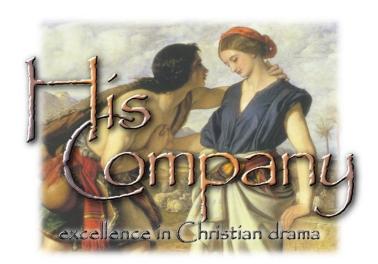
# **Communion**

## FIVE MONOLOGUES AND AN ODD CONVERSATION FOR EASTER

by David S. Lampel



#### **AUTHOR'S NOTE** 1 The five pieces in this collection—monologues by the apostle John, Mary Magdalene, and two monologues by the apostle Peter, along with a monologue/conversation of Joseph of Arimathea with Nicodemus—can be used either individually or as a unified whole. Separately, they could be used to illustrate a sermon, Bible study, choir anthem, or other special music. They could also be inserted into a larger production, such as an Easter musical. Used together, they portray the thoughts, regrets and joys of those closest to Jesus at the time of His death, burial, and resurrection. They are included in this script in roughly chronological order, so, if performed all at the same time, should be presented in this order. Regarding interpretation, this writer would not presume to direct the actor from the pages of this script. However, I would challenge the actor to dare to be understated in his or her interpretation. Overly dramatic flourishes, extravagant, repetitive gestures, and screeching lines at full volume rarely accomplish their intended result. More effective (especially in pieces such as these) is the intensity of the body frozen in place by a powerful remembrance, the face silently expressing in the long, pregnant pause an emotion so terrible it dare not be put into words. Often the most moving, powerful performance is the one accomplished without theatrics. Hymns To facilitate the use of these scripts—either separately or as a whole—we have included the titles of traditional hymns that could be used in conjunction with their performances. O Sacred Head, Now Wounded Paul Gerhardt (based on poem by Bernard of Clairvaux) And Can It Be?.... ......Charles Wesley IOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA What Wondrous Love is This...... American Folk Hymn Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed?......Isaac Watts When I Survey the Wondrous Cross...... Isaac Watts MARY MAGDALENE What a Friend we Have in Jesus......Joseph M. Scriven ALL Were You There?.... .....Traditional Spiritual CHARACTERS Apostle John Apostle Peter Joseph of Arimathea Nicodemus 34 Mary Magdalene

| John   |
|--|
|  |
| The Time: Between the death and resurrection of Jesus; describing        |
| His trial and crucifixion.   |
| The Place: Jerusalem   |
| House lights down.   |
| Stage lights up.   |
| Enter the apostle John. He is cautious, tentative, serious. He first     |
| "discovers" the audience, before addressing it. He is not quick to       |
| speak, but rather thoughtful, pensive.                                   |
| John   |
| (with his head cocked, listening)  |
| Listen. Listen to the sound of anger.                                    |
| (pause)  |
| I was there, you see, and I heard it all too well. I heard the shouting, |
| the curses thrown at Him so innocent yet reviled. I felt the heat of a   |
| city wishing only to kill something, anything that could stand in for    |
| the enemy it truly hated: Rome. It was our impotence toward Rome         |
| that drove us to vent our anger toward the blameless Son of God.         |
| (pause; sadly)   |
| It was over. No turning back. Caesar himself couldn't have stopped the   |
| momentum that was driving Jesus to the cross. Secretly, Peter and I      |
| followed Him to the palace of Caiaphas, where He was questioned by       |
| the Council. We waited, down in the courtyard, calling the shadows       |
| friend and waiting for the Lord to emerge with His verdict.              |
| (shaking his head; with empathy)   |
| Poor Peter. Caught in the offense of which we were all guilty. Always    |
| ready to speak, no matter the consequence, foolish Peter laid himself    |
| open to charges of conspiracy. There were those of us who hated him      |
| for denying Jesus, but the hate they expended on Peter could just as     |
| well have been spent on themselves, for we all knew that we would        |
| have said and done the same, had we been challenged.                     |
| (wistfully)  |

| 1  | At the time, I would gladly have exchanged the rest of my life for just    |
|----|--|
| 2  | one more day with Him. But now I realize that in His leaving, Jesus        |
| 3  | actually exchanged one terrible day of His for the remainder of mine.      |
| 4  | (long pause; more matter-of-factly)  |
| 5  | At last the theatrics of the Council and the Roman leaders were at         |
| 6  | an end, and we made our way out the western gate of the city. The          |
| 7  | procession was large and noisy. Parts of it bore an almost festive air, as |
| 8  | if the people were celebrating some grand and happy occasion.              |
| 9  | (more seriously)   |
| 10 | Other parts of the procession, however, were just the opposite, carried    |
| 11 | along by the mournful dirge, heads bowed, women weeping, men               |
| 12 | glassy-eyed.   |
| 13 | (pause, seeing it before him; beginning an extended crescendo—not of       |
| 14 | volume, but of heavy intensity)  |
| 15 | I had seen it so many times before and had passed by it almost             |
| 16 | unaware. But on this morning Golgotha seemed the most imposing,            |
| 17 | depressing site on earth. There was nothing at all grand about the         |
| 18 | execution field. It was little more than a sad, trampled expanse of rock   |
| 19 | and thin soil just outside the city wall—a place where people died in      |
| 20 | hideous torment—   |
| 21 | (wryly)  |
| 22 | —and, under the Roman oppression, with alarming regularity.                |
| 23 | (wincing from the painful image in his mind)                               |
| 24 | The place called "The Skull" was littered with the sticks and poles of     |
| 25 | past deaths. The wood—used and reused many times—was coated with           |
| 26 | old blood reduced to many shades of ochre by the Judean sun. Below         |
| 27 | the old upright poles were heavy stones jammed into the soil for           |
| 28 | support; they, too, were splattered the same ugly shades.                  |
| 29 | (embarrassed)  |
| 30 | We hung back, Peter and I, still afraid for our lives, but we saw          |
| 31 | everything. We saw too much. We saw things that are now burned             |
| 32 | permanently into our brains—images and memories that will be our           |
| 33 | companions until we die.   |
| 34 | (struggling to describe the painful scene)                                 |
| 35 | The soldiers pushed Jesus down and laid Him out over the ground.           |
| 36 | While several held Him there one brute with practiced strokes drove        |

thick rusted spikes through each of His wrists and into the crosspiece 1 timber. Jesus was silent throughout. I would have cried out, pleading 2 for mercy, saying anything that might help me avoid such an awful death. But Jesus, experiencing every bit of the pain, accepted it silently. 4 He would not revile those who reviled Him. Several of the soldiers picked Him up, pinned now to the beam, and 6 attached the crosspiece to the top of the upright pole. It dropped into 8 place with a sickening thud. While two soldiers braced against the 9 backside of the cross, a third shoved Jesus' lower legs up until both knees were bent and pushed out to one side. Then the executioner drove one last spike that passed through both his ankles. 11 12 (long pause; ashamed to be describing his discomfort in comparison to the 13 agony of the cross) I can't describe my misery. I can't describe the hollow, aching ring 14 15 of my guilt. No, I hadn't renounced Jesus, as Peter, but I have no doubt that my words would have been similar to his, had anyone so inquired. Not having the courage to speak them out loud only compounded my shame. 18 19 The sight of His tortured body hanging before us stabbed into my 20 heart like a slowly twisting knife. I wanted to be anywhere else but there, but I felt compelled to remain, as if this silent vigil—this 21 tortured communion—could somehow relieve me of my complicity in 23 His death. 24 25 John exits. 26 Stage lights down. 28 House lights up. 29 32 34

| 1  | Joseph of Arimethea/Nicodemus  |
|----|--|
| 2  |  |
| 3  | The Time: Just after the burial of Jesus; describing His death and   |
| 4  | burial.  |
| 5  | The Place: Jerusalem   |
| 6  |  |
| 7  | House lights down.   |
| 8  | Stage lights up.   |
| 9  |  |
| 10 | Note: In this monologue/dialogue, Nicodemus always addresses         |
| 11 | Joseph directly, as if in real time, while Joseph alternates between |
| 12 | talking to the audience about Nicodemus in the past tense, and       |
| 13 | talking to Nicodemus directly, as if in real time. In other words,   |
| 14 | Joseph alternates between "now" and reliving what occurred           |
| 15 | earlier with Nicodemus. Whenever Joseph addresses the audience       |
| 16 | Nicodemus remains in character, watching and listening to            |
| 17 | Joseph, but not acknowledging the audience.                          |
| 18 |  |
| 19 | Enter Joseph of Arimathea.   |
| 20 |  |
| 21 | Joseph/Nicodemus   |
| 22 | (Joseph, alone on stage, begins by himself)                          |
| 23 | "Joseph," my friend Nicodemus had said,                              |
| 24 | (at this point Nicodemus appears near him—either by entering, or by  |
| 25 | illumination—speaking the line with Joseph)                          |
| 26 | "He's dying, and will need a tomb."                                  |
| 27 | (now it is only Nicodemus speaking; to Joseph)                       |
| 28 | Your family has one nearby, haven't they?                            |
| 29 |  |
| 30 | Joseph   |
| 31 | (to Nicodemus; flatly)   |
| 32 | There's one available.   |
| 33 | (to the audience)  |
| 34 | My friend knew me well enough to accurately interpret my tone. He    |
| 35 | looked directly into my eyes and said,                               |
| 36 |  |

| 1  | Nicodemus  |
|----|--|
| 2  | (to Joseph)  |
| 3  | It's time, Joseph. It's time to go public with what I know is in your  |
| 4  | heart.   |
| 5  |  |
| 6  | Joseph   |
| 7  | (to audience)  |
| 8  | He was right, I knew it. This was a moment I had anticipated with      |
| 9  | dread.   |
| 10 | (to Nicodemus; protesting)   |
| 11 | It isn't me, but my family. I have no thought for my own position, my  |
| 12 | standing with the Council. But this will be hard on the family.        |
| 13 | (pause; to the audience)   |
| 14 | My objection sounded as feeble as it truly was. But Nicodemus, as      |
| 15 | always, was kind. Our relationship had been built on many years        |
| 16 | of living and working together, and wouldn't be jeopardized by my      |
| 17 | unsightly display of cowardice. He chose his words carefully.          |
| 18 |  |
| 19 | Nicodemus  |
| 20 | (to Joseph; empathetically)  |
| 21 | I know what you're feeling. Remember that time I went to Him in the    |
| 22 | dead of night. I had no desire to reveal my interest in what Jesus had |
| 23 | to say. It was only by His grace that He didn't call me on it.         |
| 24 | (pause; pointedly)   |
| 25 | Joseph, He's dying. I'm afraid of what will happen to the body if we   |
| 26 | don't step in. You have contacts with Pilate.                          |
| 27 |  |
| 28 | Joseph   |
| 29 | Don't remind me.   |
| 30 |  |
| 31 | Nicodemus  |
| 32 | Get permission for us to remove the body. I'll see to the burial       |
| 33 | arrangements.  |
| 34 |  |
| 35 |  |
| 36 |  |

| 1  | Joseph   |
|----|--|
| 2  | (blurting out)   |
| 3  | Let us use agents. There's no need for personal involvement.               |
| 4  |  |
| 5  | Nicodemus  |
| 6  | Joseph, we've moved beyond politics now. This is no longer about           |
| 7  | taking sides, but about paying a debt. Jesus is doing this for us—you      |
| 8  | and me and everyone else. We owe Him everything. You owe Him               |
| 9  | everything.  |
| 10 |  |
| 11 | Nicodemus "fades" from the scene—either by exiting gracefully, or          |
| 12 | by lights going down on him—as Joseph continues to the audience.           |
| 13 |  |
| 14 | Joseph   |
| 15 | (after a pause; looking out over the audience, as if looking at the actual |
| 16 | crucifixion scene)   |
| 17 | The twisted, lifeless body of Jesus was a sight almost too hideous to      |
| 18 | bear. That tender—even beautiful—face we had come to love was a            |
| 19 | battered mask of pain that hung limp upon His chest. Ribbons of            |
| 20 | dried blood caked His forehead below that ridiculous crown the             |
| 21 | soldiers had fashioned out of thorns.                                      |
| 22 | (wincing)  |
| 23 | The weight of His body pulling on His arms had enlarged the already        |
| 24 | gaping wounds in His wrists. His side revealed a deep gash, through        |
| 25 | which still oozed a clear liquid. Jesus looked like nothing more than a    |
| 26 | lifeless rag doll pinned to the side of a tree. And my heart broke over    |
| 27 | the torture He had received into that body—for me.                         |
| 28 | (pause)  |
| 29 | It was odd, and more than a little frightening, to be handling the         |
| 30 | body of Jesus. But as quickly and respectfully as we could, we brought     |
| 31 | Him down from the cross.   |
| 32 | (speaking with profound physical discomfort)                               |
| 33 | His weight had enlarged the holes in His wrists so that we were able to    |
| 34 | remove His arms while leaving the spikes in the wood. The spike that       |
| 35 | held His feet was finally, with great effort, extricated from the wood     |
| 36 | and His flesh.   |

| 1        | (pause; regaining his composure)   |
|----------|--|
| 2        | With the help of some onlookers, and even a few of the remaining               |
| 3        | soldiers, Nicodemus and I carried the body to the tomb. We didn't see          |
| 4        | any of Jesus' disciples.   |
| 5        | (pause)  |
| 6        | We stood in the tomb, gazing down on Jesus, now wrapped for final              |
| 7        | burial. In a few moments we would roll the heavy stone into place,             |
| 8        | and permanently seal His body inside the cave.                                 |
| 9        |  |
| 10       | During Joseph's last line Nicodemus reappears. The two men stand               |
| 11       | side-by-side, looking down at a point below them, between the                  |
| 12       | audience and them, as if looking down at Christ's body.                        |
| 13       |  |
| 14       | Nicodemus  |
| 15       | (quietly)  |
| 16       | How could we ever have imagined that this is how it would end?                 |
| 17       |  |
| 18       | Joseph   |
| 19       | He warned us.  |
| 20       |  |
| 21       | Nicodemus  |
| 22       | Frankly, I wasn't always able to separate parable from fact. The temple        |
| 23       | still stands, but here He is—dead.   |
| 24       | T 1  |
| 25       | Joseph  I don't know how it will all play out. Already His words are feding in |
| 26       | I don't know how it will all play out. Already His words are fading in         |
| 27       | my memory.   |
| 28<br>29 | Nicodemus  |
| 30       | I remember some. That night long ago, when I visited Jesus in secret,          |
| 31       | He spoke of this night—I know it now.  |
| 32       | The openio of this inglic I know it how.                                       |
| 33       | Joseph   |
| 34       | (not turning)  |
| 35       | What did He say?   |
| 36       |  |

| 1   | Nicodemus   |
|-----|---|
| 1 2 | Jesus told me three things that night. He told me from where He had   |
| 3   | come, where He would be going, and how we could follow. He said       |
| 4   | that He had descended from heaven, and would be returning. Then—I     |
| 5   | understand it now—Jesus described what has just taken place. He said, |
| 6   | "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the   |
| 7   | Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes may in Him have     |
| 8   | eternal life."  |
| 9   | eterriar me.  |
| 10  | Lights down slowly to black.  |
| 11  | or  |
| 12  | With great sadness the two men turn and exit together.                |
| 13  |   |
| 14  |   |
| 15  |   |
| 16  |   |
| 17  |   |
| 18  |   |
| 19  |   |
| 20  |   |
| 21  |   |
| 22  |   |
| 23  |   |
| 24  |   |
| 25  |   |
| 26  |   |
| 27  |   |
| 28  |   |
| 29  |   |
| 30  |   |
| 31  |   |

34

| 1  | Peter (1)   |
|----|---|
| 2  |   |
| 3  | The Time: In the period between Jesus' death and resurrection             |
| 4  | The Place: Jerusalem  |
| 5  |   |
| 6  | House lights down.  |
| 7  | Stage lights up.  |
| 8  |   |
| 9  | Enter Peter at a brisk pace, as if going somewhere. Suddenly he           |
| 10 | notices the audience.   |
| 11 |   |
| 12 | Peter   |
| 13 | (to audience; defensively)  |
| 14 | I suppose <u>you</u> would have known better. I suppose you would have    |
| 15 | understood everything Jesus said and did. Well, this simple fisherman     |
| 16 | didn't always get it the first time, all right?                           |
| 17 | (soberly)   |
| 18 | He did everything He could to get through to us, but His mind was         |
| 19 | still the mind of God. And I don't imagine you would have fared any       |
| 20 | better than I.  |
| 21 | (nostalgically; pleasantly)   |
| 22 | Listening to Jesus could be like hearing the song of dawn dancing         |
| 23 | across the Sea of Galilee. It could be like hearing the first meadowlarks |
| 24 | of spring echoing through the old olive trees of Capernaum.               |
| 25 | (more seriously)  |
| 26 | But it could also be like unrolling an ancient book and reading from      |
| 27 | it things far beyond the mind of man.                                     |
| 28 | (pause)   |
| 29 | We were unsure of ourselves from the start. From even the finding of      |
| 30 | the house and room where we would celebrate the Passover—look for a       |
| 31 | man carrying a pitcher of water?—we didn't know what to expect. Yes,      |
| 32 | He had told us of His approaching death, but to our ears these were       |
| 33 | words from that ancient book—words that made no sense. He was still       |
| 34 | young.  |
| 35 | (with wonder)   |
| 36 |   |

| 1  | We gathered in that room, and I could feel the moment vibrating in                  |
|----|---|
| 2  | my chest: the Passover meeting with this death Jesus spoke of. But I                |
| 3  | couldn't make sense of it.  |
| 4  | (quickly angry)   |
| 5  | And that made me angry. I wanted to strike out at something, or                     |
| 6  | someone.  |
| 7  | (calming himself)   |
| 8  | We $\underline{all}$ entered that room unsure of ourselves, like young sailors on a |
| 9  | stormy sea. The deck was rolling beneath our feet, and land was far off (beat)      |
| 11 | Am I excusing myself? Perhaps. I never grew accustomed to the Lord's                |
| 12 | rebukes. Each one was as painful as the first.                                      |
| 13 | (irritably)   |
| 14 | At the supper we were all so preoccupied arguing with each other that               |
| 15 | we ignored the most basic courtesies. We were so distracted by our                  |
| 16 | ambition and establishing our pecking order that no one noticed that                |
| 17 | our feet were still filthy from the street!   |
| 18 | (beat)  |
| 19 | No one but Jesus. Without a word he filled a basin, tied a towel                    |
| 20 | around his waist, and began washing our feet.                                       |
| 21 | (shaking his head)  |
| 22 | I was mortified. For the Master to be performing this menial task—for               |
| 23 | Him to have to! How embarrassing.   |
| 24 | (wryly)   |
| 25 | Still, I didn't offer myself in His place. Apparently my shame was not              |
| 26 | enough to spur me to action.  |
| 27 | (pause)   |
| 28 | When I protested, He said, "Peter, you don't understand now what I am               |
| 29 | doing—but you will later."  |
| 30 | (sarcastically)   |
| 31 | Well, that cleared it up.   |
| 32 | (beat)  |
| 33 | Not wishing to wait for understanding, I blurted out, "No! You're not               |
| 34 | going to wash my feet—now or ever!"   |
| 35 | (pause)   |
| 36 |   |

| 1  | Then Jesus gave me that look—the look that can wither fig trees. With   |
|----|---|
| 2  | a measured tone He said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part of     |
| 3  | Me."  |
| 4  | (incredulous)   |
| 5  | My mind raced. What does that have to do with my feet being dirty?      |
| 6  | No part of Him? No part of the one who had changed my life from the     |
| 7  | ground up? The one who took me out of the boat and set me before        |
| 8  | men, speaking in His name? No part of Him?                              |
| 9  | (beat)  |
| 10 | I threw off my robe and pleaded with Him,                               |
| 11 | (with arms outstretched; dramatically)                                  |
| 12 | "Lord, don't stop at my feet! Wash all of me!"                          |
| 13 |   |
| 14 | Peter freezes in this position, as if waiting expectantly for Jesus'    |
| 15 | approval of his magnanimous gesture. Not receiving it, he slowly        |
| 16 | transitions down to a more humbled attitude.                            |
| 17 |   |
| 18 | PETER   |
| 19 | (quietly)   |
| 20 | What Jesus said next was no lilting bird song or beam of morning        |
| 21 | sunshine, but was straight out of that dusty book. "If you have already |
| 22 | bathed," said He, "then only the feet need cleaning. You are clean from |
| 23 | head to toe. Peter, you are already clean—but someone here is not."     |
| 24 | (long pause, thinking; troubled)  |
| 25 | Now that He's gone, I wonder if I'll ever understand what Jesus said    |
| 26 | to us. Sometimes, when I try, His words fill my mind like angry fish    |
| 27 | caught in a net—thrashing about, all jumbled together                   |
| 28 | He said I was clean—but what does that mean? Right now I don't feel     |
| 29 | very clean at all. I feel like someone slogging through the mud flats,  |
| 30 | sinking deeper and deeper with every step.                              |
| 31 | (to audience; pointedly)  |
| 32 | Why did He leave us this way, with so many questions left               |
| 33 | unanswered?   |
| 34 |   |
| 35 | Lights go to black.   |
| 36 | Exit Peter.   |

| Peter (2)   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 2   |                |
| 3 The Time: Between the death and resurrection of Jesu  | s; describing  |
| 4 the now-deserted Golgotha.  |                |
| 5 The Place: Jerusalem  |                |
| 6   |                |
| 7 House lights down.  |                |
| 8 Stage lights up.  |                |
| 9   |                |
| 10 Enter Peter. He is a robust, energetic sort—slow of the  | ought, but     |
| 11 quick to speak.  |                |
| 12  |                |
| 13 Peter  |                |
| 14 (beginning sadly nostalgic, becoming happier telling th  | -              |
| There were happy days, long ago, when my brother and I  | -              |
| out into the Sea of Galilee, visiting one of our regular sw   |                |
| off the shore of Capernaum. The weight of the net, as we  | hauled it      |
| back into the boat, would be almost too much to bear.   |                |
| 19 (energetically)  |                |
| We'd throw everything we had into the ropes, straining,   | _              |
| backs to it. Sweat would pour off us, spill into our eyes ti  | II we couldn't |
| see, leaving the rope slippery in our hands.  |                |
| 23 (pause)  |                |
| What pleasant pain we felt in our arms and backs once to  |                |
| in. Our arms would throb, our backs felt as if they would   |                |
| straighten, the palms of our hands burned from the toug   | -              |
| soon we'd be back at it, tossing the empty net out over the   | ne waves, then |
| hauling its new catch back in.  |                |
| 29 (with a pleasant sigh) 30 Ab those were the devel  |                |
| 30 Ah, those were the days!   |                |
| 31 (suddenly more melancholy) 32 How I long for them, those days of happy ignorance. Lyo                                  | ander new if   |
| How I long for them, those days of happy ignorance. I wo<br>I'll ever again know such peace. For the last three years I'd |                |
| 34 God—   | ve iivea Willi |
| 35 (darkly)   |                |
| and now I've had a hand in killing Him.   |                |

| 1  | (very long pause as Peter goes back into his thoughts, and decides how to  |
|----|--|
| 2  | communicate them; more stilted than before)                                |
| 3  | Last night, after they buried Jesus, I went out into the city. The streets |
| 4  | were so silent and black, and I wrapped the blackness about me and         |
| 5  | tried to forget what I had done. Even then I was afraid—I was so afraid    |
| 6  | someone would see me and identify me with Him. I was so ashamed,           |
| 7  | but I couldn't stop being afraid for myself. In my mind I remembered       |
| 8  | what Jesus had said—that there was a reason for His dying. But in my       |
| 9  | heart I saw only a coward who denied even knowing Him.                     |
| 10 | (sharply angry)  |
| 11 | He had trusted me, and I thought only of myself.                           |
| 12 | (pause; beginning an extended crescendo)                                   |
| 13 | The street was empty—that twisted street that had been filled with         |
| 14 | people laughing and mocking and spitting their hatred. It was empty,       |
| 15 | and I embraced the emptiness like an old friend who understands            |
| 16 | your pain when no one else can.  |
| 17 | (with regret)  |
| 18 | Now, for the first time since that day Jesus had called me, I could no     |
| 19 | longer feel Him beside me. I was alone. So very much alone.                |
| 20 | (pause)  |
| 21 | The guard was asleep, and soon I was outside the city. Golgotha was        |
| 22 | nearby; from the city gate you could already smell the lingering death.    |
| 23 | I didn't really want to see it, but something outside of myself had        |
| 24 | brought me back.   |
| 25 | (with increasing anxiety)  |
| 26 | The path was still muddy from the storm. I tripped on the wet stones       |
| 27 | in the dark. I prayed that a bolt of lightning would strike me down        |
| 28 | and end my wretched misery.  |
| 29 | (dully)  |
| 30 | But soon I was there—and that ugly stand of wood was still there. Try      |
| 31 | as I might, I couldn't keep my eyes from traveling up that post, to the    |
| 32 | crossbeam that was still in place.   |
| 33 | (beat)   |
| 34 | God in heaven! My heart was ripped in two by what I saw—the spikes         |
| 35 | still there, still embedded in the wood and still painted with His         |
| 36 |  |

| 1  | blood. I couldn't look on that cross without seeing the dying body of           |
|----|---|
| 2  | Jesus.  |
| 3  | (fiercely)  |
| 4  | I <u>knew</u> the cross was empty—I <u>knew</u> He was no longer there, but—He  |
| 5  | <u>was</u> !  |
| 6  | (more quietly)  |
| 7  | He was.   |
| 8  |   |
| 9  | Peter's eyes open, and slowly become filled with horror as he                   |
| 10 | realizes his responsibility in the death of Jesus.                              |
| 11 |   |
| 12 | Peter   |
| 13 | (with self-loathing)  |
| 14 | And I put Him there. My cowardice put Him there.                                |
| 15 |   |
| 16 | Peter turns away, weeping with shame. Then he is hit with a                     |
| 17 | new realization—that it may <u>not</u> be true that he alone bears the          |
| 18 | responsibility. Working through his jumbled, tortured thoughts, he              |
| 19 | regains some of his composure and returns to the audience.                      |
| 20 |   |
| 21 | Peter   |
| 22 | (haltingly)   |
| 23 | But if, as my heart tells me, I alone am responsible for His death, then        |
| 24 | that would mean that Jesus died only for me. And that's not what He             |
| 25 | said:   |
| 26 | (anxiously trying to recall Jesus' words)                                       |
| 27 | "even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to            |
| 28 | give His life a ransom— <u>for many</u> ."                                      |
| 29 | (confidently)   |
| 30 | No, we <u>all</u> put Him there. The soldiers drove the spikes, but we all held |
| 31 | Him down so they could. And we all were pulling on that rope that               |
| 32 | lifted Him into place. We all left Him to die alone—stripped of His             |
| 33 | friends, stripped of His dignity.   |
| 34 | (having finally convinced himself)  |
| 35 |   |
| 36 |   |

| 1  |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Jesus died for <u>all</u> of us—not just me. We're all guilty of the sins for |
| 2  | which He died.  |
| 3  | (pause)   |
| 4  | It was an ugly way to die, but then,  |
| 5  | (more pointedly to the members of the audience; knowingly)                    |
| 6  | He died for ugly things, didn't He. There's no pleasant way to die for        |
| 7  | the sins of all humanity.   |
| 8  |   |
| 9  | Peter exits.  |
| 10 |   |
| 11 | Stage lights down.  |
| 12 | House lights up.  |
| 13 |   |
| 14 |   |
| 15 |   |
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34

| 1        | MARY MAGDALENE  |
|----------|---|
| 2        |   |
| 3        | The Time: After the resurrection of Jesus; describing His   |
| 1        | appearance outside the tomb.  |
| 5        | The Place: Jerusalem  |
| 7        | House lights down.  |
| 3        | Stage lights up.  |
| 9        | Note: Mary of Magdala was not a prostitute; she had been  |
| 11       | possessed by demons. Don't play her as a "loose woman," but   |
| 12       | (for example) play her just a bit erratic, or eccentric—as if there   |
| 13       | remains a lingering residue of her earlier personality.   |
| 14       |   |
| 15       | Enter Mary.   |
| 16       |   |
| 17       | Mary  |
| 18       | They always said I was crazy, and for most of my life I guess I was. I  |
| 19       | never <u>was</u> in my right mind—until I met Jesus.  |
| 20       | (pause; more thoughtful)  |
| 21       | There is no love stronger than the love that accepts you for who you  |
| 22       | are—and that is how Jesus loved me. When we first met I was a mess.   |
| 23       | He found me as I had been since my earliest days: mad as a wet hen.   |
| 24       | Everywhere I went I became the center of attention, because no one  |
| 25       | could ignore the foul-mouthed demons that lived in me.  |
| 26       | (longer pause; thinking back)   |
| 27       | He was teaching, and healing the sick in our small town by the Sea of   |
| 28<br>29 | Galilee, and I was there because I was everywhere in those days—like nagging headache that never lets you know peace. The people tried to |
| 30       | ignore me, but I wouldn't let them.   |
| 31       | (reflecting her attitude and behavior at the time)  |
| 32       | If I could have no peace, then neither could they; if I had to live with  |
| 33       | the constant torment, then I would be a constant torment to them.   |
| 34       | (with a shrug)  |
| 35       | Don't ask me why; it's just how I was.  |
| 36       | (pause)   |

But Jesus didn't ignore me. Even in my state of incoherent babbling and screaming I still could understand that here was a man who cared for me as I was. No one had ever loved me like that. No one had ever reached down into my torment to lift me out; everyone else had always expected me to reach up to them.

(pause; reliving the morning at the tomb)

Oh, what a cold, miserable morning it was. I don't think any of us had slept the night before. Ever since I had helped Nicodemus and Joseph place Him in the tomb, I had been unable to shake the feeling that we hadn't done enough for Him. Even with the extravagant amounts of burial spices Nicodemus had supplied, it didn't seem enough. Jesus had done so much for me—I simply had to do more, even if only to attend to His burial.

#### (pause; heavier, darkly)

I wasn't one to frequent cemeteries. After the sleepless night I was bleary-eyed and disoriented—like walking the dark streets of a strange city and imagining that the lights represent familiar landmarks. The tomb looked strange, different from the last time I had been there, only a short while before.

At first it was all just a blur: the open tomb, the angels, running back for the disciples, returning with them, then being left alone there and hating the cloak of confusion I was unable to throw off.

#### (long pause; with warmth)

I thought he was the gardener. Doesn't every garden have a gardener, someone to tend and tidy and keep the riff-raff away? I only wanted to go home and sleep and forget that my Master was now gone forever. But he persisted: "Whom are you seeking?" And I still didn't recognize Him. Then He spoke once more, and it was as if that heavy cloak of confusion was suddenly lifted away—as if the voice of an old friend had just entered the conversation.

#### (pause; pleasantly)

Jesus had always said my name in a warm, gentle way—like a brook gently tumbling over rounded pebbles, like song birds just waking to the dawn. In an instant I knew it was Him, and all doubt and confusion left me.

(pause; thinking back)

| 1  | There is a tender little song we would sing in the neighborhood when    |
|----|---|
| 2  | I was a girl. I've forgotten most of it—except for one phrase:          |
| 3  | "Know my name;  |
| 4  | Call me friend."  |
| 5  | My precious Lord was alive! But Jesus was more than my Master, He       |
| 6  | was my friend. He knew my <u>name</u> , and in His speaking that one    |
| 7  | simple word—my <u>name</u> —I remembered the true depth of His love for |
| 8  | me—His love for everyone who knew His.                                  |
| 9  |   |
| 10 | Mary exits.   |
| 11 |   |
| 12 | Stage lights down.  |
| 13 | House lights up.  |
| 14 |   |
| 15 |   |
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