

MARYAM'S PREGNANCY

By: Ezzat Goushegir

Translated By: Mansour Bonakdarian

Excerpts of: **MARYAM'S PREGNANCY**

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SCENE 2

(Actress on stage listening. In a dim light, we hear Mother's voice on tape.)

Mother's voice

One day as the king's son rode through the forest he heard a singing so lovely that he stood still and listened. It was Rapunzel in her loneliness. While he was hiding behind a tree, he saw a witch calling out:

Rapunzel, Rapunzel

Let down your hair.

Suddenly a golden waterfall appeared before him and the prince climbed up. At first, Rapunzel was terrified, having never seen a man before, but when the prince caressed her hair and told her how much he loved her, all her fears were gone.

(The voice fades.)

Actress

Then what happened, mom? Mom...mom...

(The Actress looks around, calling "mom", trying to find her mother. Then slowly her child-like qualities change. Faced with the reality of her pregnancy, she calls her mother terrified, and exits.)

Maryam

My mom, just as the story is getting to the juicy parts, always pulls the plug. Come on mom, tell us that Rapunzel is under the prince...no, I mean the prince is under Rapunzel. Why should it always be the prince who's on top? Rapunzel could be on top too. Either way, Rapunzel's belly is swollen. The prince has many mistresses all over the world, or he could be inside a shark's belly. Anyway, who cares? What matters is that Rapunzel's belly is swollen. There's a pest squirming inside of her. Rapunzel is now puking her guts out every day, the smell of meat nauseates her, spots have appeared on the tip of her nose. Mom knows that Rapunzel's belly is swollen. Now Rapunzel receives seven or eight kicks and blows every day and a thousand curses and insults. Each day she has to down pints of chamomile tea, saffron, parsley juice and many other concoctions. But the kid is holding out inside her belly.

(Mother and Actress enter.)

Mother

Oh, God! What have I done to you that you are testing me like this?

(The Actress is hunched up, squatting in a corner. Mother slams both fists into the Actress' head.)

Mother

When?...When did it happen?

Actress

I don't know...

Mother

When? Try to remember...when?

Actress

A month ago...no, two month ago...no...I don't know...three months I guess...Yes three months...at the beginning of summer.

Mother

Where?

Actress

On ...on the sea...

Mother

The sea?

Actress

On a boat...

Mother

Who is he?

(Silence)

Who is he? What's his name?

(Silence)

Don't be afraid...tell me. (Touches her hair) Tell me sweetheart...I'm your mother...I must know...(Pause)? What's his name?

(Silence. The Mother gets angry)

Who is this son of a bitch?

(Silence. She slaps her)

Are you deaf? Or dumb? What's this bastard's name?

Actress

(Hesitantly) Jasem!

Mother

Where does he live?

Actress

He has no home in here, no family!

Mother

Then how did you?...How?

Actress

He lives in Kuwait!

(Mother stares at her, then beyond into the distance.)

Mother

Is he a business man?... From a good family? (To herself) Tall? Handsome? Like a prince?

(Actress softly cries. Suddenly Mother rises and pulls Actress to her feet.)

Mother

Run! Run around the yard!

(Actress runs around the stage.)

Mother

Faster! Faster! Faster you bitch! Faster, may God strike you dead!

(Actress runs faster and faster and begins to pant.)

Mother

Faster!

(Actress collapses on the ground.)

Actress

I can't anymore...no...I can't...

Mother

What shame!...How can we get rid of this shame?

(Furious, Mother pulls Actress to her feet, points to a huge, heavy sack at the corner of the stage.)

Mother

Take this millstone to the basement!

(Actress moves blocks down stage.)

Mother

Put this sack on your back and take it up to the roof!

(Actress lifts the sack on her back and runs upstairs and back. She repeats the action a few times.)

Maryam

Forty pounds up, forty pounds down! Turned into a pack horse but nothing happened.

Mother

Jump! Jump! Jump from up there! Again! Jump again!

Maryam

Jumps off a thousand times until she collapses, but nothing happens!

(Mother, in rage, pulls her up and begins to pound on her stomach.)

Mother

Holly...God...(Actress retreats) Stop! Stop where you are!

(Mother delivers second punch. Then third and fourth punch while swearing. Actress falls to floor and bursts into tears.)

Mother

Kill it, make that seed die!

(Actress writhes in pain. Mother brings out knitting needle. Lights dim.)

Mother

Spread your legs apart! (Actress moves away) Lie still!

(Mother forces the Actress down on ground and spreads her legs apart. She struggles to stick knitting needle inside her. Actress wails.)

Mother

You've scandalized us!

(Mother begins to clean her bloodied hands and Actress' bloodied thighs.)

Maryam

My mom's hands are bloody. My thighs are bloody, too. But the kid's still hanging on. It's made up its mind to stay in there.

(The stage is quiet.)

Actress

A midwife...must get a midwife.

Mother

Do you want the whole world to know?

(She looks at her with regret and love)

Mother

My sweet daughter, most beautiful daughter, I had such high hopes for you, such wonderful dreams.

(She embraces her, touches her hair, kisses her, holding her tightly, they both rock together.)

Mother

After years of suffering, after years of pain...of working hard, I wanted so much to raise a daughter to be unique among all other girls in the city! To be educated, to be somebody! Not like me, crushed under foot, begging for a loaf of bread and a pair of shoes!

(Suddenly she stops talking. Pushes the Actress away and faces the other way. The stage is quiet. When the lights shift to Maryam, the Mother and the Actress leave the stage.)

Maryam

Mom visits the fortune tree and ties a piece of my dress to it. The fortune tree has lost all its leaves but has as many pieces of material tied to its branches as you can imagine with all the colors faded by the sun, just like the faded fortunes of all those who tied them to the tree. Now Mom kneels, facing Mecca, five, six times a day and talks to the sky. That is, she talks to God so that God can cure all her misfortunes from up there. Mom is constantly worried. She has lit candles for me, has had sheep sacrificed, has pleaded with all the saints, cries all the time, and beseeches the prophet. (In a childish voice) Mom, what does god look like? (Imitating Mother's voice) Like a tall man with a halo around his black turban. (Crosses to audience, in

her own voice) **If that's what God looks like, I'll shit on him...and on his beard, mustache, turban and on his prick!**

(Maryam surveys the audience for their reaction.)

What was I saying anyway? Oh yeah, I was saying...just like mom who utters a thousand praises to god and the prophet, I wouldn't mind uttering a thousand praises of my own kind for God, Jasem, my dad and brothers. Fuck God, fuck Jasem, fuck my dad, fuck my oldest brother, fuck my second brother, fuck my third brother, fuck my fourth brother....no, if I keep going I'll end up having a thousand brothers and I've only got three brothers...three lecherous monsters as brothers, just like mutants!

(Mother enters hurriedly, looks petrified, light shifts to Mother.)

Mother

Maryam, Maryam, where are you? In which hole are you hiding yourself? Come quick, grab your suitcase. Your father and brothers are searching for you, armed with daggers. They are out to spill your blood. We must run away. I can't bear to watch you get lynched. Where are you Maryam? (To herself) I wish I had never given birth to you. I wish you had been stillborn. (Hysterically calls her) Maryam!

(Actress, frightened, walks towards the stage with a small suitcase. The sound of bombing is heard. Both are shaking.)

Mother

What the hell are you staring at me for? Hurry up!

(As the sound continues, the light fades to blackout.)

END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3

(Lights flicker and flash, bombs are heard.)

Maryam

Looks like Mother's fortune tree has granted her wish!

(The sound of bombing continues. there is the sound of a wall collapsing. Screaming women, men, and children can be heard. Maryam too falls down and struggles to reach a safe spot. After a while the noises subside. In silence, Actress moves to center stage.)

Actress

**There is a war, whether you want it or not.
There aren't drops of rain falling from the sky,
There is fire, scraps of metal raining down.
There aren't dandelions, or butterflies circling in the air,
There are children's torn clothes, strands of hair floating in the air.**

**There is war whether you want it or not.
There are tall palm trees in the south
The trees have now been decapitated.
The men of the south are strong, vigorous
Now, their skulls rest on broken telegraph poles,
Like scarecrows,
in a barren field
The women of the south are brave.
Now, you must look for their torn limbs on the mounds of the
scorched bricks of dilapidated homes.**

**What is this on the earth, in the air and water?
raw, bloody scraps of meat?**

**There is a war, whether you like it or not!
Who started the war?**

Maryam

**Enough! Enough! That's enough! Enough of your sermons! Now missy is reciting
poetry too! Shove it! So there's a fucking war.**

(Imitating Actress)

**"Who started the war?" Why explain the obvious? Just to satisfy someone's fat
belly and withered.... That's all there is to it. They're just playing with fireworks,
trying to make a buck. They'd sell their own mothers; and here you are being
mushy about it all.**

(Imitating the Actress to the audience)

**"The south has tall palm trees; the trees have been decapitated...the south has
strong men" and so on.**

(Maryam faces the Actress)

Maryam

Forgive me for interrupting your speech! You can throw your poetry in the trash.

Actress

(In a fit of anger) **Go head, be vulgar! I don't respond to insults. I'm not going to respond to you right now. The stage is only big enough for one of us! Please take over the stage. Let's see what you can do!**

(The Actress walks away and sits on a platform in a corner, watching Maryam)

Maryam

(Facing the audience and speaking sarcastically)

Anyhow, I was telling you my story. Yeah...in the middle of that mess, my mom managed to be smart for the first time in her life and got us a ride in a truck. The truck was so packed with people that it's back end kept dragging on the road, looked like it was about to lost its ass completely in a few miles. Who knows what had happened to my dad and brothers? As the truck was driving down the road, the town was going up in flames behind us; people were burning alive. There was this man who was chasing after the truck on all fours, just like a dog, barking. Suddenly we crashed into another truck and stopped. People were all over each other. The do--I mean that man—suddenly jumped inside the truck and squeezed under our feet. While everyone was busy beating someone else over the head, I suddenly yelled: Look! Look up in the tree top! Someone's dick was dangling from the tree and it'd been pierced through the middle by a piece of shrapnel, just like an arrow. It looked exactly like the hearts we used to draw in each other's books at school, always doing our best to make them look bright red. On the shrapnel it said "Made in U.S.A" Now, no one seemed to give a shit whether the shrapnel came from a missile made in the U.S. or Russia. What mattered was that some bastard's dick had been torn off and tossed across town and was now hanging from the tree top about 10 or 15 miles away. Oh, well, with such fruit on that tree there'll be less screwing, and fewer pregnant women. The beast inside me squirmed around and I puked on the man...I mean the dog...

Actress

(Panic-stricken; bellows at Maryam)

That's enough! You are going to chase the audience away with this sort of talk! Theatre is no place for that kind of language.

Maryam

What did I say? I only said that someone's freshly severed dick was hanging from the tree, and that's no lie. It's the truth, truth, truth. They don't serve popcorn at a war, you know...

Actress

We didn't come here to elaborate on every explicit detail for the audience. These people have never seen a war.

Maryam

Hold your horses! Stop! Stop! When someone turns into a dog, not having wanted to be a dog, you've gotta find out why that person's become a dog. Maybe you could learn so you don't fall into the same trap.

Actress

Don't you realize that they can't even hear you? Nobody is going to believe a word you say. They can't take it in.

Maryam

If they don't wanna believe, it's their problem. If they want to live in a closet, fine. There's the exit. There are a couple more exits here, too. What do you say? Huh?

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE 3

SCENE 5

(Lights up on Actress at center stage)

Actress

A life of seven months underground...forty steps separating me from light...separating me from fresh air...fresh water...and people...separating me from talking...talk...talk...a tongue that is left unused will rust...(lonesome, she runs her hands across the wall) stone...stone and dirt...wall...and a wall...roof...a hole...a step...a step...(tries to count the steps) 1-2-3-4-5-...forty steps...a faint light...at the top of the forty steps from a barred window! What time is it? It must be 11 in the morning on a day in October...Perhaps October 11. If the date trees in our home town have not gone up in flames now, the dates would be ready to be picked. My mother, if she were in our town –which she is not – is frying fish in the pan. The sun is bright and hot, the weather humid and stifling. Ships are blowing their whistles...the sound of motor boats...Jasem, with curly jet-black hair, black eyes and skin as dark as black leather, waves at me from the distance...and when he places his warm lips on mine...

(Maryam enters.)

Maryam

How many times do I have to tell you, don't get too romantic.

Actress

Leave me alone. I need my dreams!

Maryam

...Look, this is it...look...stones as large as the devil's teeth...and dirt...bread crumbs and musty water full of worms...the stench of shit and piss...and you all by yourself...I mean me...having to cover my piss with the dirt like a cat. For the next seven or eight months forget about what's up there. Your world is what's around you. There is no one to help you out. You're all you've got left. There's nobody else left in the town up there. If there is, she's hungrier than you. If you set one foot out there the guards will catch you.

(Putting on a revolutionary guard's hat, holds whip in hand and snaps it at ground, imitating guard's voice.)

Mayam

**Name?
Mother's name?
Place of residence?
Date of birth?
And when they notice your stomach...
Husband's name?**

Actress

I don't have a husband...

Maryam

(Imitating guard's voice)

What? No husband?...Hey...this chick isn't marrird...

(Guard interrogation and Actress lines almost overlap.)

Actress

They push you through one hallway into another...

Maryam

(Cracks riding whip at each question)

Name?

Actress

From one room to another...

Maryam

Last name?

Actress

From one woman to the next...

Father's name? Maryam

From one woman to a man... Actress

Mother's name? Maryam

From one man to another... Actress

Stud's name? Maryam

Stud? Actress

(Maryam/Guard snaps whip on ground as if flogging Actress who scream and rolls on ground in pain.)

Maryam
(As guard) She should be stoned to death. Can't reform a whore by holy water and flogging her...

Actress
The files keeps getting thicker and thicker. From a single page to a hundred pages. From a hundred pages to a thousand. Every detail of your life has been unveiled and is public knowledge. Jasem's name travels from mouth to mouth...someone says let her give birth to her bastard...someone else says let them both die together, to set an example for all women. Look like they have dug a hole in the middle of a wasteland and people have gathered around, holding rocks in their hands. (Recitations from the Koran begin) A man recites from the Koran...

(Recitation continues followed by silence.)

Maryam
Stupid wretch...You're almost eighteen and so gullible, as if you were only four or five...even four or five-year-olds can lie and you still haven't learned how to. Lie so you can survive. One of my own proverbs! (As if talking back to a guard) How dare you insult me, you scum? All the leaders of the government know who I am and you, who hasn't even learned how to wash your stinking ass, who's only started to have a couple of hairs growing above his lips, you're already busy putting a file together. You who'll faint from a frat! My husband was one of the first martyrs in

this holy crusade. He threw himself in front of the enemy tank so he could defend the sacred faith,...I carry his child inside of me with pride.

(Imitating Guard's voice) **Forgive me, sister...**

(In her own voice to the guard) **Let God forgive...**

(To the Actress) **Look how his lips have turned white...He's gone pale in the face, scared stiff, looks like he's about to shit in his pants. Don't pity anyone but yourself and those worse off than you. Get it?**

Actress

I don't think I can do that. I'm a terrible liar. Even in my worse nightmare I don't think I could convince anyone. Sometimes I don't even know what is a lie or a truth. I don't know when it is night or day! Whether I am asleep or awake. I don't even know if I am asleep or awake right now. How many lines have I scratched on the wall? 30? A whole month has passed and each time I shut my eyes I can see myself buried up to the neck. Jasem is there, next to me, in the wilderness, in another hole, buried up to his neck, his face bloody...with two bloody holes in place of eyes and a crushed head. (Screams) Jasem...Jasem...my dear, what have they done to you?

(Blackout. Recitations from the Koran. When lights come up, the Actress is buried up to the neck as the light flashes to resemble rocks thrown at her. Koran recitation subsides and crowd noises grow. Actress screams. Laughter and curses from the crowd. The Actress wailing, moves her head from left to right avoiding stones. Suddenly, Maryam darts about like a wounded dog and curses at the people, barking and growling.)

Maryam

Stop...stop it sons of the bitches...What do you call yourselves? Bunch of murdering pimps....

(Blackout)

End of scene 5