

MY SON

A Dramatic Reading

by
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My name is Mary. I am a mother. I have a son. I love him, but now I am alone.

My son has done a great wrong, or so the people say. In the land of justice, he must pay for his crime, and the sentence is death. Today he died.

He was not a child. He was a man, he was tall, he stood straight and his eyes touched those he met. His brown hair was clean and curly; he could smile and he warmed hearts of those on whom he smiled. He did not look like a criminal. To me, his mother, he was not a criminal, he was my son. He spoke softly, kindly, I thought; but he did a wrong and now he is dead.

Dead? No, not dead, it cannot be--and yet I heard the sentence. I heard the sentence of my own son's condemnation, not from the judge on the bench nor the governor but the people. The people in the streets spoke his name as a man who should die, who should not be spared; I heard it in the market, and I heard the children laugh.

Yes, the children that he loved, they laughed, because their parents said he should die. Then they pointed at me and they laughed and their parents saw and they joined in their jeering:

"His mother! See his mother, she didn't teach him the law."

"His mother!" Oh, Father, where have I failed? Did I not teach him the law, did we not sit together as mother and son and talk through the long winter evenings when the sun disappeared at the end of a day?--The nights were meant for love and warmth and holding small sons on one's lap--Did we not talk through the summer evenings and smell the fragrance of the perfumed flowers? Did we not laugh and grow warm in each other's laughter? Did we not soothe away the tears that fell, and mend the wounds that tore our hearts? Did I not love you? Did you not love me? Yes, yes! Then why do the people cry against us, why has this fallen upon us?

I am a mother. I watched my son grow from the babe in his cradle, to the young infant holding a spoon, taking his first step. I remember the sound of his voice as he said the first word; the first smile that showed his teeth; I remember the barefoot toes, and the marks in the sand where he had run. I remember the hair bobbing in the wind, and the happy little voice calling above the swirling breeze that he wanted me to come and play with him.

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