

Scene: Mary enters and sits down at her bench with a table with a mirror, brush, etc. She picks up bottle (box?) of perfume and gazes at it. As she starts talking, she is only talking to an empty room ignoring the audience.

Mary: (takes the lid off the perfume and inhales) One year's salary. Do you really smell as if you cost that much? You had better. It took me more than that of saving and putting aside. I found you in the market and wanted you, but knew I couldn't ask Marta for such a frivolous thing. She would have scoffed. Said we should spend the money on something more efficient; the ever efficient Marta. (smiles sadly) But, I thought differently. I scrimped and saved from the little that I can actually call my own. Every time I put the money away, I thought of your smell and the joy of a little of it on my skin; even though there is no one to please but me with the smell. (sighs as she takes one last smell and then puts the lid back on) No, I will not enjoy it like I thought, but nothing is the same these last few weeks since I finally was able to buy you. Who would have thought that so much could happen in just one month.

(stands up and starts to pace a little) It all started just over a month ago. My brother, Eleazar got sick. At first Marta just sent me to the market to pick up some of her home remedies, but after a night of those not working, she sent me for the doctor. When the doctor came and seemed baffled and Eleazar didn't improve, I talked to Marta about sending for the Master. We sent a servant with very specific instructions. Talk only to the Master. Make sure that you give the Master this exact message, "Lord, the one whom you love is sick." We knew the Master would come. Unfortunately, we acted too late. Our brother died later that day. We couldn't call the messenger back, but if we could have, we would have. Marta was about ready to send another messenger after the first so that the first messenger wouldn't bother the Master, but for once I was able to persuade her not to. I think it had to do with her being so distracted with the burial and all of that. By then the mourners had already arrived and she had the planning of the meal, the spices for burial, the funeral procession and the grieving process had already begun for her. She was able to busy herself with all the work, but not me. Work is Marta's balm. For me, I would much rather be at the Master's feet listening to his voice. Even though it was going to inconvenience Him, I wanted Him to come—just to hear his voice of comfort.

Word spread quickly that first day of the week. Friends and comforters arrived from Jerusalem and from Bethany. Even though I knew how much Eleazar was admired in the community, I was still impressed with the turn out. I don't know how much had to do with the fact that Eleazar was an important member of the community or for the Rabinic law of comforting the mourning. We had a large amount of people at the house. Marta was in her prime. She loved having people to direct, and she had people!

Meanwhile, I would have much rather hidden. I tried, but the first day of a death is the busiest. The funeral procession takes place and everyone wishes the deceased peace. So, before the afternoon was out, I was at the head of the procession with Marta taking my place in the women's line to the grave. The parade of people stretched back behind us almost seemingly innumerable, but in reality it was probably 150 people.

Upon reaching the grave, we had the body placed in the cubby hole designed for Eleazar. There was also a hole there prepared eventually for Marta and me. We had not dreamed of placing our brother there so soon. The grave was inside a cave with niches built in it for eight bodies. In the first of the three right hand niches they laid my brother. Then we each proceeded to say a final farewell to Eleazar. The traditional "Depart in peace," stuck in my throat and almost wouldn't come out. Marta had a hard time with it also. We leaned on each other then and wept. The mourners around us gave us the time we needed to compose ourselves. Then we headed back to the house. One there, all the mourners formed two lines, and we passed through it to cross the threshold as they expressed their sympathy. The day was not yet done. There was the dinner now to eat. At least we were allowed to rest while others served us; although, I think that was harder on Marta than the rest of the day had been. We sat among friends and reminisced about Eleazar. There were family friends there who remembered us as kids. The stories that we were able to share brought smiles through the tears. When at last we fell into bed that night, it was with relief. Yes, I cried myself to sleep. It was so hard to realize that Eleazar was gone.

The next couple of days are blurs in my mind. They were full of tears, mourner songs, and secret hope. The secret hope was for the Master. Our messenger must have arrived and although the Master couldn't do anything now to help Eleazar, he could come and comfort us. I hoped for that beyond all else. I knew if He came, I could sit at his feet and just rest. It wasn't until Tuesday when the messenger returned that things got worse.

The messenger brought a reply from the Master. When the Master heard the news about Eleazar he said some strange words. These words echoed and reverberated through my mind for the next three days. The Master's words were, "This sickness will not end in death, but is for the glory of God, so that His Son will be glorified through it." The Master always has seemed to know what is happening. He even had been able to speak a word and bring a sick child back from the brink of death. I can't seem to think what went through His mind, to make him say that Eleazar was not sick enough to die. To make matters worse, it was said the very day Eleazar died! What was He thinking? Could He have known what was happening here? Marta and I discussed this, but Marta soon would wonder back to her kitchen or other hostessing duties. The mourners would be here mourning with us for the first week. Meanwhile, I would sit and ponder. I tried

to help Marta but my heart wasn't in it, and the other comforters would soon bussle me off to sit and mourn on my own.

As I sat and pondered, the thought often came to my mind, "if only the Master would have been here. Eleazar would not have died." The if onyls will drive a person crazy if she listens to them. I would sit and ponder, sit and cry, sit and dispair. Finally, when I had enough of the people, I would try to sneak out to the grave to sit and think, and sit and mourn in quiet. That didn't last long except for the first time. I was able to have a few moments of peace before a childhood friend found me and soon the rest of the mourners were there to mourn with me. I wrestled with the Master's words while I quoted psalms. How could our situation bring glory to the Master? How could it be for the glory of God? I did not understand and at times I didn't care. I just wanted to have the Master there. Then I could look into His eyes and know all would be well, but He wasn't here. I couldn't understand why He hadn't returned with the messenger. What could have happened?

Marta and I tried to figure it out, but none of our aimless ponderings came to any conclusions. Through those long days of mourning, Marta and I somehow managed to survive. I know Marta looked alright on the outside, but that was only because she had a house to run and people to tell what to do. I on the other hand probably looked as bad on the outside as Marta felt on the inside.

The morning of the fourth day arrived under a sunny sky. It was one of those gorgeous days with crystal clear blue sky and marvelous sun. I was able to sneak outside before many of the mourners were up and gaze into the sky and think. I heard the Master's words tumble through my mind for the umpteenth time. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God; so that the Son of Man may be glorified." I did not know how or why or understand the words any better than I did before, but I decided to accept and believe them. If the Master had said them, then they were true. The Master had never lied before; why should he start to now? As I came to that conclusion, I looked up into the cloudless sky and heard the words of a psalm pass through my mind, "The heavens declare the glory of God." I decided that no matter what happened, I could do as the heavens and declare God's glory. I'd had the priveledge of having a brother who cared for me and my sister. We were not left destitute. We had friends who were here to help comfort us, and we had the Master as a friend; even if he wasn't here yet.

The rest of the day took on a different cast. I went into the house and helped Marta with the breakfast. The comforters tried to bussle me out of the kitchen, but I didn't leave until I saw that it truly was under control. Then I went back to my little seat I had used all week. I sat and prayed this time. I thanked God for the wonderful things He had given me and asked Him to bring glory to the Master through me. Little

did I know what would unfold that day. As I prayed, Marta came bussling in. A look in her eye told me something was different for her too. She whispered in my ear the most wonderful words I had heard since Eleazar died. "The Master is here and wants to see you!" I bolted out of my seat and went running to the edge of town to meet Him. I heard the murmurs around me and knew that the comforters had not heard what Marta said. They thought I was going back to the tomb. I let them think that. I had only thoughts of the Master. I found Him outside our village sitting in a small resting place. I collapsed at his feet and cried. Between my sobs, I said the words that had been tumbling around in my head since Eleazar had died. With conviction and no accusations I said, "Master, If you would have been here, my brother would not have died." As my words trailed off into tears, I felt something drip onto my hand. I looked up and saw the Master crying—no *weeping* with me! The Master's eyes met mine and held them. The look that passed between us was one of understanding. He knew the pain I had gone through, He understood the anguish, and He seemed to know the victory I had gained earlier that day. As he gained his composure, he asked to be shown to the grave. I stood up and brushed myself off. The Master stood up and his followers came along. We almost had a second burial procession forming as we moved to the tomb.

Upon arriving, the Master said words that I will never forget to this day. He said, "Take the stone away." The authority in his voice almost made some of the younger men start to obey him immediately, but Marta's voice cut off their movements.

Marta being Marta was very straight forward. She just stated the facts. "He stinks! It is the fourth day." The implication was on the fourth day, the decaying process starts. It also was believed that on the fourth day after death, the soul would leave the body and go to Abraham's bosom. She wasn't insulting the Master, just varifying the facts. I didn't understand what was said next, but Marta clearly did. The Master turned to her and used words that were very similar to the messengers reply. In fact they were so similar that a shiver went down my spine. He stated, "Didn't I tell you that if you only believed, you would see the glory of God?"

That seemed to get Marta's attention also. She nodded, subdued, and the men moved the stone away from the enterance. Then He began to pray; it was a short prayer that he said was for the people around that they would believe in Him. I didn't know what to expect, but I found that I was holding my breath. It was released in a gasp as he said the next words. "Eleazar, come forth!" If I thought there was authority in His voice before, I was wrong. This was true authority. I gazed at him wondering where it came from, and then I knew. I knew without a shadow of a doubt, that He was more than the Master, more than Teacher. He was—*is*—God! Then as if proving to me that fact, a gasp went up around me. First from Marta and then from my own throat and from others as a white clothed figure hobbled into view. Marta and I stood stunned.

Even though he was completely wrapped in burial clothes, we knew it was Eleazar, but we were too amazed to move. Jesus' words moved Marta from her paralysis. He told us to unwrap him. Immediately, Marta was ordering people around, but the usual sharpness was gone from her voice. There was awe, and I saw tears and a smile mixed on her face as she looked at Jesus and thanked him. As I went past the Master to Eleazar, I paused and looked into his eyes. I thanked him also, but I noticed something about his eyes, although there was triumph, there was a sadness there as well. It was similar to the sadness that had been there when he had cried with me. It was a look of understanding and almost dread of death. There seemed to be no need of words as our eyes met. He nodded for me to go to my brother.

The reunion supper that followed was in stark contrast to the mourning meal following the funeral four days ago. Eleazar told stories, people laughed, everyone wanted to see him and the Master. The Master also told stories and laughed with his followers, but I still noted a sadness that seemed to permeate him. I didn't understand it until the Sabbath when Nicodemus came to supper. Nicodemus is a friend from Jerusalem who sits on the Sanhedrin. He brought news of the Sanhedrin's reaction to Eleazar's resurrection. He told the men that the High Priest had said it would be better for one man to die for the nation than that the whole nation should perish. They were now actively seeking ways to kill the Master. The Master's followers and even Nicodemus urged Him to go away where the Sanhedrin could not reach Him. He just quietly ate and brought everyone's attention back to Eleazar. The pall that had descended with Nicodemus' news was lifted and the celebration returned, but I noticed as I served the Master, that His heart was not in it. The Master and his followers left early on the first day of the week. They were heading back to the wilderness of Perea. The passover was near, and they would return closer to the actual event.

Marta, Eleazar, and I went back about our business. I can't say we went back to it the same as we were before. We had many discussions about who the Master really was, but I think we all agreed that he is God. I think for Marta it is just part of her make up to be able to argue. Those discussions though did help us figure out how to answer other people, and there were lots of people with questions. As the crowds began to arrive for passover, they heard the story of Eleazar and came to visit. They wanted to meet a man who had been dead for four days. They wanted to meet the sisters and hear our side of the story. Again, Marta showed her organizational skills of bringing a meal together for a lot of people. Repeatedly we would have 20 people for a meal—most of them complete strangers. All of them had two things in common; they wanted to meet Eleazar and they wanted to hear about the Master. Eleazar beamed every time he told the story. He loved to tell of being in Abraham's bosom and hearing the Master's voice commanding him to come forth. With Abraham's helping hand, Eleazar stood up

and found himself in complete darkness. He could barely move. He knew where the Master's voice had come from and so he shuffled off toward it.

So the days passed. Now it is only six days away from the Passover. The Master and his followers are back. There is a meal tonight at Simon's house. Marta has been asked to help, and Eleazar is the guest of honor along with the Master. Everyone is in a festive mood, but I noticed the look on the Master's face. The eyes are back to the look they had at the tomb. The dread of death is in them. He seemed to be able to dissuade others' fears of His death, but I believe He will not make it through this Passover. I can't understand why I think this, it is just a feeling deep inside of me. I want to be prepared for the loss. I know that He raised Eleazar; could He do the same for Himself? I don't know. But I want to show Him I care and understand a little of what He is feeling.

(Goes back to the bench, sits down and takes the ointment container. Opens it and smells) The Master is God. I know that. I want to give Him back a little of what he has given me. He gave me that peace before He came and raised Eleazar. He gave me my brother back from the dead. What can I give him? (smells the ointment again. With conviction, closes the ointment and stands up) I will do it. I don't care what the others think. This is for the Master. I will give Him what I have. (Takes her hair down and wipes at tears. Then straightening her back, walks out the door.)