

"Have pity on me." from "The Lark" by Jean Anouilh

Then, I'll start at the beginning. It's always nicer at the beginning. I'll begin with my father's house when I was very small. (Runs to join her family) I live here happy enough with my mother, my brothers, and my father. (She dances downstage, clapping her hands.) I'm in the meadow now, watching my sheep. I am not thinking of anything. It is the first time I hear the Voices. I wasn't thinking of anything. I know only that God is good and that He keeps me pure and safe in this little corner of the earth near Domremy. This one little piece of French earth that has not yet been destroyed by English invaders. (Makes childish thrusts with an imaginary sword, and stops suddenly as if someone has pulled her back.) Then, suddenly, someone behind me touched my shoulder. I know very well that no one is behind me. I turn and there is a great blinding light in the shadow of me. The Voice is grave and sweet and I was frightened. But I didn't tell anybody. I don't know why. Then came the second time. It was the noon Angelus. A light came over the sun and was stronger than the sun. There he was. I saw him. An angel in a beautiful clean robe that must have been ironed by somebody very careful. He had two great white wings. He didn't tell me his name that day, but later I found out he was Monseigneur the Blessed Saint Michael.

Blessed Saint Michael, excuse me, but you are in the wrong village. I am Joan, an ignorant girl, my father's daughter--(pauses, listens) I can't save France. I don't even know how to ride a horse. To you people the Sire de Beaudricourt is only a country squire, but to us he is master here. He would never take me to Dauphin, I've never even bowed to him--

Then the Blessed Saint Michael and Saint Catherine would come along with me, and if that wasn't enough Saint Marguerite would go, too. (Turns back as if to listen to Saint Michael) But when the army captains lose a battle--and they lose a great many--they can go to sleep at night. I could never send men to their death. Forgive me, Blessed Saint Michael, but I must go home now--(But she doesn't move.) Oh, Blessed Saint Michael, have pity on me. Have pity, Messire. (She moves back to the trial simply.) Well, he didn't. And that was the day I was saddled with France. And my work.