

a script from  
**skit**guys.com

**“The Christmas Dilemma Ensemble”**

by  
Skit Guys Studios

**SYNOPSIS**

When an infant Savior arrives, five ordinary people find their lives upended and forever changed. In this ensemble script, the stories of Mary, Joseph, a Wise Man, a Shepherd, and the Innkeeper all point to the miraculous birth of Jesus and the impact His life will have on them (and the world).

This full play incorporates pieces of the individual scripts from *The Christmas Dilemma* series and creates one moving piece that can be performed for a special Christmas service or event.

**CAST (in order of appearance)**

Stuart, the innkeeper  
Patron  
Joseph  
Estelle, wife of Stuart  
Shepherd  
Wiseman  
Drummer Boy  
Mary  
Paperboy

**PROPS**

Dollar bill  
Cloth  
3 Coffee Cups  
Bagel  
Glass of water  
Pad of paper  
Bucket  
Wash Cloths  
Briefcase  
Business card  
Drumsticks  
TicTacs  
Large, old suitcase  
Prop Baby (or you can alternatively have a real baby Jesus)  
Newspapers

## SET

You can go as big or as small as you want with the set! It's written to make it easy on those who do not have the time or budget for a large set. But for those that do have the time and budget? Go crazy!

Go Small- few bales of hay, a stool, maybe a wooden post fence

Go Big- courtyard between the barn and the inn. Have a small pen upstage for animals with bales of hay everywhere. Make a faux barn with doors. On the other side of the stage, have the back porch of the inn with a door leading into the inn. You could even have live animals!

## COSTUMES

Stuart- wears pants, long sleeve shirt with sleeves rolled up, work apron with pockets

Patron- casual pants and shirt, nothing fancy or trendy

Joseph- pants, long sleeve t-shirt, dressed very humbly; clothes are worn

Estelle- long skirt or pants, blouse with a sweater or cardigan

Shepherd- working clothes, overalls, work boots, cowboy hat

Wiseman- tweed suit with bowtie

Drummer Boy- pants, shirt (or band uniform)

Mary- long skirt, sweater, dressed very humbly

## HOW

As we stated in the "SET" suggestions, this play is designed to be simple *or* elaborate. We wanted to make something to fit your event no matter what your budget or space. The time on this play is approximate and may be different for you depending on how you choose to use the script. Here are some ideas on how to use this play:

- Have a dinner theatre. Serve dinner in your fellowship hall and perform this play as a Christmas event or outreach. Have a barnyard theme when decorating using lanterns and twinkle lights. Have nighttime sound effects like crickets and owls.
- Insert music in between the scenes. This is a perfect time to get your kids choir involved. Or simply lead your audience in some Christmas carols.
- Use your space! No matter where you are, get creative. Give your actors movement, don't just sit on a stool or hay bale and deliver your lines, unless the direction calls for it. Make the story interesting with the blocking (the movement in the play).
- Perform this in a barn! Wouldn't THAT be cool?

## TIME

Approximately 60 minutes

SCENE ONE

*Stuart, the innkeeper, enters while yelling to his wife offstage.*

**Stuart:** Estelle, Estelle! Put the bed down! I said put the bed down. Estelle, sweetheart, please put the bed down, I'll be right there.

I'm trying to get some of my tools. Estelle put the bed down. *(To audience)* We're trying to fix a bed in one of our rooms. She thinks that I intentionally try to make her mad. I would never try to do something to make my dear, sweet Estelle mad.

*(To wife offstage)* Honey, put the bed down, I'll be right there. I said, put the bed down. Oh, hold the bed up. I'm trying to find some tools, yes, tools! Put the bed down, I said... oh, hold the bed up. *(To audience)* It has been chaos outside everywhere. You see, Caesar has issued this decree that everyone in the land must be counted. Everyone has come back to their hometown to register, and Bethlehem is packed with people. I've never seen anything like this before! The vendors are out selling like mad, the economy has never seen better days! Quite amazing. I tell you, it would take a miracle to top what I've seen in Bethlehem over these past few weeks. A complete miracle!

*Patron enters.*

**Patron:** Excuse me, can you describe your rooms for me?

**Stuart:** Pardon me?

**Patron:** Your rooms. I need a place to stay.

**Stuart:** I'm sorry, but all my rooms are full. There are no vacancies.

**Patron:** Man, are you tellin' me! This whole census thing... I mean, I wasn't even gonna come and then my CPA said I had to so... here I am!

**Stuart:** You're out of luck here, sir.

**Patron:** Aw, c'mon, you gotta have something! I've got money! And I know I didn't misread the sign.

**Stuart:** Sign? What are you talking about? I turned the vacancy sign off about half an hour ago.

**Patron:** No, no. Not that. The star over there, ya know? I've been followin' that star for like half an hour. And I just KNEW it meant vacancies. Apparently, it meant UN-vacancies. I mean, that star there? You can't deny it's shining right over your inn... ahh. Come to think of it, it's really not over

your inn. It's over your barn. But you wouldn't put people in your barn, would'ja!

**Stuart:** No, not even a pregnant woman.

**Patron:** What?

**Stuart:** Nothing. Keep talking.

**Patron:** Well, where can I stay? There has to be something around Bethlehem...

**Stuart:** There is a motel, let's see...one, two, three...six motels down!

**Patron:** Oh yeah, Motel 6! Looks like they left their light on for me.

**Stuart:** Looks like it.

**Patron:** Well, thank you and Merry Census!

**Stuart:** What?

**Patron:** Merry Census. I mean this has got to be the biggest time of the year, economically. I even trademarked the phrase! Merry Census!

**Stuart:** Oh! Ok, Merry Census!

**Patron:** You owe me a dollar!

*Stuart gives him a dollar, and Patron exits.*

*Talks to audience...*

**Stuart:** Forgive me for being so rude, my name is Stuart and I own this inn. My wife Estelle would probably tell you differently. She'd tell you that I only work here...part time...half-heartedly even at that.

*(To wife)* Estelle, sweetheart, put the bed down. I said put the bed down. No, I didn't say shed a few pounds, I said...oh, never mind, hold the bed up.

*(To audience)* The evening is upon us and I've already turned people away. At least half a dozen people if not more. There is one gentleman, fisherman and his wife. Newborn baby in her arms, John, I think they said his name was. I visited with them awhile and they said they hoped their son would find something better to do with his life than haul fish all day. When I asked what they had in mind, they said they hoped he would write books. I inquired about the kind of books and they began to explain in great detail about how they wanted him to write about the meaning of life.

Now, I'm a simple man who never has even attempted to ask those questions. I looked at them and told them, "It would probably take a divine revelation to show your son John the meaning of life." The father looked at me and said, "That's what I'm hoping for."

There was this other couple that came late tonight. They have made a lasting impression on me. The two looked very tired. I was on the front porch with my wife when they came up to us; the girl was on this donkey. She said to me, "Sir, we are very tired. Can you please find a place for us at your inn?" I told them, like I told the people before them, I was so sorry but there was just no room here. She looked at me and said, "You don't understand, my husband has been on foot all this time. We've been traveling ninety miles and we are very exhausted. Don't you have anything?"

Now, please know I'm a businessman first. Always have been! I couldn't do anything. Bethlehem was packed! So, when I say to you I was about to tell them to leave for the second time, don't think me rude. *(Pause)* My wife did. She did something to me at that moment, she did this thing where she jabs me in the ribs with her finger. I only had two options at this point. "A" find a place for them to sleep, or "B" find myself a place to sleep other than this inn.

My wife, Estelle, she saw something which I totally missed. The young girl, she was pregnant. I knew right then I couldn't leave them out in the cold night. I started to think where I could put them. The only place I could think of was the barn. My mother would roll over in her grave if she knew I was thinking of sending someone there. It's full of stench, manure, animals, hay. No place to put two people! It's all I had. I said to them, "You can have the barn. There's nothing else I can offer. It's yours if you want it."

They both smiled at me and said, "Thank you". They started to walk off and the husband turned around and said, "God bless you..." then looked at his wife, smiled, put his hand on her stomach and said, "...because He's about to bless us." I tell you, there was something different about them. If only you could have seen the way he treated her. The way they treated each other! It was such a sight to see. I've tried to think of a word to describe this couple. The only word that seems to run through my mind is kind of a quirky word. We don't hear the word very much but it's the only word that seems to fit. The word is—

*Stuart is interrupted by Joseph coming on stage. He is humble and friendly, but also seems stressed.*

**Joseph:** I hate to bother you...

**Stuart:** Huh? No bother at all. What can I do for you?

**Joseph:** I'm afraid the birth will be sooner rather than later. I need something to wrap the baby in. Anything will do, if you have it.

**Stuart:** Oh, goodness! Well, of course. I'll find something. Stay right here. So many people everywhere...this way I know where to find you. Estelle! Keep holding the bed 'cause I'm on to something else!

*Joseph watches Stuart go. As he stands alone, he looks troubled and anxious. Joseph begins praying.*

**Joseph:** This isn't how I thought it would be, God.

I don't want Mary to hear this, God, but I'm...overwhelmed. This child is on the way and I'm...not ready. Lord, *this* is how you saw Mary's and my life forming together? I was born into the lineage of David, but seriously? *This*? What business do I have raising a...king?

You know me as a humble man, not an irresponsible one. But look where I've landed us. In a barn!

*Feeling more distraught.*

I've planned things out my whole life. I worked hard. Saved my money. I'm trying to do everything right here, Lord! Others planned for the census, got here early, and what do I do? I show up with my pregnant wife, hours from birth, after a ninety-mile journey, and I can't even find a room! This isn't how I imagined us bringing a child into the world... especially Yours.

*Long, regretful pause.*

I don't talk about dreams much. I'm a carpenter, not a poet. What good are dreams except to disappoint us in the end? That's my father talking, I guess.

*Shrugs, looks back to barn.*

Mary, she tried to tell me that You had other plans for us. I didn't believe her. I thought the worst and tried every which way to get out of it all. And then You showed up...

*Laughs to himself.*

...in a dream. Maybe that's the only time I would listen to you long enough—in a dead sleep!

*Laughs again, then settles a little into himself. With a bit of resolve and submission...*

I know...I know...I am certainly not the first man to have his plans rearranged by You, God. Won't be the last either. But—

I gotta tell You, this one feels like it's set with thorns. But also like...it's going to change the world.

*Glances back to the barn.*

It's just that I'm not sure I'm a "world changing" kind of father. There's a lot more men in this world who are braver than me. Look, I know who I am—you got the wrong guy. What I'm trying to say, God, is that...I'm not enough.

*Beat.*

But if You see a flicker of something inside this sawdust covered heart of mine...then I'm willing to take a detour.

*Small laugh.*

A really big detour. But I promise you this, even if I don't feel like enough, I'll still give you all that I have.

*Stuart returns with cloth.*

**Stuart:** Here you are! This should work just fi...*(noticing his somberness)*...my boy, are you all right?

*Joseph doesn't immediately answer. But then, after regarding the cloth, he offers a reassuring smile.*

**Joseph:** God is taking care of everything. *(Takes the cloth)* Thank you.

*Stuart watches Joseph exit and contemplates for a moment.*

**Stuart:** That word I was thinking of when it came to those two was..."Holy." Yes, that is the only word that can describe what I witnessed when they came to my inn and in some odd way, just now...holy. That couple, they are just different. Speaking of different, my wife...

*(Yelling offstage)* Estelle! Are you still holding the bed up? Why don't you just put it down! *(Yelling louder)* I said... *(softening, to himself)* holy.

*(Laughing to himself)* To think I was almost too busy to catch this. Holy. I'll be right there, sweetheart. I'll be right there.

SCENE TWO

*Estelle is onstage, taking in the night.*

*Stuart is looking for Estelle and he begins calling for her offstage.*

**Stuart:** Estelle! Estelle! Where are you? The bed is finished. *(Enters carrying 2 coffee cups and a bagel)* Estelle...what are you doing?

**Estelle:** Look at that star!

**Stuart:** *(looks)* It's a star. What about it?

**Estelle:** It's huge, so bright. I've never seen anything like it!

**Stuart:** A star is a star is a star, Estelle. Come on inside. *(Pauses. Stuart can see Estelle is too fixated on the star)* You aren't going to budge, are you? Well, here, at least drink your coffee.

**Estelle:** No. Coffee will keep me up.

**Stuart:** Not this coffee. It's decaffeinated. Drink up.

**Estelle:** *(sips coffee)* But it tastes like regular. Are you sure this is decaf?

**Stuart:** Oh, yes. Quite sure. That's the secret of the new "Pharaoh's naturally brewed decaffeinated coffee," it tastes like regular, but it's decaffeinated.

**Estelle:** Mmmm. Good cup of coffee. This star. I'm mesmerized by it. I wonder if it's guiding some weary traveler tonight. Can you imagine what it would be like to be out in the middle of nowhere and your only guide is a star? *(Grabs bagel from Stuart)*

**Stuart:** I think it would take a very wise man to answer that question.

**Estelle:** Since you're not busy, rub my shoulders.

**Stuart:** Why should I rub your shoulders?

**Estelle:** Because I was only holding up a bed for ten minutes, rub my shoulders!

*Estelle sits.*

**Stuart:** All right, all right. *(Putting down coffee cup to rub shoulders)*

**Estelle:** *(eating bagel)* Good bagel, where did you get it?

**Stuart:** Like it? I bought a whole slew of them at old man Moses' Deli down the street.

**Estelle:** Is this butter on it?

**Stuart:** No, it's a butter substitute. It has half the fat of regular margarine or butter.

**Estelle:** Are you sure it's not butter?

**Stuart:** It's not butter.

**Estelle:** I can't believe it's not butter.

**Stuart:** I tell you, Estelle, we are probably the only two people up tonight. I mean the whole town of Bethlehem is asleep. After the day we've had, I don't know what we're still doing up. We're up and those shepherds are up. Why do they keep going into our barn?

**Estelle:** Maybe they know the couple inside.

**Stuart:** Oh yes, the couple. What are their names?

**Estelle:** Mary and...

**Stuart:** Joe, I think. *(Grabs coffee cup)* Take one more good look at that star and then let's turn in. Let's go.

**Estelle:** The star. What do you think it means?

**Stuart:** *(pause)* Blue light special, I don't know.

**Estelle:** I'm serious. Do you think it's a God-thing?

**Stuart:** A what?

**Estelle:** Maybe God has a purpose for that star.

**Stuart:** Estelle, you're getting loopy on me again. We have been down this road too many times. It's just a star. Let's go inside.

**Estelle:** It could happen!

**Stuart:** Enough already!

**Estelle:** Stuart, give it a chance. It could mean something.

**Stuart:** *(upset)* Enough! *(Freezes)*

**Estelle:** *(to audience)* My husband, Stuart. He's a good man. I feel sometimes he's too busy and he misses the blessings of life. Don't get me wrong... he's a sweet, kind, and gentle husband. Other times, he's a perfect example of why mothers eat their young. You see, I have a joy in my

heart for God. I'd like to share that joy with him...if only he'd let me.  
*(Estelle freezes)*

**Stuart:** *(to audience)* My wife Estelle. A marvelous woman. There's no doubt about it. Sometimes I feel she gets a little carried away with what she calls these "God-things." She tries to correlate everything in her life somehow around God. I mean, a perfect example: the star. She wants to parallel that star somehow with God. It's just absurd. At other times, I look at the inner peace she has, and I must say I'd like some of it. I always find myself shying away from it because I feel like I wouldn't be good enough to understand the joy Estelle finds with God. I would like to know the faith Estelle has but I get too fearful. I do wish sometimes that God would just reveal himself in the flesh. God in the flesh, now that would be a miracle, wouldn't it? My wife...she sees miracles all day long, and I guess I keep looking for one.

**Together:** *(Stuart puts down coffee cup and places his hands on Estelle, which makes her unfreeze)* I guess...I desire intimacy.

**Estelle:** What did you say?

**Stuart:** I didn't say anything. What did you say?

**Estelle:** I didn't. I thought you...

**Stuart:** I heard you, something about "Macy's" or something.

**Estelle:** Well, "Macy's" is having their winter sale.

**Stuart:** It doesn't matter. Do me a favor and tell those shepherds to get out of our barn. The couple in there needs their sleep. Tell them they have to pay rent like everyone else!

**Estelle:** Oh, all right. Don't get in such a huff. I'll be right back.

*Estelle exits.*

**Stuart:** *(looking at star)* You know, maybe Estelle is right. Perhaps the star does have something to do with God. Could it be? No, now Stuart get a hold of yourself. Quit thinking such foolishness. But what if? What if the star really was a "God-thing?" *(Shakes his head)* That's just crazy—

*Suddenly Shepherd comes rushing toward Stuart, looking panicked.*

**Shepherd:** This is crazy, this is crazy!

**Stuart:** That's what I was just saying. Wait, what's crazy?

**Shepherd:** I know what's going on inside your barn. I've seen inside your barn!

**Stuart:** You smell like my barn.

**Shepherd:** Well, that's just the sheep dip. I'm a shepherd.

**Stuart:** How do you know about my barn?

**Shepherd:** Because of that star! And them alien angel things. We were just there. Minding our own sheep. And they were just all like "baaaaa" and then all of the sudden came all these alien angel things and they were all like *(angel singing sound)* "ahhhhhh!" And we were all like *(scared)* "AHHHHHH!" That angel alien was like, "Fear not!"

**Stuart:** And then what?

**Shepherd:** What what?

**Stuart:** After the "baaaa" and the "ahhhh" and the "AH!"?

**Shepherd:** And then they downloaded it into my brain.

**Stuart:** They downloaded what into your brain?

**Shepherd:** *(very fast, like in a trance)* Fear not! Behold, I bring you great news of a great joy that shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David, which is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find the babe wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. *(Out of trance, talking to Stuart again)* And then all the sudden there's a bunch of them alien angel things! And they were all singing and praising and everything and we were scared and then we looked at each other and said, "Let's go see if what they said is true!" And we went inside your barn and then all the sudden, *(makes a popping noise with his finger inside his cheek—pop!)* out came that baby just like they said. JUST LIKE THEY SAID!

**Stuart:** How do you know all this?

**Shepherd:** It's etched in my brain...! I gotta tell everybody. EVERYBODY! *(Gasps! Grabs Stuart by the shirt)* Did you hear that? *(Let's go of shirt)*

My mouth has gone dry as winter wheat. Can I bother you for a glass of water?

**Stuart:** Why not? Stay right here.

*Stuart disappears, and the Shepherd tries to catch his breath. He is trembling with excitement.*

**Shepherd:** I seen my share of lambs bein' born, and its special every time but this...

*Trying to comprehend.*

That big 'ole angel tellin' us to go find a newborn Messiah...

*Removes his hat, like he's remembering his church manners.*

I reckon I never held a newborn. No...no...people don't much like how we shepherds smell. Don't blame 'em. Sheepin' ain't a clean business.

*Back to excited.*

I can't hardly believe this is happening! I gotta get a grip. I gotta...I gotta tell people. That's what I gotta do...I gotta tell people, I gotta share the news. I gotta let 'em know...

*Starting to head off to tell people, but then his spirits diminish a little.*

Who's gonna listen to me? It's not like I got much of a reputation to speak of. Nobody looks twice my way. And I'm gonna talk about an angel sightin' and the Messiah comin'?

*Thinking it through.*

Okay, okay...hold on, maybe I should get my manners on, that's it. And remember that proper way to talk that my mama rambled on about when I was a kid. Clean up a little, get the dirt out from underneath my nails and brush my—

*Gets a little riled up.*

Who am I kiddin'? There ain't no hidin' this man. Maybe I oughta just stay here. What am I supposed to do with all these sheep, anyway? Just run off and leave 'em? That goes against every shepherdin' code ever written.

*Something strikes him.*

Why'd those angels come to me? There's a hundred people more important than me in this valley. It just don't make sense. None of it makes sense. Maybe He wants things turned on its head. I mean you got a whole history of Him doin' that.

Maybe that's it. Maybe it's not supposed to make sense. Maybe that's what God wants.

'Cause the people those angels came to see tonight, well, we got ragamuffin in our blood.

*Laughing at the thought.*

PURCHASE  
And this seems like the most important news to ever be shared on God's green earth.  
*Listing off what he remembers, but this time thoughtfully and slowly. He is understanding it.*

He said good news...good news...that's gonna bring great joy to all people. The Savior, he's been born today in Bethlehem. And we'll recognize him by a very specific sign: he's gonna be wrapped in cloth, lying in—and this was the real kicker—a manger. A Messiah in a feeding trough. Even my family was better off than that. I mean, we didn't have two sticks to rub together, but at least I had a bed to lay my head in when I was a kid. I've been waiting my whole life for this Messiah. And now it seems He might just be more like me than I thought was ever possible.

*Starts to really sink in. He begins to soften.*

I think that angel was a little off...that's not good news. It's the best news ever.

*As he exits, he yells to offstage...*

C'mon boys!

*Just as **Shepherd** disappears, **Stuart** returns with a glass of water. He looks around for the **Shepherd**.*

**Stuart:** Hello? Where did he go?

*He takes a moment, looks up at the star, sips the water.*

**Stuart:** Maybe, just maybe...that star—

***Estelle** comes running in a panic.*

**Estelle:** Stuart come quick! Come quick! It's happening!

**Stuart:** What is it, Estelle?

**Estelle:** The girl. It's happening right now.

**Stuart:** What girl?

**Estelle:** Mary.

**Stuart:** What are you...?

**Estelle:** She's going to have the baby! Come on.

*Estelle and Stuart start to exit.*

**Stuart:** This is going to be a very long night.

### SCENE THREE

*The next morning. Stuart is sitting on stool writing something on pad of paper. Estelle enters with a bucket and some wash cloths.*

**Estelle:** Oh, what a night.

**Stuart:** Yes, it has been quite an evening.

**Estelle:** What are you doing?

**Stuart:** I'm just looking at the star before it fades away. How's the new baby boy?

**Estelle:** Doing great. Just cleaning him up now.

**Stuart:** How's Mary?

**Estelle:** She's fine. And Joe...he's sleeping.

**Stuart:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Estelle:** They named the baby Jesus.

**Stuart:** A very good name.

**Estelle:** What are you doing?

**Stuart:** Estelle, look up there. What do you see?

**Estelle:** Have you ever noticed you always answer my questions with a question?

**Stuart:** I do? You know, Estelle, I think the world is starving. Starving for hope, starving for peace, starving for love. What about you?

**Estelle:** I ate already. See, you did it again.

**Stuart:** Did what?

**Estelle:** You answered my question with a question.

**Stuart:** I did? Where was I?

**Estelle:** Everyone was starving.

**Stuart:** Yes, of course. I don't know if you know this about me but I'm starting to take this "pain and suffering" thing very, very seriously...

**Estelle:** I bet you are.

**Stuart:** And that is why I was sitting here thinking...

**Estelle:** Imagine, sitting and thinking.

**Stuart:** Then it finally just hit me...

**Estelle:** Hope it didn't hurt too much...

**Stuart:** What is the one beacon of hope, of peace, of joy and of love still left in this world?

**Estelle:** *(sarcastic)* Donuts.

**Stuart:** No, Estelle. Be serious.

**Estelle:** I don't know. I have to go. I'll be back in a bit. *(Exits)*

**Stuart:** I think it may be God. I think God is trying to tell us something through that star...I just don't know what it...I can't seem to put my finger on it...I can't seem to place it.

*Wiseman enters. The next round of dialogue between the Wiseman and Stuart is rapid fire. But be careful not to go too fast! Your audience needs to be able to understand you. Find a good rhythm, the idea is a good back and forth.*

**Wiseman:** Is this the place?

**Stuart:** The place?

**Wiseman:** Yes, yes the place. The place. Come on, I haven't got time to waste.

**Stuart:** All right, all right. Don't be in such haste. What's in the case?

**Wiseman:** The case?

**Stuart:** The case.

**Wiseman:** *(looks around)* I guess this is the place.

**Stuart:** Your name?

**Wiseman:** Reuben King. *(Shakes hands with Stuart)*

**Stuart:** King. Stuart.

**Wiseman:** You can call me Ru.

**Stuart:** You can call me Stu. *(Point to each other)*

**Wiseman:** *(hands business card to Stuart)* Here's my card. I deal with impossibilities.

**Stuart:** Impossibilities?

**Wiseman:** That's my job.

**Stuart:** All right, all right. What's in the case?

**Wiseman:** A barrage.

**Stuart:** A barrage of what?

**Wiseman:** Of bulk.

**Stuart:** What kind of bulk?

**Wiseman:** Expensive bulk.

**Stuart:** For whom?

**Wiseman:** For the baby.

**Stuart:** The baby?

**Wiseman:** The baby in the barn.

**Stuart:** The baby in the barn? How did you know about the baby in the barn?

**Wiseman:** Followed the star.

**Stuart:** The star?

**Wiseman:** I followed the star to the baby in the barn in Bethlehem.

**Stuart:** You followed the star to the baby in the barn in Bethlehem? The star. The baby. Impossible.

**Wiseman:** That's my job.

*Drummer Boy enters.*

**Drummer Boy:** Okay, who ordered the drummer?

**Wiseman:** Ah! the Little Drummer Boy.

**Stuart:** The Little Drummer Boy? What's he for?

**Wiseman:** He's going to bang on his drums for the baby in the barn in Bethlehem.

**Stuart:** He's going to bang on his drums for the baby in the barn in Bethlehem! Beautiful. What ballad?

**Drummer Boy:** Pa rum pa pum pum.

**Stuart:** *(getting into the excitement of the guests)* Pa rum pa pum pum! You play your drums for him!

**Drummer Boy:** *(singing)* I'll play my best for him. Pa rum pa pum pum.

**Wiseman:** *(singsong)* Rum pa pum pum.

**Stuart:** *(singsong ending)* Rum pa pum pum.

**Drummer Boy:** Hey catchy!

*Drummer Boy exits.*

**Stuart:** Okay, Ru, no more babbling around. What's your beef?

**Wiseman:** Can I bounce a secret off you?

*Wiseman and Stuart lean in toward each other to tell secret. Wiseman freezes.*

**Stuart:** *(to audience)* As he leaned in closer to me, I could only think of one thing. *(Reaches into apron. Pulls out Tic Tac container)* Tic Tac?

**Wiseman:** *(unfreezes and takes one)* Tasty, and only one and a half calories per mint.

**Stuart:** Bingo!

**Wiseman:** I won't lie to you. I'm going to be straight with you. I'm going to be frank. I'm going to be candid, I'm going to be curt, I'm going to be Captain Kirk. I'm not going to pull the wool over your eyes. I'm just going to lay all my cards on the table.

**Stuart:** Get on with it, Ru.

**Wiseman:** All right, Stu. The baby in the barn.

**Stuart:** What about the baby in the barn?

**Wiseman:** The baby in the barn is the Son of God.

**Stuart:** The baby in the barn is the Son of God?

**Wiseman:** Yes, the Son of God.

**Stuart:** Impossible.

**Wiseman:** That's my job. Now, be a friend and get me a...

**Stuart:** ...yes? A what?

**Wiseman:** A, uh...uh...

**Stuart:** Yeeesss? *(Beat)* Decaf coffee?

**Wiseman:** Yes! It was right on the tip of my tongue. Thank you!

*Stuart rolls his eyes and exits.*

*The Wiseman glances back to make sure he's alone. He picks up his old, large, sturdy traveling suitcase This man-of-the-world looks nervous.*

**Wiseman:** Oh boy...do I have a problem. A big, big problem if there ever was one.

*Stops to catch his breath, talks to his suitcase like it's listening.*

You, my friend, have been my quiet companion for all these years, by my side whenever I needed you. I need you now! What to do? What to do?

*Sits atop it.*

You and I, we've been on some long trips together, but none so fantastic as this one! Nooo siree. Not a chance—

*Winces.*

Oy! Back's seizing up again!

*He stands, stretches his back out, then pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and buffs the marks out of the old suitcase as he talks.*

I'll admit it, but only to you, that there was a moment I thought we were on some kind of celestial snipe hunt. Certainly, we could all see the star. Quite a diva among the rest, if you know what I mean.

*Chuckles.*

But after a while, you begin to doubt yourself. A moving star? Get outta here. Stars aren't supposed to move.

*Glances at his suitcase.*

*Purchase*  
I know, you've seen me doubt myself through many of our—in hindsight, mind you—ill-conceived expeditions. But this...this was much different. We realized it as soon as the king called us to his chambers, immediately as we arrived in Jerusalem. King Herod himself!

*Gives a final wipe, stands.*

*Script*  
Asking what we knew of the star. This baby. The possibility of a new king of the Jews. Curious to see all the treasures we brought.

*Returns the handkerchief to its pocket.*

I've had plenty of audiences with royalty, but King Herod is surely one of the most intimidating of men. Oh sure, all smiles and handshakes, with a seemingly benign request: let him know when we find the baby. He, too, would like to worship this new king.

*Lowers his voice.*

But instructions came in the night, the kind that come in dreams. Dreams of Biblical proportions...

*Chuckles nervously.*

Can you believe I am saying these things?

*He thinks through the words, they're heavy.*

*Remove*  
Don't return to the king. That simple. That straightforward. And so, this morning, I find myself in this dilemma. Do I listen to earthly authority, or the godly type?

*Stoops next to his briefcase.*

*Watermark*  
The world traveler in me, the 'wiseman' in my head, so to speak, tells me to return to Herod, give him what he wants, get a hearty pat on the back and an "attaboy" from the man on top. Nothing wrong with climbing the ranks, is there?

*Quieter.*

*At*  
But my heart tells a different story. That Child is worth every ounce of obedience I have to give, even if I don't quite understand the roadmap yet.

*Stands.*

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I've learned a few things over the years, you know. Sometimes you gotta do the thing that doesn't make sense. It's what got us here in the first

place, right? A mysterious star. The King of the Jews born in a barn. What has been ordinary up to this point?

*Picks up his suitcase.*

If following a star seemed difficult, I think following this little King may be an even greater challenge.

*Pats his briefcase.*

Yes, my friend—looks like you and I are going to be taking the long way home.

*Wiseman exits. Stuart returns with coffee. Again! He's been abandoned. Just then Estelle comes on stage, holding the tiny baby, with Mary following.*

**Estelle:** Stuart! Coffee this late?

**Stuart:** It's decaf. Estelle, what are you doing? The baby should be asleep.

**Estelle:** We had to get out of there. The noise was just too much.

**Stuart:** The noise? What noise?

**Mary:** Well, there was this boy and I assume he meant well but he kept banging on his drums. That's all he would do is bang and bang and bang.

**Stuart:** *(looking at the baby but afraid to touch)* So, this is the Son of God. So magnificent. *(Beat)* Mary, I have to ask you a question. How did this happen?

**Mary:** I said "yes." And God made the impossible... possible.

*Mary walks a few feet away and spotlight shines on her as the stage darkens. She looks adoringly at her child. Everyone else on stage freezes in silhouettes as Mary delivers the monologue.*

**Mary:** *(to baby)* Well, you've made quite a grand entrance into the world, now haven't you? Not the entrance a king would make. A manger of all places. No palace. No guard. Just a barn and a lot of hay, if you ask me.

*Looking back toward where she came from.*

What am I to make of all these visitors? This silent night sure got loud fast.

*Pulling the baby closer.*

I suppose you'd like to know how this all came to be, wouldn't you?  
Well, on an ordinary day—more ordinary than you can imagine—an angel came to me. I know. I had trouble believing it myself!

*Distant, remembering...*

He spoke of things I couldn't really comprehend. He spoke of You, the Son of the Most High. And after he told me all that would happen, events that felt altogether impossible, he looked straight at me, as if to ask...will you say yes?

*Snuggles him closer.*

It was the scariest "yes" I'd ever uttered, to tell you the truth. This was an impossible yes that only God could make possible. This would change everything. Never in my wildest dreams...

*Ponders deeper, then looks down at him.*

Speaking of dreams, is it okay that I have dreams for you, too? All mamas have dreams for their babies, you know. Even babies who are announced by heavenly hosts.

*Laughs.*

My little one, what other yes's will God ask of me? Because I must confess that when I said yes to all this, my legs were shaking a little when I said it. No, a lot. My legs were shaking a lot.

*Beat.*

I have a strange feeling that this will not be the only yes required of me. Oh, my Child, I cannot begin to imagine the yes's that God will ask of You.

*She takes in a long, beautiful gaze at Him.*

So...we will just take things one day at a time. The yes's, the no's, I must stand before them as they come. God help me, one faithful day at a time, to keep saying yes.

*Lights come up as **Stuart** and **Estelle** return to her. **Stuart** looks to **Estelle** for reassurance.*

**Estelle:** You can touch him, Stuart. He won't bite. This is what you wanted wasn't it? God in the flesh.

**Stuart:** *(to **Mary**)* May I hold Him?

*Stuart carefully takes the baby. He walks a few feet away, with Estelle, who has a gentle hand on his shoulder. They look adoringly at the baby.*

**Stuart:** Look at You! You are quite a sight. So human, yet so divine. To think I put the Messiah out in the cold last night. Never again, never again. You are truly remarkable.

*Stuart hands the baby back to Mary just as the Wiseman rushes in.*

**Wiseman:** Well, it's time for the banquet.

**Stuart:** What banquet?

**Wiseman:** The banquet for the baby in the barn...oh, He's right here. For that very baby!

**Stuart:** Right, Mr. King, I must tell you that you are a very wise man.

**Wiseman:** "Wiseman" ... I like that!

**Stuart:** Estelle, we need to give Mary a gift. What can we give her? Oh, yes...  
*(Find something fairly recognizable to your audience that they would find funny. I.e. a poinsettia from the front of the stage)* Take them; we have a lot of them.

**Wiseman:** Stu, if two of my companions come looking for me, I'm—

**Together:** —in the barn...buh-bye.

**Stuart:** Merry Census!

**Wiseman:** What did you say?

**Stuart:** Merry Census! It's the biggest thing to hit Bethlehem so a phrase has been coined for this wonderful occasion.

**Patron:** *(offstage)* Now you owe me two dollars!

*Stuart and Wiseman look around for the voice.*

**Wiseman:** *(chuckles)* My friend. The biggest thing to hit Bethlehem and the world is what happened in your barn tonight. You don't need to be telling people Merry Census. You need to be saying..." Merry Mary-had-the-Christ-Child-in-a-barn-after-following-the-star-all-day Day!" *(Mumbling to himself)* I didn't even get the Shepherds in there! And it's way too long. I've got to work on that. *(To Stuart)* What a day. A day that will change the world.

*Wiseman and Mary with baby exit.*

**Stuart:** *(sitting on stool)* Estelle, what an evening we have had! Did you see the baby! To think we had Jesus, the Messiah in our barn. *(Pause)* While you aren't doing anything, rub my shoulders...

**Estelle:** Why?

**Stuart:** 'Cause I've been holding a baby for two minutes. Rub my shoulders. Can you imagine what King Herod is going to do when he hears about this? Much less the whole town of Bethlehem. What is going to happen when word leaks out about this?

**Paperboy:** *(carrying papers)* Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Baby born in Bethlehem. King of the cradle. *(Sarcastic to Stuart)* Born in a barn! *(One more current topic of headline news comes out of Paperboy's mouth before Stuart places his hand over Paperboy's mouth. Paperboy hands Stuart the paper then exits.)*

**Stuart:** Look Estelle. It's already starting to happen. What if they don't believe Him? What if they don't follow Him?

**Estelle:** Well, He worked through you. If He can work through you, He can work through anybody. Besides Stuart, it's a...

**Stuart:** I know, I know...

**Together:** A "God-thing."

**Stuart:** I know. I'm sorry about that. I'm going to be better, I promise.

**Estelle:** This moment, it's so, so...

**Stuart:** Holy.

**Estelle:** *(smiles, looking at Stuart, making a spiritual connection, which they have never experienced before)* Yes, holy. *(Pauses)* I have to go get ready. I have a lot of mouths to feed. *(Pauses with an awkward silence)* I've never felt closer to you than I do right now. *(Starts to exit)* Oh, hey... *(Tosses the pad that Stuart had been writing on at the very first of Scene 3)* I like it. It's really good!

**Stuart:** You do, huh? Estelle...

**Estelle:** *(stops before exiting)* Yes?

**Stuart:** I love you.

**Estelle:** I love you, too. *(Exits)*

**Stuart:** *(to audience)* Bethlehem will be waking up soon and the people will be wanting food in their stomach and everyone will be rushing to register for the census. Lives everywhere will be in their own little world and what they won't realize is that a Savior just entered the world. Yes, indeed. What a night. I must get busy myself. So, Merry Cen— *(stops himself)* No Stuart, don't miss it. Don't make it about money and possessions... *(smiles)* Christ. It's about the Christ child. *(Looking at pad)* She likes it. *(Starts to read from pad)* "It was a silent night...it was a HOLY night..." *(Starts to exit and pauses)* Yes, Child sleep while you can, because your work is about to begin. *(Pause)* Silent night, Holy night...all is calm, all is bright.

*Note: This would be a good time to lead the audience in Silent Night. If Stuart is comfortable singing, have him lead out.*

*Lights out.*

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