

JUST AN OBSERVER

By Kaye Loughridge

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Abia watches with interest when his cousin Joseph, and Joseph's fiancée Mary become the talk of the town. From that time, throughout the major events in the life of Christ, Abia is simply a curious spectator. He's staying at the inn when Jesus is born; is with the caravan that returns to find the missing 12-year-old; and hears the bickering that surrounds Jesus' ministry. But when Pilate asks, "What will you do with Jesus?" he realizes that no one can be *Just an Observer*.

SETTING

There are several simple scene changes. Abia can stand at a podium or in a spotlight. Mary's home and the stable can be suggested with a few set pieces rather than actual scenery. The temple scene can be portrayed by a table with candles which Anna lights during Abia's narration as Mary and Joseph approach. The well where the ladies gather can be placed at the side of the stage opposite Abia. If the cross is shown by use of an overhead projector, the effect of lightning can be given by rapidly switching the light on and off.

PROPS

Wooden chair, broom, bedroll, manger, shepherd's staff, doll wrapped in a blanket, several bracelets, several water pots, tambourine, pottery jars, small table with basin, robe, large dice, cross.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 m, 7 w, 3 flex, 3 girls, 2 boys)

ABIA: Middle-aged or older man.

JOSEPH: Young man. Mary's husband.

MARY: Joseph's wife.

ANGEL: Messenger from God.

SHEPHERD 1: Visits Jesus at His birth.

SHEPHERD 2: Another.

ANNA: Older woman, faithful servant of God.

SIMEON: Older man, faithful servant of God.

***GIRL 1:** Playing in the street.

***GIRL 2:** Another.

***GIRL 3:** Another.

***BOY 1:** Another.

***BOY 2:** Another.

***LADY 1:** Going to the well to draw water.

***LADY 2:** Another.

***LADY 3:** Another.

***LADY 4:** Another.

***LADY 5:** Another.

PILATE: Passes judgment on Jesus.

SOLDIER 1: At the crucifixion.

SOLDIER 2: Another.

***NOTE:** The number of girls, boys and ladies can be adjusted.

JUST AN OBSERVER

(AT RISE: SPOTLIGHT on ABIA as he enters and goes to the podium to speak.)

ABIA: I come tonight to bring you greetings from the land of Israel. I know that you are here to discuss the events that happened there about two thousand years ago, and I felt that you might like to hear from one who was there. You see, I lived at the time of Jesus of Nazareth. My name is Abia, and I am a relative of Joseph, the carpenter. Oh, you won't find my name mentioned in the Gospels. I was there all right, but I took great care not to take sides. I never liked to be in the midst of conflict — and I never knew of an issue that raised more heated debate than the name of Jesus. So, I remained just an observer — an innocent bystander as it were. But then, it's not my story you're interested in. As I said, Joseph was a relative, and though it isn't seemly to speak highly of your own kin, I have to say there wasn't a more respected young man in the land. Fair, honest, a hard worker — a fine, Godly man. And there was a budding romance between Joseph and a lovely maiden named Mary.

(SPOTLIGHT off ABIA and focus on stage. JOSEPH crosses stage carrying a wooden chair and knocks on MARY'S door. She opens the door.)

JOSEPH: Greetings, Mary. I have come to return the chair your mother asked me to mend. I think she'll find it stronger than ever.

MARY: I'm sure she will, Joseph, but you did not need to make a special trip. Father would have come for it.

JOSEPH: It was not out of my way...and...well, to tell the truth, I was hoping that it would be you that answered the door. I wanted you to know that I have been working evenings on the furniture for our own home and it is almost complete. I'm sure it will be ready by our wedding date.

MARY: Oh, Joseph, it is so exciting! I can hardly sleep at night. Just think, a home of our own. And what could make it more special than furniture made by your own hands! God has blessed me richly in giving me a husband who is such an excellent provider.

JOSEPH: Not so greatly as He has honored me in giving me such a lovely wife. We must offer Him our home to use in any way He wishes — and we still cannot repay His goodness to us.

(SPOTLIGHT returns to ABIA. MARY and JOSEPH exit.)

ABIA: Well, you can see how things were between them. In fact, the whole town could see, and watched with great interest. After all, Mary was a friendly, well-behaved girl — as well liked as Joseph. So you can imagine the surprise, actually the shock, of the town when she was found to be with child! Even more amazing was the story she told. It seems she had been visited by angels!

(SPOTLIGHT goes to MARY. ANGEL enters.)

ANGEL: Hail, Mary! I am come, a messenger from God, to tell you that you have found favor with the Lord, and will be blessed abundantly. For thou shalt bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He shall be the Son of God, and shall reign in a Kingdom without end.

MARY: How can that be?

ANGEL: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and overshadow thee and you shall have a child. For with God all things are possible.

MARY: I do not completely understand, but I am the Lord's handmaiden. Be it unto me as He wills.

(SPOTLIGHT returns to ABIA.)

ABIA: Well, some found Mary's story too preposterous to believe. Others felt that she was honest and godly and firmly believed she had indeed been chosen to

ABIA: *(Cont'd.)* mother the Messiah. The thing everyone was watching for — myself included — was Joseph's reaction. The wedding date was set. What would he do? He could even have her stoned! But Joseph loved Mary dearly and didn't want to see her hurt or humiliated. He had decided to quietly cancel the engagement, when suddenly he did an about-face and announced that the wedding would take place as planned. And his story was as astounding as Mary's!

(SPOTLIGHT on JOSEPH sleeping on a bedroll. ANGEL enters.)

ANGEL: Joseph! Wake up, Joseph.

JOSEPH: Who are you, and what are doing in my room?

ANGEL: I am here with a message for you, Joseph. The Lord would have you to accept Mary as your wife, for the child to be born of her is from God and is the Son of the Highest. When He is born, you are to call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

(SPOTLIGHT returns to ABIA.)

ABIA: So, Joseph's story supported Mary's and they married. Some felt he was foolish and others admired him. But no one's opinion mattered to Joseph. He loved Mary and believed the child to be holy. As for me, I never took sides. I was just an observer. Well, the months passed, and just about the time for the baby to be born, Caesar Augustus decided to collect a tax. Now taxes are just one of life's necessary evils. I didn't really mind paying it. But for some reason only he knew, it was decreed that everyone had to go back to the home of his ancestry to register! A waste of time it seemed to me, but the law is the law, so I joined the caravan to Bethlehem. Being a man of some wealth — I'm not bragging, you understand — I sent a servant ahead to secure a room for me at the best inn in town.

End of Freeview

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