

# Canaanite Woman

A monologue

By  
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# Canaanite Woman

*Canaanite Woman* was written in response to a request from my then minister for a monologue based on Matthew 15 v 21-28, which he asked me to perform in the church service on a Sunday in August, 2011.

The piece lay in the filing cabinet for another eleven years until I was invited to perform something on the theme of outsiders at the Radius Drama Festival of 2022. I began to try and write something else and then remembered this.

I wanted the Canaanite woman to be an ordinary person. Not well off, modern day and working class. I chose a Yorkshire accent because it is where I am from, but whoever delivers the monologue should use an accent they are completely at home with - any that does not come naturally will strike a false note.

A rehearsal technique which I have found useful is to practice monologues in front of a full-length mirror. It helps you spot meaningless gestures, tendencies to lean only one way, whether the clip mic is placed correctly, and so on.

Jane Bower 2023

## Canaanite Woman

*The woman speaks in any noticeable regional accent*

I know he was tired. I know he'd just walked fifty miles. But he must have wanted to come if he'd walked that far with his gang. Fifty miles, just to get to Tyre and Sidon.

I'm from Canaan myself. If you came from my neck of the woods you'd know that straight away. It's written on my face, it's heavy in my voice. I can't change either of them. Canaanite Woman. It's written all over me.

She was lovely when she was little. She was still lovely then. To me, anyway. Others had long since given her up. But she was my baby, always would be. I would go on backing her up and fighting her corner for ever. I love her. But it had cost me some family members, and some friends. They didn't want to get involved. She was too difficult.

'But she needs me', I'd say. But the real truth was never spoken. I need her. She's all I've got. I love her. She's mine. I remember she used to love making bread when she was little, before the evil came. Sifting the flour, kneading the dough, and we'd sing (*sings a snatch of melody briefly, breaks off*) Oh God – I couldn't think about that any more. It was too great a pain.

I'd heard he was coming, the teacher, the one that did the healing. I'd heard about him, everybody had, but I never thought I'd actually see him, meet him. He was just a fantasy figure, someone other people met. But now he was coming here, just up the road from my door. I thought about it, and this thrill of fear shot through me.

But then I thought, why not? What have I got to lose? He can only say no, he can only ignore me.

It's either this or watching my darling girl, year after year, rocking and foaming and moaning, screaming when her brain and her mind are too much for her to tolerate - what mother wouldn't risk it?

I thought about buying something bold to wear, top quality, make myself stand out or give a good impression. But then I thought, what's the point? I'm still Canaanite Woman. Do I really think I can impress him? I am what I am.

It was a big risk leaving her alone in the house. But she hates crowds, they make her panic, and everyone was outside. So I went out, and forced my way to the front – I didn't make myself popular. Some people saw I was desperate and jeered. 'Fat chance!' I heard one say. Others were more sympathetic and made way. I glimpsed him and my heart was pounding. I saw him.

His face was.... For a moment my courage failed. Then I thought of her, raving and wailing.

I filled my lungs.

'Have mercy upon me, O Lord, King David's son! My daughter has a demon, it torments her – please, please'