

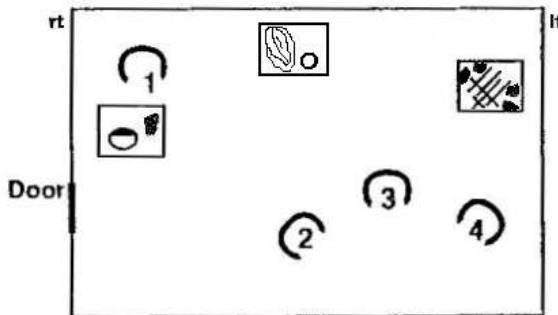
Sunday Morning

A Drama based on the Amazing Events of Jesus' Death and Resurrection
Written by Tim Onnen

Cast:

Spearro (unit commander, arrested Jesus, searching spiritually)
Justus (soldier, arrested Jesus, always joking around, mocks religion)
Leo (soldier, assisted at Jesus' trial & crucifixion, believes He is God's Son)
Brutus (soldier, assisted at Jesus' trial & crucifixion, mocks Jews & their religion)
Pheus (soldier, guarded Christ's tomb, awe-struck)
Victor (soldier, guarded Christ's tomb, nervous)
Akiba (Jewish leader, pious)
Herzul (Jewish Leader, paranoid)
Narrator

Notes: Good costumes will enhance the drama. A table of four swords and four polishing rags is stage left. A table with a cup of dice and a large white cloth are on a rear centered table. A wash basin and towel are on a table stage right. Each soldier will take a turn inconspicuously "washing up", dipping the cloth into the bowl of pretend water and wiping their face and neck. They will also polish their swords throughout the conversation. During these activities each still listens intently. Periods... in the script suggest a slight pause in the dialogue.



(On set are Brutus slouched and sleeping in chair 2, Justus in chair 3. Leo is in chair 1, head in hands, eyes closed, leaning on the wash table in front of him. All are "frozen" until the opening narration ends.)

Opening Narration: We have here the living quarters of Roman soldiers. They are about to start the day. Two of them witnessed Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Thursday night. The other two witnessed Jesus' trial, nailed Him to the cross, and watched Him die on Friday. And now it is a short time later . . . It is very early "Sunday Morning."

(Leo stirs, slowly raises his head, gets up, moves slowly to stage left, picks up a sword, then lays it down again, he turns, going to the center table, picks up the cup of dice and shakes it, pauses, pondering, sets them down, picks up the seamless white cloth and runs his hand through it, becomes motionless for a moment, shakes his head in bewilderment and lays the cloth down again.)

Spearro: (entering, clapping loudly) The sky's pink in the east. Let's move it, men.

Brutus: (startled by the clap) This life's for the chickens! -- waking up so early. (sits up slowly, rubs eyes and face trying to wake up)

S: (moving to behind three chairs) Jerusalem will be buzzing soon, and we've got orders to carry out. (turns, toward L. at rear stage right) How did you sleep, Leo.

Leo: (pacing, rubbing his neck) Not too well. Maybe an hour.

S: Still thinking about last Friday? But, you've seen a lot of executions.

L: I'm still trying to piece things together, sir. (*makes his way to the table to wash*)

S: Better talk things out. Anyway, I'd like to hear about it.

Justus: (*sarcastically*) Say, Spearro..., speaking of orders; who get's that perilous job today?

B: (*becoming lively, laughing*) You mean guarding the tomb of the Jew's dead king.

J: (*slapping B's knee*) Yeah, can you believe it. (*rises, fisted hand over his heart, sarcastic & dramatic*) Commander, I feel extra courageous today. I volunteer for such a job, laying my life on the line. (*laughs*)

B: You mean laying yourself on the ground with your feet upon a rock, watching the grass grow. (*laughing*)

S: Both of you jokers have the next shift at the tomb... But don't be surprised if you have to deal with a mob of the Guy's followers. That's the rumor, ya know. (*goes to wash when L. is done*)

J: I'll believe it when I see it. But I think they're a bunch of wimps just like their leader was. (*goes to the sword table*)

L: (*done washing, moves toward J.*) Their leader isn't a wimp. He's just got a different outlook.

J: (*turning to correct L.*) You mean had a different outlook, Leo.

L: I don't think He's totally gone, Justus.

J: (*astonished*) What!

L: He didn't talk like a normal person... He didn't act like a normal person... He didn't die like a normal person... ... It's as if dying were His plan for His life... but not the end of His life.

J: (*has picked up his sword and polishing rag, jeeringly*) Come on, Leo... Then where is he now? (*goes to sit in chair 3*)

L: I don't know, Justus. I don't have all the answers. (*sits in chair 4*)

J: I have one answer... Dead people stay dead.

L: Usually, Yes... But who's to say Jesus couldn't rise from the dead himself? They say that He raised a man from the dead in Bethany a few weeks ago.

B: Aahh, that's probably just another rumor. (*mockingly asking for proof*) Did you see this resurrected man, Leo?

L: No. Do you have to see everything you believe.

S: I saw him, Brutus. Leo's right. It was a dead man come back to life.

(*S. finishes washing, goes to the sword table and inspects them while facing the others and listening*)

B: Superstition, if you ask me... (*pointing to L.*) Just like a lot of other things that you're calling supernatural?
(*rises, goes to wash*)

L: (*rising out of his chair, passionately*) Brutus, you saw everything I did. How can you just chalk it up to chance or superstition.

J: (*laughing*) Listen to this guy. (*mimicking*) Pretty soon he'll be wear'in a long robe and prayer shawl like all the religious fanatics in this country.

S: Knock it off, Justus. You and I saw some strange things ourselves during the arrest. (*has picked out two swords and rags, moves behind chairs 3 & 4*)

L: (*sits down again, anxious to hear more*) Like what?

J: Well..., like the Sanhedrin . . . They had us put together an armed battalion as though we were going up against some wild criminal. But when we went out to arrest Jesus, He actually came out of the darkness to meet us!

S: That's not all. When we said we were looking for Jesus, He admitted, "I am He."

B: (*loudly from the wash table*) Sounds just like the average Jew to me: irrational! (*B. & J. laugh*)

S: (*ignoring B. & J., talking to L. while giving him a sword and rag*) When this Jesus said, "I am He," we all stumbled back and fell to the ground, like some invisible tidal wave hit us.

J: Spearro, you've got to admit, they tried to take us on. How about the guy who drew his sword and cut off the ear of the High Priest's slave. (*frivolously motioning as if to demonstrate on L's ear*)

S: (*grabbing J's arm*) Yes, Justus... but who stopped the commotion?

J: (*hesitant to admit*) Well..., ... the man, Jesus, did.

S: (*letting go of J's arm*) Yes! And He even healed the guy's ear, right then and there.

B: (*is finished washing, goes to get his sword and polishing rag*) So, he had magical powers. Big deal.

S: (*to B.*) Listen . . . , miracles have happened all through history for the Jews. And their writings say that God Himself will come to earth some day. This Jesus was a walking miracle man. You just don't see that every day.

J: (*rises, goes behind his chair to defend B.*) Come on, Commander. We're Romans. We hate Jews; we despise Jews, and especially their batty religion... Remember?

S: (*perturbed, slowly backs up J. a few steps*) Yeah, Rome has taught us what to hate... and despise. But what has it taught us to love and trust?... Caesar?... Ourselves?... What hope do they give us?

J: (*not at all afraid, in his face*) Okay, think what you want, but you're putting your job on the line.

S: (*loud, forceful, thumping his finger into J's chest, backing him up to far stage right*) Look, Rome has my loyal service. But, I'm tired of giving them my mind and heart. I've been their puppet long enough. I've got questions that are bigger than Rome. I want to hear more about this... ...all right?

J: (*Backing off, lifts hands, shrugs shoulders*) All right. All right! Go ahead.

(B. has meanwhile sat in chair 3 with his sword and polishing rag)

S: (*turning, loud commanding voice*) Brutus!... so what did you and Leo see while you were on duty Friday? (*sits in chair 2 while B. is talking*)

B: Ahh. Plenty of stuff... The funniest thing was watching the Jewish Leaders... holding meetings all night long... sneaking around lobbying the people for the guy's death... secretly talking with Pilate...

L: Yeah, they broke plenty of their own laws through the whole thing, even on their highest Sabbath. They were out to get Jesus no matter what . . .

B: (*interrupting*) You could tell Pilate was scared, washing his hands and everything. I've never seen him so paranoid about a decision.

J: (*ridiculing*) Hey, Brutus . . . What's that you said that the Jews yelled when Pilate finally handed Jesus over?

B: You mean, (*mimicking, J. joins him saying*) "We have no king but Caesar." (*both laughing*) B: Wasn't that something? I thought I'd never hear that from those pious fanatics. Man, they're the best politicians I've ever seen.

J: (*after his laughter calms down*) Yeah, I mean . . . how can this Jesus be anybody special, when most of His own people rejected Him and yelled for His crucifixion?

L: Well, some do believe in Him, Justus. Maybe the majority just had wrong expectations. People can be wrong, no matter who they are . . .

J: (*interrupting, implying L. is wrong*) That's for sure.

L: . . . And I think the God in heaven was showing they were wrong by all the unusual things that happened while Jesus was dying... like the black sky.

S: You mean those three hours of darkness? . . . Wasn't that at the time He was on the cross?

B: Hey. Now, I'll admit, that was spooky. But, worse than that was the earthquake right after he said his last words. Man, we all thought the world was coming to an end...

J: (*interrupting*) The temple guard said that the huge veil even tore in half. (*goes to wash*)

L: (*excited, rising*) That's just the kind of things I'm talking about; it can't be just coincidence. (*to S.*) But what was really unusual, were the things Jesus said.

S: Like what, Leo?

L: (*starring down but still standing, thinking back*) Well, on the way to Golgotha, women we're weeping, and he said, "Do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children" ... And the first thing He said from the cross was, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

S: (*astonished*) He said, forgive them?

L: (*moving to between the chairs of S. and B., speaking to S.*) Yeah! He's being put to death and He's not even thinking of himself. He's showing concern..., and love, even for His enemies. (*pause, thinking back*) Boy, that really started to make me think.

B: (*rises, accusingly*) Yeah, Leo, but even after that, you still mocked and ridiculed Him . . . (*L. turns his back to B. and slowly moves to stage right, wishing he could escape the true accusations, B. quickly picks up tunic off table and approaches L. with it*) . . . You even mocked Him when we rolled the dice . . . and you won His tunic. (*B. throws the tunic in front of L. who just stares down at it - short pause - then B. points at him with his sword*) You mocked Him just like you had done at the scourging . . . with the whip . . . and the thorns . . . and the jokes . . . you were doing it too, Leo!

L: (*turning around, defensive, loudly*) I know I was . . . That's how we've all gotten our kicks around here for a long time. It's second nature. And that's just my point. (*turning away again ashamedly*) How could anybody forgive me after that? . . .

S: (*to L*) . . . And you think Jesus was saying He forgave you?... even while you were still mocking Him?

L: (*turning to S.*) When He said it, He was sincere . . . You could see it in His eyes... And I remember what He said to one of the other criminals. The guy was mocking Jesus, too, at first . . ., but then he realized that Jesus was innocent...

J: (*interrupting, laughing*) A lot of good that's going to do a guy when he's already hanging on a cross. (*B. laughs too*)

L: (*to J. and B.*) Laugh if you want. But, Brutus, you heard what Jesus said to that criminal: "Today you will be with Me in paradise" ... It's like I said before... I don't think Jesus is totally gone. It's like He had a mission to die... but would walk right through death.

B: (*laughing*) Well, if He's gonna walk right through death today, I guess Justus and I will have a front-row seat. (*J. laughs & gives him "five", congratulating him for his quick humor.*)

(*L. goes to sit in chair 4 again*)

S: (*rising, forcefully to B. & J.*) Can't you guys take anything seriously? . . . Don't you have any questions about your destinies? . . . And do you have any good answers? . . .

(*B. & J. calm down, don't answer, but turn their backs to S. for a moment*)

S: (*sits again, calmly asking L.*) Did Jesus say anything else from the cross?

L: Yeah, at the end, He yelled out like I've never heard anyone yell right before dying. He said, "Father into Your hands I entrust My spirit."

S: Who's this "Father" He keeps talking to?

L: I guess . . . God . . . *(excitedly)* . . . Spearro, it squares with why the chief priests wanted Him killed. They told Pilate, "He claims to be the Son of God."

B: That's when Pilate got really nervous. *(loudly)* But I can't believe that, there at the foot of the cross, you said the same thing, Leo!

L: *(expressively)* Why not, Brutus? Why not?

B: *(throwing both hands into the air)* This conversation is crazy. If there is a God, why would He show up as a man among these fanatical people?

S: But, Brutus, Why not?... It's His choice.

(a knock is heard at the door)

S: Come in. *(remaining seated, but turning toward door)*

(Akiba & Herzul enter, coming in just enough not to be seen from outside, Herzul enters last looking back to make sure no one noticed them coming into the living quarters of these Gentiles)

Akiba: Hello, sirs. We can't stay long. We just want to make sure that the tomb is still being guarded well... and that everything is going fine. . . We are to bring an updated report to the Sanhedrin.

S: *(relaxed voice)* The watch is continuing... There have been no reported incidents. *(pointing to B. & J.)* These two men will be taking the next shift.

A: Good.

Herzul: Commander, remember... we are to be the first notified if anything happens.

(Pheus & Victor, out of breath, carrying swords, rush in, they speak to everyone but direct most of their words to Spearro, talking very excitedly, interrupting each other to get the story across)

Victor: *(spots the Pharisees, points to them quickly)* Good you're here too!

Pheus: *(to S.)* There's something wild going on down at the tomb...

V: There was an earthquake... *(S. stands)*

P: And we saw this bright light coming down from the sky. It was an angel... or... or... some god, or something...

V: And it rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb, as though it weighed no more than a olive...

P: We couldn't even look at him. He was bright as lightning...

V: Commander, we both became so faint. . . and the next thing I knew we were pulling ourselves up off the ground...

P: Then, we saw people come out of a lot of the tombs. Man it was spooky! I said, "Let's just get out of here."

V: And Commander, as we left we . . . we looked into the tomb . . . and . . . and...

P&V: *(together)* it was empty!

V: Please, Spearro. *(V. & P. kneel)* Please . . . don't tell Pilate we left our post. . . Please!

S: All right... All right... Just calm down. *(to A.)* Rabbi, what do you want to do?

A: *(nervously hurrying)* We've got to call a meeting. . . We'll think of an explanation for this. . . Don't worry about Pilate; we can cover for you if necessary.

H: Don't any of you say a word about this until after our meeting. *(pointing to V. & P.)* Commander, can these two soldiers come with us?

S: *(to P. & V.)* Yes. You two, follow the Rabbis. *(A. H. P. & V. exit hurriedly, S. paces for a moment, chin-in-hand, pondering)* Hummmmm. . .

B: *(nervously)* Now what, Spearro?

S: *(turning to the others, excited)* Let's go see the tomb! *(all hurriedly move toward the door, B. & J. exit first, S. turns back toward L. & stops him)* Leo..., what do you think?

L: *(grabbing S. by both shoulders, looking him right in the eyes)* He's risen, Spearro! I know it. *(louder, more enthusiastic)* He is RISEN!!!

S: Yes!!! *(thrusting his sword into the air)*

(both exit hurriedly)

Narrator: *(pause)* Jesus said... "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever." "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in Me will live even if he dies. And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die." *(Revelation 1:18 & John 11:25-26)*

To God Be the Glory!