A PUPPET PLAY IN ONE ACT

The Day After Easter

Based on Matthew 27:62–66; 28:11–15 · Written by Carrie Elderberry



SUITABLE FOR
Ages 7 and up

PERFORMANCE TIME
10–12 minutes

CAST SIZE
6 puppets

PROPS REQUIRED
Roman soldier costumes (optional; see Prop Options)

MAIN THEME

The resurrection isn't just a nice story about bunnies and candy — it's a real event with real, ordinary witnesses, including the very soldiers who were paid to lie about it and cover it up.

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To print just the play on its own, print pages 5–8.

PRODUCTION OVERVIEW

Synopsis

Three kids finish off their Easter candy and can barely remember what the holiday is even about, until CHILD 3 (recently baptized) insists that Jesus rising from the dead is a much bigger deal than anyone's giving it credit for. The children imagine what the soldiers who guarded Jesus' tomb might have said to each other afterward — and the play cuts to that very scene: three soldiers, paid to lie about a stolen body, wrestling with what they actually saw. Two of them threaten violence to keep the truth buried; the third, shaken by the angel and the empty tomb, decides to go find out for himself whether Jesus is really alive.

Spiritual Concept

Matthew's Gospel records that the guards at Jesus' tomb were bribed to spread a cover story — which is itself striking evidence that something happened they couldn't explain away. This play imagines the soldiers as real people with real consciences, not just a footnote in the story, and lets SOLDIER 3's quiet decision to go investigate stand in for anyone today who's willing to actually look into whether the resurrection is true rather than dismiss it.

Age Suitability

Best for ages 7 and up; the soldiers' threats of violence and the more mature conversation about death and truth-telling suit an audience old enough to follow two intercut scenes and sit with an unresolved ending.

Performance Time

10–12 minutes

CAST & TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Characters (in order of appearance)

CHILD 1 — A modern child, not a believer, but curious. Remembers the Bible's account that the guards made up a story to avoid punishment.

CHILD 2 — A modern child, not a believer, but curious. Quotes an uncle who's skeptical about the resurrection, but is genuinely interested to learn more.

CHILD 3 — A modern child, a believer and follower of Jesus, recently baptized. Pushes back when the others treat the resurrection as no big deal.

SOLDIER 1 — Looking out for himself. Quick to remind the others they'd all have been executed for telling the truth, and threatens Soldier 3 to keep him quiet.

SOLDIER 2 — A true fool — blew through his hush money in a day and jokes his way past the seriousness of what happened, even while denying he was ever scared.

SOLDIER 3 — Moved by the truth of the resurrection. Can't shake what he saw — the angel, the earthquake, the neatly folded grave clothes — and quietly decides to go find Jesus' friends and learn more.

Prop Options

- The soldiers should wear Roman uniforms, red Bible-tunics if you are able to make costumes. Tin foil “helmets” also work well and can be pinned on at the back for stability.

PERFORMANCE NOTES FOR PUPPETEERS

New to puppets? General prep, technique, and voice tips live at gospelpuppets.org/getting-started.

Character Notes

SOLDIER 2's bravado (“I just decided to close my eyes for a power nap”) undercut immediately by SOLDIER 1's “your nose was all bloody from falling face first on a rock” is a key comic beat — it also does real work showing how flimsy the cover story is.

SOLDIER 3's closing monologue, alone on stage after the other two exit, is the emotional turn of the play — give it room to breathe before the scene cuts back to the children.

The play deliberately does not resolve whether Soldier 3 ends up believing — CHILD 3's closing hope ("I hope at least ONE of the guards got to see Jesus, alive again") is left open rather than answered.

Staging

A fun way to include more people, especially pre-readers eager to help, is to have a hand-held "curtain" ready for the scene change. Helpers can run up and screen the center stage for a moment while chimes are rung and the puppets switch places.

This play alternates between two scenes (children, then soldiers, then children again) — a clear scene change (lighting, sound cue, or simply full exit/entrance) will help the audience track the cut.

Reading the Script

CAPS = volume/intensity.

Ellipsis (…) = the author's pacing notation.

The source's dialogue tags alternate between full names and abbreviations (C1/C2/C3, S1/S2/S3) — standardized here to CHILD 1/2/3 and SOLDIER 1/2/3 throughout.

THE DAY AFTER EASTER

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(Enter three CHILDREN.)

CHILD 1: Have you eaten all of your Easter candy yet?

CHILD 2: All gone the first day! YES!

CHILD 3: I've still got the black jelly beans. They are my favorite! I have to get a little more desperate before I eat those.

CHILD 1: Ha! My mom took all of my candy.

CHILD 2: I hate those black ones! But I still eat them… I like ANYTHING sweet.

CHILD 1: So now what? When's the next church holiday?

CHILD 2: Christmas I guess. So… which one is Jesus's birthday? Easter or Christmas? I forget.

CHILD 1: I can't ever remember. Who cares, anyway?

CHILD 3: Are you serious? Easter is when Jesus got KILLED.

CHILD 1: Yeah but… no big deal. He came back to life!

CHILD 3: And that's not a big deal?

CHILD 2: Well nobody REALLY knows, anyway. That's what my uncle says.

CHILD 3: *(jaw drops, so shocked)* Guys!

CHILD 1 AND 2: What?

CHILD 3: Nobody else has EVER came back to life, after…not after getting killed the way Jesus did.

CHILD 1: *(sarcastic)* Oh, please! You're just all religious now, because you got baptized.

CHILD 3: Am not! It's just, it's just that it's TRUE.

CHILD 2: No… wait. How are you so sure? That Jesus came back to life?

CHILD 3: *(pause)* Um, let me think. There are a lot of reasons!

CHILD 2: My uncle says that people stole his body in the middle of the night and hid it.

CHILD 1: The Bible talks about that. The guards were soldiers. They told that story so they wouldn't get punished.

CHILD 2: Why would they get punished?

CHILD 1: Well Jesus's body was GONE! And there wasn't even a fight.

CHILD 2: This is all very confusing. I thought Easter was just about bunnies and candy and springtime.

CHILD 3: You didn't know about the soldiers?

CHILD 2: No! Tell me about it.

CHILD 1: I wonder if any of THEM decided to follow Jesus after all that.

CHILD 3: Wow… what an idea. Hey! Let's move over and hear what the soldiers might have to say. After all, this is a puppet show!

(Exit CHILDREN. Enter three SOLDIERS.)

SOLDIER 1: Have you figured out what to do with your money yet?

SOLDIER 2: All gone the first day! Ha!

SOLDIER 1: How did you lose it so fast?

SOLDIER 2: Oh, I was playing a game with some other guys, you know, with dice.

SOLDIER 1: But dude! That was a lot of money!

SOLDIER 2: Easy come, easy go!

SOLDIER 1: *(turns to #3)* Well I'm saving some of mine. And what about you?

SOLDIER 3: I don't know… I'm feeling worse and WORSE about that money.

SOLDIER 2: What are you talking about? Money is sweet! Who cares where it comes from?

SOLDIER 1: Don't tell us you are SORRY that you lied. We would all have been EXECUTED if we told the truth!

SOLDIER 3: I know, I know. But… that ANGEL… and you saw the angel too, didn't you? I'm sure you did!

SOLDIER 2: Maybe we did, and maybe we DIDN'T. It all happened pretty fast.

SOLDIER 1: Are you going to get all religious now, just because you saw an angel?

SOLDIER 3: It's not as simple as that. You know as well as I do that the body WASN'T stolen.

SOLDIER 1: How can you be so sure? We were flat on our faces!

SOLDIER 2: Maybe the angel stole it! Ha!

SOLDIER 1: We were all knocked out for quite a while.

SOLDIER 3: And also there was the earthquake, too, even BEFORE we got so scared.

SOLDIER 2: Hey! I wasn't scared. No little old angel is going to scare ME. I just decided to close my eyes for a… you know, a power nap.

SOLDIER 1: Ha! You can't fool US. Dude, your nose was all bloody from falling face first on a ROCK.

SOLDIER 3: And maybe you guys didn't notice, but the grave clothes were neatly folded! And left there, right in the tomb. Nobody stealing a dead body would bother to do that!

SOLDIER 2: OK, so…well… so what? I'm not about to risk my neck telling what REALLY happened.

SOLDIER 3: I know. But speaking of death… I've been doing a lot of THINKING about death with all this. You know— we are all going to die some day. And as soldiers… we are likely to die very young.

SOLDIER 1: Ah, speak for yourself!

SOLDIER 3: But listen… IF the dead man, Jesus, that we were guarding, really DID come back to life, maybe all the OTHER things we have heard about him are true, too.

SOLDIER 1: *(get angry, slow and menacing)* Look. If you know what is good for you, you will say NOTHING to NOBODY about what we really saw. Do you understand?

SOLDIER 2: Or we will make sure your life DOES end, very suddenly! And we will also make sure… that there is nothing left of YOU to rise from the dead. Get it?

SOLDIER 3: OK, OK.

(Exit SOLDIER 1 and SOLDIER 2.)

SOLDIER 3: Still, it won't hurt to find out where the friends of Jesus are staying. Maybe I can just… sort of hang around near them… and listen in… on what is happening now. If Jesus really is alive… then their GOD is real. There will be some sign of it. I've simply GOT to find out.

(Exit SOLDIER 3. Enter three CHILDREN.)

CHILD 1: Gosh. I never thought of the guards as real people like us.

CHILD 2: I guess I never thought about Jesus being real, either. My uncle always says… but… he actually makes up a lot of stuff.

CHILD 3: Do you think Jesus was the one who folded the grave clothes? Or was it one of the angels?

CHILD 1: Definitely not a GUARD!

CHILD 2: I wonder how much money they got?

CHILD 3: The Bible doesn’t say.

CHILD 2: I bet it went as fast as my Easter candy! Ha!

CHILD 3: Well! I hope at least ONE of the guards got to see Jesus, alive again.

CHILD 2: Me too!

CHILD 3: Me three! And that’s all for today!

ALL CHILDREN: You can read more about the true story of Jesus, coming back to life, in the Bible.

(Enter SOLDIERS.)

ALL SOLDIERS: And you will read about us, too!

ALL: Goodbye!

THE END

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Discussion Questions

1. Why did two of the children at first think Easter wasn't "a big deal"?
2. The Bible says the guards were paid to lie about what happened. Why is that itself evidence something real happened?
3. SOLDIER 3 couldn't explain away the angel, the earthquake, or the neatly folded grave clothes. What convinces YOU that the resurrection is true?
4. SOLDIER 1 and SOLDIER 2 threatened SOLDIER 3 to keep him quiet. Have you ever been pressured to stay quiet about something you know is true?
5. The play doesn't tell us whether SOLDIER 3 ends up following Jesus. What do YOU think might have happened to him?

Related Bible Passages

Primary Text: Matthew 28:11–15 — The chief priests bribe the tomb guards to say Jesus' disciples stole his body while they slept. (Summarized.)

Additional Scripture:

- Matthew 27:62–66 — Pilate posts a guard at the tomb and seals the stone, at the chief priests' request, to prevent anyone from stealing the body. (Summarized.)
- 1 Corinthians 15:3–6 — Paul lists the eyewitnesses to the risen Jesus, seen by “more than 500 of his followers at one time,” most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote. (Summarized.)

Song Suggestions

- “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today” — Amen Choir of the First Baptist Church and National Philharmonic Orchestra — https://open.spotify.com/track/2vB8WyoSYrH3jfu9xDTt4r
- “Easter Song” — Keith Green — https://open.spotify.com/track/5MUsiIncUIN6VY5vusxz87
- “In Christ Alone” — Keith & Kristyn Getty — https://open.spotify.com/track/2hQxLiI93xdjqENJuKeXjO

Ministry Context

A great fit for the week after Easter, when the holiday's excitement has faded but the story's implications are still worth exploring. The soldiers' scene gives skeptical kids (or the skeptical uncle quoted in the play) a way into the historical evidence for the resurrection without feeling preached at.