

THE LILY and THE RUE

By Judith L. Clough

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PUBLISHED BY

Eldridge Publishing Company

PO Box 14367

Tallahassee, FL 32317

95church.com

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DEDICATION

This play is gratefully dedicated to the very special people of Harwidale Presbyterian Church Players Guild, without whose love and talent, this play would never have been presented, and to the congregation, without whose warm support, it would **never** have been written.

The Playwright

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Scene 1: Courtyard in the home of Martha of Bethany

Scene 2: Courtyard

Scene 3: Kitchen

Scene 4: Main room

Scene 5: Marketplace of Bethany

Scene 6: Kitchen, two weeks later

ACT II

Scene 1: Courtyard

Scene 2: Main room

Scene 3: Main room

Scene 4: Near the tombs of Bethany

Scene 5: Near the tombs

Scene 6: Main room, several months later

TIME: 90 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission

SCENERY: Wooden bench for courtyard; small table and benches for kitchen; larger table, benches and chairs for main room; stalls and wagons for marketplace; boulders, bushes, etc. for tombs of Bethany.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 7 w, extras as disciples)

MARTHA: A warm, honest, strong woman who has had a great deal of responsibility thrust on her. She has fallen into a trap of self-pity which she sees as no one caring about or helping her.

MARY: A gentle, sweet person whose "gift" of knowing things about others has helped her to live in a dreamy state with little actual responsibility.

HANNAH: An old woman, embittered by her losses of her loved ones, convinced there is no hope for anybody.

RACHEL: A servant woman, sensible, kind, a contemporary of Hannah.

JUDITH: Lively, sensitive teenage girl raised from death by Jesus.

REBEKAH: Judith's mother; loving but firm, used to her wealth and position but not haughty.

JESUS CHRIST: Very warm and understanding.

LAZARUS: A likable, eager young man pampered and mothered by his sisters but not spoiled.

PHARISEE: A pompous windbag.

WOMAN

DISCIPLES

SCENERY: Wooden bench for courtyard; small table and benches for kitchen; larger table, benches and chairs for main room; stalls and wagons for marketplace; boulders, bushes, etc. for tombs of Bethany.

HAND-HELD PROPS: Dust cloths, dishes, pottery, baskets, fruits, loaves of bread, bunches of herbs, flowers, vase, jar of anointment.

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ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: JUDITH enters SR and begins shaking out dust cloths, humming merrily. She does not see LAZARUS enter, SL, who watches her for a minute, then clears his throat.)

JUDITH: *(Startled.)* Oh, my goodness. I didn't see you at all!

LAZARUS: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to startle you. It's just that you were so busy ... *(Stares at HER.)*

JUDITH: *(Laughs.)* Oh, I always get involved in anything I do, even if it's only shaking out dust cloths. *(Short pause as SHE stares at HIM.)* Can I help you? Are you looking for someone? My name is Judith.

LAZARUS: No ... that is, I mean, yes. Well, the truth is ... I live here.

JUDITH: But ... *(Confused, then understanding.)* Oh, you must be Lazarus. Martha and Mary are always talking about you. *(Getting excited.)* You've been traveling with Him! Oh, tell me all about Him. What is He saying? What is He doing?

LAZARUS: Well, He's been doing much the same thing as the last time He was here, healing a lot of people, and teaching. *(Starting to get excited.)* You wouldn't believe the crowds that follow Him! And the hundreds of people He's healed! Why, I've seen Him cast out demons, and make cripples walk, and blind men see, and deaf hear ... it's ... it's just incredible!

JUDITH: Yes, yes, I know. What about the Kingdom of God coming?

LAZARUS: *(Reluctantly.)* Well, that is a little harder. He talks about it in parables, you know, like leavening in bread or a pearl of great price. I know He's trying to tell us something very important, but I don't understand it, not really. I'm not the only one, though. Most of the disciples don't understand Him either.

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JUDITH: I know. (*Quietly.*) He's ... He's not like anyone else.

LAZARUS: Then you know what I'm talking about. He means so much to me, and I know He loves me, but sometimes He looks at me so sadly, even when He's smiling.

JUDITH: When does He do that?

LAZARUS: Oh, when I'm talking about how great it's going to be when we drive out the cursed Romans and set Him up as king. Judas says ...

JUDITH: Judas of Kerioth, one of the disciples?

LAZARUS: Yes, isn't he great ... a real patriot! He is convinced that soon the Master will announce that He is the Messiah, and then we will drive out the Romans and restore Israel to glory!

JUDITH: (*Wryly.*) I suppose Judas has this all thought out?

LAZARUS: Yes, yes, he has definite plans. He has ... contacts ... and I ... I've been with him to a meeting.

JUDITH: (*Alarmed.*) Lazarus, you aren't in with the Zealots? They're thieves and murderers and...

LAZARUS: Well no, not exactly. But I want to be ready to fight when the time comes, and they can teach me ... things. Oh, Judith, it is so hard being patient! I love the Master so much and Israel so much ... I just want to get going and make Him king!

JUDITH: (*Alarmed.*) Shhhh ... Don't you know the Romans have spies everywhere? Do you want to get Him in trouble? Or your sisters? Oh, your sisters! I forgot! They'll skin me alive for not coming to tell them you're here. Especially Martha.

LAZARUS: Oh, yes, especially Martha. You'd think she was my mother instead of my older sister, the way she fusses over me. You should have heard the argument when I wanted to go traveling with the Master.

JUDITH: I can imagine. I've only been here a few days, but already I feel just like I was still at home. Only both of my parents fussed over me, all the time. At least you're a man ... you can get away!

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LAZARUS: Well, it wasn't easy! You should have seen all the clothing and food and medicines Martha sent. Oh, those herbal remedies of hers! *(Makes a face.)*

JUDITH: She does love her herb garden, doesn't she? Just as much as Mary loves flowers. That's where she is now, out picking flowers to decorate ... *(Horror-struck.)* ... Oh, my! If you're here, that means He can't be far behind!

LAZARUS: He sent me on to tell Martha He'll be here in about half an hour.

JUDITH: *(Groans.)* I'm going to lose my job. She'll never forgive me for not running to tell her sooner. She wants everything to be perfect. *(Gathers up cloths distractedly.)*

LAZARUS: Come on, I'll protect you from my fierce sister. She'll be so glad to see me, she won't dare yell at you. *(BOTH exit.)*

End of Freeview

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