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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Passion Play

by Sarah Ruhl

SAMUEL FRENCH

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An early version of ***PASSION PLAY*** was produced in workshop at the Tristan Bates Theatre in London in July 2002. It was directed by Mark Wing-Davey; the design was by Madeline Herbert and the lighting design was by Emma Chapman. The cast was as follows:

PONTIUS. . . . . Colin Tierney/Tim Welton
JOHN. . . . . Oliver Chris/Oliver Dimsdale/Paul Ready
MARY 1 . . . . . Kate Maravan
MARY 2 . . . . . Annabel Capper
VISITNG FRIAR, ENGLISHMAN . . . . . Alan Cox
VILLAGE IDIOT . . . . . .Liz White/Nathalie Armin/Hayley Carmichael
CARPENTER 1. . . . . Peter Warnock/Michael Gilroy
CARPENTER 2. . . . . Patrick Brennan/Morgan James
DIRECTOR . . . . . David Stevens
MACHINIST, GERMAN OFFICER . . . . . Tim Welton/James Albrecht
QUEEN ELIZABETH, HITLER, REAGAN . . . . Scott Handy/Catherine Tate
SHEPHERD . . . . . Danny Sapani/James Albrecht
SHEPHERDESS, BIRD . . . . . Louise Bolton
OLD LADY. . . . . .Rita Davies

PASSION PLAY received its world premiere at Arena Stage (Molly Smith, Artistic Director; Edgar Dobie, Managing Director) in Washington, D.C., on September 2, 2005. It was directed by Molly Smith; the set design was by Scott Bradley, the costume design was by Linda Cho, the lighting design was by Joel Moritz, the sound design and original music were by Andre Pluess; the dramaturg was Mark Bly and the stage manager was Amber Dickerson. The cast was as follows:

PONTIUS, FOOT SOLDIER, P, ENSEMBLE . . . . . .Felix Solis
JOHN, ERIC, J, ENSEMBLE . . . . . .Howard W. Overshown
MARY 1, ENSEMBLE . . . . . Kelly Brady
MARY 2, ENSEMBLE . . . . . Carla Harting
VISITING FRIAR, VISITING ENGLISHMAN,
VA 1, ENSEMBLE . . . . . Edward James Hyland
VILLAGE IDIOT, VIOLET, ENSEMBLE. . . . . Polly Noonan
CARPENTER 1, VA 2, ENSEMBLE. . . . . .J. Fred Shiffman
CARPENTER 2, ENSEMBLE . . . . . Lawrence Redmond
DIRECTOR, ENSEMBLE . . . . . .Leo Erickson
MACHINIST, GERMAN OFFICER,
YOUNG DIRECTOR, ENSEMBLE . . . . . .Karl Miller
QUEEN E LI ZABETH, HITLER, REAGAN,
NIXON, ENSEMBLE . . . . . .Robert Dorfman
ENSEMBLE . . . . . Parker Dixon

PASSION PLAY was produced at the Goodman Theatre (Robert Falls, Artistic Director; Roche Schulfer, Executive Director) in Chicago on September 15, 2007. It was directed by Mark Wing-Davey; the set design was by Allen Moyer, the costume design was by Gabriel Berry, the lighting design was by James F. Ingalls, the sound design was by Cecil Averett, the projection design was by Ruppert Bohle; the dramaturg was Tanya Palmer, the production stage manager was Joseph Drummond and the stage manager was T. Paul Lynch. The cast was as follows:

PONTIUS THE FISH GUTTER, FOOT SOLDIER, P . . . . . .Brian Sgambati
JOHN THE F ISHERMAN, ERIC, J . . . . . Joaquin Torres
MARY 1 . . . . . Kristen Bush
MARY 2 . . . . . Nicole Wiesner
VISITING FRIAR, VISITING ENGLISHMAN, YOUNG DIRECTOR . . . . . .Alan Cox
VILLAGE IDIOT, VIOLET . . . . . Polly Noonan
CARPENTER 1, TOWNSMAN . . . . . .Brendan Averett
CARPENTER 2, TOWNSMAN . . . . . Keith Kupferer
DIRECTOR . . . . . Craig Spidle
MACHINIST, GERMAN OFFICER, VA . . . . . John Hoogenakker
QUEEN ELIZABETH, HITLER, REAGAN . . . . . T. Ryder Smith
ENSEMBLE . . . . . Tiffany Bedwell, Jeremy Clark, Kyle Lemieux, Ron Rains, Jayce Ryan

PASSION PLAY was produced at Yale Repertory Theatre (James Bundy, Artistic Director; Victoria Nolan, Managing Director) in New Haven, CT, on September 19, 2008. It was directed by Mark Wing-Davey; the set design was by Allen Moyer, the costume design was by Ilona Somogyi, the lighting design was by Stephen Strawbridge, the sound design was by Charles Coes; the production dramaturg was Colin Mannex and the stage manager was James Mountcastle. The cast was as follows:

PONTIUS THE FISH GUTTER . . . . . Felix Solis
JOHN THE FISHERMAN . . . . . .Joaquin Torres
MARY 1 . . . . . Susan Pourfar
MARY 2 . . . . . .Nicole Wiesner
VISITING FRIAR, VISITING ENGLISHMAN, VA . . . . . Thomas Jay Ryan
VILLAGE IDIOT, VIOLET . . . . . Polly Noonan
CARPENTER 1 . . . . . .Brendan Averett
CARPENTER 2 . . . . . .Austin Durant
DIRECTOR . . . . . Keith Reddin
MACHINIST, GERMAN OFFICER, YOUNG DIRECTOR . . . . . Dieterich Gray
QUEEN ELIZABETH, HITLER, REAGAN . . . . . Kathleen Chalfant
ENSEMBLE . . . . . Laura Esposito, Brian Hastert, Slate Holmgren, Barret O'Brien, Luke Robertson

PASSION PLAY was produced by Epic Theatre Ensemble (Zak Berkman, Melissa Friedman, Ron Russell; Executive Directors) at The Irondale Center in Brooklyn, NY, on May 12, 2010. It was directed by Mark Wing-Davey; the set design was by Warren Karp and Allen Moyer, the costume design was by Gabriel Berry and Antonia Ford-Roberts, the lighting design was by David Weiner, additional music was composed by David Van Tieghem; the associate director was Scott Illingworth, the movement director was James Calder; the fight director was David Anzuelo, the dialect coach was Deborah Hecht and the stage manager was Iris O'Brien. The cast was as follows:

PONTIUS THE FISH GUTTER . . . . . Dominic Fumusa
JOHN THE FISHERMAN . . . . . Hale Appleman
MARY 1 . . . . . Kate Turnbull
MARY 2 . . . . . Nicole Wiesner
VISITING FRIAR, VISITING ENGLISHMAN . . . . . Daniel Pearce
VILLAGE IDIOT, VIOLET . . . . . Polly Noonan
CARPENTER 1 . . . . . Brendan Averett
CARPENTER 2 . . . . . Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr.
DIRECTOR . . . . . Keith Reddin
MACHINIST, GERMAN OFFICER, YOUNG DIRECTOR . . . . . Alex Podulke
QUEEN ELIZABETH, HITLER, REAGAN . . . . . T. Ryder Smith

AUTHOR'S NOTES

I started writing this play fourteen years ago after rereading a childhood book which includes an account of Oberammergau in the early 1900s. In this old fashioned narrative, the man who played Christ was actually so holy as to have become a living embodiment. The woman who played Mary was, in real life, just as pure as the Virgin. I started thinking, how would it shape or misshape a life to play a biblical role year after year? How are we scripted? Where is the line between authentic identity and performance? And is there, in fact, such a line?

The first act is set in 1575 in England, when Queen Elizabeth was about to shut down the Passion Plays in order to control religious representation. Not many towns still performed the Passion in 1575; the village of Act One is, then, itself something of an anachronism, oddly suspended between the middle ages and the Renaissance. In 1575, Queen Elizabeth banned religious plays altogether; up until then, over one hundred towns in the British Isles performed the Passion. Meanwhile, Elizabeth, who was excommunicated by the Pope in 1571, increased measures in the 1570s to cleanse England of Papal trappings, including Jesuits. Ordinary Catholics often housed priests in what they called "priest-holes" in order to maintain Catholic rites.

The second act moves to Oberammergau, Germany – a town where the Passion Play, begun in the Middle Ages, even now continues to be played every ten years. Many narratives describe Oberammergau as a living picture of the New Testament, ignoring the fact that, in 1934, the director of the Passion was already a member of the Nazi party. The actor who played Christ and the actress who played the Virgin Mary were also early party members. By 1947, every actor in the play had at one time been a Nazi, with the exception of the men who played, ironically, Judas and Pontius Pilate. (The play takes liberties with these historical facts.) As late as 1946, the village of Oberammergau denied knowing anything about concentration camps, although Dachau (where Oberammergau's one Jew was sent during the war) was only seventy-five miles away.

The Passion Play, which often incited pogroms during Easter when performed in medieval Germany, became a historical perversion during the war, seen with our contemporary lens. In 1934, Hitler saw the Passion and was greeted with open arms. He came a second time on August 13, 1934 – six weeks after "Night of the Long Knives," when Hitler purged his leadership of known homosexuals, Communists, and Jews. Act Two of Passion Play quotes the 19th century Oberammergau script (famous for its anti-Semitism), as well as quoting a speech Hitler made at a dinner, expressing his admiration for the Oberammergau Passion in 1942. Everything else in the play is an invention. I am indebted to Saul Friedman and James Shapiro for their careful research.

It should be said that, since the war, Oberammergau has made many attempts to reform their Passion Play; has invited Jewish scholars and has revised their text in order to reflect a more ecumenical view. Many Passion Plays have enlisted the Anti-Defamation league to get it right, or at least, more right. And yet, even today, we are plunged into the same kind of moral/aesthetic debates, as when Mel Gibson took up the mantle of the Passion, which had one of the biggest viewerships, ironically, in the Arab world. But more people talked about "Passion-dollars" – the surprise commercial success of the movie – than they did about the dangers of focusing the Gospel story on violent scape-goating.

Years after beginning Parts One and Two of *Passion Play* (which I began with the encouragement of Paula Vogel) I returned to the cycle. I discovered that there was a Passion Play in Spearfish, South Dakota, started by an actor from Germany in the 1940s. I felt that I had to continue the story. Serendipitously, Arena Stage in Washington D.C. asked me to write a play about America, and I figured that there's nothing more American than the nexus of religion, politics, and the theatre. Especially when it seemed as if we were in the midst of an unacknowledged holy war, conducted by a man who felt himself to be appointed by God (he must have been appointed by someone, he wasn't appointed by the popular vote in 2000). Never had the medieval world and the digital age seemed so oddly conjoined. I found myself fascinated by how leaders use, misuse and legislate religion for their own political aims, and how leaders turn themselves into theatrical icons. Queen Elizabeth, wearing layers and layers of make-up, "married" herself to England; Hitler took photographs of himself gesticulating until he got it right; Ronald Reagan had miraculous and natural powers as an actor. But what is the difference between acting as performance and acting as moral action? It is no accident that we refer to theaters of war.

More and more, it seems to me that the separation between church and state is coming into question in our country. We are a divided nation. And the more divided we are, the less we talk about what divides us. The left is perceived of as anti-religious ideological secularists; the right as religious zealots. But whatever happened to the founding father's rationale for separating church and state? More devotion was possible, and more kinds of devotion would be possible, the less the state controlled religious rhetoric. More devotion, and more conversation about devotion, would be possible with that freedom. I miss that conversation, and I think theater is a good place for it. To my mind, devotion is like a quality of light – how is it possible to legislate the quality of light? It would be like legislating the invisible moments that happen in a theater. And ultimately, this play is about those moments – about how actors wring moments out of their private lives in order bear witness in the community.

Ideally, *Passion Play* (Parts One, Two, and Three) would be performed all together in one evening (it should run about three hours plus intermissions) or else in rotating repertory. Together, the three parts form a cycle play – alone, they do something different, but they can technically stand alone. If in repertory, I suggest doing Parts One and Two on one night, and Part Three on the next. If the resources of one theater are too limited to produce the entire cycle, I can imagine two theaters in one city collaborating to put the cycle up together. In the original guild productions of the Passion, the carpenters in the village would handle the crucifixion scene and the bakers would handle the Last Supper. Perhaps our theatrical communities could borrow from the primitive guild model.

I wrote the first draft of *Passion Play*, Part Three before the 2004 election, with a great sense of urgency. It's easy to feel powerless as the great political wheels turn, financed by enormous wealth. But then you get to thinking about what starts every grass-roots revolution – people organizing in one room. Luckily that very special right is protected by our Constitution. And as ill-suited as some theater artists are to some meanings of the word "organization," there is one thing all of us tend to do well, and that is to organize people to come to one room. It is not that the play you are about to read is a political treatise – not at all – but it does provide us with another occasion to be in one room together as we continue to meditate on the relationship of community to political icons. And to meditate on what we can do to affect change in very solemn times indeed.

– Sarah Ruhl

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN FOR ENTIRE CYCLE

The full play requires eleven actors. Each actor retains a semblance of his or her role when the play jumps in time and space. For example, Pontius the Fish Gutter becomes a Foot Soldier in Part Two, and a Vietnam vet named "P" in Part Three. There is some flexibility in how the Carpenters and Machinist are reincarnated in Part Three. The play is an ensemble piece, and all the players help to create the world of the play within the play.

Part One *England, 1575*	*Part Two* *Germany, 1934*	*Part Three* *South Dakota, 1969—the present*
PONTIUS THE FISH GUTTER (plays Pontius Pilate and Satan)	**FOOTSOLDIER** (plays Pontius Pilate)	**P** (plays Ponitus Pilate and Satan)
JOHN THE FISHERMAN (plays Jesus and Adam)	**ERIC** (plays Jesus)	**J** (plays Jesus)
MARY 1 (plays the Virgin Mary and Eve)	**ELSA** (plays the Virgin Mary)	**MARY 1** (plays the Virgin Mary)
MARY 2 (plays Mary Magdalen)	**MARY 2** (plays Mary Magdalen)	**MARY 2** (plays Mary Magdalen)
VISITING FRIAR	**VISITING ENGLISHMAN, OR SIMON LILLY**	**VA PSYCHIATRIST**
VILLIAGE IDIOT	**VIOLET**	**VIOLET**
CARPENTER 1, SAM (plays the angel Gabriel)	**CARPENTER 1, JOHANN**	**CARPENTER1/ENSEMBLE**
CARPENTER 2, SIMON (plays Joseph)	**CARPENTER 2/ LUDWIG**	**CARPENTER 2/ ENSEMBLE**
DIRECTOR	**DIRECTOR, ROCHUS SCHALLHAMMER**	**DIRECTOR**
MACHINIST (plays an emperor)	**GERMAN OFFICER**	**YOUNG DIRECTOR**
QUEEN ELIZABETH	**HITLER**	**PRESIDENT REAGAN, QUEEN ELIZABETH, HITLER**

This play is for Paula Vogel.

PASSION PLAY

PART ONE

A village in Northern England, Spring, 1575

CHARACTERS

PONTIUS THE FISH GUTTER . . . . . plays Pontius and Satan
JOHN THE FISHERMAN . . . . . plays Jesus and Adam
MARY 1 . . . . . .plays the Virgin Mary and Eve
MARY 2 . . . . . plays Mary Magdalen
VISITING FRIAR
VILLAGE IDIOT
CARPENTER 1 or **SAM** . . . . . .plays the angel Gabriel
CARPENTER 2 or **SIMON** . . . . . .plays Joseph
DIRECTOR
MACHINIST . . . . . plays an emperor
QUEEN ELIZABETH . . . . . preferably a man in drag

SET

The suggestion of the sea.
A playing space.

PROLOGUE

CHORUS.

We make our play in England.
In the North
By the sea
In the open air of England.
The Virgin Queen is on her throne
The Catholics are mostly done.
Take pity on our simple play –
we've no fancy lights
only the bare light of day.
The good Lord tells us,
to be most simple is to be most good –
so here is honest rough-hewn wood.
We ask you, dear audience to use your eyes, ears, your most inward sight
for here is day *(a painted sun)*
and here is night *(a painted moon)*.
And now, the play.

SCENE 1: BUILDING THE ROOD

A man on a cross. The sound of sawing.
At first we are not sure whether or not this is a real crucifixion.
Carpenter 1 (Sam) measures John the Fisherman from head to toe.

CARPENTER 1. You have g–grown.

JOHN. I'm afraid so. I wish my bones would not make such work for you year after year.

CARPENTER 1. You cannot stop your bones from gr-gr–growing.

JOHN. My cousin's bones stopped growing three years ago, and his bones have troubled no seamstress with new stitches since. Perhaps he should play my part.

CARPENTER 2. Oh, but he's a limp wee little thing. Gutted his hand when he meant to gut a flounder. And now his back's as crooked as the road to hell!

JOHN. Now you mustn't make fun of poor Pontius.

CARPENTER 1. What mmmm mighty arms you have! You could swing many a fi-fi-fine lady on those br-brawny arms.

JOHN. You could knock me down easily, Sam!

CARPENTER 1. Nnno. I would never h-h-hurt my John boy.

CARPENTER 2. Now me and him may be twins, but we're as different as two peas in different pods. He likes his ale light, I like it dark. He likes Sundays, I detest 'em. I like blondes, and he likes his brunettes, don't you there, Sam?

The Sky Turns Red.

JOHN. Why there's that red light again!

CARPENTER 2. So it is! What the devil…

CARPENTER 1. It's been a' creeping and a cr-cr-crawling into the cracks in the windows! It makes me afffraid.

They stand, transfixed. The light disperses and becomes natural.

CARPENTER 2. Oh well, I suppose the sun must be angry about something. Only one more little nail.

He pounds in a nail.

There. Your measurements, my good man, have been taken.

He helps John off the cross.
Exit Carpenter 1 and John.
Simon stays behind to tell the audience:

I have blisters and splinters and all for the glory of God. My father's father was a carpenter. My father's father's father was a carpenter. We all have blisters and splinters in our fingers and all for the glory of God.

SCENE 2: PONTIUS AND A TRAVELING FRIAR

Pontius, to the audience:

PONTIUS. All my life I've wanted to play Christ…if only, I thought, they put me on a cross, I would feel holy, I would walk upright. And every year my cousin plays the Savior.

I want to kill my cousin. No – I want – when he is on the cross – and if I left him on just the slightest bit too long – and if the pretend nails were real…then they would nail me to the cross, and I would follow him to glory.

My cousin is a good man – ah, the tingling in my head again – something pulling – like a string at the top – a puppet – up down up down, string.

Today the sky turned red, the sky turned red, and we should kneel down and take notice but everyone's too busy eating their bloody porridge!

On the other side of the stage, a Visiting Friar appears. He is in disguise.

VISITING FRIAR. *(addressing the audience)* Today I walked far and far until I noticed that the shrubbery had changed and I was out of my province. And then – the sky turned red! At two in the afternoon! If shivers didn't crawl up and down my spine like worms…

PONTIUS. *(to the audience)* My cousin is nothing but a bastard!

VISITING FRIAR. *(to the audience)* I will conceal myself behind a tree and observe this young man.

PONTIUS. *(to the audience)* He is a thorn in my side that must be plucked out. If I were a woman I could bake this malice into my bread, but as it is, I am a man and I must make this malice a knife. I will store my acorns of malice, I will guard them and I will harvest them in the spring.

Pontius notices the Visiting Friar and changes his face.

PONTIUS. Hello, traveler! What brings you to our little town? New faces are seldom seen here.

VISITING FRIAR. I come from a neighboring village but am tired and require water. Are you not the famed village that plays the Passion, scattering tales of its holiness across the land?

PONTIUS. We are that very village, sir.

VISITING FRIAR. Not many towns dare in these dark days to play the Passion in England.

PONTIUS. Aye. This town is slow to change.

VISITING FRIAR. Are you then the same town famed for a most beautiful and graceful young man who plays the part of Christ?

PONTIUS. He is, in point of fact – my cousin.

VISITING FRIAR. Your family must be proud of such a relation.

PONTIUS. My family is very proud of my cousin, I'm sure.

A grimace to the audience. A smile to the Visiting Friar.

VISITING FRIAR. And you? What do you play?

PONTIUS. Pontius Pilate – and Satan.

VISITING FRIAR. Ah! To be sure!

Pontius grimaces to the audience. A smile to the Friar.

PONTIUS. Would you like to take a drink of water at my home?

VISITING FRIAR. I would be most grateful. Perhaps I can meet the famed cousin of yours.

PONTIUS. By all means!

(to the audience) Between gritted teeth, between bloody gritted teeth!

SCENE 3: JOHN THE FISHERMAN'S KITCHEN, DAY

VISITING FRIAR. You're just as comely and upright as they say.

JOHN. Thank you.

VISITING FRIAR. With the same dimple in the chin.

JOHN. You must be hungry. Can I make you some eggs, sir?

VISITING FRIAR. I would be honored to eat an egg made by your holy hands.

(checking the door, in low tones) Young man, can I trust you're a Catholic?

JOHN. We are all Catholic in our private hearts though we have no public house of worship left. The stage is our house of worship.

The Visiting Friar takes off his disguise, revealing a priest's cowl.

John kneels down and kisses the hand of the Friar.

God save you! Is it not dangerous for you to stay here? Are they not catching priests and putting them into prison?

VISITING FRIAR. Aye. We're hidden in closets and priest-holes all over England.

JOHN. And are you now in need of a hiding place?

VISITING FRIAR. Aye. But I would not dream of putting you in danger.

JOHN. Stay with us.

VISITING FRIAR. I know now why they tell tales of your Christ. You have His spirit.

JOHN. You really mustn't believe such things, good Friar. Perhaps you'd like to come to our rehearsal today. You could see the scaffolds that lift men up, the machinery that brings men down. You'll see that I'm no better than the tattered costume that I wear.

VISITING FRIAR. I would be honored to see the famed village rehearse.

SCENE 4: THE VILLAGE IDIOT

Day. The heavenly choir rehearses.
The Director conducts, and arranges their halos. The Visiting Friar watches.
The Village Idiot sits cross-legged in the town square, playing with a jack-in-the-box.
The sound of a musical jack-in-the-box crank.

THE VILLAGE IDIOT. In a time, in a time, in a time without…words – oh – pop – pop goes the weasel! *(laughs)* You have a strange ugly face, surprising to pop out at me! Why do you pop out at me? Do you like me, scary big nose? *(laughs again)*

DIRECTOR. Shut your mouth, village idiot!

VILLAGE IDIOT. *(to the jack-in-the-box)* Well, Jack, Big Director Man told us to shut our mouths – I shut your mouth. *(Stuffs him back in box.)* Now I want you out again to play with. *(Winding)* Bird of a heart, heart of a giant, big beast in the mouth of hell! Pop! Jack! You again – darling Jack, I thought I'd never see you again, shut down in that dark, dark box, your body all bent and twisted. *(Kisses him)* I'm sorry I put you in your box, dear Jack…

DIRECTOR. *(overlapping slightly)* I said, shut your mouth, village idiot! The heavenly choir rehearses!

VILLAGE IDIOT. The heavenly choir rehearses, oh, oh, the heavenly choir rehearses…no part for Jack or me, oh no. You just pop out of a box, don't you Jack? And I just wind you because things need to be wound – clocks – tick tick – hearts – tick tick – oh! Beautiful, beautiful Jack with your heart in a box.

The Director marches over and ties the Village Idiot to a stump, putting the Jack-in-the-Box a distance away.

Ahhhh! JACK! SAVE ME! It is dark and I am in the box…I'll close my eyes and make the sky turn red…. now…now….

The sky turns red.
The heavenly choir stops singing.
The heavenly choir looks up.

THE VILLAGE IDIOT. See that, Jack! Did you see?

SCENE 5: MARY AND MARY

The Director and the half-naked figure of John the Fisherman practice the crucifixion scene.
The Visiting Friar looks on in disguise.
Mary 1 and Mary 2 sit on the other side of the stage under a tree.
Mary 1 wears a halo.

MARY 2. Mary Magdalen was a whore because she pretended and that's like me – I'm a whore because I pretend things.

MARY 1. How do you know Mary Magdalen pretended things?

MARY 2. I don't know. I just know.

MARY 1. Oh, his acting is divine! Oh! Oh! His loincloth is slipping!

MARY 2. It is easy and fun to seduce men – you can pretend things, and it's fun to pretend – but then you have to bed them, and that is the boring part – you can hardly pretend anything interesting with your legs apart.

MARY 1. Boring! Why, Mary, your brain is addled. Milking cows is boring. Needlework is boring.

MARY 2. It's all one! At least with needlework, *I* work the needle and stitch where I please instead of lying like a tapestry only to be pricked. At least with cow-milking *I* squeeze the teet instead of standing swollen and mooing.

MARY 1. No, no, Mary. You can't possibly think milking cows and needlework and men-bedding are all one. Perhaps you've not found the right man.

MARY 2. Perhaps.

MARY 1. John, the Fisherman, for instance, he's handsome and true. And seeing him so oft in his rehearsal loincloth – it makes me pound and pound.

MARY 2. I've known John the Fisherman too long to fancy him in a loincloth. I like to stick to my books. There's a heap more amusement in one book than in a score of beddings all alike.

MARY 1. And his muscles like a lion's, and golden too!

MARY 2. Hmmph.

Mary 1 freezes, ogling John the Fisherman. Mary 2 turns to the audience.

When I was a child I noticed one day that all the girls turned into strange flapping birds when the boys walked by. Their eyes got huge and acquired wings, as though cursed, wings for eyelashes to flutter and flap. I thought the wings on their eyes might fly them to a different land altogether. I didn't turn into a bird around anyone – I stayed quiet and very still.

MARY 1. Oh! Oh! His loincloth is slipping!

MARY 2. It's sinful to covet your own son, Mary. It's a sin, a sin against God.

MARY 1. I didn't ask to play his mother.

MARY 2. I'm sure it's not right, Mary.

Perhaps we should switch roles.

I think my part has more scenes with John the Fisherman.

MARY 1. Oh!

MARY 2. Run find the director and ask! Go on!

Mary 1 runs off.

(looking after Mary 1) Yes, much better to play the Virgin Mary – to have a baby – yes – I do like babies – and a husband – yes, I do like men – I do – but not to bed the one to get the other! No wonder she smiled so tenderly in all the paintings. The happiest and best of women.

Enter the Director and Mary 1.

DIRECTOR. I'm sorry, ladies, but you've signed your contracts. And besides, *you* look like a saint *(to Mary 1)* and *you* look like a whore. *(points to Mary 2)* There's no getting around it. *(to Mary 2)* Look at that beauty mark and that gap between the teeth. And you've got a bit of a deformity in the chin – it just wouldn't do for the Virgin Mary to have a bit of deformity in the chin. *(to Mary 1)* And her smile. A smile like that would melt the devil's heart. But not mine. Now finish memorizing your parts, ladies. There's no time for all of this driveling anarchy.

Enter The Visiting Friar, in disguise.

VISITING FRIAR. Would anyone here like to confess their sins?

MARY 2. I would.

VISITING FRIAR. Meet me around the corner after dark.

SCENE 6: AT THE CONFESSIONAL

MARY 2. Forgive me Father, for I have sinned. I have dreams of women embracing me and kissing me full on the lips.

VISITING FRIAR. That is indeed a sin.

I want you to say twenty Hail Marys, thirty-two Our Fathers, and hang a crucifix above your bed.

MARY 2. But there is a crucifix above my bed, Father. And I find that I rather enjoy the dreams, though I try not to have them.

VISITING FRIAR. Now you mustn't enjoy such dreams, Mary. It addles a young girl's brain to play the role of a whore from a young age. I want you to say your penances, Mary, chew on a ginger root, and change parts with the shepherdess.

MARY 2. Oh, but she's not half so good as me, Father. I'll be good, so good! I'm good at pretending!

VISITING FRIAR. Now, Mary, I am looking after the salvation of your soul.

MARY 2. Yes, Father. *(pause)* Father, why is it wrong to dream of women kissing you full on the lips?

VISITING FRIAR. Ask God, Mary. Only God can explain, only God – the Father.

The Sky Turns Red.

MARY 2. Oh the sky, the sky, again the sky!

SCENE 7

Pontius sits on a stoop, cleaning his shoes with a knife.

PONTIUS. Last night the moon threw its head back, laughing at me – a white wedge – a laughing pitchfork – and tonight the moon sank down on his haunches – his face turned full at me – he looked bewildered and afraid. Had the fat white face of a dunce. You think I'm a bloody fool to speak of the moon, but who else will be a witness to my grief?

The doctor who birthed me, see, he didn't sew up my belly properly. Most people have got some skin between their guts and the air of the world, not me, not me. You can stick your finger way into my belly button, and when you pull it out it smells like gangrene, like fish.

I gut the fish. My cousin – he catches 'em. He don't have to see their innards. He don't have to talk to dead fish all day. He can talk to the sea. Me – I close my nose and I smell the stench of dead fish. I close my eyes and see dead fish coming at me in a parade.

He closes his eyes and huge beautiful fish puppets walk towards him as if in a parade. They surround him and undress him. They leave to the beating of drums. He turns to the audience. He blinks. The sound of the sea gurgles.

SCENE 8: NIGHT

Mary 1 kneels by her bed.

MARY 1. Hail Mary, full of grace…

(to the audience) I hate to sleep alone. My feet get cold. I put socks on and then my feet get hot so I take them off under the blankets but then my feet get cold again in the night.

(putting her socks on) It's unnatural, cold and unnatural, this solitary sleeping. The sheep sleep together, all woolly and warm. I get too lonesome to sleep alone. I slept with my parents 'til I got too old. One time they locked me out – I could hear why – strange sounds coming from the bed. When I got old enough I found men to sleep with – men with hair on their legs and bellies to keep me warm at night. I go out walking sometimes to find them.

She climbs down a rope and out of her window.

I've never been with child. Don't know why. Better not to ask God.

John the Fisherman out walking in a shaft of light.

JOHN. Sometimes – tonight – a feeling of grace comes and I feel peaceful and easy and ready to die but still aware of the moon's beauty, like silver fish scales shedding. Skin covers the world – luminous moonskin – and I must step softly and slowly on it – the cobbled streets have fish-skin, the trees have human skin – and it is not fearsome, only slow and lovely and soft, but I must be careful not to prick you and make you bleed.

Mary 1 walks toward him, carrying a jar.

MARY 1. Good evening.

JOHN. Good evening, Mary. What brings you into the night air by yourself?

MARY 1. Uuum…My mother – she's sick – doctor told me to trap the night air in a jar and bring it back to her.

JOHN. May I help?

Mary looks down, embarrassed.

MARY 1. Umm –

JOHN. I'd do anything to help you and your good mother, Mary.

MARY 1. Could you climb up that wagon, John, and trap that particular spot of air?

She hands him a jar and he climbs an abstracted wagon.

JOHN. This spot?

She scrutinizes him from behind.

MARY 1. Perhaps a little to the left.
And to the right. And up. Yes, that bit there.

JOHN. *(handing her the jar)* I hope this will do, Mary.

She smiles at him.

JOHN. Your mother…is she very sick?

MARY 1. My mother?….Oh yes…her belly….she swallowed something…

JOHN. I'm sorry, Mary. You know I would drink your sorrow if I could.

John escorts Mary 1 offstage.
Pontius appears from behind a bush.

PONTIUS. Always, always, always him!
I can cry
only out of one eye.
Only the left
and the right stays dry.
Dry as a bone
dry as a cunt
who's left alone.
Oh, God let me cry!
Out of both eyes, please God,
please God let me cry!

Same scene. Night.

Mary 1 climbs back into her bedroom window.

MARY 1. It will be a cold bed for me again tonight. He's chaste as a clam.

SCENE 9: THE FALL OF MAN – A REHEARSAL

Mary 1, the Director, Pontius and an apple.

DIRECTOR. In this scene, Mary, you are tempted by a delicious, ripe fruit. Your mouth should water. Now. Go.

PONTIUS. *(as Satan)* Eve! Eve!

MARY 1. *(as Eve)* Who is there?

SATAN/PONTIUS. I, a friend.
And for thy good is the coming.
Bite on boldly, be not abashed.

DIRECTOR. Don't be afraid, Pontius. Slink your skinny arm around her waist. There, there. Dangle the apple in front of her lips.

MARY 1. Then will I to thy teaching trust,
And fang this fruit unto our food.

She bites timidly into the apple.

DIRECTOR. Bite harder! The juice must dribble down your chin! Again!

MARY 1. Then will I to thy teaching trust,
And fang this fruit unto our food.

She bites the apple, hard, a large section of apple in her mouth.

PONTIUS. Oh!

DIRECTOR. Good.

SCENE 10: NIGHT

Pontius sits on a wagon, looking at stars.

PONTIUS. *(to the audience)* I gutted a fish today – I thought it was dead – I slit open its belly – and five live fishes squirmed out. They stunk of death. They wriggled and wraggled in the guts of their mother and they died one by one. The last one to go was a real wriggler. He watched everyone go before him – he swam around in their fishy guts – and then I slammed the knife down on his back. I couldn't stand to see one so alone and so alive, so I killed the poor devil to put it out of its misery.

He sees Mary 1 offstage.

Hush – Mary walks. The smell of the moon follows her. And her eyes follow my cousin. Would she kiss a poor fishmonger? Would she wrap her arms around the stench?

Mary 1 appears, holding a jar.

Miss Mary, why are you out walking at this time of night?

MARY 1. You startled me.

PONTIUS. I didn't mean to frighten you, Mary.

MARY 1. There is little light from the moon tonight. The trees cast their shadows on your face.

PONTIUS. I can see you. I can see you because I have studied your face in the dark of my bed before sleeping.

MARY 1. I am a Christian woman.

PONTIUS. Why are you out walking tonight?

He comes closer to her.

MARY 1. You smell of fish.

PONTIUS. I slit open their bellies all day. Why are you out walking tonight?

MARY 1. I could sell you some rosewater. You could sprinkle it over your hands.

PONTIUS. Oh, would you, Miss Mary?

MARY 1. Well…yes. Good night.

She turns to go.

PONTIUS. Don't go.

(to the audience) She is a deer wrapped in brown velvet. She is the air breathing inside the body of a violin.

(to her) Don't go.

MARY 1. It's late.

PONTIUS. According to who? The sun? The moon? It's early for the sun – he hasn't even woken from his nap. And it's only mid-afternoon for the moon, she's just barely risen. And you out walking…Owls don't fly out of their dens for no reason.

MARY 1. You play tricks with words.

PONTIUS. Do you play tricks, Mary?

MARY 1. Certainly not.

They look at each other. He seizes her. They kiss. She drops the jar.

The night air. You've spilled it.

Pontius gets on the wagon
and traps the same bit of air that John trapped.
He gives it to her.
She pities him. Kisses him.

You don't taste like other men.

PONTIUS. I know.

She kisses him again.

MARY 1. They would take away my part or worse if they knew.

PONTIUS. I will be silent as a dead fish, silent as a closed box under water.

They kiss.
Strange watery noises.

SCENE 11

The Village Idiot wakes up from a dream, frightened.

VILLAGE IDIOT. Jack! I thought I had me a dream of the Queen. Why, she was standing up in heaven, and she was naked and pregnant – full pregnant, swollen like a melon. Her belly was dangling over her private parts, which were flaming red. They say the privates are the same color as the eyebrows but you never can say with certainty until you've given 'em a thorough look. But I blushed, I did, to see the Queen's privates – they're always covered up with drapes and curtains like a stage. So the Queen, she looks at me, with a real cold glimmer in her eyes like jewels, and she says, "I have come to stop the Passion." And she points her bony little finger at me, and I wake up, breathing heavy and scared-like.

SCENE 12: IN THE FOREST

Mary 1 and Mary 2. The shadows of trees on their faces.

MARY 2. How long?
MARY 1. Too long.
MARY 2. Big?
MARY 1. A little.
MARY 2. In your costume?
MARY 1. Not yet.
MARY 2. Christ.
MARY 1. Yes.
MARY 2. You could be killed.
MARY 1. Don't.
MARY 2. Vomit?
MARY 1. Yes.
MARY 2. Breasts?
MARY 1. Yes. I think so.
MARY 2. Holy mother of God.
MARY 1. Please.
MARY 2. You have to leave.
MARY 1. NO!
MARY 2. What, then?
MARY 1. I want my part.
MARY 2. There's a woman in a neighboring village…
MARY 1. No!
MARY 2. What then, what?
MARY 1. I don't know.
MARY 2. In one month…
MARY 1. I know. But I want my part.
MARY 2. I know you do, Mary.
MARY 1. Please.
Don't tell.
MARY 2. Yes, of course.

MARY 1. The woman in the neighboring village…does she?

MARY 2. Yes.

MARY 1. I'll wait. Two weeks.

MARY 2. I'd like to kill him.

MARY 1. I fear, Mary, sometimes I fear….

MARY 2. What is it?

MARY 1. I dream, night after night, that I give birth to a fish…a huge, ugly, dead fish with a gaping mouth.

SCENE 13: THE FLYING MACHINE

A rehearsal. The Machinist, Director, Mary 1, Mary 2, Carpenter 1 & 2. Carpenter 1 plays the angel Gabriel.

MACHINIST. Our profession is closer to God than any. What is the one power denied to man by God? God gave us fire, God gave us water. We can talk, walk, swim, screw until we're blue in the face. But who wants to swim in the bloody cold water, shivering and stinking like pond scum when you could fly through the tree-tops? But who among us can fly? Huh? Tell me!

And who among us doesn't want to fly? Who among you has never dreamed of flying, of skimming the honey-stalks with your noses? Of flying like water-bugs over ponds and taking in the stench?

But who among us has flown? None! None! And who among us knows how to make a man fly?

Pause.

Me! So shut your bloody traps and listen to me!

I'm going to rig you up by the seat of your pants, and do you know what you're going to do? You are going to fly like a bird like an insect with golden wings like an angel! I've worked with the best of them – I've worked with Simon Daybell, with Martinius Lily, with SEBASTIAN MONK – and none of them – *none* – has ever rigged an angel the way I rig 'em.

Now strap this on.

Carpenter 1 straps on a harness.

VILLAGE IDIOT. *(eyes closed, holding her jack-in-the-box tightly to her chest)* And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

Carpenter 1 shouts as he's rigged up the machine.

THE MACHINIST. Shut your mouth, will you? Do angels scream when they fly? No, by Christ, they like flying! They bloody love it!

Carpenter 1 dangles. Mary 1, meanwhile, looks ill.

DIRECTOR. *(to Carpenter 1)* There. Now say the bloody line. And you, *(points to Carpenter 2, who is dressed as Joseph)* Kneel down. Look surprised.

Carpenter 2 looks surprised.

Not surprised like you've wet yourself. Surprised as in amazed. Surprised holy-like. Surprised like your wife's bosom has grown big as two pumpkins, all at once.

Carpenter 2 opens his mouth wide.

There. Continue.

CARPENTER 1. *(as Gabriel)*
Hail, thou that art
highly f-favored,
the Lord is with thee,
Mary.
Bb-lessed art thou among
women.

THE VILLAGE IDIOT.
Hail, thou that art
highly favored,
the Lord is with thee,
JACK.
Blessed art thou among
women.

DIRECTOR. *(to Mary 1)* What's wrong with you? Look surprised. Look happy. Look radiant.

MARY 1. Yes, sir.

DIRECTOR. Joseph – let's have your line.

CARPENTER 2. She is with child, I know not how.
Who could trust any woman now?
Hail, Mary!

MARY 1. By God's will, Joseph, must it be.
For certainly save God and ye
I know no other man
Nor in flesh have been defiled.
God knows all my doing.

CARPENTER 1.
Behold, M-Mary, thou
shalt

THE VILLAGE IDIOT.
Behold, Jack, thou
shalt

b-bring forth a son
and shalt call his name
J-Jesus.

bring forth a son
and shalt call his name
JACK.

The Sky Turns Red.
Everyone looks up.
The Machinist loses hold of the flying machine.

CARPENTER 1. Oh, the sky!

Carpenter 1's harness falls and he comes crashing down.
He screams.

SCENE 14: MARY VISITS PONTIUS AT WORK

Pontius stands at a counter and guts fish. Sees Mary 1. Drops his work. Washes the fish blood off his hands with water from a bucket.

PONTIUS. You.

MARY 1. I need to speak with you.

PONTIUS. I wrote you letters. I scented them with rose-water.

MARY 1. Where there are no ears.

PONTIUS. What of my letters? Did you get them? Your eyes hard like flint, Mary, you're killing me –

MARY 1. I said I need to speak with you.

PONTIUS. Come to tell me I smell of fish? We rolled into the earth, Mary. Come to tell me you forgot?

MARY 1. I'm pregnant.

PONTIUS. Oh, God.

MARY 1. And don't take the Lord's name in vain, neither.

PONTIUS. Run away with me, Mary. We'll be a Trinity. You, me, the baby. You can nail me to a cross, Mary, I'm yours, yours forever. You can scourge me every night and still I'm yours forever.

She doesn't speak.

Can I touch?

She nods. Pontius puts his hand on her belly, reverent.

My life in your belly! Oh, it's ticking, Mary! I can hear it!

Marry me. Marry everything – the fish-guts, the bile – I'll become clean for you, Mary.

MARY 1. No.

He takes his hand off her stomach.

PONTIUS. You love him, don't you? That it?

MARY 1. I want to keep my part.

PONTIUS. Curse the part, Mary! Curse the part! It's a tiddling, priddling, little turd of a play. Plays aren't real. Your knee on my chest, Mary, that's real. Marry me!

MARY 1. Ever since I was little I've wanted to play the Virgin Mary.

PONTIUS. You can pretend you're the Virgin Mary in my bed! You can scream ten Hail Marys in the ecstasies of love. Do you remember how you shuddered?

MARY 1. Christ won't love me.

PONTIUS. Which one, Mary? My cousin or the one from the good book?

MARY 1. Just Christ, Christ himself…

PONTIUS. By Christ Himself, then, let's run off together – you can have your baby in a manger, the softest hay, your face – honeyed – eyes milky, I'll comb your hair with straw… Kiss me, Mary.

MARY 1. No.

PONTIUS. Leave my sight or I swear…I won't be accountable.

She turns to leave. Turns back.

MARY 1. My wedding dress would turn red.

PONTIUS. What?

MARY. Dresses – they know things – you think they don't – they hang so quietly, but they know things the way you know things and I know things and they tell – oh, yes.

She looks at him, turns and leaves.
Pontius slams his knife down into the table.

SCENE 15: MARY AND MARY

MARY 2. I have an idea.

MARY 1. Tell me.

Mary 2 whispers into Mary 1's ear.

SCENE 16: AT THE CONFESSIONAL

MARY 1. There's been a miracle, Father, I wanted to tell you first. God has impregnated me that I can better play the Virgin Mary.

VISITING FRIAR. Child…

MARY 1. I had a vision, Father. Angels – beautiful angels – calling me, saying, blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

VISITING FRIAR. Sweet Jesus.

MARY 1. I was sleeping, but they called to me from the window…There was one angel, dressed all in blue, with stars in her hair…I felt my belly, and it's become round like a melon since yesterday…

VISITING FRIAR. You're quite sure, Mary?

MARY 1. Yes.

VISITING FRIAR. Glory be to God. A miracle.

He crosses himself.

MARY 1. I feel very honored, of course.

VISITING FRIAR. Never, Mary, never have you…

MARY 1. No, Father, of course not.

VISITING FRIAR. Are you sure, Mary? Blessedly sure?

MARY 1. Yes.

SCENE 17: A REHEARSAL – THE DEATH OF PONTIUS PILATE

Pontius, the Director, the Machinist, Mary 2 and Carpenter 2.

MACHINIST. *(as the Emperor, LOUD)* Out on thee, thou rascally fellow!
Thou hast killed Jesus,
My dear Lord.

DIRECTOR. Remember – you are an emperor. Do you know what that means? Being the emperor means someone else chews your very food for you. No need to shout. Peasants bend forward to hear you whisper. Carry on.

MACHINIST. *(whispering)* Put this fellow in a dungeon to rot,
That he may see no light at all;
he is a sorcerer.

DIRECTOR. Let's move on. Go ahead, Pontius. Now – you are very distressed in this scene.

PONTIUS. I well know I shall die:
Great is my anxiety *(pronounced to rhyme)*
Distressed am I.

DIRECTOR. Use this knife.

The Director gives Pontius a knife.

PONTIUS. So that no man in the world may
Give me a cruel death;
My own heart
With my knife I will pierce –
Oh! alas and welaway –

He stabs himself with a stage knife.
He dies a long, painful stage death, groaning.
He punctures his eyes, slits open his belly.

DIRECTOR. Good, Pontius. You're improving nicely.

The Visiting Friar enters.

VISITING FRIAR. There's been a miracle. Mary is with child.
Pontius gives the Visiting Friar a wild look.
A tableau.

SCENE 18: MARY IS VISITED BY JESUS

Mary 1 lies in bed. John enters, kneels at her bedside.

JOHN. Bless you, Mary.

MARY 1. No, John, no.

JOHN. A miracle sleeps in your belly.

MARY 1. If anything were to happen to me, would you raise the child? Be its father?

JOHN. Anything for you and the child, Mary.

MARY 1. You believe me, don't you?

JOHN. I would never doubt your word, Mary, or the word of the Lord. You're beautiful. You're radiant with the sweat of the Lord on your brow.

MARY 1. I feel it kicking. God's child.

A pause.

JOHN. Marry me. Be my wife. We'll raise the child together as Mary and Joseph did before us. I'll be a good husband, Mary. I'll never touch you, if that's what you want. I'll fish all day – I'll feed us with fruit from the sea.

MARY 1. Oh God, that I could, John.

JOHN. I understand, Mary, if you don't fancy me. I'm not worthy of you…you have God in your belly.

MARY 1. It's not that…It's only that…I'm God's bride now.

JOHN. I see…It's better that way. It's – a miracle.

SCENE 19: THE SCOURGING – A REHEARSAL

Mary 2, Carpenter 1, Carpenter 2 , the Machinist and Pontius.

CARPENTER 2. I see where her eye wanders…She's a pretty little thing, too pretty if you ask me.

CARPENTER 1. St-stop. G-god wouldn't like you to speak that way of Ma-mary.

CARPENTER 2. She's been hankering after John the Fisherman all month and perhaps she's finally gotten what she wanted out of him.

MARY 2. *(to Carpenter 2)* I've seen your lecherous eyes… You wish you could lay a hand on Mary and now she's God's bride you're jealous.

CARPENTER 2. True enough, I'd like to take Miss Mary to a field somewhere, but what does that have to do with the price of eggs and butter? So would every other young lad in this town, and that's *exactly* what I'm saying.

PONTIUS. I'll bloody your face, Simon, if you don't shut your gob!

CARPENTER 2. I never believed the tale in the Good Book anyhow. Mary was probably some young wench knocked up by another bloke, couldn't stand to tell her husband to be – afraid he'd beat her pulpy. Any girl who can persuade the multitudes that God's the father of her bastard child –

Carpenter 1 punches Carpenter 2 in the face. They start brawling.
Enter John the Fisherman, in a loin cloth.

JOHN. What's this! Ho! Hey! Stop the fighting between brothers. Stop! Haven't you heard the news? A miracle in our little town…you should bow your heads and be grateful.

They look down, ashamed.

JOHN. A new Christ is to be born, as the Good Book prophesizes. No longer will I have to play the part of Christ. Mary is with child.

CARPENTER 2. We've heard.

JOHN. Then why all the brawling? Blood trickles down your chin, good brother.

No one speaks. Enter the Director.

DIRECTOR. What's all this? Take up your whips. We've only one week left of rehearsal – where's Mary?

JOHN. I left her home, sick with women's sickness. A glorious sickness to bear for the new Christ.

DIRECTOR. Hmmph. She'll be fined two shillings for missing rehearsal.

JOHN. You cannot fine a woman for bearing the Messiah, with all due respect sir.

DIRECTOR. Very well. Perhaps under the circumstances. Everyone to their places. Mary, you read both parts. Pontius, let's have your speech.

PONTIUS. *(as Pilate)* That I am innocent of this bloode shall ye see;
Both my hands shall weshen be.

Pontius washes his hands.

DIRECTOR. Start whipping.

The chorus pretends to whip John the Fisherman.

Lamentation!

MARY 2. *(as the Virgin Mary)* Why? Why is my son slayn?

A tableau.

SCENE 20: JOHN AND PONTIUS

After rehearsal.

PONTIUS. You think she's God's bride, do you?

JOHN. I see God in her eyes, yes.

PONTIUS. When the baby comes out, I'll wager it'll look less like God and more like me.

JOHN. What?

PONTIUS. You heard me.

John the Fisherman looks at Pontius.
Mary 1's face, illuminated in a window.
A brief tableau.

SCENE 21: MARY AND MARY

The forest.
Mary 2 walks out and meets Mary 1.

MARY 1. I hear them whispering underground, in the trees – I hear them calling me a whore…

MARY 2. Don't listen. I love you, Mary. Let's run off together. I'll protect you. We'll raise the child together as Mary and Joseph did before us. I'll dress as a man…I look enough like a man…we'll go far away from here.

MARY 1. You don't look a bit like a man, Mary.

MARY 2. What does it matter? Then I won't dress as a man. I'll dress as myself, but we'll go far, far away.

MARY 1. I have to leave alone, and where I'm going, no one can follow me.

MARY 2. Mary.

MARY 1. I'm a whore, Mary.

MARY 2. I would follow you anywhere, Mary.

MARY 1. No, dear. Please.
Good-bye.

Mary 1 turns to leave, but before she goes, kisses Mary 2 full on the lips.
Mary 1 leaves.
The Sky Turns Red.

MARY 2. Oh, the sky! Again, the sky!

SCENE 22: THE TOWN SQUARE

The Village Idiot with her jack-in-the-box.

VILLAGE IDIOT. Mary not in her costume
Mary not at home.
Mary not in the lamb white days
Mary, Mary gone.

Do you know, Jack, that a woman's long hair is the last thing to float in the water? It floats, Jack, dry like a lily pad, until in one great rush it goes under – whoosh. Oh, and the fish they wept, Jack, I knew something was wrong – they cried all night and the sea bulged over the earth.

The Visiting Friar and the Director enter.

VISITING FRIAR. God has spoken with me. And God wants you to stop the Passion.

DIRECTOR. But Father, months of work…

VISITING FRIAR. It cannot be right, with Mary nowhere to be found. There's something strange, foreboding, in the whole business.

DIRECTOR. Which is precisely why the play must go on! We made a pact with God, when the plague had eaten the very stomach out of our village, that we would play the Passion and all for the glory of God. If we refuse, I believe that something horrible will visit our town… already, the sky is red.

VISITING FRIAR. But who's to play Mary?

They both look at the Village Idiot.

DIRECTOR. What do you say, dearie, would you like to take part in the play?

THE VILLAGE IDIOT. *(laughing, to Jack)* Jack, would I like to take part in the play?
(She listens to Jack.) What, Jack? I can't hear you.
(to the Director, very serious) Yes, I would like to take part in the play.

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