

Free Almost Mary, Scene 4, 2f
Mary – age 13
Philippa – age 15

SCENE 6, Early March; 1811 Lyme Regis England
Mary Anning is considered the first female paleontologist

AT RISE it is two weeks later. MARY and PHILIPPA are fossil hunting by the cliffs. PHILIPPA is near a rock pool and MARY is meticulously checking rocks by the lower portion of a cliff. A storm is coming.

PHILIPPA

I love being outside! I have missed it so!

MARY

Two weeks of rain. It certainly has made the cliffs soft.

PHILIPPA

Is there the possibility of a landslide?

MARY

Yes.

PHILIPPA

It's difficult to decide when to hunt. You want the cliffs soft so they can break apart and show you their treasures. But you don't want to be near them when they crack because of

PHILIPPA (cont'd)

the danger. But if you're not near them right after a landslide, the tide will come and take your fossils out to sea. It's a muddle.

MARY

You're learning.

PHILIPPA

It is thrilling!

MARY

You need to stop loving the dangerous part of it! I don't want to lose you.

PHILIPPA

This is safer than needlepoint. I'd get all twitchy and prick my fingers and then they would bleed all over the canvas.

MARY

I had no idea that being a “lady” was so treacherous.

PHIPPA

It’s painful.

(Beat.)

Your Mum didn’t look pleased that we were coming down to the beach.

MARY

She’ll be pleased if I find the skeleton!

PHILIPPA

It’s quiet with just the two of us.

MARY

With Joseph working and Henry in school, I can focus more on finding fossils. Henry can be distracting – all hijinks and games. We’ve known each other since our earliest days – he’s like another brother you must keep in line. But I do miss them.

PHILIPPA

Mary! Come here right away!

MARY

What’s wrong?

PHILIPPA

Is this a fossil?

MARY

Sorry, no.

PHILIPPA

Couldn’t you just say “yes” once in a while to make me feel good?

MARY

But then you’ll never find a real one. Fossils aren’t like fish jumping into your lap. For one thing – they’re dead. And - they’re shy - like pearls in oyster shells only opening up to those who care about them.

PHILIPPA

I want to be good at something! *Mary?* What is this?

MARY

A lovely seashell.

PHILIPPA

This is all so tricky! I must study – to know what I am looking for. Do you have books?

MARY

Only two. I learned at my father's knee. Henry has quite a lot and he occasionally lends me some. Now search! You won't find anything chatting with me!

PHILIPPA

Wait! Is this – it's kind of gloppy – but can this be *an actual fossil*? Look! It's shaped like a snake!

MARY

That is indeed a fossil. The scientific name is ammonite. But we just call them snake-stones.

PHILIPPA

I should here. Take it.

MARY

I don't think so! You found it!

PHILIPPA

But – you can sell it!

MARY

For a mere shilling or two. Keep it – it's your very first fossil - the first of many more discoveries! Later, I will show you how to clean it properly so that it sparkles like new.

PHILIPPA

It's from another world, isn't it?

MARY

That's what we're trying to find out.

PHILIPPA

We are exploring an old world to discover a new world – that's old.

MARY

Yes! People think I comb these cliffs just to add a few shillings to our till. But I feel that we are seekers of a mysterious world.

PHILIPPA

Do you think you'll ever find the rest of your dragon? Your "Ragnara?"

MARY

I wouldn't be here if I didn't believe that. Of course, it could have appeared on the beach in the last two weeks and then the greedy tide took it away. That would be my luck!

(MARY diligently goes back to work.)

PHILIPPA

I wonder if Ragnara was a sea monster – maybe there still are sea monsters out there. Perhaps they are bashful and don't want to meet people. What do you think, Mary?

(MARY has stopped hammering and is methodically clearing away a small area with just her hands.)

PHILIPPA (cont'd)

Mary? *What do you think?*

(Lightening.)

About the possibilities of sea monsters? Mary? *MARY!*

(Thunder.)

What is it?

MARY

Don't know.

PHILIPPA

A storm is coming. We should go.

MARY

In a minute.

(There is the sound of a rock falling. PHILIPPA jumps.)

PHILIPPA

What was that?

(Lightening)

Mary!

MARY

Wait!

(Thunder!)

PHILIPPA

We're going. If I have to drag you out of here!

MARY

No! There's something – whitish – hard.

PHILIPPA

If it's there now, it will be there tomorrow!

MARY

That's not how it works! It could be washed out to sea tomorrow! This could be it/

PHILIPPA

/The tide's marching in - nothing is worth being washed out to sea! Not even Ragnara!

(Thunder)

MARY

One more second –

PHILIPPA

- we could drown!

(Lightening.)

MARY

In a minute!

PHILIPPA

We're going.