

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?



A ONE-ACT PLAY
FOR EASTER WEEK

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Garden is a place of tranquility, of shaded peace amidst the aroma of ancient olive trees. Here the olives are harvested and made into the oil used by everyone in the city. And into this peaceful setting have come a rabbi and his disciples.

Suddenly the Garden is filled with a mob, here to arrest the rabbi—Jesus of Nazareth. And just as suddenly, the mob has accomplished its mission, and has taken the rabbi back into the city of Jerusalem. His followers have scattered, and the garden is once again quiet, but unnaturally still.

There are those who have been privy to the events of this night—indeed, the events of the past week. But who is this one just arrested? Is he teacher, rabbi? Is he Master and Lord? Is he really God—or just a shrewd deceiver? (*Preceding paragraphs suitable for Program Notes*)

The play begins as the crowd has departed. The gardener and his acquaintances are left to discuss and argue over just who this Jesus of Nazareth really is.

Note: An optional way to begin a performance of *Who do you say that I am?* is to have the pastor (or someone else) read the following Scripture passages just before curtain: Matthew 26:36-41 & 47-56 (NASB preferred)

CHARACTERS

Erastus, the Gardener (p.6)

Erastus is in charge of the Garden of Gethsemane. He tends the shrubs and trees—mostly olive trees—and oversees the pressing of the olives into oil.¹ Erastus has the appearance of a hermit who spends little time in or around civilized society. He is squat and generously rotund, with a smudged face and dirt under his fingernails. However, while his manners and tone are gruff, these character traits fail to hide a mind more quick and nimble than his appearance would suggest.

As Jesus and His disciples have arrived in Erastus' garden, he has slunk back into the deep shadows. From that vantage point, Erastus has listened in silent wonder to Jesus praying in anguish to the Father. Then, with rising apprehension, he has witnessed the rush of authorities into the peaceful garden and the subsequent arrest of the rabbi.

Shara, the Syrian Baker (p.6)

This woman runs a small bakery just around the corner from where Jesus holds the Last Supper with His disciples. Shara is a simple (yet not unintelligent) woman who finds escape from an unhappy and unfulfilled marriage in her successful business. She lives peacefully with both the Jews and the Romans—not really understanding or caring deeply about either.

Late in preparations for the Passover, one of the disciples has come to her for the unleavened bread for the ceremonial supper. While most of her customers had placed their orders much earlier, Shara—being a shrewd businesswoman—has made extra for late orders; so she is able to supply their needs.

Being naturally curious, she has lingered after delivering the bread, listening to Jesus and His men through the door that opens onto the stairs leading down the outside of the house to the street below. Not being Jewish, the history and mysteries of the Passover have long escaped her, but Shara is fascinated by the words she hears coming from the lips of the Master—and follows after them when they leave for the Garden of Gethsemane.

Hananiah, the Money-changer (p.10)

This banker has overheard the teachings of Jesus for some time, as he has sat in the temple courtyard changing Roman coinage to Tyrian for worshippers. He is not antagonistic toward Jesus—in fact, under more benign circumstances, Hananiah might be well on the way toward becoming a believer. But that was instantly short-circuited the day earlier in the week when Jesus stormed into the temple, overturned his lucrative (and expensively leased) station and threw him and his like out of the temple.

Hananiah is, first and foremost, a pragmatist. No matter how he feels about what Jesus teaches, this new and admittedly attractive rabbi is not part of the power structure in Jerusalem—quite to the contrary, everything He says seems to speak against the powers that be. Hananiah must, by his very practical nature, side with the priests and temple rulers seeking to do away with this one claiming to be the Son of God. Beyond his professional situation, Hananiah is a steely-eyed, cold-blooded snob who thinks himself more intelligent, more wealthy, and more privileged than just about anyone he meets. Those beneath him, he ignores; those above him, he courts.

PROPS

Having just completed her deliveries, Shara could (and should) enter carrying an empty rough-wicker bread basket.

PROGRAM MUSIC

The original program music consisted of sounds of nature combined with simple, understated electronic tones. Anything that sets the scene according to the director's tastes is suitable.

PROLOGUE

Cue program music.

During program music, slowly dim house and stage lights to black. Once the house and stage are dark, all three characters enter in darkness and take their position DS. When program music fades out, pause tape.

Stage Lights up full immediately.

All three characters are standing at the Down Stage apron, facing the audience. The Gardener is Center, the Moneychanger and Baker on either side. They speak energetically, almost rhythmically, to the audience—each unaware of the other two.

Note: the Prologue and Epilogue are meant to be moments set out of time. For example, the perspectives of the characters in the Prologue is such that they may have already experienced what follows.

Shara

Did you see what happened? Did you hear? I was too late.

(sadly)

Oh, I was too late.

Erastus

There was nothing I could do—nothing but watch.

Hananiah

He had no right—no right at all. I don't care who He is.

Shara

Who is He?

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Hananiah

I was simply going about my business. Can't a man make a living?

Erastus

(squatting down, pressing the palm of his hand to the ground)

The soil's damp tonight. Fog setting in.

Shara

They ordered the bread, they paid their money. I should have left it at that.

Hananiah

I've rented that stall for six years. Been a member of the guild even longer. I've earned my rights and privileges!

Erastus

I don't think it'll rain—but it'd be a good night to stay in.

Shara

(fascinated)

They talked for hours, and I couldn't take my ear from that door. They spoke in such mysteries—especially Him.

Hananiah

Just hear me out. I play by all the rules—all the laws—I keep my nose clean. I'm respected in the temple and in the city. People know me—

(with a bit of a swagger)

and I know people.

Erastus

It was like it was all planned out—each person taking his part.

Shara

It wasn't an ordinary Passover. It wasn't just ceremony. What they put to their mouths became something that connected them to their future.

1 Erastus

2 Things like this don't happen here.

3

4 Hananiah

5 I like Him.

6 (darkly)

7 I did like Him. He made a lot of sense. I believed the things He said.

8

9 Erastus

10 My garden's a place of peace. This has been an offense.

11

12 Shara

13 My head burns—as if my ears have taken in more than it can bear at
14 one time.

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16 Hananiah

17 My position's secure—at least it was until He went too far.

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19 Shara

20 He went too far.

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22 Erastus

23 They went too far.

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26 *After 1 beat, lights go immediately to black.*

27 *The three characters exit immediately at the black out.*

28 *Cue program music (release pause).*

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1 **SCENE**

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3 *Lights up slowly to full; lighting should suggest evening, but be at*
4 *a comfortable level for the audience, as this level will be retained*
5 *throughout the main body of the play.*

6
7 *Lights up to pre-set by Erastus' entrance.*

8 *Fade out program music after Erastus enters.*

9
10 *Enter Erastus, the Gardener, L. He enters quickly, as if chasing*
11 *after something or someone. He stops C. Erastus is dressed like a*
12 *street urchin who has been rolling around in the dirt. His clothing*
13 *is a curious conglomeration of multi-colored, multi-layered scraps*
14 *and rags. When he walks, billows of dust roll up around his feet.*
15 *Erastus is agitated, upset over just having witnessed the arrest*
16 *of Jesus and the flight of His disciples. He doesn't know what to*
17 *do: Should he go to the authorities? The authorities were the ones*
18 *arresting Jesus. Should he forget it ever happened? That wouldn't*
19 *fit his personality. But who can he tell—and what will he tell*
20 *them? Erastus looks about, searching; finally he pivots, as if to*
21 *return from whence he came.*

22
23 *Enter Shara, the Syrian Baker, R. She, too, is agitated (and more*
24 *out of breath) still searching for someone or something. Shara is*
25 *dressed for work in her bakery—which includes a broad apron*
26 *dusted liberally with flour. She has thrown a shawl over her head*
27 *and shoulders as protection from the night air. Shara has lost*
28 *track of Jesus and the disciples as she followed them from the*
29 *upper room where they celebrated the passover. She has come to*
30 *this garden only because she heard talk of it through the door as*
31 *she eavesdropped on their conversation. Shara is here because she*
32 *has found the words of this Teacher compelling—words offering*
33 *something stronger and higher than any type of "religion" she has*
34 *been familiar with before.*

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Shara

(not just curious, but insistent)

What happened here?

Erastus

(sadly)

Oh, lady. It was a sorry sight.

Shara

(with a frustrated sigh)

I was delayed. I was with them when they left their supper, but my husband had words with me.

(pause)

Can you tell me where they went?

Erastus

(after a pause; reluctantly, but with a confirming nod)

Ah, I can. I fear I do know where they went.

Shara

(expecting him to continue, but when he doesn't she snaps impatiently)

Is this to be a riddle? Do you want me to guess?

Erastus

*(quickly, as much to calm her as explain himself;
apologetically, but uneasily)*

That's not my meaning.

(pause)

It's been a busy night in the garden.

Shara

(sitting; with a weary, resigned sigh)

It's been a busy night in the city.

(pause)

Do you know who they were?

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Erastus

(surprised—thinking she already knew; quizzically)

You don't?

Shara

I didn't see their faces.

Erastus

(confused then)

Then why are you here?

Shara

One of them came to my bakery today, asking bread for the evening meal.

(incredulous)

Can you imagine! Everyone else placed their orders a week ago. But I always plan ahead. They were nearby, so I told him I'd deliver in time for the meal.

Erastus

(grinning; nodding)

I knew it. I knew I could smell the hearth on you.

Shara

(wanting to take offense, but beginning to like Erastus)

And there's an aroma about you, too.

Erastus sheepishly wipes his hands down the front of his robe, rubs his dirty face, checks his dirty fingernails, etc.

Shara

(continuing her story)

Their house was just around the corner, and it was my last delivery. The boy who ordered it answered the door. He took the bread from my basket, but called over another to settle accounts.

(frowning)

This one was older, darker—there were schemes passing behind those eyes. His purse was small, so I knew there'd be no tip. He didn't even know me, but he didn't like me—and I didn't much like him.

Erastus

I thought you said you never saw them.

Shara

The room was already darkened. I could only make out that it wasn't a family. It was all men in the room—and no servants. I was paid and the door slammed in my face.

Erastus leaps suddenly to his feet.

Erastus

Sssshhh! Someone's coming.

Shara

(pausing to listen)

I don't hear anything.

Erastus

But your ears are tuned for the city.

(pausing to listen again)

It's a man.

(glancing at her)

Your husband?

Shara

(with a cynical laugh)

My husband's already asleep with his favorite companion—

Erastus does a take.

1 **sarcastic response that permits him a socially safe way to get back**
2 **at those who think themselves superior.**

3
4 **Erastus**

5 *(with mock submission)*

6 I was a disappointment to my mother, too.
7

8 **Perceiving what Erastus is doing, Shara snickers silently.**
9

10 **Hananiah**

11 *(looking about)*

12 There should be a group of men, with one in charge.
13

14 **Shara**

15 *(distrusting of this stranger; cautiously)*

16 Just the two of us. Only my friend—
17

18 **Shara suddenly realizes she doesn't know his name.**
19

20 **Erastus**

21 *(quickly coming to her rescue;*

22 *making it seem as if he is introducing himself to Hananiah)*

23 Erastus.
24

25 **Shara**

26 *(relieved)*

27 My friend, Erastus, and me.
28

29 **Hananiah**

30 *(ignoring the introductions; dismissively; to Erastus)*

31 Have you seen, heard anything?
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33 **Erastus**

34 *(having more fun with this arrogant stranger; with false solemnity)*

35 What'd you have in mind?

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Hananiah

(turning on Erastus; really looking at him for the first time; sharply)

You're an insolent cur.

Erastus

(pretending he didn't understand the insult)

No, I'm the gardener.

(pause; turning and walking away from Hananiah)

And I may be able to help you.

Hananiah

Then you did see them.

Erastus

Relax. You seem troubled.

Hananiah

(defiant)

I don't want to relax.

Erastus

Sit down.

Hananiah glares defiantly at Erastus, remains standing.

Erastus

(emphatically as he crosses)

Sit down.

(continuing)

My friend Shara here was just telling me about her good husband's love of wine.

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Shara

(chuckling)

More like devotion.

(suddenly remembering she never told Erastus her name)

How'd you know my name?

Erastus

(with a slightly guilty, pixie grin)

Oh, I know the name of every baker in town.

(pause; patting his girth [perhaps an aside to audience])

That's my devotion.

Hananiah

(not bothering to see the humor; impatiently)

You said you might be able to help me...

Erastus

(taking his time; getting comfortable)

Every spring I plant my seeds. I take my dibble and I make a small hole in the soil. I drop in the seed, cover it up, and wait. I wait.

(pause)

Impatience doesn't serve a gardener.

Hananiah

(beginning to fume again, but understanding Erastus's point; quieting himself before he speaks)

My name's Hananiah. I'm a banker—a moneychanger at the temple. Here and there, bits and pieces at a time, I had heard the teaching of this new rabbi. After the politics and back-room plottings of the temple, his words had the crisp ring of freshly minted coin. He made sense—and didn't seem to have an agenda.

(pause)

Earlier this week I was at work in my stall. It was a good day—it was going to be an even better day—when out of the blue, Jesus storms into the temple, screaming, shouting—acting like a madman.

1 **At the name "Jesus" Shara reacts, recognizing the name. Erastus**
2 **recognizes the name too, but is not so obvious in his reaction.**

3
4 **Hananiah**

5 *(continuing without pause)*

6 At first I was just watching, taking it all in, glad I was tucked back into
7 the corner. But then he came right at me. Before I knew it, my table
8 was on its head, my assets scattered across the floor—

9 *(sitting down with a "harrumph")*

10 —and I was being shoved out into the street!

11
12 **Shara**

13 *(excitedly)*

14 I had heard of it, but thought it was only gossip.

15
16 **Hananiah**

17 The worst you heard—it all happened. He was like a man who had lost
18 his mind.

19
20 **Erastus**

21 So what brought you here? Certainly not to ask His blessing.

22
23 **Hananiah**

24 *(back to his previous pomposity)*

25 I came to give him a piece of my mind! There were whisperings
26 around the temple of something happening here tonight.

27
28 **Erastus**

29 *(as much to himself; rising)*

30 Something happened here all right.

31
32 **Shara**

33 *(to Erastus)*

34 What did happen here?

35

1 **Erastus moves about, gathering his thoughts and deciding how**
2 **best to explain the recent events.**

3
4 **Erastus**

5 The rabbi has been arrested.
6

7 **Hananiah reacts without surprise—even satisfaction and**
8 **approval—while Shara reacts with stunned disbelief.**
9

10 **Erastus**

11 *(to Shara)*

12 It's true.
13

14 **Shara**

15 But why? Who?

16 *(pause)*

17 The Romans?
18

19 **Hananiah**

20 *(with political astuteness; confidently)*

21 No, it had to be the Council.
22

23 **Erastus**

24 They were both in on it.
25

26 **Hananiah**

27 *(amused by the political ramifications; "will wonders never cease")*

28 Hmm—Now there's an interesting alliance.
29

30 **Shara**

31 But what happened? Nothing I heard would have caused this.
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33 **Hananiah**

34 *(with condescending snobbery)*

35 What would you know?

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Shara

(with a peeved look thrown toward Hananiah)

They were peaceful enough.

(beat)

In fact, the man I heard through that door wouldn't have been a threat to anyone. He was so kind, so gentle.

Hananiah

(remembering the Jesus he had witnessed)

We're not talking about the same person.

Shara

(continuing; not acknowledging his comment)

I sat at the top of the stairs—something holding me to that door. Most of the voices were nothing but muffled vibrations, revealing no more than personality and mood. I heard young men and old, both wise and foolish, attentive and distracted—

(frowning)

—even one who was out-of-place. But I knew who he was—it was the one who paid for the bread. Something told me he was a stranger among friends. But there were words I did hear; they came from the rabbi. I don't know why His words stood out: He spoke softer than the rest.

(pointedly, to Hananiah)

And there was no malice in Him.

Hananiah

Maybe you aren't such a good judge of character.

Shara

(moving toward Hananiah menacingly)

And you are? —mister moneybags who makes a profit off people's worship.

1 **Erastus physically comes between the two before they can take**
2 **their dispute further. They grudgingly quiet down and go to their**
3 **separate corners.**

4
5 **Erastus**

6 *(to both)*

7 Shara—Hananiah, please!

8 *(after they have quieted down and moved off)*

9 Isn't it funny how everyone has gotten so worked up over a peasant
10 rabbi from Galilee? I mean, think about it:

11 *(scratching his head or face)*

12 what if I began traveling about, speaking as the voice of God—not as
13 a prophet, but as truly God's Son—would the authorities be so stirred
14 up as they are with this man? Or would I just be laughed at?

15
16 **Shara**

17 *(shocked)*

18 That's what He claims to be? God's Son?

19
20 **Hananiah**

21 *(expansively)*

22 Oh, yes. Haven't you heard? That was His authority when He stormed
23 into the temple. His position was that we were adulterating the very
24 purpose of His house: "His house," he called it. How do you reason
25 with such a man?

26
27 **Erastus**

28 *(philosophically)*

29 Reason. How does one "reason" with the Son of God, Hananiah?

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31 **Hananiah**

32 So now you're buying it?

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Erastus

If Jesus is nothing but a fool, why are the priests so angry? Why don't they just let Him wither on the vine? Why don't they just wait for the people to tire of Him?

Shara

Maybe He's touched a sore spot?

Hananiah

Or maybe they've grown weary of charlatans distracting people from the things of God.

Shara

(after a moment's thought)

I don't know much about your God. Maybe that gives me an advantage. Mostly what I know of Him I've learned from the

(dripping sarcasm)

"professionals." But if we're talking about the same God, then I learned something new about Him tonight—something I'd never heard before.

(pause)

God's Son is a servant. He washes dirty feet and He listens to the cares of others. He loves and He forgives and He's ready to die for that forgiveness.

Hananiah

(becoming bored with this woman's perspective; condescendingly)

It's not uncommon for a master to listen to His—

Shara

(interrupting)

This Master took the bread I had baked in my fire and called it "His body." Instead of using it to remember the past, He told them to eat it to remember Him in the future. He took wine and called it His blood, and instead of using it to remember an old covenant, He used it to say He was the new covenant. And when He said "Father,"

(turning her gaze toward Erastus; even more serious)

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2 I didn't know He was talking about Himself.

3
4 **Erastus**

5 (facing away from the others)

6 He knelt

7 (pointing)

8 right over there. I was no more than a few feet from Him. I've never
9 seen anyone so alone. I could almost feel the pain weighing Him down
10 as He cried out to His Father. And I could hear the loneliness in His
11 voice as He accepted His fate.

12
13 **Shara**

14 (to Erastus; feeling compassion for the older man, sensing he is feeling alone
15 right now, but instead of going to him, she asks if he has anyone else who
16 can supply this comfort)

17 Are you alone here in the garden?

18
19 **Erastus**

20 My wife died twelve years ago. But she died giving birth to our son.

21 (proudly)

22 He's a fine lad. He runs the press for me—and already the girls are
23 admiring his forearms.

24 (pause; with a little sadness)

25 He's a fine lad. He has his mother's way with animals. There's always a
26 four-footed friend at his side—

27
28 **Hananiah**

29 (to Erastus, interrupting; tired of all this domesticity; coldly)

30 Where did they take Him?

31
32 **Erastus**

33 (not answering right away, but knowing what Hananiah is referring to)

34 There were soldiers and there were priests—and many others. It was a small
35 army, but the priests were in charge. I'd say they took him to Caiaphas.

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Shara

Why so many for just one man?

Hananiah

(to Shara)

Because He has many followers.

Erastus

(agreeing)

Ah, I'm sure the authorities were expecting resistance, but mostly His disciples just faded into the night.

Shara

(incredulous)

Why did Jesus even come to the garden?

Erastus

To be arrested, I suppose.

(pause)

This was no accident.

Hananiah

(to Shara; dismissively)

I told you; they plotted this from the temple.

Erastus

No, there was higher authority involved.

(pause)

I've never seen a man in that state before.

(pause)

When my boy was very young, he got into some bad olives. I thought he'd die—he was in such misery. But nothing like the misery I saw tonight. Jesus was in torment of soul.

1 **Hananiah**

2 *(assuredly)*

3 Because of the soldiers.

4

5 **Erastus**

6 *(finally losing patience with Hananiah; angrily)*

7 Because this was the plan! Don't you understand? He gave Himself up
8 willingly. He knows what awaits Him—and He still did it.

9

10 **Hananiah**

11 How could He know?

12

13 **Erastus**

14 Because He's God!

15 *(cooling down; thoughtfully quiet)*

16 He's God.

17

18 ***Erastus turns away, with his back to the others. Hananiah isn't***
19 ***sure how to respond to this outburst. His immediate reaction is***
20 ***to burst into laughter over the absurdity of what Erastus has just***
21 ***said. But something holds that back. Maybe because from the***
22 ***beginning, he has known there was something different about***
23 ***Jesus; He is no ordinary man. But maybe, too, because there is a***
24 ***woman present; Hananiah feels the gardener has the upper hand***
25 ***in the argument on this emotional night, and he couldn't abide***
26 ***being made to look foolish before a woman. Hananiah decides his***
27 ***best defense is to keep a cool head—to remain analytical. He rises***
28 ***and moves opposite of Erastus.***

29

30 **Hananiah**

31 *(patiently, for argument's sake)*

32 All right. He's God. Why would God want to die?

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34 ***Erastus turns and glares at Hananiah as Shara does the same.***

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Erastus

(suspiciously)

Who said anything about dying?

Shara

(to Hananiah)

Your chief priest isn't going to kill anybody.

Hananiah

(sheepishly; caught knowing more than he had first admitted)

He'd like to.

(as he feels the silent accusations of Erastus and Shara)

Look, you have to admit, Jesus has come down pretty hard on the priests and scribes. He's been very public with His criticism.

Erastus

(dryly)

So they're going to kill Him.

Hananiah

(with barely veiled pride)

They've made their plans.

Erastus

(beginning quietly)

I'm not a religious man. The time of sacrifice comes and I find ways to keep busy here in the garden. I'd rather hope to meet God here than pay for His blessing at the temple.

(firmly)

And I tell you: He was here tonight. Jesus pulled Him down and wrestled with what He knew had to be. And they spoke with each other: Son to Father, man to God. And I heard enough to know that if He dies, it won't be because of any plans made by man. He'll die because His Father wants Him to.

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Shara

(to both men; contemptuously)

You Jews make me sick. Death surrounds you—and when it’s not nearby, you seek it out. Blood runs from your temple mount as if it were the lifeblood of the nation.

Hananiah

(contemptuously)

Don’t criticize what you don’t understand. God has ordered it.

Shara

Then your God has a blood lust—and I will never understand it.

Erastus

(to Hananiah)

Hananiah’s right: God has ordered it.

(to Shara)

And you’re right: blood does run from the temple.

Shara

And you serve this God?

Erastus

(simply)

I’m a gardener. I keep the trees and their fruit and I make the oil you use in your baking.

(pause)

We obey our God—even without understanding. That’s all we can do.

Shara

And you give Him what He demands.

1 **Hananiah**

2 He has always demanded a sacrifice.

3 *(matter-of-factly)*

4 Death is part of that.

6 **Shara**

7 So that's what the priests are doing in killing Jesus? Making a sacrifice?

9 **Hananiah**

10 The temple sacrifice is for the sins of the people.

11 *(uneasily)*

12 The priests are sacrificing Jesus for the purity of religion.

14 **Erastus**

15 *(to Hananiah; darkly)*

16 Tell her the truth.

17
18 **Hananiah bristles at Erastus' challenge. He's just about had**
19 **it with this backwoods gardener and refuses to give him his**
20 **pleasure. He stiffens, defiantly.**

22 **Erastus**

23 *(seeing that Hananiah will not reply; glaring back at Hananiah)*

24 Tell her it's not religion at all, but politics and wealth and power.

26 **Hananiah**

27 *(with sneering contempt)*

28 Look at this: a Syrian with flour in her ears and a ragamuffin gardener
29 who sleeps in the bushes. What gives either of you the right to criticize
30 the actions of our rulers? What can this rabbi mean to you?

32 **Erastus**

33 *(after pondering a moment)*

34 Whenever I move a tree or a bush, I first cut away some of the old root
35 system—giving the plant chance for a new start. I dig a round, deep

1 hole, removing all the soil. Then I put a little back—a small mound, a
2 seat for the plant. I carefully arrange the roots over the seat, press the
3 plant down. Then the rest of the soil goes back in.

4 (pause)

5 Tonight Jesus opened up a small cavity in me. He excavated—took out
6 some bad roots that were cluttering things up.

7 (with a sense of wonder)

8 Then He carefully—gently—set a piece of Himself down inside, and He
9 covered it back up.

10
11 **Shara**

12 Are the priests doing wrong by arresting Jesus?

13
14 **Hananiah**

15 (quickly)

16 Of course not. They're servants of God.

17
18 **Erastus**

19 The priests are serving God, all right—but not how they think. They
20 have it backwards. In their twisted heads they believe they're using
21 God to turn events to their advantage. But the Father of Jesus is really
22 using them to write the history of His Son. He will die—

23 (to Shara)

24 blood will run.

25 (deeply troubled)

26 A sacrifice will be made.

27
28 **Erastus drifts off, turning away from the others, deep in thought.**
29 **Hananiah stirs, preparing to leave. He is totally unaware of the**
30 **emotional states of the other two—who are both deep in thought**
31 **over these recent events and their possible impact on their**
32 **lives. The banker, on the other hand, believes that things have**
33 **been wrapped up tidily and is ready to move into a tomorrow**
34 **that, happily, will not include the uncomfortable threats of this**
35 **madman rabbi.**

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Hananiah

(with insensitive bluster)

In any case, it would seem that the Council is taking care of the situation. I'll regret not having the opportunity to speak my mind to this man, but, apparently, others are seeing to my reprisal. With luck, I'll regain my position at the temple and everything will be back where it belongs.

(smiling grimacingly to Erastus and Shara; sarcastically)

I'd like to say it's been a pleasure.

(to Shara; condescendingly)

Perhaps someday I'll buy some bread from you.

Shara

(smiling grimacingly right back)

Don't bank on it.

Hananiah pauses, considering a rejoinder, but (deciding this woman isn't worth the bother) chuckles dismissively and exits. Shara begins collecting her things then turns to Erastus.

Shara

Erastus?

Erastus turns toward Shara. His face is a mask of perplexed worry.

Erastus

(noticing that Hananiah is gone)

Where's Hananiah?

Shara

(wryly)

The banker had some accounts to settle.

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Erastus

(attempting to mask his disappointment)

Then you'll be going too.

Shara

(nodding; preparing to leave)

A baker gets up early.

(pause)

Doesn't a gardener?

Erastus

(with a sigh)

Always have before.

Shara

What'll be different about tomorrow?

Erastus

(taking time to move away; returning to his earlier thought process)

Many hundreds of years ago there was a man who became the father of our people. God promised him he would have a son, but year after year his wife remained barren—until one day, finally, he had his son—his only son. That boy became the pride of his heart, his future, his legacy. But one night God tapped the man on the shoulder and told him to take his son to a mountain top and sacrifice him as an offering. The man didn't understand why it was suddenly necessary to give up this thing for which he had waited so long. But he obeyed. The man and his son journeyed together to a cold and lonely place, and there the son himself built the fire and waited for the knife. And the man raised the knife, prepared to plunge it into the heart of the only son of his heart. And only then did God hold the man's hand and prevent him from sacrificing his only son.

(stopping to look at Shara; his face betraying his troubled heart)

It must be a terrible thing to sacrifice one's son.

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Shara

(simply, yet with great empathy)

Yes.

Erastus

(with sad resolve)

But I'm afraid this time there'll be no one to stop it. This time the son will die.

Lights medium-slow fade to black.

EPILOGUE

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3 *In the dark, the three characters take the same positions they did*
4 *in the Prologue. Once the characters are in place, lights up full*
5 *immediately.*

6
7 **Hananiah**

8 *(shrugging; no big deal)*

9 This will pass. These things must take place from time to time.

10
11 **Shara**

12 So much to know—but this is no time for learning.

13
14 **Hananiah**

15 Growing pains. They'll work themselves out.

16
17 **Erastus**

18 The fog's coming in.

19
20 **Hananiah**

21 Listen, He'll get a fair trial—and a fair execution.

22
23 **Shara**

24 Will someone else come along, or is He the one?

25
26 **Erastus**

27 It was all planned out.

28
29 **Hananiah**

30 *(as if lecturing)*

31 The important thing is that we retain the status quo.

32
33 **Shara**

34 How could they do this to Him? And how can His words come to pass
35 if He dies?

1 **Hananiah**

2 If He dies—

3 *(with a shrug)*

4 one less prophet.

5 *(menacingly)*

6 If He lives—one too many.

7

8 **Erastus**

9 I feel like an ancient sycamore that's just been uprooted by a bad
10 wind.

11

12 **Shara**

13 *(trying to convince herself)*

14 I'm just a baker. That's all. I bake bread. Why should this have
15 anything to do with me?

16

17 **Erastus**

18 What has happened in my garden?

19

20 **Hananiah**

21 *(annoyed)*

22 What has happened to the world?

23

24 **Shara**

25 *(introspectively)*

26 What has happened to me?

27

28 **Erastus**

29 What has happened?

30

31

32 **One beat, then lights slowly fade to black.**

33

34 ¹ "Gethsemane" is from the Aramaic gat semen, 'an oil press'.

35

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