

## DISRUPTIVE HOSPITALITY

### CAST

SILENT MARY: DANCER OR PHYSICAL THEATER PERFORMER; LOOKS LIKE 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY PALESTINIAN WOMAN WITH HER HAIR LOOSE AND LONG. TUNIC SHOULD BE GREEN OR RED

MARY MAGDALENE: 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY PALESTINIAN WOMAN, HER HAIR SHOULD BE PULLED BACK OR IN A PONY TAIL, UNLESS SHE HAS VERY SHORT HAIR.

YOUNG MARY: A GIRL, NO OLDER THAN 12 YS. OLD

MODERN SM: YOUNG MARY'S MOTHER, WEARS WORKOUT OR DANCING OUTFIT

MODERN MM: A PREACHER, WEARS A CLERGY ROBE, UNLESS IS NOT PART OF HER RELIGIOUS TRADITION

The script is conceived for three actresses and a parishioner.

The parishioner will be reading scripture when the play begins.

The first actress will represent SILENT MARY and MODERN SILENT MARY.

The second actress will represent MARY MAGDALENE AND MODERN MARY MAGDALENE.

The third actress will represent YOUNG MARY.

### ACT I

#### SCENE ONE

(At the house of Simon, the Pharisee.)

#### PARISHIONER

(PARISHIONER is standing in the usual place for reading Scripture before a sermon. The Scripture reading has been announced as John 13:1-17. Instrumental music starts playing after verse 12, when PARISHIONER reads, "Do you know what I have done to you?" PARISHIONER looks at the pianist, musician, or sound technician trying to figure out what is going on. PARISHIONER attempts to keep reading. SILENT MARY enters and begins dancing acting out Luke 7:37-38. SILENT MARY brings in (or acts as if she brings in) an alabaster jar of ointment. She stands behind

Jesus at his feet, weeping, and begins to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she kisses Jesus' feet and anoints them with the ointment. Enters MARY MAGDALENE)

MARY MAGDALENE

(Gestures to PARISHIONER as if saying, "I got this." With gestures she thanks PARISHIONER, and takes her position in the pulpit. PARISHIONER still looking confused slowly steps away from the lectern or pulpit and sits where s/he was before the Scripture reading. MARY MAGDALENE reads Luke 7:36-39 while SILENT MARY is dancing.)

*"One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner."<sup>1</sup>*

*Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment."<sup>2</sup>*

(SILENT MARY slowly exits the chancel and the music fades out.)

A faded memory... An interruption forgotten or distorted... a sinner from the city or a woman who loved too much, the unnamed woman who anointed Jesus' feet. Unnamed by Mark and Matthew. Conflated with Mary of Bethany by John, and conflated with me thanks to Luke.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 7:36-39, NRSV

<sup>2</sup> Luke 7:44-46, NRSV

I know! You have no idea who I am, do you? You don't recognize me because you don't see the long wavy hair or the alabaster jar, or the excess of emotions. Well, that wasn't me, that was her: the woman who loved too much.

Luke took some liberties with her story and his version of it suggests that with her actions and appearance she showed great love, or showed repentance, or prepared Jesus' feet for the journey. It was not to prepare him for burial, I'll tell you that. This was way before he was close to the passion, and in any case, that is another story. In Luke's story, Jesus was getting ready to leave Galilee and go to *other cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.*<sup>3</sup> And we were with him,<sup>4</sup> both of us. That's how I met her. (Pause)

You know, if I remember correctly she anointed Jesus' feet because of all the reasons that Luke suggests. She loved Jesus so much! She told me that she wanted to meet him. And she was very sad that day. And at the same time, she was grateful for the message he was sharing. She found hope when Jesus said that the *basileia*, the kin-dom of God is available to all; that the poor, the sick, and the outcasts are welcome in the Heavenly Banquet, and that the kin-dom of God is already here.

(Smiling.) She also told me that she thought that he was the Christ, and she wanted to be like a prophet and anoint him, so he would be our king, the anointed one. But she stormed into Simon's house uninvited and the first thing she saw were his feet.. well, in Luke's version of the story anyway.

Later, she heard Jesus compare Simon and her and she realized that it was a good thing that she entered that house uninvited. Can you believe that Simon did not give him water for his feet? What a breach of etiquette! Poor Jesus! He had been walking so much, he really needed that rub, and the ointment would protect his feet. He had a long journey from there to Jerusalem. A looooong journey, and we were both with him, following Jesus all the way to the upper room.

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 8:1

<sup>4</sup> Luke 8:2

**SCENE TWO**

(At the upper room.)

I remember...

(Enters SILENT MARY. Instrumental music plays in the background. MARY MAGDALENE AND SILENT MARY set up the stage. SILENT MARY acts like a disciple and reclines against the table, as the disciples would have. MARY MAGDALENE plays Jesus. They act out the story as MARY MAGDALENE narrates it.)

MARY MAGDALENE

(MARY MAGDALENE says this as she does it.)  
Before dinner "He got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself."<sup>5</sup>

(MARY MAGDALENE pours water into a basin, washes SILENT MARY's feet, and wipes them with the towel that was tied around her.)

SILENT MARY

(SILENT MARY pulls her feet away as to not let Mary Magdalene wash them.)

MARY MAGDALENE

"You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."<sup>6</sup>

SILENT MARY

(SILENT MARY nods vigorously her head in disapproval.)

MARY MAGDALENE

"Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."<sup>7</sup>

SILENT MARY

(SILENT MARY nods her head in approval and gestures as inviting JESUS/MARY MAGDALENE to wash her whole body.)

MARY MAGDALENE

"One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean!"<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John 13:4, NRSV

<sup>6</sup> John 13:7, NRSV

<sup>7</sup> John 13:8b, NRSV

(MARY MAGDALENE washes and dries  
SILENT MARY'S feet.)

Jesus taught us through his example. It was not so much about washing the feet as it was about Jesus acting like a slave for love of us!

That was also the night he gave us a new commandment: that we love one another. Like he loved us.

### SCENE THREE

(The church building.)

YOUNG MARY

(Enters YOUNG MARY running. She has two bottles of water.)

Like I love you!

(YOUNG MARY hugs SILENT MARY. SILENT MARY hugs her back and they stay cuddling. YOUNG MARY gives a bottle of water to each actress. YOUNG MARY'S abrupt entrance brings the other actresses out of their 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestinian women characterization. Now they act as actresses wearing costumes.)

MODERN MARY MAGDALENE

(As she takes the bottle of water.)

Thank you! How did you know we were thirsty?

YOUNG MARY

(Shrugging her shoulders.)

Because you have been talking too much.

(MODERN MARY MAGDALENE and MODERN SILENT MARY remove their 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestinian costumes.)

MODERN MARY MAGDALENE

You know what? You are right! Time to DO something.

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<sup>8</sup> John 13:10

**SCENE FOUR**

(The church building, at the table for rituals.)

## MODERN MARY MAGDALENE

(MODERN MARY MAGDALENE puts on a clergy robe and walks to the table. MODERN SILENT MARY and YOUNG MARY follow her. MODERN SILENT MARY begins speaking, very solemn, like in the Eucharist.)

While Jesus was at the table, a woman came [lifts up aromatic oil or hand lotion] with an alabaster jar of ointment, [pouring water] and she washed Jesus' feet with her tears and [drying her hands] dried them with her hair.

(MODERN MARY MAGDALENE walks toward the congregation and pulls out hand sanitizer. She cleans the hands of a few worshippers. MODERN SILENT MARY and YOUNG MARY follow her and start distributing hand sanitizer. Then MODERN MARY MAGDALENE pulls out aromatic oil or lotion and rubs the temples of few parishioners. MODERN MARY MAGDALENE goes back to the table of rituals; MODERN SILENT MARY and YOUNG MARY follow her. MODERN MARY MAGDALENE takes some aromatic oil or lotion and rubs it on the hands of MODERN SILENT MARY, then kisses them.)

The woman kissed Jesus' feet and anointed them with ointment. She showed great love.

(MODERN SILENT MARY does to YOUNG MARY what MODERN MARY MAGDALENE did to her, while the latter continues speaking as she looks at the actions of mother and daughter.)

She taught us to love generously; to show kindness whenever we can; to love the way Jesus taught us when he said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John 13:34-35, NRSV

YOUNG MARY

And accepting her acts of love and hospitality, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."<sup>10</sup>

(All three actresses turn toward the congregation.)

MODERN MARY MAGDALENE

Love too much. Love to excess. Love so much that you are willing to crash a party;...

MODERN SILENT MARY

...that you are willing to take a different role than the one assigned to you by social expectations; that you are willing to 'lose your dignity;'

YOUNG MARY

...that you are willing to welcome the stranger, the outcast, the dangerous, the sinner, the one who will betray you, and the one who will deny you.

MODERN MARY MAGDALENE

Love.

MODERN SILENT MARY

Love.

YOUNG MARY

Love.

(The people may be invited to rub each other's hands with aromatic oil or hand lotion. MODERN MARY MAGDALENE concludes the ritual with an extemporaneous prayer or a prayer she may write in advance interceding for her particular community and asking God for the boldness to love and extend hospitality to strangers and outcasts. Then YOUNG MARY leads the *Invitation to the Table* and the worship service continues with the communion liturgy. Ideally, YOUNG MARY will have a central place at the table, and the presiding minister will join her at the side.)

**THE END**

*Many thanks to Carrie Gerrow, Nancy Hawthorne, and Elisabeth Ruiz for collaborating in the creative process. And thanks be to the Great Giver of all creativity.*

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<sup>10</sup> Mark 14:9, NRSV

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