notebook, like a security blanket). But I'm remembering. There's room for remembering.

STREET URCHIN

Doubtful this guy's the Messiah. I mean really, a donkey? That's the best he can do? Still, better be ready. Reconnaissance it is. (Exit)

MARY

Yes, we should be ready.

But how to be ready for Jesus when to experience him has always been a surprise. I was there when he fed those five thousand people. Not just fed, satisfied. And I will never forget this -- but still, write it down, write it down (does so) -- when we were still in Galilee, Jesus was called to the home of a little girl, couldn't have been more than six.

I held her hand. It was ice cold, limp, empty. An unbearable emptiness, she was just a child. But when Jesus prayed over her, it was like the emptiness, the whole room filled with breath, expanded the walls even. And that little girl woke with the light of a hundred suns in her eyes. She sprang out of bed, gave everyone an enormous hug. Laughed. We all did. Laughed her mother out of her tears. And then she ran off to do her important work of playing, living.

When Jesus said we were going to Jerusalem, I wanted to be like that little girl, I wanted to embrace it, but every fiber of my body screamed out, No, not Jerusalem, not there. My bones creaked along every mile. How am I going to make it over a hundred miles, I thought. But then something happened along the way.

SCENE TWO

And now here we are and -- Oh but I should back up. I have to write down the part about Bethany. We camped just outside the village before moving on. Jesus had a lot of people to tend to, so in the meantime, he sent a couple of the guys out on a mission: Go into the village, um, go into the village...

JESUS

(Enters, as though from Mary's memory) And find there a donkey that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it. If anyone asks you, "why are you doing this," tell them the Lord needs it and will send it back immediately. (Exit)

Enter Judas, Peter and John in mid argument. Mary looks on.

JUDAS

A donkey? He cannot be serious.

PETER

You heard him.

JUDAS

What I heard was a bunch of old stories. Forget the old. We're living Now. And Now is Pilate riding in from the west on the best horse money can buy.

PETER

Yeah, so what?

JUDAS

Oh c'mon, Peter, open your eyes. This is our moment. Jesus has managed to attract the largest following against Rome we've seen. Now we have to give that following confidence that we can actually defeat them, otherwise --

JOHN

Otherwise what?

JUDAS

Otherwise it's all for nothing.

JOHN

You call everything we've seen, everything we've done, nothing? Why are you here, Judas?

JUDAS

Why are you here, O Favored One?

PETER

What do you mean, "Favored One?"

JUDAS

We need a real mount. Listen, I know a guy.

PETER

No. We do it his way. He asked for a donkey.

JOHN

Specifically a colt. I think there's poetry in that.

PETER

(to Judas) You coming?

JUDAS

Forget it. You guys go.

Peter and John exit. Judas notices Mary, realizing she's been privy to the scene.

JUDAS

A donkey.

MARY

(Quoting) "Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on / a donkey."

JUDAS

/ A donkey. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MARY

What would you have him do?

JUDAS

Lead a rebellion. Isn't that the point?

MARY

We go to Jerusalem to confront the authorities of this world. That's what he says. It doesn't mean raze the temple.

JUDAS

Shouldn't it?

MARY

It's the Temple, Judas.

JUDAS

You of all people should get it. There's nothing in that Temple worth saving. They've betrayed us. Our own people have betrayed us to the Romans and convinced - some of us - that God still lives. And maybe He does, but not in that Temple, not with all those land deeds signed over, debts collected. My father signed over his death on that paper. Losing his land, his place of, his place of...

MARY

Belonging?

JUDAS

(Deflecting Mary's interjection) It killed him. And I know we'd find your family's name on a little piece of paper just like it. Don't you want to see it made right? And for all those other families without homes? This is justice, Mary.

MARY

Justice? Or revenge?

JUDAS

Does it matter if one is the other? If getting our revenge turns out to be justice? Two birds, one stone. And what could be more satisfying than taking those traitors by the neck and strangling them.

MARY

Careful, Judas.

JUDAS

It is the mean reality of this world. Sometimes blood is the only way.

MARY

I won't believe it.

JUDAS

Look, all I'm asking is that we up the ante. I know you understand, I know you want justice. Maybe you can talk to him. The others don't want to see it, but he respects you. He'll listen to you.

MARY

First, he listens to everybody because, he just does, he listens. Second, who am I to - I really don't have anything to say.

JUDAS

(Grabbing Mary's notepad) Nothing to say? Really?

MARY

(Grabbing notepad back) That is mine, and I am simply recording the way of Jesus. Third. You should speak with him. He'll listen to you too, Judas. He loves you too. We all do.

JUDAS

Oh, Mary. That's not good for you, you know.

MARY

What?

JUDAS

Seeing the good that's not there. What do you think, when this is all over, John and I are going to collaborate on a book of poetry? Peter and I have a fishing expedition planned? What's holding us together? The mission. Which is as it should be: focused on the mission, not on each other. But for what it's worth, you're alright.

MARY

Then is it enough to say that *I* --

JUDAS

(Cutting her off) No. Leave it at that. (Exit).

MARY

(Calling after him) Stop making yourself out to be a lone wolf, Judas.

We're a community. A family. Sometimes contentious. But more times, content. Where was I? (Writing) The procession to the Temple, yes, through the outer gates, into the courtyard. We took it all in: it's awesomeness, what human hands can create. And it's wretchedness, what human hearts can neglect.

SCENE THREE

We spent the night in Bethany. When we returned Monday morning, Jesus stormed into that Temple like a legion of angels. He turned over the tables of the money changers, and we chanted, holding hands, and John raised his voice over the people:

JOHN

(Entering) We claim this space as sacred. Your business of oppression has no place here.

MARY

And then Peter:

PETER

(Entering) You support a system that brings poverty and debt upon these people.

MARY

And Jesus:

JESUS

(Entering) Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?" But you have made it a den of thieves.

MARY

And the people, many people joined us in our chants and our singing. Many, but not all. There were several temple scribes and priests who stood by and watched.

Exit disciples. Jesus remains. Enter Caiaphus, Elder and Scribe

CAIAPHUS

This one has amassed too great a following.

SCRIBE

They do seem to love him.

CAIAPHUS

I don't care how much they *seem* to love him. How many are willing to follow him - that's what matters -- numbers. That's what the Emperor is watching for. And if this continues, if we let him go on like this, Rome will destroy us.

ELDER

It can't continue, no question. If he comes back to the Temple - and I think he will - he makes it easy for us. We hire one of our best assassins.

CAIAPHUS

Maybe. But what if the crowd riots? Then the Romans swoop in, slaughter them all, and maybe we're lucky enough to keep our own lives.

ELDER

They wouldn't do anything to us.

CAIAPHUS

Wouldn't they. It's our job to contain this sort of thing.

ELDER

So then, the next time he comes, we arrest him.

CAIAPHUS

Even that might be dangerous in public.

SCRIBE

Why not play his game?

CAIAPHUS

How do you mean?

SCRIBE

The people hang on his every word. How hard can it be to trip him up? Make him say something that will turn the people against him? Problem solved.

MARY

On Tuesday, we returned again to the Temple. A crowd gathered as Jesus preached and healed the afflicted.

JESUS

Be healed and go in peace. Your sins are forgiven.

Street urchin and friend sneak around to watch.

CAIAPHUS

You cannot forgive sins! By what authority do you do this? Who gave you the authority to forgive sins, to charge businessmen with thievery, to enter this city like some kind of King?

JESUS

I will ask you one question. Answer me and I will tell you by what authority. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?

SCRIBE

(The three convene apart) Alright, let's keep our heads and think this through.

CAIAPHUS

If we say "from heaven" he'll say, "so why didn't you believe him."

SCRIBE

Right, and then we appear the hypocrite.

ELDER

So we say "from human origin."

SCRIBE

Not out loud. Not if you want to keep the people on your side even a little.

CAIAPHUS

(To Jesus) We don't have to answer that.

JESUS

And I don't have to tell you by what authority I do these things.

CAIAPHUS

(Losing his temper) You have no authority!

SCRIBE

(Diplomatically intervening with new tactic) Teacher, we know that you are sincere, that you teach the way of God, and that you don't show partiality. Tell us this: is it lawful to pay taxes to the Emperor or not? Should we, as God-abiding people, pay them or not?

JESUS

Why do you test me? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.

The Elder presents a denarius to Jesus.

STREET URCHIN

I knew it -- collusion! Traitor!

JESUS

(Holding up coin for all to see) Whose image is this and whose title?

URCHIN 2

Sh! You'll get us in trouble.

STREET URCHIN

I don't care, he takes money from Romans.

ELDER

(Chagrined but defiant) The Emperor's.

JESUS

Give to the Emperor the things that are the Emperor's, and to God, the things that are God's.

SCRIBE

(With sincere curiosity) And what belongs to God?

CHIEF PRIEST

(To scribe) No more. He will answer for himself later.

JESUS

(To scribe) What do the scriptures tell you?

SCRIBE

(Quoting) The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

CAIAPHUS

That is enough, I say.

SCRIBE

(To Jesus) Tell me, which commandment is first of all?

CAIAPHUS

Do not bother to return to your position.

Caiaphus, Elder, and street urchins
exit.

JESUS

The first is "Here O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart /

JESUS AND SCRIBE

And with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

JESUS

The second is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.

SCRIBE

Teacher, I believe what you say is true. To love God, to love my neighbor is so much more than any burnt offering or sacrifice.

JESUS

You are not far from the kingdom of God.

Exit Scribe.

MARY

The Kingdom of God. It was a real and present place he seemed to inhabit and that was always coming alive around him. It didn't matter where we were or who we were with.

SCENE FOUR

Enter disciples.

On Wednesday, we accepted a dinner invitation at the home of Simon, the Leper. People called him by his suffering. He didn't seem to mind. He almost embraced it -- oh no, not the suffering itself -- but an understanding of his brokenness, the crevices through which his compassion flowed. There was a woman there - (Enter Anonymous Woman) -- how is it I don't remember her name? -- she had a jar of perfume. It smelled of musky pink flowers, the kind of flowers that overturn rocks on a mountain cliff.

ANONYMOUS

(Reciting prayer and pours perfume on Jesus' feet) Go, for God sends you. Go and God will be with you. Hear O Israel: Adonai is our God. Adonai is One. Blessed is God's glorious kingdom forever and ever.

JUDAS

What are you doing? You stupid woman!

JOHN

Judas, we're guests here.

JUDAS

We're guests everywhere and getting nowhere. That could've brought in a day's wage for three hundred families in need. And this stupid woman -- !

Peter snorts. A look from Mary.

JESUS

Let her alone. She has done a good work.

PETER

(Aside) She wouldn't know work if it bit her in the --

JOHN

(To Peter) Don't be rude.

JESUS

(To Judas) You will always have the poor with you and can show kindness to them whenever you wish, but you will not always have me.

JUDAS

What does that mean, you're bailing? Great. Just great.

PETER

No one's bailing.

JOHN

(To shush) Peter.

JUDAS

And we wonder why we're at the mercy of Rome. Why do we insist on sabotaging ourselves, throwing away our resources?

PETER

If anyone's sabotaging, it's --

JOHN

Let's not accuse.

JUDAS

Wasted resources, wasted energy, wasted time, all such a waste.

ANONYMOUS

(Calm but unapologetic) Not a waste. I understand your frustration --

Another snort from Peter

JUDAS

You understand nothing. (To Jesus) I've risked everything. And all I want to know now is can I count on you?

JESUS

You can count on me to love you for you, not an idea of you.

JUDAS

That's not what I asked.

JESUS

Can you do that for me?

JUDAS

Stop! Stop answering questions with questions, with little stories, just tell me, definitively --

PETER

I'll tell you definitively. You are the definition of a horse's --

JOHN

Whoa! Why are we arguing here?

PETER

Who's arguing? I'm simply defending what Jesus is --

JOHN

Jesus doesn't need a defense, and no one needs this argument.

JUDAS

But we're not arguing, John. We're in agreement on this:
You'd give the Romans the shirt off your spineless back.
(Exit. Jesus watches after him.)

JOHN

(Beat) I am so sorry, Simon. We didn't mean to bring this
into your home. Things are just a little stressful right now.
(To the woman) You know, I happen to think the perfume very
nice, strong, but nice. Some people just don't appreciate
metaphor the way we do.

ANONYMOUS

I didn't mean to --

PETER

But you did. Maybe you're better off in your gilded halls.

ANONYMOUS

Yes, well, they are gilded, as you say. Better off depends on
what you mean. I've been comfortable. But now I'm unmoored
and it's...(a cornucopia of emotion that she would share were
she alone with Jesus). I've listened in the Temple. I've
watched from behind my veil, not daring to lift it.

PETER

Your veil is lifted now.

ANONYMOUS

Isn't that a relief? To allow myself to be seen. (To Jesus)
You've shown me beauty beyond my imagination. It's been such
a pleasure to share a meal with you and to give you in return
something approaching beauty. Even if it costs me dearly, I
will gladly pay it. I will pay it a hundred times over just
to thank you, to thank you before...

JESUS

You have anointed my body beforehand for its burial. And what
you have done will be told throughout the world in
remembrance. I have seen you and I will remember.

ANONYMOUS

My Lord.

Anonymous Woman exits. Peter rushes after and Mary follows.

PETER

Before what? What is it you know?

ANONYMOUS

Only that there are those who have much to lose. And are afraid of it.

PETER

You're afraid.

ANONYMOUS

No. Maybe. But I'm here anyway.

Woman exits fully, leaving Peter and Mary alone.

MARY

Should we follow her?

PETER

Why?

MARY

In case she knows...

PETER

She doesn't know anything. She's just stirring up trouble.

MARY

Jesus didn't seem to think so. It was like the two of them had a kind of understanding?

PETER

Jealous, are we?

MARY

No! It's just this anointing before his burial - does that mean something? Or is it just metaphor like John said --

PETER

(Muttering) John.

MARY

--Just poetic gesture. (Beat) I don't know what I would do if... what I would do without him.

PETER

So it's all about you now - this whole movement.

MARY

Of course not. We're in this together. And not just as a movement. Peter, were a community. A family. Right?

SCENE FIVE

MARY

It was a long walk back to camp that night, less content, more contentious.

JOHN

(To Peter in a rush of excitement) There you are, you totally missed it. Jesus laid hands on Simon and then there was this, this, it's hard to describe.

PETER

Try using metaphor. Oh but then some of us won't get it.

JOHN

Okay, so I won't tell you, excuse me.

PETER

Was that an apology?

JOHN

Not really.

PETER

Because you're usually so good at apologizing: oh, I'm so sorry for these rude people because I would never behave that way.

JOHN

Someone needed to.

PETER

And of course you would because you are just so good.

JOHN

I never said that.

PETER

You hardly say anything else, O Favored One.

JOHN

So maybe I am favored. Jesus relies on me.

PETER

Yeah, I forgot you're going to be seated on his right side in Glory.

JOHN

You can laugh, but at least I wasn't on the receiving end of "get behind me, satan."

PETER

That's not what he meant, you know that's not --

JESUS

What are you two arguing about?

PETER AND JOHN

(In unison) Nothing.

JESUS

Good, because I'm sending the two of you into the city. I have arranged for you to meet a man there who will show you into a large guest room. Make it ready for our Passover meal.

PETER

Yes Lord, but can I go with Thomas?

JESUS

You can go with John.

PETER

The thing is, John won't shut up. He keeps going on and on with his poetry. (Beat) You do this on purpose, don't you?

JESUS

Yes.

JOHN

(As he exits with Peter) See? He agrees: A worthy spiritual movement requires the language to elevate men's souls.

Jesus and Mary are silent as disciples exit. It is a full silence.

JESUS

Mary.

MARY

(The dam breaks) Are you courting death? Do you think it's romantic or something? Because I don't. I don't understand why you keep -- if it is that imminent, let's just go somewhere else. There is good work to be done all over the place. People need you. They need you to be alive.

JESUS

And God needs me to speak truth to Jerusalem that all may know the abundance of his kingdom. If I chose to ignore that, would you be just as angry with me?

MARY

I'm not angry.

JESUS

Mary, who do you say that I am?

MARY

You are the person who saved me. My savior.

JESUS

Is that all I am?

MARY

(Hurt) All? Maybe you don't understand how low I'd sunk, how utterly and completely alone I was. It was no small thing.

JESUS

Mary, you are more to me than a thing in need of saving. You are no small thing. Do you remember, I told you then, there is so much More. The More I spoke of was not just what I might do, it was what you might do, might be, might remember. Mary, you have a responsibility to what your Creator has given you.

MARY

A handful of dust?

JESUS

God crafted much out of a handful of dust. It's no mean thing. Open your hands. What are those coins, talents, the little pebbles of possibility you are holding? God has entrusted you with those. I know you will no longer hide them away, call them names, or be stingy with them. Go your way, seek with open eyes, make your coins double and more.

MARY

I'm sorry.

JESUS

Don't be sorry. Be Mary. Oh and you can write that down about the coins. But make it a good story with maybe a joke or something at the end. If I'm to be in your book, I want you to write me with a sense of humor. It's only human.

MARY

And a little divine. (Beat). Don't leave me.

JESUS

This is the work that God requires of me. What does God require of you?

SCENE SIX

Enter disciples.

MARY

What does God require of me? How does one know? He hasn't called out to me from a burning bush as he did Moses. What did God require of him? To go to Pharaoh, to pursue justice, freedom for our ancestors. All that we commemorate now in this, our Passover Feast.

JESUS

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

MARY

I sometimes think of the mothers, kneading bread, listening to their children play, knowing the Angel of Death is waiting.

JESUS

Take, eat, this is my body.

MARY

I imagine fathers slathering the blood of their sacrificial lambs over door frames. Unsure, maybe. Frightened, but faithful anyway.

JESUS

Take, drink, this is my blood.

MARY

Faithful anyway.

JESUS

Friends, for you are indeed my friends, it is good to share this table together. Remember this, all of you, what it is to break bread together, that you may be nourished within yourselves and have peace with one another. A great tribulation is coming. So be sustained in this. Even if you desert me now, come back to the table.

PETER

Desert you? My Lord, what makes you think I could? Don't you know that I love you?

JESUS

This very night, you will deny me three times.

PETER

I will die before I deny you.

JOHN

Nothing could happen to make us leave you.

PETER

Nothing. I would never.

THOMAS

How could we after everything we've seen?

PETER

Never.

JOHN

Everything we've experienced. When you healed Simon, the Leper? That was beyond words.

PETER

You don't understand. (Meaning Jesus)

THOMAS

Oh and when you put your hands on those blind men, what was it you said?

JESUS

According to your belief, let it be.

THOMAS

Right, and remember that time you were preaching in that house? Filled with people, couldn't get in or out, we look up and a couple guys are tearing open the roof.

JOHN

Oh yeah, yeah to get that lame man inside.

THOMAS

Lowered him all the way down laying on that mat.

JOHN

I thought they were going to lower him on top of my head, I could barely get out of the way.

THOMAS

And Jesus says, "take up your mat and walk."

JOHN

And he did.

THOMAS

The looks on everyone's faces!

JESUS

(To Judas) What you do, do quickly.

Judas exits. Only Mary and Jesus are aware -- Peter distraught over what Jesus has said, and Thomas and John caught up in the "glory days."

MARY

Judas?

JESUS

(To call her back) Mary. Mary, this cup is my promise to you. (He gives her the chalice). Take it and remember. Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God. And Mary, when God comes in the storm, don't look away.

MARY

I won't.

JESUS

Friends, my heart hurts. I should like to go to the garden to pray. Please come with me.

SCENE SEVEN

Disciples accompany Jesus to the garden, eventually drifting to sleep.

MARY

And so they left, late as it was, for the garden, Gethsemane. I thought of him there, knelt down among the gnarled olive trees and imagined myself praying beside him:

Jesus kneels. Mary kneels also. This can be staged with the two of them face to face, sharing the same space.

JESUS

Abba, Father.

MARY

Almighty God.

JESUS

For You, all things are possible.

MARY

Please see your servant, Jesus.

JESUS

Remove this cup from me.

MARY

Your prophets say what You require from us is to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with You. All this, he has done.

JESUS

Yet not what I want, but what You want.

MARY

Please look with favor upon him and all who need him.

JESUS

Friends. Are you sleeping? Wake up. The time has come.

Enter Judas and Servant. Jesus stands.

MARY

(Still kneeling in prayer) Deliver him from harm.

JUDAS

Rabbi. (Kisses Jesus).

JESUS

Judas. You betray me with a kiss?

MARY

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and in your faithfulness answer me.

SERVANT

Jesus of Nazareth. You are arrested in the name of Caiaphus, and to be tried in the court of the high priest.

MARY

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Mary retreats to side with notebook.

Jesus remains center with servant.

SCENE EIGHT

Enter Caiaphus.

SERVANT

Here stands the accused.

CAIAPHUS

He's had an audience of five thousand and there are no witnesses?!

SERVANT

No one will come forward, sir.

CAIAPHUS

No one?

SERVANT

Well, um, there are two, but....

CAIAPHUS

Two's enough to convict. Bring them forward.

SERVANT

Sir --

CAIAPHUS

Bring them forward!

SERVANT

Yes, sir.

Two witnesses enter.

CAIAPHUS

The order of this court is to keep the peace and protect our noble nation from harm of traitors. What do you know of the actions of the accused?

WITNESS #1

He said, we heard him say, "I will destroy this Temple with my own hands and then in --

WITNESS #2

No, no he said the Temple was only made by hands and he could destroy it in three days.

WITNESS #1

No, in three days he would rebuild the temple, without using his hands.

CAIAPHUS

Ugh. Get these out of here.

Witnesses exit. Caiaphus and Jesus remain.

SCENE NINE

Takes place between court, courtyard, and Mary.

MARY

Why are they taking so long? They're together, everything is fine. I'll just write. Everything is fine. (Writing) Um. And then Jesus asked, "Who do you say I am?"

Enter Servant girl and Peter.

SERVANT GIRL

I know you. I've seen you with the zealot they have inside. What's his name, Jesus. Of Nazareth, of all places.

PETER

Who? I don't know what you're talking about.

CAIAPHUS

Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?

JESUS

I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.

SERVANT GIRL

I remember now. In the Temple. You were with him causing all that trouble.

PETER

Not me. Haven't been to the Temple. Must have been someone else.

SERVANT GIRL

Please. I know a Galilean accent when I hear it. You are so one of them.

PETER

I said I'm not so just leave me alone.

SERVANT GIRL

You are.

PETER

Don't you have some chamber pots to clean?

SERVANT GIRL

I may clean their mess, but I belong to this palace and what do you got, peasant?

PETER

I'm not --

SERVANT GIRL

Galilean.

PETER

No --

SERVANT GIRL

Hey look everyone, it's one of those zealots!

Peter flees. Servant girl exits.

CAIAPHUS

What need have we of witnesses? This blasphemy is proof enough of his guilt. Take the accused to Pilate. (Caiaphus exits. Jesus remains.)

SCENE TEN

Pilate enters.

PILATE

They tell me you're from Nazareth. Took my first war horse through there. Dirty little hovel. Can't blame you for getting out. Or are you just here for the festival? (Jesus says nothing). They also tell me you've quite a following, and that you incite the people to insurrection. Your taxes are too high, are they? (Jesus still says nothing). You know, I wonder if you saw me riding through Nazareth that day. What were you, ten, twelve? Old enough to remember the smoke rising from Sephhoris. Pity we had to burn it. But such things are necessary in keeping the peace. We crucified so many I lost count. Do you really want to be just one more? And for what? (Jesus says nothing). Not much of a rival, are you? Hardly worth my time. Let's get down to it then: are you King of the Jews?

JESUS

If you say so.

Claudia, Pilate's wife, bursts in.

CLAUDIA

Pontius! (Sees Jesus) Oh, thank God, he's still here.

PILATE

How did you get past the guards? Claudia, you know this is off limits.

CLAUDIA

Yes, dear, I do know. I also know it is imperative you release this prisoner.

PILATE

By whose authority?

CLAUDIA

Divine authority.

PILATE

The Emperor spoke to you?

CLAUDIA

(Scoffs) The Emperor.

PILATE

Careful, Claudia.

CLAUDIA

An angel, a messenger from God, came to me in a dream.

PILATE

A dream? Claudia, really --

CLAUDIA

Listen! The angel showed me what will happen should this man die. I saw a great fracture flowing with blood of both Roman and Hebrew, people crushed under collapsed buildings, and all else engulfed in flame.

PILATE

You should have stayed home, Claudia. Jerusalem has been too much stress and strain on you nerves. Go on now. Treat yourself to a bath and glass of wine.

CLAUDIA

Do not condescend to me. I have seen you to this from a mere soldier. And my dream was every bit as real as us standing here.

PILATE

Claudia...

CLAUDIA

It was real. Jesus of Nazareth is a just man and innocent.

PILATE

Claudia...

CLAUDIA

The angel took my hands into his, and said, "I bestow upon you the pain of injustice." Then he kissed my palms. They burned. Piercing burns. Look at my hands. I still feel it. Please, release him.

PILATE

Claudia, you've made yourself sick.

CLAUDIA

(To Jesus) Forgive us.

JESUS

I forgive you.

PILATE

(Immediately incensed) Guard.

GUARD

(Enters from nearby post) Sir.

PILATE

Take him out. Hold him. Don't let anyone near him.

GUARD

Yes, sir.

Guard exits with Jesus.

PILATE

Forgive us? Him, forgive us. How dare you undermine my authority, authority given me by Emperor Tiberius.

CLAUDIA

Pontius, even an Emperor has to look up to speak with an angel.

Claudia exits. Pilate follows.

SCENE ELEVEN

MARY

(Has been writing) Who do you say I am? Savior? Friend, yes, but more than friend. Who are you? Make room for remembering. It was like I woke from a nightmare to look into the face of -
- Like being on Moses's great mountain and seeing the face of-

Thomas and John enter, the last steps
of their hastened retreat.

THOMAS

Are we the only two back?

MARY

Thomas.

THOMAS

Not even Peter?

JOHN

I told you, Peter's chasing 'em down. Did you see the way he
wielded that sword?

MARY

John, you're hurt.

JOHN

One of the soldiers got me as I --

MARY

Where is he? Where's Jesus?

JOHN

I don't know.

MARY

You left him.

JOHN

We had to. They were armed, and --

MARY

Tell me he's okay, nothing's happened, he's okay.

THOMAS

Yes, he's okay. Now will you shut up so I can think.

MARY

That cut will need cleaning, John. (Begins to inspect cut).

JOHN

(Mumbles) Thanks.

THOMAS

We can't stay here. They know who we are. They'll want to
make an example of us. Make sure no one rises up in his
place.

MARY

His place? You talk as though --

THOMAS

We need somewhere to hide.

JOHN

You're right. Why did we come *here*? Judas could be here any minute with his kiss of death.

Peter enters.

PETER

Judas isn't coming.

JOHN

The vigilante returns. How many did you skewer?

MARY

(A reprimand) John! (To Peter) Did you find Jesus? Is he okay?

PETER

They took him to Pilate.

MARY

Pilate?

THOMAS

So Judas finally got what he wanted. A war cry to rally the people.

PETER

And we're the sorry pieces of fodder.

MARY

Judas wanted, needed, us. We failed him.

THOMAS

Don't you dare blame us for this. Judas is a grown man. He made his own bed.

MARY

I didn't mean to blame.

THOMAS

Fact remains they took him to Pilate. No more messing around. Where do we hide?

JOHN

Simon will take us in.

THOMAS

They'll look for us there.

JOHN

Maybe that's okay - if we can be ready for them. Peter could make us ready, I mean, the way he went after them with that sword.

THOMAS

(Seeking response) Peter?

JOHN

I know it's a risk, but if you show us what to do, we could at least have a fighting chance.

PETER

Will you stop being all epic poetry for a second? You are not King David and this is real.

JOHN

I thought I was being practical.

PETER

I ran away.

JOHN

Of course you didn't. I saw.

PETER

You saw one scared swing of the sword. I'm telling you I ran away. Like the miserable failure I am, I ran away.

THOMAS

Plan A: we hide.

PETER

One thing I'm actually good at.

MARY

No. Remember yourself, Peter.

PETER

Great, because what I really needed right now was chiding. Alright, let's have it. I know you've been waiting to gloat over my failure.

MARY

I'm waiting for you to remember that you are better than this. (Peter scoffs). It's true. Jesus knows it.

PETER

I turned my back on him.

MARY

Turn back around. No hiding. We'll go heads held high and we'll be waiting for him when Pilate releases him.

PETER

Releases him?

MARY

He does it every year for festival.

PETER

What makes you think it'll be Jesus they release?

MARY

Because the people choose and the people love him.

PETER

No, Mary. Not the people in that courtyard. It's their boat we're rocking and they're sick and tired of it.

MARY

Well, it doesn't matter. Some how, some way...

THOMAS

Facts, let's stick to the facts.

MARY

He has always surprised us. There could be so much more to this and we can't be surprised if our heads are stuck in the sand. Come with me.

THOMAS

Come with you and do what exactly?

MARY

Be there.

THOMAS

This makes no sense. You're being irrational. Peter, tell her.

MARY

He would want you to be there, Peter, I'm sure of it. He is waiting for you to come to him, just like that time, that time you were out fishing - remember? - You were fishing, you saw Jesus on the shore - C'mon, you tell it often enough - and he walked out to you upon the water. And you, Peter, got out of that boat to greet him. On the water.

PETER

Yeah well I leave out the part where I went under. You didn't see how close I came to drowning.

MARY

Don't look down this time. Come with me.

PETER

I'm sorry, Mary. I can't do it. I'm sorry.

THOMAS

Faith. I love it. Faith against the might of Rome.

JOHN

Right.

THOMAS

I don't know what we were thinking. I mean really, what did we think we were going to accomplish?

PETER

I walked on water.

SCENE TWELVE

The disciples exit. Mary remains. Jesus walks slowly of his own volition to the cross. Ideally, this is by way of an aisle through the congregation /audience. At the "cross," Jesus raises one arm. Actors knock on wood in sync three times. Jesus raises second arm. Actors knock in sync three times. Witnesses, Caiaphus, and Elder enter.

WITNESS #1

King of the Jews.

WITNESS #

Please.

WITNESS #1

Thought you'd destroy the Temple, did you?

WITNESS #2

Try rebuilding from there.

WITNESS #1

Yeah, unless you can get down.

ELDER

Terrible business. But it's the right thing.

CAIAPHUS

Yes. Far better that one man die than an entire nation perish.

WITNESS #2

Show us your power. Come down and we'll believe.

ELDER

He saved others. Can't save himself.

CAIAPHUS

I've enough of this.

Witnesses, Caiaphus, and Elder exit.

MARY

He saved others. So many others. That little girl in Galilee. Just a child. An empty shell, but his breath filled the room and I had never seen anyone so fully alive. So many healed by a touch of his hand. (Beat) And then there was Lazarus.

Martha enters. This is a flashback sequence.

MARTHA

He's alive! Mary, he's alive.

MARY

Martha? What do you mean, alive?

MARTHA

I saw it with my own eyes, an honest-to-goodness miracle, it was Jesus --

MARY

Jesus?

MARTHA

He called for Lazarus to come out of the tomb and he did. Just walked right out of his tomb.

MARY

Wait, you saw Lazarus? What, like his ghost?

MARTHA

No, no, not a ghost. Lazarus himself, flesh and blood like you and me. He asked for a cup of water and said he was hungry.

MARY

A miracle.

MARTHA

Like God himself came down. And then ate with us. (Exit)

MARY

But why that miracle and not this one? Why? Why?

SCENE THIRTEEN

The Anonymous Woman enters, to the side
She prays.

ANONYMOUS

Go, for God sends you --

MARY

He was doing good work, good work --

ANONYMOUS

Go and God will be with you. --

MARY

There were five thousand hungry people and he broke the bread
and made it enough --

ANONYMOUS

Blessed is God's glorious kingdom --

MARY

It made a difference to people. *He* made a difference: his
hands that healed Simon, his feet that walked on water, his
heart that entered Jerusalem, his breath that restored life
to the little girl of Galilee, his voice that laughed with me
and called my name: Mary. Mary, you said. And I almost knew
you: Rabboni. You are Rabboni because you teach my heart to
know God, but God has --

ANONYMOUS

May God comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

MARY

O my God!

JESUS

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Mary rips up the pages of her book.

THE END