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 ichtyosaur (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!*

JOSEPH!

(MARY makes an abrupt change from fear to stern.)

Jo-seph.

You're such an easy target.

MARRY
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.*

*No!*

*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!

And if the head is here –

MARY
Where is the body?

JOSEPH
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.)