**THE PASSION OF CHRIST (2017)**

**Day 1 (Palm Sunday)**

*A few days before the performance banner notices appear around village proclaiming “It all starts here – 6pm on Sunday.” During the day of the performance the “House at Bethany” appears on the green. Half an hour before the performance musicians (and possibly dancers?) strike up, and 10 minutes before the performance the ‘inhabitants of the village of Bethany’ appear around the house. As 6 o’clock approaches the musicians slip into the background. The action begins as Jesus and his followers appear at the opposite end of the green to the “house”.*

**From Galilee to Jerusalem**

**Scene 1. The House at Bethany**

*(The scene opens as Jesus and his disciples arrive in the village of Bethany. There are two or three women accompanying them, including Naomi, the mother of James and John. Some of the disciples have not been here before, and Jesus pauses on the outskirts of the village to rest and allow them to take in their surroundings before moving on to the home of Lazarus, and his sisters, Martha and Mary. As they sit by the roadside a small crowd, mainly women and children, gathers watchfully at a short distance.)*

**Jesus:** Far enough! This is where we will rest for a while.

**Peter:** Where are we,Master? Is there an inn?

**Jesus:** Don’t worry, Peter, this is Bethany. We have friends here. They will they will give us shelter and refreshment. And then we press on.

**Philip:** Where to, Master?

**Jesus:** To Jerusalem.

**Judas:** Jerusalem? Are we going to take on the Romans?

**Jesus:** We’re going to the Temple; to my Father’s house. That’s where everything begins and ends.

**Bartholomew:** Will you proclaim your kingdom?

**Jesus:** *(Smiles)* What d’you think we’ve been doing, all these weeks? *(Turns to the others)* Matthew? Thomas?

**Thomas:** Here, Master!

**Jesus:** *(Points across to the recreation ground)* See that village on the other side? That’s Bethphage. I want you to go there …

**Matthew:** *(Tired and incredulous)* Now, Master?

**Jesus:** Now, Matthew. When you get there you’ll see a donkey tied up outside a big house just as you come into the village. Untie it and bring it here.

**Matthew:** Just like that? Won’t they mind?

**Jesus:** *(Smiles)* They’ll be expecting you. If anyone asks, you just have to say the words, “the Master has sent for it”, and they’ll know immediately to let you take it. *(The two disciples begin to move away)*

**Matthew:** *(Mutters)* We get all the best jobs!

**Thomas:** Come on, someone has to do it. *(They exit)*

*(During these exchanges James and John have been in deep conversation with their mother, Naomi, but at this point she comes forward with the two men following her)*

**Naomi:** Master, I beg a favour!

**Jesus:** Naomi! What do you want of me?

**Naomi:** It’s my boys, James and John.

**Jesus:** Oh! Am I working them too hard?

**Naomi:** No, Lord, they are good boys, and they’re family; and they’re your most loyal followers…

**Jesus:** And…?

**Naomi:** Lord, grant that when you come into your kingdom, they will sit at your right hand and at your left…..

**Jesus:** Stop! *(The other disciples are looking at James and John, amazed and angry. Jesus beckons James and John to come forward and addresses them directly…)* Can you drink from the cup I will drink from?

**James & John:** Yes! … Certainly!

**Jesus:** *(Slowly)* Yes, I believe you can, and I believe you will…. But to sit on my right and on my left in glory – that is not mine to grant. And before the rest of you explode, understand this all of you. My kingdom is not of this world. In this world the kings and great men lord it over everyone else and make life a misery for them. In my kingdom we serve everyone else and make life worth living! Yes, we are going to Jerusalem, the city of God; but there the Son of Man will be taken and reviled and beaten, and done to death. That is the glory we are heading for… Now, it’s getting cold, let’s go and find that shelter!

*(They all get up in some confusion, and follow Jesus as he heads towards the house of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. The crowd of women and children follow still at a distance. Mary is outside with a broom of twigs, but when she sees Jesus approaching she drops the broom and runs indoors)*

**Mary:** Martha! It’s the Master! The Master’s coming!

*(Martha runs to meet Jesus)*

**Martha:** Master, it is so good to see you! Be welcome to our home!

*(She leads Jesus into the house)*

**Lazarus:** Master! Welcome, my home is your home!

**Jesus:** Lazarus old friend! You look well! And very alive!

**Lazarus:** Alive Master, and very well! Mary! Where is she? Bring water to wash the Master’s feet!

*(Jesus sits on a chair. Mary immediately sits on the floor in front of him as the other men file into the room. Martha shakes her head at Mary and then fetches a bowl of water and a rough towel to bathe Jesus’ feet which she proceeds to do.)*

**Jesus:** The Lord bless you all for your kindness! *(Martha dries his feet and begins to go round the other men, casting angry glances at her sister as she does so.)*

*(The Crowd are now round the door of the house, peering in. Some men have entered and squat on the floor around Jesus waiting for him to speak. There is a scuffle at the door as some of the women try to bring their children into the room. Two of the disciples are barring their way.)*

**Jesus:** Let the children come to me! Don’t try to stop them – the kingdom belongs to them!

*(The children run into the room and Jesus stands to bless them. As he places his hands on their heads the children all sit at the front of the crowd as close as they can get to Jesus. Martha has been busy around the room all this time, but now appears in front of Jesus)*

**Martha:** Master,do you see how my sister leaves me to do all the work? Surely that’s not right? I want to hear what you’ve got to say, just like everyone else! Tell her to come and help me!

**Jesus:** Martha, Martha! Stop fretting and fussing about all these jobs. They’ll still be here tomorrow, or if not you won’t have to worry about them anyway. Why don’t you come and sit down too? I won’t be here tomorrow, so I reckon Mary’s made the right choice!

*(Martha looks bewildered and angry but eventually sits uncomfortably in the crowd of children.)*

**Jesus:** *(To the disciples)* So we’re going to Jerusalem; to my Father’s house. The high priests of Israel, the guardians of that house, have closed its gates to the people and made it hard for anyone to enter the presence of my Father – our Father. That’s the first thing we must change…

**Judas:** Master, we’re twelve men….. will that be enough?

**Jesus:** Two or three’s enough, Judas. When two or three are gathered in my name I will always be there. And we’re not fighting for land or for wealth, so we won’t need that old sword Peter’s got stashed away somewhere!

**Peter:** What’s the next thing we must change, Master?

**Jesus:** We must lift up the poor, the oppressed and the outcast so they too can enter into their inheritance; and we must make sure that all the people hear the holy law of my Father…

**Andrew:** But the Doctors of the Law…

**Jesus:** The Doctors of the Law and Pharisees are hypocrites. They affect great holiness, and they pile huge burdens on the shoulders of the poor so that they cannot achieve it! We must proclaim the true commandments, and show them in the way we live.

**Andrew:** What are the true commandments, Master?

**Jesus:** The first is to love God, with all your heart and mind and strength. And the second is to love your neighbour as you love yourself. There is no greater commandment than these. This is the Law of Love. *(Jesus stands)* Alright, all of you… Come aside a little.

*(He moves out of the house and the disciples follow and gather round him.)*

**Peter:** What’s the matter, Master?

**Jesus:** It’s time we were moving on. We’ll celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. And then it all happens… All the prophecies about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. *(The disciples look at each other in apprehension. Jesus turns away from them and raises his arms towards the church – ‘Jerusalem’.)* Jerusalem, oh Jerusalem! *(A long pause)*  The city that murders the prophets, and stones God’s messengers! How I long to hold your children safe, but you will not let me!

*(As Jesus is speaking the disciples gather round behind him. The women who are travelling with them come out of the house and gather behind them. Jesus turns and surveys his followers, like a commander reviewing his troops. Then he simply nods.)*

Come on, let’s go and see if Matthew’s found that donkey. *(Goes towards the north end of the green, just as Matthew, Thomas and the donkey appear round the corner from the direction of the recreation ground.)*

*Meanwhile Mary has appeared from the house wearing a travelling cloak and closely followed by Martha and more slowly, Lazarus.)*

**Martha:** Mary! What are you doing?

**Mary:** I’m going with the Master.

**Martha:** Are you mad, child? The Master has enough to worry about without you to look after!

**Mary:** I can help. I can look after him. I can cook, I can clean…

**Martha:** You cook?? You clean??

**Mary:** Yes! I must go!

**Martha:** Mary! You must stay! We are people of The Way. We wait … for the Messiah! We must keep faith!

**Mary:**  Martha! Don’t you see? This is the Way! Jesus is the way.

**Lazarus:** Martha, she’s right. We must let her go. I would go if I had the strength; you would go, if you could leave me. We must let our sister go for us!

*(The three siblings stand looking at each other, then they embrace and Martha and Lazarus stand watching as Mary moves rapidly across the green to join the party that is just setting off in the direction of the church)*

**Scene 2. The Entry into Jerusalem**

*(As Jesus and the disciples go towards the church a noisy crowd follows them chanting, calling to the audience and handing out swathes of palm branches. Finally Jesus, with the donkey, enters the church (Jerusalem) and continues up the main aisle to the front of the stage (the outer court of the Temple). The crowd are following and in the church the noise rises to a huge crescendo of constant “Hosanna”s. Temple scribes and temple officials/guards, roused by the noise, appear at the front of the stage and try to quell the shouting, to no avail.)*

**Crowd:** JES-US! JES-US! JES-US!

**Bilhah (Crowd 1):** What’s happening? What’s happening?

**Crowd:** The Messiah’s coming! JES-US! JES-US! JES-US!

**Ruth (Crowd 2):** The revolt must be beginning!

**Crowd:** Ho- Ho- Ho- Hosannah! Ho- Ho- Ho- Hosannah! Ho- Ho- Ho- Hosannah!- Ra!!

*(The crowd keeps up a constant chant of* JES-US! JES-US! JES-US!, Ho- Ho- Ho- Hosannah! *and* The King! The King! The King! *As individual excited conversations break out -* He’s going to send the Romans packing; he may even teach the old priests a thing or two(!); this is the one who’ll set everything to rights for us. e*tc... Jesus dismounts and the crowd falls silent.)*

**Matthew:** *(To the donkey)* Come on, boy, I don’t think we’ll be needing you any more. Better send you back home. *(The donkey is led down the side aisle and out of the church as the hubbub in the temple court rises.)*

**Scene 3. Cleansing the Temple**

*(Jesus, followed by the Disciples a couple of yards behind, walks left along in front of the stage.)*

*(The stage opens to reveal the outer court of the temple, which is effectively a market place, with traders changing money and selling sacrificial victims. There is one small table on the left and two more at the rear facing front. There is a small platform (from rear of lectern) on front of stage right for Jesus to stand on when he faces the Scribe.*

*The Traders, 3 or 4 of the Crowd quietly step onto the Centre Stage by the nearest steps. The rest of the crowd gather as close as possible to the stage. The Traders attend to their stalls. The Crowd gathers around the stalls [silently] haggling over prices. The Temple official (Scribe) stands in the background (rear right) keeping an eye on things.*

**Matthew:** *(To the donkey)* Come on, boy, I don’t think we’ll be needing you any more. Better send you back home. *(The donkey is led down the aisle and out of the church as the hubbub in the temple court rises.)*

*Two traders speak at the same time as indicated below.*

**{Laban (Trader 1):** Best rates! Best rates! - Change your dirty denarii into Yahweh’s own currency!

**{Ruel (Trader 2):** Officially approved lambs! The perfect sacrifice! Best lambs in the City!

**{ Laban (Trader 1):** With us you always get the proper rate! No hidden charges! Pay your temple tax!

**{Dinah (Trader 3):** Beautiful pure doves, buy one get one free! Yes, two for the price of one;

**{ Laban (Trader 1):** Get your money changed here and now. Best rates!

**{ Ruel (Trader 2):** Lovely lambs – all raised locally. Buy them while you can.

**{ Laban (Trader 1):** Always the proper rate! The cheapest way to be legal! Pay your temple tax!

**{ Dinah (Trader 3):** Get your doves here - you know you need them, so you may as well have them at half price!

*(Jesus and the disciples move rapidly onto the stage. Jesus stands at the front on the right. Peter and Thomas stand left adjacent to stall. The other disciples stand right, behind Jesus. All in the crowd react to the action that unfolds. They then back away to the right of the stage. NB Throughout this crowded scene all performers need to ensure they are clear of the tables when pushed over. Also DO NOT MASK JESUS.)*

**Jesus:** *(Shouts)* STOP!…. Stop this wickedness!

*As he speaks, he tips this table over and moves around turning over the other tables (as below.) Money, lambs, doves in cages and other artefacts fall to the floor. The crowd draws back to the sides of the stage in bewilderment. Judas looks on in disbelief.*

**Jesus:** This is a place …. To give relief to the poor …. *Turns over 1st table. Trader 1 steps back in amazement as the money spills over the floor.* Not to oppress them …. To comfort the grieving …..*Turns over 2nd table. Mouths open in disbelief. Trader 2 raises hands in horror. Trader 1 seeks to recover coins from floor.* Not to add to their burdens ….. To welcome the strangers ….. Not to drive them away …..*Turns over 3rd table. Trader 3 steps backwards. Hands raised in horror.*

*Jesus steps back. Lemuel recovers from his shock and moves to confront Jesus who faces him defiantly, arms folded on his chest.*

**Lemuel:**  *(Loud)* Stop this madness! You ignorant Galilean! Who do you think you are?... And what do you think you’re doing? …. Why are you profaning this holy place?

**Jesus:** This *holy* place??! *(Sarcastic tone)*The Scripture says, “My house shall be called a house of prayer.” Is *this* a house of prayer? You are making it a robbers’ cave!

*Jesus glares at them and leads his disciples from the stage by the centre steps. The crowds exchange bewildered but excited glances then back away from the steps as Jesus and the disciples descend.*

**Bilhah (Crowd 1):**I’ve never seen anything like it.

**Ruth (Crowd 2):** Nor me. He must be mad!

**Bilhah (Crowd 1):**Whatever will he do next?

**Elias (Crowd 3):** Come on, we’ll follow him. We don’t want to miss anything!

*(Jesus and his disciples move down the centre aisle and exit into the tower room. The Crowd follow in Jesus’ wake and filter off and sit among the audience. Meanwhile the temple traders, supervised by Lemuel, pick up the tables, the money, lambs, dove cages etc. The tidying up is interrupted by the arrival of the High Priests attended by Malchus.)*

**Annas:** Well…. We can’t have this, can we?

**Caiaphas:** Who is he?

**Lemuel:** Another street preacher and healer. From the north; from Galilee.

**Annas:** Do we know where he preaches?

**Lemuel:** There are safe houses all over the city.

**Annas:** What? Do you mean the Nazarenes?

**Lemuel:** Some such, yes. Harmless messiah-seekers.

**Caiaphas:** Harmless! I don’t call this harmless, do you?

**Lemuel:** No, no! I meant this isn’t the Zealots. They’re not terrorists.

**Annas:** Ah!Just a more subtle kind of rebel? But if we could infiltrate one of his meetings, and trap him into saying something seditious….

**Lemuel:** He’s not hard to find. He’s not hiding!

**Caiaphas:** Then maybe you should go along. A seeker after truth…. one rabbi to another…. ask him what’s the moral thing to do about the taxes that our Roman … masters impose on us…You could take some of the herodians with you.

**Lemuel:** Easily done! Leave it with us!

**Annas:** Good. I’m glad you understand how important it is that we sink our differences and work together on this matter.

**Caiaphas:** We must stand together in the face of danger, and defeat this great evil!

*(They embrace formally and coldly, and leave in opposite directions. The lights fade to total darkness. After a few moments the house lights come on dimly at the back of the church.)*

**Front of House Manager:**

So Jesus arrives in Jerusalem and begins his mission, to bring a message of hope to the people - to all the people. The stage is set for a major confrontation with the powers that be, the priestly hierarchy and the Doctors of the Law, and in the background, the might of Rome – the Governor and his troops, charged with maintaining order and peace in this troublesome province of the Empire.

We hope you will join us here again at 6pm on Thursday to see how this confrontation plays out.

**Day 2 (Maundy Thursday)**

**Confrontation and Communion**

**Scene 1. In the House of Simon the Leper**

*(Jesus enters Simon’s house and is greeted warmly by Simon. He is accompanied by his disciples. The crowd of other people follow. Two or three enter the house. The others stay at the ‘doorway.’ Mary Magdalene joins them.)*

**Simon:** Master! Welcome, my home is your home! Sarah! Bring water to wash the Master’s feet!

*Jesus sits on a chair on the stage area. Sarah brings a bowl of water and a rough towel to bathe his feet which she proceeds to do.*

**Jesus:** Simon, Sarah, the Lord bless you both for your kindness! *(Sarah dries Jesus’ feet.)*

*(A few more of the Crowd enter the house together with the two Pharisees and the Rich Young Man and the room soon fills up. The Temple Guards watch from the doorway. The women among the crowd stand to one side with Sarah. Most of the men squat on the floor around Jesus waiting for him to speak. Mary of Magdala enters clutching a small amphora and stands with the other women. When all the visitors are settled…)*

**Elias:** Master, when will you get rid of the Romans?

**Jesus:** Did I say I would? We should not only love one another, we should love our enemies

and try to live at peace with them!

**Lemuel:** But, Master, what about the taxes that our Roman masters impose on us?

**Jesus:** What about them?

**Lemuel:** Should we pay them? Are they not too burdensome?

**Jesus:** Can you show me a coin?  *(Benjamin reluctantly fumbles for a coin and hands it to Jesus, who takes it and holds it up)* Whose face is this? Whose is the superscription? *(Several voices answer from the crowd: “Caesar’s”)* Then surely it must belong to Caesar!

**Elias:** What about the temple tax, then? The temple coins don’t have God’s image on them.

*(Nervous laughter from the crowd.)*

**Jesus:** Does that mean they don’t belong to God?

**Elias:** *(Embarrassed)* No, I suppose not.

**Jesus:** Then, give Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, and give God the things that belong to

God!

*(Discussions break out in the crowd. The disciples, sitting among the crowd, are joining in. But one young man, very well dressed, struggles to his feet and comes forward to kneel in front of Jesus.)*

**Rich Young Man:** Master,tell me, please, what must I do to gain eternal life?

*(The crowd falls silent)*

**Jesus:** You have studied the Law …

**Rich Young Man:** All my life, Master, I have studied the Law, and I have tried to keep it and live by it, to the letter….

**Jesus:** I sense there’s a ‘but’ coming?

**Rich Young Man:** .... *(Pause)*But it isn’t enough, …. Is it?

**Jesus:** It seems not!

**Rich Young Man:** So, please, tell me …?

**Jesus:** So go and get rid of all your possessions, sell everything; give the money to the poor; and come and follow me.

**Rich Young Man:** *(Stunned)* Everything? Really …. everything?

**Jesus:** Really everything.

*(The Rich Young Man buries his head in his hands, then leaps up and stumbles out of the house.)*

**Elias:** How can anyone get into Heaven, then?

*(At this question the children begin to sing loudly and happily: “Jesus, remember us, etc , when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus smiles and gestures towards them)*

**Jesus:** *(Slowly)*  Look around you! Look at your children - how innocent and trusting they are….

*(A small boy comes forward and stands looking up at Jesus)*

**Jesus:** *(Smiling)* Hello, lad! What’s your name?

**Boy:** Jacob.

**Bilhah:** Tch! Say “Master”!

**Jesus:** *(Smiling at her, and then stooping to the boy)*And my name’s Jesus. *(stands the boy on a stool)* Look! None of you can enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless you become again as innocent and trusting as this child.

*(As Jesus is speaking Mary steps forward from the group of women, carrying the amphora of precious oil, and comes to kneel behind Jesus. She is crying as she anoints his head and feet)*

**Ruth:** What does she think she’s doing? Why doesn’t he stop her? Doesn’t he know the sort of woman she is? What a criminal waste!

**Bilhah:** That stuff costs the earth! I couldn’t afford it! It could have been sold and the money given to the poor.

**Judas:** Yes, that’s what should happen; think how many poor people that could have helped.

**Jesus:** Why are you giving her a hard time? The poor will always be with you; but I won’t! She has performed a good service for me. She knows what’s going to happen! Don’t you, Mary?

**Mary:** *(Mary nods emphatically. She is shaking with grief.)* Master, do not do this! Do not leave us!

**Jesus:** This woman is preparing my body for burial. Do you find anything wrong with that?

*(To Mary)* Thank you, Mary. Your loving kindness will always be remembered. Go in peace.

*(Mary hurries away out of the house and to the back of the church.)*

**Ruth:**What’s he thinking about? A complete disgrace! Shameless hussey!

**Bilhah:** No better than she should be. You should hear what Leah told me about her and that Benjamin.

**Elias:**She can wash my feet any time she likes!

**Bilhah:** Hush, he’ll hear you!

*(Jesus stands)*

**Jesus:** The Passover is near at hand! It’s time for you all to go to your homes to prepare!

*(Jesus embraces Simon and Sarah and leaves the house followed by the disciples. Outside he pauses.)*

**Jesus:** Matthew, Thomas! Will you go to the place I told you about to make ready for the Passover meal? We will follow you shortly.

**Matthew:** Of course, Master.

**Thomas:** At once!

*(They head towards the back of the main stage. Meanwhile Jesus and the rest of the disciples head across the front of the stage and down the centre aisle. Judas remains watching them for a moment, before beginning to follow them, along with the first members of the crowd. Then he hesitates and stops. He turns back and makes his way furtively across the front of the stage towards the High Priest’s House. Halfway down the aisle Bartimaeus is seated at the end of a pew. As Jesus passes he calls out.)*

**Bartimaeus:** What’s happening? Who is it?

**Andrew:** Hush! It’s Jesus of Nazareth.

**Bartimaeus:** Jesus? *(Shouts)* Son of David! Jesus! Have pity on me!

*(Jesus stops but doesn’t turn round)*

**Andrew:**  I say be quiet, old man! He’s going to keep the Passover. He can’t be disturbed now.

**Bartimaeus:** *(Shouts again)* Son of David! Jesus! Have pity on me!

*(Jesus turns round)*

**Jesus:** Let him come to me.

**Andrew:** He’s calling you! Come!

*(Bartimaeus leaps to his feet and Andrew leads him forward to stand in front of Jesus)*

**Jesus:**  What is your name?

**Bartimaeus:** Bartimaeus, Master, son of Timaeus.

**Jesus:** And what is it you want of me?

**Bartimaeus:** *(Almost whispers)* I want my sight back.

**Jesus:** And you believe I have the power?

**Bartimaeus:** You are the son of David, the one who is to come.

**Jesus:** *(Pauses)* Then go; your faith has cured you.

*(Jesus* *takes him gently by the shoulders and turns him round to face the audience. Bartimaeus stares round in amazement. He turns back falls on his knees and clutches Jesus’ hands. Jesus raises him up and again turns him to face the back of the church. Bartimaeus hurries down the aisle, embracing people, clutching their hands and staring around, calling out “I can see! … The Master has healed me! I can see – I can see your face! … Praise be to Yahweh who has sent his Saviour!” . Jesus turns back towards the stage and leads the disciples into the tower room. Meanwhile Judas has appeared in the south aisle making his way furtively towards the High Priest’s house.*

**Scene 2. Judas Iscariot Betrays Jesus.**

*(Judas approaches cautiously constantly looking over his shoulder. As he arrives outside Caiaphas’ house he is met by Malchus, the High Priest’s servant, enforcer and head of household.)*

**Malchus:** Who are you? What do you want?

**Judas:** My name is Judas Iscariot, I need to see Caiaphas the High Priest, in person. It’s urgent.

**Malchus:** His holiness is resting now.

**Judas:** I must see the High Priest, now! I’ve come to warn him!

**Malchus:** Wait, please. *Disappears, to return seconds later with Annas, the High Priest’s father-in-law.)*

**Annas:** Is this the man? What is it you want?

**Judas:** *(Surprised and annoyed that Caiaphas hasn’t appeared in person.)*  I need to see Lord Caiaphas. I have vital information for him.

**Annas:** About what …. ?

**Judas:** Jesus the Nazarean.I have … been with ….him… and the Galilean men who came with … him.

**Annas:** Aha! Yes?

**Judas:** He’s very dangerous; he has to be stopped!

**Annas:** *(Dismissive)* We already know that.

**Judas:** But I can tell you where to find him when there are no crowds about.

**Annas:** Ah… One moment please.

*(Annas disappears, and returns immediately with Caiaphas, and a temple official carrying a leather purse and Malchus carrying a wax tablet and stylus. Caiaphas looks enquiringly at Annas, who gestures towards Judas.)*

**Caiaphas:** You know where we can find this Jesus alone?

*(Judas nods.)*

**Caiaphas:** And where would that be then?

**Judas:** What will you give me if I tell you?

**Annas:** You’ll get what Scripture prescribes – blood money; the going rate. So where will we find him?

**Judas:** *(Cowed, and beginning to realise what he’s got into.)* In Gethsemane garden, by Olivet. He will go there after the Passover meal. There will only be the men of Galilee with him.

**Caiaphas:** *(Sarcastic)*And do you suggest we arrest them all?

**Judas:** No, no! I’ll be there. I will greet him, just him, with a kiss. There can be no mistake.

**Caiaphas:** Good. I don’t like mistakes. But I think we should take *you* with *us*…. to make sure that you don’t … *mistake* the time and arrive too late.

**Judas:** Oh…. Yes, of course I’ll go with you.

**Caiaphas:** Yes. Of course you will. *(Judas is looking at him with anxious expectation)* Ah yes, the recompense for this very small favour …. *(He looks enquiringly at Malchus, who leans forward and whispers in his ear.)* Hum.., the going rate… Thirty pieces of silver.

**Judas:** Oh…. Yes.

**Caiaphas:** *(Emphatically)* Yes. *(to Malchus)* See to it.

*Caiaphas and Annas sweep out, through the doorway. Malchus nods to the Temple official, who drops the purse in front of Judas, while Malchus makes a note on his wax tablet. The two officials then turn and follow the high priests out. Judas stoops awkwardly to grasp the pouch and skulks away in a half crouching gait.*

**Scene 3. The Last Supper**

*(The scene is a large upper room in a substantial house somewhere in Jerusalem. Matthew and Thomas have walked up the side aisle during the previous scene and are now on stage moving carefully around the long table making sure that everything is in place)*

**Thomas:** Well, I think that’s everything.

**Matthew:** Yes, just in time I reckon.

*(Jesus and the disciples have entered from the back of the church and now filter into the room and take their seats around the table talking quietly. Thomas and Matthew join them. The buzz of conversation quietens and they begin dipping into a large communal bowl and eating. N.B. It is essential that Judas dips his bread into the bowl. The disciples pass occasional quiet comments to each other until Jesus breaks the quiet.*

**Jesus:** You know, ….One of you is going to betray me.. *(Pause)* That is what the prophecy says, isn’t it?

**Peter:** Can you mean me, Master?

**All:** *(except Judas)* Do you mean me, Master? … Can you mean me? …. Surely not me, Lord? etc…

*Judas looks downward.*

**Jesus:**  Someone who has broken bread with me and dipped his hand into this common bowl with me, and eaten this meal of fellowship with me, will still betray me.

**Judas:** Master, can you mean me?

**Jesus:** The words are your own. It seems we each must do what we must do.

*(Judas rises knocking over his chair, and rapidly leaves the room exiting behind the stage into the Chancel.)*

**Jesus:** *(Sighs, and then picks up an unbroken bread. He holds it up and prays over it and then begins to break it and share it out with the disciples)* Take this bread and eat it. It is my body, broken for you. *(He picks up a large goblet, repeats the act of blessing, and passes it round the table.)*Drink from this, all of you. This is the sign of a **new** covenant, and a pledge to all humankind. It is my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins……

*(The goblet is passed round the table. There is a brief period of silence, then Jesus and disciples get up and move to the sides of the stage.)*

***(THE EUCHARIST)***

**Scene 4. Departure to Gethsemane**

**Jesus:** *(Comes forward from the table, centre stage)* Come, it’s time we left.

**Peter:** Where to Master?

**Jesus:** We need somewhere to pray and sleep. Trust me, Peter, just follow! No, that’s still hard isn’t it? Tonight faith will fail all of you and you will want to run and hide. You know what Scripture says: “I will strike down the Shepherd and the sheep will all be scattered.” But after all this is over, and you all just want to go home, I will be there, raised up again; and I will lead you back to Galilee.

**Peter:** Master, everyone else may desert you, but I never will!

**Jesus:** Peter, Peter, Peter! Tonight, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.

**Peter:** No! I would die for you before I’d disown you!

**All:**  Nor will I! … No, never! … My faith won’t fail! … I’ll follow wherever you lead! etc etc.

**Jesus:**  Come on then, we must go now. We’ll spend the night at Gethsemane.

*Jesus, Peter, James and John moves off slowly down the aisle. The other disciples stand looking at each other in consternation.*

**Thomas:** Well, what are we waiting for? Let’s go and die with him!

*The disciples follow. Matthew hangs back, and turns to address the audience.*

**Matthew:** That’s Thomas for you – Miserable! Mind you, you can tell none of us is feeling very happy. Where is he taking us? It doesn’t look good. Peter’s got a sword under that robe – A fat lot of good that’ll do; that big old softy can’t even gut a fish properly. Well, that’s it; can’t stop now. Are you coming? We’re going to need all the help we can get!

*As Matthew exits, the Crowd come out of the pews and follow, encouraging the rest of the audience to come with them.*

**Scene 5. The Arrest**

*(Jesus enters the garden walking quietly but purposefully, with the disciples trailing behind him. Peter, James and John are following him closely. When he arrives he stops and turns as the disciples shamble to a halt in front of him. The Crowd is waiting at a distance.)*

**Jesus:** Right this is far enough. You can all wait here and rest. Try to keep out of sight! *(To Peter, James and John)* I’ll need you to come with me to keep watch.

*(They all nod and follow him. Jesus walks a few yards further, looks around and turns to the three men following him.)*

**Jesus:** This is the place. Stay here while I go over there. I need some time to pray. Stay awake and pray with me! And keep your eyes and ears open!

*(The three disciples sit on the ground, while Jesus goes forward again and kneels, still in full view of the audience. As he prays the disciples fall asleep.)*

**Jesus:**  Father, my Father! This is hard, so hard, and I am so afraid! *(Pause)* Do I have to do this? Is there really no other way? …. Father, if you will… take this cup away from me! You stayed the hand of Abraham when he would sacrifice his only son to your will. You found another way and Isaac was spared … Father! … *(Pause)* No, not my will… your will be done…

*(After a short while Jesus rises and returns to the three disciples.)*

**Jesus:** Peter! All of you! Asleep? Couldn’t you manage to stay awake for me for such a little time! Listen! Stay awake! Keep watch! Pray that you may be spared this test!

*(Jesus moves away again and falls to his knees)*

**Jesus:** Father! Speak to me… speak so that I can hear you! *(Pause)* You seem so far away…. My heart fails me… *(Pause)* Father, give me some sign that this has to be… No… no… Father, I obey your will… with … all … my … heart…

*(Jesus rises and returns again to the three disciples.)*

**Jesus:** Peter!John! James! Wake up! Watch with me so your souls may be safe!

*(Jesus moves away again)*

**Jesus:** Father forgive me my weakness and lack of faith. *(Pause)* Forgive me as I forgive those who seek to harm me! And Father keep these men safe… they have given all to be with me… grant that they too may see your glory…

*(Jesus rises and returns a final time to the three disciples.)*

**Jesus:** Still sleeping! Ah well, enough, enough! *(Sounds of the mob approaching)* Can’t you hear? It’s time for the Son of Man to be subjected to human judgement. My betrayer is coming! Let’s not hide. Let’s go and meet him.

*(As he is speaking a small troop of temple guards led by the High Priest’s servant, Malchus, and accompanied both by Judas and by a crowd of ruffians with sticks and cudgels, enter the garden and march towards Jesus. As they approach the main group of disciples they retreat into the shadows. Jesus is now standing facing the intruders with Peter, James and John gathered close behind him. As the troop approaches Jesus moves forward to meet them with the three disciples close behind him. Peter draws his sword.)*

**Jesus:** Who are you looking for?

*(Malchus and Judas come forward)*

**Judas:** Master! *(Hurries forward and makes to embrace Jesus)*

**Jesus:** Judas! My brother! *(Judas stops in his tracks)* Would you betray me with a kiss?

*(Judas stands confused and then flinches as Jesus suddenly reaches forward and embraces him warmly. Judas clutches his head and staggers to one side, as Peter steps forward and swings at him clumsily with his sword. The blow misses him and catches Malchus on the side of his head. Judas runs off into the shadows.)*

**Jesus:** Stop! Put up your sword. Let them have their way! *(turns to Malchus)* I know you! You’re Malchus, aren’t you? *(He gently touches the side of his head)* Malchus, be healed! Be whole! *(Jesus again steps forward to confront rest of the troop.)* So am I such a dangerous bandit? Did you need to bring swords and cudgels to arrest me? Every day I’ve been among you in the temple in broad daylight. You could have arrested me there. But no, you have chosen this moment – the hour when darkness reigns! *(He holds out his hands to them, wrists together.)*

Here I am; I am Jesus of Nazareth, the man you are looking for.

*(The soldiers hesitate and then two of them step forward and bind his arms. They lead him away into the church with Malchus and the troop following. The disciples follow at a distance.)*

*(The soldiers hesitate and then two of them step forward and bind his arms. They lead him away into the church with Malchus and the troop following. The disciples follow at a distance. The Front of House Manager emerges and addresses the crowd.)*

**FoH Manager:** This is going to be a very long night; you can all go home now, but we hope you’ll join us in the church at 6 o’clock tomorrow evening to find out what happens next. Some of us are not going home. We’re going to stay here in the church and keep watch. Any of you who want to join us for all or part of that vigil are very welcome to do so. You can enter the church now, quietly, through the main porch or you can come back later; and you can leave whenever you’re ready to do so. The vigil will end at midnight. So I’ll wish you all a good night, good rest, and hope to see you tomorrow.

*(The Vigil and the stripping of the church will begin in the Lady Chapel ten minutes after this announcement.)*

**Day 3 Good Friday**

**Four Trials and the Crucifixion**

**Scene 1. The Trial before the High Priests & Peter’s Denial.**

*(The procession from Gethsemane arrives at the High Priest’s house, led by Malchus and the temple guards with Jesus. They are followed by a motley crowd with Peter and Matthew somewhere near the back. Jesus is led into the house, where the whole priestly Council is assembled around the two High Priests. The front of the crowd presses into the house, and Matthew, being a Levite and related to the High Priests, is able to squeeze in too. Seeing that Peter has been left outside he searches out one of the serving girls.)*

**Matthew:** Miriam! You’ve grown so much I hardly recognised you! *(Miriam simpers coyly)* My friend’s got stuck outside – do you think you could sweet talk old Zachery to let him in?

**Miriam:** Well, seeing as it’s you, Matthew! *(Gives him a coy look and goes over to speak to the servant who is minding the door. Peter is helped into the room through the crush.)* There you are now… hmm! You’re not a local are you? Are you one of that fellow’s disciples?

**Peter:** *(Angry and afraid.)* No, I certainly am not!

**Miriam:** Ooh!Sorry I asked!

*(She moves away and Peter pushes further into the room, accidentally jostling against another man, who turns towards him.)*

**Reuben (Man in the crowd):** Hey! Mind out! … Just a minute – You’re one of them aren’t you?

**Peter:** No! Of course not! I wouldn’t be in here if I was!

*(Rachel, another serving girl, is passing.)*

**Rachel:** You’ve got a northern accent – you must be one.

**Peter:** I tell you, I’ve never seen that man before!

*(Somewhere outside a cock crows. Peter stands as if thunderstruck, and then turns, struggles back to the door and hurries away down the church convulsed with grief. Meanwhile…)*

**Annas:** The dawn is here. Let us begin the process.

*(Jesus is brought to stand in front of the Council)*

**Caiaphas:** You are Jesus Bar-Joseph, the carpenter from Nazareth – *(Jesus bows his head briefly.)* Are you the Messiah?

**Jesus:** If I tell you, you won’t believe me! But from this moment on, I say to you, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of God Almighty.

**Caiaphas:** You are the son of God, then?

**Jesus:** It is you who say that I am.

**Annas:** *(Quickly)* We do not need to proceed any further, or to call any witnesses! He has just condemned himself out of his own mouth! We all heard it!

*(There is a general rumble of agreement from the Council)*

**Caiaphas:** We are agreed, then. He is worthy of death. *(Council: “Aye”)* However, in the present circumstances we are not able to impose this sentence ourselves. We must lay our case before His Grace, the Governor, and.. er.. call upon our .. er.. Roman masters to execute the sentence on our behalf. Let us adjourn..

*(Loud mumbles of* “Hear, hear” *as the whole Council rises. The Chief Priests lead the way out of the house as Jesus is led towards the Palace of the Governor.)*

**Scene 2. The First Trial before Pilate**

*(The High Priests and other temple officials march up and onto the main stage (left) followed by the guards with Jesus and the crowd. When they reach the steps to the upper stage (right) they stop. The Centurion appears at the top of the steps.)*

**Centurion:** You have business with his Grace, the Governor?

**Caiaphas:** We have. We have captured Jesus the Nazarene, who has been subverting our nation and fomenting rebellion against the emperor.

**Centurion:**  You’d better bring him inside. Not all that mob; just you and any witnesses.

**Annas:** You must know we have already completed the rites of purification before the feast. If we were to enter a .. erm.. Roman building we would become .. ah..

**Centurion:** Unclean? Wait there. I’ll convey your business to his Grace.

*(Turns smartly and goes inside. At the same time Pilate appears from the back. The centurion salutes.)*

**Pilate:** What’s going on Lucius?

**Centurion:** The Jews, Sir. They’ve caught some poor beggar they say is an enemy of Caesar. They want you to punish him.

**Pilate:** What’s he done?

**Centurion:** No idea, Sir.

**Pilate:** Well why don’t they bring him in?

**Centurion:** They can’t come in here, Sir, they’re afraid they’ll be contaminated – something to do with their religion, Sir.

**Pilate:** Of course. I forgot. *(ironic)* We’re the dirty Gentile dogs and they’re our loyal subjects! So Caesar’s Representative will have to stoop and come to them.

**Centurion:** I guess so, Sir.

**Pilate:** Come on then; let’s get it over with.

*(They go outside and the murmur of conversation stops and the crowd falls silent. Pilate stares deliberately round, taking in the whole scene, looks the priests up and down, and then fixes his gaze on Jesus.)*

**Pilate:** Is this the threat to the Empire?

*(Caiaphas clears his throat, and looks at Annas, but no-one speaks)*

**Pilate:** Hah! Not guilty. Case dismissed.

**Caiaphas:** Your Grace! You have not heard the evidence.

**Pilate:** I can see the evidence.

**Annas:** *(Sinister with suppressed anger)* Your Grace, if you do not take this seriously you are no friend of Caesar’s.

**Pilate:** *(Also angry, but clearly taken aback)* Very well. State the case and bring forward your evidence. *(Caiaphas and Annas exchange glances, and Caiaphas nods to Annas to begin.)*

**Annas:** Your Grace, we found this man subverting our nation, opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be Messiah, a king.

**Pilate:** *(To Jesus)* Are you the King of the Jews?

**Jesus:** *(Raises his head for the first time, and looks straight at Pilate.)* The words are yours. *(They look each other in the eye for a long moment.)*

**Pilate:** *(To the priests)* I find no case for this man to answer.

**Caiaphas:** His teaching is causing disaffection among the people all through Judaea. It began in Galilee and it has spread as far as this city.

**Pilate:** Wait! It began in Galilee? This man is a Galilean?

**Caiaphas:** *(Uncertain of what this intervention means)* Er..Yes?

**Pilate:** Then why have you brought him here? This case falls within the jurisdiction of the Tetrarch, Herod. *(The two priests look at each other, thwarted and angry, but before they can gather themselves Pilate continues.)* As it is, I believe his Highness is conveniently in Jerusalem at this time – whether for your feast or for some business of his own. Centurion! Take this man into custody and deliver him to my Lord Herod. I will send a letter with you.

**Centurion:** Yessir! *(Two Roman soldiers move down to take charge of Jesus)*

**Pilate:** *(To the crowd, and then to the priests)* I’m now imposing an immediate curfew on this town. Anyone found on the streets between now and daybreak without legitimate reason will be flogged. And you, Sirs,had better return to your temple and continue your preparations for the feast.

*(Pilate turns on his heel and exits through the back of the palace; the crowd disperses and the priests and their retinue also move away reluctantly. When the way is clear the soldiers march Jesus to the back of the church and round to Herod’s palace.)*

**Scene 3. The Trial before Herod**

*(Herod is lounging on a day bed attended by several serving girls…. The Centurion enters and raises his arm in salute)*

**Centurion:** Greetings Sire, from his Grace, Pontius Pilate, Governor of the province of Syria and Judaea. *(Hands Herod a small scroll)*

**Herod:** *(Annoyed)* Ach! What does he want now? *(Looks briefly at the scroll and then waves it at the Centurion as if he cannot understand it)* What is this?

**Centurion:** His Grace sends his compliments, sir, and requests that you deal with a case that falls within your jurisdiction.

**Herod:** Oh really? What case?

**Centurion:** A trouble-maker from Galilee. Jesus the Nazarene.

**Herod:** Oh!! The miracle-worker? Oh yes! I would like to see him! Bring him in!

*(The Centurion salutes and exits)*

**Herod:** *(Rubbing his hands and speaking to the serving girls)* This could be fun! I’ve heard he’s very, very good!

*(Centurion returns with Jesus, in chains, between two legionaries)*

**Herod:** *(Silkily)* Jesus of Nazareth! …. Hello! *(Jesus remains silent, head bowed)* Oh! Grumpy! Well, I’ve actually heard of you! Doesn’t that make you feel important?.... *(Still silence)*…. Oh all right then; you seem to be upset; but I want to see what you can do; I want to see if what everyone says about you is true! So, come on… just one little trick to satisfy my curiosity… Nothing too difficult; I’m not a harsh man! …. *(Suddenly angry)* Oh lawd! Say something, man! … “Abracadabra” maybe? …. Can.. you ..not ..do it? *(Claps his hands sharply)*

All right! Fetch some water!

*(One of the maids hurriedly fills a goblet from a pitcher of water standing at the side and hands it to Herod)*

There now, maybe turn a little water into wine for me? I’ve heard you can do that! I like wine! …. If you just do this, I might even rescue you! … give you a job – in my cellar! …. Aarrrgh! Say something man! YOU ARE NOT TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY! … YOU .. ARE .. WASTING .. MY .. TIME! … Arrgh! GET RID OF HIM before I strangle him with my own hands. Take him back to Pilate, tell him … tell him this is just a jumped-up village magic-man not worthy of our attention.

*(Centurion salutes again and Jesus is hurriedly led out)*

**Scene 4. The Second Trial before Pilate**

*(The squad of soldiers march Jesus back to the forecourt of the Governor’s Palace. As they arrive the Priests appear hurriedly from the temple area and a crowd rapidly gathers. Pilate emerges and stands looking down at the prisoner, and the crowd forming behind him. The centurion hands him a small scroll.)*

**Pilate:** So! You’re back. *(He glances at the scroll and then at Jesus.)* You seem to have convinced the Lord Herod that you are no danger to the state. *(To the waiting priests)* I have found no fault. Your tetrarch Herod has found no fault.

**Caiaphas:** Your Grace! You must examine him thoroughly.

**Pilate:** *(After a long hard stare at the priests)* Bring him inside. Not them!

*(Pilate goes into the governor’s palace and sits in the one chair. Jesus is brought in and stands in front of him flanked by the two troopers.)*

**Pilate:** Right, young man, now we had better have some straight talking. Are you the King of the Jews?

**Jesus:** Is that your own idea, or has someone else suggested it?

**Pilate:** What! Am I a Jew? The gods only know how you have offended them, but it’s your own people who have brought you here!

**Jesus:** My kingdom does not belong to this world. My authority comes from elsewhere.

**Pilate:** You are a king then?

**Jesus:** “King” is your word. My task is simply to bear witness to the truth.

**Pilate:** The truth? Whose truth? Theirs? Yours? Mine? What is the truth?

*(Pilate gets up abruptly and goes out onto the forecourt. As he appears a roar of anticipation rises from the crowd)*

**Pilate:** I find no case against the man you call your king. But there is a custom that I release one prisoner for you at Passover. Is it your wish that I release the King of the Jews?

*(A confused roar rises from the crowd and then it resolves into cries of “Barabbas! Barabbas!” Pilate raises his hand. And returns to the judgement chamber, where Jesus is still standing. As Pilate resumes his seat the Centurion enters and leans down to speak in Pilate’s ear)*

**Centurion:** Your wife, sir.

**Pilate:** Agh! By Jupiter! My wife?! *(Rises and goes to the archway where his wife is waiting in the shadows)* What in Hades do you want? Can’t you see I’m a little busy at the moment?

**Octavia:** My Lord, forgive me!

**Pilate:** What is it then?

**Octavia:** The man you have in custody … Jesus… *(Pilate makes a huge gesture of frustration)*

**Pilate:** *(Sarcastically)* Jesus Bar-Abbas, or Jesus, the king of the Jews?

**Octavia:** Don’t be cruel, my Lord!Jesus the Messiah.

**Pilate:** Of course!

**Octavia:** My Lord, he is a good man. - Do not condemn him! I beg you have nothing to do with this. I have dreamt such terrible things – My Lord, spare him please! *(Falls at his feet)*

**Pilate:** *(Through gritted teeth)* Please! *(Stoops awkwardly to lift her up)* Listen.. believe me I am doing what I can. But what am I supposed to do about that? *(Gestures towards the priests and the crowd)* If that lot goes up, I’m the one who’ll be crucified! *(Octavia begins to weep noisily)* I am trying – alright? Now go!

*(Octavia hurries out and Pilate returns to the judgement seat and stares at Jesus.)*

**Pilate:** Where have you come from? *(Silence from Jesus)* Do you now refuse to speak to me? Don’t you understand that I have complete power over you? I can crucify you… or I can release you.

*(Jesus turns his head slowly towards the crowd – the chant is now “Crucify! Crucify!” – and then back to Pilate.)*

**Jesus:** Can you? *(The question lies like a lump of rock between them, as Pilate wrestles with the realisation that he cannot.)*

**Pilate:** Centurion! *(Lucius appears at once)* Flog him. *(The Centurion salutes and Jesus is marched rapidly out through the back arch.)*

*(The flogging takes place off stage and is represented by sound effects – the ribaldry of the soldiers and the regular crack of the lash. Pilate sits motionless throughout. When the lashing stops Jesus is led back wearing a crown of thorns and a purple robe. Pilate rises and walks out onto the forecourt. Jesus is led after him and as he appears there is another roar from the crowd.)*

**Pilate:** Here is your King!

*(Cries of “Crucify him!”)*

**Pilate:** Crucify your king?

*(Cries of “We have no king but Caesar”)*

**Pilate:** Bring me some water! *(Water is brought and Pilate ostentatiously washes his hands. Then he addresses Jesus)* This is not my judgement. The Gods only know what you’ve done to deserve this, but this is the judgement of your own people. *(Turns to the High Priests)* So be it. See to it yourselves!

**Centurion:** *(Places a piece of vellum in front of Pilate)* The charge, Sir.

**Pilate:** *(Speaks as he writes)* “Jesus of Nazareth. The King of the Jews.”

**Annas:** Ah, your Grace! Just to be quite clear please! Write that he claimed to be king of the Jews!

**Pilate:** I’ve written what I’ve written. *(Impatient gesture)* Go on, Take him! Get out all of you!

*(The stage clears, and Pilate is left sitting alone centre stage. After a moment or two Pilate’s wife appears at the side of the stage. As their eyes meet, they stare at each other in hollow anguish as the lights dim to complete darkness.)*

Scene 5. The Crucifixion

*(The crucifixion scene has almost no dialogue. It consists of the procession to Golgotha (through the streets of the village), the nailing to the cross, the erection of the cross and the gathering of a small group of women and disciples near the cross, with a single soldier standing on guard beside the cross. Three more soldiers are sitting on the ground nearby rolling dice to see who will win Jesus’ coat.*

**Jesus:** John, …. John … see … your mother … *(pause)* Mother? …. Your …son…

**John:** Master, she will be safe with me. She will not want for anything I can give her.

**Altius (Soldier):** *(Casts the dice and looks up at the cross)* If you’re the King of the Jews, why don’t you save yourself? Come on down!

**Crespus (Soldier):** Knock it off Altius! No need for that. Look – You’ve got the coat!

**Jesus:** Father,forgive them … they don’t know what they’re doing.

**Altius:** He’s going delirious! He’s losing it!

**Crespus:** Knock it off!

**Jesus:** Father, into your hands I surrender my spirit.

*Suddenly there is a massive crash of thunder, the lights all flash and flicker and then go out. After a few seconds the lights slowly come up again to reveal the soldier, Secundus, standing rigidly to attention as if petrified. The Centurion enters rapidly.)*

**Secundus (Soldier):** BLIMEY! What in Hades was that?

**Centurion:** I don’t know soldier, but it was certainly something to do with *him. (Gesturing towards the cross)*

**Secundus:** With him? Then by all the gods he must have been a really wicked son of Hades!

**Centurion:** No, I’m afraid not … Just the opposite. This man… was an innocent. A true son of God. I don’t know what we’ve done, but I’m pretty sure we shouldn’t have. *(Long pause)* Come to order, soldier.

**Secundus:** Sir!

**Centurion:** You are to prevent anyone, anyone at all, from interfering with … with him.

**Secundus:** *(Salutes smartly)* Yes Sir!

**Centurion:** Carry on, soldier. *(The soldier remains standing to attention beside the cross, as the centurion takes a final look at the cross and turns to the other soldiers who are now on their feet. He gestures to them to join him and turns towards the crowd.)*

**Centurion:** *(to the crowd)* Alright! Move along now! There’s nothing more to see here.

*(The soldiers use the shafts of their spears to push the crowd back and shepherd them into the dimly lit church.)*

*(After everyone is seated John and James enter the church with Jesus’ body on a stretcher the soldiers escort them up the centre aisle, and they place the body in the tomb. The soldiers roll the heavy stone into the mouth of the tomb and stand either side, as James and John withdraw through the chancel arch.)*

**FoH Manager:** There’s nothing more to tell this evening. Go home now, and we look forward to seeing you here at 11am on Sunday morning when our story comes to its conclusion.

**Day 4 Easter Morning**

**Scene 1. The Empty Tomb**

*(The tomb stands in front of the pulpit with the stone rolled to one side to reveal a dark interior. When the congregation are assembled for the Easter Eucharist, ie at 11am, the action begins without preamble. Mary mother of Jesus, Joanna, Mary mother of James and Salome come from different directions and gather at the back of the main aisle. Between them they are carrying all the requirements for anointing and wrapping the body of the crucified Christ – bundles of linen, a basket of herbs and aloes, other precious spices and flask of myrrh. They are really nervous about what they are about to undertake.)*

**Joanna:** Come, Mary, we’ve managed to collect all the herbs we need..

**Mary (Mother of Christ):** Joanna, you are so kind, so kind. I don’t know how I would manage without you all.

**Joanna:** Mary, I could never repay you for all your kindness to me over the years! Isn’t that right, girls?

**All:** Yes! … we all feel the same.. you’ve been like a mother to us all… etc etc

**Mary (M of C):** Have we got herbs?

**Salome:** Yes, look! I persuaded Simeon to let me cull the best from his garden; and some aloes.

**Mary (M of C):** And I have the myrrh.

**Mary (Mother of James):** And here are the precious spices. They were meant for Benjamin, but he said he’s not going anywhere yet, and he insisted I should bring them.

**Salome:** So… are we all ready?

**Mary (M of C):** But where’s young Mary? We can’t go without her. She said she would come.

**Salome:** She’ll come, I know she will. She’s taken it really hard, but she’ll be coming I’m sure of it.

**Joanna:**  But we can’t wait – the sun’s rising!

**Mary (M of C):** Come on then, maybe she’ll catch us up. *(They begin to move up the aisle)* I hope no-one saw us leave.

**Mary (M of J):** No matter! They can’t stop us now!

**Salome:** The guards can!

**Joanna:** They wouldn’t dare! By law they cannot. Besides they may have gone by now.

**Salome:** Oh, I really hope so!

**Mary (M of C):** I hope not! We’ll need their help to move the stone! We’ll never manage it on our own.

*(By this time the women are level with the front pews)*

**Salome:** Oh, I’d forgotten about the stone, what are … *(She stops and stares at the tomb)* … What … Mary! The stone!! Look! … The stone!

*(The women stand dumbstruck and completely bewildered as they take in the open tomb.*

**Angel:** *(Voice)* Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive?

*(After a shocked pause the women turn and run back the way they came. Halfway up the aisle they meet Mary Magdalene hurrying in the other direction.)*

**Mary (M of C):** Oh Mary, Mary! Come with us! *(Mary Magdalene stops and looks after them, and then back towards the tomb in growing alarm. Then she runs up the aisle to the tomb. She stops with a gasp of horror in front of the tomb, then cautiously peers inside. She recoils and falls to the ground.)*

**Mary Magdalene:** *(Shrieking)* NO! No! No! No! *(Uncontrollable sobbing)*

*(Jesus approaches quietly from the vestry and stands in the chancel arch.)*

**Jesus:** *(Gently)* Why are you weeping?

**Mary Magdalene:** *(Without looking up)* They’ve taken him away… I don’t know where he is …

**Jesus:** Who? Who are you looking for?

**Mary Magdalene:** *(Still facing the tomb)* Please! If you’ve taken him away tell me where he is! Let me look after him.. I can take care of him..

**Jesus:** Mary! Look at me.

**Mary Magdalene:***( Slowly standing, turning and staring in absolute shock; then almost in a whisper -)* Master! *(She moves towards him)*

**Jesus:** *(Again gently)* Don’t hold me. I have to go, I have to go to my Father now. But you go and tell all my disciples that I am alive!

*(He turns and goes to the vestry. Mary turns to face the congregation, almost in a trance.)*

**Mary Magdalene:** Jesus is alive! … I have seen him! … HE IS ALIVE!

*(She walks down the centre aisle, eyes raised and face shining, to the back of the church. At the same time the Celebrant and altar party come out of the vestry and down to the chancel arch to begin the service. The Celebrant picks up Mary’s words in the traditional greeting to the congregation)*

**……………………….**

**Celebrant:** Sisters and Brothers, Jesus Christ is risen!

**Congregation:** He is risen indeed!

*(Hymn)*