Joseph Receives Unsettling News

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a comedy in one scene

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Joseph: A carpenter, husband to Mary.

Mary: Wife to Joseph. She has some unusual news.

Gabriel: An angel who has told Mary she’s going to have a baby. He can be unconventional. I see him winged in a white gown and derby hat. A peace symbol is on his costume somewhere. He needs a shave and might be tattooed. He smokes a cigarette (or a joint) at rise.

Scene

Nazareth, morning. 2018 years ago.

SUMMARY

Mary tells Joseph she’s going to have a baby. He’s taken aback because he’s not the father. God is.

**Note: Gabriel holds a musical triangle. Each time he strikes it, lights dim and actors stop and move to the blocking of the first line after the tone. When he rings it a second time, the action resumes. The first move will be to the blocking at the top of the play. All this will be perfectly clear as you read the script. The note Gabriel strikes on the triangle should be clear and bright, not ominous.**

SETTING: A work room in a cottage in Nazareth.

AT RISE: JOSEPH is building a table. GABRIEL lounges high upstage. He is smoking a cigarette. When HE hears MARY’s voice, HE crushes the cigarette, quickly stands, holds triangle aloft. HE is unseen by MARY and JOSEPH throughout.

MARY (off.)

Joseph?

JOSEPH

In the shop.

MARY

(MARY enters. SHE carries a rolling pin.)

Good morning, dear.

(SHE kisses HIS cheek.)

JOSEPH

Good morning, Mary. Hand me that mallet, please.

MARY

(As SHE retrieves mallet.)

I have news.

JOSEPH

(As HE taps with mallet.)

Is it about the census?

MARY

In a way, yes. Do you like children?

JOSEPH

I love children ...

MARY

Good because –

JOSEPH

… which is why I can’t see bringing any into this corrupt world. Herod stealing every

piece of silver he can get his greedy hands on. Wars, disease, crime … why do you ask?

MARY

Never mind.

(Gabriel strikes the triangle. Lights dim as MARY and JOSEPH return to the opening blocking. He hits it again. Lights up, action resumes.)

MARY

(MARY enters.)

Good morning, dear.

JOSEPH

Good morning, Mary. Hand me that mallet, please.

MARY

I have news.

JOSEPH

Is it about the census?

MARY

In a way, yes. Do you like children?

JOSEPH

Yes. … As long as they belong to other people.

(Gabriel strikes triangle. Lights dim, actors move. 2nd strike,

lights up, action resumes.)

MARY

Do you like children?

JOSEPH

I’m sterile.

(Gabriel strikes triangle. Lights dim, actors move. 2nd strike,

lights up, action resumes.)

MARY

Do you like children?

JOSEPH

I love children.

MARY

Good because –

JOSEPH

These are exciting times. That thief, Herod, will soon be dead. With all these wars, there will always be opportunities for soldiers. And Heaven knows we’ll always need doctors. And policemen. We really need policemen. Did you like that bookcase I built yesterday?

MARY

Like it? I loved it. I think you have a real future in carpentry.

JOSEPH

I’m pleased you liked it, but it’s been stolen.

MARY

That’s terrible! Could you build another?

JOSEPH

Certainly.

MARY

Could you … build a crib?

JOSEPH

I guess. Sure.

MARY

Good. I’m with child.

(JOSEPH bangs HIS finger, howls, mouths a bad word. Gabriel strikes triangle. Lights dim, actors move. 2nd strike, lights up, action resumes.)

MARY

Do you like children?

JOSEPH

I love children.

MARY

Good because –

JOSEPH

These are exciting times –

MARY

I know, I know. Cops, soldiers, doctors.

JOSEPH

Did you like that bookcase I built yesterday?

MARY

Like it? I loved it. I think you have a real future in carpentry.

JOSEPH

I’m pleased you liked it, but it’s been stolen.

MARY

That’s terrible! Could you build another?

JOSEPH

Certainly.

MARY

Could you … build a crib?

JOSEPH

I guess. Sure.

MARY

Good. I’m with child.

JOSEPH

What?!

MARY

I’m going to have a baby.

JOSEPH

A baby?! That’s impossible. We haven’t … you know.

(HE makes some vague coupling gesture.)

MARY

No worries. You’re not the father.

(JOSEPH’s mouth drops open. Before HE can speak, Gabriel strikes triangle. Lights dim, actors move. 2nd strike, lights up, action resumes.)

JOSEPH

A baby?! That’s impossible. We haven’t … you know.

MARY

Stranger things have happened.

JOSEPH

I’d like to know when.

MARY

Last February. My due day is October 25th.

(Gabriel strikes triangle. Lights dim, actors move. 2nd strike,

lights up, action resumes.)

JOSEPH

A baby?! That’s impossible. We haven’t … you know.

MARY

Stranger things have happened.

JOSEPH

I’d like to know when.

MARY

Last March. My due day is November 25th.

Gabriel strikes triangle. Lights dim, actors move. 2nd strike,

lights up, action resumes.)

MARY

Last April. My due date is December 25th.

JOSEPH

I didn’t meet you until June.

(Gabriel strikes triangle. Lights dim, actors move. 2nd strike,

lights up, action resumes.)

MARY

My due day is December 25th.

JOSEPH

(HE counts months on HIS fingers.)

I was at the Carpenters Symposium last April. In Galilee.

MARY

No worries. You’re not the father.

JOSEPH

What??!! … How could you do this to me?

MARY

I begged you to take me with you.

JOSEPH

You told me you were a virgin.

MARY

I am a virgin.

JOSEPH

That makes no sense.

MARY

It’s a miracle.

JOSEPH

(HE brandishes mallet, advances on MARY.)

I’ll show you a miracle!!

(MARY cringes as Gabriel strikes the triangle several

times in rapid succession. Lights dim, actors move. One strike

, lights up, action resumes.)

JOSEPH

You told me you were a virgin.

MARY

I am a virgin.

JOSEPH

That makes no sense.

MARY

It’s a miracle.

JOSEPH

I’ll show you a miracle!!

MARY

(MARY cringes.)

Don’t hit me!

(MARY speaks before GABRIEL can ring triangle.)

MARY (Continued.)

An angel came to me in a dream and –

JOSEPH

You saw an angel?

MARY

Yes, last April. In a dream.

JOSEPH

You never mentioned any dream -- Wait. An angel made you pregnant?

MARY

Of course not.

JOESPH

I’m confused.

MARY

He told me I was going to become pregnant.

JOSEPH

Did he say by whom?

MARY

You’d better sit down.

(GABRIEL strikes the triangle. Lights dim. MARY and JOSEPH return to the opening blocking. HE rings again; lights up. action resumes.)

MARY

Good morning, dear.

JOSEPH

Good morning, dear. Hand me that mallet please.

MARY

I have news.

JOSEPH

Is it about the census?

MARY

In a way, yes. Do you like children?

JOSEPH

I love children.

MARY

Good because –

JOSEPH

These are exciting times. That thief, Herod –-

MARY

Please. No more about Herod. … Where’s the bookcase you built yesterday?

JOESEPH

Did you like it?

MARY

Very much. I think you have a real future in carpentry.

JOSEPH

I’m pleased you liked it, but it’s been stolen.

MARY

That’s terrible! Could you build another?

JOSEPH

Certainly.

MARY

Could you … build a crib?

JOSEPH

Why in the world would we need a crib?

MARY

I’m preggers.

JOSEPH

(HE bangs HIS finger, howls, almost swears.)

Holy Fff --!! … What?!

MARY

Preggers. I’m going to have a baby.

JOSEPH

A baby?! That’s impossible. We haven’t … you know ... done it.

MARY

Stranger things have happened.

JOSEPH

I’d like to know when.

MARY

I just said. Last April. My due day is December 25th.

JOSEPH

I was at a carpenter’s symposium last April. In Galilee.

MARY

No worries. You’re not the father.

JOSEPH

What?! How could you do this to me?

MARY

I begged you to take me with you.

JOSEPH

You told me you were a virgin.

MARY

I am a virgin.

JOSEPH

That makes no sense.

MARY

It’s a miracle.

JOSEPH

(HE brandishes mallet, advances on MARY.)

I’ll show you a miracle!!

MARY

Don’t you hit me!

(SHE brandishes HER rolling pin. THEY face off.)

An angel came to me in a dream, Joseph.

JOSEPH

You saw an angel?

MARY

Yes, last April. In a dream.

JOSEPH

You never mentioned any dream -- Wait. An angel made you pregnant?

MARY

Of course not.

JOESPH

I’m confused.

MARY

He told me I was going to become pregnant.

JOSEPH

Did he say by whom?

MARY

You’d better sit down.

JOSEPH (Sitting.)

I’m assuming you understand the procedure.

MARY

The what?

JOSEPH

The procedure. The method. … You know. Like we talked about.

MARY

Oh. That. Well … There was no procedure. There was no method.

JOSEPH

Wait. I’m confused again.

MARY

It’s really quite simple, Joseph. When I went to bed, I wasn’t pregnant. Then an angel visited me, he whispered in my ear, and in the next instant, I was pregnant.

JOSEPH (Disgusted.)

Oh my God.

MARY (Excited.)

Yes! Exactly!

GABRIEL

Hallelujah.

(HE strikes triangle, which brings us to black.)

END OF PLAY