

THE EMPTY TOMB

Cast of Characters

MARY MAGDALINE- in her 20's.

MARY, MOTHER OF JAMES- in her 40's

SALOME- in her 30's

JOANNA wife of Chuzas, Herod's steward- in her 60's, walks with a cane.

At RISE:

(In the background is a barely visible empty tomb opening, small enough for one person to stoop and enter, towards the [audience view] left side of the stage. The front stage light is dim but bright enough for the cast to read their parts. The four women enter from the [audience view] right side holding candle-lanterns, slowly, in single file. One carries a vessel. There are two large stones present for seats.)

JOANNA

I have to sit. This was a long walk this early in the morning. (Sits as does Mary Magdalene.)

MARY, MOTHER OF JAMES

Please do. You are so brave to come; if King Herod found out. He'd...

JOANNA

Never mind. My husband, Chuzas is Herod's steward but Chuzas saw Jesus once heal a blind man. He'll never tell that old Fox Herod anything. Chuzas loved Jesus.

MARY MAGDALINE

(Holding a handkerchief and drying her eyes) Me too. I cannot understand this! Jesus cast out seven demons from me! I thought he was Messiah the Prophets wrote about—and that Roman swine crucified him. No Messiah would hang from a cross!

SALOME

But Caiaphas was behind it and those rich Temple Pharisees and Sadducees plotted with Pilate. Many Jews believed Jesus was the Messiah when they saw him heal the sick, feed 5,000, and cast out demons. But many left when Jesus said "No one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by the Father" and something about eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

JOANNA

Remember the time when Jesus said "Enter by the narrow gate?"

MARY, MOTHER OF JAMES

My son James knew Jesus well. He often spoke to me, his proud mother, about him. The stories he told! James was at Lazarus' tomb when he heard Jesus tell Martha these words: "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Then James told me "they took away

the stone. Jesus looked up and prayed to the Father, and when he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." My son James witnessed this! Later they even ate with Lazarus!

MARY MAGDALINE

(Holding a handkerchief) I heard Jesus say more than once He had to suffer, would be killed and come back again.

JOANNA

Nobody could rise from a Roman cross. Those murderers! Even from a distance, how He suffered and we saw that Roman pig stab him with his spear. Even Jesus could not live again from that, could He?

SALOME

I followed and saw those faithful men, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, and Nicodemus a member of the Sanhedrin no less, carry him to Joseph's tomb. Well, in a moment we'll be there. Let's go.

JOANNA

Mary, mother of that fine man James, help me up. (She stands as they all face each other.)

MARY MAGDALINE

Why did you bring spices? We'll never move the stone and besides, what of the guards?

JOANNA

At the end of the Sabbath last night I felt that I was supposed to bring spices. The Lord will show a way. Have faith in God—we will anoint Jesus' body.

(They walk slowing toward the empty tomb, and it lights up. *[Optional, not essential- several armed soldiers are lying on the ground, motionless.]*)

MARY, MOTHER OF JAMES

What on earth happened? Why are these soldiers passed out on the ground? (She bends over one [imaginary] prone soldier, touches his neck.)

He's alive. I can see him and the others breathing. They fainted dead away. Why?

(They step to the small tomb entrance.)

SALOME

The stone isn't there! I see it over there. (She looks to the far left stage wing).

They enter single-file and while hidden inside, a man in a white robe appears by the entrance and is lit with a spotlight. A moment passes. They exit the tomb, see him, and step away a short

distance. SALOME and MARY MAGDALINE fall on their knees and all shade their eyes from the light.)

SALOME

“Who—who are you?”

THE MAN

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. (They look into the empty tomb.) But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

(The spot light goes dark and the man vanishes in the background. The two stand and all look where he disappeared, then hold hands and walk [stage lights brighten as they approach front stage], and face the audience.)

JOANNA

“Hold me up. Was that an angel?”

MARY MAGDALINE

“Jesus is alive?! Jesus is alive?!”

MARY, MOTHER OF JAMES

“Can this be? James once told me that at the Passover meal, after Jesus washed their feet, Jesus said ‘After I am raised I shall go ahead of you into Galilee.’”

SALOME

Let us go and tell Peter and John and James and the rest what we saw and heard!

(They exit the stage.)