**The Olive Grove**

*This is a monologue by the apostle John, Jesus’s closest friend on earth, written in the garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper.*

I’m worried about Jesus. It feels like he’s heading for a nervous breakdown. Surely he can’t keep going like this for much longer?

It started on Sunday. While everyone else was going completely over the top as we approached Jerusalem, he seemed strangely subdued. And ever since he threw out the money-changers in the temple, he’s been winding up the Pharisees and Sadducees at every opportunity. He’s throwing caution to the wind.

The way he dealt with their trick questions was brilliant, but no one could mistake that the new parables he told were against them, and then he launched into a tirade against their hypocrisy. The crowd loved it, but is it wise to make so many enemies? Oh Jesus, my friend, be careful!

He’s still doing what he loves – making humble people feel valued. The smile on the face of that poor widow who put a couple of coins into the temple collection; the appreciation he showed Mary at her expensive expression of love with the perfume, when everyone else was accusing her of waste; even the challenge to the lawyer who asked a clever question and admired his response.

I was hoping that things would calm down with the Passover meal, just the band of us alone. He’d obviously been thinking about it all day, because once it started he got broody and talked about dying, again. He even talked about one of us betraying him. “Remember me when I’m gone,” he said – as if we could forget him! Then he turned the Passover rituals into being about him. I wish I could understand what he meant.

After the meal, he was fixing something up with Judas – I saw them whispering, and all I heard was him telling him to do it quickly. Once Judas had gone, his intensity went up several notches – as if he was running out of time. Instructions, warnings, reassurance, commandments, promises, prayers, one after another after another.

Thomas plucked up the courage to ask the question we were all thinking – “Where are you going?” He replied that we can’t follow where he is going, but that he will come back and fetch us. What does that mean?

It’s a relief to be up here on the hillside, away from the bustle of the city, in the quiet of the evening. He’s gone up a bit higher to pray alone. “Watch and pray,” he said. I can hear him calling out, crying out to God for help. He sounds desperate. Oh Lord God of hosts, give him strength!

*(Pause as John falls asleep. He wakes up with a start.)*

I’m sorry, Master, I didn’t mean to let you down. What’s that noise? Your betrayer? No, it’s all right, I can see Judas with them. NOOOH!!! Peter, get your sword out! We must protect him!

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

*(Panting as he recovers from running)* Peter, I’m here. You did what you could, but he stopped you! It was as if he was in charge – healing that thug’s ear! I’m ashamed. We promised we’d stick by him, and we ran away.

What can we do now? They’ll take him to Caiaphas. Oh, Jesus! I know – Rhoda – she’ll let me in. At least I can see if I can help.