

CHANGED BY HIS LOVE

by Audrey Surma



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**Changed by
His Love**

by AUDREY SURMA

PRODUCTION NOTES

These monologs may be used individually or as a series. Because they tell women's stories with easy-to-relate-to situations (including the drudgery of housework and dealing with the business world), they would be appropriate for a mother-daughter banquet or women's retreat.

A theme that runs throughout each of these monologs is stewardship. Each woman was somehow affected by Jesus' life-changing love and as a result gave of her talents, time or money. Therefore, the monologs would also be used in sequence at a time of stewardship or commitment emphasis in the following order:

1. **ABIGAIL**, the widow, who, though her gift was small, gave all she had;
2. **LYDIA**, who not only gave of her wealth, but witnessed to her family;
3. **PRISCILLA**, who faced danger by opening her home and livelihood to further the Kingdom of Christ.
4. **DORCAS**, talented with the needle, who gave of her time to help the poor;
5. **MARTHA OF BETHANY**, who felt that service in the home as hostess and cook takes first priority;
6. **MARY OF BETHANY**, who gave the most precious gift of all — her understanding and her undivided attention, thereby filling the most significant need.

The last two monologs, about sisters Mary and Martha, could be performed together sitting on opposite sides of the stage, with special lighting used to spot each sister as she speaks. For convenience, cues have been given within each monolog to signify when the women alternate their speaking.

Costumes

Biblical dress is suggested in the following ways:

ABIGAIL — simple dress and head covering of gray, brown, or any dark color. (According to Jewish law, widows were forbidden to wear black.)

LYDIA — A Greek, might wear richer colors indicative of her station in life as a wealthy merchant.

PRISCILLA — a Roman, married to a Jew, living in a Greek country, is open to interpretation.

DORCAS — simple Jewish dress, also open to interpretation.

MARTHA — simple biblical costume, perhaps topped with an apron and scarf about her head.

MARY OF BETHANY — simple biblical costume.

Props

ABIGAIL — small pouch for coins.

LYDIA — a length of purple cloth, slung over her shoulder.

PRISCILLA — sheet of paper, parchment if possible.

DORCAS — sewing basket, needle and thread, and garment of some kind.

MARTHA — anything to indicate she had been working (dust cloth, feather duster, linens, etc.)

MARY OF BETHANY — hair brush and flask, perhaps an ornamental perfume jar.

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Abigail and the Widow's Mite

(pertinent Scripture: Mark 12:42)

(Woman enters wearing simple grey or other dark-colored dress and head covering. According to Jewish law, widows were forbidden to wear black.)

Perhaps you never heard my name . . . I'm not surprised. It was given to me by my devoted mother. She longed for a daughter, and when I arrived after a long and difficult labor, she gave me the name "Abigail"—meaning joy. Papa called me "Abbie," and I became the joy of his life—a little girl after three mischievous boys. Pampered and spoiled, I wanted for nothing. My doting parents and big brothers made sure I was well cared for.

Mama and Papa early picked a suitable mate for me. A carpenter by trade, Eli was steady and honest. Moving into our town when I was but a child, he put down roots and soon became a respected member of the community Gibeah. He was often invited to our home for meals, and he became my good friend. Though much older than I, he would spend long hours telling me stories and answering the many questions I never seemed to lack. With our special relationship, marrying Eli was something I just assumed would happen someday.

When I reached the appropriate age for becoming a wife and mother, the affection we felt for each other quickly deepened into love. Soon, the son I prayed for was born, but at the age of nine, while helping his father build a small stable, he fell . . . striking his head on a rock and dying soon after. The grief I felt was nothing compared to that of Eli, who blamed himself. The child had been his constant companion while he was working. Though my husband knew in his head it was an accident, his heart felt he was to blame.

You know . . . nothing can fill the emptiness left after the loss of one child, but Eli and I sought consolation in our prayer

1 for other children. It didn't happen . . . and after two years of
2 waiting, my husband died, a broken man.

3 At first, the neighbors were very attentive, bringing food
4 and expressing their sympathy. The Law says this should be
5 done, but they began to ignore it, for it became too much trouble
6 to include a lonely widow in their gatherings . . . and then there
7 was the jealousy of the men's wives to contend with . . . as if
8 any of their husbands could take the place of my precious Eli.
9 They looked at me impatiently, their hearts cold and unforgiv-
10 ing, and they blatantly asked, "Where is your husband's
11 brother? It is his responsibility to marry and take care of you."

12 As far as I knew, Eli had no brother. He never mentioned
13 one, and I knew none of his relatives, for he had arrived in
14 Gibeah alone. And so I was excluded, with only a token gift
15 from the priests—sometimes food and sometimes discarded
16 clothing.

17 For a long time I managed quite well by gleaning the grain
18 that was left for the widows and orphans in the corners of the
19 fields. I did my best to stretch what little I had. But times became
20 harder, (*sighs deeply*) and now at this age . . . well, my strength
21 is not as it used to be. (*Straightens shoulders and smiles*) But I
22 have always felt blessed by our God, Yahweh. He gave me a
23 good husband and a lovely boy, and my memories have sus-
24 tained me through the silence of empty nights.

25 I still try to make at least one annual trip to the temple at
26 Jerusalem, giving what I can save. I remember one such time,
27 as I entered the Women's Court to worship, some of the worship-
28 ers in fancy purple robes brushed by me, filled with pride at
29 the rattle of their great and generous gifts of many coins falling
30 into the collection box. I was humiliated that all I had to give
31 was a mere farthing, two small coins. I couldn't help it . . . I felt
32 a twinge of jealousy that they could give so much, and I so
33 little. I slipped quietly forward, leaving my gift, hoping no one
34 would notice me or my feeble pittance. (*Wipes a tear*)

35 As I started to leave, someone at the door touched me on

1 the elbow. I turned and looked into the serene and beautiful
2 face of a young man, who said, "Bless you, my sister, Abigail,
3 you have given all you have."

4 Startled and self-conscious, I wondered who he could be
5 and how he knew my name and my plight. Later I learned he
6 was Jesus of Nazareth, the one who claimed to be the Christ.

7 I had heard the story of how he cleared the temple of the
8 money changers. I was glad! The things that went on in God's
9 house . . . it was disgraceful! The noise, the smell of the animals,
10 the filth on the floor—it all made me ill. So . . . as soon as I
11 completed my prayers, I hurried outside and left for home. I
12 never saw him after that day. What a pity. How I would have
13 liked to know him!

14 When I heard he suffered and died on a cross, I couldn't
15 get my own experience with him out of my mind . . . It didn't
16 make any sense that someone who had been so kind, so compas-
17 sionate to me, could possibly be guilty of any crime . . . let alone
18 blasphemy. And only those hateful Romans would think of such
19 an awful way to die!

20 Not long after his death, a grizzled, rough-looking man
21 came to my door. I was afraid to let him in, but he introduced
22 himself as Peter, one of the Nazarene's disciples. Then I remem-
23 bered! I had seen him in the temple that day.

24 He told me of the Resurrection and brought me food and
25 clothing . . . saying the church of Jesus Christ would be taking
26 care of me from now on. I rejoiced! Jesus was alive! And I soon
27 learned the significance of my new-found friends and their
28 faithfulness. God is still blessing and taking care of me. I con-
29 tinue to give what I can, and I have never again felt ashamed
30 about my offering seeming small compared to others. The Lord
31 understands. I give from my heart.

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Lydia, Woman of the Purple
(pertinent Scripture: Acts 16:11-15, 40)

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4 *(Enter a woman in Grecian dress carrying a length of purple*
5 *cloth slung over her shoulder.)*
6

7 **I'll never forget the first time I saw Paul of Tarsus. He and**
8 **his companions, Silas, Luke and Timothy, created quite a stir**
9 **as they made their way along the road toward Philippi, right**
10 **past the river where we stood. Timothy was young and hand-**
11 **some, and when they came over a rise and he saw the town up**
12 **ahead, he began to run. Not one of the women on the shore of**
13 **the Gangitis that day could take their eyes off him.**

14 **I stood there watching as they brought their baggage,**
15 **meager as it was. What a motley crew they were! Luke with his**
16 **physician's bag bulging full of who knows what; Silas, bum-**
17 **bling along; and Paul with his sparse red hair and unsteady**
18 **gait bringing up the rear. We couldn't imagine who they were,**
19 **but we were soon to find out.**

20 **We learned they had traveled the nine miles over the**
21 **mountain range connecting the seaport of Neopolis with**
22 **Philippi. From the looks of them, with the exception of the**
23 **young, handsome one—***(Smiles)* **it had been a difficult journey.**

24 *(Pauses)* **But first, let me tell you a little about me. I was**
25 **left a widow at a young age with children to raise. Fortunately**
26 **I inherited my father's business of dealing in the much-desired**
27 **purple cloth.** *(Reaches up and fingers the cloth)* **In a world where**
28 **women rarely competed with men in business, I had little**
29 **choice. We had to eat! So, with a little ingenuity on my part, I**
30 **learned the entire business, from the dyeing process right up**
31 **to finding a buyer. I was brought up in Thyatira, where the**
32 **plant murex grew wild. Even as a child, I learned it could be**
33 **processed to dye cloth a beautiful shade of purple.** *(Shows cloth)*

34 **Purple is always in demand, for religious vestments and**
35 **curtains as well as clothing for royalty, and I soon learned it**

1 would provide an excellent income for my children and me.

2 The Gangitis River was sparkling clear and provided a
3 perfect place for the women in my charge to rinse the dye from
4 the cloth. It was our custom to stop for a small lunch at midday.
5 Some of the women were Jewish and used the time for worship.
6 They sat in small groups and prayed, recited the prophecy and
7 Law and discussed how it affected their lives. There was no
8 synagogue there since Jewish families were in the minority and
9 had no place to worship. The women Gentiles sat off to the
10 side, some listening but rarely participating.

11 I had been a Gentile all my life, but decided to convert to
12 the Hebrew faith. I became interested when I noticed the
13 Jewish women were far better workers than their counterparts
14 from my world, with less bickering, less jealousy and less laziness.
15 I was intrigued by this difference and felt compelled to
16 join the women in their discussions.

17 Soon the riverside became the place to be on the Sabbath.
18 Others were invited . . . men, women and children. As I walked
19 toward the river gathering on one of the Sabbaths, I was surprised
20 to see that the four men we had seen walking down the
21 road were also there. The one speaking, I later learned, was
22 Paul. While he wasn't much to look at, he had a powerful voice.
23 I was immediately struck by his message. He told of one who
24 claimed to be the Christ, the Messiah, the one the Jews had
25 been expecting for so long. He said he met this man on the road
26 to Damascus, and he told how his life had changed since that
27 meeting.

28 As he spoke, God opened my heart to his message, and I
29 knew immediately that this was what I had been looking for
30 all my life. My family had always worshiped the Greek and
31 Roman gods, but I somehow knew, even then, that something
32 was lacking. There must be something better!

33 I looked around the group, seeing the faces of other Gen-
34 tiles, and wondered how this would affect them. I expected the
35 Jews to believe in it . . . he was their Savior . . . but how were

1 my people reacting to it? I knew it was up to me to make the
2 first move.

3 I got to my feet and went over to the four men. "I want
4 this Jesus as my Savior, and I want the baptism with water,"
5 I said.

6 Luke immediately came to my side and asked me some
7 questions. I suppose my answers were satisfactory, for Paul
8 took my hand, saying, "God bless you, my sister."

9 A murmur rose from the crowd, and I noticed some of my
10 servants walking over to the river to be baptized also. As one
11 or two timidly came, others joined them, until soon a line had
12 formed, reaching all the way to the river's edge.

13 Paul took each of us individually and baptized us in the
14 name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. As I came up
15 out of the water, I felt clean, inside and out.

16 I knew I had to help make others see what I now under-
17 stood . . . that Jesus of Nazareth was the Savior of the world. I
18 went home and told the children and their families of my reve-
19 lation, and soon they were also baptized. I began to devote a
20 good portion of my income to help Paul, Silas and the others
21 in their work and invited them to stay in my home when they
22 were traveling in the area.

23 This new commitment to the Messiah was wonderful. We
24 found comfort in the unconditional love we felt for each other.
25 But still the Christian life was not easy. There were those who
26 condemned us. Many of my own people thought my senses had
27 left me. "How could a dead man rise and live again?" they
28 wondered. Some of the Jews thought it unthinkable for a Gen-
29 tile to be included. They insisted that we first become Jews.
30 But we gained much of our strength from the example of Paul
31 as he wrote to us from prison in Rome, never complaining of
32 his own lot, but always encouraging us to be strong in the faith.

33 You know . . . it's not enough to say we believe—to accept
34 Jesus as Savior. We must help others to do the same. As Paul
35 said, "How can they believe, if they have not heard?"

Priscilla, the Tentmaker**(pertinent Scripture: Acts 18:2, 26;****I Corinthians 16:19; II Timothy 4:22)**

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5 *(Enter a woman in biblical dress. She holds a letter in her hand*
6 *and occasionally looks at it, as if reading.)*
7

8 *(Angrily)* When that fool, Claudius, became Caesar, he de-
9 creed that no Jews would be allowed to live in Rome. For me—a
10 Roman citizen—to stay in my homeland, I would have to give
11 up my beloved Aquila, who is a Jew. This I could never do, for
12 he is my husband, and the one who introduced me to the living
13 Lord.

14 Aquila had traveled to Jerusalem on business and met
15 there some of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. He returned
16 to Rome, a believer in the Christ, and his zeal for this teacher
17 convinced me of the truth . . . something I had obviously been
18 missing all my life.

19 We left Rome and went on to Corinth, traveling by boat
20 from Athens, some fifty miles away. What a busy place Corinth
21 was! A bustling seaport town where we immediately set up our
22 business as tentmakers, working side by side. It's painstaking
23 work, but Aquila does the heavy lifting and hole-punching,
24 after which my nimble fingers take over. Having our work in
25 common has brought us closer together, and I highly recom-
26 mend it to other couples.

27 We brought in our goat skins from Cicilia, near Tarsus,
28 and soon had a successful business going. We set up a shop in
29 back of our home and had more work than we could handle.
30 *(Hesitates, thinking)* It must have been about that time that God
31 directed Paul to us. He had come to Corinth to be a witness
32 about Jesus Christ, but he found himself short of money and
33 began looking for work. When he told people in the marketplace
34 of his trade as a tentmaker, he was urged to see us.

35 A crossroad for travel and trade, Corinth is filled with

1 people from many walks of life. And of course, when they come,
 2 they bring their own forms of religion with them. We were
 3 shocked to find so many worshiping idols and practicing unbe-
 4 lievable forms of immorality . . . even in the temple!

5 With this in mind, you can imagine Paul's surprise when
 6 he learned that Aquila and I were Christians. We insisted that
 7 he move into our home, and our work prospered. Paul was a
 8 fine tentmaker! Our spiritual lives grew as well, through endless
 9 conversations while we worked. Though Paul had strong opin-
 10 ions on many subjects, especially a woman's place in the
 11 church, I know he respected me and many other women for
 12 our efforts in serving Christ.

13 We discussed plans for establishing a church there in
 14 Corinth as we worked together during the week. On the Sab-
 15 bath, we walked to the synagogue. I'll never forget when Paul
 16 asked to speak that first time. There was much opposition . . .
 17 *(Thinking, as if remembering)* One time he was even arrested and
 18 accused of blasphemy. We were so frightened!

19 Despite the threats we received, we established that first
 20 church right there in our home. It was dangerous, we knew,
 21 but the three of us prayed about it together, and God blessed
 22 the chance we took, for soon Jew and Greek alike responded
 23 to the Gospel message. Yes, many lives were changed in the
 24 year and a half that Paul stayed.

25 When he decided to move on to Ephesus, we asked God
 26 for direction again. He made it known to us that we were to
 27 travel with him. Of course, that meant pulling up stakes—
 28 *(Smiles)* excuse the pun—of our business, but we knew that
 29 tents are needed everywhere, so it was an easy decision.

30 When we reached Cenchrea, Paul broke his Nazarite vow
 31 that he would never cut his hair, and he shaved his head. I
 32 suppose it was to convince Gentiles that though he was a Jew,
 33 he opposed the strict Jewish adherence to Old Testament reg-
 34 ulations. He was preaching Christ as the Messiah even though
 35 he was still a loyal Jew. Actually, he was quite well received

1 in the synagogue at Ephesus by both Jew and Gentile, and with
2 that encouragement, he decided to return to Jerusalem and
3 leave us to carry on the work.

4 As we had done before, we opened our home for meetings
5 of the believers, but with the threat of persecution always loom-
6 ing over our heads. However, one young man—what a joy he
7 was—Apollos, showed real promise and began to preach on his
8 own.

9 Unfortunately, he was young and immature in the faith,
10 and he made some serious mistakes. We invited him to stay in
11 our home so that we could spend more time instructing him in
12 the way of the Lord.

13 Though things were going well and our numbers were
14 increasing, I had a secret longing for Rome, where I had grown
15 up and still had relatives. Paul had written that he would be
16 going on to Rome, and we decided to surprise him by meeting
17 him there. Since we had received word that Claudius had died,
18 we felt it would be safe to return.

19 It was wonderful to be back home, but we found little time
20 for visiting old friends. There was work to be done! But, you
21 know, anything worthwhile takes dedication and sacrifice,
22 doesn't it? So we immediately set up our home again as a meet-
23 ing place for Christians.

24 In this last letter from Paul to Timothy, (*Shows letter*) he
25 sent us a greeting, thanking Aquila and me for our support.
26 But he warned us of the opposition we would always experience
27 and the danger of religious arguments that accomplish nothing.
28 He encouraged us to continue to witness faithfully, teaching
29 the Good News of Jesus Christ. And he ended his letter with
30 this: (*Reading*) "The Lord be with your spirit, and God's grace
31 be with you all."

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Dorcas, Seamstress for the Poor

(pertinent Scripture: Acts 9:36-43)

(*Woman enters in biblical dress carrying a sewing basket and garment of some kind. She takes out a needle and thread, as if to begin sewing.*)

Hardly a day goes by that I don't think back over my life since the risen Lord came into it. Living high over a rocky ridge above the beach where the Mediterranean flows into the harbor at Joppa, I often saw small ships capsize or wreck on the rocks. Before I knew Jesus, I gave little thought to the consequences for families of the seafaring men who died bringing supplies from Spain that were so vital to Jerusalem.

But the coming of the Christ changed my thinking . . . in many directions. When his disciples came to our town, preaching and performing their miracles in the name of Jesus, a feeling—difficult to describe—came into my heart . . . Peace, I think it was. No, more than that . . . a feeling of well-being . . . a feeling of love for all people. I knew I wanted to do something . . . I *must* do something to help those poor, unfortunate women and children facing a life of poverty. Though the Law years ago admonished us to take care of widows and the fatherless, the people of my day became overwhelmed with their number and indifferent to the needs of these and other unfortunate ones.

And so I invited them into my home, filling their gnawing, empty stomachs with nourishing food. I watched as the children ate like little scavengers, their eyes darting here and there, as if they expected the food to be snatched from them.

I noticed their ragged clothing. Having always been good with a needle, I set about to patch and mend the garments they had on. Sometimes the fabric was so worn and thin, it was hardly worth the trouble. But their clothes always held up long enough for me to make new ones. (*Smiles*) The children would come and sit at my knee as I sewed, (*Pats knee and looks down*)

1 and we would sing songs and play games. We talked about the
2 Messiah, and their eyes grew wide with wonder when I told
3 them how Jesus had performed miracles—even bringing the
4 dead Lazarus to life again!

5 The mothers began to come and listen too, and when I
6 suggested they seek out the disciples when they visited Joppa,
7 many went and gave their lives to the Christ. I was amazed by
8 the changes that came over these women when they put their
9 faith in the Messiah. Their inner cleansing seemed to bring an
10 outer cleansing as well. Not only did their children begin show-
11 ing up with shiny hair and clean clothes, but each woman began
12 to take pride in her own appearance. They all begged me to
13 teach them to sew.

14 They were amazed when I found large numbers of robes
15 and cloaks packed away in my home which could be cut up
16 and used again. They would sit and finger the cloth lovingly
17 and soon began to suggest ways to alter the design, making
18 attractive garments for themselves.

19 I felt their love for me and it was gratifying, but they
20 embarrassed me when they reminded me that my name, Dorcas,
21 meant beautiful. I never thought of myself as beautiful. My
22 features seem plain. (*Gesturing*) Nose, too pointed. Eyes, a pale
23 grey . . . but I suppose Mother hoped that I would grow up to
24 be a beauty when she named me. Though Greek was the prin-
25 cipal language in Joppa, Peter, the disciple, called me Tabitha,
26 my Hebrew name. When he said I was beautiful on the inside,
27 I blushed all the more.

28 We grew to love each other, these women and children
29 and I. They became my family, and I continued to help them
30 as much as I could. I even began to seek out the beggars on
31 the street, in order to feed and clothe them as well. Many had
32 little family and depended on one person to bring them to the
33 gate to sit and beg each day. Of course I was criticized for it
34 by some, but the gratitude in the eyes of the recipients was
35 reward enough to make me continue.

1 Some said I worked too hard, and I'll admit there was
2 much to be done. I often stitched long into the night by oil lamp.
3 Perhaps this caused my illness. I don't know when it began
4 exactly . . . the terrible feeling of fatigue. The women begged
5 me to stop and rest, and I did try, but the tiredness never seemed
6 to go away. I lost my appetite, and I began to lose weight—more
7 and more, until I became faint from weakness. (*Sighs deeply*)

8 One morning some of the women came and found me in
9 bed. I could not raise my head. They made broth and brought
10 it to me, holding me up so I could sip it, but, though it smelled
11 delicious, even that took too much effort, and I collapsed onto
12 my pillow.

13 I don't remember how long I remained in this state. They
14 tell me I became delirious, often calling upon Yahweh for help.
15 It wasn't until later that I learned how frantic the women had
16 become. They knew I was dying and sent for Peter, who was
17 in the nearby town of Lydda. By the time he came, they say I
18 was already dead, and the women were preparing my body for
19 burial.

20 My only recollection was being alone in my room, lying
21 on the bed, with Peter standing over me, calling, "Tabitha,
22 Tabitha! Wake up! In the name of Jesus Christ, wake up!" As
23 he held my hand, I opened my eyes and gradually felt the
24 strength returning to my body. Soon I was even able to sit up!

25 Peter went to the window and called out the news that I
26 was alive and well. I heard shouts outside, as my friends re-
27 joiced. I got up and waved to them. Later they told me that
28 Peter had healed Aeneas (*pronounced Aé ne-ās*), who lived close
29 by, of a paralysis he had suffered for eight years. For this reason
30 they felt sure he could also help me.

31 The news of my miracle reached the ears of many of the
32 skeptics. Of course, some still didn't believe. They said it was
33 a trick and criticized me for being a part of it. The most gratify-
34 ing thing of all though is that many more people *did* believe
35 and became followers of the Christ as a result of my healing.

1 **They realized that you need not do some great thing in the eyes**
2 **of men . . . but a small service in the name of Jesus is blessed**
3 **by the Father.**

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Martha of Bethany

(pertinent Scripture: John 11:1-27; Luke 10:38-41)

(If performing concurrently with MARY OF BETHANY, as suggested in the production notes, MARTHA speaks first. MARY's eight speaking parts are indicated by numbers. Cue lines are provided for ease in alternating the speaking parts.)

(Woman in biblical dress enters. She is holding a cleaning utensil of some kind—choose something that doesn't appear too modern, like a dust cloth.)

I first heard of Jesus from an old family friend. We had not seen Andrew in awhile, and I wasn't prepared for the change in him. Always quiet. Always sweet. But that day he seemed different—full of self-confidence, like a man driven by some noble cause.

He and his wild brother, Simon, had been called by this strange new teacher from Nazareth . . . and the stories he told about him were like the tales the old people tell—entertaining but difficult to believe. Andrew said he believed this Jesus was the promised Messiah. Dear Andrew—so sincere. I tried desperately to understand. But when he told us this man ate with tax collectors and spoke with Samaritans—things no good Jew would think of—well, I listened politely, but my mind wandered as he spoke, for the idea of a kingdom to be set up with only twelve followers . . . that seemed ridiculous!

After Andrew left, I dismissed it all from my mind. I had been pressed into the role of substitute mother at an early age. Our mother died in childbirth with my sister, Mary, leaving me not only a baby to care for, but my little brother, Lazarus, as well. Although all of us are adults now, they still look to me for everything. I am hostess, housekeeper, laundress, gardener, cook . . . everything!

Lazarus has never been well, and Mary . . . I'll admit I've spoiled her. Though now grown up, she has remained sweet to

1 a fault, sensitive, intensely religious, but totally *helpless* in the
2 kitchen! After Father died, the entire responsibility of the
3 household fell on my shoulders.

4 (*MARY, #1. Cue: . . . she was up and doing, while I lazily re-*
5 *mained in bed.*)

6 Much to my surprise, Andrew appeared at our home in
7 Bethany again a few days later. Coming into the kitchen, he
8 insisted I follow him outside. He had brought Jesus of Nazareth
9 with him!

10 Oh, my! Guests! Company always comes when you are the
11 least prepared, but I quickly took off my apron, pushed back
12 a wisp of hair from my face, and went outside. There, at my
13 gate, stood the most incredibly disconcerting individual I had
14 ever met. The first thing I noticed were his eyes—they seemed
15 to reach down into my very soul.

16 The rest of his appearance was typical. He wore nothing
17 to signify himself as a teacher, a rabbi and certainly not a
18 Pharisee! When he spoke, the softness of his voice touched my
19 heart. I was so fascinated with this man, I hardly heard Andrew
20 speaking to me. I came out of my trance and realized he had
21 asked if they could spend the night.

22 Oh, dear! I thought. I must make these men comfortable—
23 food must be prepared, mats must be aired, fresh linens must
24 be laid out. There's so much to do! Praise be to God, Father
25 left us a large home, with plenty of rooms. The Master . . . did
26 I dare call him that? *Jesus* must be made to feel at home.

27 After that first visit, they often came back, usually for only
28 a night, sometimes just for a meal. Our door was always open
29 to Jesus, Andrew and the rest. I even grew to like Matthew,
30 the tax collector, and the always boisterous Simon Peter. I
31 *wanted* to listen to the talk that went on between the men and
32 my brother, but I never found the time.

33 (*MARY, #2. Cue: Jesus proved many times that Lazarus was*
34 *right in accepting us as equals.*)

35 (*Sarcastically*) **Not so with Mary. She could always be found**

1 at the feet of Jesus, looking up into his face adoringly. And I,
2 busy with the extra work his visits created, missed it all. But I
3 knew I could count on Lazarus to fill me in on all that happened
4 during their stay. And, of course, Mary babbled on and on with
5 excitement about Jesus' miracles.

6 *(MARY, #3. Cue: "Who will do the work if I don't?")*

7 I must have believed him to be the Son of God, but I never
8 took the time to truly understand him. I worshiped him in my
9 own way, but I saw my mission in life as making things as easy
10 for him as possible while he was under my roof. I always hoped
11 that someday I would be able to sit down and enjoy his stories.

12 I remember with shame one of their visits . . . all of
13 them . . . with many others standing outside listening. I tried to
14 feed them all, even those outside . . . but it seemed I would only
15 finish baking the little wheat cakes they liked so much, when
16 Lazarus would come out to the kitchen asking, "Are there any
17 more?"

18 *(MARY, #4. Cue: Not even Martha's dirty looks could have kept*
19 *me away.)*

20 And to make matters worse, Mary continued to sit and
21 listen, spellbound, while I, exhausted as I was, did all the serv-
22 ing, the cooking, the cleaning up after them. I guess my nerves
23 became a little frayed.

24 *(MARY #5. Cue: . . . and he knew I understood.)*

25 I stood in the doorway looking at them, lying around com-
26 fortably on their couches, deep in conversation—and Mary
27 right in the middle of them! Something in me just snapped!

28 I cried out in a voice much too loud, "Lord, don't you care
29 that I must work so hard alone? Please tell Mary to come and
30 help!"

31 *(Shakes head)* A hush came over the room. These men had
32 never known a woman to be so outspoken. My face turned
33 scarlet, and I ran from the room, out to the kitchen. Sitting
34 down and fighting tears, I didn't notice the figure standing
35 behind me, but I sensed his presence.

1 **Jesus bent down, took my hands in his, and said, “Martha,**
 2 **you have always done so much for all of us. Never have you**
 3 **failed to make us comfortable, but it is time you came and fed**
 4 **your soul.” Right then, there among the pots and dirty dishes,**
 5 **his majesty was overwhelming! I shall never forget that mo-**
 6 **ment!**

7 *(MARY, #6. Cue: To whom would I go when I was troubled?)*

8 **When Lazarus became so desperately ill, it was only nat-**
 9 **ural to assume Jesus would come. Hadn’t he healed many?**
 10 **Surely he would come and heal his good friend. We sent word**
 11 **where he was teaching, but he didn’t come. We waited . . . and**
 12 **waited . . . and waited . . . and Lazarus grew steadily worse.**
 13 **When he died, I was angry! If Jesus had come, my brother could**
 14 **have lived. We buried him in the tomb with Father and Mother.**
 15 **Rich and poor alike came, for Lazarus was well re-**
 16 **spected . . . but the one we wanted most failed to appear. My**
 17 **spirits sunk into despair.**

18 *(MARY, #7. Cue: . . . but why not in time to save our brother?)*

19 **Four days later, word came that Jesus was just outside**
 20 **the village. My feelings—torn in several directions—betrayed**
 21 **me. On the one hand, I eagerly awaited his visit, but on the**
 22 **other, I felt only disillusionment.**

23 **Nevertheless, I ran to the garden where he stood, and my**
 24 **first words to him were, “Oh, Lord, if only you had come**
 25 **sooner . . .” Then suddenly a change came over me, and I added:**
 26 **“but even so, I know God will grant you what you ask.”**

27 **I believed in him, but the months of being consumed with**
 28 **jealousy for Mary and not really listening to his words caused**
 29 **my faith to waver.**

30 **Jesus smiled. He knew my thoughts, for he put his hand**
 31 **upon my shoulder and said, “Martha, your brother will rise**
 32 **again.”**

33 **“Yes. Yes, Lord,” I said. “I know, in the last days.”**

34 **“Martha,” Jesus said. “I am the Resurrection and the Life.”**

35 **The “I am” sounded like thunder. I fell on my knees before**



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