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## **On a Cold Sabbath Morning**

**Peter and Mary – between death and resurrection**

**A story of what might have happened on that cold and cheerless Saturday  
by Ralph Milton**

Mary of Magdala walked slowly down the cold street of Jerusalem. It was the Sabbath morning, but it didn't feel like Sabbath. Mary had no idea where she was going. After a sleepless night, she was just walking.

Around a corner of a narrow street she saw a figure huddled in the deep morning shadows. A man, a large man, hunched up in fetal agony.

"Peter?" said Mary. "Simon Peter?" There was no response, except a slight drawing up of legs closer to the body.

Mary hadn't really needed to ask. And she didn't ask permission to sit down beside the desperately unhappy man shivering against the cold white wall. For perhaps an hour she sat with him. There were no words.

Finally Mary spoke. "If there's such a thing as hell on earth, this must be it."  
Another long silence.

"Did you hear about Judas?" Peter mumbled.

"No."

"He's dead too. Killed himself."

"Oh God!"

"Well, damnit Mary. Maybe that's the sensible thing to do!"

"Yeah. I know what you mean, Peter."

"I can't get his face out of my mind, Mary. I keep seeing it – all the time. It's just there and it won't go away. I saw his face, Mary, right after the rooster crowed, right after I'd been swearing up and down I didn't know him, had never seen him. And then I saw his face and I can't get it out of my head."

"I guess Jesus was pretty hurt." Suddenly Mary turned angrily toward Peter. "He should have been mad. That was a dirty, cowardly thing to do, Peter."

"You think I don't know that? That's why his face keeps bugging me. He wasn't mad. He wasn't hurt. He looked...you know the way he would look at us sometimes after

we'd been talking about something, and you could just read the affection in his face. There was love in his face when he looked at me, Mary, and it's driving me nuts!"

"Do you know....?" Mary began to weep. "Do you know what he said when they hoisted him up on the cross? I can't even imagine the pain he was going through, but he said, 'God, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing.' They are tearing his body apart and he says, 'Forgive them.'"

Mary wept quietly for awhile. Peter buried his head in his cloak. Both of them sat in silence for another long while.

"I remember when I first saw him in Magdala," Mary spoke quietly." I swore at him the first time I saw him. I told him to get out of my life. He wouldn't go. Just like the face in your head, I guess, Peter. Jesus kept hanging around our village and I kept telling him to get lost, but one day I didn't tell him to get lost and we started talking. There hasn't been a day since then that I haven't talked to him." Mary began to weep again. "Peter, this is the first day since I met him, that I haven't had at least some kind of a conversation with Jesus."

"Were you in love with him?" For the first time in the conversation Peter raised his head to look at her.

Mary said nothing but Peter saw the question had been heard. He waited.

"Yes. Yes, deeply and terribly. I still am. But I don't know how to love a man like that? He was a man. I've had other men. I thought I knew exactly what to do with him – how to handle him. But he was more than a man or at least a different kind of man and that confused me. He wanted to talk to me – wanted to hear what I had to say. He was the first man that ever respected me, and I never knew quite what to do with that – how to respond to him, when he looked at me – just like you say – with that deep affection in his eyes. Still, I would have gone to bed with him in a minute if he'd approached me."

"Did he?"

"No. I think he loved more than my body, though he may have loved that too. I think he loved me the same way he loved you." Then very quietly she added, "Did you know how much he loved you, Peter?"

Peter's head went down inside his cloak. Then slowly, the tears began. Quiet tears at first, then bursting into a body shattering quake and screeching anger.

"Damn him anyway! He knew I was a worthless turd when we first met, but he could never accept that. Why didn't he just spit in my eye? Then I could go and hang myself like Judas and be done with it. Why did he have to look at me like that? Why, Mary?" Peter sobbed like a child, and Mary's hand reached out to his. She joined his weeping.

"You know something, Peter? Not all of him died. That's why we're sitting here bawling like a couple of babies. I've got that look of love in my head too. I saw it on his face just before he died. That love didn't die, Peter. We still love him and he still loves us. That isn't dead."

Peter squeezed Mary's hand so hard it almost hurt. "The love is still here, Mary, but the dreams have died. I guess the only thing we can do now is try to live without him. What are you going to do now, Mary?"

“Tomorrow, I need to go and do the right things for his body. At the very least I want what’s left of his body to have some dignity in death. And then? I don’t know. There’s nothing back in Magdala for me. What about you, Peter.”

“Back to the Galilee, I suppose. I’ll go back fishing. It’s the only thing I know how to do.”

“Walk with me for awhile, Peter. Walking helps.”

Mary took Peter’s strong and callused hand. As they walked into the brightness of the spring morning, the warmth of sun brought the promise of healing. Peter managed a slight smile.

“You’re right, Mary. They couldn’t kill the part of him that loves. That’s all we’ve got left to hang on to.”

**Ralph Milton has written a number of books,  
all of them available through Wood Lake Publishing.**

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