

Immaculate Conception

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Mary should not have been out at night, but the game Joseph had played had been good. He had slipped her presents whenever he could, so she had some of these things. Because Mary was a very good girl, she had rejected the advances the presents represented. But she was inexperienced, and Joseph was a bastard. She took his tokens, given to her where no one could see them. When she told him to go away, he said he wanted his things back. He said it would be fair. She said she couldn't get them to him, it would be obvious, and Joseph had told her to sneak out, to come into the olive grove, where he'd wait for her by the oldest trees. She said she'd do it, and she did.

Joseph was older than Mary, and his first wife had died in childbirth, leaving him a young widower without children. Mary's family didn't like Joseph because everyone knew he made free with women, and Mary's mother, Anne, was tightly wound.

Joseph wasn't thinking about Mary's family. He was thinking about Mary. She was the most beautiful girl – woman, by the standards of the day – in Capernaum, Cana, Magdala, Bethsaida. Maybe the most beautiful woman in Tiberias, even with its high-born ladies. Joseph was thinking about Mary's eyes and mouth, her smooth skin, a dark olive color. He fantasized what she looked like nude when he masturbated at night.

Joseph saw her enter the grove, carrying his things in a cloth, the moon was full and high above them, the weather warm, everything was perfect. She was dressed in a blue robe and a green mantle, a piece of red cloth over her hair. She didn't wear her veil. Joseph told himself she didn't wear a veil because she wanted him.

Even before she got to him, Joseph's breath was strange to him. It was fast and shallow. His thoughts whirled, they thundered, but they were nonsense, except for Mary. She was the only thing he could think of, a fascination, obsession, dream.

Mary saw him as he came out from under the shadow of a tree.

She said, "I have your things, Joseph." She was nervous, too.

Joseph walked to her. He took the cloth, tied at the top. She stood there, looking away from him, and she started to turn.

Joseph grabbed her by the wrist. His heart hammered. He was barely aware of her, he was more aware of his image of her, burned into his mind.

Mary said, "You're hurting me, Joseph."

He said, "I want you, Mary."

"P . . . please, let go of me, Joseph. I . . . I'll scream."

Joseph laughed. He found that funny. "I'll tell them all that you came to me. I'll tell them that you tempted me to come here. They'll stone you."

"Please!" Her voice was desperate, and she struggled against him, but Joseph was a carpenter. His hands were strong. "Let me go home!"

"No," Joseph said, and until that time he knew he could have stopped himself, backed away, released her and let her run. She wouldn't have said anything, she would have just had a fright, and nothing would have come of it. But Joseph wanted something to come of it. He needed something to come of it. He couldn't see his own face, but it was blank, empty.

He pulled Mary to him. She struck at him, but she didn't know how to do it, her fists were curled up and she struck him with the backs of them, like she was kneading bread. Joseph ignored them. He had her by both wrists, then, and he shook her. She was a small woman. She

was tossed like a cork in the sea. He threw her down.

She didn't scream out. Her eyes were wide with terror. Joseph's cock was tight, already. He knelt down beside her, he pushed up her robes. Her legs looked silvery in the moonlight. He saw her sex and he smelled her – fear and what he told himself was lust.

He said, "We can do anything out here. Anything."

Mary said, "Oh, God. Oh, *God*."

Joseph didn't, couldn't wait. He pulled up his own robe and forced her legs apart, and he raped her. And while he was raping her, she responded. Joseph could see it, after the first hard, rough penetrations, Mary arched back, her eyes were closed. Her arms were spread out, her fingernails gripping the dirt as Joseph fucked her.

She kept whispering, "Oh, God, oh, God." Or she'd grunt, or moan, and her cunt would flutter, her stomach twist, and Joseph would have to stop because he'd never felt anything like it. Mary had started having orgasms almost at once, and it was like she couldn't stop

Still, it was over quick. When Joseph had his orgasm, he looked down at Mary. He was still inside of her, her thighs were still on either side of him, her knees curled up. She opened her eyes. She didn't look at him, she didn't look at anything. Joseph stood up. Mary's robe was still around her hips. She closed her thighs, her feet jutting out to either side.

Joseph felt sick. He felt great. His breath was heavy, his hands trembled. He picked up the little cloth where Mary had bound his things, and he started to walk away. Then he started to run, leaving Mary behind on the dirt of the orchard.

The next day, Joseph was terrified. He watched the well where the women came to get water, including Mary. As usual, Mary came, but she held herself rigid, aloof, and her face was blank. That whole day, Joseph lived in an ecstasy of worry, worry that someone would come and get him, but no one did.

That Sabbath, at the synagogue, he couldn't do more than to focus on Mary's father, Joachim, and her brothers, Elias and Johanan. He would occasionally look over to where the women sat, but he could see nothing. Joachim was a stout man with dark skin, a beard peppered with gray, and he was a stone mason. Mary was the youngest of his child, both Elias and Johanan were were taller and older.

Sitting next to Joachim was Judas bar Philip, called Red Jude. He was a big man with very dark red hair, he was one of the darkest skinned men in the village, tall and thin, but strong. Next to Red Jude was Jonah, his brother – Jonah was the strongest man in Capernaum, violent and tough, and everyone knew it to avoid him when he had too much wine. Red Jude wanted Mary very much, and Joachim liked the fisherman.

But nothing happened that day. Nothing happened the next day, or the next week, or the next month. Joseph put it out of his mind, except he wanted Mary, again, he wanted her feel her flutter around his cock, flutter against his belly as he was inside of her. The feeling was growing stronger.

It was fall when he was in his own house and the door slammed open. Joachim was there with Elias and Johanan. They all had clubs in their hands.

Joseph had been sitting down to eat, a bowl in his hand, bread and cheese laid out. He paused and looked at the three men who came in. At first he couldn't recognize what was happening. Then, terror shot through Joseph. He felt sweat stand out on his brow, he felt his heart thud, he couldn't think straight because of the fear.

Joachim said, "You know what I just got through doing, you pig fucking bastard?" Joseph didn't know if he could have said anything at all, but Joachim went on. "I just got through telling Red Jude that, sorry, I know you're a good man, and you'll treat my daughter well, and you've got a good living, but you can't marry my daughter. I like him. I like him, and his family. I had to tell this good man that, no, my daughter couldn't marry him because my fucking whore of a fucking daughter is betrothed, already. And do you know why I had to do that, you motherfucker? I had to doing it because I was about to get out some wine and toast with my friend the betrothal between him and my daughter when my wife took me aside and said that,

well, no, my daughter couldn't marry Red Jude because she was already pregnant."

The fear in Joseph turned to terror. While Joachim had been talking, Elias and Johanan had been searching around.

Elias opened a chest and pulled out a cloth – the same cloth that Mary had wrapped up his things. He said, "Here it is, pa."

Joachim grabbed Joseph by the back of the hair and smashed his face into the bowl. The hot soup scalded Joseph, and he screamed. Joachim ignored that, pulled back Joseph's head and smashed it into the table once, twice, three times.

"Fuck!" Joachim said. He walked away from Joseph.

Joseph was blinking in pain, groaning. He tasted blood. His whole head felt oddly shaped. Pain radiated from everywhere.

Joachim pulled up Joseph, made it so Joseph was looking the other man in the eyes. Joachim said, "Listen to me, then, you cocksucking whore son, and listen to me very good, because your fucking life depends on this. Lucky for you, I love my daughter. I don't want to see her paraded and shamed because of you. So this is what you're going to do. We're going to announce the betrothal and you're going to fucking leave Capernaum."

"I don't have anywhere to go," Joseph said, and Joachim smashed Joseph's head against the table, again.

Joachim: "You get any more useless, and I won't see the reason to keep you alive. Shut up. Listen. I'll carry it all if you ain't worth anything. Mary has a cousin near Jerusalem, Elizabeth. She's married to a priest in the temple, Zacharias. What you'll do is you'll go down there and you'll tell them that you and Mary are already married. You understand? That way it won't be any thing that she's pregnant. I'll get you a letter to give to Zacharias, and he'll find you work. And you'll fucking stay there for at least a fucking year, you understand? So by the time you get back here, no one will think it's strange at all that Mary's got a baby. Do you understand this?"

Joseph couldn't move his head because of Joachim's hand in it, but he nodded as best he could. Then Joachim pulled at Joseph and threw him to the floor. He turned his back on Joseph and said to his sons, "Remember, he'll need to earn a living for your sister. Don't ruin him."

Then Joachim left, but Elias and Johanan came on Joseph with their clubs.

It was during the trip down to Jerusalem that Joseph realized that Mary was insane. He was still limping from the beating that Joachim, Elias and Johanan had given to him, but the donkey belonged to Joachim and that man had told Joseph, "If my little girl so much as touches the dirt between here and Jerusalem, I'm gonna take off your balls." So, Joseph walked.

On the way down, Mary had been quiet at first, and Joseph had been glad about it. Then she'd started humming and he had gotten angry with her and told her to shut up.

Mary said, "I'm singing to the Lord."

Joseph said, "Save it for the synagogue."

"No, silly, the Lord in my womb."

Joseph had stopped the donkey and turned to look at Mary. She sat sidesaddle, looking down at him with wide, liquid eyes. He said, "That child is mine."

"It is the Lord's," Mary said.

Joseph said, "Don't fucking say that! It's blasphemy."

"It would be, if it wasn't true. We are going to Bethlehem, right?"

"No. We're going to Jerusalem, to your cousin, Elizabeth."

"Bethlehem is the city of David, and the son of the Lord should be born there. Did you know I was of the House of David?"

Joseph had shook his head at the absurdity of it, that the daughter of some village mason should call herself of the House of David. He said, "David's line is dead. That's why we have Hasmoneans and Herods."

"No, the House of David lives in me, and in my womb."

Joseph just didn't say anything to that, but she started humming, again. This time, Joseph

didn't notice because he was thinking that his wife was insane.

That night, at the inn, he came to Mary, again. She was still beautiful, and he still wanted her, and now she was his wife. But she was insane. This time, he took his time, and she smiled, but her eyes were distant, and he took off her clothing to revel in the sight of her, dark, round, young and beautiful enough to be a queen – and when her thighs were wrapped around him, he entered her.

She said, "Oh, God." Her eyes were turned up, looking away from him, and she was smiling. She trembled, quivered, and Joseph realized that it wasn't him she trembled for.

Disgusted, he got off of her and threw on his robe. He went down to the inn and paid for wine. When he was drunk, he went to his room. Mary was in bed. He lit a lamp and flung off the sheet, and she started, looking up at him. He could see her eyes glistening. Joseph was nude, aroused, stroking his cock with his hand.

Mary closed her eyes as Joseph knelt on the bed and pushed apart her knees. Joseph could see the change come over her. So he struck her with the flat of his hand.

She jerked up, gasped.

Joseph said, "I'm not God. I'm Joseph." He grabbed her hips and pulled her closer, shifted his torso, and he thrust deep inside of her. Her eyelids fluttered, and she bit her lip, and he saw she was trying to do it, again, trying to escape him with whatever fucked up delusion she used. So he struck her, again, and she jerked, and the way she felt around his cock Joseph liked. She tried to say something but Joseph covered up her mouth with his hand as he fucked her, and she shuddered again and again, and some moans were caught in her throat, behind her hand.

Joseph told her, "Only Joseph is here, only Joseph's cock is in you, you're mine, Mary. Mine. Not God's, not your father, you're *mine*."

Mary nodded, she tried to move her head away from Joseph's hand, but she couldn't, and Joseph smiled at this – smiled because now Mary was fucking him and as her orgasms came hard to her, again, he told himself she liked it.

Zachariah, the husband of Mary's cousin Elizabeth, lived in a large house in the Greek style, with slaves, a garden, high enough above the city that it didn't stink. Since Joseph started fucking Mary, Mary had become even more distant, but she perked up when she saw Elizabeth.

At that time, Elizabeth, who was a thin, sharp-faced woman, had just given birth to a son, John. She was gleeful at Mary's pregnancy, but asked why – if it was three months ago – Mary hadn't invited Elizabeth. Mary seemed about to cry.

Joseph said, "It's my responsibility. My family disapproved and we had to do it in secrecy."

Zachariah said, "The Law says that parents should be obeyed."

Elizabeth said, "Let it be, Zachariah. You know how parents are, and how love can be. In time, they will give their blessings. They will see that Mary is a woman of quality."

Zachariah was concerned, but not suspicious. Elizabeth was overjoyed to see Mary, and thought nothing else about it. They accepted Joachim's lie, and accepting his lie they would secure the rest of it. By the time Mary and Joseph got back to Capernaum, the details of Mary's pregnancy would be blurred to the point no one could, with authority, say what happened when.

And true to Joachim's word, Zachariah's position was enough to get Joseph good work. Joseph had brought his tools on the same donkey that Mary had ridden on, and he was happy to get out of Zachariah's house – so he worked hard, and there was always work to be done in Jerusalem. Herod the Great was glorifying the Temple, and workers in wood and stone could get work easily, and more easily because Herod was hated so deeply that many Jews would simply refuse to work for him – even if Herod was making the Temple a great wonder. Joseph, himself, hated Herod the Great, feeling he was a sell-out to the Romans, and because he was half-Idumean, but the work was steady and Herod paid well. In four months, he and Mary were able to get out of Zachariah and Elizabeth's house, and he was glad of it – though every day Mary would go back there and Elizabeth would send a slave to Joseph's apartment to do the work a wife should do.

Briefly, Joseph thought his beating of Mary would be noticed by Zachariah – but long

before Joseph and Mary left Zachariah's house, he saw that it was common for Elizabeth to bear bruises, too. After which Joseph relaxed. Zachariah agreed that it was fair and proper to show a woman where she should be.

Near the end of Mary's term, she said to Joseph, "I want to go to Bethlehem."

"Why the fuck would you want to do that?" Joseph said. He had worked hard, and he was annoyed that the food on his table wasn't made by Mary – that it was scraps from Zachariah's table. It didn't even matter that the money he saved on food he could drink in wine and spend on whores. He hated it that Mary wasn't a proper wife. She should be making his food, doing his laundry, not just having Zachariah's slaves do it for them both. He was frustrated with what a spoiled brat Mary was before she made her bizarre request.

Mary: "I want to have my son in Jerusalem."

Joseph almost hoped it was a girl, to spite Mary. He said, "Why does it matter where you have the damn thing?"

She blushed. Because of her pregnancy, they hadn't been having sex for the past few months, but she was beautiful enough that Joseph still wanted her. In later years, his ardor for her would die – save when he was very drunk – but now it was a bright, raw heat. She said, "Jerusalem is the city of David."

"You're on that, again?" Joseph snapped. "You're not of the Davidic line. The House of David is dead, Mary, dead and gone. Herod saw to that."

Her head was done. Her voice was soft. "Indulge me, Joseph. When it is very close to my time, I'll leave here. You can bring over your whores and drink your wine as much as you please."

Joseph's jaws clamped together. He put down his bread and said, "You will not talk to me that way. I'll peel the skin from your back if you talk to me like that. I'll beat you until you abort that little monster inside of you and I'll crush it's fucking skull with my heel."

Mary fell on her knees. She said, "Forgive me, husband!"

He smiled. He tore off some of his bread and ate it. He said, "That's more like it. But what do I care if you go or stay? Spawn your brat where you will. I just want to know, in case something goes wrong." Which Joseph prayed it would. He knew that childbirth was risky, and Mary was young. He hoped she'd die, and carry the child off with her, so he could be free. He found Jerusalem pleasant enough, its women willing, and so long as Herod the Great lived, there would never be a want of work.

It was then that Mary started crying and laughing at the same time. Joseph turned away in disgust from her insanity.

When Mary's time came, Joseph was summoned by a messenger. When he got to the inn where Mary was staying, he didn't think anything until he entered the common room downstairs. It was then that two men peeled themselves away from the door – Elias and Johanan. Joseph felt his blood run cold.

Joachim stood up, seeing his sons move. He went over to Joseph and gave him a cup of wine. Joseph drank it quickly, and Joachim put a hand on Joseph's back and moved him towards a table. Joseph sat down, and Joachim sat across from Joseph, and Elias was on one side of Joseph, Johanan on the other.

Joachim said, "My daughter has bruises. They're faint, you know how they get, a little yellow. My wife got here to prepare the room for Mary, and she said they were bigger when she arrived." Joseph finished the wine. Joachim poured more from a jug. Joseph didn't know what to say. Joachim did: "We brought gifts for Mary. A little money, a little incense, a little oil. But, hey, we're all men here, aren't we? We all have wives, and who hasn't felt the urge to lay their hands on their wife like that? Who hasn't done it? Women are weak, and stupid, and you've got to kick the shit out of them, sometimes. The Lord knows that I've knocked the stupid out of Anne."

Joseph relaxed, because Joachim was smiling like everything was alright. But then Elias reached between Joseph's legs and grabbed his balls. Elias squeezed. Joseph almost dropped the

cup of wine, and his face turned purple and he had a lot of trouble breathing, it was like his heart didn't want to work right, the pain was so sharp.

Johanan whispered, "Except you're just the piece of shit that fucked my sister. You're only her husband because it would be bad for her if we cut your fucking throat and threw you in a ditch."

Joachim said, "My boy has it just right, Joseph. The only reason I haven't smashed in your head and turned you into the village fucking idiot, or dragged you into the desert and broken both your knees and left you there to crawl around until you the vultures were plucking out your eyes, is because it would mean my little girl's shame being known. You're alive as a cover story. You've got some perks. I've got eyes. I know Mary's a good looking girl, and there's nothing I can do that'll stop you from sharing her bed, as much as it sickens me. So, you get to fuck my daughter, but if you lay one finger on her, again, well, being a widow is almost as good as being married, isn't it? And she is good looking. She'll find herself a rich husband that doesn't give a damn that she's got a child, that'll be happy having a beautiful woman smiling at him before he dies. You listening, Joseph?"

Joseph managed to nod. Joachim nodded. Elias let go of Joseph's balls.

Joachim said, "Go up and see your wife."

Joseph sat a few moments to try to collect his strength. When he felt strong enough to keep his legs under him, he got up and staggered to the stairs. When he was out of sight of the three men, he stopped and slumped down. His pain was intense, throbbing out from his core into his whole body. He gasped a while and when the worst of the pain went away, he found Mary's room.

She had a room on the third floor. It was probably the best in the inn – Joseph was sure that Joachim was paying for it, because he hadn't given Mary enough money for this.

Mary's mother, Anne, was there, and a midwife. A child was being put in cloth and handed to Mary. Mary was propped up on the bed. She was bareheaded, her skin ashen, pale, she was sweat streaked and her hair was plastered to her head. The room was hot from her exertions, even with the window open.

The midwife was speaking to Anne. Joseph came up softly behind Mary, who was talking to the child.

She was saying, softly, "Joseph isn't your father. Your father is the most high, in heaven, and you are the brother of Adam, the son of the Lord. You are my Emmanuel, but he will not know that. I will call you Jesus. And downstairs, from the East, have come three kings bearing gifts for you, my beautiful Emmanuel."

Joseph blinked, and staggered out of the room. He hit his hands and knees on the hallway floor outside the room. He fought a rising bile. His wife was insane. His wife was a madwoman. But he couldn't tell her because he believed Joachim's threat – he had been savagely beaten by Joachim's sons, and he had not forgotten the murder in Joachim's eyes, or the hatred in the faces of Elias and Johanan.

Looking at the floor, though, he realized that while it was true he could not touch Mary, it occurred to him that – even by the reasoning of Joachim – Jesus was *his son*. And he could hurt Mary through her madness, even though his hand was stopped by Joachim. He couldn't hit Mary, but he could hit Jesus. Joseph smiled a cold, hate-filled smile. He would have his revenge on Mary, on her madness, on the brutality that Joachim had inflicted. He would hurt Jesus and, though Jesus, he would make Mary's life a living hell. This pleased Joseph down to his bones.

End

Afterword: The consequences of this story play out in my novel *Simon Peter*. If you liked this, and want to know where it goes, you can find out there. Please, feel free to spread this around so long as you keep the Creative Commons license on it and the link back to my webpage. My webpage is my key resource for learning everything about me and my work, as well as to contact me either by email or my blog. Thanks for reading!