

**THE LILY OF PALESTINE**  
By Dale Ahlquist

## Cast of Characters

16 Females; 10 Males; 1 Child (Male)

<u>MARA:</u>	Mariam's mother.
<u>GIRIAS:</u>	Mariam's father.
<u>BOUDON:</u>	Mariam's uncle.
<u>NUVA:</u>	Mariam's aunt.
<u>HAKIM:</u>	A servant.
<u>FISHERMAN</u>	
<u>MARIAM:</u>	A Palestinian peasant, daughter of Mara and Girias.
<u>WOMAN:</u>	A woman in a cave.
<u>JOHN GEORGE:</u>	Mariam's friend.
<u>MADAME NAGGIAN:</u>	An aristocrat.
<u>FR. PHILIP ABDOU:</u>	A priest in Marseille.
<u>MAN:</u>	A strange man in the street.
<u>CHILD:</u>	Son of the man in the street.
<u>DOCTOR DEBEQUE:</u>	A doctor.
<u>FR. BUZHY:</u>	A priest at Pau
<u>FR. LAZARE:</u>	A priest in Mangalore
<u>MOTHER HONORINE:</u>	Mistress of Novices of St. Joseph.
<u>SISTER JOSEPHINE:</u>	One of the sisters of St. Joseph.
<u>SISTER CATERINE:</u>	One of the sisters of St. Joseph.
<u>MOTHER JULIEN:</u>	Mother Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph.
<u>SISTER VERONICA:</u>	One of the sisters of St. Joseph.

SISTER MARIE ESTHER: One of the sisters of St. Joseph.

SISTER NAOMI: One of the sisters of St. Joseph.

SISTER NOELLE: One of the Carmelites at Pau.

SISTER TERESA: One of the Carmelites at Pau.

SISTER CLAUDIA GRACE: One of the Carmelites at Pau.

MOTHER ELIZABETH: One of the Carmelites at Pau.

PEOPLE in the streets of Jerusalem, Marseille, and Mangalore

## Scene Breakdown

### ACT I

- Scene 1 – The Home of Gieras, Ibillin, Upper Galilee, 1845
- Scene 2 – The Home of Boudon, Alexandria, Egypt, 1861
- Scene 3 – The Home of Boudon, 1862
- Scene 4 – Outside the Home Of Boudon, A Few Days Later
- Scene 5 – A Cave
- Scene 6 – A Street in Jerusalem, 1864
- Scene 7 – The Home of Madame Naggian, Marseille, France, 1865
- Scene 8 – A Street in Marseille, At About The Same Time
- Scene 9 – Convent of St. Joseph, Marseille, 1866
- Scene 10 – Convent of St. Joseph, A Few Days Later

### ACT II

- Scene 1 – Convent of St. Joseph, A Few Days Later
- Scene 2 – Convent of St. Joseph, 1867
- Scene 3 – Convent of St. Joseph, A Few Minutes Later
- Scene 4 – Carmel of Pau, France, 1869
- Scene 5 – Carmel of Pau, A Few Days Later
- Scene 6 – Carmel of Pau, A Few Days Later
- Scene 7 – Carmel of Pau, Two Weeks Later
- Scene 8 – A Street in Mangalore, India, 1870
- Scene 9 – Carmelite Convent in Mangalore, India, A Year Later
- Scene 10 – Mariam’s Cell, A Few Minutes Later

### EPILOGUE

#### Approximate Length

105 minutes

#### Time

1846-1878

#### Place

Galilee, Egypt, France, and India

ACT I  
Scene 1

Setting: The home of Girias.

At Rise: The stage is dark. We hear MARA singing a lullaby. As the lights come up, she is cradling an infant wrapped in white, and continues her gentle song.

MARA

(Singing)

When you wake  
The day will shine  
The hours of darkness  
Left behind  
When you wake

When you wake  
You'll see the wind  
The mighty horsemen  
Riding in  
When you wake

And so to sleep  
My little dear  
I'll sing you this song  
I'll stay right here  
We take our turn  
We taste a tear  
But never mind  
Never fear  
The path of thorns  
Will all be cleared  
When you wake  
When you wake  
When you wake.

(She holds the baby closer. Enter GIRIAS, carrying a wooden box. He lays it on the table, without saying anything for a while. Finally he speaks.)

GIRIAS

The priest...is waiting...at the cemetery.

MARA

Not yet.

GIRIAS

Then, I suppose he can wait longer. He'll understand.

MARA

How can he understand? How can anyone understand? How am I supposed to understand?

GIRIAS

(Pauses)

It is the path of thorns, Mara.

MARA

And where does this path lead?

GIRIAS

To heaven, I hope.

MARA

I wanted to give you a son.

GIRIAS

You gave me twelve sons.

MARA

All dead. Twelve baby boys who died in our arms. Twelve!

GIRIAS

Twelve little apostles. Sent forth and called back. Their path to heaven has been shorter than ours.

MARA

You have never played with your sons, Girias. Never seen them laugh or sing. Never taught them to read or ride or fish. Never even heard them say a word. Twelve times...

GIRIAS

And twelve times I have tried to comfort you, my dear Mara.

MARA

With the same words.

GIRIAS

With the same words.

MARA

And every time I ask the same question: why can't we have a normal life?

GIRIAS

And every time I answer:

MARA and GIRIAS

(Together)

Whose life is normal?

(She almost smiles, but then breaks down in tears. He puts a consoling hand on her shoulder.)

GIRIAS

Oh, my dear. The same words never work, do they?

(She laughs through her tears)

MARA

Dear Girias.

(Pauses)

GIRIAS

But if I were to concede that there are people with normal lives... When I look at the rest of the world, Mara, when I look at the ones who have what you would call normal lives, I don't see many happy people. They all want something else.

MARA

All I want is a family.

GIRIAS

And they want something else. They don't want the babies they've been given.

MARA

I wish they could see me.

GIRIAS

I wish they could, too.

MARA

I would do anything... anything to... to have a child.

GIRIAS

Would you? Really? So would I, I think. I would like to believe I would. And what would it be, I wonder? Even when we promise great things to God, there is really very little that we can do.

MARA

But we must do *something*, Girias.

GIRIAS

(Pauses. He ponders and gains some resolve.)

There is something we could do. Something we will do, Mara. We will invoke the Holy Family. And we will walk in the steps of the Holy Family. We will walk to Bethlehem. We will go there on foot and ask the Blessed Virgin... for a daughter. And we will promise her that if our prayers are answered, we will name the little girl Mariam, and we will give her to God. And I will make 200 candles—500 candles—and give them to the Church of the Nativity...

MARA

...so that pilgrims can offer their prayers.

GIRIAS

It is a humble gift, but for me a very large one. But many people will be blessed by those prayers.

(She rises from her chair)

MARA

I will walk beside you to Bethlehem.

(She hands the baby to him)

Such a good man you are, Girias. I am sorry you have to bury another son.

(He lays the baby inside the small wooden coffin and places the lid on it.  
As the lights fade, we hear the sound of a hammer driving nails into wood.  
The sound continues through the scene change.)



Scene 2

Setting: The home of Boudon.

At Rise: Enter BOUDON, carrying a hammer.

BOUDON  
Hakim! Where is that worthless rag-head? Hakim!

HAKIM  
(Entering)

Yes, Master.

BOUDON  
Where were you? I wanted some help nailing those crates together.

HAKIM  
I was completing my prayers, Master.

BOUDON  
Do your prayers build crates? When are your prayers going to start doing anyone any good?

HAKIM  
I believe they always do good, Master.

BOUDON  
Were you praying for me? That I suffer a miserable death?

HAKIM  
They are set prayers, Master.

BOUDON  
What a pity. I was actually hoping you were accomplishing something five times a day. Because if your prayers actually worked, I think I'd become a Moslem. *My* prayers have certainly been falling on deaf ears.

(Looks impiously heavenward. Enter NUVA.)

NUVA  
Blaspheming again, Boudon?

BOUDON  
Just telling the truth.

NUVA  
You'll burn in hell.

BOUDON

The only question is will I burn with Christians who are unfaithful or Moslems who are faithful.  
Or the other way around?

NUVA

It won't matter what company you keep there.

(BOUDON turns from her, and NUVA exits without him seeing her go)

BOUDON

Hakim, get my boots.

HAKIM

You're wearing your boots, Master.

BOUDON

(Cuffs him on the head)

Not these boots, you idiot! The others!

HAKIM

Yes, Master.

(Exit HAKIM)

BOUDON

Nuva...

(He sees that she is gone)

Nuva! Where is she? Mariam!

(Pauses)

Where is everyone? I would do just as well as a bachelor. Better, I think!

(Enter HAKIM)

HAKIM

Master, I could only find one boot.

BOUDON

And what am I supposed to do with one boot? Because if you don't find that other boot, I'll tell you what I'm going to do with this one!

HAKIM

I will find it, Master.

(Enter NUVA)

NUVA

No, you won't, Hakim. The dog ran off with the other boot.

BOUDON

What?!

NUVA

I told you not to bring that flea-bitten mongrel into this house.

BOUDON

Today, I kill that dog.

NUVA

Didn't you hear what I said? He's gone. Run off. And with your boot.

BOUDON

I liked those boots.

NUVA

You still have *one*.

BOUDON

I'll make another one. Out of Hakim's prayers. Or out of his skin. Whichever works. Hakim, go!

(Exit HAKIM)

NUVA

Don't be so hard on Hakim. Mariam asked you to be more kind to him.

BOUDON

As if I should do what Mariam tells me. And where *is* she?

NUVA

In her room, I imagine.

BOUDON

She spends too much time in there.

NUVA

You can't spend too much time praying.

BOUDON

Hakim does. He is always praying when he is supposed to be working.

NUVA

Then you should not have hired a Moslem servant.

BOUDON

And I don't like Mariam sticking up for the Mohammedan. Pretty soon they'll be praying together. And what then?

NUVA

Who knows? Peace!

BOUDON

Or hellfire. How'd you get so religious all of the sudden?

NUVA

I hadn't noticed.

BOUDON

Maybe Mariam is rubbing off on you.

NUVA

Like I said, I hadn't noticed.

BOUDON

What a strange little weed she is.

NUVA

Don't call her a weed! She is your sister's daughter!

BOUDON

My sister was strange, too. Couldn't seem to keep a son alive. When she finally managed to have a daughter, then she couldn't keep herself alive. And that pathetic husband of hers. Withered like a weed, too, when his wife died. There was just no life in that family. Maybe weed is the wrong word. Weeds have some stamina, at least. No, weed *is* the right word. You can't get rid of them. Now we're stuck with their daughter. Nothing but a bother. Like a weed. The sooner we marry her off the better. What's for dinner?

NUVA

You told me you were going to bring something from the market.

(Enter HAKIM)

HAKIM

Master?

BOUDON

Hakim, you baboon! What do you want?

HAKIM

A fisherman is at the door.

BOUDON

Bring him in.

(Exit HAKIM)

We're having fish for dinner.

(Aside)

That was almost like an answer to prayer, except that I neglected to pray.

(Enter HAKIM with FISHERMAN, carrying a large fish)

FISHERMAN

Good afternoon, sir!

BOUDON

Almost evening now.

FISHERMAN

Good evening, sir!

BOUDON

Good evening and welcome! I'm in the *mood* for fish!

FISHERMAN

Thank you, sir, thank you! I caught it myself just this morning.

BOUDON

This morning? So it's not fresh.

FISHERMAN

It was late morning, sir! It's very fresh! I was too late to get it to market! So you see, it is fresher than the market fish!

BOUDON

Well then! Let's have it.

(Starts to hand him a coin)

This will do?

FISHERMAN

Yes, sir, yes! Very good, thank you!

MARIAM

(Offstage)

Wait! Uncle! Don't buy the fish! It's poison!

(Enter MARIAM)

BOUDON

Mariam, you little worm! What are you on about? How can you even say that?

MARIAM

I had a dream last night that a poison fish came into the house!

BOUDON

And I should believe your dreams, and insult this honest fisherman!

MARIAM

I'm sure he *is* honest. He doesn't know it's poison.

BOUDON

But *you* do.

NUVA

Mariam, please!

(To FISHERMAN)

I'm sorry for my niece...

BOUDON

(Giving coin to FISHERMAN)

Here. We will happily buy your fish.

FISHERMAN

Thank you, sir. Thank you.

BOUDON

(Tosses the fish into a deep pan)

And bring another catch anytime. We will always buy your fish.

FISHERMAN

I thank you again, sir.

(Exit FISHERMAN)

BOUDON

Mariam, I swear, if you give me any more trouble like that...

MARIAM

Uncle, at least let me taste the fish first before you eat it.

BOUDON

If you want the first bite, fine!

(Picks up a knife)

Let's clean it, cook it, and thank God for our meal.

(Aside)

I'll tell you where the poison is in this house.

(Starts to cut the fish)

Oh hellfire, why are there never any sharp knives in this house?

HAKIM

Use mine. It's always sharp.

BOUDON

Unlike your wits.

MARIAM

Uncle, please be kind!

BOUDON

Mariam, enough from you!

(Cuts open the fish, and jumps back)

What the devil! Get a basket! Quick!

(They bring a basket, he covers the fish, panting in horror, wide-eyed)

NUVA

What's the matter?

BOUDON

I don't believe it!

NUVA

What?!

BOUDON

A viper! Of all things! Inside the fish!

NUVA

A what?

BOUDON

A poisonous snake!

(He stares viciously at MARIAM)

MARIAM

I...I...

BOUDON  
What are you?

NUVA  
Boudon! You can thank her!

BOUDON  
Hakim, clean up the mess. I'll be back with dinner. We'll eat the dog if I can find it. Or the fisherman, if I find *him*.

MARIAM  
It's not the fisherman's fault, Uncle!  
(He storms off)

NUVA  
Boudon!  
(Exit NUVA after him. HAKIM approaches the mess, but then turns to MARIAM.)

HAKIM  
They do not treat you well.

MARIAM  
(Awkwardly)  
Hakim...you really should not talk to me about anything like that. It's not your place.

HAKIM  
I would not be surprised if someday you find yourself in my place.

MARIAM  
And on that day, you may say whatever you wish to me.

HAKIM  
How did you know about the fish?

MARIAM  
You heard, didn't you? A dream.

HAKIM  
It was supernatural, don't you think?

MARIAM  
Do you mean...from God?



HAKIM

(Hesitates)

Yes.

MARIAM

God...is natural. It is natural that he should protect life. There's nothing extraordinary about that.

HAKIM

Then how do you explain all the death in the world?

MARIAM

The same way I explain all the sin in the world.

(Pauses)

Let me help you with that mess.

HAKIM

There is a snake under that basket. A poisonous snake.

MARIAM

Snakes can be conquered.

HAKIM

*You treat me* well.

MARIAM

There is no reason not to.

HAKIM

You pray.

MARIAM

(Pauses)

Yes.

HAKIM

You pray a lot.

MARIAM

Yes.

HAKIM

So do I.

MARIAM

Yes, I know.

HAKIM

Five times a day. How many times a day do you pray?

MARIAM

I don't know. I never really...I suppose...once.

HAKIM

Only once?

MARIAM

Yes...I think that's the right answer.

HAKIM

One prayer? How long is it?

MARIAM

I begin the prayer when I wake up. I end it when I fall asleep.

(He is startled and puzzled by this answer, and his face shows it. She carries the basket out.)

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

Setting: The home of Boudon.

At Rise: NUVA is sitting at a tale. Enter BOUDON.

BOUDON

It's time to talk about Mariam.

NUVA

You mean about the fact that you've always resented her?

BOUDON

I've always been generous! And what good does it do me? When her parents died, I took her in. When we left Galilee and came to Alexandria, I brought her, too. And the gifts I've given her! What does she do with them? It's always a disaster. I gave her pet birds. She drowned them.

NUVA

She was only trying to bathe them. She was very distressed about that.

BOUDON

I wonder what she would do with pet fish. Try to air them out?

NUVA

I know she's...different. But perhaps we have never really accepted her, never embraced her. She's always alone. Not so much alone as somewhere else. It's as if she's not really here.

BOUDON

Well, better that she actually *be* somewhere else.

NUVA

What are you saying?

BOUDON

She's leaving. I've found someone to marry her. The match is made.

NUVA

Where did you find someone?

BOUDON

In a weed patch!

NUVA

Boudon!

BOUDON

Your cousin Hiram.

NUVA

Hiram! Why didn't you discuss this with me?

BOUDON

Because I knew what you would say, so why waste a discussion?

NUVA

But...Hiram?

BOUDON

He's perfect. He has no prospects. He's not too smart. But he has some money. And he does what I tell him. He's already agreed.

NUVA

He's 20 years older than her.

BOUDON

We're not pairing up royalty here. Anyway, it's done. Call her in here.

NUVA

(Goes to door)

Mariam, come in here please. Your uncle wants to talk to you.

(Enter MARIAM)

MARIAM

What is it, Uncle?

BOUDON

Mariam, I have some good news! You are going to be married!

MARIAM

(A look of horror forms on her face. Pauses.)

No!!!

BOUDON

(Stunned at this reaction)

What do you mean, "no"?! You should be happy! This will be good for you! I'm helping you!

MARIAM

But Uncle, I must not be married! I must not!

BOUDON  
Why not?!

MARIAM  
I had a dream last night...

BOUDON  
Another dream!

MARIAM  
Uncle, I beg you, listen to me. Don't make me do this.

BOUDON  
What kind of freak are you? I have found a fine husband for you. You will be well taken care of.

MARIAM  
Uncle, please! I thank you for your thoughtfulness. I thank you for all that you do for me, but this is not...

BOUDON  
*This* is how you thank me?

MARIAM  
I cannot be married, Uncle!

BOUDON  
You intend to make me look like a fool?  
(He strikes her)

NUVA  
Boudon!

BOUDON  
Quiet, Nuva! I will not be defied! Mariam, you will do as I say!

MARIAM  
Not this, Uncle! Not this!

(He strikes her again. She falls back.)

BOUDON  
I was prepared to give you a good life! Now I'll reward you for your disobedience!  
(He grabs a stick and beats her. She cries out.)

NUVA  
Boudon, for God's sake, stop!

(He finally does. Throws the stick down. Spits on MARIAM.)

BOUDON

I don't care *what* happens to you! If you want to live here, you'll have to work! You'll be treated no better than a servant! No better than Hakim! In fact, I'm going to put Hakim in charge of you! You answer to him now! I don't even want to talk to you! You are the servant of a servant!

(BOUDON stomps out. NUVA rushes to MARIAM.)

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

Setting: Outside the home of Boudon.

At Rise: HAKIM sits on a crate. Enter MARIAM, carrying an armful of wood.

HAKIM

Here, let me take that.

MARIAM

You don't have to.

HAKIM

I insist.

(He takes it, then sets it down)

MARIAM

Thank you.

HAKIM

And so, you find yourself in my place.

MARIAM

A little lower, I'm afraid.

HAKIM

You should not be a servant to me. It is unjust. It is an insult.

MARIAM

I don't mind being a servant.

HAKIM

You should leave.

MARIAM

Where would I go?

HAKIM

Come with me. I will leave, too. We will both leave. I will take care of you.

MARIAM

Do you understand, Hakim, that the reason my Uncle punished me is that I refused to marry?

HAKIM

Your uncle was unfair to you. He was unkind to you. I will be kind to you.

MARIAM  
But I will not marry you.

HAKIM  
I am not asking you to marry me.

MARIAM  
Not yet.

HAKIM  
(New tactic)  
We have much in common.

MARIAM  
Hakim, we have nothing in common.

HAKIM  
We both take our religion seriously.

MARIAM  
Very well, we have that in common. But we don't have our religion in common.

HAKIM  
But maybe we do. Or maybe we will. You must learn more about Mohammed. You probably don't know anything about him.

MARIAM  
I am a Christian, Hakim. I belong to Christ.

HAKIM  
Islam has a very high view of Jesus Christ. We believe he was born of the Virgin Mary. We believe he ascended into Heaven and that he will come again.

MARIAM  
Then maybe you should become a Christian.

HAKIM  
(Pauses, not happy with how this is going)  
You must learn more about Mohammed.

MARIAM  
I am a simple girl.

HAKIM  
And Islam is a simple religion. It is better suited for you. And not just for you, for everyone. We have a simpler understanding of God.



MARIAM

But God is not simple.

HAKIM

But God is one, not three. There is only one God. And God is only One. *The God: Allah.*

MARIAM

You said you have a high view of Jesus.

HAKIM

We do.

MARIAM

Don't you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

HAKIM

Allah had no children!

MARIAM

But aren't we all children of God?

HAKIM

No!

MARIAM

But Jesus called God his Father.

HAKIM

He did not!

MARIAM

He taught us to pray, "Our Father, who art in Heaven."

HAKIM

That is not what the Prophet taught!

MARIAM

But why wouldn't the Prophet teach something as simple as that? Doesn't it make sense that we should love God as a Father?

HAKIM

It is not about love, it is about obedience!

MARIAM

Obedience must come from love. Otherwise it is just resentment.

HAKIM

The only thing that matters is the will of Allah!

MARIAM

The only thing that matters is that Jesus loved us so much that he obeyed his Father all the way to the Cross. Love means sacrifice, or it doesn't mean anything at all. That is the meaning of the Cross.

HAKIM

There was no cross! There was no crucifixion!

MARIAM

The only reason Christ came to us was to die, to die on the cross, to die for our sins.

HAKIM

He did not die! He went straight into Heaven. The Prophet has said so.

MARIAM

He went into Heaven after the Resurrection, which was after the Crucifixion.

HAKIM

There was no Resurrection because Jesus did not die.

MARIAM

He *did* die. It was the sacrifice of God Himself...

HAKIM

Sacrifice! Sacrifice is for idols! Allah forbids idol worship.

MARIAM

Jesus sacrificed himself. To *obey* God.

HAKIM

This is not what the Prophet said.

MARIAM

Did Mohammed say that Jesus was the Son of God?

HAKIM

No!

MARIAM

Did Mohammed say that Mary is the Mother of God?

HAKIM

God has no mother!

MARIAM

Did Mohammed say that Jesus *is* God?

HAKIM

There is no God but Allah! And Mohammed is His Prophet!

MARIAM

If Mohammed did not believe that Jesus is God, then I do not believe Mohammed could be a prophet of God.

HAKIM

(Exploding)

There is no God but Allah! And Mohammed is His Prophet!  
(Pulls out his knife threateningly)

MARIAM

No Hakim! For the sake of your soul!

HAKIM

Say it! There is no God but Allah! And Mohammed is His Prophet! Say it!

MARIAM

(Crosses herself)

Our Father, who art in Heaven...

HAKIM

Infidel!

(He violently grabs her, turns her around...and slashes her throat with the knife. She drops to the ground. He stands over her, panting heavily, then turns and runs away.)

BLACKOUT