

Joseph Monologues – Sweet Dreams and Bitter Nightmares

These monologues may be done independently or as a set.

A video of the author's performance is also available.

Sweet Dreams

Scripture

Before the monologue: Matthew 1:18-19

After the monologue: Matthew 1:20b-24

A lawyer's office. A bare coat tree stands near the entrance. A small table and single chair (facing audience, behind the table) is centre stage. There is a small stack of papers (i.e., the adoption papers) and a container of pens on the table. The lawyer, an imagined figure, is presumed to be sitting with their back toward the audience. The dialogue must be carried by Joseph, allowing adequate pauses for the lawyer's "voice."

Joseph enters in a flurry. He is wearing a coat, carrying a briefcase and a concealed mobile phone.

*Sorry I'm late. This isn't like me. I'm normally quite punctual. "Just on time, Joseph."
That's what the guys in the guild always ...*

Oh, pardon me. Good evening to you too. "Shakes" lawyer's hand.

Puts briefcase down. Hangs up coat. I've just never done this before. Needed a lawyer ... Except for the time Paul fell through the roof and worker's compensation refused

Yes, I have the paperwork. Pulls out papers/folder and places them on the table.

You expect your engagement will lead to marriage, right? That's reasonable, isn't it? A spouse you love, a house with a carpenter shop, and eventually children of your own, God willing.

No, sorry, I haven't filled those out. I didn't know how to start.

Sits down. Yeah, sure, start with my name. Joseph. Ah, Joseph of Nazareth. Better, Joseph of Bethlehem; that's really where I'm from. I have a long ancestral lineage dating back to ... Yeah, go ahead, just say Joseph.

My birth date? Ah, July 21 ... 34 BC. Well, I'm not sure what BC means either. Use BCE if that's better ...

My fiancé's name is Mary. Isn't that a delightful name? Mary. Oh, let me show you a picture. *Locates a photo on his phone.* Aren't her eyes just like doves and her lips like crimson ribbon? *Takes phone back.* Her face, a slice of pomegranate.

Puts phone away. No, sir, I don't know her birthdate. The records aren't clear.

Or her address. No. I'd go over to visit but never noticed her house number. We'd do the evening chores together. We'd talk. I'd dream. She'd ponder. And if we were so bold, we'd hold hands ...

Yes, of course I loved her. She was perfect. Gracious, compassionate, full of humour. Her face, a slice of ... *Stands.* I just can't believe I'm here, that it's come to this.

Well, it's obvious, isn't it? She's pregnant.

With child.

C'mon, she has a fetus growing in her uterus. And it's not mine.

No, that's the point! She had sex with another man. It's an illegitimate, unlawful, immoral pregnancy. I am not the father, and I can't marry an unfaithful ...

What, you think I'm too bitter – for being betrayed? For having my dreams crushed? For losing my future?

Look, I didn't create this mess.

Again sits. Yes, I'm innocent. That's easily defensible. I have her on tape saying I wasn't involved.

She says it was ... God.

Why can't she be honest with me? It's not like her to cover something up with an absurd claim.

Yes, of course, it's absurd.

C'mon, you must think "divine insemination" is rather bizarre. Who's going to believe that?

Look, I'm not here to talk theology. I need to know my legal options.

Because I can imagine how this will play out. She can't hide her pregnancy. She can't justify it. I lose my business. Imagine the public shaming, the scandal ... No, you don't need to remind me – I know the law – she could be stoned to death.

So, what should I do? How do I file this divorce without causing her or the child any harm?

Of course. Yes.

Yes, I'm still willing to pay the dowry.

Yes, and any other legal responsibilities. Of course. Mary and the child need to be cared for.

Please. Don't call me good. I'm so confused. There's no good way through this.

Pause.

Picking up a pen. So, where do I sign? *Signs multiple copies.*

Now you sound like Mary.

No, I don't think God's involved. I don't think God's in the business of ...

This has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit ...

C'mon, God's not that kind of father ...

You're really buying her story, aren't you?

I can't believe you don't find it outrageous!

Pause.

OK, so what's your proposal?

Pause.

Standing. No. No, absolutely not. I'm not the father. I will not name the child. That's ridiculous.

But you have a name to suggest ... Two names?

C'mon, this is stupid!

Yes, I know what Jesus means. "To save."

And, sure, I suppose it's a perfect name for these circumstances. But this isn't a linguistic game!

And Emmanuel's the second name, is it? "God with us." As Mary's been claiming ... No, I'm not missing the irony.

But you're missing the point.

Pause.

What are these? *Picks up the original sheets of paper from the table.* More papers to sign? Um, what are these? Adoption papers? What's this about?

You want me to become the legal father of this child? What, and abandon the divorce proceedings, marry my fiancé, and raise Jesus as my son?

Holding up the papers. That's your best advice?!

Puts papers down on the table and turns to leave. Just because I still love her, doesn't mean I can marry her. *Takes jacket and picks up briefcase.*

My decision's made. File the correct papers. And please keep this process quiet.

What's that? Sure, ok, call me in the morning. I'll sleep on it. Whatever.

As he leaves. Pardon me? Sweet dreams to you, too. *Exits.*

Bitter Nightmares

Scripture and Song

Before the monologue: Matthew 2:12-13, 16

After the monologue: A Voice Was Heard in Ramah, #278 Voices Together

An Egyptian border crossing. The border official is wearing a camouflage military jacket and sits at a table with their back to the audience. He is stamping papers stacked on the table. They have a concealed phone in their pocket. An Egyptian flag is hanging beside the table. Joseph and Mary's backpack leans against the table. The actor will play two characters; initially the border official and later Joseph. In each case, the dialogue must be carried by the single actor, allowing adequate pauses for the other's "voice."

Looks up from his papers. Citizenship?

May I see your passports?

You don't have documentation? I'm sorry, sir, but we can't allow ...

A refugee claim?

Well, Egypt is not presently accepting refugees.

No, sir. The border is closed.

Please, there's nothing I can do for your family. You'll all need to go home.

You had a dream? Sir, we all have dreams. But I place little value in personal aspirations. Do you think it was my dream to become a border patrol officer?

Next, please ...

Irritated. Sir, I cannot ... Pardon me? A mass grave? What are you talking about?

No I haven't, and I'm not interested in a fabricated

Really? Unearthed yesterday? Where are you getting this information?

Hold it, hold it. Several hundred children? Has this been verified? We haven't heard this news.

Ok, just excuse me for a moment. *Steps away from table.* That's a serious allegation.

Still with back to the audience. On their phone. Khalid, any recent news out of Bethlehem? I've got a couple here with an outlandish story!

Nothing, eh? No edict from Herod? No street violence? No breakdown in security?

They're suggesting there's been a state-sponsored infanticide.

Yeah, I said outlandish!

Excuse me. *Places his hand over phone, looks to his right.* What's that Asim? A party of 3 came through earlier with a similar story? When were they here? And who saw them this morning? Karim?

Back on phone. Ah, Khalid. Put me through to Karim please.

Karim, it's Mahmoud. I have a family here from Bethlehem seeking political asylum ... Yes, Bethlehem. Exactly. I understand you saw travelers earlier today? Astrologers from Persia? Traveling through our crossing? Seems a bit round about ... Political danger, I see. Anything about children? Oh, shoot. Yes, file that report. We may be seeing others.

Ends the phone call. To Asim, again to his right. Asim, put in a call to our consulate in Jerusalem. We need to see if this story tracks. Sure, also check in with the police service. Karim's submitting a report. I'll interrogate our folks here.

Character change. Officer walks over to the table and places his jacket on the chair. They become Joseph. Now faces the audience, sits on the floor, as if seated next to Mary and Jesus.

In distress, crying. My God, Mary, is Daniel also dead? Micah? Baby Eli?!

Who butchers children?

Look at him. Look at him, Mary! How is our child a political threat?!

What? *Turns to the "seated officer."* Ah, I'm sorry, officer ...

Walks to table. Yes, of course, I'm glad to talk. She'll need to nurse our child.

No, we don't have any firearms ... or alcohol ... Citrus? Are you kidding? Sorry. We don't have much food at all. We left with nothing.

Um, three days ago. Just as the soldiers came.

Militia. Hundreds of them. On horseback. Everywhere.

Oh ... Herod.

I don't know. The man's a monster.

He wants our child dead.

Well, that was tipped to us in a dream.

Yes, a dream. I'm not expecting you to believe me. But it was timely and vital information. We got out just in time.

No, we're traveling alone. It happened so quickly. We left family behind.

Sir, it was chaos.

No humanitarian corridor, though the word was to go south.

Said directly to the officer. Officer, we need safe passage to Egypt. Now.

We heard this crossing was open.

Well, we, ah, know others who came through here.

Yes.

Several gentlemen from Bethlehem ... I mean, Persia ... They had stopped in Bethlehem at our house. And had reasons to travel home this way.

Yes, political reasons. They were trying to save our child.

Retreating from the table. Instead, their visit created this mayhem ... I wish they hadn't come.

Pause.

Oh, no, we don't know them. They're complete strangers.

Of course we welcomed them into our home ... they came a long way.

Their names? Oh, I don't know if I remember ... Um, Melchior. The taller one was Balthasar.
And, ah, who brought the gold?

Yeah, gold. Sorry. Um, they each brought precious gifts. For our son. They came to see our son.

I don't know. We don't really get it either.

Pause.

Yes, we have the gold along. *Grabs the backpack.* We were meaning to declare it ...

Yes, sir, I know it's not typical refugee ...

What, you're suggesting it's contraband? No, officer, it's not illegal ... As I said, these are gifts for our son ... thought to be a king ... a future king ... from foreign strangers ... who happened upon our place ... following a star ... whose presence precipitated a tyrant's jealousy ... so furious he's determined to murder all the baby boys in Bethlehem ...

You don't believe me, do you?

Sure, talk to whoever you need to. We'll wait here. Sir, we can not go back.

You want to talk to the child's mother? Sure, you can talk with her. She can confirm every detail. *Breaking down in tears himself.* But be prepared, right now she won't stop crying.

Arlyn Friesen Epp (Canada), 2023.

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