THE BODY IN THE BELFRY

by Doris A. Wald

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Production Notes

CHARACTERS/COSTUMES/PROPS

1. Pontius Pilate: Local Roman prelate. He is pompous with a predilection for using words that begin with the letter p and supposes himself to be a grand sleuth.

Costume: Roman toga or anything purple denoting high rank with a laurel wreath for his head.

Props: Place setting at a front table.

2. Saturday: Ponty's persnickety sidekick. He never says a word that the audience can hear. He sometimes whispers in Ponty's ear, but everything else is mimed.

Costume: Roman toga.

Props: Place setting at front table (seated next to Ponty), large bag or lots of pockets filled with a sundial wristwatch plus flashlight, note pad and pen or pencil, can of spray disinfectant, feather duster or polishing cloth, magnifying glass, antiseptic wipes, glasses, binoculars, and surgical gloves.

3. The Body: Talkative except when asked a sensible question, but no one can hear his words except the coroner, the angel and the audience.

Costume: Jewish robe with cloth over head to signify death. The cloth should be of an open weave to allow his facial expressions to be seen. Cheesecloth works well.

Props: Stretcher to be carried on.

4. Daedulus Bodicus: The coroner. He loves his job and is eager to try to help solve the mystery, but he is disgusted with the Body for not cooperating.

Costume: Tunic of white or hospital green with Ace bandage for tie at waist.

Props: Stethoscope, reflex hammer, large coin (the larger the better).

5. Ruth: Typical Jewish matron. She is in charge of the feast.

Costume: Jewish robe and headcover.

Props: Large spoon.

6. Maggie: Finds the body. She tends to be hysterical anyway, and follows Ruth wherever she goes.

Costume: Jewish robe and headcover.

Props: Large box of tissues, napkins.

7. and 8. Guard 1 and Guard 2.

Costumes: Roman tunics, helmets, swords, boots or sandals.

Props: Guard 1 needs to carry a large sheet of paper with a lot of small handwriting on it to use as a receipt.

9. Ananias: A scruffy, no-good patsy of the high priest. He is cowardly and always involved in anything underhanded happening in town.

Costume: Dirty tunic or robe with hood and tied belt.

10. Caiaphas: The head priest. Puts on a good, pious show when in public, but is really devious and nasty. Loves to pal around with Ponty to get on his good side.

Costume: Rich-looking robe or caftan and priest's headdress.

11. Angel: Appears at very end to take Body to be judged.

Costume: Police uniform plus wings and/or halo.

Props: Handcuffs and nightstick.

12. Maryanne: Flirtatious but hard-working woman. She is one of the friends gathered for the meal but is working in the kitchen most of the time.

Costume: Jewish robe and head covering.

13. Joanna: Maryanne's friend. She is not as bold as Maryanne.

Costume: Jewish robe and head covering.

14. Simon Peter: The patriarch of the feast. He is concerned about Ponty's presence and worried about getting arrested. Addressed by Ruth as Rabbi.

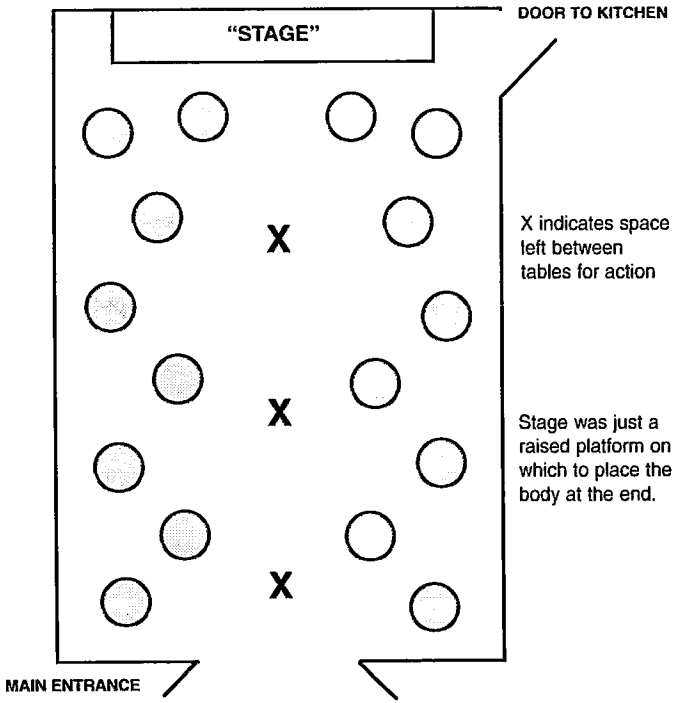
Costume: Robe. May also be played by the parish priest or pastor in street clothes.

15. Thomas: One of the believers. He tends to be hesitant and follows the crowd. May be read by a member of the audience.

16., 17., 18. James, Philip, and John. Three of the believers. These parts may be read by three members of the audience.

SET

The play's setting is Jerusalem, one week after the crucifixion of Jesus. The action takes place in the "lower room," where the friends of Jesus have gathered for a meal. You don't need a special set, which is a big plus with this play. There is no need to construct a belfry, as the belfry action takes place Off-stage. The main requirements are a few places to enter and exit. It's preferable if the audience can see one door, as Ruth makes a big show of locking it when the action begins. When originally performed, the action took place right out among the tables. Below is a diagram of our set-up. Although our production was staged in our church social hall, please feel free to adapt your staging to whatever area you have available to you. As you set up your tables, please keep in mind to allow for maximum audience interaction. Leave two tables empty to hold the stretcher — one up front and one farther back.



ADDITIONAL COSTUME NOTES

When this play was originally performed, several of the characters opted not to wear the traditional costumes. The man who played Pontius Pilate did not feel comfortable in a toga. He ended up wearing a white jogging suit, a purple cape with a brooch clasp, and a silk laurel wreath. It worked very well. Daedulus wore an operating-room green scrub suit top that we lengthened to floor length and tied with an Ace wrap. Just the outfit got him a laugh. Most of the women opted to wear more traditional robes, as did the Body.

DINNER

Our menu was quite simple, with breadsticks and salad already on the tables when the action started. When the feast is finally begun at Pontius' insistence (the blessing may be given at the beginning of the evening so as not to interrupt the action), the entree is served. Ours was spaghetti with garlic bread, but perhaps if the chef is adventurous, a Middle Eastern menu would be appropriate. Scene Two takes place while the audience is eating the main course. Scene Three action happens after the main course has been cleared before dessert is brought out. The action in Scene Four completes the play after dessert. The interweaving of the action with the meal could be adapted to fit whatever courses are being served. For example, if the servers prefer not to have the salad on the tables right away, the initial action could wait until after it has been served, or the scene could be split, with half performed before the salad is served and half done after the salad course. As long as the order of the scenes is maintained, the action may be adapted to fit your menu.

Scene 1: Before Dinner

(The play opens with a large crowd of people gathered for a feast, so when all your guests arrive and are seated, the action may begin. RUTH is in charge and bustles about busily, making sure that the doors have been properly locked, a matter she seems most concerned about. MAGGIE follows her around, echoing her orders and doing whatever she says. All other characters are Off-stage or seated in the audience.)

RUTH: Now that we're all here, let's get these doors shut. We don't want those nosy Romans getting wind of this, or that snob, Caiaphas. He'd just love an excuse to get us all arrested! *(As soon as the doors have been secured and everyone breathes a sigh of relief, a loud, insistent knocking is heard.)* **Quiet, everyone, quiet!** *(Turning to MAGGIE)* **Who could that be? Oh no! I hope it isn't...**

GUARD 1: *(From outside doors)* **Open up in there! We know you're in there! Open in the name of Caesar!** *(More banging on the doors)*

MAGGIE: *(Screams.)* **Oh! What shall we do, what shall we do?** ***Aaaagh!*** *(She faints on RUTH.)*

RUTH: *(Struggling to support the weight of MAGGIE)* **Maggie! Maggie! Stop it! That doesn't help at all.** *(To one of the men nearby)* **Well, open the door and we'll see what they want.** *(Doors are unlocked and opened. GUARDS 1 and 2 enter and post themselves one on each side of the doorway.)*

GUARDS 1 and 2: *(Together)* **His Eminence, Pontius Pilate, Governor of Jerusalem!** *(Ohs and whispering spread through the hall, but RUTH bravely stands her ground. MAGGIE makes a quick recovery. PONTIUS PILATE pokes his head around the corner and sniffs curiously, smiles appreciatively, takes a big whiff, and strolls pompously into the hall, followed by SATURDAY who acts very snobbish, like the place isn't clean enough to suit him. Everyone draws back from them except*

RUTH. MAGGIE cowers behind her, trying to hide, yet have a good view.)

PILATE: *(To RUTH)* **Are you the proprietor?**

RUTH: Proprietor? No, this is not a restaurant. This is my house.

PILATE: Private property?

RUTH: Yes. May I ask why you have decided to visit my humble home?

PILATE: Well, Ma'am, as my man Saturday and I were perambulating through the park, I perchanced to perceive the presence of a party. I just love a good party! And I pondered, perhaps I could persuade the person giving the party to permit us to partake. Hmmm? *(Looking intensely at RUTH)*

RUTH: Well, Your Honor, you are welcome to stay and eat with us if you would like, but I hardly think that our simple fare could compete with what you are accustomed to.

PILATE: *(Looking sad and rubbing his stomach)* **Have pity on my poor paunch! It is indeed a paradox that one who appreciates the good things in life** *(He sniffs again as if savoring the very air)* **should be burdened with the world's worst cook!**

RUTH: You mean they don't serve you good food at the Governor's house?

PILATE: Oh, Ma'am, if you only perused the putrid parade of petrified porridges to which I am subjected, you would pity me indeed. May we be permitted to join you? *(Looks around for a seat.)*

RUTH: *(Rolling her eyes at MAGGIE who shrugs her shoulders, then nods.)* **If you could just step over here...** *(She shows PILATE to a place at the head of the hall with a place for SATURDAY beside him. SATURDAY follows them, checking the cleanliness of the place and wrinkling his nose derisively as if nothing there comes up to his standards.)*

PILATE: *(To RUTH)* **This is my man Saturday. Forgive him for**

not speaking much, but he's a quiet fellow. *(SATURDAY has an expression on his face that shows he's above speaking to the likes of these people. As PILATE follows RUTH to a table at the head of the hall, he sniffs the whole way.)* **Oh, Saturday! What pleasures does my nose perceive? Ahhh! A platter of plump partridges... Pâté in pastry...Plenteous porcelain plates of potato pirogies...Pasta with pesto...Pot roast and pumpernickel...Ahhh, the pungency...The piquant aromas of paprika and pepper...All rinsed down with pots of pekoe and pourings of purple punch!** *(SATURDAY is trying not to touch anything or let anything touch him. PILATE sits at a front table and heartily introduces himself to the others at the table. SATURDAY fusses over him, checking the silverware for cleanliness, polishing PILATE's plate with his robe, etc., until PILATE pushes him away impatiently.)* **Saturday! Quit being so persnickety!** *(RUTH goes back by the doors again. MAGGIE follows her everywhere.)*

RUTH: I was afraid this was going to happen. Those soldiers have been watching the house since last week. Of all the people to be forced to invite into my home!

MAGGIE: I don't know. He doesn't seem so bad. He has nice eyes, and I can always tell by the eyes. Anyway, didn't the Master teach us to turn the other cheek and sit down with our enemies?

RUTH: *(Looking at MAGGIE amazed, like she's seeing a side of her friend she never saw before)* **Yes. Yes, you're right, Maggie. That's what the Master would've done — invite him in to eat with us. Besides, you saw the way he asked. What else was I supposed to do, tell him to leave? Yeah, right! That would have gone over real well. He had those two soldiers right behind him, and I bet there's a whole troop just outside.**

MAGGIE: What I can't understand is why he would want to eat with us.

RUTH: Look, my cousin told me he did the same thing at her

house once. He just wanders around till he smells some good cooking and then invites himself in for the feast! I guess he figures he's the governor so he can do what he likes! Or maybe the cook at the palace *is* really bad. Let's just hope a feast is all he wants. I don't want him to start asking questions about last week, and I just hope nothing goes wrong while he's here. Let's get this meal over with as soon as possible. It might be what the Master would've wanted, but the sooner he's out of here again, the better I'll feel.

MAGGIE: But what are we to do with these extra people now?

RUTH: We'll just have to set up some more places in the back. At least it's just the two of them. When he did this to one of my friends, he brought along a whole bunch of his cronies, including Caiaphas! And if there's anyone worse than Pontius Pilate to have in my house it would be Caiaphas! *(RUTH and MAGGIE get plates, silverware, and glasses and set some places. PILATE and SATURDAY are seated.)* **We're short a couple napkins, Maggie. You just run on up there and get them for me, and be quick about it! We're almost ready to start serving!** *(MAGGIE exits. In a minute we hear her scream in the distance. The screams grow closer and louder until MAGGIE bursts back in through the doors.)* **What in the world is the matter with you?** *(Grabs MAGGIE by shoulders and shakes her.)* **Quit that awful noise and tell me what's wrong!**

MAGGIE: *(Screaming)* **There's a dead person up there! Dead!** ***Aaagh!*** *(She faints all over RUTH.)*

RUTH: *(To two GUARDS by the door)* **Go see what she's raving on about!** *(She tries to revive MAGGIE. GUARDS exit. After a few seconds they rush back in and report to PILATE.)*

GUARD 2: She's right! There *is* a body up there!

PILATE: *(Leaves his place at his table and goes to back of hall. SATURDAY follows, looking surprised and revolted at the thought of eating in a house where there's a dead body.)* **Guard!**

Send for the coroner at once! *(To RUTH)* **Now there's really no reason why we can't start eating, is there? Hmmm?**

RUTH: *(Struggling with MAGGIE)* **I guess not, sir. It's all prepared.** *(GUARDS exit. PILATE and SATURDAY return to their seats. MAGGIE starts to revive.)* **C'mon, c'mon, Maggie. It's not that bad, is it?**

MAGGIE: *(Wailing)* **Oh, oh, oh, it's awful! It's so awful! Boo-hoo-hoo!** *(Then suddenly perfectly straight and sane)* **For heaven's sake! I don't get to find a body every day, you know, so let me enjoy it, will you?** *(Wailing)* **Oh, boo-hoo-hoo! It's so awful, so awful!**

RUTH: *(Escorts MAGGIE to the kitchen exit, then re-enters.)* **The really awful part about it is that now we'll have to put up with one of those dreadful Roman investigations. That's the part I can't stand! Anyway, let's get this feast started. Rabbi?** *(Looking for PETER)* **Rabbi! Would you please say the blessing for us?** *(PETER says the blessing and the feast starts.)*

Scene 2: During Dinner

(During the dinner, MARYANNE and JOANNA enter from the kitchen looking hot and tired.)

MARYANNE: Boy, I'm glad to get out of that kitchen for a while, aren't you, Joanna?

JOANNA: I sure am, Maryanne. It seems like we've been working in there forever. *(Looks around.)* **It's so crowded in here. Let's go over by the door for some fresh air.** *(They walk over to the doorway where the GUARDS are standing. Suddenly JOANNA takes a closer look at GUARD 1 and tugs excitedly on MARYANNE's sleeve.)* **Maryanne, Maryanne, look! It's him! It's him!**

MARYANNE: Who? What are you talking about?

JOANNA: *(Pointing to GUARD 1)* **Don't you remember? He's the soldier who was on guard the morning we went to the tomb!**

MARYANNE: *(Doubtfully)* **I'm not so sure.** *(Going over for a closer look)* **I thought it was an older guy.**

JOANNA: Look, I'll prove it to you. *(Goes boldly over to GUARD 1)*

MARYANNE: *(Trying to hold her back)* **Don't do anything! Don't say anything! You'll get us both arrested! Stop! Stop!**

JOANNA: *(To MARYANNE)* **Oh, nonsense!** *(To GUARD 1)* **You look familiar. Don't I know you from somewhere?**

GUARD 1: *(Disgusted and not really looking at her)* **Can't anybody come up with a new line? Look, lady, I'm a happily married man, and I don't —** *(Finally looks straight at JOANNA)* **I don't...oh no! Not you!** *(Peers around to see MARYANNE, who has been hiding behind JOANNA.)* **And you, too! Oh, no!**

JOANNA: *(Turning triumphantly to MARYANNE)* **See, I told you it was him! It was that nose. I'd know that nose anywhere, and...**

GUARD 1: *(Interrupting her)* **Hey! Keep it down, will you? I don't want anyone to remember I was on duty that morning! I got in a lot of trouble over that body coming up missing. I've been in hot water about it ever since!**

JOANNA: Why? What do you mean?

GUARD 1: Old Pompous Pilate has something on his mind about that young guy they crucified last week, and since I was responsible for guarding the tomb, he figures I was in on the plot to steal the guy's body! Not a day goes by but what he asks me about the whole thing all over again! He keeps harping and harping on it!

MARYANNE: What did you tell him?

GUARD 1: I told him I fell asleep for a little while and that it was gone when I woke up. He figures I was drugged. He's always seeing plots in everything.

JOANNA: Why didn't you just tell him the truth about what

happened?

GUARD 1: *(Horrified)* **The truth! Bright lights? Angels? Women crying and screaming? You think I'm going to tell him that?! You *are* crazy! Sometimes I think *I'm* crazy! Maybe I was asleep and just dreamed it all.**

MARYANNE: *(Trying to reassure him)* **No, no. You're not crazy. We were there too, and we saw the same thing. Don't worry, maybe someday we'll understand it all.**

RUTH: *(Approaches and the girls pretend they haven't been speaking to the GUARD, but RUTH looks at them suspiciously.)* **What are you girls doing over here? We need some help back in the kitchen. You get back in there and get to work. We can't have anything go wrong with this feast!** *(She shoos them back toward the kitchen, but JOANNA manages to give a big wink to GUARD 1 over her shoulder as RUTH is hustling them away. A few minutes later, loud voices are heard from a table. Several of the DISCIPLES are seated there. Those reading these parts should stand so they have the audience's attention and can be heard.)*

JOHN: I tell you, James, there was something wrong with the guy!

JAMES: The minute I first laid eyes on the guy, I knew he couldn't be trusted!

PHILIP: Oh, I don't know, John, he just seemed like an average person to me.

JOHN: Well, just look at how he handled the money. Greedy, I'd say.

JAMES: Yeah, the kind that would sell his own grandmother for a profit.

JOHN: A real rat! And where is he now, I ask you? Where is he?

PHILIP: I haven't seen him around, but that doesn't mean he meant to do what he did. He may have been completely innocent!

JOHN: *(Almost leaping at him)* **Innocent! Philip! How can you say that? You saw what he did!**

PHILIP: But you can't judge a man just on what you saw. We don't know for sure what happened.

JAMES: *(Leaping excitedly)* **But we were right there! And now he's nowhere to be found! He's guilty, I tell you! Guilty! And when we do find him, he's going to answer some questions and then he's going to confess what he did!**

JOHN: You'll have to ask your questions fast, brother, because if I see him, he's as good as dead!

PHILIP: You mean you'd kill him?

PETER: *(Interrupting)* **Gentlemen, gentlemen. Please calm down. You're attracting undue attention to yourselves.** *(He glances over at where PILATE is sitting. The argument subsides, and JOHN, JAMES, and PHILIP sit back down.)*

Scene 3: Between Dinner and Dessert

(After the main course, a loud knock is heard at the door of the hall. GUARD 2 enters. He gets everyone's attention and RUTH and MAGGIE rush over to see what's going on.)

GUARD 2: His honor, Daedulus Bodicus, Coroner to the Governor.

DAEDULUS: *(Rushing in importantly)* **I was told to report here to Pontius Pilate.** *(RUTH takes DAEDULUS to PILATE's table. PILATE and SATURDAY rise to greet him. PILATE is pleased to see him, but SATURDAY treats him as if he is diseased, spraying him with disinfectant, pointing the can and going PSST! all over him.)*

PILATE: My good hostess, may I present to you my good friend and colleague, Daedulus Bodicus.

RUTH: You are the coroner?

DAEDULUS: Yes, Ma'am. I'm the one who can look at a dead body and tell you lots of things about the person. Oh yes, a dead body can speak volumes to someone who knows what to look for. Why, a bit of blood or a nice knife wound

can tell me just... *(Pilate interrupts.)*

PILATE: That's enough, that's enough. Spare us the details, please! What's important now is that a body has been discovered here in the home of this kind lady who is the generous hostess of this delicious feast. To thank her for her hospitality, I intend to see that everything is handled correctly, so I am personally taking charge of the details. *(SATURDAY groans and buries his head in his hands in disgust, being sure to keep his robe from touching anything or anyone.)* **Please perform a postmortem and report to me immediately.**

DAEDULUS: Indeed I will, sir, indeed I will. And let me say that if there is anything amiss, I'll be sure to let you know right away. *(Struts out importantly with one of the GUARDS to go look at BODY.)*

PILATE: Now we can get on with more important things, like the next course maybe, hmmm? *(Looking at RUTH)* **I must say, this is the best feast I've found — I mean, that I've been invited to — for quite some time. I can just imagine the desserts! A panoply of pumpkin pies and petit fours...Precious pannikins of papaya preserves, peach parfait, or pomegranate puree...Prune pudding...** *(SATURDAY perks up at the mention of prunes, as though that's the first thing to appeal to him. PILATE continues to rave while sitting back down. RUTH springs into action once again, bustling about getting the dessert course served. Soon DAEDULUS rushes back in at the door and makes a big show of running up to where PILATE is sitting and whispers in his ear. PILATE gets a serious look on his face, then a pleased look. RUTH notices them whispering and walks over to find out what is going on. MAGGIE follows.)*

RUTH: *(Bustling over)* **What can I get for you now, sir? Some more caesar salad, perhaps?**

PILATE: *(Rising from his seat and rubbing his hands)* **No, no. What I need to have served up to me now won't come on a plate.**

Oh no, no, no! What we need served now is a *(Dramatic pause)* ***murderer!*** *(MAGGIE screams and there is great excitement.)*

RUTH: *(To MAGGIE)* ***Quiet!*** *(To PILATE)* **What do you mean?**

PILATE: My coroner has just given me his preliminary report. *(To DAEDULUS)* **Perhaps you could relate the facts to the good lady here.**

DAEDULUS: Yes. Well, the body shows signs of strangulation. I didn't take the time to really look closely at small details, but his neck was all... *(He grabs at his own neck to demonstrate. PILATE interrupts.)*

PILATE: Spare us the gory details and just give us the facts!

DAEDULUS: But it was most peculiar, because his head was all... *(Hangs head to one side)* **and his face was all...** *(Horrible expression on face. PILATE stops him again.)*

PILATE: I said to spare us the details. People are trying to eat here! *(SATURDAY has been quite grossed out by this whole description and looks green and sick.)*

MAGGIE: *(Eagerly)* **Oh no, don't mind about us! I want to hear everything!**

RUTH: Maggie! Be quiet!

MAGGIE: Oh, there you go again, spoiling the fun of it! I hope if I ever get the chance to find another dead body that it's not at your house. You just don't appreciate anything!

RUTH: *(Groans, then to DAEDULUS)* **Do I understand you to say that this person did not die a natural death?**

PILATE: From what Mr. Daedulus has...

DAEDULUS: *(Interrupting)* **Natural death? Oh no, no way. Actually, at first glance I'd say he was strangled. You see, his head was all...** *(Launches into description and imitation again but is halted by PILATE.)*

PILATE: Daedulus, old buddy, *(SATURDAY interrupts with a worried look on his face and whispers in PILATE's ear and mimes signs of sickness and a swipe across the neck)* **there, er... doesn't seem to be any sign of pestilence or plague?**

DAEDULUS: No, sir. Just that awful expression on what's left of his face, and...

PILATE: *(Interrupting him again impatiently)* **Would you just go do the rest of your job and see what else you can find out about this dead person?**

DAEDULUS: Yes, sir! By the way, he still had his purse on him and it was empty except for this odd silver coin that was stuck down under the lining. *(Holds up large coin so all can see, then holds it out to give it to PILATE. SATURDAY intercepts it and sprays it with antiseptic before handing it to PILATE.)*

PILATE: *(Examines coin.)* **Peculiar! This isn't a Roman coin. Not at all.** *(SATURDAY pulls out a large magnifying glass to look at coin more closely.)* **Do you know what it is, Daedulus?**

DAEDULUS: I've never seen a coin like that. Maybe it's Jewish. But if you'll excuse me, I'll just go and converse with that body now and see what stories it has to tell. *(Exits, gleeful and excited. GUARDS 1 and 2 exit too, to help DAEDULUS with the body.)*

PILATE: *(Has been fingering the coin with a thoughtful look on his face)* **You know, I could swear I've seen one of these recently, but I can't place just where at the moment. But I'll remember. Does it look familiar to you, Ma'am?** *(As he offers the coin to RUTH to examine, there is a loud scuffle and shouting at the door. The GUARDS burst in, dragging along a scruffy-looking ANANIAS, who is struggling to escape. He gives a yelp when he sees PILATE and tries to hide his face in his hood.)* **Paralyzing pandemonium! What's interrupting the feasting now? What's going on here? Who is this man?** *(SATURDAY is revolted by ANANIAS' appearance and holds his nose and attacks him with the spray can.)*

GUARD: We don't know who he is, sir. We found him digging through the dead man's clothes when we went up to get the body. He was muttering something about the man's purse. We can't get anything out of him.

PILATE: Why is he so reluctant to show me his face? Hold him

up, there! *(He leans over to get a closer look at ANANIAS, holding the coin behind his back. The GUARDS take off the man's hood and pull his head back so PILATE can see his face more clearly.)* **Oh yes! Now I see why he was hiding his face! Precisely because he knows I've seen that ugly mug of his before and I'm not likely to forget it.** *(SATURDAY pulls out a pair of glasses and jams them on his face and peers at the guy.)* ***Soooo,*** **what are you up to today, Ananias, hmmm? Perpetrating a perversion of some sort, I'll wager! Whenever I see you, I know trouble's not far away. Are you still working for the high priest?** *(PILATE, SATURDAY, and ANANIAS start to circle as PILATE asks his questions.)*

ANANIAS: No, no! Of course not!

PILATE: How do you explain your presence here? Jewish you may be by parentage, but you aren't of this household! *(Continuing to circle, but SATURDAY gets dizzy and turns them all to start circling the other direction.)*

ANANIAS: ***Welll,*** **I was...ummm...I was just in the neighborhood selling some Girl Scout cookies, and I...**

PILATE: Perhaps you were sent to search for this? *(PILATE pulls the silver coin out from behind his back and shoves it toward ANANIAS' face.)*

ANANIAS: *(Cringing and cowering at the sight of the coin)* **Oh no, oh no! Now what am I going to tell him? Oh, he'll never let me live this one out! Ohhh, ohhh!**

PILATE: Who won't, Ananias? Caiaphas, perhaps? Of course you're still working for him. You parasitic, pantywaisted puppet! You're the only Jew I know that would be willing to touch a stranger's dead body. And Caiaphas is the only Jew I know in Jerusalem who would stoop low enough to hire you to do it. He has no principles whatsoever either!

ANANIAS: *(Dropping to his knees)* **Oh please, sir, don't send me back to him empty-handed. He'll have me flogged!** *(Tries to grab at PILATE to beg for mercy but SATURDAY fends him off.)*

PILATE: *(Looking down at him, PILATE brings coin down in front of ANANIAS in a big gesture and ANANIAS makes a grab for it, but PILATE yanks it up again.)* **You disgust me! You were just involved in the crucifixion of that innocent penniless peasant from Nazareth, and now this!** *(To the GUARDS)* **Take him away and lock him up. Then go fetch Caiaphas, but don't tell him about any of this. Just tell him I found an excellent feast and I would like him to join me.** *(RUTH and MAGGIE react very negatively to PILATE's order about bringing CAIAPHAS into their house to feast, too. The GUARDS leave, taking ANANIAS with them. PILATE turns to RUTH again.)* **Perhaps he'll be here in time for some dessert, at the very least. But we can start on ours while we wait for him to show up, can't we? Hmmm?** *(PILATE and SATURDAY go back to their seats and the dessert is served. RUTH and MAGGIE are disgusted and go off to the kitchen, mumbling.)*

Scene 4: After Dessert

(PILATE finishes his dessert and goes over to RUTH.)

PILATE: I was just going to ask you, Ma'am, if you knew what sort of a coin this was. *(Hands coin to RUTH.)*

RUTH: *(Taking the coin and examining it closely)* **Why, yes I do, sir. It's a very old Jewish coin. I haven't seen one since I was very small. People used to use them to pay the temple taxes. I can't imagine where this person would have gotten one.** *(She hands it back to PILATE.)*

PILATE: Palpitations! I just remembered where I saw one of these! Caiaphas had some. The day after they had that crucifixion, I dropped by his house unannounced to see what he thought of the things that had happened. I burst in on him and caught him counting some coins just like this one. He seemed very upset and was yelling about

them as though they didn't tally up correctly. But I thought nothing of it at the time. I was so angry at him that I completely forgot the incident until now. But now that I think back on it, he seemed in a hurry to get that money out of sight once I came into the room. Now I wonder why. Hmmm.

RUTH: Caiaphas would be able to get lots of coins like that out of the temple treasury. But what would he want them for?

PILATE: I am perplexed, but I'm beginning to suspect this business is connected with that crucifixion and those phony charges Caiaphas leveled against that nice young guy he had killed. Boy, the more I look back on it, the more I regret ever letting him get away with it. I thought letting Caiaphas have his own way about it would help calm down the populace and improve the relationship between the Jews and the Romans. But now I think it made things a lot worse. If this matter is connected in some way, I intend to persevere until I solve this perturbing problem!

(RUTH and MAGGIE have been looking at each other secretively during this speech and now regard PILATE with amazement and respect. SATURDAY, who has been watching all of this with growing interest, whispers excitedly in PILATE's ear.)

PILATE: *(Continues.)* **Really? You don't say! Well, well! I think that just goes to prove that my suspicions were correct.** *(To RUTH)* **My man Saturday here tells me that he recognizes several of your feasters as some of the people who were friends with that nice young man. Saturday was with me at those proceedings, you see, so he ought to know.** *(To SATURDAY)* **If you would just point out some of those people, I'd like to talk to them a little bit to see what they have to say about all this!**

(RUTH and MAGGIE look fearfully at each other as SATURDAY takes out a pair of binoculars and scans the audience. He scans right in the face of some of the very close ones and cranes his neck

to see the far corners of the hall. He finally focuses on the person chosen to play the role of PETER and points dramatically at the person. PILATE walks over to PETER. RUTH follows and stands behind one side of PILATE.)

PILATE: *(Continues, to SATURDAY)* **Do you have a pencil and parchment? Or pen and papyrus, perhaps?** *(SATURDAY whips out pencil and paper to take notes. PILATE to PETER)* **Now, my good man, if I could have your name, to begin with.**

PETER: *(Rises, embarrassed.)* **My name is Peter, sir, Simon Peter, but my friends call me "Rocky."**

PILATE: *(Holding up the coin)* **Have you seen any coins like this one recently?**

PETER: *(Looks at RUTH, who shakes her head to indicate that he should give a negative answer, then answers nervously.)* **No, I haven't.**

PILATE: Do you know how one of them could have been involved in that crucifixion business?

PETER: *(Waffling)* **Er...** *(Looks over at RUTH, who gives a slight shake of her head.)* **No, I don't.**

PILATE: Listen to me. I know you knew that poor young fellow, and if you were a friend of his, maybe you'd like to find out the truth of this matter as much as I would. Isn't there anything you can tell me?

PETER: *(Decisively)* **No, no, no! I tell you, I don't know anything about any coins or bodies or anything!** *(All the Off-stage cast crows a loud rooster crow. On-stage cast looks all around in amazement.)* **Can't anyone shut up those darn chickens?** *(He plops down in his seat thoroughly disgusted.)*

PILATE: *(To SATURDAY)* **Well, that wasn't much help, was it? But I can't really blame him for denying everything. After all, it must seem to these people that I'm the enemy in these matters.** *(Sighs.)* **Is there anyone else here that looks familiar?** *(SATURDAY does his binocular scan routine again and points to whoever is reading the part of THOMAS at another*

table. PILATE goes over to the person.) **And who might you be, sir?**

THOMAS: My name is Thomas. *(Fidgets nervously and looks sideways at RUTH, who has followed PILATE to the table.)*

PILATE: Is there anything you could tell me that would help me get to the bottom of this plot?

THOMAS: *(Again RUTH from behind PILATE's back, indicates a negative answer should be given.)* **I doubt it.**

PILATE: Allow me to paraphrase. Don't you think that helping me would help get this mystery solved?

THOMAS: *(Looks at RUTH, who shakes her head "no" and threatens him with her spoon.)* **I doubt it.**

PILATE: *(Getting exasperated with THOMAS)* **But surely you have something to say to me!**

THOMAS: I doubt it. *(Again the Off-stage cast gives a loud rooster crow and the On-stage cast looks all around.)*

PETER: *(Loudly from over at the other table)* **Oh, brother! There go those darn chickens again! They never give it a rest, do they?!**

PILATE: *(To SATURDAY)* **It's pointless. I can't persuade these people to part with anything pertinent to the problem. I can see we're going to be on our own on this one, but I'm determined to show them that I am sincerely sorry for what happened to their young friend from Nazareth.** *(SATURDAY shakes head sadly, peers with dissatisfaction at the data he has written in his notebook, then draws a big X over it all and puts the pad and pencil away.)* **Say, they seem to be taking a long while getting back here with the priest. What time is it, anyway?** *(SATURDAY pulls out a large sundial and squints at it, turning it this way and that under the lights, trying to see where the shadow is. Then he pulls out a large flashlight, turns it on, and holds it over the sundial, showing it to PILATE.)* **It's ten o'clock already! Where are those guys?** *(SATURDAY stows the sundial and flashlight, shrugging his shoulders.)* **Anyway, maybe we're asking the**

wrong people the wrong questions. *(To RUTH)* **You say this is your house? You must be quite wealthy to own such a large home.**

RUTH: Well, actually it's my uncle Joseph's house. I just take care of it for him because he has no daughters here in Jerusalem.

PILATE: Could I speak with your uncle?

RUTH: He's away on a short business trip right now. What did you want to ask him?

PILATE: Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't your uncle give up one of his tomb sites to be used for that young man last week?

RUTH: *(Very nervous and clinging to MAGGIE's hand)* **Yes, he did. No one else had a place to lay him on such short notice. The next day was our Sabbath, sir, so we needed to do something quickly.**

PILATE: What I can't understand is what happened to the body afterward. *(RUTH and MAGGIE look at each other nervously but with smiles on their faces.)*

RUTH: Don't worry, it was taken care of.

PILATE: But I don't see how anyone could've taken it out of that tomb with the big rock and the guards and all. It just doesn't make sense. Couldn't you tell me what happened?

RUTH: Well... *(She is interrupted by GUARD 1, who has run into the hall.)*

GUARD 1: *(Roman salute)* **Reporting, sir.**

PILATE: What took you so long? And where is Caiaphas?

GUARD 2: We searched all over for him and finally found him at the house of a potter on the edge of town.

PILATE: Preposterous! A potter! Why should Caiaphas be visiting a potter?

GUARD 1: It did seem curious, so we listened at the door a bit. It seems they were striking a deal on some real estate.

PILATE: What?

GUARD 1: We waited until after they were done and Caiaphas left, then we followed him for a bit. When it was clear that he was headed back to the temple, we split up. The other guard was to follow him and then ask him to join you here after he got back to the temple. That way he wouldn't know he'd been seen at the potter's house. They should soon be on their way, sir.

PILATE: And what have you been doing all this time?

GUARD 1: I went back to the potter's house, sir, and got out of him the details of what had happened. It seems that Caiaphas had some money he wanted to spend and this potter had a field for sale, so they struck a deal on it. Here's the receipt the potter got, sir. He said that the priest hadn't wanted to give him one, but he had insisted so no one could question how he had come by this money. *(Hands a slip of paper to PILATE which SATURDAY intercepts and disinfects.)*

PILATE: *(Taking the paper and looking at it)* **I'm not familiar with this part of the city.** *(To RUTH)* **Do you know anything about this potter or this property?** *(Hands paper to RUTH.)*

RUTH: *(Looking at the name on the paper)* **Old Benson? You mean he finally sold that field of his? He's had it on the market for years, but everybody knows it's useless! And what a price the old swindler got out of the priest for it! Hah!**

PILATE: A high price? Let me see that again! *(Takes paper back and scans it.)* **I'll say he got a good deal on it. Twenty-nine pieces of silver! What an odd price to pay. I mean, why not twenty-five? Or thirty, maybe? Twenty-nine. Hmmm. And you say the land is useless?**

RUTH: Oh, yes. It's all worn out and full of rocks. I can't imagine what Caiaphas would want it for.

PILATE: *(To GUARD 1)* **Did the potter mention what Caiaphas**

was going to use the field for?

GUARD 1: A cemetery.

PILATE: What? That's not plausible!

GUARD 1: The potter said he didn't like the high priest and wasn't going to have anything to do with his offer to buy the field until Caiaphas told the potter that out of the goodness of his heart, he was going to use the field to start a cemetery for poor people.

PILATE: Incredible! And the potter believed him?

GUARD 1: I guess he had it written in the small print of that deal there *(SATURDAY whips out the magnifying glass again and PILATE grabs it from him and peers at the paper)* **that Caiaphas has to guarantee that that's what he's going to use it for. If he doesn't use it for the cemetery, the ownership reverts back to the potter. And with no refund of the money!**

PILATE: I'm developing a respect for this old potter! What a hard bargain! I'm amazed that Caiaphas agreed to it!

GUARD 1: The priest didn't seem real happy when he left the old potter's house.

PILATE: Now why would Caiaphas ever want to start a cemetery for poor people? I can't believe it's out of the goodness of his heart because he hasn't any to spare! He's a parsimonious pirate! Unless...unless...Let me ponder... *(Paces about deep in thought, then gives great leap.)* **Panicking pulsations!** *(SATURDAY jumps out of his skin.)* **That's it! He didn't want to purchase the field at all!**

RUTH: Didn't want it? Then why buy it if he didn't want it?

PILATE: If I know his greedy heart, he'd have wanted that money put in the temple treasury. Are there any of your laws that regulate what kind of money may or may not be put into the temple treasury?

RUTH: Yes. Our laws are quite clear on our responsibilities to the temple.

PILATE: Is there ever a circumstance where money cannot

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