

## Pilate's Wife

It's not easy being a governor's wife. The official duties are demanding enough -- entertaining dignitaries, attending official ceremonies, always being on display. If you frown at the wrong moment, the professional gossips have a field day.

But the unofficial duties, the secret assignments, are the most important and the most nerve wracking. If you ascend in Roman government, there are a hundred power seekers ready to pull you down. Behind many of the smiling faces acclaiming your success, are conniving minds plotting your ruin.

A political wife must guard her husband's back, always alert for the spy or the assassin. Equally dangerous is the opportunist, apparently a friend while you are in power but ready to turn on you if a rival looks like a better bet. Very few can be trusted. I suppose Pilate does not always trust me. And frankly, I must never take him for granted.

My casual conversations are always laced with significance. As I read the mood of the principal players, I look for the subtle signs of trouble. What do they talk about spontaneously? What is their tone of voice? Is there a catch in the voice at the mention of a certain name?

At times I have played the double agent, hinting of my boredom with Pilate and his career, hinting that I could be had for a price. I would watch for the leer of the lecher or the mental chess game of the schemer. Perhaps I have done it so well that my husband may have wondered on whose side I really was. Yet my career is linked to his for better or for worse, and I must protect him as I protect myself.

Pilate is a shrewd politician, always able to come up with a careful compromise in a sticky situation, and I have made my contributions. The future looked good for us and that is why I was so disturbed by the appearance of the Jesus problem.

I could see right away that although the Jewish leaders made it seem like a routine execution, there was something strange about the request. The man did not look or act like a typical rebel leader. Although Rome has no timidity about a little shedding of blood in the interest of peace, giving the ruling teachers permission to crucify a young upstart over obscure differences in their own strange religion seemed to set a bad precedent.

It looked like a trap and all my instincts warned me. In other difficult situations, I had never shied away from consulting the occult practitioners with their chicken gut readings or horoscopes. But this time I was sent a dream, completely unbidden, that confirmed my worst fears. This man was a hidden rock upon which our career would shipwreck. He was a god, an exalted one, with unimaginable power at his control.

Yet we were trapped. If we set him free, the Jews could claim that a self proclaimed king had been loosed on the empire. If we gave in, I could see visions of doom. All the most clever maneuvers to solve the dilemma or at least distance ourselves from it failed and the worst case scenario took place.

Now, we hear that his body has disappeared from the tomb. The soldiers charged with guarding it, incredibly, claim that they were asleep -- in essence asking to be executed. Obviously they have been paid off, and expect to buy their lives back as well.

This is all strange doings and smells of magic. How ironic that we who rose to the top of the ruling class should be undone by a poor practitioner of the dark arts. And yet, that is not the way he seemed to me. If I did not know the Jewish superstition to be the product of generations of preoccupation with ancient holy writings, I would say that Jesus seemed like a man who had touched reality. He seemed to embody perfect confidence and peace combined with power and justice. If I were a young woman, I would have liked to study his teachings.

Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 18,19