

IN THE UPPER ROOM

By David Dunlap

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Dedicated to my wonderful wife, Geri, and son, Phillip.
The playwright, David Dunlap

STORY OF THE PLAY

Mary, a wealthy Jewish widow, has heard Jesus speak but is unsure if He is the Messiah. When she is asked to let the upper room of her house be used for Jesus's Passover feast, her teenage son, Mark, is ecstatic for the chance to talk with Him outside the temple. The maid, Rhoda, just thinks Mark is trying to get out of more chores again. While we do not see Jesus or His 12 disciples, we do learn more of His ministry through the faith of Mary's visiting relative, Barnabas, a missionary, and her friend, Joanna, who has been healed through Jesus.

In Scene 2, events seem to get out of control after the dinner as Mary spies the commotion of soldiers and Judas running away. Barnabas advises Mary that Jesus has been arrested and she and her servants might be questioned for having the supper in their home. Unbeknown to Mary, Mark has followed Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane and runs home, shaken, angry, and in tears, to tell his mother of Judas's betrayal.

In Scene 3, Mary tells how her faith has grown since she witnessed the crucifixion three days earlier with Joanna and the other women. When Joanna rushes in to announce Jesus has risen, they all realize that because Jesus is alive again, they also can have eternal life in Him.

CHARACTERS

(3m, 3w, 1 flexible)

MARY: A wealthy Jewish widow and resident of Jerusalem.

RHODA: Mary's servant, in her late teens to early twenties.

MARK: Mary's teenage son. *(Future writer of the second gospel.)*

BARNABAS: Visiting relative of Mary and an early missionary of Christianity.

JOANNA: A friend of Mary's from Galilee.

JOSHUA: Male servant of Mary. Appears only in Scenes 2 and 3.

JONATHAN or ANNA: Teenage friend of Mark. Referred to in script as boy but can be played by a girl.

bread, 33 years after the birth of Jesus Christ.

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SET

All the action takes place in the large upper room in Mary's home. It is plainly decorated, yet is neat and clean. One doorway, SL, opens onto a small landing which leads to a stairway (not visible) down to the street. At SR is a large window with a window seat. There is a large table at USC. Chairs are pulled out for cleaning under the table. A neatly folded white tablecloth is laying on the table as well as a pile of cleaning rags.

SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: Thursday morning, Passover week.

Scene 2: Later, that night.

Scene 3: Sunday morning.

TIME: Passover week, the first day of the feast of Unleavened bread, 33 years after the birth of Jesus Christ.

PROPS

Broom; 2 small working lamps; assorted dishes; crumpled napkins; pitcher; basins; towels; small stool; small packages.

COSTUMES

All characters wear typical Biblical clothing. In Scene 3, characters may wear a change of clothes, if desired, as it is several days later. Mary and Rhoda wear shawls as they enter.

SOUND EFFECTS

Clatter of falling dishes; commotion outside the window.

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: The set is brightly lit. It is the middle of Thursday morning of Passover week and MARY is alone on stage. Mary is just finishing sweeping the floor under the table and cleaning up the room. RHODA'S voice is heard from offstage.)

RHODA: *(Offstage.)* Mistress Mary! Where are you ma'am?

MARY: *(Calling offstage.)* I'm up here, Rhoda! Come on up and give me some help!

RHODA: *(Entering from SL.)* What are you doing up here? I've never seen you up here before.

MARY: I haven't been for a long time. My husband used this room a lot for meetings but I haven't had any reason to be up here since he died.

RHODA: What brings you up here today?

MARY: I just thought it was about time I cleaned up a bit. You never know when we may need the extra space up here. It's a shame to let this large room go to waste.

RHODA: With all the space you have downstairs, I don't see why you'd ever need to use this dingy old room. Besides, your son isn't going to be too happy about this.

MARY: *(Surprised.)* Mark? Why should he mind if anyone uses this room?

RHODA: I know he is your only son and I'm not one to spread stories, but a lot of times when you ask him to run an errand or to help me or one of the other servants do something, he disappears and I suspect this is one of the places he hides.

MARY: Oh, Rhoda. I realize Mark is still young and a bit irresponsible, but do you really think he would hide up here to get out of work?

RHODA: I don't know. All I know is that I've seen him coming down from up here lots of times when I thought he was out helping Joshua.

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MARY: Well I guess I'll find out soon enough. Mark is out helping Joshua carry water, so I'll ask him about it when they return.

RHODA: Joshua went to get water, but I don't think Mark is with him. He said something about going back to the temple to hear that new teacher from Nazareth.

MARY: He's gone to the temple again? He's been there every day this week. *(Thoughtfully.)* I can understand why he would want to go hear Jesus teach, though. He is so different from the priests and Pharisees.

RHODA: Have you heard this Jesus of Nazareth speak?

MARY: *(Stops working.)* Yes. I was at the temple earlier this week. He said we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and love our neighbors as ourselves. I've never heard any of the Pharisees say anything like that. And they weren't just words with Jesus either. For instance, there was a poor widow in the temple who gave only a couple of copper coins, probably everything she had. The Pharisees ignored her but Jesus was so kind to her, as if He knew she'd given all she had.

RHODA: Some people claim he's the Messiah. Is that true?

MARY: I don't know. The scribes and Pharisees sure don't think so. They tried to trick Him but He answered their questions with such wisdom that they went away looking foolish.

RHODA: They won't like that too much. Couldn't they try to arrest Him?

MARY: I don't think they'll try anything like that. He has many followers among the people in town for the Passover.

RHODA: Including your son, it seems.

MARY: Oh yes, Mark. Well, even if I do understand his reasons for wanting to go to the temple, that's no excuse for not doing his chores. *(Pause.)* I sure miss his father at times like this. He needs a man to talk to him. Maybe when his cousin Barnabas gets here today, he'll talk to Mark.

End of Freeview

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