

DoveTale

By Ted Swartz, Lee Eshleman and Ingrid De Sanctis

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

Characters: Gabriel, Mary

Set: *Simple home. Loveseat with a throw. A few chairs, small wooden crate and small table holding the phone stage right. Bride magazine on crate.*

Props:

Print shop box with napkins inside, sealed envelope with letter inside, post-it note from Mom, two scrolls to be put in pockets of overalls, paper for pocket of overalls (“hand wash”), 3 napkins in pocket of overalls, inside of Gabriel’s backpack: notes for Joe, map, wrench, Raggedy Ann doll, bugle (to be played backstage)

Length: 15-16__ minutes

GABRIEL enters the back of the house, looking about with a crumpled map in one hand and some sort of backpack/duffle in the other. His hair is rather wild, spiked up in the air somewhat. He is a warm and engaging character and speaks directly to the audience.

GABRIEL: Do any of you live around here? You see, I’m looking for this one house and I know what it looks like of course, but only from one angle: straight overhead. From down here on the planet everything looks different and I ... her name is Mary. And she’s really ... well, she’s GONNA be really ... (*Gestures a round tummy*) ... well, that’s my job to tell her that she’s gonna really ... and this is one of the biggest jobs that I ... I mean I just wanna—do I look okay? (*Sees interior of Mary’s apartment, walks on*) Well, this must be it. Yes, this looks right. But what if I’m wrong? It would be very embarrassing to give this announcement to the wrong person. (*Sees magazine*) Hello, what’s this? *Bride magazine!* Yep, this must be the place. (*A new thought*) Well, I should practice.

(Very flat)

Behold. (*Realizes that was not the best approach*) No.

(Tries again. Deep, dramatic voice)

Behold. (*Reconsiders his approach*) No. I’ll scare her to death.

(Tries again. Suave with finger click)

Behold.

(With some dramatic movement)

BEHOOOOOOOLD! YES!

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(GABRIEL leaps over couch.)

Okay! Greetings! You who are highly... highly ... *(Looks at his mini-scroll)* favored! Greetings, you who are highly favored. I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God."

(To the sky; sheepish)

Hey guys? I found the place. Listen. I think there should be some kind of a majestic trumpet fanfare when I say my name, to give her that full sense of grandeur. Work on it. When I say, "I am Gabriel. Greetings you who are highly ... *(Looks at scroll)* favored!"

(Hears MARY coming; GABRIEL heads into audience.)

Here she comes.

(MARY blusters in through the door dressed as an everyday woman in a denim skirt and pink sweater. She's carrying her purse and mail stacked on top of a carton. MARY sets the carton down. She is excited about the letter that she has found, opens it immediately and sits on the couch to read it.)

MARY: *(Reading the letter)* "Dearest Mary, I miss you so much. The Third Annual Conference of Woodcrafters and Pipe-fitters of Jerusalem and Palestine is going great, though. We studied dovetail joints and it made me think of you. This morning we had a forum on cabinets, banisters, and trim work. It made me think of you." He is so sweet. "The city is big and beautiful. Just like you." What? *(She is a bit surprised by this line. Goes to second page.)* "The beautiful part, not the big part of course ..." *(Relieved)* Oh. "All my love, your Joseph. P.S. You are my sweetheart. P.S.S. You are my sugar dumpling." *(She puts the letter away and looks at her other mail still smiling to herself.)* He is so silly.

(MARY picks up post-it note off the carton. GABRIEL re-enters the scene and stands behind the loveseat as she reads the post-it note. MARY cannot see GABRIEL.)

MARY: "Mary, my dear. Here are the napkins straight from the shop. Nice color choice. Did you remember to invite the Levitt's? Remember, two t's! They always get two t's!" *(To herself)* Okay, Mom. *(Back to reading the post-it)* "Call me when you get these; I have big news from your Aunt Elizabeth. Love, Mom." *(MARY opens box, examines a napkin, places it on the table to admire it.)* Mary and Joseph. June 22. Forever On. *(She walks away from the napkin. Then stops. Turns back. Looks at it again.)* Wait a minute. Mary and Joseph. June 22. Forever On. It should say ONE. Mary and Joseph. Forever ONE! Nine hundred cocktail napkins. *(GABRIEL approaches the door.)* Forever On. What are we, a porch light? *(MARY puts the napkin away. GABRIEL knocks.)*

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MARY: Just a minute.

(Goes to the door. Opens it and sees GABRIEL in his white overalls. He really looks like a plumber.)

Oh the plumber! Come on in. I've been calling you guys for two days. *(Dashes over to the kitchen)* It's right over here. See? It's been leaking like a grapefruit.

(GABRIEL strikes an angelic pose and begins his speech.)

GABRIEL: Greetings, you who are highly flavored. Flavored!

MARY: *(Not sure how to respond)* Highly frustrated is more like it. I tried using duct tape on it, but that didn't work.

GABRIEL: I am Gabriel.

(A sad-sounding bugle blast. They are both embarrassed. To MARY that sounded like a stomach problem. To GABRIEL the angels were not taking this seriously.)

I stand in the presence of God.

MARY: Good. *(Trying to think of something to say)* Because when duct tape fails, who else can you turn to? *(She backs away from the sink area.)* Well, let me get out of your way.

GABRIEL: Blessed one, you have found favor with God.

MARY: *(Backs behind the table. She is trying her best to be kind but this is a bit strange.)* If you need some tea or anything just let me know.

GABRIEL: *(Advancing toward her; MARY begins to freak out a bit. GABRIEL is working hard now.)* No, no, I mean it. And you will be overshadowed by the holy spigot. Spirit! But be not afraid and fear not. Though there is great trembling in you ... seeds of peace but seeds of ... many seeds. You are very seedy. *(Realizes he's scaring her; tries to reassure.)* But fear not—

MARY: *(He's too close; she crosses to the chair, stage left.)* You know actually, I think the sink is fine. And I can't even afford a plumber anyway.

GABRIEL: No, no. I'm an angel. *(Crossing to center)*

MARY: *(Trying to be as polite as possible. Smiling.)* Yes, you are Mr. Gabriel. I'm sorry to waste your time.

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****PURCHASE REQUIRED FOR PERFORMANCE AND DUPLICATION****

GABRIEL: I am the angel Gabriel (*Trumpet blast*) ... and I can fix your plumbing. (*Produces wrench and sets to work*) I just want to tell you that he's coming! And a crushed reed he will not smolder (*Confusing himself*)—no, no, a smoldering reed he will not smolder—he will be nice to reeds...

MARY: (*Crossing to phone*) You know, I really need to call my florist.

GABRIEL: Please! There's something I must tell you! (*He stands and backs away so as not to threaten her.*) You are the beginning of something new and without end. It will go on and on forever. On and on like a river. On and on like the wind—

MARY: (*Trying to get to the table behind him and use the phone*) I really need to go on and—

GABRIEL: On and on. Like cocktail napkins. Forever on.

MARY: (*MARY looks at the cocktail napkins then at GABRIEL.*) Who are you?

GABRIEL: I told you. I am (*Looks heavenward to squelch the bugle*)... I am Gabriel. I'm an angel.

MARY: An angel.

GABRIEL: Yes. An angel. (*Puts away the wrench*) And I'm here with big news, not that I've been quite as—quite as—that my words—articulate, as I hoped to be but surely you sense that the air is full of—fullness—and kind of pregnant.

MARY: Actually, you know my neighbor Levi can fix that pipe. (*Crosses to door*) He's right next door. He's very strong. So I think you should go now.

GABRIEL: Mary, please.

MARY: (*This stops her in her tracks. She catches her breath and really looks at him.*) How do you know my name?

GABRIEL: Oh, please don't throw me out. I want to do this right. Of course I know your name. I know everything about you. We spent a long time deciding on you.

MARY: Who?

GABRIEL: Me and the boss and some lesser cherubim. (*She crosses down left*) Don't you see how right you are for this? From the very beginning,

and duplication rights.

****PURCHASE REQUIRED FOR PERFORMANCE AND DUPLICATION****

even as a girl, your fairness ... playing hopscotch and kickball ...
the Raggedy Ann doll!

MARY: *(Smiling to herself remembering her doll)* My Raggedy Ann doll! My favorite. *(She sits on chair.)* Oh, I loved that doll.

GABRIEL: Exactly. Yes, you did, didn't you, Mary. *(He sits on the loveseat; sets bag right of couch.)* You loved that doll so much. But you gave it away. To...

MARY / GABRIEL: Rebekah Goldman.

MARY: Rebekah Goldman! But that was in third grade! *(She starts to connect all this. Looks at GABRIEL and crosses to him where he is sitting on the couch.)* How could you possibly—wait a minute, were you in my third grade class? I'm sorry, I don't recognize you...

GABRIEL: No, I never actually went to school. But I know about your classmates; I know how cruel they were. They taunted Rebekah about her lazy eye and because she was poor. But not you. Mary, you walked with her. On her side of the street. Back and forth to school. And she always had that doll. She called it her "Happy Mary" doll...

MARY: Okay, well what do you want with me? *(Goes and sits back down on the chair stage left.)*

GABRIEL: Mary, you're a good woman.

MARY: Okay.

GABRIEL: You're full of mercy.

MARY: All right.

GABRIEL: And you're going to have a baby.

MARY: *(MARY is distracted by the idea of a baby and has no clue as to what GABRIEL is really saying.)* I hope so. We've planned the first one seven years after we're married.

GABRIEL: No. I mean much sooner than that. *(Stands.)*

MARY: And then two to three more, spaced 24 to 30 months apart.

GABRIEL: *(Grabbing chair and moving it to center to stand on. This makes MARY a bit nervous.)* No soon! It's upon us! Listen! *(Gets scroll from pocket.)*

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After lo these 60 years, your prayers have been heard. You'll bear a son! Do not let him have wine or fermented drink. He will be a man of locusts and wild honey...

MARY: You are making no sense. What do locusts have to do with me?

GABRIEL: Did I say locusts? Oh, that's the wrong scroll—here we are—Hand wash in cold water. No! It's gotta be here somewhere ... *(GABRIEL gets down from the chair, crosses to MARY and speaks more honestly.)* The way I understand it, you will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be called the Son of the Most High.

(MARY stands, crosses to GABRIEL and tries to explain.)

MARY: Gabriel, I am an engaged woman, which means I've kept myself for Joseph. Gabriel, have you heard of the honeymoon, where ... Gabriel. Oh no, no, no. This is impossible.

(MARY goes back and sits down, trying to laugh this off.)

GABRIEL: Impossible? That's what your Aunt Elizabeth said. *(He sits on the loveseat. Phone rings several times. MARY finally answers.)*

MARY: Hello? Aunt Elizabeth? How are you? You're ... you're pregnant. *(MARY is clearly thrown off by AUNT ELIZABETH'S pregnancy.)* Can I call you back?

MARY: That's impossible. Aunt Elizabeth is—

MARY /

GABRIEL: —83 years old!

(MARY is distressed by this news and sits down in the chair stage right next to the telephone table.)

GABRIEL: Yes! Amazing! Impossible! She is so happy. Zechariah doesn't say much ... but Elizabeth is positively glowing.

MARY: *(MARY thinks she can explain this away.)* But, see, at least they're a couple. They've been married for—what—65 years. Of course they're ready for a child. Sometimes it takes that long. Who knows how long it'll take Joseph and me until we're ready? We're not even a family yet. I'm not even married yet.

GABRIEL: But you will be. You'll be God's first family.

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MARY: *(Comes to loveseat, sits on the arm)* And Joseph, he's just getting started in the business and he cuts himself all the time in the shop. He's--to be honest, he's kind of a klutz, an adorable klutz, but we're hardly organized enough to handle a child.

(Moves back to the chair stage left, deeply moved and overwhelmed by all this because she can feel the truth of it all and her humanity.)

This is a mistake. You're here by mistake. I'm not the one.

GABRIEL: *(Stands, picks up his backpack, moves to MARY)* Mary, God is coming. He needs a safe place to start.

MARY: *(Full of heart and question)* Don't you see what you're asking? I'll be totally humiliated and disgraced. My God would have prepared me. He would have sent some kind of sign or something.

GABRIEL: *(Steps forward and extends his arms out to the sides)* I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God. Who has chosen you, Mary.

MARY: But Gabriel...

GABRIEL: *(Fishes in his backpack and gives her the Raggedy Ann doll)* You won't be alone. I promise. God will be with you, on your side of the street. Always.

(GABRIEL exits and leaves MARY alone while she takes all this in. Suddenly the phone rings and she crosses to answer it. During the following phone call, MARY keeps trying to find the words but her mind is elsewhere. She says the wrong thing then tries to cover it up over and over and over...)

MARY: Hello? Joseph? *(Completely perplexed)* Joseph who? *(Realizing)* Oh! Joseph! My fiancé! No, no, this isn't Mary—I mean *(Trying to cover up and explain this)* Yes! This is Mary—I mean what I meant to say was that the plumber was just here. Yeah, he was an angel. No, he didn't fix a thing ... well, actually it's not leaking ... Oh, you cut your finger. I'm sorry, I hope it hurts. I mean, no, no ... you think I don't sound like myself? Well, I'm just in shock ... that you called; you know ... you're coming back on Friday? That's a little bit early. Oh, and you wanna have dinner—at my place? No, no, no, no you never know who might pop up ... At Bartholomew's? Friday at 6. Yeah, that's fine. Bye, Mary. No! Uh ... what was your name again? Joseph. Joseph! No, I'm just kidding. I'm joking. See you Friday at 6. Bye. *(MARY starts to hang up and then speaks into the phone. More herself now)* Joseph? Oh, I thought that you'd hung up. *(Full of heart)* I just wanted to tell you that I love you. I really love you. Thanks. Okay—I'll see you Friday. Bye.

(MARY hangs up the phone and exits as the next scene begins.)

***** SCRIPT PREVIEW *****

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SCRIPT
PREVIEW

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