

## MARY'S MONOLOGUE - 'DONKEYS AND STABLES'

*(Woman walks in carrying a baby (doll) in a blanket and wearing a blue headdress to signify the character Mary)*

Isn't he wonderful? My beautiful baby. We've named him Jesus and I can't begin to tell you how blessed I feel. I imagine all mothers feel the same, but I just can't help feeling I really am the most blessed mummy of all time! He sleeps, he eats, and I have to say he's the most peaceful baby I have ever known. All my friends can't believe it.

'Sleepless nights?' they ask. 'Thankfully not,' I reply.

'Wind and projectile you know what?' they say. 'No,' I simply say.

'Unable to soothe himself?' they enquire. 'No, he seems most at peace when I lay him in his crib.'

Well, at that they soon leave me alone. But I understand that my baby boy, my Jesus, is a little different from the rest. Don't be mistaken - the donkey and the stable were a challenge. You see, I always expected to give birth in my own mother's home, with family surrounding me with water and blankets warming by the fire. Familiar surroundings, safe and warm. Giving birth at home was what I expected. But instead my Jesus was born with a different kind of family surrounding him.

I know some say that donkeys are foolish, but I think donkeys are far from foolish. We needed to use the strength of the donkey to carry us to Bethlehem. Nine months pregnant and riding a donkey - I don't call that comfort and joy, to be honest! However, our donkey was such a gentle soul. He carried me as carefully as he could, navigating each bump in the road, each boulder, each crevice ... and I knew he was trying to bring comfort in my discomfort. He must have been so tired



by the time we reached Bethlehem, yet he helped to keep my precious baby Jesus safe in my womb. So, while that journey wasn't the most comfortable or joyful, it was beautiful knowing that even an animal cared for me, cared for my son. Even in a stable that was a bit dirty, a bit uncomfortable, our precious donkey lay close to the manger, bringing his warmth. Joseph and I also lay close by the donkey to keep warm, feeling the softness of his fur, the warmth of his breath - yes, comfort, in the form of a donkey. It's surprising how God sends comfort in the most unexpected of ways, and that brings joy.

Come on, little one, your daddy will be wondering where we are.

*(Mary exits as she continues to talk to the baby).* He's got so much to teach you, he's a wonderful carpenter. His soul is gentle, and he loves you as his own...



## SHEPHERD'S MONOLOGUE - 'SHEEP AND STONES'

*(Shepherd walks with in with a crook and wearing a headdress (tea towel and tie would suffice) or carrying a fluffy sheep under his arm)*

I've just been to the shepherds' monthly get together. Oh my, today was interesting - and I have to say, quite joyful indeed. We all gathered in a field on the outskirts of Bethlehem, and as I got closer to the field I could hear this beautiful sound. And you would have never guessed it, but all of the shepherds gathered were singing a new song! We do like to sing, you know, especially around the fire when we're keeping warm when the night air is chilly. It also helps us to know where we all are in the dark, too! Well, the song they were singing rang a few bells with me, I have to say, because I'd heard the words before. The main gist of it was 'Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth.'

Ooh, it took me back, it did! I remember as though it was only last night. The angels surrounding us, and us being a little nervous of them to start with, if I'm going to be bluntly honest. But then realising that these angels meant us no harm - quite the opposite actually. These angels were messengers from God! I've often been asked if I felt comfort and joy in those moments before we went running off to find the baby; and I guess, to be frank, the first sighting of a huge angel followed by what felt like hundreds of angels didn't actually feel comfortable at all. It was a shock! It's not every evening you have a chorus of angels in your sheep fold, I can tell you! However, those feelings quickly passed, and a joy like no other filled spaces in my heart I never knew possible!



Now did you know that shepherds are known to be good runners? No? Well, we are, and we often have to run after wandering sheep that need to be found, and we need to act quickly and run fast! So, on that evening as the stars shone brightly in the sky, as the angels sang their song about the birth of Jesus, I had the urge to run. I wasn't running away from the stars or the angels, honest friends, I was running *towards* something - or should I say, someone - running to the new king, baby Jesus.

The ground was rough, with stones, boulders and crevices everywhere. I felt my skin burn as another stone found its way into my sandals, with the sand from the hillside making its home in between my toes,. And then my ankle gave way with the force of running downhill at speed. Pain seared into my calf muscle, but I could not and would not stop. Yes, it was uncomfortable, but I knew I needed to be the first to meet the new king. You see, sometimes you have to be uncomfortable to experience true beauty. And you know something else? Meeting baby Jesus gave me a peace and comfort in my heart like I had never known before. And then do you know what else? That comfort brought a joy that made me start singing - and I have never stopped! In fact, I'm going to sing that song until the day I die because everyone needs to know! Life might not always be comfortable, but that baby Jesus taught me that comfort and joy can come when you least expect it - even in the form of a newborn baby.

Well, now I've said that all out loud, it's reminded me that at the next shepherds' monthly meeting I might encourage even more singing, as it turns out us shepherds are in tune with the heavenlies! I wonder if one day someone might even sing a song about us ... Now, I wonder how would that go ...?



*(Shepherd walks off mulling and thinking about a song)*

‘As shepherds watched their sheep by night’ - no, no that’s not right ...

‘As shepherds watched their lambs” ... no, no not that either. Let me think again ... /As shepherds watched their flock by night ...’ Now that sounds like a good first line to a song, don’t you think!

*(The music could start for the next carol as the shepherd leaves).*



## THE INNKEEPER'S MONOLOGUE - 'OVERBOOKED BUT OVERJOYED'

*(Innkeeper to walk in with his head in his hands)*

Oh my, I can't quite believe what's happened. How can you feel so uncomfortable yet overjoyed within a matter of moments? *(Takes a big breath)* Sorry, let me introduce myself - I'm Isaac and I'm the local innkeeper down at the bottom of the hill. You may have seen my inn as you travelled here today, and I have to say, you are most welcome to come and join us and book in an overnight stay. Well, when I say you can book in, you can after two weeks on Wednesday because we've been fully booked for weeks now! In fact, being fully booked has a lot to do with what I want to tell you about, because we were so booked up with everyone wanting to be in the same place at the same time! (You know what censuses do to people! Tends to leave folk with no sense!)

That's why when this young couple came knocking on our door in the middle of the night, I was very uncomfortable at having to turn them away. Not least because of the large bump that was evident underneath the young woman's cloak and the look of complete anxiety on the face of her husband Joseph. Yes, this young woman called Mary was with child, and she looked ready to pop. So when they asked if I had a place for them to stay, I felt so uncomfortable saying no and turning them away. Thank the tiny bright shining stars that my good sense prevailed, because as I saw the sorrow and anguish in their faces, I remembered that the cattle shed was somewhat warm, out of sight and vacant - well, apart from a few animals, obviously. I didn't think they would want to actually take up my offer, but I guess when



you are desperate and about to give birth to a baby, comfort isn't at the top of your list of priorities. I guess in those moments, when life is literally bursting forth, you take the discomfort to bring forth joy.

Now I've been around when my wife has given birth to our seven children, so I know a thing or two about childbirth. Erm, actually just let me clarify - when I say I've been around, I mean I've been in a nearby room while my wife's mother and sisters have helped her give birth. Four boys and three girls - yes, I'm a proud father. But I did feel sorry for Joseph the father, as he was going to have to help deliver the baby on his own. That made me feel uncomfortable too, that they had no one else around them. I felt sad - I didn't know what to say, and I felt, to be very honest, I felt distressed that this poor young woman was having to give birth in a stable. I felt like I had let them down. There, I've finally said it. My discomfort was because I couldn't do what I felt I needed to do. That made me feel uncomfortable.

However, by some miracle of God, with a few clean cloths and a bucket of clean water warmed by the fire by my wonderful wife, that husband helped his young wife give birth. Not only that, they wanted to share their experience - share their first newborn with anyone and everyone, it seemed.

My wife went to check on them, and they said to bring me to meet Jesus - that's what they named him. Me? For some reason this felt like nothing I'd ever experienced before. There, among the animals - a donkey, cattle, not forgetting the sheep - it was the most beautiful scene. A mother, a father and their newborn. The stable was lit with a glow like I've never seen. I couldn't even tell you where that glow was coming from, but glow there was. I felt overjoyed, I felt a peace like



I've never felt. And the joy within me was even more than when I'd seen my own children for the first time! Better not share that information with my wife! I really don't understand it!

Anyway, my discomfort left me as I realised that all this couple needed was each other and their baby boy. Sometimes, we have to put aside the discomfort so we recognise what's important, because what's important brings real joy - everlasting joy - and I can tell you now, no money, no power, nothing can ever touch real joy.

Now that is a comfort!

Well, best be going - beds to make, animals to feed. And since that baby was born in our stable, we can't keep up with bookings - so remember, if you want to book a room give us two weeks on Wednesday, friends - we might have some availability then!

