

“Roman Soldier at the Tomb”

by
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- What** This monologue looks at the resurrection of Jesus through the eyes of one of the Roman soldiers who participated in his beating and crucifixion and was ultimately placed as a guard at His tomb.
- Themes: Easter, Crucifixion, Tomb, Faith, Salvation, Divinity of Christ, Suffering, Angels, Resurrection, Monologue
- Who** 1 male, 30-50
- When** Easter morning, just after the resurrection of Christ
- Costumes and Props** Full Roman soldier garb. If budget allows, Roman armor and a sword should be included. If this is not an option, a simple, short tunic, leggings and sandals can be worn. The tomb may be constructed or inferred, depending on time and budget.
- *Check with your local theatre for costume rentals.
- Why** Isaiah 52:14, Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 28: 1-8, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:2-7, John 19: 1-3
- How** Much of the scenery in this piece may be inferred, so careful attention should be made by the actor to help the audience accurately visualize the tomb and other surroundings.
- The most challenging parts of this piece revolve around internalizing the struggle of this guard at experiencing this scene for the very first time. From the recollection of Christ’s beating and crucifixion to the reality of the resurrection as it must have played out, the more the actor can visualize the actual events, the more impactful it will be for the audience.
- Time** Approximately 5-7 minutes

In the dark a light appears. It shines out at the audience like a floodlight. It slowly builds in intensity, almost to the point of being overwhelming. And yet, it is apparent that it emanates from one place. After a moment, it seems to 'move' and then slowly fade out...

*Lights up on lone, **Roman Soldier** asleep next to a tomb. There is a giant round stone in a man-made track that is pushed all the way to one side, revealing the open tomb door. The **Soldier** is sleeping in a far-from-comfortable position. His torso is twisted, as if he fell there in a heap. After a moment, the **Soldier** awakens in a jolt, as if slapped by an unseen hand. He sits bolt upright. He rubs his eyes and takes a moment to orient himself. The truth of where he is and what has happened begins to register on his face as he looks around and sees the empty tomb.*

Soldier: No, no, no...this can't...

Rushes to doorway of tomb and looks in...turns facing out and sits...staring off into the distance.

How did I...

He suddenly remembers he was not alone last he knew; he jumps up and looks off in the distance, first one way, then another, and yells...

TIBERIUS!! QUINTAS!!

His calls become more and more desperate, almost pleading.

Artorius...

He turns back to look at the doorway of the tomb...his shoulders fall...he turns and crosses to sit at the ledge in front of the doorway in defeat...

That's it, then...that's the end. My career as a soldier...my freedom...my LIFE...over... *(he looks around)* I cannot believe! *(He rises and leans on jamb of doorway)* We were JUST here! That door was shut. It was SEALED! Artorius and I were making fun of Quintas, who was snoring. Tiberius was watching the East entrance...and then... *(he grasps his head as if trying to remember)*. I will be court-marshalled...I will be beaten...crucified... *(he looks back into doorway of empty tomb)* which is more than a little ironic...

And where did the others go? No doubt a lame attempt to flee their fates. The cowards....

He turns and moves to stone...begins running his hands over it...feeling its roughness...almost to make sure it's still real.

But how could, who could have MOVED THIS STONE???? It must weigh, what? A thousand libra? Two thousand libra?? (*He surveys the scene, shaking his head in disbelief*) I can't have fallen asleep. You never fall asleep. Every soldier knows that. And what's more, we all must have. Otherwise, the others wouldn't have gone...if only I could... (*rubs his head, and then it starts to come back to him...*)

I dreamed...I dreamed there was a... (*looks around to top of tomb*) there was a bright light...a...a flash! And a man...no...a giant man...was sitting...right there! He must have been, at least 8 cubits. He had a big silly grin on his face...and he sat with his legs crossed as though playing a game with a child...and...what did he say? (*Wincing...as if trying to remember...and then, a revelation*) "He is not here". He looked at us, like we were a bunch of schoolboys, and said "He is not here. He is risen." And the next thing I know, I'm waking up to the stone rolled away, the rest of the sentry fled, and the body...gone...

It can't have been a dream. (*Shakes head*) I mean, how else does one explain this? There is no way, even five strong men could have snuck past all of us, moved a stone this size, and stolen away a body without us hearing. And the chances of all four of us falling asleep? No way...

But that would mean... (*slowly loses himself in reverie...then, shaking his head, with a sarcastic half-grin...*) I can just see it now. Me, standing before the Prefect.

"No sir! We, none of us fell asleep! There was a bright light...the seal...it just...melted before our eyes! The ropes burst, and then the stone...blew off the front of the tomb like a leaf! The LIGHT...it was as if the sun was rising from inside the tomb! And then a giant, glowing man-thing told us this Yeshua has risen from the dead..."

Yes...I'm sure they would all smile and nod...even have a good laugh...right up until the moment they threw me off a cliff...

But, what else can I do? Where do I go? (*He thinks for a moment...an idea!*) The Sanhedrin! I'll go to the Sanhedrin. I'll tell them what happened. They were the ones who wanted us stationed here to guard the tomb to begin with. Perhaps they can protect me. Or maybe help me come up with...something that can at least be...explained... (*he looks around*) instead of this...this absurdly unbelievable...

He looked at me... (*staring off into space, as if recalling a moment*)

We were beating him. Pilate's orders. To satisfy the Sanhedrin by teaching him a lesson, humiliating him in front of his followers, causing him a great deal of pain. Artorius had just scourged him...almost 40

lashes... He looked like a half-butchered carcass... We propped him up, in the middle of the square. He could hardly stand... Quintas had a section of acanthus thorns he had fashioned into a makeshift crown. He handed it to me, along with a club... grinned... and said...

"He wants to be a King. Let's have his coronation."

He just stood there as I approached him, swaying like a reed in the wind... looking at me... I put the wreath on his head... He just looked at me so intently... like... like he knew me... through all the blood and the swelling and bruises.

His eyes... it was as if he was extending mercy to me. I didn't want him looking at me like that... I didn't like that at all. I hit him... hit him hard... again... and again... and again... trying to get that look in his eyes out of my head.

He went down. Everyone was laughing. Everyone but me... His eyes haunted me...

Suddenly starts, as if shaken awake

I have to get out of here. I have to... I have to tell someone... tell them... what? The truth?! WHAT IS THAT?! The Prefect will never believe me. I'll be beaten. I'll be crucified...

What do I do...? (Looks out, questioning) Where do I go now...?

I can't get that look in his eyes out of my head...

Lights fade.