

Christmas Journey

A Roman Soldier steps up and addresses the audience:

All right now, quiet everyone, quiet. Now listen up! I know it's a nuisance but you've got to go on this journey. The Roman government are taking this census and they want to count you all. So you have to go to the place where you were born, and in your case – it's Bethlehem. It's a long way to Bethlehem, about 70 miles. So get ready for the journey. It's not the sort of thing you want to do if you're pregnant. Now you'll need money to buy food and a place to stay. The prices could be high, and the taxes are always going up, but if you look out you may even find spare money on the journey, dropped by other travellers on the way. Right, here we go then. (Marches off)

If you are doing this as a journey you could have left chocolate coins littering the route.

A wise man appears and addresses the audience:

Excuse me! Wait! Wait! Er... I've got a bit of a problem! You haven't seen a couple of people on camels have you? (Waits for a response) I'm supposed to be with them but I've lost them. It's a bit embarrassing because I'm supposed to be a wise man. Where are you lot going anyway? Where? Which way? That way? But it's not that way... (Audience: Oh yes it is) Oh no it's not. (Oh yes it is) Oh no it's not. Look – you go that way, and I'll go this way and if you get there before me – tell them I'm on my way. Oh, you haven't seen any shops have you? I need to get the baby a present... I thought I could get him a book token. See you...

(Wanders off in the wrong direction)

Joseph and Mary walk on, Mary is heavily pregnant, Joseph says:

Are you going to Bethlehem? We are too. David was my great, great, great, great, great etc. grandfather. He was born in Bethlehem and went on to be the greatest king we've ever had. If only we had him now. He was a fighter and a warrior, he would have thrown out these Romans. He wouldn't have stood for this census. But we have no strong leaders these days. So we have to go. I have to shut up my carpentry business, and take my wife to Bethlehem. I daren't leave her behind. She's going to have a baby, and people have been spreading terrible rumours about her.

You see – it's complicated - but I'm not the baby's father. It's bee a difficult time. It's God's baby, but a lot of people don't know that. So they've been saying lots of horrible things. I've got to be honest and say I've had plenty of doubts along the way. Not always easy to be full of faith, is it...

Anyway, I have relatives in Bethlehem, one of them has an inn, so I hope there'll be room for us, I'm afraid I don't think he'll be able to fit all of you lot in though.

(Mary says "Ow!" and rubs her stomach)

Mary:

I can't keep going Joseph. It's too much. The journey's too long. Let's go back. Please.

Joseph:

Come on. Let's keep going.

(They walk off together)

Angel appears:

Stop! Quiet! Now you don't need to be afraid. I know angels often turn up to fight battles but I've got some good news for you! Really good news. Today – here in Bethlehem – a new baby has been born. Now I know there's been lots of babies born in the town tonight, especially with so many extra people coming for the census – but this baby is different. This is how you'll know which one I mean. Go into Bethlehem and look for a child lying in an animal trough. He'll be wrapped in strips of cloth. That's the baby. Don't bother with any of the others – this baby has come to bring peace on earth and glory to God.

You've been waiting for freedom for a long time – well don't worry – it's coming.

Now hurry up! Get going! Find that baby! Go! Go!

(Walks off)

Shepherd walks on looking at the audience:

What do you lot want? You haven't come to steal the sheep have you? Just cause I'm on my own. Cause I'm a dab hand with a catapult, I'll take on any lion or wolf that comes for me. Well you're too late, because the sheep have all run off! I knew this would happen as soon as they went tearing off into town on some wild baby chase.

I stayed behind – well, someone had to, it was just a few lights in the sky, with some thunder, and a few shooting stars. I don't think it was angels at all. Faith? It's not a matter of faith. King David wouldn't have left his sheep would he? He'd have stayed with them to the end.

Oh I see! That's why you're here! You're looking for this mysterious baby too? Well. they all went that way, shouting about infants and inns. If you hurry you might catch them up – and when you do find them tell them this – they're fired. Leaving helpless sheep to the wild animals and sheep stealers.

Go on...

(Walks off grumbling and muttering)

Mary and Joseph walk out carrying a baby. Innkeeper's wife walks on, fingers to her lips:

Shhh! Try not to make too much noise. This is my cousin Joe, and his wife Mary. And look! Look! They've had a baby. Can you believe it? A new baby! On a night like this! I wanted to put them in my house but there's just no room. I've got friends and relatives coming out of my ears. So I had to put them out here. In the stable. I think they're going to use that trough for a cot.

No idea where those shepherds came from. I couldn't believe it when they showed up asking about a baby in an animal trough. How did they know about that?

And what's next? Before you know it there'll be three wise men rolling up with a few camels and some presents.

I wonder about it all though. It's a strange start in life, isn't it? Strange to be born poor and yet have people come and treat you as if you're rich.

I think there's more to this baby than meets the eye.

(Walks off deep in thought, Mary and Joseph leave too)

This set of monologues can be performed or read in church as part of a service, or on stage.

The monologues can be interspersed with carols or appropriate songs which fit each character in the story.

Alternatively you could do this as a literal journey outside, walking a route with the characters appearing at particular intervals. Again this could be interspersed with carols.

If appropriate you can end with more carols plus hot chocolate, mulled wine and mince pies.

And anything else!

Feel free to adapt or rewrite this, and to add any other bits of drama, action or dance etc. if it's useful and usable for your situation.

Dave Hopwood 2012.