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“At the Table”

by
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SYNOPSIS

This play is a collection of monologues and duets that depict the events of Holy Week from Palm Sunday to The Last Supper through the voices of the disciples and others who encountered Jesus that week. It is told as Jesus and his disciples gather in the upper room for the Passover feast.

CAST

Jesus
Joanna—a merchant
Abigail—a farmer's daughter
Martha
Shifra—wife of the owner of the upper room
Mary—mother of Jesus
Andrew
Matthew
John
Philip
James
Peter
Judas

*Non-speaking
Simon
Jude
Thaddeus
Bartholomew
James, son of Alphaeus
Thomas

SCENES

*These are also available as individual monologues at SkitGuys.com.

Hosanna: Andrew
Rage: Joanna
Faith: Abigail
Quiet: Martha
Honor: John and Matthew
Body: Shifra
Blood: James and Philip
Denial: Peter
Betrayal: Judas Iscariot
Hereafter: Mary, Mother of Jesus

PROPS

13 plates
13 goblets
2 loaves of unleavened bread
decanter of wine, palm branch
1-2 bags of coins (may use the same bag for Joanna and Judas)
bag of leg of lamb
basket of vegetables
including carrots
bowl and spoon
bowl and towel

SET AND STAGING

This is a simple scene that is easy to stage. Upstage center is a long table with 13 stools and 13 places set with plates and goblets. In the center of the table is a loaf of unleavened bread. Jesus and the 12 Disciples are seated around the table, engaged in the Last Supper. One by one, various disciples will stand up from the table and cross to downstage center to address the audience. Additionally, other characters will enter from offstage and cross to downstage center to deliver their monologues. Throughout the play, Jesus and the Disciples should silently act out eating, drinking, and conversation, or other elements of the Last Supper as described in the stage directions.

WHY

Why: Matthew 21-28:13, John 12:12-20:23, Mark: 11-16:14, Luke: Luke 19:45-24:49

TIME

Approximately 30 minutes

Andrew stands and crosses to center, speaking directly to the audience, holding a palm branch.

Andrew: *(joyful, excited to retell the events)* What a week it's been so far—and its only Thursday! But that's how things are when you're a disciple of Jesus—one day you're riding triumphantly through the streets of Jerusalem and the next you're quietly sitting in an upper room preparing for the Passover meal.

Looks back toward the table if it's there, then turns back to audience excitedly.

When I hear him speak, when I see the miracles he performs, I just know that the man I've dedicated my life to is the real deal. I mean, when we first started this whole thing—that day on the shore of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus called my brother Simon Peter and I to be fishers of men—I could never have guessed we would've traveled this far and reached this many people. *(remembering)* Back then, Peter and I were the first—the first disciples of Jesus, I guess you could say. But that day, as Simon Peter and I were casting our nets into the sea, Jesus showed us that our lives had a greater purpose. And it wasn't long before the others *(indicates disciples at the table, if present)* joined us too.

Of course, there have been others who became followers and friends of Jesus. But the twelve of us, Jesus's disciples, have been the ones there every day, doing whatever needs to be done so that the world can know that Jesus is the true Messiah and son of God.

He shakes his head, a small smirk on his lips.

If I'm being honest, when this first began—this journey we're on—I was content with that thought that in each town we traveled through, if we connected with even a few people—if we could convince even one *(holds up index finger)* that Jesus was here to save us, then we would've done a good day's work. But now...after what happened on Sunday, I know this is all so much bigger than I ever could have imagined! *(excitedly)* I wish you could've seen the excited crowds waving their palm branches in jubilation! For them, Jesus was a star in every sense of the word—luminous, radiant, a beacon of light in these troubled times. *(looks up or back at the table)* For me—for us, his disciples—he had always been our teacher. *(looks at audience)* But in this moment, as he rode on the back of that donkey, he was more than a teacher. He was a king! And the people of Jerusalem were ready and waiting for their king.

Raises the palm branch and starts to wave it.

They waved their palm branches and cried out, *(cries out loudly as he waves his palm branch)* "Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Lowers his palm branch, shaking his head in disbelief.

I'm telling you, when we heard that, we knew that we were finally reaching people on a much bigger scale than we had ever dreamed possible! *(waving his arm above his head across the sky)* I can just see it now—from Jericho to Cana to Damascus—the teachings of Jesus will be heard. *(growing more excited)* Everywhere we go people will be crying out, 'Hosanna!' They will be crying out for their king, Jesus, and we will be right there...by his side.

First Jerusalem and then—the rest of the world! *(looking straight at the audience)* After what I saw earlier this week when our Lord rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, I know one thing's for sure—Jesus is a star—the biggest star in the world.

Looks up or back at Jesus, then turns back to audience, resolute.

And just like a star way up high in the nighttime sky—nothing can stop us now!

Andrew returns to his seat at the table. Moments later, **Joanna** enters, carrying a bag, or perhaps a slab of meat or a mutton leg. **Shifra** enters from opposite direction, hands **Joanna** money, takes the bag/meat/mutton leg and exits. Then **Joanna** will turn to face the audience.

Joanna: *(counting the coins in her hand)* Seven...eight...nine. Looks like it's all there.

Takes a money pouch that's tied around her waist and puts the coins inside, then cinches the pouch and turns to the audience.

Selling livestock is a good business—or at least it can be. People always need a nice piece of goat for their stews or a leg of mutton if it's a special occasion. And when they come to the temple to worship, people want to offer sacrifices. If they don't have a spare sheep or goat at home, then their gonna need to buy one, right? *(shrugs her shoulders)* The way I see it, my husband and I are doing a public service.

Confidently, like a salesperson.

I mean, we're talking about convenience, here. All these people have to do is show up at the temple, and right there is my stall, ready to sell them the sacrificial animal of their dreams! And contrary to popular belief, you can't just show up with any old animal from the farm. The priests assess the animals and determine if they are fit for sacrifice. Well, every animal at my stall has been pre-screened by the priests for optimal sacrificial potential. *(shrugs her shoulders)* So you can hardly argue that these top-quality animals aren't worth a small upcharge. My

husband and I are simply taking a cut of the money—a cut we have earned for all the legwork we do to make sure that our customers are satisfied. (clarifying) Oh, right, and also so that God is satisfied. Because that's why we're doing this after all, isn't it? To glorify God?

We merchants get a bad rap, especially after that business with Jesus earlier this week. They want to make us out like we're just in it for the money. But we're not. We're just people trying to make a living, same as anyone else. And that's all we were doing the day Jesus came in and started turning over tables, scattering coins and driving out the livestock. (*shocked*) He was furious! I had heard of this man, this supposed Messiah. This man who was all about peace and love. And now here he was, standing not two feet away from my stall, yelling, "my house will be a house of prayer, but you have turned it into a den of robbers!" (*incredulous*) Robbers? Does taking my cut make me a robber? Does making a profit mean that I'm stealing? (*thinks for a moment*) Sure, we take a little extra when it gets closer to Passover. (*justifying*) But the money changers were charging an extra temple tax, so it really was only fair that we made a little extra too. (thinks again) And I know these people were just coming to worship their God— (*clarifying, adamantly*) a God I believe in too, just in case you were wondering.

(*thinks; beginning to slow down a little*) And while I haven't seen these miracles that people have said Jesus performs, I have heard the tales and I must admit, there's something about him...something powerful...something...holy about him.

She pauses to really reflect; she's just now beginning to understand a little more of who Jesus is. Be careful not to rush this but let her process through these feelings. Let her be in that moment again when she met Jesus.

That day, when he approached my table and looked me in the eye, it was as if he was looking into my soul. And what he found there...

Stops, thinks, suddenly sad, looks down at the ground, then looks up, concerned.

Did he see a wife who wants to help provide for her family or did he only see greed? (*becoming worried*) Did he see the love I have for my God or did he only see a woman profiting off the backs of people who only wanted to honor him? (*beat; upset*) Did he see who I am now or who I want to be?

Looking upward. Fully realizing...

No wonder he was so angry! We took God's own house and instead of honoring him, we allowed money to rule us—to be our false God—to be our savior. (*thinking*) And right there—right in front of us, was our true savior, Jesus. And we angered him. (*finally understanding*) I don't

blame him. Not one little bit. *(looks at audience)* I only hope he can forgive me.

Joanna exits. Moments later, Abigail enters carrying a basket of vegetables and crosses to center.

Abigail: *(to audience)* Farm life can be tough—long days spent out in the sun sowing seeds, tilling soil, harvesting. There are many jobs to be done, and when your father is a farmer, you know that you were born to do one thing—work the land.

(smiles) We're lucky in a lot of ways *(takes vegetable from basket)* food is never scarce—there's always plenty left over after we've sold our goods at market. And farming families are large—they need to be—so there's always company in the evenings when we finally get to rest after a hard day's work. Of course my brothers do most of the manual labor—the ploughing, tending to the livestock. My sisters and I help with the harvesting and bring the produce into town to sell to our customers, who are anxious for our carrots, potatoes and onions for their Passover stews. Most days are the same—wake up early, eat a breakfast of oats and milk, then out to the fields.

(excitedly) But a couple of days ago the most extraordinary thing happened! On the northern border of our farm is a single, solitary fig tree—a small little tree—nothing much to speak of, honestly. We didn't plant it—our farm doesn't have orchards. The tree has just always been there and my sisters and I have been known to enjoy the occasional fig when we take a break from working the north fields. But on this day, as I was harvesting these carrots *(takes a carrot from her basket)* the fig tree was empty—it wasn't yet fig season. *(kneels down, reenacting)* So there I was, kneeling down in the dirt, the apron of my dress dark and dirty, my hands rough and raw, my nails black from digging in the soil, when suddenly I saw a group of men. There were thirteen in total, but they were clearly following one—the man I'd heard spoken of in hushed tones in the market—this man they said can perform miracles and who can even walk on water!

(sits up) Well for me, a farm girl whose routine never changes—wake up, breakfast, fields—the approach of this supposed Messiah welcome sight. You can imagine my surprise when, instead of continuing down the road, they stopped at our fig tree! *(stands)* I dared not approach them—my father wouldn't like that—but I picked up my basket and moved to a patch of carrots closer to the tree. This man, this... Jesus was hungry, so his followers started rifling through the branches of the tree, looking for fruit. Well, like I said, it wasn't fig season, so they weren't able to find any. When they informed Jesus that the tree was bare, Jesus said, "May you never bare fruit again!"

Now I've never known a man who was successful in getting a plant to follow his commands. *(chuckles)* If that were the case, my father would be the most successful farmer in the land.

Turning serious, reverent.

But when this Jesus—this man who supposedly could perform miracles—told the tree that it would never bare fruit again, it immediately withered, right before our eyes! *(excitedly)* This tree that moments ago had been lush and full of green leaves was now nothing more than a dry trunk and some rotting branches. Well, I wasn't the only one who was astonished. His own disciples asked him, "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" to which Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to the mountain, 'Go throw yourself into the sea' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

Well, right then and there I dropped my mattock in the dirt and folded my hands in prayer. *(drops to her knees and folds her hands in prayer)* I didn't ask him for anything. I only thanked God for the gift of this man... Jesus... a man who could perform miracles. A man who, on that day—a day that started out like any other... wake up, breakfast, fields—taught me what the power of faith could do.

Abigail exits. Moments later Martha enters and crosses to center. When Martha starts to speak, Jesus and the Disciples bow their hands in prayer.

Martha: *(uses spoon to stir contents of bowl, she is mildly stressed)* So much to do. So much to do! Passover is tonight and I've been so busy hosting Jesus and the Twelve that I am terribly behind with my preparations for our own supper. And all I really want is a little bit of quiet and some rest.

Starts stirring more aggressively with each of the following sentences.

I wouldn't be *quite* so behind if I had a little help! But when Jesus is here, my sister Mary is completely useless. It's the same now as it was the last time he was here. I know he told me that Mary's actions—choosing to sit at his feet, listening to his words—is the most important thing anyone can do. And deep down I know this is true, but *someone* has to prepare the meals and do the washing and cleaning! It's not as if Lazurus can help me. Why, only a short time ago he was completely and utterly dead! I'm so thankful Jesus brought him back to us and I know after his ordeal, Lazurus needs his rest.

So I guess it's just me... *(dramatically, put upon)* again. *(slows her stirring)* Don't get me wrong, I'm glad to have Jesus in my home. I would do anything I could to help him further his mission to bring the word of

God to the people, but I'm not like Mary. She's the one out there, waving palm branches in the streets of Jerusalem, trekking up to the Mount of Olives to hear him speak while I stay at home (*looks over her shoulder, offstage, as if looking back at her home*) making sure that everyone else is taken care of.

Sighs and stops stirring.

The truth is, sometimes I wish I could be more like her. Her sense of freedom, her willingness to abandon all else to follow the Messiah. But I am who I am. I know Jesus sees that and knows what is in my heart.

Resumes stirring and turns to look offstage, reflecting, or at Jesus, if part of "At the Table"

Yesterday he was so quiet. While his disciples ate and drank and talked and laughed, I saw him tucked away in the corner, seemingly lost in thought. He sat alone, sometimes praying...sometimes watching the others...sometimes with a small smile playing at the ends of his mouth...sometimes looking so sad it brought tears to my eyes.

Turning back to audience.

I wonder what made him so quiet...so reflective...so sad? (*stops stirring and thinks*) Perhaps he was just tired after the busy events of the week—his triumphant ride into Jerusalem, his angry display at the temple, his long sermon at the Mount of Olives. I certainly could understand needing a little peace and quiet after all that work.

Starts stirring as she looks up, thinking.

Or perhaps it was something more...something not of this world...something we could never understand. (*looks down into her bowl*) If only there was a special meal or treat I could whip up for him that would take the sadness out of his eyes.

Laughs ruefully and starts to stir.

There I go again, trying to show my love and devotion through my cooking, no matter how many times Jesus has tried to tell me what he wants from me. (*stops stir, reflecting*) And now I wish I hadn't worried so much about the cooking, the wash or the cleaning. (*looks at the audience*) I can see now that there's plenty of time for chores. But Jesus—who knows how much time we have to learn all he has to teach us.

**Looks at Jesus if part of "At the Table".*

Maybe Mary was right to give up everything for him after all.

Martha exits, reflecting while she stirs. Jesus stands, picks up bowl and towel from the floor and crosses to Peter and takes Peter's foot in his hands.

Peter: Lord, are you going to wash my feet?

Jesus: You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

Peter: *(pulling his foot back)* No! You shall never wash my feet.

Jesus: *(patiently)* Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

Peter: *(giving Jesus his foot and holds out his hands)* Then Lord, not just my feet my hands and my head as well. *(bows his head)*

Jesus washes Peter's feet then stands.

Jesus: Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

Matthew and John enter and cross to center.

John: I was not expecting that.

Matthew: I know. Why would he do a thing like that?

John: He's the Messiah—he can do whatever he wants.

Matthew: I know he *can* do it. I just don't know why he *would*. Even Peter was startled.

John: I don't think anyone of us knew how to react when we saw our teacher...our Messiah, kneeling at our feet.

Matthew: When we should've been the one kneeling at his.

John: Right. But that's Jesus for you—always doing the unexpected.

Matthew: But why now? Why today?

John: I don't know. Maybe because it's Passover?

Matthew: We've celebrated Passover with him before and he's never washed our feet.

John: Yes, but something about this Passover seems different.

Matthew: What do you mean?

John: It seems as if everything he does and says lately is to prepare us for a time when he won't be with us anymore.

Matthew: I know. He's also been talking a lot about the way we should treat one another when he's gone. Truthfully, it's starting to get a little depressing.

John: *(excitedly)* Say that again!

Matthew: *(confused, slowly, unsure)* It's getting...depressing?

John: No...the other part.

Matthew: *(thinking, unsure)* He's been talking about the way we should treat one another?

John: Yes! That's it I get it now.

Matthew: You do?

John: That's why he washes our feet, isn't it? *(laughs, ruefully)* I don't know why I didn't see it before!

Matthew: Are you planning on sharing this new-found realization?

John: Don't you see? Everything Jesus says and does is a lesson.

Matthew: That's true. He really does love a good parable.

John: This time the lesson wasn't in the form of a story. This time, Jesus taught us a lesson with his own actions. You see, just as Jesus humbled himself at our feet—his friends and followers—taking our tired and dirty feet into his own hands and washing them clean, so he wants us to do the same for others in his name.

Matthew: He wants us to go around washing feet?

John: No... *(closes his eyes and shakes his head, trying to get his point across)* I mean yes, if need be... *(closes his eyes and shakes his head again)* I mean, no! You're missing my point.

Matthew: *(chuckling)* Don't worry, I know what you mean.

John: *(crossing his arms and raising his eyebrows, not believing him)* You do?

Matthew: By washing our feet, Jesus wanted us to know that we must humble ourselves in service of others.

John: Go on.

Matthew: (*thinking and realizing*) I know that Jesus wants our love and attention, and as his disciples, we spend each day giving him all that we have. But I can see now that he doesn't want all of our love for himself. He wants us to spread that love throughout the land by giving of ourselves to others.

John: (*surprised*) Wow! I think you've got it.

Matthew: And in that way, more than anything else, we truly honor him.

John: (*with a smirk*) Okay, now you're just showing off.

Matthew: (*shrugs his shoulders*) I just feel like I understand Jesus a little better now.

John: You're welcome.

Matthew: (*ignoring him, suddenly having an idea*) And I feel like, if one of us really understands Jesus, like understands him better than anyone else—

John: (*interrupting him*) You did hear me say that Jesus wanted us to *humble* ourselves, right?

Matthew: (*ignoring him*) Then maybe one of us should start writing some of this down—these lessons Jesus is teaching us.

John: That's not a bad idea. Maybe *you* should.

Matthew: (*smiling*) Maybe I will. (*outstretches his arms and starts to walk toward John*) Thanks for all your help, buddy.

John: What are you doing?

Matthew: I'm giving you a hug.

John: (*holds up his hands*) We're good. You don't have to.

Matthew: Are you sure?

John: I'm sure. (*starts walking offstage; Matthew follows*) What's gotten into you today, anyway? You're not normally much of a "hugger".

Matthew: What can I say? (*smirks*) I'm just trying to spread the love.

Matthew and John laugh and cross back to sit at the table as Shifra enters, carrying a loaf of bread. Jesus washes their feet and then stands behind his place at the table as Shifra recites her monologue.

Shifra: *(looking down at the bread)* A simple loaf of bread. The cornerstone of any good meal—something to help fill our stomachs when meat is scarce or the harvest is not as plentiful as we had hoped. Something to sop up those last few drops of mutton stew or to drizzle honey over if you are fortunate enough to have some. *(holding up the loaf and looking it over)* It's made of just a few ingredients—flour, water and salt—then cooked over a hot fire. Simple ingredients put together to make a humble loaf of bread for Passover. Families all over Jerusalem are celebrating Passover today, which is what brought Jesus and his Disciples to my doorstep.

Looks back at the table or offstage.

When two of his men came by earlier today to inquire about our upper room, my husband and I were all too happy to offer it to them. We weren't using it and it was already furnished—the perfect place for a group that size to celebrate Passover. I had just begun preparing the meal, so it was no trouble for me to prepare extra for these men and their teacher—a teacher I had already heard many people speaking about, and...if I'm being perfectly honest *(smirks)*, was more than a little curious to meet. *(leaning into audience, as if letting them in on her innermost thoughts)* A man who can turn water into wine...who could heal the sick with only his touch! *(looks around quickly, then back at the audience, shocked)* I heard that in Bethany he raised a man from the dead! Who wouldn't want to meet the man who could perform such miracles?

Looks back at table or offstage.

When these men arrived that evening, Jesus seemed pleased with the accommodations. He brought with him the two men who had come earlier and ten more besides. *(chuckles)* I don't think I've ever had so many people in this house before. At first I was worried I hadn't made enough food to feed such a large group, but Jesus assured me it was plenty.

Smiles, looking back at table or offstage.

Such a kind man—you can see it in his eyes—the peace...the love. It warms you inside just to be near him. *(darkening slightly)* But there was something else there too, something I couldn't quite make out. I guess he had the look of a man carrying a great burden, *(thinks)* only...I can't imagine what a man who can perform such miracles could possibly be burdened by.

She looks at the table. Jesus picks up the bread, holds it up, closes his eyes in prayer then brings it down and breaks it in half.

Jesus: This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

Jesus passes the bread to Disciples on either side of him, who each take a piece and pass the bread. Shifra turns back to audience, surprise and a little bit of confusion on her face.

His body. (looks down at the bread in her hands) He called the loaf of bread I made his body. (looks back at the table) And when he said that, the room was as silent as a tomb—no one dared even to breath, so focused was everyone on this man, this...Messiah. (breaks her loaf in half as she says the next line) He broke the bread and passed it to his Disciples saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." (looks back at table or offstage) In remembrance—what a funny thing to say when clearly these men will follow Jesus to the ends of the earth. (looks down at bread) But for those of us who must remain at home, who can't follow Jesus wherever he goes next, he has given us a way to remember him—a man who speaks of peace and love and God's plan for us all. A man who performs miracles and who's warmth I hope to keep in my heart long after he's gone.

Looks down at bread.

Flour, water, salt...simple ingredients, put together to make a humble loaf of bread, yet somehow, in Jesus' hands it becomes so much more.

Shifra prays over the loaf, breaks off a piece, looks back at the table or offstage, eats the bread, smiles and exits. Jesus holds up the goblet, blesses it, then drinks from it.

Jesus: *(holding up the goblet)* Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Jesus passes the goblet and each Disciple drinks from it. Once it gets to Philip, he and James stand and cross to center, subdued.

James: *(looking into the goblet)* His blood.

Philip holds out the cup to James, who takes it.

Philip: *(looking into goblet)* Poured out for us for the forgiveness of our sins.

James: *(solemnly)* And here I thought we were just coming together to celebrate Passover.

Philip: (*nodding in agreement*) Like so many other times before.

James: But none have felt quite so...solemn.

Philip: So ominous.

James: (*looking at the goblet*) What do you think he meant by that, exactly...comparing the wine to his blood?

Philip: Perhaps it's another parable...like the one he told the other day in the temple.

James: The one about the two sons...the one that says he won't work and does and the other who says he will work and doesn't?

Philip: Yes. Maybe this is just another one of his teachings.

James: (*unconvinced*) I don't know about that. When Jesus uses stories to teach us, they aren't about him...they aren't personal. (*looks at the goblet*) What could be more personal than your own blood?

Philip: True.

James: He's seemed preoccupied lately...talking of death and destruction and his second coming.

Philip: He talked of that quite a bit on the Mount of Olives the other day.

James: Right. (*holds up the goblet*) Perhaps this is just a continuation of his sermon that day.

Philip: His blood.

James: Poured out for us for the forgiveness of our sins.

Philip: (*takes the goblet*) Pouring out his blood...surely he's talking about his own death?

James: Perhaps.

Philip: But why now? Why is he suddenly so focused on a time when he won't be here anymore?

James: He's talked about his death many times before.

Philip: Right—to prepare us and to help us understand God's plan...but not like this.

James: Do you think something's changed? I thought things were going so well.

Philip: I did too. Did you see how many people lined the streets when we arrived in Jerusalem? There must've been hundreds!

James: So how did we get here?

Philip: *(looks back at table or offstage)* Where? At this table?

James: Yes! Here we are, sitting around, talking about remembering Jesus by eating bread and drinking wine when just days ago he was greeted by the crowd as if he were a king! *(starting to get upset)* What does Jesus know that he isn't telling us?

Philip: Jesus is all knowing.

James: I just meant that suddenly things seem a lot more...complicated.

Philip: Complicated...how?

James: *(upset)* Complicated like this! *(holds up the goblet)* Yesterday this was a cup of wine and now it's the blood of our savior.

Philip: That's true.

James: *(growing more upset)* And bread is no longer bread—it's the body of my friend. And I'm supposed to eat it in remembrance of him?

Philip: *(calmly)* That's what he's asked of us.

James: And then he tells us that he will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now until the day he drinks with us in his Father's kingdom.

Philip: I heard him say that as well.

James: *(really upset now)* So I ask you, how can it get more complicated than that?

Philip: *(after a pause)* I guess all I can say is Jesus told us what he felt was important...what we needed to know up until now. We have to trust him.

James: Yes, I know. He's told us that he will suffer...that he will be arrested...that he will... *(pauses, nearly unable to say the words, looking down)* die.

Philip: That's right. At some point Jesus will die. But not now...not tonight. Tonight, we gather around the table to honor what was...and what will still be. We listen to the teachings of our Lord, and we hold his words in our hearts. *(holds up the goblet)* And someday in the future...we will gather again, only without our Rabbi.

James: Surely there's still time... *(looking back at the table or offstage)* so much more time?

Philip: I don't know. Only God knows...and his son.

James: *(looking at the goblet)* And when he's gone we'll do as he taught us...we'll remember him when we eat our bread and drink our wine.

Philip: His body and his blood.

James: Poured out for us for the forgiveness of our sins.

They look down at the goblet then return to their seats at the table. Jesus addresses the Disciples.

Jesus: This very night you will all fall away on account of me.

Peter: *(vehemently, standing.)* Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.

Jesus: *(crossing to Peter and putting a hand on his shoulder)* Truly I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.

Peter: *(upset)* Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you!

Jesus smiles sadly at Peter and returns to his seat as all Disciples ad lib their agreement, such as "Nor will I!" or "Never!" or "We stand with you, Jesus!": During the commotion, Peter looks at Jesus then crosses to center. Jesus sits and commotion stops as Peter speaks directly to the audience.

Peter stands and crosses to center, speaking directly to the audience.

Peter: *(distracted)* How could Jesus say such a thing? How could he think I would deny him? Not only deny him, but that I would do so *(putting up fingers as he counts)* not one...not two...but *three* times! *(shakes his head, as though the thought is inconceivable)* Three times! This man who I believe in my heart to be the Messiah? This man who I believe to be the Messiah, brought here to save us all? I couldn't deny him even one time, let alone three.

Starts to pace, starting to grow angry.

I have done everything he asked, I have put all of my faith in him. Couldn't he have just a little faith in me in return? Haven't I dropped everything to follow him? My job as a fisherman has been cast aside. My family makes do with my absence for days and weeks at a time. Haven't I proven that there is nothing I value more in this world than him? *(crying)*

out) Can't he see that I have nothing more to give than my own life? And for him I would give that in an instant!

Falls down to the ground, exhausted from his anger, now kneeling. He breathes hard for a moment—catching his breath and regaining his composure. After a moment, he looks upward, pleadingly, his hands folded in prayer.

God, please help me show your Son that I am a man of my word...a man he can count on to stay by his side, through thick and thin—to fight anyone who would try to harm him, to go to prison trying to defend him, to die if I must!

Looks down, thinking, then looks up.

Or maybe he's wrong. Maybe this is all just a warning of what could be...not what will be. *(shakes his head)* But Jesus is never wrong...it's not possible. *(looks at the table)* If he's never wrong then that must mean... *(stops, realizing, quietly)* but no—I couldn't...I wouldn't!

Tearfully, utterly saddened, turns to look at Jesus.

Or will I? *(turns away from Jesus, thinking)* Could I? *(thinking, turns to audience)* Would I? If Jesus is right *(looks back at the table)* ...if before the rooster crows I do indeed deny him three times then... *(falters, shaking his head)* I don't know...*(stops, then falters again, this time louder, shaking his head a little harder)* I don't know...*(stops, faltering again, then looks directly at the audience, solemnly)* I don't know myself at all.

Peter returns to his seat at the table. Jesus stands.

Jesus: Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.

Disciples ad lib, saying things like "No!" "Never!" or "Who is it?" or "Not I, Lord!" Judas Iscariot slinks down in his seat as Jesus turns to him.

Jesus: What you are about to do, do quickly.

Judas Iscariot stands and crosses to center, looking over his shoulder at the table.

Judas: What choice do I have? Things have gotten so out of control. When we started this whole thing, it was so much simpler, but now... *(trails off, remembering)* I've spent the last three years following this man...this Messiah. I've given up everything I knew before—given my life to him, and for what? *(looks around)* To be hiding in some upper room like a bunch of criminals? *(resolute)* I'm no criminal! I've committed no crime! *(shakes his head)* This isn't what I signed up for.

Walking further away from table or pacing.

When I first heard about Jesus...a man who taught the word of God as if he knew it firsthand...a man who could perform miracles...I knew I had stumbled upon greatness. *(becomes increasingly more excited over the next few lines)* I was enchanted by this man whose mere presence could draw a crowd of hundreds of people, whose words could command an army of thousands! The power he had was astounding. The Messiah...a savior sent to us to conquer those who try to keep us down!

Resentfully.

But this whole time the twelve of us have been right there by his side, listening to his teachings, doing his bidding, and for what? The promise of God's glory someday? Well, what about right now? This is our time! *(less excited)* And yet, here we are...the vultures are circling. The Pharisees have tired of our antics and want us gone—want Him gone. They see our numbers growing. They feel their power waning.

Everyone's talking about Jesus. If only he could see how much power he has—how much we all could have—he could be the king his people want him to be! *(darkening)* But no...he doesn't want that. And now the Pharisees have promised money if I turn him in...thirty pieces of silver. We could do so much good with that money! Help the sick, give it to the poor. Isn't that what he's always wanted from us anyway? To help those around us who are in need?

Besides, what's the worst that could happen—they'll arrest him. So what? He hasn't committed any crime! They can't possibly hold him for very long. They'll keep him two, maybe three days tops. They'll make their point and then they'll let him go. They just want some of the hysteria surrounding Jesus to calm down.

Once they release him, we can move on—go somewhere else a little quieter...a little less volatile—and pick up where we left off, only then we'll have a little more money in our pockets...we can do a little more good.

Unsure.

So why do I suddenly feel so bad...so treacherous...so...unfaithful? If there was any other way...anything else I could do to get things back on track, I would do it in an instant! But there isn't. Things have gotten too out of control. This is what we've come to.

Looks back at Jesus.

Does he know what I'm about to do? He tells me to do it quickly, so he must.

Looks at audience, sadly.

I hope he knows I had no other choice.

Judas Iscariot runs offstage in the opposite direction. Lights dim on all but Jesus and a spotlight upstage center. Jesus looks weary, as his Disciples carry on in their merriment, unaware of what's to come. Mary, Mother of Jesus, slowly and solemnly and crosses to center.

Mary: *(to audience)* Passover. *(looks at table or offstage)* A day of quiet reflection. *(looks at audience)* A day to look to the past, to our ancestors and all they had to go through to be delivered from slavery. A day to praise God for the miracles he performed through Moses so that his people could one day be free. All over the land, Jewish men, women and children are eating unleavened bread, saying their prayers and telling the story of Moses, the burning bush, the plagues, most notably the tenth and final plague which is said to have brought the angel of death to kill the first-born child of any home whose door was not marked with lamb's blood.

Looking at Jesus.

The first-born child. *(smiles and looks at audience)* There's nothing quite like that moment when you become a mother, and nothing quite like that child that made you one. *(chuckles, to herself)* Even if you had been around children all your life, even if you've asked all the questions, prepared in every way you know how, there is no escaping that feeling that you don't know what you're doing. And you're so afraid of everything! *(laughs)* Will they bump their heads when they start to crawl? Fall down and hurt their knee when they take their first steps? Be accepted by other kids their own age? Be frightened when they venture out on their own for the first time? With your first born everything is new—not just to the child, but also to his mother.

The first tear wiped from his cheek...the first lullaby sung before bedtime...the first time strolling hand in hand along the bank of the river...the first time *(pauses, holding out her hand to Jesus or offstage)* letting go. *(drops her hand)*

I think about those women—our ancestors—the ones who, frightened, slaughtered a lamb and wiped its blood across their doorways, praying to God to spare their child. I'm grateful every day that God blessed me with my son—his son—Jesus. But I'd be lying if I said that some days I wasn't terrified—terrified that one day the angel of death will come for my son too. Maybe every mother feels that way, I don't know. *(chuckles)*

ruefully) Oh, the plight of motherhood! To feel such love and such fear every morning that you wake. To know you must let them fly free, but also wanting to protect them—every minute of every day. And while Jewish mothers all over the land are telling the Passover story and tales of the past, I'm looking toward the future and wondering...what does the future hold for my first born?

He's done such great work—healing the sick, helping the poor, bringing the word of God to so many. The numbers grow each day. As his mother, I am so proud, but also, as his mother, I am constantly keeping lookout for the unseen dangers, the pitfalls, the dark spirits lurking in the shadows. And I fear that there is danger lurking for my son right around the corner. A mother knows. A mother can feel it.

The name Jesus is spoken by so many—his followers are so numerous that he is bound to be making enemies. Those in power can't be happy when their people call Jesus their king. And there's something else...something *(shakes her head)* I don't know *(pauses, thinking)* it just feels like suddenly things are barreling forward at such a speed none of us could possibly stop it. *(sadly)* His own mother can't stop it.

Pauses, looks at Jesus or offstage.

All I can do is wonder...wonder about the hereafter...what comes next.

Tonight, Jesus shares his Passover meal with friends—safe and sound in the upper room of a home in Jerusalem. But what comes after that last piece of unleavened bread is eaten, that last sip of wine is gone? What will happen to my beloved son once darkness falls? *(anxiously)*

Something is coming...as his mother I can feel it.

Looks upward.

All I can do now is put my faith in his Father.

Mary exits. Light remains on Jesus. If a cross is present, perhaps the spotlight shifts to the cross—momentarily both Jesus and the cross are lit, then the light on Jesus dims, leaving only the light on the cross. Finally, that light too, dims. End of play.