

Beyond Redemption

By Hilary Mackelden

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DEDICATION

*Dedicated to Rev. Canon Andrew Cornes,
with grateful thanks for all his prayer, help and support.*

STORY OF THE PLAY

Jacob is a decent family man trying to earn a living as a guard at the temple in Jerusalem. But his life becomes complicated by the maverick preacher, Jesus.

First Jacob finds his roof damaged after a crowd lowered a crippled man down into his home where his wife Miriam and daughter Deborah had arranged for Jesus to visit—unbeknown to Jacob. He forbids Jesus in his home again, but that doesn't stop Miriam and Deborah from following Jesus.

Their participation is damaging Jacob's career prospects as his bosses are trying to keep this Jesus under control. When Jacob is detailed to arrest Jesus, Jacob's frustrations boil over, and for the first time in his life he abuses a prisoner.

Jacob, Miriam and Deborah's different reactions to viewing the crucifixion are presented through intertwining monologues spotlighted in the darkness. Jacob, filled with guilt and remorse, wonders "If this man was the Son of God, am I beyond redemption?"

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 m, 2 w)

JACOB: A temple guard, 40 years old.

MIRIAM: His wife. In her late 30s.

DEBORAH: Their daughter, 18, works as a serving girl in Caiaphas' palace.

Running time: Approximately 85 minutes.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play needs little to no scenery. Most of the action takes place in the kitchen of Jacob and Miriam's home. The home needs a few props: a table, three chairs, a stove with a cooking pot, a bag of vegetables, a knife to cut them, two flagons of wine, (unbreakable) cups to drink from, and an oil lamp. Scene Seven benefits from the use of spotlights as each character talks about the crucifixion of Jesus.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: A room in Jacob and Miriam's house. There's a table and three chairs, and a stove with a stew pot on it. MIRIAM sits at the table, somewhat nervous. Now and again, she looks up at the ceiling, and then at the door as if expecting someone. A tired JACOB enters. He takes off his coat and stretches to relax.)

JACOB: Hello, darling. How are you?

MIRIAM: Fine. I'm fine. Shouldn't I be?

JACOB: I only asked. *(Yawns.)* Been a long day. Caiaphas had us all running around in circles. Apparently there's some new "people's prophet," firing everybody up.

MIRIAM: *(Guiltily.)* Really? Oh.

JACOB: You know the Sanhedrin. Everything's the end of the world. How was your day ...?

(HIS voice trails off as he looks up. His expression is a mixture of bemusement and horror. MIRIAM'S nervousness increases. He looks at her, then up at the ceiling several times.)

JACOB: *(Continued.)* Miriam? There's a hole in the roof.

MIRIAM: Now, Jacob, don't get mad. It's not as bad as it looks.

(HE looks from HER to ceiling several more times.)

MIRIAM: *(Continued.)* It's a funny story, really. You couldn't make it up. *(Beat.)* Once the repairs are done, no one will be any the wiser.

JACOB: What happened?

MIRIAM: It's a long story. But it's going to be fixed, so –

JACOB: A large hole in the roof, broken tiles.

MIRIAM: I got John the builder to have a quick look. He says it's all cosmetic.

JACOB: Pretty substantial cosmetics. Tell me what happened.

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MIRIAM: Well, the neighbors, Deborah, my sewing circle friends and two of their husbands –

JACOB: *(HE gives MIRIAM a sidelong look.)* Having a party, were we?

MIRIAM: *(Defensive.)* There were a few people here. I think you'd be grateful there were witnesses to back up my story.

(JACOB shakes his head as if to clear it.)

MIRIAM: So, as I was saying ... my sewing circle friends and two of their husbands, some people who came in off the street and –

JACOB: Hang on. Some people who came in off the street? You just invited anybody in to my house?

MIRIAM: I didn't exactly invite them. They just – came.

JACOB: I think you'd better start at the beginning, don't you?

MIRIAM: *(A pause. SHE tries to start several times.)* It was Sarah's idea.

JACOB: It would be. That woman's a bad influence. What did she do this time?

MIRIAM: Well, we were all in the sewing circle the other day and somebody mentioned Jesus.

(JACOB looks at HER long and hard. She looks guilty.)

MIRIAM: *(Continued.)* He's a traveling preacher. I think He's from Galilee. Everybody's talking about Him. They say He –

JACOB: I know who Jesus is. I've heard what Caiaphas says about Him.

MIRIAM: Oh?

JACOB: You don't want to know. You were in the sewing circle?

MIRIAM: Yes. And like I said, someone mentioned this Jesus, and Sarah said it would be nice if we could actually get to hear Him speak.

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JACOB: Please tell me you didn't bring Jesus into my home?

MIRIAM: We thought it would be better if one of us hosted a meeting, rather than if we all went out on the streets looking for Him.

JACOB: *(Looks up at the ceiling again.)* It couldn't be at Sarah's home?

MIRIAM: Oh, Jacob! Sarah couldn't host it. She has to be careful. Her husband's an official in the temple.

JACOB: So am I.

MIRIAM: It's not the same thing. He's a teacher of the law and you're only a temple guard.

JACOB: Thanks very much.

MIRIAM: No, I didn't mean –

JACOB: Doesn't matter. Right now, I'm more interested in how inviting Jesus to speak to your sewing circle resulted in that.

(HE points at the hole. MIRIAM lowers her eyes, guiltily.)

MIRIAM: It was only supposed to be the sewing circle. But then, Sarah told some of the neighbors, and they sort of invited themselves. And then Sarah and Naomi brought their husbands –

JACOB: Wait! You invited Jesus into my house while two members of the Sanhedrin were here? Do you have any idea what that could do to my career? *(Deep, calming breath.)* Go on. There was the sewing circle, and Sarah and Naomi's husbands?

MIRIAM: And the neighbors, and these people that came from goodness only knows where. It got a bit crowded. I ran out of fruit juice to serve. I was so embarrassed.

JACOB: *(Looks at the ceiling again.)* Right now, drinks are the least of my worries. What happened to the roof?

MIRIAM: I'm coming to that. *(Beat.)* We were sitting and talking. Jesus was very nice. Bit rough, a little on the grubby side. He could do with a spruce up, but that's to be expected when He lives on the road, isn't it?

JACOB: Get to the point. The roof?

End of Freeview

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