

# *The Christmas Rose*



*And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one.  
T.S. Elliot, Final lines from Four Quartets*

*by Terrence Leon Gargiulo*

Amelia<sup>1</sup> insisted on walking home alone. She needed time to think. Amelia kicked the dense tufts of icy snow. Her stomach was doing flips. She didn't know whether to be overwhelmed by the fears and anxieties vexing her or to give into the strange feelings of happiness and excitement competing for her attention. Amelia knew she would have to compartmentalize all of this. So Amelia did what she did best, she engaged her sharp, quick mind to organize and analyze the day's events. She ran the scenes over and over again in her head.

Amelia almost missed the announcement this morning. Getting to school on time was never a given. Amelia and her brother Beau needed to fight the relentless chaos of the war zone of what was otherwise known as their home. Truth be told, Amelia did an excellent job of shielding Beau from the worst of it. This was becoming harder and harder to do. Beau was getting older. He was noticing things and asking her lots of questions - questions that she did not know how to answer. The hurt in his bright, wide blue eyes crushed her heart. How could she ever help him understand?

The heavy dump of snow last night had made everything take more time this morning. Amelia was sure it was going to be a horrible day. Her room teacher Mr. Burrows shot her one of his infamous, impertinent glares when she burst into the room just as the bell rang. She plopped down in her seat and did her best job to disappear. Amelia was still bundled in her winter parker while the morning announcements droned on. She slipped into a residual fog of the morning's drama. She would have missed the announcement if it hadn't been for her best friend Jacelyn elbowing her in the ribs.

"Will Amelia Colombo please report to Mr. Orange's music room today between third and fourth periods?"



Joseph stroked his beard. His cheeks were turning rosy red. He was thankful that the blush overtaking his peachy, flesh cheeks was safely concealed from everyone in the room especially her. He could have never dared to imagine what he was seeing. He stared at the young girl being presented to him.

The Nazorean girl's eyes were cast down. Her head hung low with regal simplicity. She was imbued with a delicate, gentle demeanor. Joseph could smell the sweetness of her presence as if she was a perfume. He took long deep inhales to let the delight of her appearance permeate all of his senses. Joseph blinked his eyes trying to regain his composure. It must be her

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<sup>1</sup> What does Amelia mean? A blend of the medieval names Emilia and Amalia. In Latin, it means "industrious" and "striving." Its Teutonic meaning is "defender." source: <https://www.babycenter.com/baby-names-amelia-252.htm>

disposition he thought. What a humble, modest creature. He longed to see her face eye to eye although he was sure it would be more than his shy demeanor could bear.

Joseph relished the sight before him. The girl's head was bowed forward and held up by the conforming pillars of her rounded shoulders. Joseph wondered if he was being mesmerized by her air of obedience. But obedience to who or to what? Even in her modesty, this girl possessed a calm grounded self-assurance. Somehow he knew she was not a mere blind puppet beholden to her parents or Jewish customs, and laws.

There was a radiance dancing around her. Was it the light striking her simple, light blue tunic? Joseph wandered through the images and questions floating through his mind while combing his heart trying to make sense of what he was experiencing. He lingered in the goodness of the moment not wanting what he felt to ever fade.

Joseph was aware of Joachim's gaze, the girl's father, scrutinizing him from head to toe. Joachim had a knowing, gracious smile. Joseph had expected their meeting to be perfunctory and transactional in nature. He was after all seeking Joachim's daughter's hand in marriage. Joachim's soft, silent examination was devoid of judgment. Joseph felt a warm wave of blessing washing over him. Standing up to leave, Joseph let his eyes take in one last impression of the girl hoping it might quell his burning heart. Mary was her name.



Amelia stumbled her way through the first three periods of school. She did not want to get her hopes up but being called to Mr. Orange's room could only mean one thing...

Amelia's Abuela had a lovely singing voice. Things could be falling apart at home as they always were, but Abuela's house was a sanctuary. Amelia would sit in her Abuela's kitchen on a chair that had been designated as Amelia's special perch. It was underneath the framed picture of *La Negrita*<sup>2</sup>. Amelia would cradle her large cup of hot cocoa nursing it while her Abeula would sing the sweetest songs. Without realizing it, Amelia would start singing. The melodies would begin

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<sup>2</sup> According to tradition, La Negrita, the Black Virgin, is a small (less than a meter tall), probably mulatto, representation of the Virgin Mary found on this spot on August 2, 1635 by a native woman. As the story goes, when she tried to take the statuette with her, it miraculously reappeared twice back where she'd found it. The townspeople then built a shrine around her.

In 1824, the Virgin was declared Costa Rica's patron saint. La Negrita now resides on a gold, jewel-studded platform at the main altar in the *Basílica de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles* in Cartago. Each August 2, on the anniversary of the statuette's miraculous discovery, pilgrims from every corner of the country (and beyond) walk the 22 km from San José to the basilica. Many of the penitent complete the last few hundred meters of the pilgrimage on their knees. This basilica is equally visited by tourists and locals.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virgen\\_de\\_los\\_Angeles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virgen_de_los_Angeles)

tripping off of her tongue. Amelia would let these streaming notes of peace thaw her hurting, sensitive heart. She'd close her eyes and enter the music. Then Amelia would begin singing with selfless abandonment – sometimes with tears pouring down her cheeks. These gracious tears had nothing to do with the songs. Singing and the music gave Amelia unseen permission to express all the formless feelings and emotions she had to keep packed away. Amelia had to be strong for herself, and for Beau. In the norms dictating the rules of her life tears, emotions and vulnerability were not permissible in her house – at least not for the kids. There was another set of rules for her parents.

Once Amelia started singing, her Abuela would stop, sit quietly and beam at Amelia with pride. After this little ritual, Amelia was ready to talk and share everything with her precious Abuela. And boy could Amelia talk. Every detail of Amelia's day would come pouring out. Fortunately, there was no end to her Abuela's capacity to listen.

For the longest time, Amelia's Abuela had been encouraging her to sing for others. "Why don't you join the school's Glee Club?" she would ask. Amelia was too self-conscious - she could never do that. Besides, Amelia knew that she did not actually have a good voice. Her Abuela was just hopelessly loving and positive and believed that Amelia could do anything...

Amelia hadn't told her parents or even her Abuela that Mr. Orange had asked her to try out for a solo. Unbeknownst to Amelia, Mr. Orange one day had walked into the back of the music room before class when Amelia was singing Natasha Bedingfield new song *Unwritten*<sup>3</sup> to Jacelyn. He had a look of utter surprise. He had never heard Amelia sing. Mr. Orange insisted that Amelia audition for one of the solos in the Christmas concert.

Beau knew Amelia had auditioned for a solo. He heard Amelia talking to Jacelyn about it but Beau would never let the cat out of the bag. She loved how excited Beau could get. He had always been an unexpected bundle of joy to her from the moment she held him as a baby. Beau jumped up and down, waving his head from side to side. He grabbed her hand to twirl Amelia in circles. He kept repeating Am (that was Beau's nickname for Amelia), "Am, I know you are going to get a solo and you're going to be awesome! I can't wait for everyone to hear your beautiful voice."

Amelia knew her secret was safe with Jacelyn and Beau.



Joseph brushed the saw dust from his small work bench. Dusk was fast approaching which was good since he was finding it impossible to work. It was three months before his marriage to

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<sup>3</sup> See lyrics to song in Appendix 1

Mary. For the last nine months Joseph had labored hard to prepare for receiving Mary into his home.

Every morning and night Joseph fell to his knees thanking Adonai for the gift of this delightful creature. Joseph turned his heart searchingly towards Adonai for guidance. His guileless faith was a sure and steady tool; like a chisel or hammer he used as a carpenter. Joseph followed the Law as best as he could but it was the silent inner conversations he had with his Creator that sustained him. He would never dare to share his interior life with anyone – he wouldn't have been able to explain it and even if he could, no one would have understood it or believed him.

Joseph often wondered why people were so outwardly focused? Yes, maybe that was one of things that was so alluring about Mary. She was different. He felt she had an inner strength that could only come from being close to Adonai. Perhaps his relationship to Adonai was not as strange or as unusual as he thought. There must be others who seek Adonai in more ways than pursuing the righteousness through strict adherence to the Jewish Laws and customs.

Joseph's train of thought was broken when he heard someone knocking at his door. Breaking all customs, Mary had come to see him. He had not seen her since the day he had first set eyes upon her. It was her turn to search him. She looked deep into his eyes. He felt her eyes swimming with questions and the pupils of her eyes were slowly dancing from left to right.

Joseph observed that perplexity was written all across Mary's beautiful face. He was completely taken aback. This was the first time he was encountering Mary eye to eye, face to face and it was overwhelming. There was a strange calm urgency in her gaze. She held his eyes for what seemed like an eternity. It was as if in the space rapidly closing between them, she was receiving words to guide her lips.

Mary began in earnest. She lowered her eyes and spoke. "My husband, forgive my boldness that I dare to speak to you before our marriage. I must share with you news that is a great mystery to me. My message is hard to share and I imagine it will be even more difficult to receive. May I have your permission to speak?"

Joseph furrowed his brow and took a small step towards Mary. He bowed his head towards her indicating his soft, gentle permission for her to continue speaking. Mary's entire body seemed to take a deep breath. She continued, "While praying this morning I was visited by an angel of Adonai. He said to me,

<sup>28</sup>...“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

<sup>29</sup> [I] was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

<sup>30</sup> But the angel said to [me], “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

<sup>34</sup> “How will this be,” I asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered [me], “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail.”

<sup>38</sup> “I am the Lord’s servant,” [I] answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.”<sup>4</sup>

Joseph was stunned. How could this be? There was no air of falseness to either Mary’s words or her posture. Mary’s body appeared to go limp for a moment. She spoke as if another had spoken through her. Joseph had felt himself pulled into the scene. It was as if he was viewing what had happened to her but with the eyes of his heart. He felt no betrayal in her. Yet rising in him there were a flurry of hard to face feelings; suspicious, disappointment and disbelief. His dream shattered. His pure bride defiled.

Joseph was a man of faith committed to following the Law. In this moment, he did not want to think about the Law. According to the Law, Mary’s pregnancy was punishable by death. Mary waited for a response but Joseph remained quiet. There was both a question and an answer in the silence between them. He could not allow the tug of voices condemning Mary dominate his heart. The disappointment was stinging. Joseph tried to settle the tempest of accusatory thoughts wanting to plague him. He gazed longingly at Mary. She was the most noble and beautiful creature he had ever encountered.

Joseph had heard rumors flying from village to village. Strange things had been occurring in Judea. It had been said that Zechariah, the husband of Mary’s cousin Elizabeth and priest from the tribe of Levite had a vision while making an incense offering in the sanctuary. It was purported that Zechariah had become mute after the offering. Most people insisted he must have seen an angel. People were claiming that Zechariah’s wife Elizabeth who was old and barren was pregnant. Joseph was not interested in gossip but the fact that Mary’s story was somehow connected to these rumors gave him pause to wonder.

<sup>19</sup> Because Joseph was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose [Mary] to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gospel of Luke, 1: 28-38, New International Version (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> Gospel of Matthew 1: 19-21, New International Version (NIV)



Amelia paused her walk home in front of Mr. Johnson's house. She had to catch her breath not from the cold or vigorous pace through the banks of snow but from the assault of emotions. Amelia had auditioned for the show. She recalled all the details: one by one kids were called into Mr. Orange's room. He taught them a couple lines of a song. The whole thing took less than 5 minutes. Amelia did not think much of her audition she just remembered feeling glad it was over. She knew there would be no way she'd get a solo.

Amelia saw that Mr. Johnson's car was completely covered in snow. His wife had died last year. Amelia's Abuela had been good friends with Mrs. Johnson. She was from Costa Rica like Amelia's Abuela. Naturally, that became the beginnings of a deep and close friendship. Both ladies were active in their local church. They would get together and spend hours washing and ironing the linen clothes used on the church's altar for mass.

Mr. Johnson was always teasing them. He chided, "If you washed and ironed my shirts the way you ladies do these altar clothes I might be a holier man." No one saw Mr. Johnson much these days. He and his wife had been inseparable. Amelia knew Mr. Johnson was reeling from her death. Her heart went out to him. That's just the way Amelia was. She could be in the throes of tumultuous ups and downs and the incessant debilitating challenges of life at home and still have a capacity to connect with the hurts, needs, and perspectives of others.

Amelia began to brush the snow off Mr. Johnson car with her gloved hands. She knew that clearing the snow in this weather and at his age would not be a good idea. This would also give her more time to continue thinking about the day. Just as Amelia was about to clear the last bit of snow from Mr. Johnson's car she heard him open the door of his house. He poked his head through the door. One glance at Mr. Johnson and Amelia immediately felt a flood of heaviness in him. It tugged at her heart. He gave her a kind smile and began to thank her for the help.

Amelia did not even let him finish his words of gratitude before blurting out, "Mr. Johnson I found out today that I got a solo in the Christmas concert will you please come and hear me sing?"

Amelia was shocked. What possessed her? Was it her desire to share the joy she had been burying in herself to lift up Mr. Johnson's spirit? His quiet groan for a burst of light in a darker bout with grief swung open the doors of Amelia's private compartmentalization. She had had no plan to invite him to the concert. Telling Mr. Johnson about her solo before anyone else was preposterous. Pure insanity. Now that she had spilled the beans it felt right.

Amelia watched Mr. Johnson's face spread from a deliberate, polite kind smile to an efficacious grin. He was genuinely happy and excited for her. And he was having a moment of joy. So... a moment that had been a gift to her, came through her, and now was spreading to him. Amelia's insides were becoming warm with an infectious, serene steady stream of love. Maybe it was her imagination, but she felt Mr. Johnson's wife had somehow been involved and present in this moment.

Mr. Johnson stepped outside. Well, Amelia have you told your Abuela yet? She'll be ecstatic I'm sure. She used to talk non-stop about you. She says you have the voice and heart of an angel."

Amelia's eyes became wide. "Mr. Johnson you are the only person who knows about this. I walked home from school today because I wasn't ready to tell my Abuela. I'm still trying to get used to the idea. I'm scared."

He chuckled, "Amelia you just sing with that golden heart of yours. Your voice will be lush. I know it is going to quiet people's racing minds, give them a taste for wonder and bring them right to the heart of Christmas. You know Amelia, I was feel very sad today. I was looking around the house and seeing how it has none of the charm, and brightness of Mrs. Johnson's Christmas decorations. I was missing her in a bad way this afternoon. I think your kindness in stopping in front of my house, noticing my car buried in snow, helping me, and then divulging your Christmas concert solo secret with me first was a gift from my wife. Amelia you have given me a nugget of hope. I will definitely be at your concert. I can't wait to hear you sing."

Amelia could not speak. Hard emotions or good emotions, it did not matter. It was next to impossible for Amelia to animate things she parked deep inside of her into cogent words. Mr. Johnson did not mind. He knew what she was feeling and he could feel the effects of his words on her.

Amelia did what she did best. She jumped into action with a bold commitment, "Well Mr. Johnson, I bet my Abuela would love to come over to your house and help you decorate it. I'll talk to her this afternoon about it." Then just to be sure the whole thing had an air of authority, she added with an enthusiastic assertion, "and you can count on it!"

Amelia had a surge of self-conscious energy. She needed to leave as quickly as possible, she managed to wave goodbye to Mr. Johnson as she said, "Thank you Mr. Johnson, see you at my concert. Merry Christmas!"



Joseph put his arm around Mary to steady her as they walked. He felt his care and strength move through his muscles providing reassuring comfort to Mary. Joseph's face was set like flint. He had a responsibility – maybe it was more like a purpose. Wasn't he a simple carpenter? His



steps became driven, deliberate and quick paced. The fingers in his hand were tense with anxiety. He pursed his lips. He was surprised by a strange centeredness he was feeling in the confusing frenzy of events swirling around him. He realized he was not in control of what was happening. Joseph was in the eye of a storm.

Mary had been in labor for many hours. The child could be born any moment. It was proving impossible to find a place to rest. Joseph had been driven out of his village. He was seen as unclean after people learned of Mary's pregnancy. The vicious glares of people were cruel and the harsh words had been hard for Joseph to take. His ability to get day labor jobs as a carpenter had become difficult at best.

Joseph was happy that complying with the Roman census requiring all Jews to register in their home towns was providing cover for their escape. He and Mary would be heading to Bethlehem. Here it would a little easier for them to maintain some anonymity. Joseph clenched the few coins he had managed to save to make the trip. It would need to cover all of their expenses and pay for the sacrifices prescribed by the Law. According to the angel they were expecting a baby boy. Eight days after his birth they would bring him to the temple in Jerusalem to be circumcised.

Mary's groans of pain were growing stronger, and closer and closer together. Joseph lift his hand to knock on the door of an inn keeper in the little town of Bethlehem. A grumpy impatient man seethed at Joseph's inquiry. He was ready to slam the door shut when Joseph put his foot in the doorway to prevent another inn keeper from slamming a door on him. Joseph calmly pointed to Mary standing behind him and explained his wife was due any moment. Joseph pressed a coin into the palm of the inn keeper's hand.

The inn keeper's wife appeared to see what all the commotion was about. When she saw Mary she pushed her way through the door. She took Mary to a little cave that served as a stable on their property. She sat down on the ground and tried to make Mary comfortable by putting Mary's head on her lap. Then she took charge of the situation and began to instruct Joseph and her husband where to find all of the things they would need to bring this child into the world.



Amelia tried to get her golden curly hair to fall and lay on her shoulders but it seemed to have its own ideas. She grimaced at her reflection in the mirror. Amelia had been told by lots of people that she was a pretty girl but spending inordinate amounts of time getting dolled up was not her favorite pastime. She saw Beau's eyes appear in the mirror. They were eager, bright and beaming with pride. Amelia smiled. Beau gushed, "Am, you look beautiful!"

That was the best compliment she could have gotten. It wasn't Beau's words that delighted her. It was his unabashed love and affection. Amelia tried to toss off the comment retorting, "Well I hope I sound beautiful tonight."

Amelia made one last effort to try to discipline one of her curls into place but it was no use. She sighed and told Beau to put on his jacket and get ready to leave. They needed to hurry. Jacelyn's parents would be there any second to pick them up. She had to get to school early to warm-up her voice and rehearse one last time with Mr. Orange. He had been so patient and kind. Mr. Orange believed in her. He had encouraged her in ways she had never had any teacher do before.

Amelia was discovering that music was like a safe passageway through all of the dissonances and discordant uncertainties of life. And while music had always been part of her special relationship with her Abuela, Amelia was discovering new opportunities for making it a more deliberate part of her life.

Mr. Orange wanted her to audition in February for the County's Honor Glee Choir. He explained to Amelia that the group had opportunities to perform in major cities in other states. The thought of all this was overwhelming but incredibly exciting. Amelia had something she could make her own now. She was motivated. Amelia was determined to work hard to make Mr. Orange and her school proud of her.

Amelia's Abuela was supposed to pick up her parents to take them to the show. Amelia rushed into her Mom's bedroom. Her Mom was still in bed in her pajamas. She looked exhausted. Amelia's Mom called her over to the bed. "Amelia I know you're going to be wonderful tonight. I'm so proud of you. I can't wait to hear you."

Amelia's Mom spoke in slurred sentences. Amelia squeezed her eyes shut for a second to get control of herself. She felt like she was listening to a company's customer service automated message. Amelia opened her eyes and responded to her mother, "Yeah, I'm sure it will be really good tonight... thanks Mom. You better get up now and get dressed, Abuela will be here soon." Amelia shifted gears and tried to put an encouraging bounce back in her voice, "Mom, you want to get there early so you can get good seats. Sit on the right hand side of the auditorium that's where I'll be singing."

Amelia heard Jacelyn at the door. She hurried out of her Mom's bedroom and into the living room. Her father was passed out on the Lazy Boy chair with an empty wine bottle at his feet. Amelia fought back the anger and tears. She charged towards the door and grabbed Beau's hand to quickly get out of the house. Jacelyn gave Amelia a concerned look, "Amelia is everything okay?" Amelia flashed her best friend a brief hurt look while nodding her head up and down. Amelia had entrusted Jacelyn with quite a bit of what her family life was like but not everything. No one knew everything – not even her Abuela.

The auditorium was filling up fast. The sounds of the crowd were deafening to Amelia. She put her hands over her ears doing her best to concentrate. She kept going over every note of her solo. Mr. Orange had told Amelia he was proud of her. He had no idea how profound his words were. Mr. Orange's simple, sincere positive words meant the world to Amelia. She was not accustomed to getting many of them, and when she did, she treasured each one. Amelia was nervous but she was determined to not let Mr. Orange down.

Amelia ran to find Jacelyn to ask her to spot her parents in the audience. She wanted to know where they were sitting because she did not want to directly look their way during her solo. Jaclyn walked to the wings of the stage to pan the audience. Jacelyn saw Amelia's Abuela sitting with Mr. Johnson but there were no signs of Amelia's parents.

Mr. Burrows was helping Mr. Orange get everyone assembled. There was no more time. They were ready to start. All the kids had to take their places on the risers. Jacelyn was on the other side of the stage and Amelia could not speak to her. Right before the curtain was supposed to rise Amelia, lifting her hands and shrugging her shoulders, caught Jacelyn's eye. Jaclyn being a great friend, knew exactly what to do. She gave Amelia a thumbs up and a wink. Amelia smiled.

Amelia's solo was the second to last number. The concert progressed as a blur to Amelia. At last the time came for her solo. The stage lights were darkened and a backdrop with small white and blue lights gave the appearance of stars in the sky. A group of kids brought a crèche onto the stage and placed it right next to Amelia.

Amelia stepped into a small yellow spotlight. She felt Mr. Orange's eye catch hers. His confident, kind look stilled Amelia's racing heart. She closed her eyes just like she did when she sang with her Abuela. Amelia opened her mouth and the first notes of the song floated out with a deep haunting pitch.

Amelia felt her belly button warming up like a furnace on a cold night. She began to engage her heart to paint a picture of the song's words. This was Amelia's chance to let others know what she felt without telling them. The music could speak much better than her. Amelia left her body on the stage while she took a trip inside of her imagination. She dove deep into her disappointments, questions, betrayals, and hurts and in the middle of it all there was a glimmer of clear, bright hope. If this was a prelude to joy she wanted more of it. The music was overtaking her. This sense of soaring freedom was the gift of music.

### **Mary, Did You Know?**

Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?

Mary did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?

This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you

Mary did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?

Mary did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?  
When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God

Mary did you know? Mary did you know? Mary did you know?

Mary did you know? Mary did you know? Mary did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again  
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the lamb

Mary did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?  
Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?  
Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect lamb?  
That sleeping child you're holding is the great I am

Mary did you know? Mary did you know? Mary did you know?

Mary did you know? Mary did you know? Mary did you know? Oh

Mary did you know?

Songwriters: Buddy Greene / Mark Lowry

Amelia sung the last words of the song as a whisper. The auditorium was perfectly still. She did not want this peace of silence to end. Then this fragile, powerful tender sacred shell of wonder was broken by a thunder of applause. Amelia did not want any credit. She was thrilled by the validation of her efforts but she knew something had worked in her and with her to bring the music to life.

The show came to a rousing end and Amelia let loose a long exhale. Crabby Mr. Burrows was the first to walk up to her, take her hand and shake it vigorously telling Amelia that she had done an absolutely amazing job. She had to store up that compliment. Then she looked out into the audience and saw Beau running to give her a hug. He had a bright red rose and handed it to her. "Am you're the best. That was amazing. I knew you were going to be great tonight. I love you!" Then he hugged her for about the fifth time.

Amelia saw Mr. Johnson and her Abuela approaching her. Her parents were nowhere to be seen. She wasn't surprised. She was sad but not angry. The performance had enlarged her heart.

Amelia's Abuela was beaming. "Amelia, my strong, courageous, beautiful song bird you were a messenger tonight. Do you realize you transported all of us to the manager with Mary and Joseph? May you be always be blessed dear child.

That's just how Amelia's Abuela was – she could find God at work in all things at all times. She called Jesus her All in All. Her faith was a pillar of strength that Amelia knew she wanted to cultivate more and more in her life.

Mr. Johnson looked relaxed and happy. He extended a white rose to Amelia. “Brava! Amelia that was one fine and memorable performance. You have a bright future in front of you. Everything your Abuela said about you is true!”

Beau had gone over to look at the crèche on the stage. He motioned Amelia to join him. “Am, let’s give baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph the roses. Beau melted her heart. That was the perfect thing to do and he knew it. She took his hand and they kneeled together and placed the white and red roses next to the Holy Child.



She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to

them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

<sup>21</sup> On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.<sup>6</sup>



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<sup>6</sup> Gospel of Luke 2: 7-21 New International Version (NIV)

**APPENDIX 1: LYRICS UNWRITTEN BY NATASHA BEDINGFIELD****Unwritten**

Natasha Bedingfield

I am unwritten, can't read my mind, I'm undefined  
I'm just beginning, the pen's in my hand, ending unplanned  
Staring at the blank page before you  
Open up the dirty window  
Let the sun illuminate the words that you could not find  
Reaching for something in the distance  
So close you can almost taste it  
Release your inhibitions  
Feel the rain on your skin  
No one else can feel it for you  
Only you can let it in  
No one else, no one else  
Can speak the words on your lips  
Drench yourself in words unspoken  
Live your life with arms wide open  
Today is where your book begins  
The rest is still unwritten  
Oh, oh, oh  
I break tradition, sometimes my tries, are outside the lines  
We've been conditioned to not make mistakes, but I can't live that way  
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The rest is still unwritten  
The rest is still unwritten  
The rest is still unwritten  
Oh, yeah, yeah  
Songwriters: Danielle A. Brisebois / Natasha Anne Bedingfield / Wayne Steven Jr Rodrigues  
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