

Jeering crowds were baying in unison,
Caught up in the hatred of the Council towards Jesus.
I was near enough to hear the hammer blows
Four horrific sequences of heart-shuddering thuds,
This was no place for fearful disciples,
They had fled in fear and shame and disbelief.
Only the beloved and ever-faithful John remained.
Our loyalty made us a lonely sight,
Heartfelt devotion deep-rooted and self-less,
Hands held in wincing agony and tightened grip as the cross was embedded.
No cry of pain from my Lord and Saviour,
He who had delivered me from seven devils now himself undelivered,
Now lifted up on the deadly cross,
Exposed to ridicule and organised malice.
To die a helpless death.
We moved nearer, fighting back tears, being brave for Jesus.
Showing him we cared, but just not understanding anything anymore.

In the midst of all this brutality, his love still shone through.
He looked up and saw his mother. Her face cried out in maternal yearning
Seeing also John he called out from his cross:

"Woman, behold thy son!

Behold thy mother."

His words were with no care for himself, no hint of physical pain,
But that outpouring of affection that first drew me to him,
A selflessness so pure, so re-assuring.
My eyes filled with tears, and when I blinked them away his head had bowed.
I looked, yearned, for any signs of life, willing some movement, anything.
He had raised Lazarus from death, but then he, Jesus, was alive to bring him back.
Who was now here to restore him?
His lifeless body hung limp.
I fought the evidence.
Looked again for any telltale movement of continued being.
He's said in the optimism of life, he would raise himself after three days.
But how can what is dead do anything?
A soldier thrust his spear into the corpse.
Mary cried out. We hugged and held tight, knowing the final truth.
Her son, the man to whom I owed my life, so innocent, so maligned.
Dead.

When faced with reality, how can reason give hope?
When or how does faith take over and become somehow more real?
Just a week ago, the four-day dead Lazarus emerged whole from his tombed grave.
Jesus had commanded him to come forth, and he did.
So why wasn't he at the cross?
Did he feel guilty he couldn't do anything? Where were all the others he had helped and
healed?
And what more could I have done? Where is my faith? Guilt and helplessness ran through me.
I felt sudden remorse, and momentary anger at his disciples and everyone.
Did Jesus have to die? Where was his God? Why has this happened? How can he raise
himself?
An angel thought tried to creep in: it all means nothing unless he does come back from death.
He's been right in everything else he has said and done. Why not this? That is what he
promised. Oh, would it please be true! I watched as Joseph took the body down; the noble
Nicodemus helped him, - a second witness confirming the inevitable. You don't lay the living
in a sepulchre and roll a stone across

I arrived early to the sepulchre, while it was still dark.
The stone had been rolled away!
The body must have been moved!
I ran as fast as I could to tell Peter and John.
Breathless, tell them. Urge them to do something. At least check what I say.
I felt empty. Without the body I could not grieve. There was no finality.
I told them again! The body's missing! We did not know how or when or who had taken it.
They too ran; John arrived first, but it was Peter who went in, confirmed without doubt the grave was empty. Then John also looked in, saw the same.
They left, lost and confused in their broken thoughts.

Where else could I go? What to do?
Whoever took the body might yet come back. I had no other option but to wait, and weep.
The last few days had been as much as I could bear.
I went back towards the tomb. I hadn't yet looked inside, to see for myself.
I peered inside.

Two angels in white reached out to me from where the body had been.

"Woman, why weepest thou?"

Once more I replied with the expected and obvious concern. They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have taken him. Self pity made me withdraw, and tears streamed down my weary face.

"Why weepest thou?"

The insistent question, this time asked by some person standing near, I supposed the gardener, and again I reply Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him and I will take him away.

"Mary"

I turned round.
Saw Jesus!
Saw my risen saviour!
Rabboni! Master!

His words came as if in a dream, but this was reality!
I wanted to hug him! To hold him dear! The shock realisation! Of course he was not in the tomb! *Why weepest thou?* Why indeed! I had been looking for the wrong thing!
Searching for death where there was only life! And what life! Glorious! Eternal! He had won!
Love had won!

"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

And I understood the dominion over the seven devils that had bound me, the raising of Lazarus, the love of Jesus Christ, that the God of Life was his Father and my Father, the only God and my God..

Oh what resurrection! What absolute proof! What joy!

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent".*

Go to my brethren? I ran!!

*John 17:3