



NOW SERVING FRESH DRAMA

## Behold the Handmaid

By Teri Kistler

### **CAST: 2 females**

**Mary the Younger:** Jesus' mother, 14-16 years old

**Mary the Elder:** Jesus' mother, 40s

### **RUN TIME: 20-25 minutes**

### **PROPS – None required.**

### **STORY**

As a teenage girl, Mary wrestles with the overwhelming news that she will give birth to and raise the Son of God. As an older woman, Mary reflects on the meaning of her Son's life and death. In interwoven monologues, both Marys express their heartaches and joys – one to her husband, the other to Luke as he gathers details for his account of Jesus' life.

### **THEMES**

Mary. Christmas. The Magnificat. Sacrifice. One Act.

### **SCRIPTURE**

Luke 1:46-55

### **PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES**

The two Marys speak to two characters, Joseph and Luke, both of whom are unseen during the production. Another actor could be included who portrays an artist painting the scene in the style of a Renaissance painting. It is as if a painter's subjects have come to life.

Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org))

**READING COPY ONLY – PERFORMANCE PERMISSION NOT GRANTED**

Copyright © 2011 by Teri Kistler

For royalty information, visit [RileysDiner.com](http://RileysDiner.com) or e-mail [michael@rileysdiner.com](mailto:michael@rileysdiner.com)

## Behold the Handmaid

(LIGHTS come up on a cross. Beneath the cross is a manger. In silhouette we see the two MARYS. They are dressed in the manner of an Italian Renaissance painting of the Madonna. MARY THE ELDER wears a faded version of the gown worn by MARY THE YOUNGER and a widow's veil. MARY THE ELDER stands beneath the cross, looking up to it. MARY THE YOUNGER stands looking down into the manger.)

MARY THE ELDER

"Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that were fulfilled among us." Luke, are you sure of the beginning? Your language seems formal. "In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee –

MARY THE YOUNGER

– to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was –

BOTH

– Mary."

MARY THE ELDER

Yes, Luke, this is how it should be told to the people. Where were we ... It's my age. ... I lose my train of thought. I've spoken to you of the angel Gabriel's visit to Zechariah, which occurred before his visit to me. How the angel left a stunned Zechariah and Cousin Elizabeth facing the birth of her baby with a husband lacking the power of speech. Elizabeth only sensing that she had found the Lord's favor.

MARY THE YOUNGER

Joseph, we've received wonderful news. My cousin, Elizabeth, in her old age, is with child just as Gabriel said! This is our answer. I can go to her while our families adjust to our news. And you will never guess: Zechariah can't speak a word. He was struck mute while serving at the temple. Rumor has it that he, too, had a visit from an angel. Could it have been the very same messenger?

## MARY THE ELDER

I'm sorry. I've jumped forward a bit. My own visit from Gabriel was shocking enough, though, to my credit I wasn't struck dumb. Though I'll confess my heart came to my throat when I turned and saw him there. ... How did I tell Joseph? It wasn't easy.

## MARY THE YOUNGER

Joseph. Last night ... Last night ... Please, sit. Your pacing makes me nervous. Last night, I went to the roof before going to my bed, thinking the fresh air would help me sleep. I've been so restless lately, tossing and turning through the night and waking for no reason. There on the roof, I was alone for the first time in I don't know how long. The betrothal festivities have left me reeling.

## MARY THE ELDER

I was just fifteen while Joseph seemed so much older. He was such a gentle man just the same. He was never gruff. Very practical. I was a bit awestruck by him. He was a man highly respected in our village. And who was I to marry such a man? To set up a life with him, leaving my parents as I took a final vow, the vow to cleave only to my husband. The man I respected and grew to love. My Joseph.

## MARY THE YOUNGER

Joseph, I'm speaking the truth. I was alone on the roof, but just the same, I felt someone's eyes on me. He called himself a messenger. He was an angel, Joseph. An angel called Gabriel. I didn't hear him come up behind me as much as I sensed him. I turned from looking at the first star.

## MARY THE ELDER

Such a dreamy girl, wishing on the first star of the evening, when this voice, pounding as loudly as my heart, said: "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." I fell to my knees trembling.

(MARY THE YOUNGER falls to her knees.)

## MARY THE YOUNGER

My wish went right out of my mind.

## MARY THE ELDER

"Do not be afraid," he said. This angel, Gabriel, sent from his place at God's throne to visit me.

MARY THE YOUNGER

This is what he said: "You, Mary, have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you will give him the name –

BOTH

– Jesus."

MARY THE YOUNGER

Then I asked, "How can this be since I am a virgin?"

MARY THE ELDER

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called –

BOTH

– the Son of God."

MARY THE YOUNGER

How could I think of you then, Joseph? How could I even think of my own dream of entering your home as your bride, when I've been chosen – we've been chosen?

MARY THE ELDER

My response to Gabriel overshadowed my concern for Joseph. How should I respond to a messenger from the Righteous One? I took a vow of sorts. A vow which became a part of who I am now. All I could say was –

BOTH

– "Behold the handmaid of the Lord –

MARY THE YOUNGER

– let it be done as you have said." And the wave of fear left me, replaced by an awe I've never before felt. Who am I that the Most High should grace me this way? ... Joseph, ... if you choose to divorce me, I'll understand.

MARY THE ELDER

He didn't respond at first. So I told him what Gabriel had said about Elizabeth.

MARY THE YOUNGER

I asked of Gabriel: Elizabeth? How can that be?

MARY THE ELDER

“In her old age, she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month” –

MARY THE YOUNGER

– Elizabeth. –

MARY THE ELDER

– “for nothing is impossible with God.”

MARY THE YOUNGER

Nothing is impossible with God. Even Elizabeth is blessed. What could I say? “I am the handmaid of the Lord –

MARY THE ELDER

– may it be to me as you have said.”

MARY THE YOUNGER

I have made my vow, Joseph. ... Joseph?

(JOSEPH has left her)

MARY THE ELDER

He needed time. While I, surprisingly, was able to sleep peacefully for the first time in weeks, he received his own answer. This wonderful, practical man had a dream.

MARY THE YOUNGER

(JOSEPH has returned)

And you will trust this dream? You know it's of God? I can't have you second-guessing later. You are sure enough to go to my father with me then? ...

MARY THE ELDER

Amazing, that this marvelous thing should be so difficult to speak of ... this treasure in an earthen vessel.

MARY THE YOUNGER

... And you'll still have me as your wife? We will raise Jesus together?

## MARY THE ELDER

I was doubly blessed. That God would put me in this man's care. Of course, there were whisperings of disgrace as we hurried to say our final vow, and I was packed off to help Elizabeth as her time drew near.

## MARY THE YOUNGER

This will be for the best. You'll be able to continue in the shop. The order from Mordecai will be finished by the time I get back and then we will have time to set up our home for the baby. Tell me this is what you want, Joseph.

## MARY THE ELDER

Not long after I returned from Elizabeth, word of the census came ordering us to the home of our forefather, David.

## MARY THE YOUNGER

(bundling costume around the front to indicate pregnancy)

How can I travel now of all times? Law or no law, we both know what is in store. Joseph, my time will come while we're on the road! You'd have me give birth not knowing if we'll have a midwife? Bethlehem may as well be Egypt for all the distance it seems. ... Yes, you know what is best. I'll pack our things. But, I feel it is only right to tell you, I've just come from mother, and she's already crying. Even father can't console her. Go to them, try to reassure them. Brag about the health of the new donkey if you must. Anything to set their minds at ease.

## MARY THE ELDER

Many times it was Joseph who gently reminded me, recalling to me my own words when I could not:

## BOTH

"I am the handmaid of the Lord –

## MARY THE ELDER

– let it be done as you have said." It took time for me to leave my younger ways. I was never perfect, especially at thirteen, fourteen, fifteen. Annoyed that I couldn't keep pace with the changes in myself, and frightened, really, of all that was before me in my life. The questions of my future both resolved and raised with the message from Gabriel. ... Give your scribe a rest, Luke, and remind me of what I've already told you – these things I've treasured in my heart. My son's birth. Bethlehem.

MARY THE YOUNGER  
The census.

MARY THE ELDER  
David's city.

MARY THE YOUNGER  
The exhausting journey.

MARY THE ELDER  
Joseph's concern.

MARY THE YOUNGER  
The choking dust.

MARY THE ELDER  
No room ... even at the inn ... for God's son.

MARY THE YOUNGER  
The pains coming more quickly.

MARY THE ELDER  
Joseph's face lined with worry.

MARY THE YOUNGER  
His loving hands, easing me to childbed.

MARY THE ELDER  
A bed of straw, covered with the donkey's rough blanket.

MARY THE YOUNGER  
Stifling my screams so he wouldn't worry so.

MARY THE ELDER  
The warm, acrid breath of the animals we shared the night with.

MARY THE YOUNGER  
The pain.

MARY THE ELDER

The fear. How could God submit Himself to the danger of human childbirth?

MARY THE YOUNGER

The fear.

MARY THE ELDER

The birth.

MARY THE YOUNGER

The blood.

MARY THE ELDER

The relief as He took His first gasping breath.

MARY THE YOUNGER

His breath. so sweet.

MARY THE ELDER

His eyes wide with confusion.

MARY THE YOUNGER

His first cry.

MARY THE ELDER

Joseph's calloused hands cradling God's son.

MARY THE YOUNGER

The swaddling clothes.

MARY THE ELDER

Swaddling the precious, tiny body of God's son.

MARY THE YOUNGER

Jesus.

MARY THE ELDER

Emmanuel. God with us.

MARY THE YOUNGER

The joy.

MARY THE ELDER

Purest joy.

MARY THE YOUNGER

(looking to the “baby” in her arms)

Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

MARY THE ELDER

(looking to MARY THE YOUNGER)

Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

MARY THE YOUNGER

Joseph, don't you think he takes after me ... only handsome? Can a baby be handsome? He will be brave and strong. Fearless, just like his father. His father. ... So many times I've had to remind myself.

(looking at the baby in her arms as she speaks to JOSEPH)

Will you be able to love him as your own? If you were to imagine something more than my features in Jesus' eyes, his smile, in this dark, curly hair. ... If you should imagine you see, in his face, the features of another man. Ephraim the Potter, or Judah, you remember my childhood play mate? He's married to Miriam now. ... Yes, you are right in saying it. My own imagination has carried me away. I'll stop my prattling and rest. I feel so full of life, though. It's hard to

**END OF SAMPLE**

**This play is protected by copyright law. It is illegal to print, transcribe or otherwise duplicate this electronic document.**

**We hope you have enjoyed this sample. To prevent copyright infringement, the rest of this play cannot be displayed. To purchase this script with full performance rights, visit [www.rileysdiner.com](http://www.rileysdiner.com).**