

FREE SCENE: Almost Mary by Claudia I. Haas – all rights reserved

CAST: 2 (1f, 1m)

Mary: 13 years old; sister to Joseph

Joseph: 9 years old; brother to Mary

Place: Lyme Regis Cliffs, UK, February 1811

Mary is considered the first female paleontologist. This scene depicts their finding of a giant fossil later to be known as an ichthyosaur (fish lizard from the Jurassic Period).

AT RISE we are again below the cliffs. JOSEPH is seen staring at a large fossil head. (About four feet long and crocodile-like in appearance.)

It is in a large rock that had fallen off of the cliff. It could also be simply embedded in soft rock on the ground. The details of the discovery are sketchy.

JOSEPH has a hammer and chisel but is just staring at the gigantic head in wonder. We hear MARY who appears.

MARY

JOOOOO-SEPH! ANSWER ME!

(MARY sees JOSEPH who is very still.)

JOSEPH! Mama's going to skin your hide if she knew you were here - oh mercy me! I'm in love!

JOSEPH

With a dragon skull?

MARY

Dragon?

JOSEPH

Maybe.

MARY

Whatever it is, it's smashing! I bet it's over a meter long!

JOSEPH

Mary's in love with a dragon skull!

MARY

Look into the eyes! And what a magnificent head!

JOSEPH

Look at that huge jaw. It could bite my head off!

(JOSEPH mimes getting his hand stuck in the rock.)

MARY! HELP! *It's got my fingers!*

MARY

JOSEPH!

(Abrupt change from fear to stern.)

Jo-seph.

JOSEPH

You're such an easy target.

MARY

Not so. I am an almost-scientist.

JOSEPH

You are an almost- scientist who fancies a dragon head.

MARY

He's amazing. I want to know everything about him – his world, his family/his – maybe it's a her – maybe/

JOSEPH

/Mary! We found a dragon! People will sing songs about us!

MARY

If this were a dragon, wouldn't the skull be black from breathing out all that fire and smoke?

JOSEPH

What else could it be? *I know!* A crocodile.

MARY

No!

JOSEPH

Yes! Look.

MARY

It does look like the crocodile pictures I've seen. These fossils are clues to a big, grand mystery. And guess what we are?

JOSEPH

Two children!

MARY

Try harder.

JOSEPH

Crocodile hunters!

MARY

Detectives – of the past.

JOSEPH

We'll have to look the head up. You do still have Papa's book?

MARY

I have everything. The tools/his clothes/the last thunderclap....

(JOSEPH smashes his fist into the rock.)

JOSEPH

Owwww!

MARY

Joseph!

JOSEPH

I didn't want to cry.

(Beat.)

MARY

I think when you lose your father, you're allowed to cry.

JOSEPH

Even boys?

MARY

Even boys.

JOSEPH

We haven't been here since -

MARY

- Papa's fall.

JOSEPH

I miss him.

MARY

We should go. We promised Mama we wouldn't come to these parts.

JOSEPH

And leave the dragon?

MARY

We can't do that!

JOSEPH

I know!

MARY

We'll have Papa protect us. I'm sure he can see us from heaven. I'm going to show Papa where we are. Remember when we would put our initials in the sand after a big find?

JOSEPH

And then the sea washed it away. It washes everything away.

MARY

I still like the tradition.

(MARY draws a circle in the sand and puts her name and Joseph's initials inside it. The lights change. RICHARD appears above.)

He's here.

JOSEPH

How do you know?

MARY

I feel warmer. Now, I must stop being a lazy lay-about and chisel!

(JOSEPH goes at it with too much enthusiasm.)

MARY

Don't hammer her! You'll hurt her!

JOSEPH

She's dead.

MARY

But we want her in one piece. You get more money that way.

(They chisel.)

JOSEPH

Papa said that a long time ago the ocean came up to the top of the cliffs!

MARY

He said all of our fossils came from the sea.

JOSEPH

It's a sea-dragon! With such a large head – I wonder how gigantic the body was!

MARY

And if the head is here –

JOSEPH

Where is the body?

RICHARD

First things first, my dears.

MARY

What did Papa say? "First things first, my dears." And you know what comes first, Joseph?

RICHARD & JOSEPH

One step at a time. One breath at a time.

(They chisel.)

JOSEPH (cont'd)

This head could make our fortune.

MARY

Such dreams! But maybe it is worth more than sterling. *Maybe* – it will go to a fancy museum and people will study it and learn from it. And I, Mary Anning, will be famous/

JOSEPH

/Now who's dreaming?

MARY

I dream every time I come down here.

JOSEPH

My dreams are about buying food and eating until my tummy aches.

MARY

I daresay, we could buy a little rice and treacle if we sell this!

JOSEPH

(JOSEPH starts speaking the Nursery Rhyme which turns into song.)

JOSEPH (cont'd)

Half a pound of two-penny rice; half a pound of treacle;
That's the way the money goes!

(MARY joins in.)

Pop! Goes the weasel!

JOSEPH and MARY

Up and down the City Road; In and out the Eagle;
That's the way the money goes! Pop! Goes the weasel!

(The lights will dim at the end of the song as we fade to black.)