

Between Death and Life

By Bill Yowell

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BETWEEN DEATH & LIFE

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DEDICATION

*For Chloe, Caleb, and Brenna.
The Playwright, Bill Yowell*

THE STORY

Here is an excellent collection of six short dramatic scenes and monologues in which an agent of the devil visits Biblical characters at their most vulnerable moments, right after the crucifixion. The Samaritan woman, Peter, John, a centurion and others, the agent preys on their weaknesses - their shame, their fear, their doubt. But faith wins out each and every time. Let these scenes inspire your congregation this Easter. Easy to rehearse.

SAMARITAN WOMAN: Woman and Agent.

THE POWER OF JESUS: Peter. Jesus and Agent are optional.

FAITH OF A CHILD: John, Mary, and Agent.

THE TOUCH: Four women.

THE TOUCH: (*As a monologue*) One woman.

OPENED EYES: One man.

THE CENTURION: One man.

SAMARITAN WOMAN

(AT RISE: WOMAN enters carrying jugs to hold water. She stops and begins working at a well. She picks up a cup, which is laying in front of her. She dips it into one of her jugs. She takes a sip, then fondly looks at the cup. We hear a VOICE offstage. It is that of JESUS.)

JESUS: *(Offstage.)* Will you give me a drink?

WOMAN: *(Tenderly remembering.)* You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?

JESUS: *(Offstage.)* If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water. Everyone who drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

(The Devil's AGENT, a woman, enters and watches.)

WOMAN: *(To SELF.)* Even though they have crucified You, I still believe in You.

AGENT: *(Amused, SHE moves toward the WOMAN.)* Even though He's been dead for two days?

WOMAN: *(Rising.)* You startled me.

AGENT: I saw you heading toward the well and wanted to see if it was you. Are you not a Samaritan woman?

WOMAN: Yes.

AGENT: The one who proclaimed the arrival of the Messiah?

WOMAN: *(Quietly.)* Yes.

AGENT: *(Looking forward to humiliating the WOMAN.)* What good fortune that I should meet you. Your reputation is well-known. You are ... shall we say ... a very unique woman.

WOMAN: Where are you from? Who are you?

AGENT: Let's not talk about me. Let's talk of you. You met Jesus?

WOMAN: *(Pausing.)* Yes.

AGENT: Tell me about Him.

WOMAN: *(Still quietly.)* No. I would rather not. Good day. *(Begins to exit.)*

AGENT: *(Childlike.)* Please. I want to know. *(The WOMAN holds for a moment.)*

WOMAN: No. I must go.

AGENT: *(Reasoning aloud.)* Perhaps you realize He's not the Messiah. I can understand you not wanting to talk about Him.

WOMAN: *(Compassionately and moving to the AGENT.)* He is the Messiah. *(Decides to tell.)* I was at a well ... He came, *(Remembering and cherishing the moment.)* alone. He asked for a drink. *(Slowly reaching out as if giving Jesus the cup.)* He began to tell me things of my past ... things that no stranger could know. You see, my life was not ... a life to be proud of. *(Total realization.)* He knew that ... but that didn't ... that doesn't

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matter to Him. He still came to me. I knew who He was ... *(Dropping to knees.)* I fell to my knees. He touched my hand and said, "I who speak to you am He." He is Messiah.

AGENT: *(Clapping slowly.)* That was lovely. Touching. He told you of your past?

WOMAN: *(Still remembering.)* Yes. How many husbands I've had.

AGENT: *(Building anger.)* Five, isn't it?

WOMAN: *(Defensive.)* Yes.

AGENT: And were you not living with a man at that time, too? Many know of your past.

Do you honestly believe that he was the Christ?

WOMAN: *(Pleading.)* I know He was the Christ.

AGENT: *(Over the kneeling WOMAN.)* The Christ would appear to you?

WOMAN: *(Confused.)* Why not?

AGENT: *(Exploding.)* Look at yourself! Think of your life ... your past. *(Enraged.)* Do you think the Messiah would come to earth and find ... you? A woman who had five husbands and was living with a man. *(Sarcastically sympathetic.)* You've had a difficult time with men, haven't you? *(Calmly.)* Some have called you a piece of filth ... I think you're simply confused. You need to reconsider who this man really was. Certainly not the Christ. Would the Christ come to earth for a sinner? *(AGENT exits.)*

WOMAN: *(Crying.)* When He touched my hand I knew. I know.

JESUS: *(Offstage.)* I who speak to you am He.

THE END

THE POWER OF JESUS

(In this scene, PETER remembers his days with JESUS. Peter and Jesus do not interact: they are memories. It is optional to portray both Jesus and the AGENT in voice only, without an on-stage actor. Either way will be effective. AT RISE: Peter is sitting alone.)

PETER: *(Hurting.)* Jesus, can you hear me? Jesus do you care? I called you Messiah. I prayed with you in the hills. Was it all for nothing? The compassion and the love. Were you just another Jew, or were you the One? Hear my prayer. *(Closes eyes, remembering.)*

JESUS: *(Offstage VOICE or actor standing SL.)* Don't be afraid, Simon Peter. Follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men.

PETER: I am afraid. You're gone.

JESUS: Who touched me? Who touched my clothes? *(Pause.)* Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering. *(PETER is peacefully remembering as these lines are said.)*

PETER: And so she was. Her faith healed her.

JESUS: Peter, who do people say that I am?

PETER: *(Believing.)* You are the Christ. *(Then confused.)* What happened? It wasn't supposed to end this way. *(Rising.)* You healed so many. You just touched them and they were made whole. You raised them from the dead ... spoke their name ... and they rose from the dead. *(Pause.)* You gave them hope. What more did they want from you? And you loved us ... you didn't care that we were sinners. You just loved us. You loved ... a fisherman. Me. Matthew. Judas. Judas. *(Enraged.)* Judas!!! How could you? Were you blind? You saw everything with your own eyes! He loved you ... He trusted you. *(Explodes.)* You knew he was the Christ! *(Humbly, realizing HE too has failed JESUS.)* As did I. *(Drops to knees.)* I failed you, too. *(Complete anguish.)* I'm so sorry. *(AGENT enters SR or is heard as an offstage voice.)* My Lord, forgive me. Forgive me.

AGENT: *(Reminding.)* Your Jesus is dead.

PETER: *(Without making eye contact and hurting.)* I know. Why did he have to die?

AGENT: He was not loved.

PETER: I loved Him.

AGENT: *(Building.)* You denied Him.

PETER: But I loved Him.

AGENT: *(Condemning.)* You denied Him three times!

PETER: Yes, I denied Him, but I loved Him. I love Him.

AGENT: Your Jesus is dead.

PETER: I know you. You are the enemy. He told me you would come to sift me as wheat. *(Rising with building faith.)* You shall not defeat me. You shall not defeat me. I believe. I believe in my Savior Jesus Christ. Yes, He is dead, but the day will come when He shall have victory over death, hell, and the grave! *(AGENT exits in disgust. PETER looks upward.)* Because there is power in your name, Jesus!!!

THE END

FAITH OF A CHILD

(Scene takes place immediately following the death of JESUS. AT RISE: JOHN enters quickly, looking for someone.)

JOHN: *(Calling in hushed tones.)* Mary! Mary! *(Sits.)*

MARY: *(Enters calling.)* John? Is that you? What took so long?

JOHN: *(Rising.)* Roman guards are everywhere. I had to wait for the streets to clear.

MARY: Any sign of the others?

JOHN: No. *(MARY turns away.)* They'll be back. I know they will.

MARY: *(To HERSELF.)* "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."

JOHN: Mary, they will be back.

MARY: You did not leave Him. You stayed till the end. You were with Him at the cross.

The others ...

JOHN: They're scared, Mary. *(At a loss for words.)* Have you been back to the tomb?

MARY: Yes. It was kind of Joseph to give us the tomb.

JOHN: He's a good man.

MARY: And so are you. You've been a great comfort to me. I want you to know that. All you've done ...

JOHN: You need to rest. Go to the house. I'll be there shortly.

(MARY agrees and exits. JOHN sits again, wiping his face. AGENT enters as if passing through.)

AGENT: *(Casually.)* Greetings. *(No response.)* Are you hurt?

JOHN: *(Rising.)* No, I'm just leaving.

AGENT: *(Getting excited.)* I know you. You're one of His followers! Aren't you? You're a follower of Jesus of Nazareth!

JOHN: *(Uneasy.)* Yes. I must be on my way.

AGENT: Don't leave. I won't tell anyone I saw you.

JOHN: Sorry, I must go. *(Begins to exit.)*

AGENT: Why? Are you ashamed? Are you afraid?

JOHN: No. I just ...

AGENT: Why did you believe in that man? *(JOHN is looking around uneasily.)* There are no Romans in the area. Just me. Now ... why did you believe in Jesus?

JOHN: I still do!

AGENT: *(Amused.)* I ask for your forgiveness. Why do you believe in a dead Jesus?

JOHN: *(Not sure, but knows.)* Because I do.

AGENT: You sound like a child.

JOHN: If you had seen what I have, then you, too, would believe.

AGENT: *(Coldly.)* I doubt it. Tell me, what have you seen that allows you to still believe? *(Pause.)* What's the matter? Can't think of anything?

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