

# ***THE CROSS***

*By William Diller*

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

This is a short play concerning the events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as seen from the perspective of a typical Jewish family living in Jerusalem.

Amos is a simple carpenter doing work for the Romans. It's steady work but his wife, Ruth, and son, Samuel, hate it. The play has an explosive ending when the family learns "that man" Jesus has been condemned to die and a centurion pounds at the door, ready for Amos' finished work. His work is a large wooden cross. Interspersed with scriptural readings, this play is easy to produce yet extremely powerful.

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(2 m, 1 w, 1 child, 2 readers)*

Scripture Reader

Narrator

Father (*Amos*)

Mother (*Ruth*)

Son (*Samuel*)

Centurion

### **Production Notes**

All characters should wear Biblical costumes. Amos' workshop consists simply of a workbench with some primitive tools. The workbench should be arranged so that the congregation will not be able to see the cross on top. Throughout the play, the actors will pretend to work on something on the table. The Scripture reader will be off stage; his/her voice could come over the PA system. The narrator will be at the side of the stage behind a podium. Biblical quotes are from the New International Version.

Additional props include a basket of food, a rag on the workbench, a bucket of water and dipper, and a sign which reads, "Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews" with a string at the top.

**Scene One**

*(AT RISE: As the LIGHTS come up, NARRATOR speaks.)*

NARRATOR: At the time of Christ, things were much as they are today. People were required to provide for themselves; to work for a living. Everyone who was able would learn a trade to support themselves and their families. This is a story of one such family.

*(The SCRIPTURE READER speaks over the PA system.)*

SCRIPTURE READER: While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: The one I kiss is the man, arrest him. Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. *(MATTHEW. 26:47-50)*

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him. "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour - when darkness reigns." *(Luke 22:52-53)*

NARRATOR: Join us now, in the workshop of a certain carpenter in Jerusalem.

*(The LIGHTS go down then come up on AMOS working at the workbench. After a beat, RUTH enters carrying a basket of food.)*

AMOS: Hello, Ruth.

RUTH: I've brought your supper, Amos.

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*(AMOS wipes his hands on a rag and takes the basket from RUTH, looks inside it.)*

AMOS: Looks good.

RUTH: Thanks. *(Pause. SHE looks at the workbench with displeasure.)* The Romans sure do keep you busy.

AMOS: *(Defensively.)* Now, Ruth, we've been over this a thousand times. It's good, steady work.

RUTH: *(Submissively.)* I know.

AMOS: Besides, if I didn't do it, someone else would.

RUTH: I know, Amos.

AMOS: *(Taking a small bite of food.)* This sure hits the spot. I was getting hungry.

RUTH: You're working late tonight.

AMOS: The Romans need two *(Nods at the workbench.)* of those. I have to finish them...before the Passover.

RUTH: Why isn't Samuel here? I thought he was helping you.

AMOS: Hard telling where that boy is.

RUTH: I bet I know!

AMOS: *(Angrily.)* He'd better not be with that charlatan, Ruth.

RUTH: *(Thoughtfully.)* Amos, Samuel did say something about going to Gethsemane with Mark. They were going to see ... that man.

AMOS: I knew it had something to do with him.

RUTH: Mark says that man is the -

AMOS: *(Interrupting.)* I know who he's supposed to be. If he was, don't you think the Chief Priests would tell us?

RUTH: *(Unsure.)* I guess ...

*(There is a commotion off stage. The SOUND of shouts and people running. A teenage boy, SAMUEL, enters quickly. He stops just inside the entrance, breathing hard, looks off stage furtively, as if he is afraid of being followed.)*

RUTH: Samuel!

AMOS: What's wrong, son?

SAMUEL: They took him!

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RUTH: Took him? Took who?

SAMUEL: He ... he was betrayed ... by a friend!

AMOS: Who was betrayed?

RUTH: Samuel ... are you talking about your friend Mark?

SAMUEL: No, Mom, not Mark -

AMOS: (*Derisively.*) You must be talking about that charlatan.

SAMUEL: (*Angrily.*) He's not a charlatan. He's the -

AMOS: (*Interrupting.*) I know who you THINK he is -

RUTH: Stop arguing, you two. Samuel, tell us what happened.

SAMUEL: (*Speaking quickly.*) We were at Gethsemane. The Chief Priests came with the palace guards. He was betrayed ... with a kiss. We all ran. We were afraid of being arrested, too.

RUTH: (*Puts HER arm around SAMUEL'S shoulders, trying to calm him.*) Calm down, son.

SAMUEL: (*Despondent.*) They've arrested him. They took him to Jerusalem ... to the High Priest ... (*The LIGHTS go down.*)

SCRIPTURE READER: Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. (*Matt. 26:57*) Very early in the morning, the chief priests with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. (*Mark 15:1*)

## Scene Two

*(AT RISE: The NARRATOR speaks.)*

NARRATOR: It is early the next morning, the day before Passover. Amos worked long into the night to finish his order for the Roman government before the Passover. He is opening his business early in order to put some finishing touches on his work.

*(AMOS enters the work area, yawning and stretching as he prepares for the day's work.)*

AMOS: I'm getting too old for this. *(Arranges tools and begins to check measurements.)* Now, where was I ...

*(RUTH enters quickly, looking around.)*

AMOS: Ruth, what is it?

RUTH: Is Samuel here?

AMOS: No.

RUTH: I was hoping he had come to work with you.

AMOS: No, I thought he was still sleeping.

RUTH: He was so upset last night ... about the arrest ...

AMOS: I know, Ruth.

RUTH: He was gone when I got up. I ... I hope he didn't go to the temple this morning...

AMOS: Why?

RUTH: There's a lot of racket coming from that direction. It sounds like a riot!

*(AMOS and RUTH walk to the exit and stand listening. There is a loud crowd noise from offstage. Amos shrugs, returns to work, Ruth continues to stand by listening.)*

RUTH: I hope Samuel isn't mixed up in that ... that tumult at the temple! *(Pause, listening.)* Amos, the noise is moving. It seems to be coming from ... the praetorium, the governor's palace ...

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