

THE ROCK

by Mark Jacobs



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The Rock

A Dramatic Reading for a Sunrise Service

by Mark Jacobs

CAST

Female 1

Male 1

Female 2

Male 2

PRODUCTION NOTES

The theme of *The Rock* is 1 Peter 2:7-8a: “Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,’ and, ‘A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.’ ” It is appropriate for a sunrise service or any time on Easter Sunday.

This production is very easy to stage. No special set is needed. Four podiums or music stands should be set up to hold the Readers’ scripts.

The four Readers should dress similarly — preferably all in black.

The only props needed are four rocks that the Readers hold throughout the performance. When the soldier uses his rock to pound the nails into Jesus, the Readers all bang their rocks simultaneously. The rocks may be struck against the podiums or music stands used to hold the Readers’ scripts. In the original production music stands were used, and the echo effect was powerful.

The vocal delivery should be clear but unemotional except when the Readers speak in character. They should then use a lot of expression. This gives more effect to the one who is “center stage” at the time. Most importantly, don’t just read the script, but experience it. If you live it, your listeners will too.

- 1 *(Each READER stands behind a podium or music stand, holding*
 2 *a rock.)*
- 3 FEMALE 1: A rock.
- 4 MALE 1: An innocent stone.
- 5 FEMALE 2: A rock.
- 6 MALE 2: The immovable stone.
- 7 FEMALE 1: A rock. A tool of destruction.
- 8 MALE 1: A tool of death.
- 9 MALE 2: A fortress against intruders.
- 10 FEMALE 2: A divider between my Lord and me.
- 11 FEMALE 1: A rock. *(Examines her rock.)* So innocent-looking ...
- 12 MALE 2: But so powerful.
- 13 FEMALE 2: A statement.
- 14 MALE 1: An instrument of destruction.
- 15 FEMALE 1: A weapon. I was there the day this man they call
 16 Jesus was brought in front of us all. The day was warm. It
 17 was the kind of day where if you moved, the dust from the
 18 ground would rise, slinking its way around your throat
 19 like a snake coiling and tightening, leaving you choking
 20 and dry. Jesus was brought forth onto the steps of the
 21 hall where Pilate and all of the other henchmen known as
 22 politicians did their business. On this day Pilate was not
 23 in front of the crowd but back in the shadows, watching,
 24 waiting. The guards brought forth Jesus and pushed him
 25 to his knees, holding his head face up. They stood behind
 26 him with their spears poised at his side, waiting, hoping
 27 he might try something, anything. But he didn't. He just
 28 say on his knees, looking out at the eerily silent crowd —
 29 almost as if he were searching for someone. Between the
 30 hush and the dust, you knew something was about to
 31 happen. All of a sudden, a man started to shout at the
 32 crowd like a carnival barker.
- 33 MALE 2: All right, folks, gather round. We have for your
 34 display one Jesus of Nazareth. Says he is some sort of
 35 Christ — the Messiah! *(Laughs.)* Did you hear me way back

- 1 there? Says he is the Messiah! What you think we ought
2 to do?
- 3 FEMALE 1: It was so quiet.
- 4 FEMALE 2: So very quiet.
- 5 MALE 2: Well, friends, our leader, Pontius Pilate, has given us
6 an honor today. You're in for a treat. He has decided to
7 wash his hands of this man. Can't say I blame him. Well,
8 that leaves you with the decision. You get to decide
9 whether he goes free, or ...
- 10 MALE 1: *(After a pause)* It was so quiet.
- 11 FEMALE 1: So very quiet.
- 12 MALE 2: *(Almost shouting)* We can hang him on one of Rome's
13 crosses and crucify him! *(Pause)* Come on, folks. What will
14 it be? Don't let this opportunity slip by! You get to choose!
15 All you have to say is "Free him" or "Crucify him."
- 16 FEMALE 2: It was so quiet
- 17 MALE 2: So very quiet.
- 18 FEMALE 1: Then to my left, I saw a man bend down and pick
19 up a stone. A rock. Then, grinning, he spit on it and threw
20 it right at Jesus. *(Makes a throwing motion.)*
- 21 MALE 1: It was so quiet.
- 22 MALE 2: So very quiet.
- 23 FEMALE 1: The rock hit him on the forehead. The man who
24 threw it laughed and yelled.
- 25 MALE 2: You want an answer? There's your answer. Crucify
26 him!
- 27 FEMALE 1: All of a sudden, it was as if someone had flipped a
28 switch. The crowd went crazy. Others picked up stones
29 and began throwing them at Jesus, screaming ...
- 30 MALE 1: Crucify him!
- 31 FEMALE 2: Yeah! Kill him.
- 32 MALE 2: Give me the nails. I'll kill him myself!
- 33 FEMALE 1: All the time I kept thinking how ironic something
34 as innocent as a stone, a piece of the Creator's work, was
35 used to condemn an innocent man.

- 1 FEMALE 2: A rock.
- 2 MALE 2: A stone.
- 3 MALE 1: A piece of God's granite, a tool to complete justice.
- 4 (*Pause*) It was just a rock. I needed a hammer. I was just
- 5 doing my duty! I'm a soldier — I know the routine. I've
- 6 come to see the whole incident as entertainment. That's
- 7 what the crowd sees it as.
- 8 FEMALE 2: Entertainment.
- 9 MALE 2: The cross.
- 10 FEMALE 1: The blood.
- 11 FEMALE 2: Entertainment.
- 12 MALE 1: Entertainment. Every part of these deaths are
- 13 orchestrated for the crowd's pleasure. Pilate knows it. He
- 14 loves to tell us.
- 15 MALE 2: Boys, when you kill someone in public, make it big.
- 16 It's grand theatre! Hang 'em high. Make the blood flow!
- 17 MALE 1: Make the blood flow. It's always the same. The
- 18 convicted, or leading man in Pilate's little production,
- 19 always gets the whip at the bottom of the hill. Then they
- 20 strap the cross on his back and make him haul it up this
- 21 skull-shaped hill to me. It's always the same. I'm always
- 22 waiting. It's my job — I'm the nail man. I make the blood
- 23 flow. The tools of my trade are the same as a carpenter's:
- 24 a hammer and nails.
- 25 FEMALE 1: (*Deadpan voice*) It's always the same.
- 26 MALE 2: (*Deadpan voice*) It's always the same.
- 27 FEMALE 2: (*Deadpan voice*) It's always the same.
- 28 MALE 1: It's always the same, except (*Pause*) I don't know, I
- 29 must have had too much to drink the night before. It just
- 30 didn't seem the same. The day was dark and windy. Makes
- 31 it less entertaining ... the sun always makes the blood
- 32 shine. I can usually tell when the onlookers come up the
- 33 hill. They're boisterous, yelling, taunting. Not today.
- 34 FEMALE 2: It was so quiet.
- 35 FEMALE 1: So very quiet.

1 MALE 1: It caught me off guard. Then as they got closer, I
 2 noticed he wasn't even carrying his cross. Oh, he had it
 3 strapped on, but some other bleeding heart was helping
 4 him. This was not good, not good at all. *It's not supposed*
 5 *to be like this*, I thought to myself. *Keep it together. Come*
 6 *on ... It's show time.*

7 FEMALE 2: Entertainment.

8 MALE 2: The cross.

9 FEMALE 1: The blood.

10 MALE 1: I looked around for my tools. The nails were right
 11 beside me on the ground, where they should have been.
 12 But the hammer — where did I put the hammer? *(Pause)*
 13 Then I saw it: a large, smooth, thick, rectangular rock.
 14 Just as well. I picked it up. They laid this man they called
 15 Jesus down on the cross. Then the other guards ...

16 FEMALE 1: Stretched out his legs.

17 MALE 2: They stretched out his arms ...

18 FEMALE 2: and opened his hands.

19 MALE 1: I took the rock, that piece of granite. I placed the first
 20 nail on his left hand. *(ALL rap their stands in unison to make*
 21 *the noise of the rock on the nail.)* The blood came forth dark
 22 and red. I waited ... for the cry of pain, for the cheer of
 23 the crowd. But ... nothing.

24 FEMALE 2: It was so quiet.

25 MALE 2: So very quiet.

26 MALE 1: I took the nail and placed it on his right hand. *(ALL*
 27 *rap their stands in unison again.)* More blood, but still no
 28 sound. Just a look from this Jesus. He did not spit at me
 29 or curse my job. He spoke just two words.

30 MALE 2: You're forgiven.

31 MALE 1: Oh no, you can't do that to me! Come on, yell! Scream
 32 in pain!

33 FEMALE 1: So very quiet.

34 MALE 1: Curse me! You're forgiven? I'm not forgiven. You're
 35 going to die. I'm going to kill you! How can you forgive

- 1 me? (*Points to rock.*) I used this rock!
- 2 FEMALE 2: An innocent rock.
- 3 FEMALE 1: A rock.
- 4 FEMALE 2: A stone.
- 5 MALE 2: An earthen fortress that divides yet connects. (*Pause*)
- 6 It was my first assignment. Not too hard to watch a grave.
- 7 Tough, huh? It wasn't as if anyone could get into the
- 8 grave and bother this dead Messiah, Jesus. A rock, a huge
- 9 stone, blocked the entrance. It took seven of us to roll it
- 10 into place in front of the cave. All I had to do was sit and
- 11 wait. Wait for the sun to come up and my relief to allow
- 12 me some well-deserved sleep. Sleep was not allowed
- 13 under threat of death from my commander. The night
- 14 was so still. No wind. No sound. My colleagues and I had
- 15 drawn lots to see who would watch the rock. I drew the
- 16 short lot. It was so still!
- 17 FEMALE 1: It was so quiet.
- 18 MALE 1: So very quiet.
- 19 MALE 2: I had always wanted to be a soldier. All the conquests
- 20 and all of the perks. People look up to you when you're
- 21 part of the Empire's company. Yet it was my mother who
- 22 encouraged me to be a soldier. She said:
- 23 FEMALE 2: My son, you need something solid in your life.
- 24 Something that will be a stepping stone toward your
- 25 future. Be a soldier for our great Empire and Caesar. You
- 26 never know where it might lead!
- 27 MALE 2: Where did it lead? To guard a dead person behind
- 28 a big rock! Our official assignment given by our
- 29 commander was ...
- 30 MALE 1: Men, secure the area from grave robbers. Those
- 31 followers of Jesus are tricky. They may try to take the
- 32 body and spread some tale. We owe it to our constituents
- 33 to protect the tomb and make sure no false rumors
- 34 spread.
- 35 MALE 2: So here I was, protecting a dead person. Oh, I didn't

1 need to hear our commander to know about this Jesus.
 2 We had all heard of him. Some crazy Jewish Zealot. He
 3 didn't know his boundaries. He kept trying to tell others
 4 that he was the King. The Leader. It didn't help that he
 5 kept making up stories about bringing people back from
 6 the dead or making food out of nothing. But he wasn't the
 7 first crazy person, and he wouldn't be the last. None of
 8 that matters now. He is dead, and I will now have a death
 9 sentence on my head. I don't know how it happened! One
 10 moment I was standing there, looking at that stupid
 11 grave, and the next ... there was no wind, just quiet.

12 MALE 1: It was so quiet.

13 FEMALE 2: So very quiet.

14 MALE 2: Empty! The rock was rolled to the side.

15 FEMALE 1: Empty!

16 FEMALE 2: The tomb was empty.

17 MALE 2: This had to be a dream. I must have fallen asleep. No
 18 one could have moved that stone! It was immovable.

19 MALE 1: Immovable.

20 FEMALE 1: Immovable.

21 FEMALE 2: Immovable.

22 MALE 2: But no, the stone was moved, the tomb was empty,
 23 and I'm dead. There was no other choice. I had to run and
 24 get away from the fate that awaited me — the same fate
 25 that Jesus suffered. I didn't know where I was running to
 26 — only that I wanted to avoid the other soldiers. I slipped
 27 on some slick stones as I ran and bruised my knee. And
 28 then I ran smack into some women as they were coming
 29 to the tomb. It seems this Jesus has affected my life after
 30 all. A soldier — all I ever wanted to be was a soldier. And
 31 now ... I'm dust. It was an immovable stone! How could
 32 they have done it? Could he have done it?

33 FEMALE 1: A stone.

34 MALE 1: A rock.

35 MALE 2: An innocent stone.

1 FEMALE 2: A divider between my Lord and me. It was still
 2 dark when several of us women joined together to go visit
 3 the tomb of our Lord. You could tell it was going to be a
 4 beautiful day. The stars were still bright above as we left
 5 the gates of the city, and there was a purple haze in the
 6 east — a royal purple hue. We walked quickly and
 7 purposefully to the tomb with our spices and perfumes.
 8 We talked and prayed as we went. The talk was about our
 9 families and homes. The prayer was that someone, a
 10 gardener, or anyone, would be there to help roll the stone
 11 out of the way so that we could reach him. Our talk
 12 continued.

13 FEMALE 1: May Yahweh bless our journey and accept our
 14 gifts today.

15 MALE 1: When will the Messiah come?

16 FEMALE 1: I don't know. Someday, I'm sure.

17 FEMALE 2: The Messiah has come, and we're going to see him
 18 today.

19 FEMALE 1: He's dead.

20 MALE 1: He's dead.

21 FEMALE 2: Yes, he's dead, but ... Just then, someone ran right
 22 into us. It was still dark, but it looked like he was a
 23 soldier of some sort. When I asked why he was running,
 24 all he said was,

25 MALE 2: The rock! The rock.

26 FEMALE 2: We ran now. The closer we got, the more we could
 27 see.

28 FEMALE 1: The sun had risen at last. Night was over.

29 FEMALE 2: As we got to the tomb, I stopped dead in my tracks.
 30 No rock, no stone. It was out of the way. I crept slowly
 31 into the cave. A voice out of nowhere said ...

32 MALE 1: Why are you afraid?

33 MALE 2: The one you look for is no longer here.

34 FEMALE 1: He has risen as he said.

35 FEMALE 2: My first reaction was to cry because he was gone.



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