

The Big Show

The scene is the nativity. Mary and Joe sit quietly, Mary holding Jesus as a group of shepherds gaze on. One of the shepherds, a youngster, starts to shuffle a bit, looks around, then clears her throat.

Shep. When's it start then?

Joe. When's what start?

Shep. The big show?

Joe. The big show? There's no big show.

Shep. Well, I expected a bit more than this. (Indicates the stable)

Joe. He's a brand new baby. He sleeps, yawns a bit, cries, fills his nappy. What else do you want?

Shep. But the angels promised us a big show. They said he'd be amazing. Does he do any tricks?

Joe. Tricks? Course he doesn't. Frankly we're just glad Mary didn't give birth in a ditch. It's been a bit of a frantic night.

Shep. Will he do something tomorrow? I mean, we were promised peace on earth. This isn't exactly what I'd call a bit of fast-paced bit entertainment.

Joe. Fast-paced entertainment? This isn't the latest blockbuster movie you know.

Shep. Got any refreshments then? Hot dogs and burgers? Soft drinks?

Joe. No we haven't got any refreshments!! We've got a new baby, grateful hearts, weary bones... oh and a big star up there in the sky.

Shep. Ah yes, now I'll admit that's impressive. That's a very good special effect. Does it do anything?

Joe. No! It just stays up there, lighting up the stable a bit.

Shep. Oh... really? To be honest I'm surprised with this place. Shouldn't a king have a place with a few less cobwebs?

Joe. Well we tried to book a palace but they were all full.

Shep. Really?

Joe. No! Course not! And anyway, I doubt you'd have got anywhere near us if we'd been in a posh place with pile carpets, look at the state of your sandals! Look what you've trodden in.

Shep. Oh yea. (Sighs) So what now then?

Joe. Now? Now we take him home and look after him while he grows up, has a normal, if relatively poor, childhood.

Shep. I was thinking about fireworks... some pyrotechnics to round things off?

Joe. No! There'll be no fireworks. Nothing dramatic whatsoever. Just so long as Herod doesn't hear about the birth of a new king.

Shep. Ooh! Will he be coming then?

Joe. I hope not. There'll be trouble if he does. We may well have to run for our lives if that despot shows up.

Shep. What's that noise? Hey! Some action at last. (points off stage) Look at these posh folks coming, all smarted up on them camels. (The other shepherds stand, bow and start to leave) Wait a minute! Where are you lot going? It's just getting exciting. Come back. Don't you want you to rub shoulders with posh people? (The shepherds go)

Joe. Apparently they don't.

Shep. This is confusing. I thought this was the start of something big.

Joe. I'm sure it is. A quiet revolution. One day at a time. Now unless you want the big excitement of changing his extremely full nappy...

Shep. Ugh. No thanks.

Joe. See you later then. Maybe pop back in about 30 years? See what he's up to then? Look out, mind that pile of camel's du... oh dear, too late.

Shep. Ugh! Oh no... Oh well, bye then. Hope we haven't lost any sheep while we've been away. We did have a hundred, but if one's run off that'll only leave 98... or is it 97...

Shepherd wanders off counting on her fingers.

Dunky the Donkey

Most people look at me and have no idea. Well, they wouldn't would they? How could they? They just see a donkey that gives rides to children. And nothing wrong with that. Nothing at all. But I've seen something most folks can only dream of, I've seen a very precious thing. My name's Dunky, my mum called me Duncan but all the kids I meet shorten it. So I'm Dunky. And I like that.

Things began I think when a man and woman were trying to get to Bethlehem. They had to put their names down on a very important list. Because there was a kind of referendum going on. They started out in a car they had borrowed, but then the engine overheated – hiss, boom! - and they had to leave the car by the roadside and walk to the nearest railway station. The train there went for one stop then was cancelled – 'Right! Everybody off!' - and so they had to get off and board a bus. The bus took them so far then ran out of fuel – chug chug blugh! And that's when I saw them. A weary couple sitting on their cases, sighing and scratching their heads and wondering what they could do now. It was dawn and I just saw two dark shapes, one of them very round indeed because all through this journey the woman was very pregnant! And by then she was tired and snappy and hungry for a fish and fig sandwich! Apparently being pregnant made her love fish and fig sandwiches. The man wandered over to the barn where I live and spotted me in the doorway. I saw his eyes light up then – ping! – and he pulled some coins from his pocket – chink! – left them in a little tower by the spot where I sleep and grabbed my reins – lug! – and off we went – clip clop! He took me over to the woman and she climbed on board. Now I'm used to children on my back, but a woman with a tiny child inside her gave me a bit of a start – yikes! But I got used to it, and the man was kind and patted me and told me it wouldn't be too long. It was long though! Quite a trek – phew! – but we clip-clopped on and eventually, as it was getting dark again, we arrived in Bethlehem.

Then the fun began. You see everyone else had arrived too, so all the hotels and guest houses were jampacked with folks sleeping in the bedrooms, the backrooms and the bathrooms. Yikes! What could we do? The woman was rubbing her tummy a lot and saying, 'He's on his way. He's on his way!' I didn't know who she meant but I could feel her jiggling about up there on my back. Then the man let go of me and just ran off, and I thought 'Oh great! Thanks very much!' And we stood there in the street, blocking the way. With people squeezing past, saying, 'Scuse me! Scuse me! Do you mind!' Thankfully the man came back, his face flushed and his eyes wide and he grabbed my reins – lug! – and practically ran me down to the end of the street. There was a little animal house there, and I could see a couple of sheep look at me and roll their eyes. 'Baa! Humbug!' – they seemed to say. We trotted in, the woman practically fell off me and she landed in the sheep's bedding. 'Baa! Humbug!' They didn't like that! And that was when it happened. It's hard to explain, but as the baby came out, and the woman yelled and the man cried and they both smiled... well... a bright light appeared in the sky. And I felt very strange indeed. And I knew I was seeing no ordinary baby. I mean, he cried, and they had to clean him up, and he was looking all pink and startled... like any baby... but I saw something else. I saw he was different. He was... not like any other child I'd ever given rides to before. It was like the world was in his eyes, and all the really good things of life were in his tiny fingers. Funny isn't it? To think that of a baby. But I wasn't the only one. Other people came to see him and it all got a bit crowded – Squeeze! Squeeze! Squeeze! Some scruffy shepherds, covered in sheep dung, ran in. And they could see it too, I'm pretty sure. And they went away talking about his eyes and his tiny fingers. And that was it. The precious thing. Best night of my life. That baby in the stable. Brilliant! I just had to tell you.

The Christmas Journey

A poem which could just be read, or the audience could be invited to join in on the following responses.

Mary/Joe – half audience cheer for one, half the other; **Green/Sick** – hold stomach and look ill

Romans – all boo; **Baby** – say aah and mime rocking a baby;

Sheep/Shepherds – all say baa!; **Wise men** – stroke chin and look wise, and say ‘Hmmm!’;

Angel/fly – flap arms; **Camel** – blow through your lips and make a lip-flapping camel noise.

There was a couple called **Mary** and **Joe**,
At Christmas they had to go
To Bethlehem,
Way back when
The **Romans** told them so.

Mary felt **sick** on the ride,
She looked all **green** and wide-eyed.
They raced on down
To Bethlehem town.
Because **Mary** had a **baby** inside.

The town was jam-packed that day.
So **Mary** and **Joe** had to stay
In a room full of **sheep**.
They didn't get much sleep,
And the **baby** was born in the hay.

Some **shepherds** were eating their tea
When an **angel** said, ‘Look at me!’
He was up in the sky
Because he could **fly**,
And he told them about the **baby**.

The **shepherds** ran like mad
To see the new **baby Mary** had.
The **baby** stared hard
As they oohed and aahed,
Because the **shepherds** smelt quite bad.

Then some **wise men** came from afar
Following a big bright star,
They came from out of the blue,
And their **camels** did a poo,
Right there in **Mary's** back yard.

The **wise men** and **shepherds** said, ‘Wow!’
This **baby** is amazing you know!’

Then they went away
Different that day,
Because of the **baby** and **Mary** and **Joe**.

Family Time

Joseph has his 6 youngest children sitting down so he can explain to them about their brother Jesus.

'Right, are you all here? One, two, three, four, five, six. Good. Simon sit still. Miriam, be quiet, let me get a word in. I don't care if little Joe is pulling your pigtail. Joe stop pulling her pigtail. No Susanna, you can't have another fig. You've already had seven. Jacob – don't do that. Now sit still and listen! All of you! This is important. Now, you know your older brother Jesus? What Simon? Where is he? He's out in the workshop building a table. No you can't go and help him Simon. Sit down. Now! Because I thought this would be a good moment to... er... talk to you all. About where he came from. Don't screw your face up like that Miriam. What Joe? Yes, well, yes... yes that's right.. he was in mummy's tummy. You all were. No not at the same time Miriam. Jacob – don't do that. But before that, mummy met an angel. Yes Miriam I know we often call you an angel. You are an angel, but this was a different sort of angel. Did he have wings Simon? Well no, angels don't have wings. Yes I know you have some wings Miriam, Jesus made them for you didn't he? Jacob – don't do that. But angels are like messengers. And they brought mummy a message. About your brother. What Joe – did he have a sharp sword? No. Well, maybe, I don't know. I wasn't there. He did smile though, because mummy was a bit frightened and he wanted to make her feel better. A spear? No Joe, he didn't have a spear. Jacob – don't do that. No Susanna he didn't bring her any figs. He told her she was going to have a baby! Yes! No this wasn't yesterday Miriam, she's not having another baby. Five boys and two girls is plenty for me. I mean for both of us. I know you like babies Susanna but we're really not having anymore. Now where was I? Thank you Jude, yes, an angel. No it wasn't a choir of angels Miriam, they didn't sing anything. It was just one, with a burning sword and wings... I mean, without a sword and burning wings. Now concentrate everyone come on. Please. I just want to tell you something really important. Are you all focussed now. Yes? All quiet? Good. Now... (sighs) what is it Jude? Yes I know one of my front teeth is crooked. Yes and my ears are quite big Susanna. All right. All right. Now, your big brother Jesus is... well this is going to sound a bit strange and you might have some questions about it. It is unusual but, well, your lovely big brother Jesus is... well, how can I put this... well, Jesus is actually... what's that Jacob? Oh! Yes. He is. That's right. He's God's son. How did you know that? Oh! Really? He told you. Just yesterday? When he was giving you all piggy-back rides. Oh right. Great. That's sorted then. Who wants a big pile of figs? Oh and Jacob – don't do that.'

Second Cousins

Mary and Elizabeth are talking at Elizabeth's house. Both are obviously pregnant.

Mary: I'm scared.

Liz: (instinctively stroking her own pregnant stomach) It will be all right.

Mary: Will it? Will it? Who'll ever believe me? When I left and came to see you I was hardly showing, and now... well it's obvious isn't it? I'll go back there and Joseph will see, the moment I step down from the cart. He'll know. And he'll wonder what I've been up to. And how I could have possibly...

Liz: If this is of God, and you know it is, just as I know it is... then it can't end in disaster. Remember what happened when I saw you coming up the path? Three months ago... I had no idea did I?

Couldn't have done. And yet I saw you and I knew immediately. That you were carrying a baby inside. And not just any baby. Don't you think that was a sign? God's confirmation to you?

Mary: (nodding) I know. You're right. But I can't stop thinking about what people will say. Joseph will never marry me now. How can I ever convince him that this is God's planning?

Liz: You can't. Of course you can't. But he will find out, the same way I knew. God will do it. I can't promise it'll be easy. But it'll be all right. Maybe that angel will pitch up again! Leap out and given him a shock!

Mary: I'll be stained forever won't it? People will talk and make up rumours and the mud will stick.

Liz: Mary! Slow down! Slow down there with your fretting. What did that angel say to you? Remind yourself.

Mary: Don't be frightened.

Liz: Exactly. And look! If nothing else – look at me! With a baby on the way at my age! I've got an idea – you should stay and see the birth. See the miracle. It'll give you strength.

Mary: Has Zechariah said anything yet?

Liz: Hmm. (frowning) No. That is disconcerting. I'm worried he might be silent forever now. Maybe things will change when John is born. Ooh. (she holds her stomach)

Mary: What? Are you all right? Is the baby moving?

Liz: No. I just fancy a fish and fig sandwich. I get cravings for those these days.

Mary: John? You're calling him John? Where did that name come from?

Liz: Same place yours came from. The angel. Jesus and John. Second cousins. Who'd have thought it eh? So Miss Mary, next time you start panicking about the future remember that it's in God's hands. If I can go having a baby called John then you'll be surely having a son called Jesus. And both of them are going to grow up and be extraordinary.

Mary: I just wish it was easier.

Liz: So does everyone my dear. It's life. It ambushes you. Brings you the unexpected. Come on, let's go and find a fish and fig sarnie.

Inspired by Luke chapter 1