

A Manger Carol

A One Act Children's Christmas
Play

By

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Authors Note

Every year, in churches across the United States, children perform the story of the nativity before an audience of proud and excited parents. In many cases a large group of children are dressed up and paraded across the stage while a narrator reads the story of the birth of Christ. Often this tradition becomes boring and commonplace, even though they are acting out the greatest story ever told.

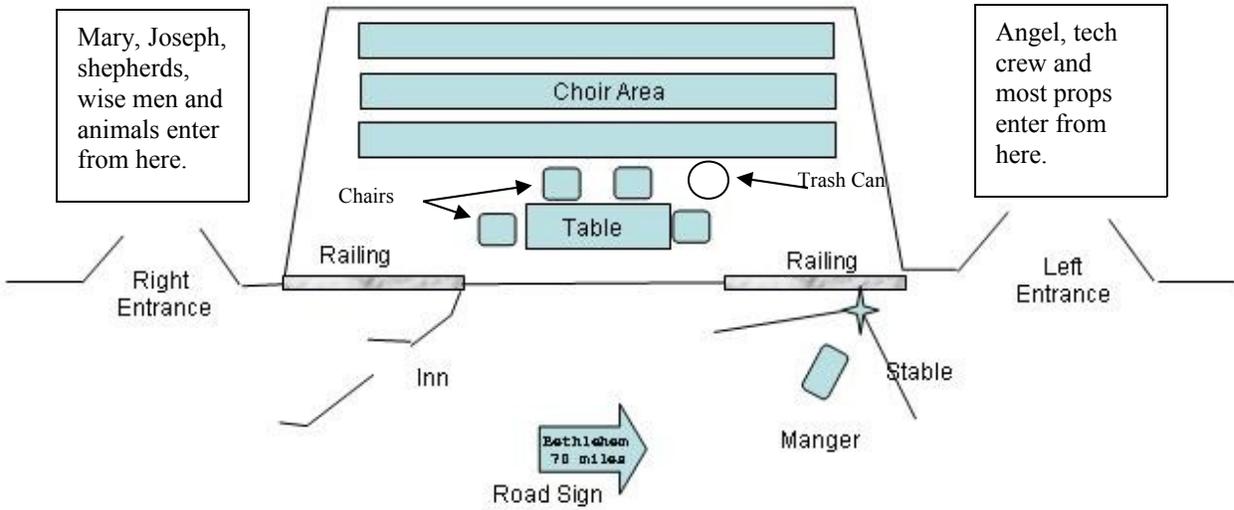
This play is designed to be a little different. It initially starts off with a departure from tradition, by introducing comedic elements into what has become, through habit, a solemn proceeding. At the end the play closes with an important message about Christmas and our Savior Jesus Christ; that the story isn't about the scenery or the costumes, but about the people in that story. A group of ordinary people who came together to take part in an extraordinary event that changed the world forever.

My hope for this play is that people will enjoy and laugh through the comedy, and then take home the message that Jesus himself often took chances, shook things up, and stepped out in faith, and that we, as his disciples, should do the same.

*"How many observe Christ's birthday! How few, his precepts!
O! Tis easier to keep holidays than commandments.*

Benjamin Franklin

Set Construction



Cast/Costumes

<u>Cathy</u>	Director of the play. A very common sense girl. Casual (jeans, shirt)
<u>Mike</u>	In charge of set construction. Very practical and hardworking. Casual (jeans, shirt)
<u>Janet</u>	In charge of make-up. Very sweet but kind of an air-head. Very well dressed.
<u>Bill</u>	In charge of props. Watches too many horror movies. Jeans, dark t-shirt with a chainsaw advert, or some horror movie logo.
<u>Mary</u>	A shy, sweet girl who finds courage, even in trying circumstances. Blue and white biblical costume.
<u>Joseph</u>	A brave young man who loves God and Mary. Dark red, beige and/or brown biblical costume.
<u>Angels</u>	2 - 4 angels are needed. White robes with golden halos and white wings.
<u>Donkey</u>	Sarcastic character with a bad knee. Has to carry Mary to Bethlehem. Donkey costume that allows face to show, knee brace.
<u>Innkeeper</u>	Biblical costume.
<u>Shepherds</u>	2-4 Biblical costumes with shepherd's crooks.
<u>Magi</u>	3 Fancy biblical king costumes. Will need both crowns and fire helmets.
<u>Tech Crew</u>	Tech crew can consist of 2 - 6 people, all dressed in black. Tech's will appear on stage bringing out props and sets.
<u>Animals</u>	Anywhere from 3 - 15 animals may be used. Some should be traditional nativity

animals, sheep, cows, pigs etc.) but others may be any type of animal. There should be no camels.

Brides maids 2 - 4 bridesmaids dressed in matching dresses.

Hunchback Dark brown robe with large pillow on back under robe.

Other Characters You may have from 3 - 15 other characters, mostly in walk-on roles, including animals and horror movie monsters.

PROPS

Table	Bibles, pens, paper, donuts, napkins.
Angels	Harps, halos, It's a Boy announcement, birth certificate, box of bubblegum cigars.
Mary	Wedding announcement.
Joseph	Toolbox with chainsaw logo on side.
Tech Crew	Large pillow, small pillow with a baby doll inside, Bethlehem sign, rope, fake donkey, toy rifle, baby on board sticker, ice cream container, spoon, straw, push broom, electric star on pole, crowns, gold, frankincense and myrrh.
Innkeeper	Marker
Shepherds	Crooks, sunglasses
Bridesmaids	Bouquet, rice.
Magi	Fire helmets, disposable diapers, baby lotion etc.
Set pieces brought out during play:	
Inn	Made from a flattened refrigerator box or other large box. One side is a beautifully painted Inn with a Vacancy sign, the other is poorly drawn with a marker. It should have a door cut into it that opens and closes.
Stable	Another box, painted to show the inside of a stable.
Star	A plastic star taped to a floor lamp or other light. Ensure plastic is far enough from bulb to prevent fire or melting.
Manger	Small wooden manger.

Stage is set with table, four chairs, and a trash can. There are paper, pens, bibles and a box of small donuts on the table.

Janet, Bill and Mike enter and meet around the table, exchanging greetings and small talk.

JANET: Well, where is Cathy?

MIKE: She said she'd be here *(Looks at watch)* She's still got a couple of minutes.

BILL: Well, at least she got refreshments. *(Opens donut box and takes one out)* My favorite; powdered donuts! *(Bill throws it in his mouth)*

JANET: Why does the box say 'chocolate' donuts?

MIKE: *(Picking up box and studying it)* These aren't powdered donuts, these are old chocolate donuts. *(Points to the box)* See, they expired two months ago!

(Bill grabs a napkin and spits the donut into it. He throws it in the trash can along with the box.)

(Cathy enters.)

CATHY: Okay, quiet, let's settle down and get this meeting started.

(The group gradually quiets down)

CATHY: We've been asked to help out with the children's Christmas show, and one of us has to direct it.

BILL: Can I direct it?

JANET: You? Are you kidding?

MIKE: Yeah, remember what happened at the Fall Carnival?

BILL: What? The haunted house? I still think it was the best we ever had!

CATHY: Yeah, right. My little sister still has nightmares.

JANET: Everybody is still having nightmares! Remember what happened to old man Sedgewick?

BILL: That wasn't my fault. Besides, the paramedics say it wasn't really a heart attack, just angina or something.

CATHY: That's besides the point. We just don't want that kind of display for Christmas; it just wouldn't be right.

BILL: Can I do the props then?

CATHY: Okay...but NO chainsaws this time, understand?

BILL: *(Reluctantly)* Okay.

MIKE: *(To Cathy)* Why don't you direct it? You've got experience at this kind of thing.

JANET: Yeah, you direct and I'll do the costumes.

MIKE: And I'll do the set.

CATHY: Okay, it's settled; I'll direct, Janet will do the costumes, Mike does the sets, and Bill will do the props.

MIKE: So, where do we start?

JANET: We'll need a script first.

CATHY: *(Opening Bible)* We'll get the story right out of Luke. It's pretty much the same story every year.

MIKE: Yeah, people sort of expect that.

JANET: You know, it would be nice to do something different this year.

BILL: Hey, I've got some great ideas. How about we have Mary and Joseph stay in the stable because terrorists blew up the inn? Then when they go to...

CATHY: *(Interrupting)* On second thought, why don't we stick to the original story. Maybe we can add a few details, but the story in the Gospels is still the best version. Let's

see (*flipping through Bible*) We'll start with Mary being visited by the angel.

JANET: Oh! I know just what Mary will wear (*As she talks Mary enters from R and moves DC*) A beautiful gown of sky blue and white. And the angel (*Angel enters from L and moves to Mary*) will be all in white, with white wings, a gold halo and a golden harp.

MIKE: A harp? Are you sure angels carried harps around with them? Check the bible and see what it says.

(*Cathy starts looking through Bible.*)

BILL: Is the harp part of the costume or is it a prop? If it's a prop it should be up to me.

JANET: I think it's part of the costume. You have to coordinate accessories, you know.

BILL: But it isn't worn, it's carried, so it's a prop.

JANET: Cathy, tell dummy here that it's part of the costume.

BILL: Who ya callin' dummy, air head...

JANET: Jerk...

BILL: Bimbo...

CATHY: Okay, both of you, stop it. The bible doesn't say anything about the angel carrying a harp.

BILL: Okay, no harps.

(*Tech enters from L and takes harp from the angel.*)

CATHY: Now, in Luke chapter 1, verse 29 it says that when Mary saw the angel she was 'troubled'.

(*Mary acts troubled*)

MIKE: That's not what this says. This says she was 'perplexed'.

(Mary acts perplexed)

CATHY: What version is that? Mine is a King James.

MIKE: *(Looking at Bible cover)* New Revised Standard.

BILL: *(Picking up another Bible)* Here's a New Century version, let's see.....it says 'Startled'

(Mary acts startled)

JANET: *(Opening another Bible)* This is a New Living translation. 'Confused and disturbed'.

(Mary acts confused and disturbed)

MIKE: Now she looks like a mental patient. I think that translation is 'confused and disturbed'.

CATHY: It doesn't matter what version you use. The point is, people don't see angels everyday, and she was probably confused, scared and all at the same time. Wouldn't you be?

BILL: I had an uncle that would see flying monkeys, and he acted confused and disturbed.

JANET: I don't think that's what Cathy means.

MIKE: Okay, so she was scared, surprised, whatever, when the angel showed up. What happens next?

CATHY: The angel tells Mary the great news.

(Angel takes out a large 'It's a Boy announcement and gives it to Mary.)

CATHY: But Mary was worried because she and Joseph aren't married yet.

(Mary takes out large Wedding Invitation that says 'next week' and gives it to the angel. The angel shrugs her shoulders and exits L.)

BILL: You know, that happened to a cousin of mine.

JANET: What, she was visited by an angel too?

BILL: No, she wasn't married. Boy, were her parents mad.

CATHY: It wasn't any easier on Mary either. Here, in verse 34 she says: "I have no husband. How then, can this be."

JANET: She must have been in a lot of trouble.

MIKE: The law back then said she should be stoned.

JANET: Killed?

MIKE: That was the law. She was in big trouble.

JANET: What did she do?

CATHY: She had faith. She told the angel; "I am the Lord's servant, may it happen to me as you have said."

MIKE: Even with an angel telling you what would happen, I bet that still took guts.

BILL: God must have picked her because she was so brave.

CATHY: Not really. She was just a young girl, and probably no different than any of us.

JANET: Why didn't God pick someone more important, like a queen or something? For that matter, why not pick someone who's already married and save a lot of trouble?

CATHY: That's not the way God does things. Sometimes he picks regular people, sometimes the weakest, poorest and unlikeliest of all.

BILL: But why?

CATHY: To show how strong he is.

BILL: I don't follow you.

MIKE: It' like this; If God made Lance Armstrong win the Tour De' France, what would that prove?

BILL: Nothing, he's won several times.

MIKE: Okay, but what if God made you win it?

BILL: Oh, I see, it shows what God can do, not what we can do.

CATHY: God shows his power by picking Mary, and making a young girl from the dinky town of Bethlehem the mother of the savior.

JANET: Okay, what happens next?

CATHY: Then Joseph enters...what will Joseph be wearing?

JANET: The usual; robes, a beard. You know.

BILL: He's a carpenter, so he'll have to have a tool box.

(Joseph enters from R and crosses to Mary. He is carrying a small tool box with a chainsaw logo on the side.)

MIKE: Don't tell me, let me guess; is there a chainsaw in the tool box?

(Joseph opens the box and he and Mary both look inside. They look at each other and shake their heads as Joseph closes the box)

BILL: No, just some hand tools, lots of knives and stuff.

CATHY: Do we really have to have a tool box?

BILL: Okay, no box.

(Tech enters, takes box, and exits.)

CATHY: Then Mary tells Joseph the good news!

(Mary hands the birth announcement to Joseph.)

BILL: I'll bet Joseph was surprised to hear about the new baby!

JANET: What did he do?

CATHY: It says here in Matthew Chapter 1, verse 20, that the angel appeared to Joseph and told him the baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

(Angel enters, shows Joseph a birth certificate that shows Holy Spirit listed as Father and Mary listed as Mother, then exits.)

CATHY: So Joseph decided to marry Mary anyway, and raise the child as his.

MIKE: I think that took guts for him too, I mean, all his friends must have talked about it behind his back.

JANET: Yeah, you know how people like to gossip.

CATHY: It doesn't say in here, but I don't think that mattered to Joseph; he believed in the lord, and he believed in Mary. That's all that mattered to him.

JANET: A guy who trusted his girl and didn't care what anyone else said about them? Why aren't there any guys like that around today?

MIKE: Why aren't there more girls like Mary around?

BILL: Why don't you two be quiet so we can finish the story.

CATHY: So Joseph and Mary got married!

JANET: I can see it now; the bridesmaids will wear pink dresses with flowers in their hair.

(Mary and Joseph embrace as bridesmaids enter and throw rice over them.)

BILL: What about the wedding cake? There has to be a huge wedding cake.

TECH: *(Backs in holding L door open.)* Careful there, don't mess up the icing. *(He pretends to direct others, using hand motions, bringing in a large cake.)*

MIKE: I don't think they had wedding cakes back then,
(Looks at Cathy) right?

CATHY: Right. No cake.

BILL: (To tech) Sorry, no cake.

TECH: Okay, take it back (He goes through door and closes it.)

(Bridesmaids chat quietly with Mary, saying things like 'I love that gown' and 'Where are you going on your honeymoon')

CATHY: And I hate to say it, Janet, but no bridesmaids either.

JANET: (To bridesmaids) Sorry.

(The bridesmaids leave slowly, looking a little disappointed.)

CATHY: Then they set out for Bethlehem.

(Tech enters with a road sign that says 'Bethlehem 70 miles'. He places it DC then exits.)

BILL: They rode a donkey, didn't they?

(Tech backs in through L door pulling a rope, pretending to be struggling with a donkey. Other tech's offstage, unseen by the audience, are pulling against him. SFX a donkey offstage)

MIKE: Are you sure you want a real donkey? Won't that be difficult?

CATHY: The noise...

JANET: The smell...

CATHY: No a real donkey is out of the question.

BILL: Okay, no donkey.

(Relieved the tech let's the 'donkey' lead him off stage.)

MIKE: I could make a donkey. No problem.

(Tech reopens L door and wheels in a very sloppily built wood donkey with wheels and crosses to center.)

CATHY: No, I don't think that'll work either.

(Tech, without stopping, turns and wheels donkey back off the stage.)

JANET: I could make a donkey costume.

(Donkey enters and stands by Mary. Cathy, Mike, Janet and Bill look at him, then at each other.)

MIKE: Of course, he'd have to get on all fours.

(They look at donkey who looks first at them, then at the floor, then back at them.)

BILL: Yep. Definitely, all fours.

(Donkey folds his arms and shakes his head.)

JANET: It wouldn't look right for the donkey to walk on his hind legs.

(Donkey points to bandage on knee/leg, and again shakes his head.)

MIKE: They used to shoot horses if they had a bad leg, didn't they?

BILL: *(Pretending to read from bible)* "Then Joseph shoots the donkey, cause he has a bad leg, and there was much rejoicing".

(Tech enters with a rifle and starts to hand it to Joseph)

CATHY: That's not what the bible says. Nobody's shooting anybody. They didn't even have guns back then.

(Tech takes gun with him and exits)

CATHY: Now they go to Bethlehem.

JANET: Why Bethlehem?

MIKE: They had to go back to Joseph's hometown for some sort of census or tax thing.

JANET: Wait a minute. God can do anything he wants, right? Why have Joseph be from Bethlehem. That's just a dinky little town, isn't it? Why not have Joseph be from Jerusalem or some other big city; it would have been a lot easier to find a place to stay.

CATHY: Remember, Janet, sometimes we don't know what God's plan is, but he has his reasons.

BILL: Like maybe showing the whole world that big cities aren't all that important?

CATHY: That could be it. Yeah, that sounds right.

JANET: Wait a minute, wait a minute. We forgot something. Isn't Mary supposed to be pregnant?

BILL: Yeah, she should have a big pillow under her robe or something.

(Tech enters with a large pillow, holds it out to Mary, who shakes her head no.)

CATHY: Couldn't we find a smaller pillow?

(Tech exits with large pillow and returns with a small one.)

MIKE: that's better.

(The tech hands the pillow to Mary. The tech, donkey and Joseph form a wall facing the audience while Mary goes behind them to put the pillow under her robe.)

MARY: Done!

(Tech exits)

