

Risen

*Matthew 28:1-10; Mark
16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John
20:1-19*

*Year A Easter 1 ; Year B
Easter 1 ; Year C Easter 1*

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Parts by scene

■ = large part ▲ = medium sized part ● = small part

[illegible]

▲	own people) who in his repentance from that past life is the most religiously fervent of the disciples		▲							▲		
▲	Andrew - the younger brother of Peter, one of the youngest disciples		▲			▲		•		▲		
▲	Nathanael - Phillip's crass bully of an older brother, who joins Jesus in search of redemption and nobler life				■						▲	
▲	Cleophas - A conscientious disciple whose faith briefly fails him after the death of Jesus				▲						▲	
•	Peter - the most headstrong disciple, and the least afraid of a fight, but never the smartest person in the room					▲		•				
▲	Angel - the angel at the tomb						▲					
▲	Jesus								▲			▲

Scene 1

Joanna , Mary , Mother

{A group of women are on their way to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. Three of them speak in Hebrew poetry (like that of the Psalms) as they walk along, slowly and solemnly.}

Mother My heart is a drowned deer
Carried away by the torrent.
Once, its ears twitched at the songs of the birds,
Now they are dashed against swift rocks.
Once, its eyes drank in light;
Now they are shut against the dark flood.
Once, it fed and frolicked in the green fields;
Now it knows only the tumult of death.

Joanna All that was built is reduced to dust,
Not one stone remaining on another.
All that was best is torn up by the roots,
Torn up and thrown into the fire.
All that was born of faith and hope
Is banished into outer darkness.
Once upon a time, a Mind contained a Kingdom;
Then it was shattered by a sword.

Mary I anointed your feet with oil:
It was all I could give except myself.
Now I come to anoint your body
For its journey to a place I can't follow.
All around us the world is waking,
Filling the air with song and fragrance -
The things that are born of love -
Unaware that Love has died.

Scene 2

Andrew , James , John , Matthew

{Meanwhile, many of the other disciples are hiding out in a safehouse.}

James *[frantically]* Are you crazy? What were you thinking?

John *[blearily through his grief]* I'm sorry, I didn't realize it would be a problem.

Matthew What's wrong? What's happened?

James Those stupid women got it into their heads to anoint the body, and John let them go. They're out there right now!

Andrew One of those "stupid women" was your mother, you know.

James *[sarcastically]* Oh, I stand corrected! My wise and intelligent mother is out on the streets right now while the Temple police and the Roman army are hunting for us.

Matthew *[somberly]* I know it's a risk, but they're doing the right thing. His body was never anointed. It's good that we...that we do right by him. That we do what we can.

James *[sneeringly]* Then why aren't you out there with them?

Matthew *[mildly, without anger]* They won't arrest a group of women doing their religious duty. They won't arrest his *mother*.

Andrew But they'll arrest *us*. What are we going to do?

James *[firmly]* We're going to stay put, that's what we're going to do. We're going to keep the lights low and the doors locked. And not send out any more funeral parties!

John *[confessionally and still sluggishly]* I wanted to go myself...I didn't have the courage...

Matthew You did the right thing. Your presence would only have endangered them.

James *[contemptuously]* Yeah, just go collapse back into your bed. You and Peter have been big helps!

John *[to Andrew]* How is he?

Andrew The same. I can't get him to eat or drink or even get out of bed.

John *[in weary despair]* I know how he feels.

Scene 3

Joanna , Mary , Mother

{The women arrive at the tomb.}

Mary Is this the place?

Joanna I'm sure of it.

Mary There's no stone.

Mother *[forebodingly]* Something's wrong.

Joanna No, it's all right. Better than all right, because now we can go right in. Maybe somebody came before us and got them to roll it aside.

Mary I was so afraid we'd come and not be able to...to see him again.

Joanna Well, the way seems clear, and I don't see anybody around. I guess we just...go right in.

Mother *[suddenly irrationally terrified]* No! There's something...something dreadful waiting in there!

Joanna It's all right, mother. We'll go first. You come on in when you can.

{Joanna and Mary and the others enter the tomb and scream. Mary comes running out.}

Mary Agggghhhh! It's terrible!

Mother What was it? What did you see?

Mary They've...they've done something with him! He's gone! They've taken him away!

{Mary runs off. Joanna emerges from the tomb.}

Joanna Mary, wait! We have to investigate! There's got to be an explanation!

{But Mary doesn't here her and is gone. There's a pause.}

Mother *[tremblingly]* He's gone?

Joanna *[gently]* That's what it looks like. Maybe they just relocated him. We just have to find someone to ask. I'm sure it'll be okay.

Mother I'll look.

Joanna Are you sure? Come on, then. Take my arm. Now be prepared. For some reason, they left the bindings, but they're quite empty. I wonder if -

{As they enter the tomb, both women gasp or scream.}

Scene 4

Cleophas , Nathanael

{Back at the house, Cleophas and Nathanael discuss their options.}

Nathanael So are you with me or not?

Cleophas I don't know. It seems...disloyal.

Nathanael Didn't you hear what they said? The Temple police, the *Romans*, are after us. And James wants to stay and fight his way out of it! Is that what you're planning to be loyal to?

Cleophas I suppose not. But shouldn't we try to persuade them to escape as well?

Nathanael You can try if you think it'll do any good. But not until I'm safely away. I don't trust what they might do if they knew we were leaving.

Cleophas What about your brother? We should at least tell him.

Nathanael Phillip is the biggest suckup of all! If we tell him, he'll turn right around and blab to James. There's *no one* we can trust.

Cleophas *[indecisively]* Maybe you should go alone. I'd only slow you down, anyway.

Nathanael It'll be safer traveling together. Now come on! Or are you going to stay here and die like a rat in a trap?

Cleophas All right. I'll come. But at least let me leave a note.

Nathanael Be quick about it! If Peter ever comes to, and John comes fully awake, it'll be a lot harder to get away unseen.

Scene 5

Andrew , Peter

{Meanwhile, Andrew tries to rouse Peter.}

Andrew *[softly]* Brother?

Peter *[waking in terror]* No. No! NOOOOO!

Andrew Peter! Are you all right?

Peter *[mumbling blearily throughout this scene]* Bad dream.

Andrew I brought you some food. Won't you take a bite?

Peter "Take, eat, this is my body..."

Andrew What? Look, you haven't eaten in three days -

Peter "Unless you eat my flesh and...*[in horror]* and drink my blood..."

Andrew Peter! Are you still dreaming?

Peter *[in growing distress through the rest of the scene]* He returned. Risen from the dead.

Andrew Who, the rabbi? How was that a bad dream?

Peter Hunted me. Through the streets. No place to hide. No way to die!

Andrew *[at a loss about how to comfort him]* Peter...look...in the first place, if the rabbi...returned, he'd praise you above everyone else. You were the only one who fought to defend him the night he was arrested; the rest of us ran! And you and John followed him all the way into the courthouse. You're a hero!

Peter Oh, God! Oh, God!

Scene 6

Angel

{Within the empty tomb, an angel has appeared before the women.}

Angel You look for Jesus who was crucified.
You will not find him here among the dead!
For death itself, your ancient foe, has died,
And rises, too, into a world remade.
To Hell itself he went, and rose unbound,
Releasing every lock on every door.
There's now no darkness where he can't be found,
And all who die in him will live once more.
And all who die in him will know the truth:
That death is now the narrow way to God.
The Tree of Life - trunk, branches, leaf and root -
Springs up from seedlings buried in the sod.

Proclaim to those who huddle in dismay
That Jesus Christ the Lord is risen today!

Scene 7

Andrew , James , John , Mary , Peter

{Back at the house, there's more frantic knocking at the door.}

Andrew *[fearfully]* Oh my God, who is it now?

James All right, get ready. I'm opening the door.

{He opens the door and it's Mary Magdalene.}

John Mary! What is it? Where are the others?

Mary *[frantically]* He's gone! He's gone! They've taken him! They've taken him away!

James What is she babbling about?

John Mary, slow down and tell us what happened.

Mary *[as quickly as before]* The stone was rolled away. The tomb was empty!
They did something with him. Something terrible!

{Suddenly, Peter appears in a doorway.}

Peter WHAT???

Andrew Peter!

Peter *[in an urgently commanding voice]* What about the tomb?

Mary *[a little intimidated, in a suddenly small voice]* It was empty.

Peter *[to John]* Come on!

{Peter rushes out the door.}

James Peter, no!

Andrew Peter!

John *[suddenly alert and alive]* I'm going with him. Stay here. We'll report back.

{John runs out the door.}

James No! Just drag him back!

{Mary takes off after John and Peter.}

Andrew Mary!

James I can't believe this! Everybody's going mad!

Andrew Should we go after them, too?

James No! We're staying put. Shut that door!

Scene 8

Jesus , Joanna , Mother

{The women are on their way back to Mother Mary's house, having reported what they saw to the disciples in the safe house, when Jesus appears before them.}

Jesus Peace be with you!

Joanna *[joyfully]* Rabbi! Then it really is true!

Jesus *[whimsically]* Of course! Would an angel lie?

Joanna *[joking right back]* Well, that was the first angel I'd ever met.

Jesus Then trust me. I know lots of them. *[tenderly after a pause]* Mother, it's so good to see you again.

{Mary doesn't reply.}

Joanna *[gently]* Mother Mary, it's your son! *[to Jesus]* I think she's in shock.

Jesus Mother, are you all right?

{Mary breaks solemnly into reciting a version of the Magnificat, the Hebrew poem she composed when she was pregnant with Jesus. Jesus joins her, with equal solemnity.}

Mother My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

Jesus For he has looked with favor on his humble servant,
And from now on all generations will call you blessed.

Mother For the Mighty One has done great things for me,
And holy is his name.

Jesus His mercy is for those who fear him
From generation to generation.

Mother He has shown strength with his arm;
He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

Jesus He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
And lifted up the lowly;

Mother He has filled the hungry with good things,
And sent the rich away empty.

Jesus He has helped his servant Israel,
In remembrance of his mercy,

everybody According to the promise he made to our ancestors,
To Abraham and to his descendants forever.

Scene 9

Andrew , James , John , Matthew

{John returns to the house with his report.}

John *[joyfully]* James, it's true!

James The tomb is really empty? Why are you so happy about it?

John Because it means he's risen! Just like he said!

Andrew Who? The rabbi? Risen from the dead?

John Just like he always said he would! Don't you remember?

Matthew Did you see him?

John Well, no, but -

James So you're saying the rabbi's alive again just because his tomb is empty? There could be a dozen explanations for that.

Andrew Where's Peter? What did he think?

John I...I don't know what he thought. I got there first and saw the tomb was unsealed and empty, like Mary said. Then Peter arrived and ran straight in. When he came out...I can't say if he was pale with rage or...or terror. Before I could say a word to him, he took off running.

Matthew I think it's safe to say he didn't come to the same conclusion you did.

James *[urgently]* Which way did he run?

John I'm not sure. Back into the city, I guess.

James *[sarcastically]* Great!

Matthew John, did you see anybody else in the vicinity of the tomb? Any guards, gardeners, priests? Anybody at all?

John No, why?

Andrew *[grimly]* The rest of the women came back while you were gone. They also saw the empty tomb, but they claim they also saw...an angel. Who told them the rabbi had risen from the dead.

John So that proves it!

Matthew *If* you believe them.

Andrew They were grieving and exhausted, and just as they discover the tomb is empty, someone comes up to them and says, "Are you looking for that guy that was crucified? He's not here any more." Maybe it's one of the guards, or the groundskeeper, and he's just trying to help out, but in their state, they take him to be an angel and jump to a conclusion that, face it, we'd all like to be true.

John Or maybe they really saw an angel!

James Did you? You were there minutes after they were. Did Mary? And if rabbi is really alive after all, where was *he*?

John Where are the women? I've got to talk to them. I've got to find out what they saw. I'll be back!

{John exits.}

Scene 10

Cleophas , Nathanael

{Meanwhile, Nathanael and Cleophas talk in an adjacent room.}

Nathanael All right, this is it. We'll never have a better chance to slip away.

Cleophas Okay, I'm ready. It's just that...

Nathanael *[impatiently]* What is it now?

Cleophas I get that I have to leave the group, and I'm sneaking out with you like I said I would, but...I have no place to go after that.

Nathanael *[magnanimously]* Hey, don't worry about it. You'll come with me to my parents' house. We'll crash there until we can figure out what to do next.

Cleophas Thanks! I really appreciate this.

{They exit the house.}

Nathanael *[in a relieved voice]* We're out! I was having nightmares about cult leaders who murder-suicide all their followers!

Cleophas I don't think James is that bad. He's just trying to cope as best he can.

Nathanael Well, he can cope without us now.

Cleophas Which way now? Which way is home?

Nathanael We'll take the back streets to the city gate, and then make straight for the road to Emmaus.

Scene 11

Jesus , Mary

{Mary returns to the tomb.}

Mary John! Peter! *[to herself]* They're gone. *[calling again]* Joanna! Mary! Salome!
[to herself] Everyone's gone. *He's gone. [lapses, weeping, into poetry again, this time quoting from the book of Job]*
If I go forward, he is not there;
If I go backward, I cannot perceive him;
On the left, he hides, and I cannot behold him;
I turn to the right, but I cannot see him.

{Jesus enters.}

Jesus Why are you crying?

Mary *[not recognizing him]* They've taken him away, and I don't know where they've put him.

Jesus Who?

Mary My...my Lord. *[suddenly urgent]* Sir, do you know where they took him? Please tell me. We'll come and take his body and find another place for it; we won't cause any trouble!

Jesus *[with deep feeling]* Mary!

Mary *[recognizing him]* Rabbi!

{She throws herself into his arms.}

Jesus It's good to feel another person's touch! But we don't have time for embraces. We both have much to do before we meet again. Go now and tell the men in the house that I am ascending to my Father and their Father, and to my God and their God.

Mary *[fearfully]* I can't! They...they hate me. Can't I just go to the women?

Jesus They already know and believe. The men will not believe, but you *will* have the courage to proclaim my return to them. *[breathing on her]* Mary, receive the Holy Spirit.

Mary *[with a sudden calm strength]* Amen!

Jesus Do you think you can do what I ask now? Can you bring light to those who fear to leave the darkness?

Mary *[in calm wonder]* Yes, Lord. In fact, I think I can do anything!

*You can read my thoughts about this play and respond with your own at
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