ST. FRANCIS AND THE ANGEL

A One-Act Play in Verse

by
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STORY OF THE PLAY

In Assisi, Italy, in the Thirteenth Century, Francis has gathered some followers in a primitive monastery. A boy appears at the gate and asks to speak with Francis, who has gone into the woods. Though poorly dressed, the boy is an angel sent to test the charity of Francis' followers and to expose the one who is a fraud. One monk, Masseo, is too foolish to recognize who the boy really is, and reacts to him with a comic resentment. The Vicar, Elias, is too angry to treat the boy charitably, sending him away. Elias then lies to Francis about what happened to the boy, but Francis understands what has transpired and also discovers that Elias has been hoarding food for himself and mistreating others. He removes Elias from his position as Vicar. Furious at his demotion, Elias leaves the monastery. Francis and Masseo then go to meet the townspeople who are preparing food for a communal feast, regaling each other enroute with jolly banter and reciting "The Canticle of the Sun."

CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATOR
FRANCIS OF ASSISI
MASSEO, A FRIAR
ELIAS, A FRIAR
AN ANGEL (A SMALL BOY)

PLACE: Assisi, Italy
TIME: The Thirteenth Century, A.D.

ST. FRANCIS AND THE ANGEL

(An empty stage or room. A BOY enters and walks to downstage center to address the audience. He is dressed in a plain tunic and sandals. If staged as a dramatic reading, he is dressed in a white shirt and pants, and carries his script.)

BOY: Hi! I'm an Angel. Oh, I know I don't
Have a halo or wings, but so what? Those things won't
Always appear on God's messengers: He's not confined
To standard equipment or costuming, and He's blind
To fancy clothes, anyway. I'm here to convey
What happened to some Franciscan friars one day
When I was sent to test them in a way
They'll never forget!
In the beginning of the Franciscan Order in Italy Saint Francis was staying at a small place in Assisi With Brother Masseo and Brother Elias. One beautiful day Francis went into the nearby woods to pray.

(The BOY walks off, stage left. FRANCIS, MASSEO, and ELIAS enter from stage right. They wear Franciscan-style habits and sandals. If necessary even brown, hooded bathrobes tied with white ropes may suffice. If staged as a dramatic reading, they can be dressed in brown jackets, black turtleneck shirts and black slacks, and they place their scripts on lecterns arranged across the stage, FRANCIS at stage left, MASSEO at the center, and ELIAS at stage right.)

FRANCIS: Ecco! Primavera! The birds overflow
With little arias, each like a piccolo
Playing in soprano, and the flowers
Wave their colorful caps at the Sun who showers
Their faces with warm kisses. Let me go
Into these greening woods where I can show
The Lord a dance a newborn cloud showed me

FRANCIS: *(Cont'd.)*
This morning -
Far enough away so you Brothers can't see,
So you won't be tempted to make fun of me!

(HE exits, stage left or sits down on the chair behind his lectern. A loud KNOCKING is audible from offstage left.)

MASSEO: Who in the world is that?! Some pilgrims come
To this place to escape the world, but I think some
Should stay away 'til doomsday so that we
Can escape from them.
(Muttering toward sound.) I'm coming. Hold your horses!
(The knocking becomes louder. Masseo replies loudly.)
I said "Hold your horses" - not "Stampede your Cavalry forces!"

(MASSEO makes gesture of opening gate. The BOY enters smiling and stands facing MASSEO or at a lectern at far stage left.)

MASSEO: *(Cont'd.)*
Son, it looks and sound like you never came
To a Friar's Gate before, so you're not to blame
For making this racket: your ignorance bears the shame.
BOY: How should I knock then?
MASSEO: Three time, peacefully.
Then wait 'til the Friar has said one Our Father. If he
Has not come by that time, you may then knock loudly
To wake him up!
BOY: Sorry - I was in a hurry
Because I'm on a long journey - that's why I knocked loudly.
I've come here to talk to Brother Francis, but he
Is in the woods contemplating fervently,
So I must not disturb him. Send Brother Elias to me:
He's supposed to be very wise, so I think he

BOY: *(Cont'd.)*
Can answer a question that's been troubling me.
Ask him to bring me some food - I'm very hungry -
And if I can stay overnight - I'm tired and sleepy.

(MASSEO nods, turns away from the BOY, and muses aloud.)

MASSEO: "Send Brother Elias to me!" Who does he
Think he is, this little waif? "Send him to me...!"
You'd think he was an Angel or something: that tone
Would only suit someone on a gilded throne.
And how did he know that Francis was away
Praying? These nosy waifs really should stay
At home, instead of sneaking around all day
Spying on people....
(He sees ELIAS staring at him from stage right.)
Brother Elias! So good to see
You here...
ELIAS: Where else would I be?
You know I live in this monastery.
MASSEO: I know, I know - excuse me, please. A stranger
Passing by just knocked on the door...
ELIAS: A stranger?
I thought that was a herd of wild zebra
Running in panic in front of a lion...!
MASSEO: No, just a boy...
ELIAS: A boy?! Let's not make him a friar - he'd enjoy
Fist fights and riots as he grew up! What did he want?
MASSEO: He wants to speak with you.
ELIAS: With me? I can't -
I'm busy.
MASSEO: But he...
ELIAS *(Annoyed.)* I said I can't!
MASSEO: He asks you to bring him some food -he says he's hungry -
And asks to sleep overnight -he's tired from his journey.

End of Freeview

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