Mary's Waiting Room

Mary's Waiting Room — Short Christian Playlet (15 min)

WHAT

The thirty silent years between Luke 2 and the wedding at Cana. Mary, the mother of Jesus, washes dishes in a Nazareth kitchen. She is older now. Joseph is gone. Jesus has just walked out the door for the last time as a carpenter's son. Across one long day, five neighbors drift through the courtyard. Each one unknowingly echoes a piece of what the angel said decades ago. The audience hears Gabriel's words layered in, soft and patient. The last scene is Mary alone, lighting a Sabbath lamp, whispering the only thing left to say.

THEME

The promise of Christmas asked a faith-filled mother to hold it for thirty quiet years before anyone else could see.

WHO

MARY — The mother of Jesus, mid-fifties. Worn and steady. The face of a woman who has carried a secret without resentment.

ELISHEBA — A widow neighbor, Mary's age. Comes by for water. Talks about her grief like weather.

JOAB — A tax collector. Younger than he looks. Comes to collect on a small debt and stays longer than he meant to.

DEBORAH — Gossipy neighbor, sixty. Carries everyone's news as cargo.

SHIPHRAH — Gossipy neighbor, forty. Walks with Deborah. Speaks more carefully.

KEZIA — Young betrothed girl, sixteen. Brings Mary a gift of figs. Asks the questions she cannot ask her own mother.

ANGEL VOICE — Offstage. Gabriel's words, decades old, rising as voiceover at the end of each scene.

HOW (STYLE / TONE)

A Nazareth kitchen and a small open courtyard, late afternoon to dusk. A wash basin. A low table. A clay oven. A clay lamp on a shelf. Mary moves through the day at the pace of a woman who has done these tasks ten thousand times. Each visitor enters from stage right, leaves stage left. After each one leaves, the lights dim slightly and the ANGEL VOICE rises — Mary stays still, hands in the wash basin, eyes lifted to a place no one else can see. By the final scene the stage is dim and Mary is the only light. Reverent. Slow. No music until the very last beat — a single low note.

PROPS

- A clay wash basin and pitcher of water

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- A low wooden table
- A clay oven (set piece, no flame needed)
- A small clay lamp with a real wick (lit at the end)
- A wooden bowl of figs
- A small leather coin pouch
- A folded cloth, gradually being mended through the scenes
- A worn Sabbath shawl on a peg by the door

TIME

15 minutes

Scene 1 — Morning at the Basin

(Lights up on a Nazareth kitchen. Late morning sun. MARY stands at the wash basin, scrubbing a wooden bowl. The door is open to the courtyard. From offstage, very faint, we hear footsteps on a dirt path — a young man's footsteps, leaving. Mary does not turn. She listens until they fade. Then she goes back to scrubbing.)

NARRATOR: On the day her son left Nazareth for the last time, the world recorded nothing. The Gospels skip thirty years between the temple and the wedding. This is one of those days.

MARY (to the basin)

Lord. He is gone. He kissed my forehead. He said he would not be back for supper. I do not know what to do with that information.

(She lifts a damp hand to her face. She does not cry. She breathes once, slowly, and goes back to the bowl.)

Scene 2 — Elisheba and the Widow's Water

(ELISHEBA enters the courtyard with an empty water jar on her hip. She is Mary's age but moves more slowly. She stops at the doorway.)

ELISHEBA

Mary. The well rope broke. I came to draw from yours, if you have any to spare.

MARY

Always. Come in. Sit. The bench is in the shade.

ELISHEBA (sitting heavily)

I dreamed of him last night. My Aaron. He was at the door. Just standing there. I have had this dream every week for six years and every week I forget when I wake up that he is not there.

MARY (gently)

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Some doors take a long time to close, friend.

ELISHEBA

I keep waiting. I do not know what I am waiting for. The waiting is its own kind of work.

(Mary stops scrubbing. She looks at Elisheba, then past her, at something we cannot see.)

MARY (very softly)

Yes. The waiting is its own kind of work.

(Lights dim slightly. Mary remains still.)

ANGEL VOICE (offstage, distant memory)

Hail, favored one. The Lord is with you.

(Lights restore. Elisheba leaves with a fresh jar of water. Mary stands a long moment in the doorway watching her go.)

Scene 3 — Joab and the Small Debt

(JOAB enters briskly, a tax collector's pouch at his belt and a tablet in his hand. He clears his throat in the doorway.)

JOAB

Mother of the carpenter. I hate to bother you. There is a balance from last quarter. Two denarii. The boy paid most of it. Two denarii remain.

MARY (drying her hands)

I have it. One moment.

(She crosses to a small shelf, takes down a worn leather pouch, counts coins with practiced fingers. She gives him three.)

JOAB

I said two.

MARY

I know. The third is for whatever Caesar takes from the man who counts honest coin twice.

JOAB (caught off guard)

You — you are kinder than the rest of this town. The rest of this town spits at me when I walk past.

MARY

Who can stand to be hated for a living, Joab. Sit a moment. Drink water.

JOAB (sitting, slowly)

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I tell my wife I want a different job. She tells me there is no different job for a man with my name on the registry.

MARY

Names are heavy. The Lord knows yours by a different one.

JOAB

Does he.

MARY

I believe so. With all my heart.

(He stares at her. He stands. He bows slightly, awkwardly. He leaves. Mary watches him go. Lights dim.)

ANGEL VOICE

You have found favor with God.

(Lights restore. Mary returns to the basin.)

Scene 4 — Deborah and Shiphrah at the Door

(DEBORAH and SHIPHRAH appear in the courtyard, arms full of nothing in particular, voices already going.)

DEBORAH

Mary! There you are. We were worried. You did not come to the well this morning.

MARY

I had bread to bake.

SHIPHRAH

And — Mary — your son. The carpenter. People are talking. He left the shop. He is — he is going to teach? In Capernaum? Is that true?

DEBORAH (interrupting)

It is true. Eli's daughter saw him on the road. He had no bag.

MARY (carefully)

He is going where he was always going.

DEBORAH

But — without an apprenticeship? Without a rabbi behind him? Mary, no offense, but he has been a carpenter for fifteen years. People are going to talk.

MARY

People have been talking since before he was born, Deborah.

SHIPHRAH (gentler)

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Are you all right, Mary.

MARY

I am. Truly. Tell the well I will be there tomorrow.

(Deborah opens her mouth, closes it, leaves with Shiphrah trailing. Lights dim.)

ANGEL VOICE

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

(Mary closes her eyes. She nods, very slightly, the same nod she gave thirty years ago.)

Scene 5 — Kezia and the Figs

(KEZIA enters quickly, a wooden bowl of figs in her hands. She is sixteen and slightly out of breath.)

KEZIA

Mistress Mary. My mother sent these. They are from our tree. The first of the season.

MARY (taking the bowl)

Bless your mother. And bless your tree. Sit down, Kezia.

KEZIA

I cannot stay long. There is a — there is a thing —

MARY

Sit.

(Kezia sits. She picks at a fig she does not eat.)

KEZIA

Mistress Mary. Can I — can I ask you something.

MARY

Always.

KEZIA

I am going to be married next month. To Yochanan. He is a good man. My mother says he is a good man. My father says he is a good man. Everybody says he is a good man.

MARY (smiling)

I know him. He is.

KEZIA

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But I am scared. I am scared of the thing I cannot name. I am scared that my whole life is going to be small. That I will wake up at sixty and the only thing I will have done is bake bread for one house.

(Mary sets down the bowl of figs and reaches across to take Kezia's hand.)

MARY

Kezia. The Lord works in the small houses too. The smallest house in this village has held the largest thing the world has ever held. You will not always know what you are part of. But you will be part of it. That is enough.

KEZIA (very quietly)

How do you know.

MARY

Because I have lived a long time being part of something I cannot yet explain. And the not-explaining has been the most faithful thing I have done.

(Kezia stares at her. She nods. She stands. She kisses Mary's forehead the way a daughter does, then leaves quickly. Lights dim.)

ANGEL VOICE

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High.

Scene 6 — The Long Quiet

(The light slants. Late afternoon. Mary is alone. She finishes the bowl. She wipes her hands. She picks up the folded cloth she has been mending all day and sets one final stitch.)

NARRATOR: There were thirty years between the boy in the temple and the man at the wedding. The Gospels do not record what his mother did with that time. We are recording it now.

MARY (quietly, to herself)

He used to fall asleep on this cloth. When he was three. When the goats kept him up. Joseph would come in from the workshop, hands full of cedar dust, and lift him to bed without a sound. He never woke. Joseph used to say he slept like a soul that had nothing to confess.

(She holds the cloth a moment. She folds it once more. She sets it on the bench by the door.)

MARY

Lord. I have kept the cloth thirty years. I have kept the words longer. The day Gabriel came I told no one but Joseph and Elisheba. The day they sang in the fields, I held it. The day Simeon spoke, I held it. The day in the temple when I lost him for three days, I held it. I have not put any of it down. I do not know how to put it down.

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(She sets her hand on the cloth as though it were a child's back.)

MARY

But you have asked me to keep holding. So I will keep holding.

ANGEL VOICE

And of his kingdom there will be no end.

Scene 7 — The Sabbath Lamp

(Dusk. The kitchen is dim. Mary takes down the small clay lamp from the shelf. She trims the wick. She strikes a flint. The flame catches — a real flame, the only light on the stage. She lifts it carefully and sets it on the windowsill, where it can be seen from the road.)

MARY

He is somewhere. He is on a road. He is doing what he was sent to do. And I am here. With this lamp. Lighting the window in case anybody walks home tonight.

(She stands a long time looking at the flame. She speaks not as one praying out of duty, but as one who has spoken to God across an ordinary table for a long, ordinary lifetime.)

MARY

Father. The neighbors will talk about him tomorrow. Deborah will say he should not have gone. Shiphrah will say he should have apprenticed under Rabbi Tobiah first. Joab will pretend he never met him. Elisheba will pray for him while she sweeps. Kezia will ask her mother who he is. None of them know what I have known since the day Gabriel came. And it is not my place to tell them. Their day will come. The wedding at Cana is coming. The mountain is coming. The cross — the cross is coming, Lord, and I have known about that one too, and I have been carrying it in my chest for thirty years. So I will keep this lamp lit. And I will not run after him. Because he is yours before he is mine. He has always been yours before he was mine.

MARY (whispered)

He is almost ready.

ANGEL VOICE (closer now, soft)

Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.

Final Moment — The Window

(Mary picks up her shawl. She wraps it slowly around her shoulders. She crosses to the doorway and looks out at the courtyard, at the road, at the night. Behind her, on the windowsill, the small lamp burns steady. A single low note from a stringed instrument. Lights down — except for the lamp, which holds for a long

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beat in the dark, and then is the last thing to go.)

END

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