

# Easter Reader's Theatre – Cleopas and his Wife

*A reading for two voices, the light print a woman's voice.*

It was just too intense, we had to get away.  
So much crying, so much sadness.  
Mary Magdalene wailing,  
Peter groaning out loud every five minutes  
and pounding his fists against his knees.

**But worst of all was Jesus' mother Mary  
just sitting motionless, holding her sides,  
staring into space,  
almost as if she was waiting for something.**

There was nothing to wait for,  
it was over. Finished.  
As final as the thunk of that rock  
falling into place over the entrance to the tomb.

**There's something you can hang on to:  
death, the one certainty.  
Now it claimed even Jesus, our Lord.  
We had hoped...well...  
we had hoped for a lot of things.**

Jesus brought hope to so many...  
the woman at the well in Samaria,  
remember how he treated her with respect?

**Or that bent over woman,  
who would have thought she could stand so tall?**

And that woman caught in adultery,  
she thought she was a goner,  
she lay face down on the ground...  
it was Jesus who lifted her up.

**Or the way he cried with Mary and Martha  
as they grieved the death of their brother Lazarus.**

**Then instead of mourning at his tomb,  
Jesus yelling, "Lazarus come out!"  
And Lazarus coming out of the tomb...  
I tell you, the shock of it nearly killed us!**

It was beyond believing.  
That was what it was,  
it was hope beyond believing.

**And yet we did believe, we did hope,  
we had faith that Jesus was the Messiah to save us,  
to deliver us from these Romans,  
to establish Israel as a light to all the nations.**

Was it only last week that Jesus rode into Jerusalem,  
the crowds cheering, the children waving branches.  
"Hosanna," they cried, and we cried too...tears of joy!  
Finally, Jesus getting what he deserved  
honour and praise and glory, as the holy city welcomed its own.

**How naïve we were!  
Those crowds so fickle,we should never have believed them.**

I feel I can never trust anyone again,  
for it was not a stranger that betrayed Jesus,  
but one of us, even one of Jesus' twelve.  
The Pharisees, always on the lookout,  
bribed Judas to turn Jesus over.

**The disciples were in the garden  
when the soldiers came for Jesus,  
armed with clubs and swords,as for a common criminal.**

Clubs and swords for someone whose only crime was healing,  
whose only fault was feeding the hungry,  
whose only vice was telling the truth.

**We had hardly heard the news he was arrested  
before he was raced to trial...  
the Council, Herod, and Pilate, all in one night.**

**“Crucify him” the crowds cried,  
“Release Barabbas,” they shouted,  
their “Hosannas” entirely forgotten.**

We kept hoping, kept hoping for some miracle,  
some bright light like on the mountaintop,  
some stilling of this storm of accusations,  
some breaking of the chains,  
like the day Jesus turned over the tables in the temple.

**But Jesus was as silent as a lamb  
with a knife at its neck.**

We women followed as he carried his cross,  
our tears a river behind us, still hoping,  
still hoping for some miracle,  
some divine power, some angel army.  
The guards kept us at a distance,  
but we could hear the hammer as they nailed him to the cross.  
We held his mother so tight, her body flinching with every sound.

**And some of us watched from further away.  
We saw him hang there, each minute passing like an hour,  
until he gave up his spirit.  
His broken bloody body carried to the tomb.  
After that it was always only people crying,  
or people too cried out to cry anymore.**

My friends went this morning to the tomb.  
They left with tears and spices to anoint the body.  
But almost immediately we heard their hurried footsteps  
as they came back racing with news  
of a stone rolled away,  
an empty tomb and an angel messenger who said  
Jesus was raised from the dead!  
Our eyes all turned to Mary and we saw a smile transfiguring her face.

**But then the arguing broke out,  
“What could this mean?” some asked.  
Some doubted the women’s stories,**

**others defended it.  
Hard words were spoken,  
(we were under so much stress you see,  
tempers were at the breaking point),  
and there was nothing to do...  
the tomb was empty, yes,  
but perhaps this was the work of the Romans.  
One last indignity to Jesus' body.**

We couldn't take it anymore,  
all the noise and conflict after such a week.  
Cleopas and I headed home to Emmaus.  
We thought it would clear our heads,  
but each step away from Jerusalem  
found us rehearsing every event over and over again.

**That's when the stranger appeared.  
He was clueless, hadn't heard a thing about Jesus,  
we had to tell him the whole story from start to finish.**

You can only imagine our surprise  
when instead of feeling sorry for us, he lit into us!  
Telling us we didn't know what we were talking about!

**Before we could get a word in edgewise,  
he started explaining it, from beginning to end,  
showing us how scriptures pointed to these very things.  
He had us hoping again, that maybe, just maybe...**

We didn't want to let him go.  
We'd reached our house, and we urged him to stay.  
We needed to hear more,  
hope had died these last three days,  
and he had resurrected it.

**It was when we were sitting at the table,  
and we passed him the bread.  
He picked it up, said a prayer,  
and as he broke it,  
suddenly, those hands were familiar hands,**

**those arms, that neck, that face...it was the Lord!**

Our eyes locked on his and then...he vanished!  
He was there, and then he was not there.  
But what was not gone, what will never be gone,  
is the hope that filled us that moment.  
We suddenly knew, beyond believing,  
that Christ our Lord was risen from the dead!

**We had seen him with our own eyes,  
we had heard his voice, and with one heart,  
Cleopas and I clasped hands and ran.  
Ran straight back to the disciples, through the darkening night,  
tears catching first one of us and then the other.**

We would stop, gasping for breath,  
looking up into the dark night,  
the stars shining and shining,  
as we smiled our way to Jerusalem.

**We broke into the room where they were gathered,  
just bursting with good news,  
the Lord not dead, our hope not gone  
our Saviour risen,  
triumphant over every force that would kill him.**

All that night we talked of Jesus,  
our voices ringing with hope,  
our heads filled with plans to go to Galilee.

**At last we laid our weary heads together to sleep  
just as the bright morning star rose,  
shining in the east.**

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