

# Mary's amazing story

re-told as if by herself, almost 2000 years ago, to a friend

written down by André H. Roosma, Zoetermeer, Netherlands, November 2000

*Hi Reada, it's good you're here! I assume you've heard what happened to us some days ago?! Oh, when I come to think of it again - oh, it was so awesome! I still can hardly sleep - all the time; it's still as if it's all too big... it was so marvelous! ... You don't know yet? Oh dear... well, wait, I'll tell you!*

*Now, where do I start? Well you know my brother Lazarus, don't you? It's so good that he is living with us! What a disgrace it would be in our culture if Martha and I had to live as spinsters on our own, without the male covering of our brother. You know that our father died years ago already... and several men despised Martha and me, or don't you?*

*Anyway, one day Lazarus got terribly ill. We really feared for his life. So, we sent out a messenger to ask this Jesus of Galilee - you know: the Rabbi who is now also called the Messiah - to come to our house again. But the next day and the day after, He hadn't arrived yet, and our brother Lazarus died. Oh, Martha and I, we were just inconsolable... We were fortunate to get a lot of mourners over at our house to grieve with us... But we were so disappointed! So many times, Jesus had been with us, and right now, when we needed Him so badly, He was in some other town near Jerusalem. Oh, how disappointed we were!*

*Then one day, I think it was already three days after we had buried our brother, He finally came. I still remember how my sister saw Him coming first. Oh, she always is so attentive and hospitable... She ran to the door. Well, I couldn't! I felt so let down! I just kept crying! Finally, Martha called me that the Rabbi wanted to see me too! Later I heard that she had vented her disappointment towards Him and that they got into some kind of theoretical debate on the theme of the resurrection of the dead. She seemed a little upset, but -you know her- she didn't show it. She is always so good at everything, including hiding her feelings, while my face always betrays me... Anyway, still crying, I went up to Jesus too. And I, too, vented my frustration about His late arrival. I still remember how I told Him that if He had been here earlier, our brother wouldn't have died. He could heal the sick,*

*you know - we had seen Him do that many times! But I couldn't stop crying - I was so full of grief and disappointment!*

*Then, the most unusual thing happened. Now, I ask you: what do most men do when they see us women, cry? They call us 'all too sensitive' and so on or they try to 'console' us in a way that doesn't work. They always want to 'solve' things for us. Just as in the story of Hanna, Elkana's wife, from The Book, you know. She, too, was crying her eyes out, because she had no children while this other wife of Elkana -what's her name?- she did have children and she was putting Hanna down all the time. Now, what did her husband say: that he surely was more to her than thousand sons or so! As if that consoles... And this Eli, he even accused her of drunkenness when she was sobbing and praying in the temple! I can't stand it when people are so insensitive!*

*But here, what did this Jesus do? He kneeled down beside me, put His arm around me and started to weep! I felt his tears on my lap! I heard His sobs next to my ear! Now isn't that incredible? Have you ever seen a man do that? Kneel down beside you and weep with you? And later I heard from His disciples, that He had all reason to say: "Mary, don't cry, baby, for it will be okay!" He had told them on the way to us that He would work things out okay. First they hadn't understood what He was saying, but later they saw it. Even the people around us didn't fully comprehend it, I guess! Wasn't this the powerful Jesus who healed the sick and cast out demons? And now He was just sobbing there with me...*

*Then, after a little while, He rose and helped me on my feet again, and He said something like: "Where's the grave?" So we went to this graveyard which is one block from our house. He and I, we were still sort of sobbing on the way there. Then, when we had come till before the stone that was in*

front of the cave where we had buried Lazarus... oh, man, I couldn't believe my ears! He asked some strong fellows who were standing nearby - I think our uncle was one of them, I don't remember it exactly anymore. Anyway, He asked them to roll away the stone. I remember Martha objecting. She called something about that it was three days already and that it would be real smelly - badly! - in there. I guess I simply was too perplexed to say a word. But I guess I also was in awe, it was like I sensed some awesome things were going to happen - somehow. I had experienced already more things with this Rabbi that were quite beyond my comprehension!

And then, when the opening was clear, He walked towards it, and called with a loud voice into the cave: "Lazarus, come out now!" For a moment I thought of the time when we had played hide and seek and when we would yell those same words when our dear brother had hid himself too well. And that it was in a way ridiculous to call those words now that he was dead... But immediately, my thoughts were as if over-run by this kind of expectancy again, so I sat still and waited. All this happened in just a split-second, you know... And then, it was absolutely awesome, we saw our brother come out of that dark and deadly cave! I could hardly believe my eyes! And neither could all the others who had followed us to the graveyard. It was absolutely silent for several minutes, while we watched Lazarus unwrap the bandages from his ankles - he could hardly walk the way we had wrapped him, you know! But then, I couldn't hold the suspense anymore... I jumped up on my feet and fell around his neck. While my hands helped him remove some more bandages, my lips kissed his cheek which was still wet with the oil we had used... Oh, it all was so unreal... I thought I was in heaven - that it was all a dream! And yet, it was so real, the rough linen of the bandages gliding through my fingers, the hairs of his beard... It was absolutely unbelievable! I didn't know whether to cry or to weep or to laugh... It was absolutely the most awesome experience I've ever gone through! Our brother was dead, and now I was holding him in my arms, and he was alive again... whew... I still get exhausted and out of breath while telling you... It was so... so... just unbelievable!

Anyway, you can imagine, after a while when everybody started to realize somehow what had happened and Martha had gone for some proper clothes for him, emotions really broke loose... It was like the biggest party ever! It ran like a lightning fire through the village. And everybody came with cakes and wine and candles and things. Oh, we were so glad, so exuberant!

That evening, I was so full! I couldn't keep my eyes from Rabbi Jesus! He was so amazing. So I went out into the garden on my own for a while. And it was then that a lot of His wondrous words suddenly started to dawn on me... He had been with us several times, when I would sit at his feet, just drinking in all that He said. He was so full of peace and tenderness, you know! Yes, that was it, a most rare combination of power and tenderness. And there, under the starry sky, I started to remember how he had been speaking about His own death that was to come. And suddenly, it dawned on me that if He was to die soon, we shouldn't withhold Him. Yes, I remembered how that one disciple of His, the one who always was the first one to speak, how he had said that the Rabbi shouldn't die and how Jesus had rebuked him. But now, I sensed that if He was to die, He was also able to raise Himself from the dead. And somehow, I was filled with such awe, such adoration. I thought, no, I knew it: He truly must be THE MESSIAH - the Anointed One - whom we had been awaiting! I just had to find a way to honor Him worthily before He would die! And all of a sudden, I got an idea...

First thing, the next morning, I went out to the shop where we - Martha and I - had bought the anointing oil for the corpse of our once deceased brother who was now living - and he still is, I still get so enthusiastic when I speak about it... Anyway, I inquired whether they had this special fragrant anointing oil that is used for anointing kings and princes at celebrations and at their burial. Only that would be good enough for this Great King! After a long while, the man returned. Yes, they had a little flask of it - about one pound in weight. "But," he inquired, "do you have any idea how much this costs?" And he quoted me the amount. Well, at first I was a bit shocked... that much... I became afraid I

wouldn't have it. So I asked him to keep it and sell it to no one else. And I ran home...

At home I asked Martha how much she had, and I looked up all the coins that I had been collecting from different countries around us and all the old Jewish coins that the Romans had forbidden to use anymore - we had kept some, for somehow we were still in hopes that one day the Messiah would come and deliver us from the Roman oppression, you know. So, I collected all the coins and all the old silverware we had in the house, and went back to the oil and gifts shop to exchange it for this delicately ornamented flask of very precious oil. But the man said that all the coins and all - it wasn't enough to buy the oil. So... well, to make a long story short, it took me several days before I had collected the total sum: I got a prepayment on my wages from my employer, some of my best friends fortunately could lend me some money, and so on. Anyway, after a couple of days I just had enough to buy the royal anointing oil. So I immediately went back and bought it. I still recall the surprise on the face of the shopkeeper: "Now, what would an ordinary woman like Mary do with such expensive oil?"

Then I had to find Jesus again. Well, that part was easy - I just followed my ears! But no way could I get close to him. All the crowds were pressing on to Him. So, I went home to help my sister prepare the evening meal - she had told me the Rabbi was coming to dinner at our house again, that very night.

And that night when He was reclining with His twelve disciples and Lazarus and several others in our dining room, and Martha was bringing in the food, I quickly went upstairs to my room and got the little flask. On coming down, I heard them chat cheerfully over dinner. I sneaked in -, as you know, in our culture a woman shouldn't be with the men when they are dining, apart from when she is serving them, like Martha was. So, I sneaked in, and broke the precious little bottle and poured out the Nardus oil, for that's what it was, over Jesus' feet. And I'll never forget this look on His face as He watched me and as my eyes met His. I did-

n't dare to look up again... His eyes were so full of peace and splendor and tenderness, and... I almost started to cry again... So, after having anointed His feet I wept them dry with my hair - I just didn't know what else to do... He just was so awesome, so... I just can't say it in words... it was... it was... I was so overwhelmed by His beauty and His power and His tenderness and all... All the time I had known that This Man was special, right there and then I knew for sure: "This Man truly is God Almighty Himself!" But I still couldn't believe He had shown so much interest in me... He had been so pure, and yet so affectionate... And I was just such an ordinary woman - and not even that, as despised by most men as I was! I had felt so privileged already as He had allowed me, yes even encouraged me to sit at His feet on other occasions when He had visited our village. And now, that look so full of compassion and grace... As He even wept with me there before He... before He rose our brother Lazarus back from the dead... I just couldn't do anything else but bow down my head at His feet and wipe His feet with my long hair... It may seem crazy, but... HE IS just SO AWESOME!

As the other people present there observed what was going on, one of His disciples - the harsh one dealing with the group's money, I guess - anyway, that one stood up and started to rebuke me. Oh, I felt so bad, I wanted the floor to open and swallow me - which it didn't, of course. In a loud voice, he proclaimed that this was "such a waste", and that this oil could have been sold for a lot of money - well, I think I knew that. Though, why would I have bought it in the first place then? But before anybody else could say a word, The Master spoke - about how the poor were there all the time "but Me, you won't see much longer" He said. And He acknowledged that what I had done was the good thing - oh, I felt as if all my blood was running up to my face. But He smiled at me and honored me, so gently. He even said that people would tell about me and about what I had done, much later...

I could hardly believe my eyes and my ears... I just sat there on my knees and worshipped Him, in total awe...