

## In need of a counselor

Counselor: Do come in. Take a seat, please. (To Mary) Would you like to put your feet up on something?

Mary: No, thank you. It's all right.

Counselor: Sure? Right. O.K. If you'd like to take a seat next to your partner, Mr Jacobson.

Joseph: Just call me Joseph, please. And this is Mary.

Counselor: Fine, fine. It's always good to get on to first name terms as soon as possible, I always think. Now how can I help? You said on the 'phone you were experiencing a certain amount of err...friction. A disagreement?

Joseph: Well you could say that. Perhaps we ought to begin at the beginning.

Counselor: Very wise. I believe Julie Andrews recommends at the very beginning. (Laughs)

Mary: I really don't think there's a great deal to worry about. I am sure it will all work out to plan.

Counselor: Indeed...indeed. Is that how you see it, Joseph?

Joseph: Well, not exactly. As I say, I'll start from the beginning. You see Mary and I are in love. Or at least I thought we were. I certainly love her.

Mary: And I really love you, Joseph.

Counselor: Well, this is a good starting point. I deal with so many couples who don't really love each other.

Mary: Well, I honestly am deeply in love with Joseph. And I respect him and want to have a family with him...

Joseph: You couldn't wait to get on with that, could you?

Mary: That's not fair. You know the circumstances.

Counsellor: Ah, I see. And what we have here is the source of some... friction between you, I take it.

Mary and Joseph: (Together) No/yes

Counsellor: You certainly don't appear to be in total agreement.

Joseph: Well are you surprised? There I was thinking I had won the lottery top prize, I was going to marry the sweetest, loveliest girl in the neighbourhood when I find out that she's...she's... been...with another man.

Mary: I haven't, Joseph. That's not fair. You know I haven't.

Counsellor: I see. Do we need to deal here with a case of paternity? I take it that the father of your child is a matter of some dispute.

Mary and Joseph: (Together) No/yes

Counsellor: Ah...again a little disagreement. How do you see things, Mary?

Mary: I was looking forward to marrying Joseph in the near future.

Joseph: Was!

Mary: I still am, Joseph.

Joseph: Well, it's not a forgone conclusion now. I really don't think you can take anything or anyone for granted.

Mary: I don't, Joseph. I really don't (Pause) Well, as I say, we were looking forward to marrying. And then I had this...visit.

Joseph: Who was it? What's his name? I'd really like a few words with this character.

Mary: It wasn't anyone I'd ever seen before.

Joseph: What!

Mary: Joseph, I've tried telling you all this before and you always lose your temper. That's why we're here.

Counsellor: Joseph, let's just get the complete picture from Mary's side. You'll get your chance in a minute.

(Pause)

Mary: The visitor said his name was Gabriel.

Joseph: No! It wasn't that Gabriel Bar-Zimri? I'll flay him to within an inch of his life, I will!

Counsellor: (Forcefully) Joseph!

Joseph: (Struggles to regain his composure)

Counsellor: Carry on, Mary.

Mary: No it wasn't him. The visitor said he was an angel called Gabriel.

Joseph: (Humphs)

Mary: He told me all kinds of things, which I could hardly take in. I was scared out of my wits in any case at first but once he'd calmed me down he told me that I was in favour with God and that I was going to fall pregnant and have a boy. That was the first incredible thing because Joseph and I have never been together like that. Then he said he would be the Son of the Most High-which can only mean one thing. Added to that this Gabriel told me that he was to be called Jesus-and we all know what that means.

Counsellor: Saviour, isn't it?

Joseph: Yes it is. The whole thing's incredible. My girl's making claims to be pregnant by heaven knows what means and will shortly be giving birth to what can only be...the Messiah.

Mary: Joseph, I'm as puzzled as you are. But I do know my own body. I know my own morals, too. I promise you I have not been with any other man. Joseph, I'm a virgin. I've kept myself for you. I promise you. Please believe me... I told this Gabriel it was all completely impossible. But...he said...well it wasn't going to happen in a natural kind of way... that this baby...this boy would be as a result of the power of God and the Holy Spirit coming over me. Most incredible of all that he is to be the Son of God.

Joseph: Mary...Mary, I really want to believe you. I know, you've never done anything to grieve me. But can't you see what this looks like. You can just imagine what the neighbours are going to say, can't you. Surely you must see my position.

Mary: I do, Joseph. I really do.

Counsellor: Couldn't you have been mistaken, Mary. Are you in some kind of trouble, perhaps, which is manifesting itself in this illusion of angels and the paranormal?

Mary: Absolutely not. I believe what is happening is God's will and however painful it may be it is a path I must tread. I must be obedient. I'd just love Joseph to be treading it with me. I want him to be there for me.

Counsellor: Well, Joseph?

Joseph: I tell you what, it'd take another vision from heaven for me to convince me to do that.