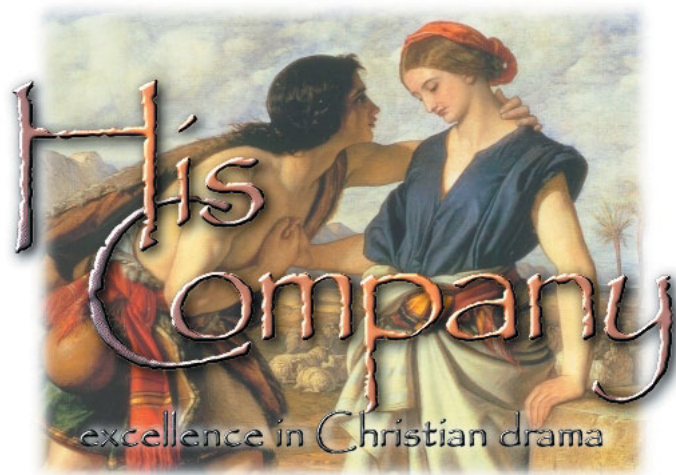


GRACE

A ONE-ACT FOR EASTER

by
David S. Lampel



AUTHOR'S NOTE

This script is the dialogue (only) from the HC musical, *Crown Him With Glory*.

CHARACTERS

5

The apostle Peter
Rachel, his wife

SET AND PROPS¹

10

SET: The drama set will be as follows: a cooking fire-ring with cook-pot stand DL; a crude, wooden chair or wooden table UL; a small bench large enough for two people DC; walking stick leaning against wall; and various pots, blankets, etc., for atmosphere.

PROPS: cooking pot, vegetable stew pork and beans out of can works well), rags, wooden spoons, wooden bowls, 3 or 4 loaves of pita bread. An earthen jar with water.

15

SCENE ONE

The Time: A few days after the ascension of Jesus

The Place: Jerusalem; the home of a friend to the Lord's disciples

20

*House lights down.
Stage lights up.*

Rachel, wife of the apostle Peter, is cleaning up after a meal. Peter enters the small room in a huff.

25

Peter

(slightly out of breath; looking about)

Where are the others?

Rachel

(continuing to go about her business)

30

Around. They've been in and out all day.

Peter

35

(emphatically; with frustration)

I wish everyone would just stay put for once! How are we to know when it's here?

(pause; to Rachel)

Maybe I should go out and round them all up.

40

Rachel

(immediately, but patiently; as if to a child)

Now just take a deep breath and count to five.

Peter

Don't you want me to count to ten?

45

Rachel

(immediately)

I don't think you could make it.

Peter

I'm all right. I just wish we could stay united on this.

50

Rachel

(going to the pot and beginning to dish some up)

Have some supper. I saved you some stew.

Peter

(are you kidding?)

55

Who can think of eating!

(pause; reconsidering; innocently)

What kind of stew?

Rachel

Lentil.

60

Peter

(considering; sounds good after all)

Mmmmm—

65

Rachel*(handing him the bowl)*

Eat. Do you some good.

Peter*(staring into the bowl handed him)*

70

I don't deserve you, you know.

Rachel*(what's the surprise?)*

I know.

75

*Peter takes a large piece of bread and, using it as a sop, attacks the stew with relish—and considerable appetite. Realizing, just as the food is entering his mouth, that he has failed to give thanks, Peter stops, abruptly, and looks toward heaven.***Peter***(quickly and mechanically)*

80

Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God, King of the world, who causes to come forth bread from the earth. Amen.

Peter returns to his stew, speaking between mouthfuls.²

85

Peter

I ran into Nathan this afternoon. It was good seeing him. He misses our fish. Says no one else can supply his market with as steady a supply.

(pause; admitting reluctantly)

90

Sometimes I find myself longing for the old days—days spent out on the boat—where my only concern was on which side to drop our nets.

Rachel*(not looking up from her work; sarcastically)*

And when to come in—

95

Peter

100 Back then I knew what I was working for. Everything was clear and
simple: Get as many fish as you can out of the water and into the boat
without tearing your net.

(pause)

Rachel, I even catch myself wishing for the old ways
105 *(ashamed)*
before Jesus came to us.

Rachel

(going to Peter; sitting next to him)

You don't really mean that.

Peter

110 It was easier then. The old way put God so out of reach, there was no
point in even trying.

Rachel

(with gentle sarcasm)

So then you had an excuse.

115

Peter

God was more distant then. What did He care about a simple fisherman
tending his nets.

Rachel

You were never a simple fisherman.

120

Peter

Things have become too complicated. Too many questions and not
enough answers.

Rachel

(pause, thinking)

125

What about the others? What are they saying?

Peter

(shaking his head)

We're all stumbling about the city wondering what to do with ourselves,

130 ducking into doorways to avoid the Romans—avoiding even our own
people. “Stay in Jerusalem,” He said.

(Peter begins gesturing wildly, waving the small bowl of stew about)
Sure. He’s gone. He’s done with it.

135 *Rachel grabs for the bowl in the nick of time, taking it from Peter before she rises from the
bench.*

Rachel

(rising, moving about the room; after a pause; introspectively)
140 I feel Him every day. I scrub the floor, go to the market, care for the
children—and it’s as if I feel Jesus more closely than ever before. Doesn’t
make sense.

Peter

(going to her)
145 You didn’t see him that last time. You weren’t there. It all felt so—final.
His work was done here. He spent three years teaching us all He could,
then God took Him back. And He was gone. Up into the clouds and He
was gone.

Rachel

(firmly; a little miffed)
150 No, I wasn’t there. But don’t talk to me as if I’ve been in Egypt for the last
three years. Jesus was no stranger to me.

Peter

Then why is everything so mixed up? Why is my mind such a jumble of—

Rachel

(stopping Peter physically before speaking; firmly)
155 Everyone’s feeling it.

Peter

160 I know I’m not alone. But that doesn’t help. Rachel, I feel like I’m split
into two people: On the one side, is the Peter who lived with his Master,
who was changed by Him, whose life gained new purpose from the Son

of God—and who was told by Him to continue with the Way, to spread the word. But on the other side is the Peter who

(frustrated)

165

could never quite put all the pieces together, who kept sticking his foot in his mouth—and who now feels as if his Master has left him.

Rachel

Listen to your heart instead of your mouth. You know that's not true.

Peter

But—

170

(pause; calming down)

I miss the old days because the confusion used to be simpler. I've always been confused, but now it seems to be scattered in the wind. Before Jesus came to us, we were confused by only one thing: Where was the Messiah? Why didn't He come? We're ready. Where is He?

175

Lights down.

SCENE TWO

180

Peter and Rachel have continued their conversation (during cut-away). By now Peter is more agitated than when we left them; there is more of an edge to everything he says. We rejoin them...³

Rachel

(simply)

185

Would you have had any other Savior?

Peter

(of course not)

No.

(he's given this some thought)

190

But I think Jesus should have another Peter.

Rachel

(quietly)

Are you still having the dream?

195

Peter

(frustrated)

It clings to me, day and night. Just when I think I've finally shaken it off,
I—

Rachel

(immediately; losing patience; almost angry)

200

Peter, how many times must we all remind you? How many different ways
can we say it: Jesus forgave you. Why is it so hard for you to accept it?

Peter

(responding with intensity)

205

Because no one else sees the color of my heart. But Jesus could. Others
saw my actions, but Jesus saw my motives. Others saw a few moments of
weakness, but Jesus saw the hypocrisy.

Rachel

(insistently)

210

And all of it He forgave.

Peter

(not giving in, but wanting to draw the argument to a close; immediately, angry)

215

I won't argue facts with you. Our Master died, He rose, He met with us
and talked with us and showed us His hands and feet and side. I won't
argue facts with you. It all happened. He met with me on the shore and
fried up some breakfast fish for us to eat. He told us to deliver His
message throughout all the world, but to stay here in Jerusalem until the
Spirit comes. I still hear His words. It all happened. Then he stood on a
hill and was pulled back into heaven by the hand of God. It all happened.

220

Peter ends the last speech more subdued, thoughtful.

Rachel

225 *(still pressing, but with some compassion)*

Then why are you still hurting?

Peter

*(moving away; after quite a long pause, giving him time to sort out his memories;
beginning simply, but crescendoing to an emotional pitch)⁴*

230 I never told you this before. The night after they buried Jesus I went out
into the city. The streets were so silent and black, and I wrapped the
blackness about me and tried to forget what I had done. Even then I was
so afraid—I was so afraid someone would see me and identify me with
Him.

235 *(angry at himself)*

I was so ashamed, but I couldn't stop being afraid for myself. In my heart I
knew what Jesus had said—that there was purpose in His dying. But in
my mind I saw only a coward who had denied even knowing Him.

(with great shame and remorse)

240 He had trusted me, and I thought only of myself.

(pausing to regain the image of that night in his mind)

The street was empty—that twisted street that had been filled with people
laughing and mocking and spitting their hatred.

(thankfully)

245 It was empty, and I embraced the emptiness like an old friend who
understands your pain when no one else can.

(wistfully, with sorrow)

For the first time since that day Jesus found me, I could no longer feel
Him beside me.

250 *(distantly)*

I was alone; very much alone.

(pause)

The guard was asleep, and soon I was outside the city.

(gathering intensity)

255 I didn't really want to see it, but something drove me on.

(speaking quickly)

The path was still muddy from the storm; I tripped on the wet stones in the dark; I think I was praying that a bolt of lightning would strike me down and end my misery. But soon I was there—

260 *(stopping abruptly; seeing it)*

and that ugly stand of wood was still there. I couldn't keep my eyes from traveling up that post,

(painfully; grimacing)

to the crossbeam that was still in place. Rachel—

265 *(with anguished horror)*

do you know that the spikes were still there—still embedded in the wood. And I couldn't look on that cross without seeing the dying body of Jesus.

(angrily)

I know the cross was empty—I know He wasn't there—but

270 *(crying out)*

He was!

(whispering)

He was.

(disgustedly; after a pause)

275 And I put Him there.

Rachel

(firmly, with impatience; setting Peter straight, but—more angry with herself—admitting her own complicity)

No. We all put Him there.

280 *(with rhythmic intensity)*

The soldiers drove the spikes, but we all held Him down so they could. And we were all pulling on that rope that lifted Him into place.

(softening, but still making her point)

Jesus died for all of us—not just you. We're all guilty—not just you.

285 *(compassionately)*

Oh Peter, it's good that you remember His suffering, but remember that He died to take away your suffering. The guilt of the law has been

replaced by the grace of Jesus. He loves you; when will you be able to
love yourself?

290

Lights down.

SCENE THREE

PROPS: water bag, jug or jar; water; and two small drinking cups.

295

As lights up Peter and Rachel are in the room; Rachel gets two cups while Peter takes the water jar. She holds the cups while he pours. As he is pouring the water into the second cup, he speaks.

Peter

300

(relaxed; with none of the tension of the previous scene)

Do you remember, Rachel, during the hottest summer months, when I'd
come home from a long day's work? I'd be so hot and sweaty and filthy
from the boat, you made me leave all my clothing out behind the house.
I'd come in and scrub and scrub until my skin was raw—and even then,
305 there was a smell of the sea about me. Most came off with the soap, but
always some remained.

(he takes a drink; reassuring Rachel)

I feel better about it. God's given me a wife with wisdom—and more than
her share of brass.

310

(pause)

But not all of it has washed away. The truth of God's grace just isn't
enough to make me forget the past.

Rachel

(unsure; thinking out loud)

315

And maybe it shouldn't.

Peter looks at his wife as she continues.

320

Rachel

(still thinking)

325 Your father taught you everything he knew about fishing. You began with
that knowledge from his life. But after he died, you were on your own,
and sometimes you made mistakes—

Peter objects.

Rachel

330 —don't argue with me: sometimes you made stupid mistakes.

Peter

Well, not stupid—

Rachel

335 Didn't you learn from those mistakes? Didn't they make you a better
fisherman?

Peter

I see. So I should continue making stupid mistakes so I can be an even
better—

Rachel

(interrupting)

340 I really don't think you'll have to try.

(pause)

All I'm saying is, Jesus knew what He was getting in the bargain.

Peter

345 Did He know what He was getting with Judas?

(jumping up)

That's what haunts me.

Rachel

350 Listen, you said it yourself: Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God."⁵
Could He really have been taken by surprise?

Peter*(cautiously; working slowly through his thoughts)*

355

There was a darkness that lived with Judas from the beginning. From the start there was a certain calculation to his actions. And at the end, he was like a man who had done business with the devil.

Rachel

And was God surprised?

Peter

360

(thinking a moment; then letting a small smile spread across his face)

God knew the heart of Judas as well as He knew mine.

(with tempered joy)

I'm not as evil as I might think. I'm a man—nothing more, but nothing less.

365

(after calming down)

But still, I feel like damaged goods.

Rachel

I think you have an advantage. You know what it's like to let someone down—you'll know how to forgive when somebody lets you down.

370

Peter

I just love Him so much—I don't want to ever let Him down again.

Rachel

You probably will. But as you said: Jesus knows your heart. He knows how much you love Him.

375

Peter*(wistfully; whispering to himself; with regret)*

I wish I had washed His feet.

Rachel*(not hearing)*

380

What?

Peter

(slightly embarrassed)

Oh, I was remembering that last evening with Him.

385

(exasperated)

It seems like the last three years of my life can be marked off by the stupid things I've done around Jesus. He was teaching us, and I was too thick-headed to see it.

(with awe)

390

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, knelt down before me, took my filthy foot in His hand, and washed it. His hands were covered with the dirt of the street. The Son of God.

(with mock arrogance)

And I protested! No sir, not my feet.

395

(what a twit!; with a sigh)

You're right, Rachel, I won't forget.

(rhythmically)

The wounds from my sins are healed,

(painfully)

400

but the scars remain. And every scar will be a reminder of who Jesus was—and is—and what He expects me to be.

Lights down.

SCENE THREE

405

Rachel turns UL to tend to her pot of stew, leaving Peter alone DC.

Peter

(it's finally sinking in)

410

I've had it all wrong from the beginning.

Rachel

(not looking up from her work)

I could have told you that.

415 **Peter**
(with playful sternness)

Hush!

(seriously)

I shouldn't be so occupied with my weaknesses; I have them—they're a part of me. But Jesus is also a part of me—

420 *(crescendoing as it sinks in)*

—and the weaker I am, the stronger I'll be in His power. Rachel!

Rachel

(simply)

Have some more stew.

425 **Peter**

Rachel, don't you see?

Rachel gazes at Peter with slightly exaggerated innocence.

430 **Peter**

Rachel, Jesus is back with the Father. This was just part of it—a beginning. He'll continue working—but now through us. Through me—through you. I don't have to be confused.

Rachel

435 *(after a beat; "yes, dear...")*

Have some stew.

Peter

(not even hearing her)

440 He's up there now, with the Father. He hasn't left us behind—He's just completed His work among us. Jesus lived, and died, and lived again, and all my sins—all my weaknesses—have been forgiven. It's only the beginning. Now He lives with His Father—the God we've worshipped for centuries. And now we'll worship Jesus. He's paid the price, Rachel. He's completed the task God gave Him.

445 *(soberly)*

He's earned our praise. If we were perfect, then we'd receive the glory.
But we're not. There's only one God, and Jesus Christ is His Son.

Lights go to black on drama area.

450

NOTES:

1. The precise set is left up to the Director's discretion, of course. In the original production, the set consisted of a small framework suggesting a room, with virtually all dialogue and action taking place just in front of (DC) this framework.
2. This play (and any production, for that matter) benefits greatly by the realism of actually eating and drinking when the script calls for it.
3. Depending on the set design and lighting capabilities, Peter and Rachel could exit between scenes, move back into the shadows, or freeze in place.
4. A suggestion from the Writer/Director/Actor : One's first reaction might be to block this long speech with Peter moving about the stage, using his entire body for dramatic impact. In the original production, we felt there was greater dramatic impact in having Peter stand in one place and keep his arms and hands pretty much at his sides. All emotional turmoil: anger, frustration, anguish, loneliness, etc. were expressed by only the voice and face.
5. Matthew 16:16

455

460

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