

A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a man in profile, facing left. He is wearing a dark baseball cap and a dark jacket. On the back of his jacket, there is a rectangular name tag with the word 'MARK' printed on it. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of his face and the texture of his clothing against a stark white background.

The Original Stageplay

THE MARK

CHRISTIAN PLAYWRIGHT

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Sample Script



Scene 1

LIGHTS UP

Living room. There is a table set for four at center stage. A refrigerator at DSL. A couch with accompanying chairs at DSR.

A faint sound of sirens is heard. The sound increases by the second and we hear the screech of a car as it stops. Car doors open and close simultaneously. Enter GIRL and BOY. They are breathless. They quickly take a seat among the audience towards the front. We hear another car pull up. Doors open and close. Enter CHARLES and JONES. They are dressed in black suits and long black overcoats. Their expression is stone cold.

They pull flashlights from their coats and scan the faces of the audience as they move up the aisle.

JONES: They must be around here somewhere.

They continue to shine their lights on faces in the audience as they get closer to the front.

CHARLES: Just keep looking.

[SFX: a faint, short cracking sound].

CHARLES: Did you hear that?

JONES: Hear what?

[Charles moves down the aisle, shining his light on faces until it stops on a familiar face.]

CHARLES: You! Step forward.

The girl hesitates, obviously afraid. Charles squeezes through the members of the audience and grabs her before she even attempts to run.

Jones looks to the other side just in time to see the boy get up and make an attempt for the exit.

JONES: One more step [*He raises his pistol*] and you're a dead man.

[Boy halts. Jones carefully approaches him and grabs him violently pulling him onstage.

Charles does the same with the girl. Both boy and girl are thrown down violently to the ground.

Boy tries again to run, but Charles grabs him before he leaps offstage, and hits him across his face sending the boy sprawling to the ground.

Charles points his gun at the boy.

CHARLES: They once said you are innocent until proven guilty. In this new world, without the mark, you are just plain guilty punishable only by death.

Jones rests his hand on Charles' gun hand lowering it.

JONES: Let's wait for Jonathon to get here.

CHARLES: Why?

JONES: Because we answer to him.

CHARLES: For now. Jonathon Simmonds is a coward. He reminds me of these fools who waste their lives for something they can't even see.

Charles kicks the boy in his rib cage. Boy lies clutching himself as the girl goes to him.

CHARLES: They are weak...a sorry excuse for a human being.

Jones stoops beside the boy and girl and examines their right hand. A bandage is fixed to a specific spot on their hand.

JONES: They don't have the mark.

CHARLES: You think they would have us chasing them for two miles if they did?

Jones slaps on the handcuffs.

JONES: Jonathon should be here by now.

CHARLES: I think he has a hard time keeping up. His pity for people like this is taking a toll on him...slowing him down.

JONES: You should say that to his face.

CHARLES: You think I'm afraid to.

JONES: It doesn't matter. He's standing right there.

[JONNY walks out to view from USC. HE is also dressed in a black suit. JONNY scouts the room looking about].

CHARLES: You missed all the fun, Supe.

JONNY *[ignoring Charles]:* This is an old church. It's the perfect hideout. The last place we would think to look is inside a derelict.

Jonny continues to examine the room until he comes to the table.

JONNY: At least four people were here *[he takes up a glass of juice from the table set for four]* and not very long ago either. This is still cold.

He puts the glass down.

CHARLES: Maybe they took off when they heard us coming?

JONNY: Blazing sirens....shattered doors....a trigger happy policeman...and you think maybe they heard you coming?

CHARLES: Your sarcasm don't move me, Supe.

JONNY: How about a simple order. Climb down from that high horse of yours and take these two to the jeep.

Jones hands Jonathon an envelope.

JONES: Take a Look at this, sir. It fell from the girls' pocket.

Jonny takes the envelope and looks at it, back and front. He then pulls the letter from inside the envelope.

JONES: It's addressed to Ruth Simmonds.

JONNY: I can see that.

JONES: Name ring a bell?

JONNY [*shaking his head*]: No!

JONES: Thought she might be a relative or something.

JONNY: I can't be sure unless I run a check on it.

JONES: Christians are officially fugitives from the law. The politicians are pushing to pass the law to have them shot on sight. If she is a relative maybe you can save her....in the event that she hasn't already saved herself.

Jones turns and exits.

Jonny stares at the pictures that are in the envelope along with a hand written letter.

LIGHTS FADE

Scene 2

[Lights come up on Living Room setting. The furniture has been re-arranged. The Couch is at CS. The table at DSR and the refrigerator remains at DSL. There are three doors upstage representing BENDAS, MARIONS and RUTH's room. RUTH is sitting on the couch reading a book. She is dressed in a long house dress.

ENTER BRENDA (she also wears a house dress) with Bible in hand.]

BRENDA *[Lets herself fall loosely on the couch beside her mother]:* I finished reading the book of Revelation.

RUTH: And..?

BRENDA: I have more questions than answers.

RUTH: What kind of questions?

BRENDA: It is very hard to believe some of the things I read in this book.

RUTH: My mother used to tell me Bible stories when I was young. I pretended as if I believed...but I didn't.

BRENDA: When did you actually start to believe?

(pause)

RUTH: When she vanished right before my eyes. I figured that if she was right about the rapture, then she must be right about everything else.

BRENDA *[sadly]:* I miss her so much, Mom.

RUTH: So do I. But we will see her again.

BRENDA: How can you be so sure?

RUTH: It's called faith.

BRENDA: I don't understand why this is happening to us, Mom.

RUTH: All I can say, Brenda, is that God knows.

Ruth gently strokes Brenda's hair and offers a smile. Brenda smiles back. She gets up and walks over to the refrigerator, opening the door and sticking her head in for a moment.

BRENDA: Mother...

RUTH: Yes, dear!

BRENDA: There's no food.

RUTH [*sadly*]: I know.

BRENDA [*closes the door*]: Is there anything in the cupboards?

RUTH: I'm afraid that's empty too. It's been three months now since your father left.

BRENDA: When is he coming home?

RUTH: I don't know, honey.

BRENDA: Do you think something happened to him..?

RUTH: No.

BRENDA: How can you be so sure?

RUTH: I just am, Brenda. [*unsure*] If something bad happens, I will know.

BRENDA [*goes to sit beside Ruth in an attempt to cheer her up*]: God will protect us...won't He? He will provide for us and take care of us...wont He?

RUTH: He has to. He promised He would.

BRENDA: And He will protect father too...?

RUTH *[smiling]*: See, you do have faith.

BRENDA: Faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of God. *[Picks up bible]*
You have to admit...I've been spending quite a lot of time with this book...*[sighs]*
As if I have anything else to do with my time.

RUTH: I wish Marion would be more like you.

MARION'S VOICE: As if that is gonna happen *[She steps out of her bedroom dressed in jeans skirt and body blouse]* I've never liked fairy tales.

BRENDA: They are not fairy tales, Marion.

MARION: Yeah! Prove it.

RUTH: Look at what is going on around us, Marion. What more proof do you want?

MARION: Man deserves what is happening now. Our every effort has always been towards a Global war. This has nothing to do with any spiritual war between angels and demons. It is merely a difference of opinion.

RUTH: You believe that?

MARION: You would too...if you would just open your eyes to simple rational truth.

RUTH: If you want the truth, Marion, you better learn to read the Bible.

MARION: Why don't you save us some time and just tell me?

RUTH: You want me to tell you the truth?

MARION: Or the concept thereof...yes. Tell me the gospel according to mother.

RUTH: It is sin that has robbed us of peace: It is sin that drives a man towards world domination, and it is sin that stops you from believing the truth.

MARION: Who are you to decide what is wrong and what is right? Who are you to define what is sin?

RUTH: I did not create the definitions, child...God did.

MARION: Then where is He?

RUTH: Everywhere.

MARION: I want to see Him.

BRENDA: Don't test Him, Marion.

MARION: Who is this God? Why can't I see Him or touch Him or feel Him? He appeals to none of my senses so what reason do I have to believe in His existence?

RUTH: He's our creator, our guide, and our saviour...

MARION: Blah, Blah, Blah. You make Him sound like a fairy tale character.
(*pause*) I rest my case.

RUTH: Marion, If Jesus called you, would you answer?

MARION: I need more than just a call. I will not believe in something I can't see.

BRENDA: If you could see God, you would not need faith.

MARION: I don't need either God or faith.

RUTH: Is there anything you want Marion?

MARION: Oh yeah. A one-way ticket out of this prison. Maybe a nice long soak in a Jacuzzi and a double cheeseburger.

RUTH: There's only one way to be contented in this world and that's by taking the mark of the beast.

MARION: I know.

RUTH: Is that what you want?

MARION: I would do anything to be happy and normal again.

RUTH: How will you profit from gaining the whole world and losing your soul?

MARION: Why do I even bother talking to you?

RUTH: Why don't you allow the truth to set you free?

MARION: I am free! That's the whole point.

BRENDA: Marion...

MARION: I don't want to hear it. *[disgusted]* You two are getting on my last nerve!

[She walks to the fridge and opens it. She looks in...then slams the door shut].

MARION: I'm so sick and tired of this...!

BRENDA *[Loudly]*: Marion!

MARION: What kind of a God would allow His children to go hungry? You can't leave your own home without some stupid jocks chasing you to stamp a triple six in your forehead...

RUTH: MARION!

MARION: ...and you two just sit there...*[she walks over and takes up the Bible]*
Reading this book and blabbering about a loving God who neither feeds you or
clothes you or delivers you.

BRENDA *[Grabs the Bible before Marion tosses it]:* No MARION!

MARION: I'm tired of this *[Brenda tries to hold her]* DON'T TOUCH ME! TAKE
YOUR HANDS OFF ME!

Ruth grabs her arm and holds her tightly.

RUTH: You think this is easy for any of us? Have you even stopped for just one
moment to realize that you're not the only one affected by this situation?

MARION: I know how I feel. I don't...

RUTH: I, me, myself, Marion, you think this world evolves around you?

MARION: I can't think right now...I'm hungry and I'm going out to get something
to eat.

RUTH: You can't leave. You know that.

Marion ignores Ruth and puts on her overcoat.

RUTH: Marion, please. *[Marion walks offstage]* MARION! *[Ruth falls to her knees
and buries her face in her palms]* Oh, GOD! Please bring her back...

*Brenda rests her hands on Ruth. She looks up to see that Marion is coming
back, being dragged in by her father: He has a bag in one hand].*

BRENDA *[overjoyed]:* Daddy.

RUTH *[looking up]:* Jonathan...thank God you are here.

JONNY *[Reaching center stage, he positions Marion in front of him; she is still
visibly upset]:* What do you think you are doing, Marion?

[a beat]

JONNY: ANSWER ME!

MARION: I can't stand being locked up in this prison any more.

Jonny sighs. He's been here a million times.

JONNY: This prison is keeping you alive.

MARION: You call this life?

Jonny almost slaps Marion across her face. Tears moisten her eyes.

JONNY: You need to understand that it is not safe out there.

MARION: It is not safe for you either.

JONNY: I can handle myself.

MARION: So can I. I'm not a child anymore.

JONNY *[firmly]:* You cannot leave this house, Marion! End of discussion.

MARION: You get to leave.

JONNY: That's different.

MARION: Why?

JONNY: I have to be out there to protect my family. It's all I have, all I live for *[He takes off his gloves]* Look at this, Marion. I don't have the mark and neither do you. Out there you have only two options...you either take the mark or die...there is no mid ground. Do you understand?

MARION: I want to take the mark then.

EVERYONE: No, Marion!

MARION: It's my choice.

JONNY: You don't know what you're saying. You have no idea what that mark represents.

MARION: Then tell me.

JONNY: I don't have the time to talk to you about that now.

MARION: You never have time...*[exits to her bedroom]*

JONNY: MARION!

Brenda moves towards Marion's bedroom.

BRENDA: I'll go talk to her.

JONNY: Take that bag with you. Get something to eat.

BRENDA: Thanks, dad.

[She takes the bag and exits. Jonny drops on the couch]

RUTH: I know it's frustrating, Jonny..

JONNY: Its unbearable.

RUTH: I know. Please understand, she won't listen.

JONNY: How often does she do that?

RUTH: You mean scream her head off and run to her room?

JONNY: No! Leave the house.

RUTH: I don't know. Sometimes she will disappear for hours.

JONNY: We can't afford that, Ruth.

RUTH: But what am I supposed to do?

JOHNNY: Lock her in, tie her up. I don't know.

RUTH: She's crazy, Jonny. She's not used to being in one place for so long.

JONNY: It's for her own good. Nothing's ever going to change again, Ruth. It will only get worse.

RUTH: I am aware of that. I leave Marion's safety to God. It's you we are really concerned about.

JONNY: Don't be.

RUTH: Don't talk like that. You have to be out there every day doing the devil's work. That's where the real danger is.

JONNY: It's just something I have to do.

RUTH: For our protection, I know.

JONNY: These are desperate times, Ruth.

RUTH [*defeated*]: I know! It's just that...well...I'm worried about you...and Marion!

JONNY: If this is another one of your '*give your life to God*' message. Forget it.

Jonny gets up.

RUTH: See! That's exactly what I'm talking about. You don't really realize what's at stake do you?

JONNY: This hell and heaven theory of yours makes no sense to me, Ruth. I've never been religious.

RUTH: Where do you think all those people who disappeared went?

JONNY: I don't know.

RUTH: Right! But you do know what they all had in common?

JONNY: I was one of the Chief Investigators on that case. I know more than you do.

RUTH: Then why don't you say it?

JONNY: Say what?

RUTH: What did all those people have in common?

JONNY: Nothing.

RUTH: They were Christians, Jonny. *[picks up and holds the Bible out]* They all had this in common.

JONNY *[Upset]:* I told you to get rid of that book.

RUTH: You cannot destroy the truth.

JONNY: Oh really.

[He gets up and takes out a lighter. He grabs the Bible from Ruth and strikes the lighter under it].

RUTH: NO! *[Ruth manages to rescue the book from the flame].*

JONNY: What's the matter with you?

RUTH: Do you realize that this is probably the only one left in this God-forsaken town? We can't just destroy it. This covers the entire history of man [*she caresses it*] and our future.

JONNY: There is no future anymore.

RUTH: My Bible says there is.

JONNY: You foolish woman. You and your silly book is going to get us all killed.

RUTH: What death is more honourable, than dying for the truth?

JONNY: No one wants to die, Ruth.

RUTH: But we must, Jonny. Sooner or later, we must.

JONNY: Our problems can be blamed on that book. That book and the people who read it is the reason for this GLOBAL WAR.

RUTH: You don't really believe that, Jonny. This book is not the cause but the cure.

JONNY: This is a war, Ruth...not a disease.

RUTH: Why do you still continue to harden your heart to God, Jonathon Simmonds?

JONNY: Every day I watch Christians die. You want me to believe in a God that would stand by and watch His people being murdered?

RUTH: Christ is the Son of God and He suffered in like manner. How much more would we also suffer?

JONNY [*sighs*]: You believe what you want...I'll stick to what I know.

RUTH: That's what scares me the most.

JONNY: I need to get back to the office before they get too suspicious.

RUTH: When will we see you again?

JONNY: I don't know. *[Takes out the envelope]* Here. One of your 'friends' left this for you.

Ruth hesitates for a moment before looking inside the envelope. Sadness supersedes all other expressions.

RUTH *[Takes out two pictures and look at them longingly: Tears form in her eyes]:* Christopher and Sheryl. Are they....dead?

JONNY: I wish I could have spared you from the last five years, Ruth. I really do. For what it's worth, I'm sorry.

[Ruth throws her arms around Jonny].

RUTH: I'm getting used to it.

[Jonny pulls away from her].

JONNY: I have to go.

RUTH *[composing herself]:* You know you'll have to make a choice soon. Without that mark, it will be impossible for you to buy food...even if you do work for the man himself.

JONNY: When we get to that bridge, we'll cross it.

RUTH: We are at the bridge. Don't you see?

[pause]

JONNY: Why did you have to go and believe all this God stuff?

RUTH: You know I had no choice. My mother always told me about the Rapture...what it meant...how it would happen. When she disappeared before my very eyes, how could I doubt?

JONNY: Times have changed. Doubters live, believers die.

RUTH: I need you, Jonny. Stay the night ...please!

JONNY: You know I can't...if they don't see me at the base, they will try to find me.

RUTH: You don't have the mark...so they won't know where you are.

JONNY: And that is bad, Ruth. You know that.

RUTH *[kissing up]*: Please stay...if this is the last night we spend together...let's make it count.

JONNY: I...can't...

RUTH: But you must.

[Ruth escorts Jonny offstage].

LIGHTS FADE

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