

## ISCARIOT SPEAKS

### A Monologue for Good Friday

*There are few details known about Judas—this monologue is a fictionalized account based on some of those details.*

April 6, 2007

Judas:

You know, he could have been king. He could have been the One that generations of my people have been waiting for. He could have been the One to finally rid us of the Romans—the One who set us free from foreign rule and occupation.

But he was not.

I am Judas Iscariot—man of Karioth. One of the zealots. My whole life has been devoted to overthrowing Rome. And in following Jesus of Nazareth I thought I had finally found a leader who was worthy of my full devotion.

I wasn't raised to be a zealot—I don't think many men are. I was raised to be a money changer. You see the only way one could pay the Temple tax was by using a shekel—but most of the year people bought and sold goods with the coins of Rome. So when they came each year to pay the tax, they would seek out people like my father, who, for a fee, would exchange their drachmas for shekels. I was trained to do the same.

But being close to Temple life, I soon realized how corrupt our religious leaders were. I saw how closely they collaborated with Rome and made certain we Jews were kept in line.

And I grew more and more disgusted with each passing year.

In time I vowed that should there ever appear a leader, a teacher, a rabbi, who showed signs of a willingness to challenge the establishment, to lead an uprising, I would cast my lot in with his.

The first time I saw Jesus he was teaching just outside the Temple. It was but a few souls who were listening to him, but I thought I would while away some time by hearing what he had to say.

He told many stories, but one in particular caught my ear. It was about a rich man he had seen offering his Temple taxes with great fanfare, making sure all saw his gift. It was a large sum, though small compared to all that he owned. On the same day, he also saw a poor

widow, who quietly gave two copper coins, everything she had. He praised the widow for her great devotion, and condemned the rich man for his ostentation.

It was a risky story to tell. The ones in power would certainly not approve.

He also kept speaking about the Kingdom of God—and I came to believe it was his way of speaking of the coming revolution.

And so I left my post—and became one of his disciples.

We traveled all around the countryside. I was made treasurer of the group—as I had experience handling money. Not that there was ever very much. We really lived from hand to mouth, and relied on the kindness of several well-off women who accompanied us on the way.

I was shocked the day one of the women used a whole jar of ointment to anoint his feet—such a waste! We could have fed ourselves for weeks with the proceeds—or at least given them to the poor.

But no, Jesus said, “Let her be,” and then spoke about his pending death.

I had no idea what he meant, and was beginning to wonder if he would ever take a stand against Rome.

As it happened we returned to Jerusalem the very next day—and entered the city to shouts of “Hosanna!” Perhaps, I thought, the time has come.

And the next day, I had even more reason to hope, for he openly defied the temple authorities by overturning the tables of the money changers. My father and my former colleagues were furious! The authorities were livid!

But it was not to be. As the week wore on it became clear that the incident in the temple was the whole of it.

So I decided to move things along. I decided to force his hand. I thought that if he was confronted head on by the authorities, if he was in danger of arrest he would draw a sword and mount a revolt.

So I told them where he could be found, and when. I even promised to point him out by kissing him on the cheek.

The night it was to happen was the first night of Passover.

We gathered in an upper room and shared the Seder meal. We told the ancient story of how our ancestors had escaped slavery in Egypt—and I grew more impatient for our own release from bondage.

I slipped out early to join the guards who would arrest him, to lead them to the Garden where he always went to pray.

I was so nervous, I vomited on the way. It seemed so wrong to be leading the very ones I hated to arrest my own leader! But it seemed the only way.

When we got to the Garden he was there where I knew he would be. I walked up and kissed him—there was salt on his cheek, from a tear! As they dragged him off, most of the others ran or hid. Peter did draw a sword, but Jesus told him to put it away.

I followed the guards and watched, waiting to jump at his command.

But he hardly said a word.

They beat him, mocked him—and he never raised a hand.

I realized I had made a mistake, that he would never bring about a revolution. And all I had done was send an innocent man to his death.

IO tried to undo what I had done. I returned the money I'd been given for my betrayal. But nothing would stop the process.

He was to be crucified. Because of me.

It was not what I wanted. And it was more than I could bear.

They say on the cross, as he was writhing in pain, that he cried out "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

I imagine he meant the soldiers who were crucifying him.

But, then again, maybe he meant me. For I did not know what I had done, until it was too late. And I most certainly need to be forgiven.

He could have been king. But he wasn't. At least not of this world. Maybe the next—but not this one.

If he is I may meet him there today. I just hope he is not a king like Caesar.

--John H. Danner

