

## IN THEIR PLACE

(Judith enters the kitchen. She is carrying foodstuffs and arranging things in the kitchen.)

Judith: (to herself) Whew! I'm getting too old for this stuff. Well, at least I'll be by myself for a little while. There's nothing like peace and quiet. (Praying...) Dear Father, thank you for this morning. Thank you for this quiet time...

Martha and Mary enter. Martha is excited.

Martha: Oh, this is so exciting.

Mary: I love the holidays.

Martha: And Passover is my favorite. I just love all the entertaining - the special food, the special decorations, and all the people.

Mary: Speaking of people, can you believe the size of the crowds that have been following Him lately?

Martha: Everyday it gets bigger and bigger. First it was just a handful, then 4,000 and then 5,000.

Mary: And what about that crowd that mobbed Him when we entered Jerusalem?

Martha: (properly/mom-like) It's just not right all that pushing and shoving. Someone's going to get hurt!

Judith: Namely me! I'm getting too old for all this traveling around. I'm glad we're going to stay put here for a little while. I need some rest.

Martha: Stay put? What do you mean? This is just the beginning...

(Judith drops her face to her hands.)

Martha: Oh, come on Judith...don't be such a stick in the mud. This is fun. (Martha starts decorating and garnishing.) Let's see. I can put this here...and put this here. (She pauses to admire her work.) Look Mary, it's a good thing.

Judith: OK (motioning to all the work around them) but we could use a little help here.

Mary: Yeah, where's Joanna? She should be here by now.

Judith: I don't know, but I'm sure we'll have plenty of warning.

Mary: (turns) What do you mean?

Judith: I mean Susanna - that crazy daughter of hers. We'll be able to hear that mouth running a good ten minutes before they get here.

Mary: Oh now, now girls.

Martha: You know, Mary- she's right. When Jesus said, "suffer the little children to come unto me: " (Quoting Jesus with angelic reverence, then changing to a harsher tone) I had no idea it would be us who would be doing the suffering!

Mary: C'mon you two. Have a little patience with the kid. Why, girls her age could be doing a lot worse. I know I was...

(Noise from off stage of Joanna and Susanna bickering.)

Judith: There she blows!

(The women laugh)

Susanna: I don't understand why you have to drag me off on such a beautiful day. Haven't you noticed?

Joanna: Noticed what?

Susanna: It's always the women who have to do the dirty work. Clean the house, clean the clothes, clean the fish, and now, cook the Passover Seder.

(Her daughter's display embarrasses Joanna and she tries to cover up in front of the other women. She begins speaking in a proper tone.)

Joanna: It's an honor that God would call us for such a great service.

Susanna: Hello, Mom...are you blind? (waving her hand in front of her mother's face) Can't you see what's going on here? (with a deep mocking voice) "Keep the women in their place." I mean...come on...we aren't even invited to this supper.

Joanna: Susanna...my darling daughter (Joanna smiles to the other women – putting on her "nice" face, then roughly pulls her daughter aside and scolds...) ... if you don't pipe down this might be your last supper!

Susanna: (unfazed) It's just not fair. I'd like to spend a little time with Daddy during the holidays.

Joanna: As would I...

Susanna: But you know as well as I do that as soon as Passover has past, they'll pack up and travel off to who knows where. (pause) Is it asking too much for us to act like a family once and awhile?

Joanna: I really don't think that they'll be traveling again...Jesus' kingdom is near and Jerusalem is where He'll build His throne. Susannah darling, if you would just try – just listen to Jesus, you'd understand that this is a very important time in history. I believe this Jesus is the Messiah, the deliverer who we Jews have been promised for years. (With a proper tone) This is a very exciting time that I'll be able to tell my grandchildren about.

Susanna: Children? Here we go again. (Mockingly) "Don't you think it's time you settled down...?"

Joanna: Well, it wouldn't hurt.

Susanna: Mom...I want to live. I'm not ready to settle down with just one boy. I haven't even found the right one yet. (She walks over to Mary) You know what I mean, don't you Mary?

Mary: Well, I don't have a lot of time for men.

Susanna: But you've had lots of boyfriends, haven't you?

Mary: Well...

Susanna: You're so pretty. You have such style. (Susanna moves in closer) And that hair...Mary...could you help me fix my hair like yours?

Mary: Well, we really do have a lot of work to do.

Susanna: Don't remind me.

Judith: Yes, if we're going to have this meal ready in time, we've got to get busy.

Susanna: (to Mary) That's old Judith for you...work, work, work. She's no fun. This is no fun. Mary, what are you doing hanging around with this crowd, with all these people from different backgrounds. Like the old lady. What's up with her? She's a Samaritan. I thought those people had their own god.

Mary: Why don't you ask her?

Susanna: What, you don't think I will? Watch me.

(Susanna walks over to Judith and pretends to be interested in what she is doing. Susanna thinks she is going to make a fool of the old woman – thinking that it will make her look cool to Mary, whom she looks up to. She makes small talk with Judith before asking the big question.)

Susanna: So, Judith, how come you've been following Jesus?

Judith: It was due to unusual circumstances. I will never forget that day. That day changed my life. Jesus changed my life forever.

Susanna: Changed your life, huh? So tell me, what was so wrong with your life?

Judith: Plenty.

Susanna: Really? (She can't believe that Judith would have an unseemly past) How did He change your life?

Judith: Well, just like every day, I went down to Jacob's well to draw some water. Boy was it ever hot.

Susanna: Hot? Didn't you go in the evening like everyone else? And why Jacob's well? Don't you know there are many wells much closer to town?

Judith: Yes, I know but I went all the way out there...at noon...so I would be alone. I didn't want to be around anyone else.

Susanna: Why not?

Judith: (somewhat bitterly) Because everyone else – the men and the women – looked down on me. They shunned me because of the way I was living (pauses) and because of my past.

Susanna: What had you done that was so bad? (unbelieving that anyone old could do something so fun that others would look down on them)

Judith: Well, you see, I had been married five times. And at the time, I was living with a man who wasn't my husband.

(Holding up five fingers to emphasize the number five.) Five times I was widowed. Widows who live alone – without family – live a miserable life. (She pauses slightly, remembering the hard times, then collecting herself, showing great resolve,) I had to take care of myself because no one else would. I took charge of my own life...however I could.

Susanna: Why Judith you saucy little rebel you. I never would have guessed you had it in you. (Her mother tries to reel her in.)

Judith: Don't make it sound so glamorous, child, it really wasn't.

Susanna: (A little embarrassed) So where did Jesus come into this story? Is He the man you were living with?

Judith: Heavens no child. Let's forget all of this story telling and get back to work.

Martha: (Approaches Judith to give support) Go on dear, tell us all about it. (Turns to the others and says) I just love this story...

Judith: Well, when I approached the well, I saw Him leaning against it. He looked tired and thirsty, so I really wasn't overly surprised when He asked me for a drink. Nothing really surprises me anymore. But I acted surprised, because... because He was a Jew – and most Jews hate us Samaritans. So I said, "You, sir, are a Jew and I'm a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?"

Then He said the most amazing thing. I thought I'd heard everything from a man. He said, "If you knew who it was that asked you for a drink, you would have asked Him instead, and He would have given you living water.

Susanna: Living water? What's living water?

Judith: Well, I asked Him, where He would get this living water? He had nothing to draw water with and Jacob's well is very, very deep. He went on to say, "Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst again." So I said, "Give me some of this water so I won't have to keep schlepping out to this well everyday."

Then He told me to go get my husband. (Judith pauses; she is embarrassed to tell that she had no husband.) I told him I had no husband – but he already knew that. He asked me about the man I was living with (turns away) so I tried to change the subject. I wasn't sure who He was, but I assumed He was a man of God, maybe even a prophet. And I just didn't need that kind of pressure.

He asked me a lot of questions about where the Samaritans and the Jews worship. I told Him I was confused about all of that, but that I knew the Messiah, called the Christ is coming. And when He comes, He would clear it all up.

But Jesus said, "I who speak to you am He." (pause) Well, you could have knocked me over with a feather. I dropped that water jar and ran back to town as fast as I could. I told everyone that I had met the Messiah. Many came to know him that day.

Susanna: So you believe Jesus is the Messiah?

Judith: Yes.

Susanna: Isn't that just another name for just another religious leader?

Judith: No.

Susanna: More laws, more rules.

Judith: (Strongly) No! This is different. Jesus is different. Belief in Jesus brings salvation, not the laws. (Judith regains her composure.) See child, Jesus knew everything about my past. He knew I had already broken every law. But that didn't matter to him. He didn't condemn me. Instead, He was loving and compassionate. He saw my hurt, my spiritual emptiness – the loneliness, the guilt. And He took it all away. Oh, when I looked into His eyes all I saw was love and forgiveness. I saw in His eyes things I had never seen in any other man's eyes before. And you know, for the first time in my life I can say that I love myself.

Goodness, when I look back over my life – the grief, the loneliness, the worry... the sin – I can't imagine that anyone could love me. But Jesus is faithful. He is faithful to me.

Susanna: I guess I understand how important Jesus is to you. And I can understand why you need Him. (She draws close to Mary) But we're different, right Mary?

Mary: What do you mean?

Susanna: They need something like that...a movement to join. But I've already got a life. I mean, you seem to have it all figured out on your own.

Mary: Well, you see...

(Martha interrupts)

Martha: Come girls, enough chitchat. We've got to get back to work.

Susanna: We know. Cook and clean. Cook and clean.

Martha: Oh, there's more than just that. We've got to start packing.

Mary: What do you mean packing?

Martha: (Suddenly realizes she's let the cat out of the bag) Did I say packing? I didn't mean packing...(trying to change the subject)

Joanna: Did you hear the men talking about another trip? How did you find that out?

Martha: It was dark, they didn't even know I was there.

Mary: What were you doing out at night?

Martha: I had left my basket in the market and I knew that if I waited until morning it would be gone.

Well, I was in the room when I heard them approaching. So I hid in the corner. They were there...the twelve...and Him – Jesus.

Joanna: (Properly) You shouldn't have been eavesdropping on the men.... (Her curiosity gets the best of her)...was my husband there?

Mary: Yeah, what were they doing?

Martha: They were arguing,

All: Arguing?

Mary: Arguing about what?

Martha: John and James were telling everyone how important they were going to be in Jesus' kingdom.

Joanna: My mother-in-law has been filling their heads with that nonsense for weeks.

Martha: Well, you can just imagine what the others thought about that. They started debating about who was the greatest and they were so caught up in it that they didn't even notice that no one had made arrangements for a servant to be there to wash their feet.

Susanna: You mean they were walking around - inside - with dirty feet?

All: Men!

Martha: But that's when it happened.

Others: (Being drawn in more by her story) What...

Martha: Jesus stood up - and you're not going to believe this – He took off His cloak, and tied a towel around His waist and picked up a basin of water...

Mary: (hushed, with disbelief) Like a servant...

Martha: ...and He began washing their feet

(Others show surprise)

Judith: And they let Him

Martha: Yes. I think they were pretty much in shock - it was so quiet, I was afraid they could hear my breathing. (her mood changes) But then Jesus got to Peter and you know Peter (everyone agrees) he wouldn't have any part of it. He jumped to his feet and said, "I will not let you wash my feet!"

Susanna: What did Jesus do?

Martha: He kind of smiled that smile - you know the one He gets right before He's ready to teach Peter something? And then He just said, "Peter, you don't understand what I'm doing do you? But you will later."

Susanna: What's not to understand? He was degrading Himself by washing their dirty, stinky feet!

Martha: I don't know. It seemed to mean much more than that. Jesus told Peter, "If you won't let me wash you, you can't be with me." So Peter said, "well, Master, don't stop there, wash my hands and my head too. Wash all of me!"

Others: What did Jesus do?

Martha: He just smiled that smile again – I think He laughed a little - and said, "Peter, it is just your feet that are dirty." Then He looked at all of them and said, "Follow my example. This is how I want you to treat each other. You should love each other as much as I have loved you."

Susanna: Does that mean that we have to go around washing each other's feet? (She is repulsed by the idea.)

Martha: Well, if that's what needs to be done, then yes. But more importantly, I think Jesus meant that God's kingdom isn't about who's the biggest or the best. It's about humbly serving each other in Christ's name...about being last instead of first. (Susanna is puzzled) I know, it's hard for a girl your age to understand; it's hard for a woman my...I mean it's hard for any of us to understand. But that's why following Jesus and working for His ministry is so important to me. Loving Him means loving others. He told us before, when you do even the smallest thing for someone else, it's as if you're doing it for Him. That's all I need to know.

Susanna: Well, all I know is that I'm wasting a perfectly good day here in this kitchen with a bunch of Jesus-followers, or whatever it is they call you. Mom, can we go home yet?

Joanna: (Reacting to Susanna's rudeness) I think we should...these ladies have heard about all they need to hear from you!

Mary: (Trying to smooth things over) Perhaps we should all begin preparing for the next trip. It sounds like tomorrow's going to be a very big day. Who knows where we're headed next...I don't think there's anything that can stop Jesus now!

*A crowd noise starts to swell from off-stage as stage lights fade. Chaotic music begins and the noise gets louder and louder. Wind noise builds with the crowd noise and the music gets fiercer and louder. Then lightning and thunder are heard. This continues to swell until we hear three distinct hammer strikes - metal to metal. Then three more and then silence as the wind fades out. Then the piano starts to play softly and hauntingly.*

*The stage lights come up slightly and the women return to the kitchen area. Some in tears, some in shock. They – out of instinct – begin to busy themselves making preparations for the burial. Susanna goes from woman to woman trying to get support from them.*

Susanna – So now what's going to happen? (She approaches her mother) Are they going to kill daddy and the others, too? Are they going to kill us because we knew Him? C'mon you guys. I know every one is upset, but we have to start thinking...we have to survive. We've got to get our stories straight. Now, I think Peter has the right idea. Let's just deny we ever knew Him and get out of town.

Mary...Mary, surely you're not going to hang around the rest of these losers are you?

Mary - Sit down...

Susanna - There's no time for that we have to...

Mary - SIT DOWN! I've watched you these past days and I don't think you understand what you've been a part of.

Susanna - Sure I do. This guy – this messiah shows up...preaches...heals a few people then gets himself killed. I mean he brought us all this way and then leaves us. Where is this wonderful teacher, this faithful man now? (Susanna, even though she has yet to get it, is hurt by what she senses as betrayal and abandonment.) He's dead. I think it's time to get on with our lives as before.

Mary - That would be impossible. You see what we have been witnessing has not only changed our lives, but it will change the lives of every generation that comes after us. Yes, this man, this son of God was given to us so that we might learn from him, but today I believe he did something even more important. He died for us. He died in our place.

*(During this scene, Mary turns away from Susanna when she discusses what Jesus meant to her and us.)*

With all your little fact-finding question and answer sessions, you never asked me how I met Jesus. When I first decided to approach him, I wasn't sure what I would find. I still don't know why I went to that Pharisee's house that night. What was I thinking? Me, a prostitute, a sinner hated by most, but no more than myself. I wanted to meet this person that people were calling the Son of God. And I was going to the house of a religious leader to do this. I really thought the roof was going to fall in on me or something.

But I went. I don't think anything could have stopped me. I had no idea what I would find there, but I knew I needed to meet him. You see I had nothing. And I was alone. So alone – yes, the party girl was alone. Have you ever been in the middle of a crowd of people and yet felt so alone and empty that you could scream. But screaming doesn't make it go away. I've tried that.

There was quite a stir when I walked in the room. I think they were in shock. What nerve, what gall this woman has. But not him. He just smiled. And I knew before I even touched him, before he even spoke...

Susanna - Knew what?

Mary - That I would never be alone again. I would never be alone or ashamed or embarrassed... or used...again. Just the way he looked at me. I could feel the compassion and forgiveness in his heart. He healed me. He forgave me.

I fell to his feet crying. I had nothing to offer but my tears to wash his feet and my hair to dry them. I couldn't believe that no one had offered to wash his feet before the dinner. Here he was – the guest of honor. Although some had brought him there just to test him and challenge him, still others, like me, had come to know the forgiveness and healing he brings – still no one had washed his feet.

But perhaps it was meant for me to do, so that I might share it with you and others.

But washing his feet wasn't enough. I kissed his feet, the sweetest kisses I have ever known....and I have known many.

I had brought with me the only possession that meant anything to me, an alabaster jar of perfume. I wanted to worship him. But I didn't want to just sprinkle a little here and there. I broke open that jar and poured all of it – every last drop out onto his feet. Oh the sweet aroma that filled the room that night. Some said I was wasteful. But how could I hold back. How could I keep my praise from this man who had given me back my life. He saved me.

So if his life means nothing to you, if his death means nothing to you, you can blame me for not telling you my story sooner. You can blame all of us if that makes you feel better. (Sternly) But don't blame HIM. You had the chance to meet the greatest man I have ever known. The Son of God. And you just missed your chance.