

## “The Christmas Sketch”

by  
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**What** As a playwright struggles with how to best dramatize keeping Christ in our hearts beyond the holiday season, the scene comes to life on the stage.

**Themes:** Christmas, Manger, Jesus, Savior, Redemption

**Who** **Playwright:** either gender  
**Actor 1:** (Shepherd #1/Traveler #1) Either gender, teen or adult  
**Actor 2:** (Shepherd #2/Traveler #2) Either gender, teen or adult  
**Actor 3:** (Shepherd #3/Elderly Man) Older male  
**Actor 4:** (Shepherd #4/Trucker) Older teen guy or adult  
**Actor 5:** (Joseph/Joe) Teen guy or older male  
**Actor 6:** (Mary/Marti) Teen girl or older woman  
**Actor 7:** (King # 1/Elderly Woman) Older female  
**Actor 8:** (King # 2/Doctor) Female, adult  
**Actor 9:** (King #3/Husband) Adult male  
**Boy:** Teen or younger boy  
**Manager:** Adult, either gender  
**Stagehand:** Either gender, teen or adult

**When** Present

**Wear (Props)** Large manger w/straw  
Baby doll wrapped in cloth  
Cell phone  
Three pairs of sunglasses  
Two drumsticks  
Variety of winter coats  
Variety of stuffed animals  
Computer (PC/laptop/tablet)  
Table w/chair  
Paper on table  
Gift boxes (for Kings)

Sound effects: Dance music; soft mood music; infant crying

**Why** Hebrews 13:8

**How** At SL, table w/chair. Computer, papers, cell phone on table. Empty manger is placed at DSC. Stuffed animals and coats lay in a pile DSR. The actors are, in essence, either acting out or saying what the Playwright types. Playwright is never aware of their presence, although the actors, at times, are aware of Playwright's presence. Also, when the characters are speaking, Playwright should keep the typing to minimum movement, so as not to draw focus.

Stage direction key:

NOTE: stage directions are always from the audience's viewpoint, looking toward the stage. Downstage refers to the front of the stage. Upstage refers to the back of the stage.

SL= Stage left

SR= Stage right

USC= Upstage Center

CS= Center stage

DS= Downstage

DSL= Downstage Left

DSR=Downstage right

**Time** Approximately 13 minutes

At curtain, we see **Playwright** sitting at computer. At **DSC** stands entire cast, with their backs to audience, in neutral positions, not moving. All are wearing biblical costumes.

**Playwright:** *(to self, but loud enough)* OK, OK focus, focus! Gotta get this Christmas sketch to the *(insert local youth pastor or senior pastor's name here)* by next week. OK, the theme is... *(pause, referring to paper)* not leaving the baby Jesus in the manger, but having him live within us all year round. Alright, I got this. Now, we all know that Jesus came to earth as a baby.

*Typing starts. Stagehand turns and is pretending to hold a baby doll. Stagehand walks to the manger and pretends to put the 'baby' in the manger. Typing continues as Playwright speaks.*

Wrapped in swaddling clothes. *(Stagehand looks around, then at Playwright questioningly. Typing stops)* Wait, no, no one knows what those are. *(typing)* Delete delete delete. *(Stagehand freezes. Typing stops)* Wrapped in...um, er, um...Huggies, I don't know, I'll figure that out later.

*Stagehand shrugs and goes back to original neutral position. Typing starts, still talking out loud.*

He was surrounded by, um, lots of people. Like Kings, Shepherds, animals and stuff.

*Shepherd #1, #2, #3, #4 and King #1, #2, #3, and Boy with two drumsticks in hand unfreeze, turn and face forward and go to the manger at DSC and freeze in what would be considered traditional places in a nativity scene. Re: Shepherds kneeling in front of manger, and Kings standing, looking down at manger. Boy stands by Kings. At same time, Stagehand turns, gathers up the stuffed animals, then carries them and throws them haphazardly around the manger, then returns to neutral position. Typing stops.*

Wait...I think I remember hearing that the Kings actually didn't see the child for a few more years. *(Kings look at each other)* OK, maybe that will make this sketch different. We'll lose the Kings. For now

*Typing. Kings obviously disappointed, slowly start to leave. Shepherd #1 mouths a "sorry" and King #1 acknowledges it. Typing stops.*

Wait. *(Kings stop)* On the other hand, I know we'll get complaints from people, saying things like *(softly mocking)* "Where are the Kings?! The Kings?! Got to have the Kings! My nativity set wouldn't lie! They came with the set!" *(back to himself)* No thanks. OK, *(starts typing)* they're back in.

*Kings obviously happy, return to original spot, King #1 and Shepherd #1 do a fist bump.*

**Playwright:** *(stops typing, out loud)* Oh, yeah, can't forget Mary and Joseph, too.

*Starts typing, Mary and Joseph turn and take their places next to the manger, pushing past Kings/Shepherds. Typing stops. Playwright pauses, stares at screen.*

*And, yep, there they are. (still staring, long pause, still not knowing what to write next, thinking hard...) There...they...are.*

*Cast look at each other and shrug, trying to maintain focus on manger. Some start yawning, looking around, bored, looking at watches, etc.*

*Maybe. Maybe...the first King presents the baby with the gift of...of...*

*King #1 has their gift ready, anticipating giving it to the child.*

*I don't know. Hmmm. The old frankincense, gold and myrrh bit...really? (smiles to self, picks up and looks at cell phone) Maybe a little something for the young folk. (pretends to search on phone) Yea, that's perfect! (starts typing) The first King presents the baby with the gift of—*

**King #1:** *Dance! (tosses gift box aside)*

*Playwright hits his/her phone and dance music erupts. Cast starts doing all sorts of goofy dance moves, really hamming it up. Playwright is typing and grooving to the music for a few beats, but then catches him/herself, stops typing, and turns music off. Everyone freezes in their goofy mid-dance poses.*

**Playwright:** *(sarcastically, to self)* Yea, a dancing King. Shepherds. A boppin' Holy couple. Yeah. That happened. Sigh *(typing)* Delete delete delete.

*Cast all act as if they are moving in a 'rewind' mode, moving backward and eventually returning to their original positions around the manger, then freeze.*

*Hmmm. Maybe. Maybe the shepherds re-enact how the angel came down and told them of the birth. Yea.*

*Typing starts. Shepherd #1 stands. The other three Shepherds remain kneeling.*

**Shepherd #1:** *(in east coast accent, gesturing to Shepherd # 2, # 3 and # 4)* Yo, so like we were all, you know, tending to our flocks by night. *(Shepherds don't move).* Get up and tend, tend!!

*Shepherds jump up, and pretend to be pushing sheep around, and making "Baaa" sounds as they do so.*

**Shepherd #1:** Yea, better. Anyway, all of a sudden, there's this here blinding light that blasts out to the sky!

*Shepherds look upward, squinting, covering their eyes. Then **Shepherd # 2** taps **Shepherd #3** and **#4** and takes out three pairs of sunglasses. They put them on and look up again, cross their arms and smile at **Shepherd #1**, indicating no problem now with the bright light.*

**Shepherd #1:** Cute. ANYway. Then, this giant angel dude appears and tells us about the birth of this here (*motions to the manger*) child and we react with giant gestures of pure and unadulterated like awes and wonder!

*Shepherds look at each other questioningly, then at **Shepherd #1**. He gives them a 'look'. They then look at each other, then back to him and do a very halfhearted waving of hands, etc.*

**Shepherd #1:** I SAID with giant gestures! Awes and wonders!!

*Shepherds then do overboard versions of awe and wonder, really hamming it up.*

**Shepherd #1:** Stop! (*they do*) Look, if you three don't—!

**Shepherd #2:** (*to Shepherd #1*) Boss, boss, can't we show them how we really reacted?

*Shepherd #3 and #4 agree.*

**Shepherd #1:** (*confused*) How we really reacted?

**Shepherd #2:** Yea, yea, remember?

*While **Shepherd #1** looks on, **Shepherds** pretend to be 'tending' again, and then look up in unison. They pretend to listen for a moment, look at each other, and then start screaming and running all over the set, waving their arms in fake panic.*

**Shepherds:** We're gonna die! Ahhh! Giant alien dude! Ahhhh! I'm only making minimum wage, don't hurt me! Ahhh!

***Shepherd #1** tries to calm them down, but they continue their 'panic', running into/tripping over other cast members, etc. Everyone is in turmoil. After a few beats, **Shepherd #2** trips over the manger and it falls open, towards the audience. Everyone freezes in horror. Then, **Joseph** moves to the manger, looks in, showing that the manger is empty, just straw, which has spilled out. All gasp at once, in unison. Then—*

**Joseph:** The baby...is gone!

*All look at each other, then accusingly at **Shepherd #2**.*

**Shepherd #2:** *(looks at them nervously, then says)* I didn't take...I was just...I didn't see...I just work here... *(then starts quickly 'tending' again)* Baaaaaa. Baaa.

**Playwright:** *(stops typing, all freeze. Sarcastic tone again, imitating **Shepherd #2**, to self)* Baaa. Baaa? More like BAAADDD!!! Oh, man, this is going NOWhere. Freaked out shepherds?! What's next, the little drummer boy's two-hour solo?!! *(**Boy** steps forward with drumsticks in hand)* Huh, Maybe. *(**Playwright** starts to type. **Boy** starts hitting drumsticks together as if about to start a song)* Wait, wait! *(**Boy** freezes, looks disappointedly at **Playwright**).* Uggg. I need to switch to decaf. *(typing)* Delete, delete, delete, delete, delete. *(once again, everyone moves backward to original positions, including **Boy**; **Playwright** hits self on side of head)* Come on, think outside the box here, come on. *(ponders, then)* Got it! I'll modernize the story to better relate to, to, um, er, people. And stuff. OK, maybe switch the setting to a...a...rest stop. Off a busy highway. In the middle of a blizzard. *(getting encouraged)* Yea, yea *(starts typing)*

*Cast unfreeze, run over to DSR and put on the pre-placed coats over their Biblical costumes. They then gather at DSC and start blowing on their hands as if cold and huddle together. At same time, **Stagehand** moves the manger DSR. **Stagehand** then returns to neutral position.*

**Traveler #1:** Boy howdy, what a winter storm we are having. Outside. Good thing this rest stop was open for all of us stranded travelers on this road we call life. Here on Christmas Eve.

**Traveler #2:** Amen. Yes, at this rest stop outside of Bethlehem. *(beat)* Pennsylvania.

**Traveler #1:** Yes, stranded in a snowstorm. On Christmas eve. Outside of Bethlehem.

**Traveler #2:** P.A.

*NOTE: **Manager** needs to pause and give characters time to display what they are displaying.*

**Manager:** *(to audience)* Folks, as the harried manager of this rest stop called Crossroads, I've got this handful of characters with issues to deal with. Like, for instance, this elderly man needing surgery *(**Elderly***

*Man steps up*) and his wife (*Elderly Woman, joins him*). He needs to find someone to donate a kidney to him.

*Elderly Man holds his side making an overly dramatic face while Elderly Woman shows the same.*

**Playwright:** *(stops typing, all freeze)* No, not a kidney. Been done. Um, er, how about he has a broken arm, yea, that he hurt slipping on the ice outside.

*Resumes typing. Elderly Man stops holding his side and lets his left arm comically dangle out freely, making a dramatic face of pain. Elderly Woman pats the bad arm and he reacts in mock pain. She mouths "sorry" and moves back.*

**Playwright:** *(stops typing, all freeze)* No, no hmm. Maybe he's got a bum ticker

*Starts typing. Elderly Man grabs his chest in an overly dramatic way, while Elderly Woman looks on in mock concern. Typing stops.*

No, how about ulcers...

*Typing starts. Elderly Man switches hands to his stomach, tongue sticking out, Elderly Woman looking on is slight disgust, typing continues...*

or a terrible cold.

*Elderly Man does huge comical sneeze as everyone else ducks. Typing stops.*

No, maybe, he's got, like, the plague or something.

*Typing starts, Elderly Man stops, stares at Playwright, holding his hands up in question, then shrugs and starts making dramatic guttural sounds and twisting his body around, making a big show. Elderly Woman look at him then makes the sign of the cross with her fingers towards him. Typing stops.*

Wait. I didn't say demon possessed (*Elderly Man shrugs*) OK, let's go back to the whole needing the kidney donation thing.

*Typing starts, Elderly Man slowly grabs his side again, unsure if there will be more changes. Elderly Woman just rolls her eyes and pats his head. They both then step back and freeze. Playwright keeps typing.*

**Manager:** Then there's the doctor and her husband (*Doctor and Husband step up*) who's marriage is on the rocks (*both cross arms and stare at each other in mock anger*) and the Doctor swears she'll never deliver another baby because of a recent 'tragedy'

*Doctor reaches hands dramatically skyward and her and **Husband**, and then step back and freeze.*

And the trucker (**Trucker** steps forward, then starts imitating driving a truck) who's been on the road all his life and has neglected his family for years (**Trucker** starts mock and overly dramatic weeping, wipes off fake tears from his face) but is eyeing a special gift in the rest stop's gift shop (**Trucker** drops hands and looks off to stage right, stroking his chin as if in thought) to take to his estranged daughter but needs encouragement to do so. (**Trucker** hangs his head, steps back and freezes)

**Manager:** And especially to you, the young couple, Marti and Joe (*same couple who had played **Mary** and **Joseph**. **Marti** and **Joe** step up*), who just arrived after finding out Motel 6 was booked, and with Marti being so very pregnant and obviously about to give birth. Um, about to give birth.

*Manager* stops and looks at **Marti**, as does everyone else, as it's clear she's not pregnant. **Marti** and **Joe** look around frantically, then **Joe** runs over to the stuffed animal pile, grabs a few, goes back to **Marti** and she stuffs them under her shirt, creating an obviously poor version of being pregnant.

**Playwright:** (*talks out loud as typing*) Note, make Marti pregnant. (*stops, pause, typing*) Maybe re-word that. (*typing again*)

**Manager:** (*winking to audience*) And I'm guessing it'll be a baby boy! (*back to addressing the cast*) So, to all of you, I say welcome to Crossroads!! (*everyone nods and thanks **Manager***) Now, come and enjoy our life size nativity scene complete with animals, kings, shepherds and of course, Mary, Joseph and an empty manger because hooligans stole the baby Jesus doll a few days ago.

*Cast panic, throw off coats tripping over each other and run to create the described nativity scene. They still have their biblical costumes on, which were underneath the coats. **Stagehand** has re-positioned the manger to its original position. When all have arrived in their same places from the first scene, **Manager** continues.*

**Manager:** (*looking straight out to audience, dramatic voice*) So, will the old man (**Elderly Man**, now dressed as their original bible characters, just waves their hands) get his new, um, er heart, kidney, or whatever? Will the Doctor and her Husband (*both now dressed as their original bible characters, just shoot hands up*) make up and overcome the past? Will the trucker (*same...still dressed as original bible character, points to self*) find the right gift for his daughter, and will Marti and Joe (*still dressed as **Mary** and **Joseph**, wave*), um, well, have the baby? And maybe put him in the empty manger?

And who really took the baby Jesus, and will the baby be found?! Maybe it was some misguided teen (*Boy turns with mock angry look on face*) who we haven't met yet but shows up near the end and helps pull together all these story threads? Let's see what happens!

*All freeze.*

**Playwright:** (*still typing, but now speaking out loud, with high sarcasm*) And then, the Hallmark Channel shows up and sues us for stealing ALL of the Christmas movie ideas they ever made!! (*the cast look around in fake panic, thinking they'll be sued, etc.*) Puke! (*Elderly Man starts to pretend to get sick. Typing stops*) This is NOT working. (*Elderly Man stops and re-freezes as does the cast*)

**Playwright:** (*pause, then with genuine frustration*) How do I communicate, without the clichés, the importance of Jesus in our lives year-round? Hmm. Hmm. (*a thought occurs*) Maybe...let me try one last time.

*Starts typing.*

*Cast all go to their original neutral positions from the start of the sketch except for **Manager**. That person stays but freezes with head down. Soft music starts. **Manager** raises head and addresses audience.*

**Manager:** Too often we let the wonder of the coming of the Christ child be muted and stolen by the realities of life.

***Elderly Man, Elderly Woman, Doctor, Husband, Trucker, and Boy** turn let their biblical costumes drop off, and come up, and stand in front of the manger, blocking it from view, all with heads bowed.*

Our troubles and the troubles of the world press hard, deafening us, causing a loss of hope

***Elderly Man, Elderly Woman, Doctor, Husband, Trucker and Boy** now sink to their knees, heads still bowed.*

But (*sound effect of baby crying starts, very faint*) the baby isn't missing. He wasn't stolen. We just forget he was ever even there. That He's even (*pause*) here.

*As music starts to come up, **Mary and Joseph** come up from rear of the church/venue. They could also come from offstage left of right. **Mary** is carrying a baby doll, wrapped in cloth. As they approach center stage, the cast in front of the manger slowly step back to make room for **Mary and Joseph**. **Mary** then lays the baby in the manger. The rest of the cast step back.*

We need to never forget, that God's provision was born into this world in the form of his son, Jesus. That His provision left the manger, became a man, experienced all that it is to be human in this world. Like—

**Elderly Man:** *(raises head)* Fear.

*He and Woman slowly stand, holding hands, look up, look at each other, then and look at manger.*

**Doctor:** *(raises her head)* Heartache.

*Doctor and Husband slowly stand, hug, and then and look at manger.*

**Trucker:** *(raises his head)* Brokenness.

*Trucker slowly rises and looks to the manger, standing tall as if with new resolve.*

**Boy:** *(raises head)* Anger.

*Slowly rises and looks at manger.*

**Manager:** And so much more. *(pause)* And, through the cross, God's provision, Jesus overcame the world *(pause, gesturing to manger)* Behold. He's not gone. *(cast move back from manger)* And he'll never be gone if we commit to holding Him in our hearts. Now, and throughout the year. *(pause)* Behold. God's provision. For us to accept. Our redemption. *(long pause)* Behold.

*Music swells, then fades as all freeze, lights fade to blackout.*

**Playwright:** *(stops typing, to self)* Behold. *(pause, touching the screen)* Not so hard after all. *(types).* Redeemed indeed. Curtain.

*Fade to black.*