ON A STREET IN JERUSALEM

AN EASTER PLAY

By
David Dunlap

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Judith, a middle-aged widow, makes her livelihood by selling funeral spices and shrouds in front of her home just blocks from the temple. She is an unfriendly and unlikable woman who mysteriously rejects Jesus and his teachings. Although her visiting cousin, Simon, and her neighbor and friend, Leah, both accept Jesus, Judith does not. Even after she witnesses Jesus heal a blind man and later sees Him struggle past her house carrying the cross, Judith rejects him. It's not until Jesus confronts her after his resurrection and reveals her deepest hurts does she finally believe.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 men, 5 women, 1 teen, 3 children, extras)

J.J: Mischievous child, about 10 - 14. Male or female.

ZACK (or ABBY): Timid friend of J.J., about the same age. Male or female.

JUDITH: Middle-aged widow of Jerusalem. She is lonely and bitter and makes a modest living selling shrouds and cheap burial spices. Wears black or dark clothes.

LEAH: Middle-aged neighbor of Judith. She is kind and loving. Wears black.

BERNICE: Wealthy customer of Judith. Dressed in black mourning clothes.

TERESA: Excitable daughter of Bernice. Young adult. She is also dressed in black mourning clothes (Scene 1), fancier clothes in (Scenes 2 and 3).

SIMON: Judith's cousin from Cyrene.

ALEXANDER: Teen-aged son of Simon.

RUFUS: Youngest son of Simon. Aged 10 - 12.

JESUS: The Messiah, King of Kings. Son of God. Age 33.

ELDERLY WOMAN: Older woman, poorly dressed.

JACOB: The Elderly Woman's son. Mid to late 20s, also poorly dressed. He is blind and should have a rag wrapped around his eyes.

IRA: Middle-aged man and member of the Sanhedrin. He wears dark clothes with a traditional white, embroidered head covering.

AARON: Somewhat younger than Ira, but dressed the same.

SOLDIER: Roman soldier escorting Jesus to Calvary.

CROWD MEMBERS: Followers of Jesus, citizens of Jerusalem, and visitors to the city for Passover.

SCENE SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: Palm Sunday.
Scene 2: Good Friday.
Scene 3: Easter morning.

SET

A Jerusalem street in front of Judith's house, located a few blocks from the Jewish temple. The stone front of the house fills most of the upstage area. A door leads to the interior of the house. There are two exits, one right and one left where the "street" enters and exits the stage. Immediately in front of the house, right, is a large wooden table with piles of cloth (shrouds) and clay and earthenware bottles of spices. Signs advertising "Shrouds" and "Cheap Spices" etc. hang from the front of the table. A wooden stool sits between the table and the door. A large awning hangs from the front of the house covering the stand and the doorway. Other plants or decorations around the house can be added as desired, but the downstage left and right stage areas should be kept clear as these areas represent a city street.

SOUND EFFECTS

Angry crowd noise, exuberant crowd noise.

PROPS

Shrouds, bottles of spices and perfumes, walking cane, change pouch, coins, six or seven large burlap sacks, pieces of fruit, a large cross, whip, crown of thorns, sewing basket, needle and thread, large basket, slip of paper, handkerchief.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: The stage is empty. It is early Palm Sunday morning, four days before the start of Passover.)

J.J.: *(ENTERS right, looks around and then motions offstage.)* Come on. She's not here.
ZACK: *(ENTERS, timidly.)* Are you sure? If she catches us, she might not …
J.J.: Oh, stop worrying. You're just scared.
ZACK: I am not, but my brother told me Judith is the meanest old lady in Jerusalem and if you make her mad, she'll rip your liver out!
J.J.: That's not true.
ZACK: My brother told me it happened to one of his friends.
J.J.: Nah-uh.
ZACK: Uh-huh.
J.J.: *(Louder.)* Nah-uh!
ZACK: *(Louder.)* Uh-huh!
J.J.: *(Almost yelling.)* Nah-uh!!
ZACK: *(Almost yelling.)* Uh-huh!!
J.J.: *(Pulling ZACK down and hiding to the right of the sales cart.)* Shhh!
ZACK: *(Frightened, loudly.)* Is she coming?
J.J.: *(Covering ZACK'S mouth.)* No, stupid. But if you don't keep quiet, you're going to lose your liver to the old lady.
ZACK: You said that wasn't true.
J.J.: It's not. Now come on. Let's have some fun.

(J.J. sneaks around the front of the table and begins to pull shrouds off of the pile. He/she holds one up as if measuring for a new outfit. ZACK laughs and begins to pick spice bottles up one by one and smell them. To the odor of some he reacts negatively and to some he reacts positively. When Zack finds a bottle he particularly likes, he puts some of it on like perfume and offers it to J.J. J.J. does the same and the two laugh. JUDITH ENTERS through the doorway of the house and sees the CHILDREN. She limps slightly and carries a worn, wooden cane.)

JUDITH: *(Yelling.)* What do you two brats think you're doing. *(Raises the cane in an attempt to strike the CHILDREN who run away.)* You want to wear burial spices and shrouds. Fine! I'll see that you'll need them if you ever touch any of my things again. *(Yelling after the CHILDREN who are now offstage.)* Do you hear me? The next time I see your faces around here I'll… I'll rip your liver out! *(Sighs as SHE looks at the mess the children have made.)* Look at this mess. Why can't people keep their rotten offspring at home. *(JUDITH lays her cane on the stool and slowly and with much difficulty begins to pick up and fold the shrouds and straighten the bottles of spices. As she does, she mutters the following lines.)* Miserable children. If people want them, they should keep better track of where they are and what they're doing. No child of mine would have ever acted this way, torturing old widows and …

(LEAH ENTERS left and hears JUDITH'S rambling.)

LEAH: Judith. What is going on over here? I can hear you shouting all the way over at my house.

JUDITH: Hello, Leah. *(Folding a shroud.)* Those rotten neighborhood kids again. Look at the mess they've made.

LEAH: *(Helping with the clean up.)* That's a shame, Judith. When my husband and I moved into this neighborhood, we never had any of this kind of trouble. We raised five children here and they never did anything like this. This was a much nicer neighborhood thirty years ago.

JUDITH: It disgusts me how little respect children have for us older folks.

LEAH: *(Feigning offense.)* Old? Who are you calling old? *(Laughs.)* You'd think those silly Pharisees would want to keep this neighborhood as crime free as possible. Three blocks from the entrance to their precious temple is hardly the place for pranks like this.

JUDITH: They should take steps to protect common folks like us. Then maybe they'd serve some useful purpose. Worthless old bags of hot air. The whole lot of them.

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