

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Actions during the next paragraph: *Jason has been watching the interchange, and moves closer to the front of the stage to gaze up at the Lord. The Storyteller stays behind, only watching. When we hear the line about Jesus looking at him, he sinks to his knees, still looking up. Then he bows his head, and drops down with his hands on the ground, sobbing. Mary moves to him, standing beside him and putting a hand on his shoulder for a moment. Then, Mary moves to stand before Jesus, looking up at him. Jason stands also, and moves back to stand with the Storyteller on the side.*

Narrator Jason: The forgiven thief seemed to be transformed by the words of forgiveness and acceptance from Jesus, and as I watched a look of peace settle in his face, even while dying, I could see that I was likewise going to be found on one side or the other of Jesus. There was no middle ground, no area for neutrality, I now knew. Which side I was on would decide my destiny and fate... and I knew, in my soul, that decision time was upon me. And then... my heart skipped... as Jesus turned his head and *looked directly at me*. As I involuntarily sank to my knees, His eyes seemed to pierce through my soul, and I knew in an instant that he knew me like no-one else did. And more, that he loved me more than anyone ever could. What he was going through proved that, more eloquently than any words could ever express.

Actions during the next paragraph: *Mary's eyes are full of tears and her face shows her sympathy for Jesus' suffering. She reaches up with both her hands as if she longs to hold him, and comfort him. When Jesus speaks to her and says to behold her son, she looks at John. John, who is looking up also, looks at Mary when Jesus says to behold her as his mother. He embraces her, and she leans on his shoulder for strength, and in acceptance of him as her son. John leads her away from the cross and over to the side where they resume watching.*

Narrator Storyteller on the CD: Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

Actions during the next paragraph: *The lights, if on a dimmer switch, should be brought down slowly until the stage is darker. The scene is carried by the sounds, music and narration. Jason, both Marys, John, the Centurion and any others on stage all look up at Jesus (or where He is supposed to be) with varying appropriate emotional reactions. Jesus' friends and family drop their heads in grief when He breathes His last. After Jesus gives up His spirit, everyone reacts to the brief earthquake, shaking and then falling down. Everyone-- except for His friends and the Centurion-- flees in terror. The Centurion removes his helmet and bows on one knee when making his confession.*

Narrator Jason: At noon, when the sun should have been at its brightest, the sky began instead to grow dark, as if the sun itself was going out, on this darkest day in man's long history of wickedness. The crowd was frightened by this strange and unprecedented phenomenon, which was not an eclipse... the sun was simply darkening, with no clouds or mist obscuring it. The speed of the passage of time seemed to ebb and flow, and the next three hours that Jesus spent on the cross was compressed in my dream state into a series of scenes. Finally I sensed that the end was near.

Narrator Storyteller on the CD: Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him."

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" And they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!"

And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last.

(Note: On the soundtrack, intense wind and earthquake sounds are heard here.)

Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"

Actions during the next paragraph: *The stage lights gradually come back up, as all actors leave sorrowfully, except for the Storyteller and Jason. As they move from the side of the stage to the front and center, they discuss what happens between the last scene and the next.*

Narrator Jason: As the terrible, yet amazing scene passed from before my eyes, and again I found myself in limbo with the Storyteller, I carried with me the image of it as it had been burned in my memory forever. The Storyteller related to me how that one of the soldiers had pierced Jesus' side with a spear to make certain he was dead. And also how Joseph of Arimathea had went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus, which he placed in his own tomb before the Sabbath began. Seeing my downcast look, he smiled and reminded me that this was *not* the end. He recounted how on the third day, the women had come to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, and encountered an angel who told them Jesus had risen. Mary Magdalene had then rushed to tell Peter and John, who were even now hurrying to see for themselves. Looking around, I found myself in the very garden, standing before the open tomb. Seeing figures coming into the garden, we retreated to the side to observe.

Director's note: the empty tomb, like the cross, is not seen by the audience; rather, when the actors look into it, they are looking forward in the center of the stage toward the audience, putting the audience in the position of observing as if from inside the tomb. If the stage has steps down, then have the actors step down on them when "entering" the tomb.

Actions during the next paragraph: *John hurries onstage, and stoops over to look inside the tomb (facing the audience). Peter comes up a few seconds later, followed by Mary, and he also looks in, then takes a few steps further as he stoops to go through the low entrance. He then stands straight to look around in wonder. John then comes in also, ducking through the low entrance. They discuss what they see (but silently while the narration continues) and then they go back out. They hurry off, leaving Mary, who is weeping.*

Narrator Storyteller on the CD: Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

Actions during the next paragraph: *Mary does not see Jesus come up behind her. He has his robe's hood up and his face is partially hidden. Only glancing back at him, through tear-filled eyes, she does not recognise him until he says her name. She freezes upon hearing it, then turns rapidly around to look at him, as he lowers the hood. She falls on her knees toward him, holding onto his feet in worship, but he tenderly lifts her up and speaks to her. (Note: if you hold to the teaching that Mary's touch would have ceremonially made him impure, because he had not yet ascended to Heaven to present his blood on the Mercy seat, --but was about to-- simply have him hold up a hand before she can touch him.) When he is done, she hurries offstage excitedly, with a joyful expression. Jesus puts his hood back up and leaves in the opposite direction.*

Narrator Storyteller on the CD: But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping. And as she wept... ..she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" which is to say, Teacher.

Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"