

On an Ordinary Day

***Aim :** This piece was first performed in our local church at the Christmas Eve Midnight service. We were trying to provide something that would fit into the formality and reflective mood of that service and would also challenge the number of people who come to that service but are not regular church-goers.*

Characters:

Reader

Mary

Joseph

Innkeeper

Shepherd

Props/Costumes: *There are no specific props and costumes needed for this drama*

Notes : *The success of this piece lies in the element of surprise. We had it in the place of the first reading and the reader went up to the lectern and began as usual. The four characters were sitting in the congregation so when Mary stood up it was as though interrupting the service. All the characters addressed the people around them in a conversational manner.*

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The reader goes to the lectern/microphone and begins to read as usual. It should all appear as normal as possible until Mary stands up. Once the characters have spoken, they remain standing, listening to one another

Reader : Our first reading today is taken from the Book of Christmas, chapter one, starting at the first verse. . . This was how the birth of Jesus took place. There was a young girl called Mary. A pure maiden who was called by God for a very special purpose. She knew that she must do as God wanted and that He would provide all that she needed for the task ahead.

Mary: *(Appearing from a different part of the church)*

That's how you'd like it to have happened, isn't it? It's better for you to make me special from the start. Give me a confidence beyond my years. Take away the sheer terror I felt from the moment that heaven came to visit me. Assume I had no choice. It wasn't easy for me to agree. I didn't know what was ahead but I knew it was going to be hard. The thought of telling my parents, and Joseph. And knowing what people may think of me. I didn't know what you know. And I wasn't anything. That was the point. But, if it helps, give me a halo to take me out of your league. Know that you are too small for God to ask big things of you. It's easier that way.

Reader: She was betrothed to a man named Joseph. He was upset when he heard that Mary was pregnant, and determined to divorce her quietly, but an angel came to see him and explained the good news. And Joseph understood and gladly took Mary to be his wife.

Joseph: *(Appearing from a different part of the church)*

Well I suppose that's how it went, in a way. It's easy to make it rosy when you look back at things. And you prefer to do that, don't you? Much nicer to pass over the shame and the embarrassment. And the disgust I felt every time I looked at the girl I thought I knew, but suddenly seemed a different person. It's simpler to gloss over the decision I faced, not whether to marry her, but how to divorce her and try and distance myself from the whole disaster. Should I let her off the hook, or put her up for public ridicule and judgement? And then the angel came. Even that's not as nice as it sounds. To be asked to adopt a lie and share your son for the rest of your life, or his. But you give me patience and

understanding that you know you wouldn't have had. Know that you are too stubborn to be used by God. It's simpler that way.

Reader: And they came to the holy town of Bethlehem, and they laid him in a manger because there was no room in the inn.

Innkeeper: (*Appearing from a different part of the church*) Actually, I like that bit. It puts me in quite a good light. Understanding the situation immediately and offering what I could. And the pictures you paint in soft focus, air-brushing out the pain and exhaustion, I almost wish I'd been there. Instead of in that cattle shed that night. I only let them in because they'd run out of choices, but it doesn't mean I was happy about it. At best it seemed like an inconvenience, at worst I thought it could bring me a lot of trouble. And it did in the days to come. The story didn't start in a warm barn, it happened in a cattle house, and it didn't end with peaceful contentment, but in death and tragedy. But you call the food trough a manger, and take away the stink and the filth. Know that you are too suburban to be required to leave your comfort zone. It's safer that way.

Reader: And there were shepherds in the fields that night. And the heavenly host told them the glorious news and they went and worshipped the child.

Shepherds: (*Appearing from a different part of the church*) Now that's exactly right. We were on watch that night. Minding our own business, keeping out of the city. Sheep herders are like that. We work on our own. We're not ones for fuss and bother. We only left the hills because we had to. Didn't have time to change, or wash. But at least the place we found the child was more what we were used to. And when we left, the night was just the same. The crowds were still partying and we were still not welcome in the smarter pubs and inns. We went back to work, wondering what we'd really seen. But you paint stars in the sky and tears in our eyes. Know that such a miracle couldn't happen today. Know that now is different to then, and the Star of Wonder has lost its shine. It's more peaceful that way.

Reader : And all this took place to fulfil what the prophets had foretold

Mary: The Virgin will give birth

Joseph : to an outcast

Innkeeper : in an overcrowded backwater

Shepherds : when it was least expected

Reader : And this child will be the saviour of the world

Mary : God made flesh

Joseph : Reliant on humanity

Innkeeper : society

Shepherds : acceptance

Reader : For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given

Mary : to an ordinary girl

Joseph : of an ordinary family

Innkeeper : in an ordinary place

Shepherd : on an ordinary day

Reader : like this one.