

Denial

- An Easter drama

Preface to the drama.

After celebrating the Passover (where Jesus predicts Peter's denial), Jesus and his disciples go to Gethsemane, and Jesus goes off to pray by himself. When he returns he finds his disciples sleeping and is then met by Judas and a great multitude of people including chief priests and elders. A scuffle breaks out and Peter cuts off the ear of Malchus - the high priest's servant. After restoring the ear Jesus goes with the crowd to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, with Peter and John following in the shadows. In the courtyard of the house below where Jesus is being questioned, some temple guards and servants build a fire to keep warm. Servants, temple guards and passers-by mingle around the fire for several hours. It is over the course of these hours that several people encounter Peter and question his allegiance to Jesus, which he firmly denies. Shortly after - presumably near daybreak a rooster crows.

We don't know the entire nature of the conversations that took place in those early hours, there are snippets in all four gospels and in this drama the blanks are filled in by conversation between what we would assume would be excited, cynical, mob-mentality people about the events that had just happened, and were about to follow. The drama needs to be snappy (but not rushed) and is interspersed with video clips while the actors on stage remain 'frozen'.

Stage: An empty stage except for a 'bonfire' of some description. The characters move around this fire during the drama. When delivering lines the characters are in front of the fire facing the audience, after finishing their dialogues they move behind the fire to a seated position while further dialogue goes on. All characters are on stage during the entire drama.

Lighting: The 'bonfire' is illuminated with red light from behind. Apart from that the central stage area is lit by a single light from above, creating a small cone of light on an otherwise dark stage.

Characters:

Peter : Disciple under cover. He's scared that he will be the next one to be lynched.

Servant girl 1 (Tabitha): The servant girl of the high priest

Guard 1 (Marcus): Temple Guard, helped to build the fire.

Guard 2 (Alpheus): Temple Guard, helped to build the fire

Servant girl 2 (Ruth): Another servant girl.

Servant 1 (Simon): A bondservant relative of Malchus (The man who had his ear cut off)

(as the lights come up there is a group of 3 (Servant 1, Servant Girl 1, and Guard 1) huddled in front of the fire talking, three others (Peter, Servant Girl 2 and Guard 2) are seated behind the fire warming themselves)

Marcus: (excitedly) Did you hear? - They've arrested him, they're questioning him now.

Tabitha: Arrested who?..... What's He done?

Simon: The man called Jesus, the one they've been talking about all week.

Tabitha: Ah....I've heard my master complaining about him for a while,..... then that man came to see him the other day - what was his name?

Marcus: Judas - He was the one who helped us find Jesus - and It was quite a surprise for him when we did.

Simon: Where was he hiding?

Marcus: In the gardens of Gesthemane - we surrounded him with the entire Temple guard, even the priests themselves were there to make sure he didn't get away.

Tabitha: You needed all those people to arrest one man, how strong is this Jesus?

Marcus: There were others in his group, ten or eleven of them.... although they scattered as soon as we arrived - I think we woke them up!

Tabitha: I heard there was a fight and Malchus was injured,.... although he seemed to be OK when he came back?

Marcus: Yes, it was confusing, one of his followers pulled out a sword and tried to strike Malchus, I heard him cry out in pain and fall to the ground. well.....It was dark so I couldn't see what happened next but..... I think that Jesus just helped him up. Malchus was lucky that his followers were such poor swordsmen - he must have missed altogether.

Simon: I.... I heard a different story - I'm a relative of Malchus, as you know, and when I went to meet him in the outside the gardens he was pale and shaking. He said when they first confronted Jesus an..... earthquake suddenly shook them to the ground. Then when he got up he was stuck with a sword. As he turned his head his ear was cut clean off and fell to the ground,.. but....

Tabitha: but what?

Simon: But...(laughing to himself) Jesus..... put it back again.... and the wound was healed.

Marcus: (with ridicule) That's absurd! Whoever heard of such a thing. You've been drinking too much wine tonight! (he turns and walks around behind the fire to sit, at the same time Alpheus make his way to the front)

Alpheus: (serious) I saw it all happen - I was standing behind Malchus.

Tabitha: So.... what happened?

Alpheus: Well, it was like he said, we made our way down to the gardens in the middle of the night, with Judas leading the way.....

[Lights down, actors freeze]

[Video of Jesus Arrest]

[Lights up, actors resume]

Simon: So.... you're saying his ear **did** come off?..... and.....

Alpheus: (nodding slowly) That's what I saw... (takes a quick drink from a flask).... but you didn't hear it from me. (Alpheus walks back to behind the fire with Marcus)

Tabitha: (to Simon) Maybe **he's** had too much to drink! were are they holding Jesus?

Simon: Upstairs in the council room - they're questioning him now.

(At this point Peter tries to walk quietly past)

Tabitha: I wish I could hear what they're saying.....(notices Peter)..... (calling to Peter and making him stop).... You..... I've seen you before, (calling out) Guard..... (to Simon) Get the guard,this man was with Jesus of Nazareth, I remember his face"

(Simon goes back behind the fire and sends Marcus back to the front)

Peter: woman,.... I don't know him..... I don't even know what.... or who you're talking about.

Marcus: Well, who are you? Are you one of Jesus followers?

Peter: I said, I don't know what you're talking about. (he walks passed that guard and back to behind the fire)

Tabitha: I know his face, (Ruth has now joined Tabitha at the front), I know I've seen him before.

Ruth: Perhaps it was at the celebrations last week - There were hundreds of people in the streets when Jesus came into Jerusalem.

Tabitha: (unsure) Maybe,.... he just looks so.... familiar.... (Tabitha retreats to behind the fire also)

Ruth: He had a lot of supporters you know. How are you going to catch all of them?

Marcus: I think you'll find that his..... supporters..... will find something else to do when they hear of his sudden arrest. That's what this is all about you know... putting an end to this nonsense - cutting it off before it starts to spread. He's a dangerous man this Jesus.

Ruth: I hardly think he's dangerous, maybe a little delusional..... But he always looked friendly enough,... I can't recall him hurting anyone.

Marcus: Sometimes it is easier to fool a crowd of thousands, than it is to fool just one person.

Ruth: Well there were certainly thousands with him last week.

Marcus: Were you there.... when he rode into the city.

Ruth: (wearily) If you mean,... was I one of his supporters - no..... but I was there, yes.

Marcus: What did he do... what...happened?

Ruth: You didn't see (Marcus shakes his head).... it was just a normal day... then all of a sudden people started gathering around this man Jesus, as he rode past the Mount of Olives.... on the back of a donkey.....

[Lights down, actors freeze]

[Video of Triumphant Entry]

[Lights up, actors resume]

Marcus: How things can change in a week! A hero one day, a criminal the next.

Ruth: You still haven't told me what he did wrong.

Alpheus: (who has walked back to the front of the fire now) He's done plenty wrong.

Ruth: So I'm told..... but what?

Alpheus: (as though telling a secret) He healed a man who was blind..... on the **Sabbath**.

Marcus: Outright disobedience to the law.... (he shakes his head and walks away behind the fire)

Ruth: But hold on, you say he actually healed a man who was blind?

Alpheus: Well,..... he said he had been blind from birth, but I'm not so sure.

Ruth: Seems like a long time to carry on the act.....

Alpheus: I think you're missing the point here.... the man calls himself a rabbi, and yet he works on the sabbath. He give all of our rabbis a bad name doing things like that. And he openly criticises the Pharisees in front of the crowds. He makes them look foolish. (Peter has moved around closer to the front to try and overhear what is being said and is noticed by Marcus) You.... what do you want?

Peter: What's going on, what are they doing to him?

Alpheus: And what business is that of yours?

Peter: I was just.....

Ruth: (suddenly) This man was with him..... He's a Galilean.

Peter: (defensive) No.... No I'm not... No...I don't know who you're talking about. (he slinks off again)

Alpheus: You think he was one of them?

Ruth: I'm almost sure.... He doesn't look like a criminal though...

Alpheus: Yes, they never do. Just like this Jesus - he looks harmless enough, but last week, he comes into the temple and carries on like a mad-man. Pushing over stalls, letting animals out of their cages, spilling the taxes on the ground..... you wouldn't believe the scene he made.....

[Lights down, actors freeze]

[Video of Cleansing the temple]

[Lights up, actors resume]

Alpheus: And that is precisely why he's been arrested tonight.... That and a little matter of calling himself the Son of God.....(laughs as he and Ruth walk back behind the fire)

(meanwhile Marcus & Simon have made their way to the front)

Simon: I heard yelling up there (gestures with his head) what's going to happen to him.

Marcus: (laughing to himself)... let's just say you needn't worry about him for much longer.

Simon: What does that mean?

Marcus: (quietly)..... Well, keep it quiet..... but they say that they'll have him on a cross before the Sabbath.

Simon: So... they're taking him before Pilate?

Marcus: Pilate,..... Herod if they must,.... as long as they get the death sentence.

(Peter has made his way forward again)

Peter: What about a trial..... he doesn't get a trial.

Marcus: He has his trial now..... (smiling) Couldn't you hear him yelling just before!

Peter: Yes.... but I wouldn't call that a trial.

Simon: (slowly)... Didn't I see you in the Garden with him.....(getting excited) yes....you're one of his followers A Galilean... I can tell by your accent.

(Marcus turns sternly toward him)

Peter: No.....(yelling almost hysterical) I swear.... by God..... I don't know this man you're talking about.

A rooster crows.

[Lights down].