

WERE YOU THERE?

A ONE-ACT PLAY
FOR EASTER

by
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Were You There? blends extended, heart-wrenching monologues with dialogues between the elderly Barabbas and his adult nephew, and Ananias, his fellow Zealot from the time of Christ's crucifixion. This makes for a challenging production to stage for the average church and/or dramatic company, since it relies on good acting and good stagecraft to convince the audience without leaving them scratching their heads in confusion.

There are three "situations" employed in this play: First is the natural dialogue between Barabbas and his nephew. It takes place in real time (today: thirty years after the crucifixion). Second are the audience-directed "asides" by Barabbas, in which he shares his contemporaneous thoughts. Third is the brief historical exchange between Barabbas and his compatriot, Ananias. The challenge for the director (and actors) is that the actors move back and forth between these three situations quickly and seamlessly—at times, one line to the other actor, the next line as an introspective aside. The audience's suspension of disbelief can be aided by the clever use of stage lighting and even well-timed program music, but, as always, the key to it all working comes down to the believability of each actor's performance.

Central to this play is Barabbas who, though now a believer, begins the play bearing a heavy burden of guilt for the fact that—quite literally—Jesus died in his place. Like a soldier struggling to forget the horrors of war, Barabbas wants to forget the horror and guilt of that time long ago when he was released and the innocent Jesus died upon the cross made for him. But his nephew persists in nagging Barabbas about that time—and the part his uncle played in the dramatic, earth-changing events. At last Barabbas gives himself permission to remember what happened—and why—and how it changed his life forever.

In this play, what the actors do when they are not the center of attention is critical. For example, there are some things that Barabbas says that his nephew should not "hear." Artful lighting can help, but often there is insufficient time to transition from one to the other, so the physical attitude of the detached actor is key—telegraphing to the audience that he is not privy to what the other character is saying. The director will need to pay special attention to blocking in this regard.

Regarding the division of "Scenes" in the script: these are for rehearsal purposes only. In performance they could represent blackouts, indicating a time shift (and, in fact, blackouts have been included in the script), but they probably should not be noted for the audience in a printed program.

Finally, a note of credit where it is due. There is a moment in this play in which Barabbas, secured in his cell in the Praetorium and unable to hear the totality of the verbal exchanges taking place outside, hears only, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Then, "Barabbas!" Then, "Crucify him! Let him be crucified!" Because this is all he hears, he believes that the crowd is calling for his (Barabbas') death. We gratefully acknowledge that credit for this idea goes to Pastor Charles R. Swindoll (*Insight for Living*).

CHARACTERS

Barabbas, the zealot (in his fifties)

Nephew (in his twenties)

Ananias (in his twenties—from thirty years ago)

SET & PROPERTIES

No set or props are required, but can be employed at the director's discretion.

1 **SCENE ONE: An Uncomfortable Query**

2
3 *The Time: 30 years after the death and resurrection of Christ*

4 *The Place: a small village near Jerusalem*

5
6 *A note about the following stage directions: When a Barabbas line*
7 *is directed "aside," in this context that means that he is directing*
8 *his line toward the audience. Barabbas' nephew is not to "hear"*
9 *these lines (although, of course, the actor playing the nephew does).*
10 *When a Barabbas line is directed "to nephew," or is not otherwise*
11 *directed, it is to be a normal line of dialogue in real time.*

12
13 *For the brief exchange between Barabbas and Ananias, the*
14 *two characters are simply playing out the scene from Barabbas'*
15 *mind. In other words, Ananias is as he was thirty years ago, just*
16 *after Barabbas was released, and Barabbas (on stage), though*
17 *physically unchanged, is saying to Ananias what he did thirty*
18 *years earlier.*

19
20 *House lights down.*

21 *Stage lights up.*

22
23 *Barabbas is seated, roughly Center Stage. At the director's*
24 *discretion, he is either just sitting there thinking, staring off into*
25 *space, or is doing something to while away the time.*

26
27 *Enter his nephew, quietly. Barabbas hears him, but does not*
28 *acknowledge his presence, waiting for him to speak.*

29
30 **Nephew**

31 *(simply)*

32 Uncle?

1 **Barabbas**
2 *(aside)*
3 Too many questions—and now the kid's at it again.

4
5 **Nephew**
6 Uncle?

7
8 **Barabbas**
9 *(aside)*
10 I guess it isn't fair to call him a kid, since he has two kids of his own
11 now. My nephew has his own life, but he's painfully interested in
12 mine—especially what I left behind so many years before.

13
14 **Nephew**
15 *(more insistently)*
16 Uncle?

17
18 **Barabbas**
19 *(to his nephew; with a weary sigh)*
20 Yes.

21
22 **Nephew**
23 *(awkwardly; but he has asked this question before)*
24 Were you there?

25
26 **Barabbas**
27 *(aside)*
28 That's what I thought. He's always bothering me about it.
29 *(to nephew)*
30 Go home. Your wife is calling.

31
32 **Nephew**
33 I just want to know. Why won't you talk to me about it?

34
35

1 **Barabbas**

2 It's none of your business.

3

4 **Nephew**

5 Don't you want us to know the truth?

6

7 **Barabbas**

8 *(sharply)*

9 It's not my place to explain everything.

10

11 **Nephew**

12 Uncle, you were alive when our faith was born. You were part of it.

13

14 **Barabbas**

15 *(quickly; defensively)*

16 No! I wasn't part of it. Jerusalem was a big city—even then.

17

18 **Nephew**

19 I don't want just rumors. I want to tell my children the truth—and you
20 know the truth.

21 *(beat)*

22 Because you were there, weren't you?

23

24 **Barabbas**

25 *(aside)*

26 I'm beginning to hate the day my sister married. Why couldn't she go
27 to her grave without giving birth to this irritating man—this upstart
28 who wants me to reveal everything hidden in my heart.

29 *(pause)*

30 For I was there, you see. I witnessed it all. I heard the troops at the
31 Praetorium, the jeers and weeping of the crowd, the procession
32 through the streets. I saw everything—every last, ugly part of it.

33 *(to nephew)*

34 If it is faith, then it doesn't need history to make it come to life—or
35 keep it alive.

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Nephew

That's not why. There are different shades of faith, uncle. Some are like the husk off the wheat—lighter than air, blown by the wind, so thin the light shines through. Some are more substantial, like the homespun of a new cloak. But others are like the foundation of the temple—solid and strong, resilient. I long for that kind of faith, and if I can learn more about what Jesus went through that day, maybe mine will become more like those temple stones.

Barabbas

(aside)

My nephew doesn't know what he's asking. He's looking for hard evidence of something that to him has been little more than a tale told round a table—a story passed around so many times that the last one telling doesn't even remember the first; a story told so many times that pieces have fallen away, but mostly pieces have been added, piled on like layers in a rock pile, all but covering the first, real layer under the rubble.

(to nephew)

What do you expect me to tell you?

Nephew

(innocently)

The truth.

Barabbas

Surely your mother has told you.

Nephew

Every time I ask, she only says that you were a hero, someone the people looked up to. But she says it with anger, and I don't know why. Why does it make her angry that you were a hero?

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Barabbas

(to nephew, but looking away; uneasy)

Your mother never understood who I was.

Nephew

(pressing)

Then who were you?

Barabbas

(aside)

Telling him would be like picking open a deep wound that's finally healed over, and I haven't the stomach for it.

(pause; reconsidering)

But maybe I owe it to him—and his mother. Her silence is the sound of my pain. Her anger the price of my guilt. Maybe that old wound has become gangrenous and rotten, festering beneath the surface like a silent cancer. Maybe the best thing is to open it up to the light of day, to the fresh air of a time that doesn't know the darkness through which it has passed.

Go to black.

1 **SCENE TWO: A Righteous Cause**

2
3 **Stage lights up.**

4
5 **Barabbas**

6 *(to nephew)*

7 I laid awake that night, deep inside Herod's old palace, listening to
8 them shape the three pieces of wood. I had watched them before, so
9 now, even though I couldn't see, I could see in my mind the hands
10 chiseling the rough wood, not bothering to smooth its surface, just
11 shaping it crudely for its one purpose. They would be left splintered
12 and coarse, like rafters in a house that would just be covered over
13 with plaster.

14 Two of these pieces were for my comrades in the next cell, and one
15 was for me. And they wouldn't be covered with plaster, but with our
16 blood and flesh.

17 *(with increasing anger)*

18 To the Romans we were criminals, guilty of insurrection, theft, murder.
19 Yes, we had murdered, and stolen property, but only in the name of
20 our nation and people. Which is why, to our fellow Jews, we were not
21 criminals but heroes, for we actually did the deeds they only wished
22 they had the courage to do.

23 All of us hated the Romans—and they hated all of us as well. In their
24 eyes we were little more than dogs—simple-minded vermin to be
25 trampled on and ruled with an iron fist. We had few rights—except
26 the right to pay back-breaking taxes to a government not our own.

27 *(long pause)*

28 There was a commotion outside the prison wall. The light from
29 torches spread across the floor of my cell as the sound of marching
30 soldiers passed overhead. Then I heard the distant voices. The soldiers
31 ignored the crowd, as if they were bored by it all.

32 A tense calm always came with the arrival of a special prisoner. This
33 place was normally busy with all the commotion that goes with the
34 military that guards government. But whenever someone important
35 arrived—friend or foe—everything became quiet and nervous. Scum

1 like me would be hauled in with very little ceremony. But the arrival
2 of a political prisoner would silence the din. So now, with the hushed
3 discipline of the soldiers, I knew that someone special had just arrived.

4 *(stiffening; reliving his earlier vigor and hatred)*

5 I wasn't sorry for what I did. I would have done anything to get rid
6 of the Romans. Israel belongs to God—not Rome. And though they
7 considered my acts to be crimes, I considered them to be acts of
8 justice. Ours is a small land, with no designs on any other, yet we've
9 been repeatedly invaded, abused, stolen into bondage and exile, and
10 now possessed and humiliated by a heathen nation. No, God would
11 honor what I did in His name.

12 *(with dark humor)*

13 And apparently I would be seeing Him soon, for the Romans were
14 about to crucify us.

15 *(seriously)*

16 There isn't a worse way for a Jew to die. It's a hateful thing to die upon
17 a tree. My only hope was that God would credit to my account that it
18 was Roman law that had put me there, and not His.

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22 **Go to black.**
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1 **SCENE THREE: Certain Death**

2
3 *Stage lights up on Barabbas and his nephew.*

4
5 **Nephew**

6 Then you knew Jesus.

7
8 **Barabbas**

9 No.

10 *(wryly)*

11 We traveled in different circles.

12
13 **Nephew**

14 But you knew of Jesus, though.

15
16 **Barabbas**

17 *(after some thought; 'how can I explain it to him')*

18 Time compresses the past. Jerusalem has always been filled with
19 mystics and prophets. They sold themselves on street corners, and
20 every one of them carried around a little band of followers that
21 proclaimed their teacher as the only truth. Besides, everyday life isn't
22 nearly so tidy. People were still struggling to feed their families, women
23 were having babies, the streets were still a mess, and taxes were too
24 high. How were we to know a Savior had arrived?

25 *(aside, after observing the disappointment of his nephew)*

26 I can't tell whether he's ashamed of me, or just saddened by my
27 ignorance. To him, Jesus is everything, and he can't understand why
28 we didn't think the same.

29
30 **Nephew**

31 So you didn't know He was there in front of Pilate?

32
33 **Barabbas**

34 I knew someone was there—someone important. But that was all. They
35 don't give a front-row seat to condemned prisoners.

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Nephew

I'm sorry, uncle. I forget what it must have been like for you.

Barabbas

(aside; wearily)

And, for the most part, so had I.

(continuing after a long, thoughtful pause; to nephew)

A courtyard encircled the raised area where the governor held his public appearances. I couldn't hear anything he said, but I could hear the voices of the people standing on the pavement of the Praetorium. There was a cadence to their shouting—"Crucify him! Crucify him!" Then a pause, then, "Barabbas!" Another pause, then, "Crucify him! Let him be crucified!"

(resignedly)

My fate was sealed. There was only one last chance for pardon: On Passover the governor could release one prisoner of the people's choosing. I was known to them; I hoped they might put my name before Pilate. But maybe I had gone too far this time. When we killed one of the Romans, they didn't just punish the murderer, but made life miserable for everyone else. Maybe I had become too dangerous—not just to the Romans, but to my own people. So when that rusted cell door was pried open, I knew it was the sound of death for me. I knew they'd haul me outside onto the pavement, strip me, and chain me to be scourged. After the flesh on my back had been shredded, I'd be made to carry the crosspiece of my death to Golgotha, and there whatever was left of me would die—a long, agonizing death.

(pause)

They hauled me out of the cell and down the dark passage. The bright morning blinded me as they pushed open the outside door. The two soldiers were angry, and I didn't know why. They should be pleased, I thought, to execute someone who had killed one of their own. Cursing, they shoved me down to the pavement. My shackles were removed—I thought so that I could be chained to the column for scourging.

(*incredulous*)

1
2 But they left me there, in a heap on the ground, and, after a few sharp
3 kicks to the ribs for good measure, they left. I didn't know what to
4 make of it. I was expecting death, and suddenly I was free!

(*pause*)

5
6 The pavement was deserted except for a small gang of soldiers around
7 the column where they beat prisoners. One was chained there, an arm
8 on either side, his back to the soldier with the scourge.

(*wincing from the memory of that sight*)

9
10 He was laying into every stroke, and the rest were enjoying the
11 show. I could hear their cursing, their black remarks about Jews, and
12 something about a "king of the Jews."
13 I didn't know who he was, but I was close enough to see that it wasn't
14 one of my Zealot brothers. I didn't know what strange magic had
15 purchased my release, but I prayed that it would work for them as well.
16 This one I had never seen before. Even as the strokes hit there was an
17 odd peace about him. Another man would have cried out—I would
18 have—but as his back and shoulders were laid open by the scourge, he
19 made no sound. Instead of cursing them, he took their abuse; instead
20 of struggling against the pain, he only gazed up into the sky, as if his
21 spirit had already left his body.
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25 **Go to black.**
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1 **SCENE FOUR: A Dark Spirit**

2
3 *Stage lights up.*

4
5 **Barabbas**

6 *(to nephew)*

7 Nephew, nowhere is the air sweeter than outside the walls of a prison,
8 and I sucked as much as I could of it into my lungs. I had thought I was
9 headed to my death—and now I was walking the streets of Jerusalem, free.

10 *(beat)*

11 Then a hand reached out and jerked me into an alleyway.

12
13 **Ananias enters and, while Barabbas continues with his next line,**
14 **joyfully kisses his friend on both cheeks, then directs Barabbas to**
15 **the side.**

16
17 **Barabbas**

18 *(to nephew)*

19 Ananias was a comrade—the only one to escape when we had been
20 arrested. He kissed me in greeting, but also, I was sure, to confirm that
21 I wasn't a ghost.

22
23 **Ananias**

24 *(furtively)*

25 It's dangerous for you to be out on the streets today.

26
27 **Barabbas**

28 *(happily)*

29 Why? I've just been released. I'm a free man!

30
31 **Ananias**

32 May be, but today this city isn't safe for any of us.

1 **Barabbas**

2 *(aside)*

3 And I recalled the voices I heard from my cell: "Crucify him! Crucify
4 him! Let him be crucified!" I thought it had been for me, but then I
5 was freed.

6 *(to Ananias)*

7 Ananias, they were beating a man at the pavement when they released
8 me. Who was he?

9

10 **Ananias**

11 You don't know?

12

13 **Barabbas**

14 *(angrily)*

15 I wouldn't be asking if I did.

16

17 **Ananias**

18 He's a prophet that was arrested last night. They say he claims to be
19 Messiah.

20

21 **Barabbas**

22 But why did they release me?

23

24 **Ananias**

25 Pilate gave us a choice. He wanted us to release Jesus—

26

27 **Barabbas**

28 Jesus?

29

30 **Ananias**

31 The prophet. A Galilean. They say he hails from Nazareth. Pilate
32 offered him as the one to be released. But I was there. I was in the
33 crowd, and saw the priests lobbying the people to shout out your
34 name instead. Every time Pilate offered Jesus, the people answered

35

1 back with your name. He finally gave in. You were set free—and Jesus
2 was sent to the cross.

3
4 **Barabbas**

5 *(after a thoughtful pause; the true situation finally sinking in)*

6 My cross. They're going to hang him from the cross they were making
7 for me.

8
9 **Ananias**

10 *(matter-of-factly)*

11 I suppose they are.

12
13 **Barabbas**

14 What of Caleb and Naboth?

15
16 ***Ananias' face grows dark and angry. Tears begin to fill his eyes.***

17
18 **Ananias**

19 Nothing has changed. They're going to be crucified along with the
20 Galilean.

21
22 **Barabbas**

23 *(desperately)*

24 It's not right! What can we do to save them? There's got to be a way.

25
26 **Ananias**

27 *(grabbing Barabbas by the shoulders in a tight grip)*

28 There's nothing we can do. We've been up all night, plotting for some
29 way to turn this around. But there's nothing we can do. We can't stop
30 their deaths.

31
32 **Barabbas**

33 Have they left the Praetorium yet?

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Ananias

They should be on their way now.

Ananias exits on last line, expecting Barabbas to follow, but he remains.

Barabbas

(to nephew as he watches Ananias leave)

We used back streets that would take us around Herod's palace, to a point between it and the gate that was used to leave the city for Golgotha.

The streets were quiet; life was normal in most of the city: women swept off stoops, babies cried for their milk, children played in the streets. But as we approached the main street that wound through the city, the noise of a procession filled the air.

(pause, picturing it in his mind)

Dust from a thousand feet clouded the street, and it was reduced to a narrow passage by the press of the people. The soldiers weren't gentle as they cleared the way, but used their swords and spears to shove and bruise their way toward the city gate.

I searched for my comrades—the ones left behind at my release.

(his heart stirred with a noxious brew of anger and pride)

Leading the way was Naboth—dark, fiery, dependable Naboth—defiant and proud under the weight of the heavy crossbeam.

(softening)

Last came the gentle Caleb—the bright one of our group, the thinker—and my heart broke to see him struggling under the weight. Caleb wasn't a strong man, and I ached to think of him dying so horribly on the cross. I knew it would be a short death; his frail body wouldn't last long.

(less emotionally)

Between my friends was the man called Jesus—the Galilean. He was a mess, and though I didn't know him, my heart broke over how the Romans had treated a fellow Jew.

(sickened by the sight)

1 The back of his robe was soaked with blood, his arms were bruised
2 and cut, and his face was misshapen from the beating he had received.
3 As if all that wasn't enough, jammed into the top of his head, like a
4 sick joke only the depraved would enjoy, there was a crown woven
5 from acacia thorns.

6 *(pause)*

7 The crowd was mixed: some enjoyed the show, throwing stones and
8 insults at the condemned. Others wept over their treatment and fate.
9 Here and there I noticed men standing erect and silent at the edge
10 of the crowd, as if members of a secret sentry, staring straight ahead
11 through eyes filled with tears.

12 *(struggling to remain dispassionate)*

13 Soon we were at the place called "The Skull." This was all common
14 stuff for the soldiers; they had performed the same routine many times
15 before. Their movements were mechanical and efficient. They laid
16 each man onto his back, positioned the crosspiece beneath their arms
17 and shoulder blades. They lashed my friends' arms to the crossbeams,
18 but with Jesus—a special case—the executioner drove an iron spike
19 through each of his wrists. Several soldiers took hold of him and the
20 crosspiece, lifted him up off the ground, and slid the piece of wood
21 down onto the vertical post. The executioner then pushed up his feet,
22 bending his legs at the knees, and drove a final spike through both
23 feet and into the vertical post.

24 *(pause; angry)*

25 What evil devised such a death? I could barely hold back my rage. This
26 wasn't the time or place, but I vowed then to make the Romans pay—
27 and pay dearly—for this injustice.

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31 **Go to black.**
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1 **SCENE FIVE: Worthy of the Cross**

2
3 **Stage lights up on Barabbas.**

4
5 **His nephew is still on stage, but further away than before,**
6 **allowing Barabbas the stage.**

7
8 **Barabbas**

9 *(still speaking to nephew, but more lost in his own thoughts; deeply moved)*

10 There's an anger so wretched, so deep, that it can't bear its own weight.

11 There's a despair so profound that it can't be sustained.

12 If hell itself could be painted into plaster by the finest artist, it still

13 wouldn't equal the depravity and misery of the scene before me. Two

14 brave men—my comrades and friends—hung dying, gasping for breath.

15 Yes, they had taken life. Yes, they had broken the laws of both the land

16 and their God. But for them to die in such a hideous way was more

17 than I could bear.

18 For I knew that if they were guilty, then so was I. I had taken life. I

19 had broken the very laws that set our people apart from every other

20 nation. Had our zeal for justice blinded us to the injustice of our own

21 actions? Had we finally set ourselves above law and right, in the name

22 of an anger that even now still burns in my belly?

23 *(pause; less strident)*

24 On the left was Naboth—brave, defiant Naboth. Even now, as he

25 struggled for air, he used what little air he had to curse the lives

26 of his executioners. For a moment my heart filled with pride at his

27 unwillingness to bow—even in death—before the Romans. But then

28 he turned to the man called Jesus, and spat his venom at him. Now

29 he was reviling a fellow innocent, and I wept over what my friend had

30 become.

31 *(speaking for Naboth; loud, angry)*

32 "They say you are the Christ. You say you are the Christ. Well? Save us

33 then! If you really are the One—save all of us!"

34 *(pause)*

35 Jesus remained silent, as he had before. But poor little Caleb, struggling

1 to upright himself to breathe, hanging there like a limp doll to the
2 right of Jesus—Caleb gasped at Naboth, “Are you mad? Give it up,
3 man!” He sagged with exhaustion, then heaved himself back up to
4 speak.

5 “Have you no fear of God in this hour? We deserve this death—we’ve
6 earned it. But this man is innocent!”

7 *(pause)*

8 Naboth turned away, still angry, but Caleb turned his gaze back
9 toward the one hanging between them.

10 *(plaintively)*

11 “Jesus, Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom.” And
12 then the frail body of my friend sagged in defeat.

13 *(pause)*

14 Then, for the first time, I heard the voice of Jesus—a voice so tender,
15 yet strong—though human, it seemed to be borne on wings of light.
16 “Believe me, my friend, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

17 *(brightening)*

18 And in that moment I lost all my anger and pride. In that awful
19 moment I realized, to my hope and dismay—I was staring at God.
20 This was no ordinary man. Everything about Him was of another
21 place, another time, another kind of existence. Having no arrogance
22 and pride of His own, He bore instead the weight of man’s depraved
23 devotion to self. Being God, He could not sin, so instead took on the
24 sin of everyone else.

25 I dropped to my knees in shame, every bit of arrogance leached out of
26 me. Every bit of pride and boasting and conceit spilled out and flowed
27 to mix with the blood coming down from that cross. In a moment
28 I revisited all of my sins: my wretched life, the pain and death I had
29 caused in the name of my own righteousness. I was the most base
30 among a people that were base, and I realized that of all people, it was
31 I who should have been hanging from that cross.

32 *(long pause; looking up)*

33 I looked up at the three crosses. Naboth’s face still glared his defiance,
34 but he was struggling for every breath, and was now silent. Caleb, my
35

1 dear friend, had withered into a lifeless rag. How I loved him. How I
2 wished I could have died alongside him. How I longed for the days
3 before we were what we had become.

4 Between my two friends, agony was written upon the face of Jesus. He
5 was experiencing all the pain of dying as one of us. In that face there
6 was also an agony I couldn't explain—something higher and more
7 terrible than anything I might imagine. But even in that, Jesus held
8 onto all of his faculties; the insanity of the cross had not purchased
9 His soul.

10 Instead, even in His final moments of clarity, while all hell was
11 breaking loose around Him and heaven stood before Him, Jesus
12 turned to look down upon me. Without saying a word, without
13 uttering a sound, His quiet gaze bore down into the depths of my
14 heart, as if to say, "I'm dying for you, Barabbas. I'm dying for you."

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18 **Go to black.**
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1 **SCENE SIX: Truly Free**

2
3 **Lights up on Barabbas and his nephew.**

4
5 **The nephew sits slumped, staring at the ground. Barabbas is**
6 **exhausted from his painful recollections.**

7
8 **Barabbas**

9 *(aside)*

10 I expect my nephew now hates me. He wanted to know my past, and
11 what I had to do with Christ. I expect he'll now wish to have nothing
12 to do with me. What would he tell his children about the uncle who
13 had killed? What would he tell them about someone who stood by
14 and watched his friends die for crimes of which he was guilty? And
15 what would he tell them about the uncle who was set free from prison
16 so that their Savior could be tortured and killed?

17
18 **Nephew**

19 *(timidly, yet packed with emotion; without looking at him)*

20 Uncle?

21
22 **Barabbas**

23 *(without looking at him)*

24 Yes.

25
26 **Nephew**

27 *(without looking at him)*

28 Is it all true?

29
30 **Barabbas**

31 *(without looking at him)*

32 It's all true. Every word.

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Nephew

(after a long, thoughtful pause without looking at him)

Uncle?

Barabbas

(without looking at him)

Yes.

Nephew

(without looking at him)

I've never said this before.

Barabbas

Said what before?

Nephew

*(slowly raising his head to look into his uncle's eyes;
evenly, his voice husky with emotion)*

I've never told you that I love you. But I do. I love you with all my heart.

Now Barabbas really doesn't know what to say. His worst fears are suddenly evaporating.

Barabbas

(his voice packed with emotion)

I—I thought you would hate me.

Nephew

Uncle, you've been given a gift—a precious gift.

(pausing to choose his words carefully)

On the cross, Jesus took on Himself the penalty of sin for every person who ever lived. He became, in that moment, what John the baptizer called Him: the "Lamb of God." The one—and final—spotless sacrifice. In that moment He bore the sins of us all.

(tenderly)

1
2 But you—the one whose place He took on that cross—you, uncle, were
3 every man. You stood before that cross in your shame and represented
4 every person for whom Jesus died. That really was your cross—just as
5 it was mine, just as it was Mother's, just as it will be my children's. You
6 stood there that day and represented us all!
7 And for that I owe you a debt of gratitude.

8
9 **Barabbas**

(after a long pause; to nephew)

10
11 For thirty years I lived with my guilt. Oh, as sure as there is a God in
12 heaven, I became a believer that hard day. You couldn't look upon the
13 death and resurrection of Jesus without believing that He really was
14 the Son of God, and that He died for our sins.
15 But I still lived with the guilt. I lived a life of faith without joy, belief
16 without a sense of victory. My heart was changed, my life saved, but
17 my mind still labored under the weight.

(pause; brightening)

18
19 Now, nephew, I am free. For the first time since that terrible day so
20 long ago, I'm free. Barabbas is free!

21
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23
24 ***Barabbas and his nephew exit together, as the lights fade to***
25 ***black.***
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