

GOOD FRIDAY
MONOLOGUES



Monologue

SET-UP NOTES

Set:

A plain cross at the front.

Props:

A sign that says “King of the Jews” - which will be added by the final monologue

Costumes:

Keep costumes simple. We suggest each actor wear all black with one simple accent item. The sign maker can wear a simple robe, the soldier a sword at his waist and the women plain head coverings.

Positioning:

The first two monologues can be acted from the front; for the last monologue with the women, they will walk toward the cross. In between the second and third monologue, the sign should be hung on the cross.

Casting:

The sign maker can be a person of any age, as can the soldier. For the women, they are mother and daughter so the ages should reflect that.

Directing Notes:

- **The Sign Maker:**
The sign maker is discouraged. He is feeling disappointed that the hope he had placed in Jesus seems misplaced. He is dejected.
- **The Soldier:**
He is cynical and snide. He thinks this whole thing is hilarious - at the end, however, we get a hint that he is conflicted. This should be played subtly - he is not have a sudden change of heart, but wondering...“what if?”
- **The Women:**
The younger woman is angry and frustrated. Her mother is trying to be a voice a reason, even as she too is hurting. At the end, she feels some hope that Jesus is still their King.

Monologue One

THE SIGN MAKER

(Looking at a blank piece of wood)

A sign.

(Sigh)

The day before Passover, and Pilate has ordered a sign. A sign that I do not want to make. I usually love doing this work - carving, building, writing. And now here I am - asked to make a sign to hang on the cross of the one I hoped would see the end to all of Rome's cruelty. And now, he will be its victim.

They see Jesus will die shortly. I don't have much time. He has already been found guilty. The charges are nonsense of course. But as soon as the leaders even hinted that Jesus said he was a king, Pilate's hands were tied. He is scared of his Caesar, that is for sure. He cannot appear to spare anyone who claims his place.

Which makes it so strange that he wants this sign: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews..." Does Pilate believe it? He can't, can he? Is he trying to antagonize the religious leaders? That IS something that he would do. Surely he will tell Caesar that it was meant to be ironic, tongue in cheek. Little could he know how many of us did believe it. Well, how many of us hoped it were true.

I was convinced that the Messiah had come in my lifetime. The words of the prophets have assured us that a Messiah, a Saviour would come to deliver us. Surely, this is the time that we need one. Living under Roman rule weighs on us. We are weary with Herod as a pseudo-king. My father, my grandfather and those before them spent their lives praying for deliverance,, praying that the Almighty would hasten in keeping his promises to us. A Saviour. A Redeemer. A King. And I was sure that I would see what they had longed to be. Freedom. Freedom for all of us. Now, instead, I make a sign.

(Looks at sign again)

There has been much talk of signs since Jesus came. And what else could they be? A wedding - where the water in the purification jars turns to wine! At Jesus' command. That young boy, the child of the man who worked for Herod - he hasn't been able to stop talking about how he was healed - from miles away, just because Jesus said it. That man who sat at the gates for years. I lost count how many. I saw him walking around just the other day! And then Lazarus, that man from Bethany. My neighbour assured me - he was there when they put him in the tomb - and now Lazarus is alive again! Miracles all of them, but something more, I hoped. Signs. Signs that our vindication was coming. Signs that our prayers were answered. Signs that a new King had arrived. And it was Jesus!

Signs.

And now another sign *(looks again at sign)*.

Can it be just a few days ago that we heard he was coming into town and me and my friends rushed to see him? We weren't the only ones - and there he was, on a donkey. He makes a point that Jesus. A donkey, just like a king rides after a victory. And I could just feel the hope all around us. We couldn't help but start to tear down the branches. I couldn't take my robe off fast enough to lay on the ground. I yelled Hosannah until my voice was hoarse. We all did. Here was our King! I could hardly wait to see what it would look like when Pilate, and Herod got kicked out. When Jesus took over and we had a King from the line of David again, as we are supposed to. It was all any of us could talk about.

But that was Sunday. Already so long ago.

That was before the trial. That was before the Sanhedrin filled the crowd with those who would yell "Crucify Him!" That was before the death sentence.

I don't get it. Why didn't he stand up to Pilate? Why didn't he do one of his miracles and impress Herod - or better yet - defeat him? He could have, couldn't he?

Unless - they weren't signs at all. Unless he was another miracle worker with impressive tricks. Unless the stories weren't true. Unless my story won't be any different than those who came before me. Unless I will also spend my life praying for what will never be, caught up in false hopes.

I should never have gotten my hopes up. I do not understand the ways of the Almighty. It was too much to hope for freedom in my lifetime. Like my father and grandfather and those before, I will go to the grave in longing, longing for the King of the Jews.

(Writes words on sign)

Monologue Two
THE SOLDIER

(Holding sign, looking at it, laughs lightly)

Oh Pilate, you are something else. King of the Jews? That's hilarious. I mean, I know we don't usually put signs up listing criminal's crimes, but this Jesus guy is worth poking a little fun at, I must say.

Have you heard about what he's been doing? If you haven't, you must not have spent any time in Judea the last couple of years. I think the first time I heard him mentioned was when someone told me that the Jews were going all crazy for some healer. Apparently they were lining up to him in droves, and they were claiming that he was making people who could never walk, walk and people who were born blind see for the first time. Honestly, those Jews will believe anything, won't they? They put all their faith in this one God - ONE God! As if one God could be responsible for everything! And then it was like they thought God had sent this guy to help them. And get this! You know who this guy was? A carpenter. From Nazareth! You hear me right! NAZARETH! Have you ever heard anything so ridiculous? Like the gods - oh I'm sorry - the "GOD" - would pick some nobody from Nazareth to do anything important.

Well, the healings were one thing, but then a few months later everyone was going on about how there had apparently been this whole crowd of people that Jesus had fed with one kid's lunch. It was something like 5000 people who supposedly had food left over after they all ate - because they thought that Jesus had miraculously multiplied food. So I guess he's Ceres now - our goddess of the harvest. I haven't even heard of her doing anything like that. But they believe it.

Now, I mean all of this makes for some good stories - me and the guys have had some real laughs about this while on guard duty let me tell you. It never ceases to amaze me what these naive people believe. But last week it did sound like things were getting out of hand. He came into the city, and we were told to stand by because they thought riots would start once he got here. Here's the funny thing - a lot of people love him, but the priests and the sanhedrin - the big guns - they can't stand him. Makes sense I guess - probably terrifying for them to think the people might actually stand up to them for once, or that some other guy might have something to say besides them. I don't know how they even keep up with all their laws, but apparently this Jesus had suddenly become public enemy number one for them.

The trial last night was totally bizarre, I admit. I know I say that I think the Jews can be funny, but I really didn't expect them to turn on Jesus like that. I never dreamed they'd pick Barabbas to be released over Jesus. And right before one of their big fancy festivals. Ah well, it's nothing to me. We never get days off - like them. So one crucifixion is the same as another to me.

Now Pilate, the guy who held the trial - he did seem a bit spooked. I guess Jesus got to him or something, because apparently he ordered this sign that I'm supposed to hang. Well, I'd rather hang the sign than put the nails in the bodies. I'm not squeamish, but I'll be honest: I always hate that part. I know these criminals deserve it with the stuff they do, but the screams really do get to me. One thing I can say for crucifixion: it's effective.

Oh here they all come *(looks out)*

Wow that's a big crowd...I think I see Jesus. Looks like someone else is carrying the cross for him. I guess that beating we gave him took its toll. Did I tell you about that part- we dressed him up in a robe and we took thorns and made it into a crown. This guy claimed to be able to know stuff right, so we'd hit him and see if he could tell who did it! He never could! Not once! King of the Jews indeed! This man never should have claimed the stuff he did. Too many of these Jews just can't accept that Rome's in charge now.
(NOTE DURING THIS PART HE SHOULD SOUND UNCERTAIN/CONFLICTED)

(Pauses)

But you know he never once fought back, not even a little. He just stood there. I've never seen anyone do that before. (pauses).

And at one point he looked at me. Right at me. It was so weird. I thought he would scowl at me. He didn't. He just looked. And you know for a moment I thought - maybe there's something to all that they're saying

(Straightens up, looks at sign in his hands again)

I wonder why Pilate worded it this way...Why he just said "King of the Jews" and not that He SAID he was King of the Jews. Caiaphas is going to hate that.

(Pauses)

King of the Jews. I've never seen a king look at anybody the way that man looked at me. I can't imagine Caesar looking at anyone that way. Or Pilate. Or Herod. King of the Jews. These Jews - they have a funny idea of a king.

Monologue Three

THE WOMEN WHO WATCHED

Sharlene:

Come along daughter...we will find a place near the top of the hill, a little ways back. That will be easiest. We shouldn't get too close.

Mattea:

I still don't understand how this could happen.

Sharlene (*sighing*):

From the day we started to follow Jesus, back in Galilee, we knew they were scared of him.

Mattea:

But mother, THIS afraid? THIS worried about a man who was so gentle, who has helped so many, who has done so many good things? (voice catches)

Sharlene:

It is hard to understand. But His ways scare them, daughter. They know that he distrusts them. They know he is calling them out for the ways they have pushed us out, and so many, for so long. I still laugh when I think of him turning over those tables in the Temple last week! Oh, he has let those arrogant Pharisees have it that's for sure.

Mattea:

But mother - crucifixion? A death sentence?

Sharlene (*suddenly somber*):

Yes a crucifixion. The harshest sentence of all. For the gentlest of men.

Mattea:

Must we watch? Must we be there?

Sharlene (*pausing as they walk, hand on her daughter's shoulder*):

Yes, my child, we will watch. We will keep vigil. Because we said we would follow to the end.

Mattea:

The men aren't here. What of Peter, and James, and Phillip? And the others? They also followed.

Sharlene:

I do not know about the men. But I know that we women will stay with him. We are used to these things my child. We carry life and we know of its frailty. It is easier for us. We will stand with Jesus if they cannot. And we will stand with Mary, who must watch the son she bore suffer. She will need us.

Mattea:

I hate crucifixions. I hate the Romans and their cruel punishments:

Sharlene:

Hush. They may hear you.

Mattea:

Let them hear me! Jesus was never afraid of them! Why must we act afraid?
We should act as he did - bold! Certain!

Sharlene:

Not today, daughter. We are Jews. And we're women. We will stand from a distance and we will watch.

Mattea:

And when he dies, mother, what then?

Sharlene:

Then we will clean the body, as women do. We will do the work we do as women, that work which the Romans will not take from us. Come, we are close

(Both pause - looking up - as if to the cross - they grip each other, seeing Jesus on the cross.)

Mattea:

Oh mother.

Sharlene:

Yes. I know

Mattea:

Oh mother it is awful

Sharlene:

It is.

Mattea:

Do you think - it hurts?

Sharlene:

Yes, I am certain that it hurts

Mattea (*frantic*):

But maybe...maybe he can make the pain less. Maybe the one who does miracles can do a miracle for himself.

Sharlene:

Somehow, I think the pain is part of the point.

(A moment of quiet)

Mattea:

Mother, what's that, above his head?

(They both look)

Sharlene:

It looks like some sign, some words.

Mattea:

What new shame have they brought on him now?

Sharlene:

There are none among us women who can read what it says.

Mattea:

Perhaps someone has heard - what does the sign say? Do you know

(A pause as if someone is speaking to her)

Sharlene:

King of the Jews?

Mattea:

So they mock him.

Sharlene:

They do indeed.

Mattea: King of the Jews? Why would they say that? No one else has a sign! No one else is made to hang beneath the trumped up charges. There is no other sign. They must take it down! He does not deserve this! Mother, they must do something. Mother...mother why do you smile? This sign is another insult!

Sharlene: Perhaps to them, indeed, an insult, yes.

Mattea: Then why mother, why do you smile? He is suffering! Look at how he struggles to breathe! Look mother - look at the nails....look at the dried blood...look at how he hangs there, for all to see. And then a sign! Why aren't you more upset? What is wrong with you?

Sharlene: I smile, my child, because they have gotten one thing right today,

Mattea: I don't understand.

Sharlene:

King of the Jews, my daughter. He is King of the Jews. They don't know that they speak truth, but we do.

(Moment of silence)

Mattea: So what do we do now?

Sharlene: Now, dear one. We watch. And wait.