

Jesus



Luke 2:22-52

Year B Christmas 1 ; Year
C Christmas 1

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Freeman Ng

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Parts by scene

■ = large part ▲ = medium sized part ● = small part

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
▲	Boy - a boy around Jesus' age	▲						
▲	Jesus - at age twelve	▲		▲				▲
▲	Girl - a girl around Jesus' age	▲						
▲	Simeon - an elderly, kindly priest	●		▲		▲		●
▲	Mary - the mother of Jesus		▲				●	▲
▲	Elizabeth - the cousin of Mary, and mother to John		■				▲	
●	Teacher - one of the teachers at the Temple, a very cheerful, conventional thinker			▲				
▲	Anna - a prophet who serves in the Temple, a woman with a portentous and mysterious manner			●		▲		●
▲	Bartholomew - an old friend of Joseph's				▲			
▲	Joseph - Mary's husband, a quiet and conscientious man				■		▲	▲
●	John - the son of Elizabeth and cousin to Jesus, who will grow up to be John the Baptist						▲	

Scene 1

Boy , Girl , Jesus , Simeon

{Jesus and a couple of friends he made in Jerusalem venture into the Temple.}

Boy *[whispering through most of the scene]* Shhh! It's just a little farther.

Jesus *[whispering through most of the scene]* Why are we whispering?

Girl *[whispering through most of the scene]* Because of the priest. The old one. He's scary!

Jesus Why would a priest be scary?

Boy He can lay a curse on you! He can shrivel you up like an old gourd! Or melt you like butter.

Jesus You're just trying to scare me.

Girl A boy broke one of the vases last month, and the old man caught him. Nobody's seen him since!

Boy But he's not half as scary as the Crone.

Jesus The what?

Boy The Crone. An old woman who practically lives in the Temple. She calls herself a prophet, but she's really a witch!

Girl She is not! She's a very nice lady!

Boy If she's so nice, why's she pretending to be a prophet? Everybody knows a lady can't be a prophet!

Girl Girls can do anything boys can do! *[to Jesus]* Isn't that right?

Jesus My aunt Elizabeth is a prophet.

Boy Now *you're* lying!

Jesus I am not! She is!

Girl Did she ever predict something that came true?

Jesus She knew I was in my mother's stomach before anybody could tell by looking.

Boy That's nothing. There's a midwife in the east district that can tell you whether a baby is going to be a boy or a girl, *and* the exact day it'll be born.

Jesus Wow!

Girl Did your aunt predict anything else about you?

Jesus I think so, but my mother won't tell me what it was.

Boy It must be something bad.

Girl Don't be so mean! *[to Jesus]* Maybe it's something good! Maybe you're going to be rich or famous, and your mom doesn't want you to get stuck up.

Boy *[thoughtfully]* I think it's a little bit of both. Something good and something bad. Sometimes, I feel like -

{He's interrupted by Simeon appearing out of nowhere.}

Simeon *[in an ominous Halloween-y voice]* It's so good of you to come, children!

Boy and Girl *[they scream and run away]* Ahhhh!!!!

Scene 2

Elizabeth , Mary

{Elizabeth and Mary say their goodbyes before Mary leaves Jerusalem.}

Mary It's been so good to see you.

Elizabeth I wish you could stay longer.

Mary I do, too, but Joseph's already gone on ahead. I'm to meet him at Neapolis tomorrow.

Elizabeth And the Child?

Mary He's with Joseph.

Elizabeth That's too bad. I really wanted to see him again. What's he like?

Mary *[suddenly bursting out happily]* He's normal! Like any child.

Elizabeth *[skeptically]* But...he's *not* "any child".

Mary Maybe not, but it's how he seems. His two's were about as terrible as anybody in the neighborhood ever saw, though he's very well behaved now. We had trouble potty training him. Joseph says he's very good with the brainwork of carpentry - the planning and the math - but not so good with his hands. Like any child: he has his good points and his bad points. Isn't it the

same with John?

Elizabeth *[after a pause, in a low voice]* John scares me.

Mary Elizabeth! How?

Elizabeth He never crawled, but went straight to walking. He doesn't play with other children, and seems perfectly content with that. He doesn't - he doesn't express any affection toward us, though he's never given us a moment's trouble. He taught himself to read, and now he spends his free time studying the scriptures and praying and - and taking long walks into the desert. He was born for a purpose, and he's taking a straight line to it, not wasting any effort on what won't matter in the end, which includes me and Zechariah.

Mary *[comfortingly]* I'm sure it can't be that bad. There isn't a child alive who doesn't love and appreciate his parents.

Elizabeth *[half to herself]* What I don't understand is why Joshua isn't that way, too. His destiny is even greater than John's. He's the one John will make the way for.

Mary *[confessionally]* Sometimes, I wonder if I've escaped that destiny. Or misunderstood it, anyway. Sometimes I wonder how I could ever have said, "From now on, all generations will call me blessed."

Elizabeth *[sternly]* Have you forgotten the words of Simeon?

Mary *[meekly]* No. No, I haven't. But sometimes, I manage to put them out of my mind.

Elizabeth Well, you shouldn't. They're the words of the Lord. "A sword shall pierce your own heart, also."

Scene 3

Anna , Jesus , Simeon , Teacher

{Back at the temple, Simeon converses with Jesus, who didn't run away with the others.}

Simeon *[kindly]* You must be from out of town.

Jesus I'm from Nazareth.

Simeon Then you haven't heard the terrifying tales of the Temple priest who can turn children to stone!

Jesus They told me some of them.

Simeon Well, I'm glad you didn't believe them. I try to give them what they want, but I must admit, it can be a little wearying when children run screaming from you as a matter of course!

Jesus "How they are brought to desolation in a moment! They are utterly consumed by terror!"

Simeon Very good! Psalm 73. How do you come to know the scriptures so well?

Jesus "Therefore shall you lay up these words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand."

Simeon Deuteronomy! Excellent.

{Teacher and Anna enter.}

Teacher What have we here?

Simeon A boy with a remarkable knowledge of the scriptures.

Anna *[after a gasp, in a awestruck voice]* I think he's more than that.

Teacher Do you know the lad?

Anna *[to Jesus in a worshipful but slightly trembling voice]* Do you know me?

Jesus *[matter-of-factly]* I don't think so. Sorry.

Simeon He's from out of town.

Teacher Here for Passover, are you? Good for you and your parents! The blessings of Passover are felt most strongly when you come to the very center of the nation, the heart of our religious life.

Jesus Wouldn't it be better camping out in the desert? Or in another country, far away from the Temple? "For you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Anna *[breathlessly]* Amen!

Teacher *[discombobulated]* What? Huh?

Simeon As I told you: he seems to know his scriptures!

Anna As well he should!

Teacher *[recovering]* That's commendable. That's a wonderful thing.
[patronizingly to Jesus] You know, God will richly bless a child like you, who studies the scriptures and honors his parents. No evil can come to a life dedicated to the Lord, but only good.

Jesus But what about the prophets? Didn't they live very hard lives? Weren't many of them killed for preaching God's word?

Teacher Well...um...you see...

Jesus And what about Job? "The Lord gives *and* the Lord takes away."

Anna "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Scene 4

Bartholomew , Joseph

{Joseph on the road, chatting with a friend.}

Bartholomew So it's been twelve years now! And I can see they've been good to you.

Joseph *[in wonder]* He's just an ordinary boy. He needs me to teach him, and to provide for him. To be his father.

Bartholomew And I'm sure you're a good one.

Joseph I don't know...you do what you're called on to do - what your father did for you - and...

Bartholomew The generations roll on.

Joseph I don't know why I was so worried.

Bartholomew And Mary?

Joseph She's a good mother. A good wife. We're happy.

Bartholomew That's wonderful to hear! Where are they right now? I'd love to finally meet them.

Joseph They stayed behind one more day in the city to visit Mary's cousin, but I have an appointment to sign a contract for a job with a man in Neapolis, so I'm going on ahead.

Bartholomew A written contract? You can't read, can you?

Joseph No, neither Mary nor I can. I always have to pay someone to translate documents for me.

Bartholomew You should figure out a way for the kid to learn. I've known families who put their firstborn up for the priesthood just so they'd have a translator in the family!

Joseph He doesn't seem very interested in things like that. He barely pays attention in synagogues!

Bartholomew Not interested in religion? Doesn't that seem strange? I mean, given his...provenance. You know?

Joseph *[suddenly somber]* Yes. It does. We don't talk much about...the circumstances of his conception. Not to mention his birth! But that's just how it feels these days: like a story. A bedtime story about wizards and genies and magical swords you hear told just before you fall asleep, and it fills your dreams with wonders, but then you wake up, and the sun is shining and your work and your family and your...life are waiting for you like always, and you walk out into the plain light of day to live it.

Scene 5

Anna, Simeon

{Three days later, at the Temple.}

Simeon Anna, I'm worried about the child.

Anna About Him?

Simeon He's been spending every day here for three days now, and while it's been a treat to have him, is it really possible his parents would let him out of their sight for so long?

Anna You truly do not remember him, do you? You don't know who he is!

Simeon He said he's from Nazareth. How would I know him?

Anna Twelve years ago. A couple with a Child to be presented. The Prophecy you'd been given!

Simeon My God! That was him?

Anna "A light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of God's people, Israel.â€

Simeon Those are the words I spoke. You remember them better than I do.

Anna "Now let me depart in peace," you said. "Having seen Your salvation."

Simeon *[meekly]* Am I...am I going to die *now*? I thought at the time that I would die soon after, because I finally saw the...person God had promised I would see before I died, but I lived on, and after a while, the whole thing began to seem like...

Anna A dream.

Simeon Yes. But you walk through that dream open-eyed, and don't forget what you've seen when you wake.

Anna So the Lord has decreed since the day my husband died, only seven years into our marriage, so many, many years ago. "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away."

Simeon "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Scene 6

Elizabeth , John , Joseph , Mary

{Mary and Joseph come to Elizabeth's house looking for Jesus.}

Mary *[frantically]* Elizabeth! Elizabeth!

Elizabeth Mary! What are you doing back in Jerusalem?

Mary Please tell me he's here!

Elizabeth Who? What's this about?

Joseph Joshua is missing. We were hoping he came here.

Elizabeth Missing? I thought he went ahead to Neapolis with you.

Joseph That's what Mary thought. *I* thought he was with her!

Elizabeth Dear God! Zechariah! Zechariah!

John *[speaking not like a child, but like a brusque adult throughout]* He's at the Temple.

Elizabeth No, dear. Your father isn't on duty today. We have to find him and organize a -

John *[interrupting her]* He's at the Temple, doing his work.

Joseph John? Do you remember your cousin Joshua? It's been a few years since you last saw each other, but have you seen him lately? Did he maybe come to visit you?

John I see him all the time.

Joseph All the time?

John In my dreams. But he will not come to me. I will go to him.

Elizabeth We can't wait for Zechariah to show up. Mary, start searching the marketplace. I'll rouse the neighbors and join you as soon as I can. Joseph -

John *[more insistently than ever]* He's at the Temple, doing his work!

{Everybody pauses.}

Mary John? You're not talking about your father, are you?

Joseph The Temple! Come on, let's go!

Scene 7

Anna , Jesus , Joseph , Mary , Simeon

{At the Temple, Jesus continues to confound the teachers.}

Jesus But didn't God say through the prophet Isaiah, "I form the light -"?

Mary *[interrupting with an anguished scream]* Joshua!

Jesus *[innocently and happily]* Mother!

Joseph Josh, are you all right?

Mary *[in a mixture of fury and despair]* How could you do this? How could you do this to us? Do you know how we worried? Do you know what we imagined?

Jesus But you said to stay with my father.

Mary *[still in a rage]* Yes! And what did you do instead...?

Joseph *[somberly trying to get Mary's attention]* Mary?

Mary *[still in a rage]* You...you *run away!* You run away from your father and me!

Joseph Mary!

Mary Did you not *think* how we'd feel? Do you realize what could have happened to you?

Joseph Mary!

Mary *[flashing out at him]* What?

Joseph *[quietly]* He obeyed you. To the letter.

Mary I told him to stay with you!

Joseph You told him to stay with his *father*.

{A long pause as Mary digests what he's saying.}

Mary *[tenderly]* Oh, Joseph. You *are* his father. You know that, don't you?

Joseph *[in a low voice only she can hear]* I do. And yet...

Jesus *[to both of them, innocently]* Didn't you know I'd be here in my Father's house?

{Simeon and Anna enter.}

Mary *[accusingly]* You!

Simeon Blessed are you among women!

Anna And one who does not forget.

Joseph Aren't you the priest...and you the prophetess...?

Mary *[still almost accusingly]* ...who told us that our son would cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and would be a sign that would be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed.

Simeon I am.

Mary *[definitely accusingly]* You also told me that my own heart would be pierced. Is this what you were talking about?

Simeon I...don't honestly know. The words came through my mouth, but it was not I who spoke them. I don't know what they mean.

Joseph *[meekly, to Anna]* Do you?

Anna This is not the sorrow that was spoken.

Mary Then there's going to be more? Something worse? I can't imagine it.

Anna Have you forgotten who he is?

Jesus "I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and bring calamity. I, the Lord, do all these things."

You can read my thoughts about this play and respond with your own at
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Freeman Ng is a writer, poet, and Google software engineer living in Oakland, California. He's also the author of:

- *Joan* - a novelization of the life of Joan of Arc
- *Who Am I?* - a personalizable picture book
- **Haiku Diem** - a daily haiku feed that's been going since July, 2010

www.AuthorFreeman.com