

Resurrection

by Andrew Rissik

SCRIPTUS BOOKS

First published in 2015 in Great Britain
by Scriptusbooks Ltd

46 Murray Road
London SW19 4PE

Scriptusbooks.com

Copyright © Andrew Rissik, 2015

The right of Andrew Rissik to be identified as author of
this work as been asserted in accordance with Section 77
of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

*This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by
way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out or
otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in
any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is
published and without a similar condition including this
condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.*

Printed by printondemand-worldwide.com

ISBN 978-0-9564466-3-3

Resurrection

by Andrew Rissik

SCRIPTUS BOOKS

All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly reserved and applications for permission to perform it, etc., must be made in advance before rehearsals begin to Berlin Associates, 7 Tyers Gate, London SE1 3HX.

Characters

Yeshua Ben Youssef
Maryam of Magdala
Gaius Pontius Pilate
Claudia Procla
Titus Flavius

Youssef Caiaphas
Shimon Annas
Nicodemus Ben Gurion

Bystanders, Elders, Disciples
Voice of Temptation

I've returned in this printed version of *Resurrection* to the arc of events in the early drafts. The radio production of 2004 began with a brief speech by Maryam, and included an interior monologue for Yeshua at Golgotha. I've cut both here, and reinstated the temptation scene – Scene II – from which the Golgotha material was drawn. I felt these relatively minor changes improved the play and – for good or ill – brought it a little closer to what I originally intended.

A.R.

The original version of *Resurrection*, of which this text is a partial revision, was first broadcast by BBC Radio 3 on April 11th 2004 with the following cast:

Maryam of Magdala Julia Ford
Yeshua Ben Youssef Anton Lesser
Nicodemus Ben Gurion John Rowe
Titus Flavius Chris Moran
Gaius Pontius Pilate David Calder
Youssef Caiaphas Sam Dastor
Shimon Annas Raad Rawi
Claudia Procla Mia Soteriou
and James Hayes, Danny Sapani, John Glover

The play was directed by Jeremy Mortimer
with music by Mia Soteriou.

XII

The Antonia, interior.

A cordoned cell-like area where Yeshua is held.

Pilate motions the sentries to stand aside.

Pilate

What is your name and where are you from?

Yeshua

I am Yeshua Ben Youssef,
from the village of Nazareth in Galilee.

Pilate

I am Gaius Pontius Pilate,
Prefect of Judaea.

You have been brought before me
on a charge of sedition.

It is my function to establish
whether or not the charge is true.

A moment.

Are you king of the Jews?

Yeshua does not reply.

Pilate leans in, angry.

Answer me,
are you the Jewish king?

Yeshua

Do you ask this question for yourself,
or because others have said it to you about me?

Pilate

Do not be insolent.
Am I a Jew?

See,
the Jewish people,
the nation and its rulers,
have delivered you up to me.

Why?
What have you done?

A moment.

Yeshua

My kingdom is not a kingdom of the world.

If my kingdom were a kingdom of the world
then look to see my followers fighting to defend me.

Accordingly my kingdom cannot be
a kingdom of the world.

Pilate's tone hardens.

Pilate

Are you a king, then?
You talk of a kingdom.
Do you claim the title of king?

Yeshua

You say it.
You give me this title with your breath.

But I say
that to this end I was born,
and to this end I came into the world,
and for this purpose I have come,

to bear witness to the truth,
to speak only what is true.

Everyone who receives the truth hears my voice.

Pilate

Truth? What is truth?

Yeshua

Truth is from heaven.

Pilate scrutinises Yeshua.

A sense that his curiosity has been awakened.

Pilate

You are right.

If the gods would speak truth
and answer our questions
the gods would make us wise.

Instead they punish us for our presumption,
curse us for seeking knowledge.
But they do not stop us thinking.

Yeshua

God is not far off. God is near.
God is like the shepherd upon the hill

who, at nightfall, calls every animal by name
and knows, of every animal, its particular need.

Pilate's manner becomes faster, more hectoring.

Pilate

Is it God who speaks to you
or a voice that you have found
within your own mortal mind?

Yeshua

If what I say and do
is not like the word of God made flesh
then put no trust in me.

Pilate

What is this kingdom you talk of?

Yeshua

Those of every tribe or nation
who do right,

who love mercy
who will not defile themselves with cruelty:
these are the true Israel of God.

A moment.

Pilate

What shall we do with you?

You hear what your accusers
have testified against you,
yet you make no answer to it.

Yeshua

Do as it is written.

Pilate

How is it written?

Yeshua

Moses and the prophets have prophesied concerning
my suffering and resurrection.

Pilate

This is the philosopher's way:

to be flogged like an ass
and to love those who beat him,

to be father and brother to all humanity.

He is angry.

Will you die,
will you endure humiliating crucifixion,
in order to make your life into a poem?

Yeshua

I do as it is written.
I do as my father in heaven commands me.

Pilate

Why do you defy these people
who are the chief men of your nation?

Are you strong enough or brave enough
to prevail against them?

A moment as they confront each other.

Yeshua

The truths I speak are simple.

They have been true
since the beginning of the world
and are known to every man and woman
in the heart's silence,
in the mind's stillness.

I preach what you know already
but will not admit,
or have taught yourself to forget,

or else are too confident
in your strength and position to acknowledge.

In his voice, now, a note of stubborn, immovable anger.

If your enemy is hungry, feed him.
If he is thirsty, give him drink.

Bless those who persecute you.
Bless them. Do not curse them.

Repay no-one evil for evil,
or you will be overcome by evil.

Love others and you will fulfil
every particle of the law.

Pilate smiles.

Pilate

This doctrine that you teach

is for the weak,
the sick,
the idle,
the faint-hearted,
the stupid,
the incompetent.

Practice it
and you make men weaker, not stronger.

Yeshua

Love is not weak:
it is strong
and the light itself is composed of it.

As the light abhors the darkness
so abhor
the evil taking root in your own soul.

I come to turn the violent world you know
upon its head.

I say it is better to be killed
than to kill:

better to be weak
than to use your strength
against the weakness of others.

Pilate

Who can live in the world
in this way
and, by it,
protect themselves and be secure?

Yeshua

Will you win safety
in the world
and, by winning it,
deliver your soul into darkness?

Pilate

Is not death darkness?

Yeshua

No. Death is light.

Consider:
in life
this is your truth:

to labour and be weighed down:
to struggle yet never to be free:

to see continually,
day by day,
how your hope is disappointed,
your ambition confounded.

because your heart's imagination
is restless, dissatisfied and uncertain:

and the end of what you accomplish
mocks the beginning:

and the action
which seemed to you to promise joy

leads to an unlooked-for conclusion
in evil dismay.

A moment.

Pilate

Who is he then, this one God,
the almighty God of Israel?

Yeshua

God is the source.
God is the place from which you came

and to which you will return.

Pilate

To whom does he show favour?
Gentile or Jew?

Yeshua

To neither:
no one is greater than another.

Pilate

You are wrong:
you do not use your own eyes.

Is the thoroughbred not greater
than the packhorse?

Yeshua

You nominate value
as meaning what pleases you.

Do you think
that the beggar in the street
is not your brother
when he is as like you
as your own image
in a reflecting glass?

Pilate

You say that God is our home.

Will I, a Roman,
return, then, to what is not Roman?

Yeshua

The soul is born
not on earth,
but in heaven.

Pilate

When life is extinct, the soul is nothing.

Yeshua

No, the soul is eternal,
and each evil deed
is a stain upon the soul.

Pilate

Who are you?
Who do you claim to be?

Yeshua

I am the truth.

Heaven and the earth shall pass away,
but my words shall not pass away.

Pilate

Are you the messenger of God?
Are you a king?

Yeshua

I am.

A moment or two before Pilate speaks.

Pilate

Be advised:

a man such as you are
will appear before other men, saying,
'this is the law, this is God's holy word,
which comes out of my mouth.'

But if the law which he makes with his mouth,
for men to hear and follow,

is a bad law, or a law which is half-true,
or one not fitted to men's needs,
or incomplete,
or unable to be understood,

then such a law
is the cause of evil in the world.

So, in every age, men intending good,
wise men or religious men,
who preach and teach and heal,
have done harm by presuming to be more
than a living man can be.

Be advised.

Philosophers say, 'I seek only the truth.'
I say the truth is not to be found in words.

Men do not seek truth.

They seek only an end to their fear and uncertainty.

Nothing from Yeshua.

I have beaten and killed many men.
I shall do so again.
Without order our lives are worth nothing.

A moment.

But I do not take life for no reason.
Justice I give if it is in my power to give.

At once he turns away, calling out:

I find this man does not blaspheme.
He makes no political claim.
Therefore I find no fault in him.

Flog him for his insolence
to legitimate authority,
and then let him be released.

He walks away.

Titus Flavius joins him.

Titus Flavius

Sir.

Pilate stops, turns.

This has been sent by your wife.

A moment.

Pilate

Read it to me.

Titus Flavius

Sir, she instructed me,

"put this into my husband's hand unopened".

Pilate, puzzled, irritable, takes the letter and opens it.

Straight to