

**THE MAN WHO
DIDN'T NEED
CHRISTMAS**

A Christmas Play

by

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THE MAN WHO DIDN'T NEED CHRISTMAS

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CHARACTERS

INNKEEPER, 30's-50's

PILGRIMS, 20's-50's

ROMAN SOLDIER, 20's-40's

WIFE OF INNKEEPER, 20's-40's

JOSEPH, 20's-30's

MARY, 20's-30's

DAUGHTER #1, 12-16 years old

DAUGHTER #2, 12-16 years old

SHEPHERD #1, 20's-40's

SHEPHERD #2, 20's-40's

BALTHAZAR, 30's-50's

CASPER, 30's-50's

MEHCHIOR, 30's-50's

TIME

Days of Jesus' birth

PLACE

betmenem

Right of center stage is the Inn. There is a front wall with a door and two windows. Beneath the stage right window is a sign hanging “No Room”. There is a bench stage left side of Inn.

Left of center is the Stable. There are bales of hay and a manger. There is a rough back wall and a simple roof.

THE MAN WHO DIDN'T NEED CHRISTMAS

ACT I

Scene 1—The Inn

(As lights come up on the Inn, the INNKEEPER is standing in front of the Inn with a broom in his hand. He is talking to the PILGRIMS. The ROMAN SOLDIER is standing stage right watching and listening to the action)

INNKEEPER

I'm sorry. We're full.

(PILGRIMS looks at each with disappointment)

INNKEEPER (cont'd)

I hope you'll find suitable lodging. (motioning stage right) Look in town. There are other inns there.

(PILGRIMS talk amongst themselves. The INNKEEPER sweeps the floor. The ROMAN SOLDIER crosses to the PILGRIMS. He points stage right. The PILGRIMS slowly cross to stage right. The ROMAN SOLDIER crosses to INNKEEPER)

ROMAN SOLDIER

You could've squeezed in a few more.

INNKEEPER

It wouldn't have been safe. Certainly not comfortable.

ROMAN SOLDIER

You're a good man. You know it's against the law, too. But Rome would overlook occupancy limits during this busy time.

(WIFE enters from stage right carrying a basket of fruit. She passes PILGRIMS and nods to them. The PILGRIMS exit stage right. The WIFE crosses to the INNKEEPER)

ROMAN SOLDIER (cont'd)

More pilgrims mean a bigger census. A bigger census means more taxes. They all need a place to stay for one to two nights. The registration lines are a mile long. (nods to WIFE) Shalom, madam.

WIFE

Shalom, officer.

ROMAN SOLDIER

I was talking with your husband about how he is sending away pilgrims who need accommodations.

(WIFE approaches the bench and puts the bowl on the bench. She points toward the PILGRIMS)

WIFE

The inn's full. We have a sign. (points to stage right) Was that another group?

INNKEEPER

They keep coming. There's always hope.

(WIFE smiles at INNKEEPER)

WIFE

(to ROMAN SOLDIER)

My husband wants his guests comfortable. Rome know how much space he has.

ROMAN SOLDIER

Your husband's an honest innkeeper and model citizen despite the circumstances. Rome understands your feelings about the occupation.

INNKEEPER

No Jew would admit liking Rome. But I appreciate the order and security of our town under Roman rule. Bethlehem's never been safer...

ROMAN SOLDIER

...for making money.

INNKEEPER

(hands up in humbleness)

For all aspects of life.

ROMAN SOLDIER

A diplomat, too. Rome won't forget her friends.

(INNKEEPER nods at ROMAN SOLDIER)

ROMAN SOLDIER (cont'd)

I must be on my rounds. Don't send any more pilgrims away, if you can avoid it. They couldn't find a cleaner, well-maintained inn anywhere in Bethlehem. You have a great spot here.

INNKEEPER

Thank you.

ROMAN SOLDIER

Put them anywhere. (nodding to WIFE) Good evening, madam.

WIFE

Shalom, officer.

ROMAN SOLDIER

Shalom.

(ROMAN SOLDIER exits stage right)

INNKEEPER

Was the market busy this afternoon?

WIFE

Packed with pilgrims.

INNKEEPER

They keep coming. I'll run at full capacity for months to come. Maybe I can expand the inn!
(holds WIFE'S hands) Then I'll be able to buy everything we've ever wanted.

WIFE

You've always provided for our needs.

(WIFE picks up bowl. INNKEEPER sweeps with broom)

INNKEEPER

I thought you'd be getting home sooner.

(INNKEEPER and WIFE sit on bench)

WIFE

I would have but there was a big commotion at the Temple. I couldn't get pass the crowd.
The priests were talking about a new prophet...

INNKEEPER

Priests! They can always get a crowd if they talk about prophets and the future. They can't
get anyone to the Temple if they preach about being good so you can please God. That's
what counts!

WIFE

One of the priest's wife has given birth to...

INNKEEPER

That's not unusual.

WIFE

It does when the wife's beyond the years of bearing children.

INNKEEPER

(shakes head) (bored)

So, what happened?

WIFE

She gave birth to a son. They call him John. The father's a priest called Zecharias. He had a vision in the Temple last fall.

INNKEEPER

A vision? Why does it have to be supernatural? The rabbis fill their pockets by scaring the people about...nonsense. What's here is all there is. We don't need prophets and visions.

(WIFE looks discouraged)

WIFE

(excitedly)

Then they talked about the pilgrims. They said this vast movement of people is more than just about Rome. The priests claimed the Scriptures have foretold that the Messiah is coming, and coming now.

INNKEEPER

They're always saying that. Nothing's happened in hundreds of years, four hundred or so. We're an insignificant colony at the edge of the vast Roman empire. Nothing's going to happen to the Jewish people—no prophecies, no Messiah. Rome's the future for us.

WIFE

(discouraged)

We mean nothing to Rome.

(WIFE stands and crosses to entrance of Inn)

INNKEEPER

(shakes head)

You and I have a thriving business at the edge of town where nobody bothers us. We have a good relationship with the authorities. (taps chest) We control our own destiny.

WIFE

I don't think so.

INNKEEPER

And the Roman soldier who is in charge of this district is our friend.

WIFE

Wait and see.

(INNKEEPER looks confused. WIFE exits into Inn. JOSEPH and MARY enter from stage right. JOSEPH carries two bags over shoulders. MARY is at term. She has hands under abdomen trying to hold it up. She is weary. They cross to Inn, look at the sign and each other, and stop)

JOSEPH

Shalom, sir.

INNKEEPER

Shalom. I'm sorry. We're full. (points to sign) The sign. That's why it's there.

JOSEPH

I know. I read the sign. But my wife is due.

INNKEEPER

(looking at MARY)
Yes, yes. I can see that.

JOSEPH

She may deliver tonight.
(MARY has a strong labor pain and puts one hand on JOSEPH'S arm)

MARY

(imploringly)
Joseph! Please!

JOSEPH

(puts arm around MARY)
Her labor pains are only a few minutes apart...and steady.

INNKEEPER

(pointing toward door of Inn)
I couldn't possibly fit another person in there even if I wanted to. It's too crowded. Then there's the law.

(MARY slumps down in labor pain. JOSEPH keeps arm around her as she slumps to

ground)

MARY

Joseph, it hurts so much. The long trip. I shouldn't have come here.

JOSEPH

You had to, Mary. I wouldn't have dragged you here if it weren't for the census.

(to INNKEEPER)

Please sir. We don't have much time.

(MARY grabs JOSEPH'S arm)

MARY

(in intense pain)

The baby...

INNKEEPER

(nervously)

What can I do? (thinking) "Put them anywhere".

(JOSEPH and MARY put arms around each other)

INNKEEPER (cont'd)

It isn't much but I have a stable. There are no facilities in there. But you can have it if you want.

(JOSEPH picks up MARY. INNKEEPER helps JOSEPH)

JOSEPH

(genuinely)

Thank you, sir. We'll take what God provides.

INNKEEPER

What God provides? (taps chest) It's my...

MARY

I must lie down.

(WIFE enters from Inn)

INNKEEPER

(points toward Stable)

It's right there to the side.

(JOSEPH almost carries MARY)

JOSEPH

This way, Mary.

INNKEEPER

Can I show you...?

JOSEPH

We're all right.

(MARY stiffens)

JOSEPH (cont'd)

Hold on. Just a little longer.

(JOSEPH and MARY exit to Stable. WIFE crosses to INNKEEPER)

WIFE

More pilgrims?

INNKEEPER

They're still coming. Now we're over capacity. I will expand the inn!

WIFE

Why didn't you send that couple away?

INNKEEPER

His wife's ready to deliver.

WIFE

But the stable?

INNKEEPER

At least it'll be private. (pointing toward Inn) It wouldn't be in there on the floor with fifty strangers lying around them, men, women, all sorts.

WIFE

You have a good heart, dear, to consider delicate matters even for strangers.

(DAUGHTER #1 and #2 enter from stage right, poking and pushing each other)

INNKEEPER

(to WIFE)

They'll need help.

(DAUGHTER #1 and #2 cross to Inn)

WIFE

I could...

DAUGHTER #1

Shalom, Dad.

DAUGHTER #2

Shalom, Mom.

INNKEEPER

Shalom, girls. Did you do the chores for your grandmother this afternoon?

DAUGHTER #1

Yes we did.

INNKEEPER

(pointing to Stable)

Would you—both of you—please go to into the stable and help the couple I let stay there?

DAUGHTER #1

You didn't?

INNKEEPER

Didn't what?

DAUGHTER #2

You didn't let someone stay in the stable?

INNKEEPER

I did.

DAUGHTER #1

You can't.

INNKEEPER

Can't?

DAUGHTER #2

We cleaned it this morning and... (dramatically) it was such hard work.

DAUGHTER #1

They'll make a mess.

INNKEEPER

How do you know?

DAUGHTER #2

(folds hands in front of her in defiance)
What are they going to do there?

INNKEEPER

Rest.

DAUGHTER #2

Yes.

INNKEEPER

Sleep.

DAUGHTER #2

OK.

INNKEEPER

And have a baby.

DAUGHTER #1

They're not going to make a mess?

INNKEEPER

Why do you think I let them stay there? The young woman could hardly walk. She's very pregnant.

(DAUGHTER #1 and #2 hold their arms in defiance)

WIFE

Go! Your Dad wants you to help them. He's taught you to care for others.

DAUGHTER #1

(dramatically)

We so tired. We cleaned the Stable this morning, then all the chores around Grandma's...

WIFE

(waving at DAUGHTER #1 and #2)
Right now.

DAUGHTER #1

We're going. We're going!

(DAUGHTER #1 and #2 exit quickly to Stable. INNKEEPER and WIFE watch them exit)

INNKEEPER

(SHAKES HEAD)

Kids! (smiling) We were the same way.

(WIFE smiles back at INNKEEPER. INNKEEPER crosses to WIFE and puts arm around her)

WIFE

You're so patient with them. I love you.

(black out)

Scene 2—The Stable

(As lights come up on Stable, MARY is leaning against a bale of hay. She is propped up. She is holding her abdomen with both hands. She is in labor. Her sandals are off. JOSEPH is up stage to MARY. He is holding her right arm with both of his hands. He is anxious)

MARY

It's almost time. I can feel the baby.

JOSEPH

I'm here, Mary. I can help. You'll see.

(DAUGHTER #1 and #2 enter hesistantly from stage right)

DAUGHTER #1

Are you the couple our Dad sent out here?

JOSEPH

Yes. My name is Joseph and this is Mary, my wife. Mary's ready to deliver. We're a long way from home. We have no midwife. Can you help?

(DAUGHTER #1 and #2 look at each then at JOSEPH and MARY)

DAUGHTER #2

We'll try.

DAUGHTER #1

I'll get towels and some water. That's what we use for the animals. It must be the same for people.

(DAUGHTER #2 nods at DAUGHTER #1. DAUGHTER #1 exits to stage right. DAUGHTER #2 crosses to JOSEPH and MARY and sits upstage)

DAUGHTER #2

Where are you from?

(DAUGHTER #1 enters from stage right with basin of water and towels)

MARY

(in pain, blurts out)
Nazareth!

(DAUGHTER #1 crosses to down stage of JOSEPH and MARY)

DAUGHTER #1

Why did you come all the way here in your condition?

(MARY is uncomfortable and shifts weight)

JOSEPH

For the census. Each of us had to come to Bethlehem. Mary and I are both of the family of David. This is where David was from, many, many years ago. That's why we're here. We had no choice.

MARY

We've been traveling for a week. It was a hard trip. But we made it.

DAUGHTER #1

The baby could've been born anywhere.

MARY

Only here. God wanted this baby born here.

DAUGHTER #2

God wanted it? (looks at DAUGHTER #1) Our Dad never talks like that.

JOSEPH

God's hand has been in all that's happened since the beginning. An angel appeared to Mary and told her she would give birth to a special child. This is God's Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, incredible as that sounds.

(DAUGHTER #1 and #2 look at each)

DAUGHTER #1

You must tell us more. We don't understand.

JOSEPH

I'll be glad to. Even many in our town didn't believe us.

MARY

(breathing heavily and rapidly)

Joseph! Help me. Please help me. I'm afraid!

JOSEPH

(trying to be calm)

I'm right here, Mary. These girls'll help us.

(DAUGHTER #1 and #2 get close to MARY)

DAUGHTER #2

We'll do what we can. We won't leave.

(lights fade slowly)

MARY

The contractions are coming one after the other. The baby's coming!

(JOSEPH gets up and crosses in back of MARY. He leans against her and holds her with both arms. DAUGHTER #1 and #2 pick up the towels and the basin of water and move closer to MARY)

(black out)

Scene 3—The Inn

(As the lights come up, the INNKEEPER is sitting on the bench. He stands up as DAUGHTER #1 and #2 enter from door. DAUGHTER #1 is carrying swaddling clothes. The ROMAN SOLDIER is standing extreme stage right watching the action)

INNKEEPER

I haven't seen those since you two were babies. You were both born in winter like now. They really helped to keep you warm at night.

DAUGHTER #1

What?

INNKEEPER

Swaddling clothes. Who are they for?

DAUGHTER #2

Jesus.

INNKEEPER

Who?

DAUGHTER #2

The baby in the stable. To keep him warm if he throws off his blanket in the middle of the night. We're going to wrap him like you used to do to us. We were told we could.

DAUGHTER #1

(with enthusiasm)

We're helping.

(WIFE enters from door. She carries towels)

INNKEEPER

That's something I've always tried to teach you. His name is Jesus?

DAUGHTER #1

It's the name an angel told Mary...

INNKEEPER

...What are you talking about?...

DAUGHTER #1

It's the name they were told they should call him. Jesus.

INNKEEPER

An angel?

DAUGHTER #1

Dad, why don't you ever talk about God or angels?

INNKEEPER

I don't need to. I'm living a good life. I'm a good person, caring for you and your mother. Can you find fault in what I'm doing?

DAUGHTER #2

(frustrated)

Of course not. You're a great Dad. But...

INNKEEPER

If there's a God—a God of Israel—I must be doing enough to please Him. (patting chest) I'm very successful. I don't need Him. And I don't need angels.

(ROMAN SOLDIER crosses to inn)

DAUGHTER #1

There are things happening that are so big that angels are needed.

INNKEEPER

Like what?

DAUGHTER #1

Like now.

(points to DAUGHTER #2)

Let's go.

WIFE

(handing towels to DAUGHTER #1)

Take these.

(DAUGHTER #1 and #2 exit to Stable. ROMAN SOLDIER reaches INNKEEPER)

INNKEEPER

(to ROMAN SOLDIER)

Kids! They're so impressionable.

ROMAN SOLDIER

Mine are the same. (pointing to Stable) What's going on in there?

INNKEEPER

I'm letting a young couple stay in the stable.

ROMAN SOLDIER

That's smart. I told you. Now that you're over capacity, you should apply to expand your inn. I'm sure you'd get the permit from Rome. (looking around) Anyone would love to have this property—it has such promise.

INNKEEPER

I'd never sell. This land's been in my family for generations.

ROMAN SOLDIER

(looking around)

You don't say.

(WIFE crosses to INNKEEPER and ROMAN SOLDIER)

ROMAN SOLDIER (CONT'D)

(to INNKEEPER)

I must be on my patrol. (nodding to WIFE) Shalom, madam.

(ROMAN SOLDIER exits stage right)

WIFE

What did he want?

INNKEEPER

He's just doing his job. Checking on our occupancy.

WIFE

He's too interested.

INNKEEPER

He's friendly, too.

WIFE

He's not. He's spying on us.

INNKEEPER

Now, now, dear.

WIFE

Anyway, the couple sounded convincing to our daughters.

INNKEEPER

Are we still talking about the couple in the stable?

WIFE

An angel did appear to Mary and then to Joseph in a dream.

INNKEEPER

(holding up two fingers)

Now there's two?

WIFE

There's always been two. Each was told that Mary would bring the Messiah, the Savior, into the world. Our daughters thought they were telling the truth.

INNKEEPER

And you?

WIFE

INNKEEPER

(hand up to protest)

You're convinced about supernatural events that two young kids from somewhere in Galilee told you?

WIFE

Nazareth, actually.

INNKEEPER

Even worse. Nothing good's ever come out of Nazareth. These kids are not educated like those from Jerusalem. What about the priests around the Temple? They'd know if something was happening. What's her husband do?

WIFE

He's a carpenter.

INNKEEPER

There you go.

WIFE

Can't simple people have revelations from God?

INNKEEPER

(rolls eyes)

Can you count?

WIFE

Count?

INNKEEPER

They've been married six months and she's had a baby. From where I come from...

WIFE

They said...

INNKEEPER

They had to make up something—fast. An angel... or two is convenient.

WIFE

They're telling the truth.

INNKEEPER

'Bout being pregnant before they were married?

WIFE

Mary said the Spirit of God overshadowed her. The child she has carried is the Son of God.

INNKEEPER

This is absurd.

WIFE

What if the priests who knew about these matters?

INNKEEPER

That'd be different.

WIFE

I already told you the priests said a new prophet was to be born who would be the forerunner of the Messiah. That baby has been born to a woman called Elizabeth. It happened six months ago. Now we have this young couple saying they've given birth to the Messiah. These events are connected. What about the prophecies the priests spoke about? They're coming true. Don't you see?

INNKEEPER

I'm convinced we have an ordinary young couple in the stable who've given birth to an ordinary baby.

(SHEPHERDS #1 and #2 enter hurriedly from stage left. They carry staffs and pouches. They cross to Inn)

SHEPHERD #1

(out of breath)

Shalom, Sir, Madam. We need your help.

INNKEEPER

Anything but a room.

SHEPHERD #1

We're looking a young couple who may be staying here.

INNKEEPER

(with frustration)

We have many couples staying in our inn.

SHEPHERD #2

A woman who has given birth?

SHEPHERD #1

Tonight, here.

INNKEEPER

Many have left their homes to register for the census. A number of women may have given birth along the way.

SHEPHERD #2

We were told the baby would be wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

WIFE

Dear, the shepherds must be talking about the couple in our stable. It's cold out there at night. They'd have to wrap a newborn in something.

(to the SHEPHERDS)

Our daughters brought some strips of cloths to them just hours ago. And a manger sounds like a good idea to put a baby in. They could be using the feeding trough. There's no furniture out there.

SHEPHERD #1

That must be them!

INNKEEPER

(pointing toward stable)

Over there.

(The SHEPHERDS look stage left toward stable)

INNKEEPER (cont'd)

I sent a young couple there. She was very pregnant when they arrived.

SHEPHERD #2

Can we go, sir, please?

INNKEEPER

Of course.

(SHEPHERD #1 and #2 turn toward stage left)

INNKEEPER (cont'd)

Sirs...

(SHEPHERD #1 and #2 turn back to INNKEEPER)

INNKEEPER (cont'd)

...Why are you looking for this couple?

SHEPHERD #1

Several angels...

INNKEEPER

...Several angels?

SHEPHERD #1

Many angels appeared to us in the field down the hill from here. They told us that a Saviour has been born who is the Messiah, the Son of God. He'd be wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. We thought he'd be outside or in a stable where they could use a feeding trough as a bed for the baby. They'd need strips of cloths to wrap the baby because of the cold.

SHEPHERD #2

Then... thousands of angels...

INNKEEPER

Thousands?...

SHEPHERD #2

Yes. It seemed like thousands of angels appeared to us praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests".

INNKEEPER

(urging SHEPHERD #2 to continue)

And you...

SHEPHERD #2

We said we'd go to Bethlehem and see what has happened, what the Lord has told us about.

INNKEEPER

The Lord?

SHEPHERD #2

Yes...

(SHEPHERD #1 and #2 look at each)

SHEPHERD #2 (cont'd)

...The Lord, through the angels. We're sure of it.

INNKEEPER

(with sarcasm)

Don't let us keep you from this amazing sight. (pointing toward Stable) Go, please.

SHEPHERD #2

Thank you, sir.

SHEPHERD #1

Shalom.

INNKEEPER

Shalom.

(SHEPHERD #1 and #2 exit hurriedly stage left to stable)

WIFE

Dear, why were you sarcastic to shepherds?

INNKEEPER

I was only...

WIFE

You grilled them like they were in a court room.

INNKEEPER

You didn't really expect me to take the word of a couple of shepherds?

WIFE

They sounded sincere.

INNKEEPER

Sincere? I'm glad you mentioned a courtroom. Shepherds are notoriously untrustworthy. Their testimony isn't acceptable in a court of law, no matter how sincere they sound. You expect me to believe them when they're talking about angels?

(shakes head and waves off)

Several...no, many...no, thousands.

WIFE

Didn't it seem remarkable that they mentioned angels? (points toward Stable) The couple in the stable said that angels appeared to both of them also. The priest at the Temple, Zecharias, said an angel appeared to him and announced that his son would be a prophet of the Messiah. Now these shepherds. It's sounds...

INNKEEPER

Don't say supernatural. There's no need for that.

WIFE

How do you explain it?

INNKEEPER

There must be a logical explanation.

WIFE

There is. God's working in these events. That's the logical explanation. We've now heard from many different people about a prophet for the Messiah and the Messiah himself. We've heard from several people about angels appearing to them. I'm going to see what is going on. Are you coming?

INNKEEPER

(hands up)

Our inn's full of guests. Someone's got to watch them. You go...if you want.

WIFE

I am going. The Messiah's in our stable. God is with us.

INNKEEPER

Go! I don't need God meddling in my life. I'm doing well on my own.

(INNKEEPER motions WIFE to go stage left. WIFE exits stage left to Stable.
INNKEEPER shakes head. He exits up stage through door of inn)

(black out)

To Read The Rest, Please Purchase The Script