

# **THE SHEPHERD WHO MISSED CHRISTMAS**

**A Play In Two Acts**

**by  
Delvyn C. Case, Jr.**

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# The Shepherd Who Missed Christmas

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHARACTERS.....

SYNOPSIS.....

GENERAL PRODUCTION NOTES.....

ACT I.....

ACT II.....

LIGHTING PLOT.....

## CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

JACOB Shepherd

BENJAMIN Shepherd

MICHAEL Shepherd

ASHER Shepherd

A ROMAN SOLDIER

REBECCA, JACOB'S fiancée

SIMEON, a prophet

PILGRIMS

JOSEPH

MARY

ANGEL OF THE LORD

ANGEL

JESUS (infant)

MIRIAM Friend of REBECCA

DEBORAH Friend of REBECCA

LEAH Friend of REBECCA

ANNA, a prophetess

HANNAH, niece of a sheep-owner (Jonah)

PENINNAH, niece of a sheep-owner (Jonah)

BALTHAZAR Magi

CASPER Magi

MELCHIOR Magi

**Time:** The days of Jesus' birth

**Location:** Bethlehem

# SYNOPSIS<sup>ACT 1</sup>

Scene 1. A teenage shepherd, JACOB, is sitting in the Shepherd's Field gazing at a new star rising in the East. His friends, ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL, enter, kidding JACOB that he must be dreaming about his fiancée. They joke about the life of a shepherd and the problems of finding a suitable mate for marriage. They complain about conditions under Roman domination. JACOB remarks that the star means a new king is coming.

Scene 2. JACOB visits his fiancée, REBECCA, in her home. SIMEON, a prophet and grandfather of REBECCA, is the chaperone. JACOB asks SIMEON the meaning of the new star. SIMEON announces that it has been revealed to him that he will not die until he has seen the Messiah. Hearing that the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem, JACOB is hopeful that he will see the Messiah. ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL inform JACOB that he has to take the sheep to the Temple in Jerusalem for sacrifice.

Scene 3. On route to Jerusalem, JACOB passes PILGRIMS (including JOSEPH and MARY) traveling to Bethlehem to register for the census.

Scene 4. ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL are told by an ANGEL OF THE LORD of the birth of JESUS.

Scene 5. ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL find JESUS, MARY, and JOSEPH in a stable.

## ACT 11

Scene 1. At the home of REBECCA, REBECCA and her friends discuss the changes in the shepherds, ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL, since they have seen the ANGELS and the Messiah.

Scene 2. JACOB talks with his friends. He is discouraged that he has missed seeing the Messiah.

Scene 3. At the home of REBECCA, JACOB learns from SIMEON and ANNA, a prophetess, that they have seen JESUS at the Temple. SIMEON and ANNA consider a number of prophecies about the Messiah. JACOB is discouraged that he has not seen the Messiah; even his crude friends have seen Christ. JACOB leaves for Jerusalem.

Scene 4. On the way to Jerusalem, JACOB meets the Magi. The star which has moved across the stage in each scene, is now directly over Bethlehem. The streets of Bethlehem are a maze; the Magi ask JACOB to help them find the house of the King.

Scene 5 JACOB and the Magi arrive at the house in which JESUS, MARY, and JOSEPH are staying. The Magi offer their gifts. JACOB learns how God has worked in his own life and in the life of his friends.

## **GENERAL PRODUCTION NOTES**

Costumes: Clothing of robes, wide belts, head-pieces, and sandals for all characters. Staffs and pouches for the shepherds. Gowns and crowns for Wisemen. Outer cloaks for Wisemen. Gift boxes for Wisemen. White costumes for Angels.

Property List: Rough table with two chairs. Wooden bowls for the table. Two benches. Camp fire. Straw and manger. Scroll for Wisemen.

THE SHEPHERD WHO MISSED

CHRISTMAS

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# ACT I

[Christmas star position #1 above the stage beginning extreme stage right. In each scene the star moves stage left]

[lights up]

*Scene 1. Shepherd's Field, Bethlehem. There is a campfire stage right of center. The baaing of sheep is heard from off stage right.*

[spot on JACOB entering from stage right]

*( JACOB enters from stage right. He crosses to right of center stage and warms his hands at the camp fire. Then he looks up at the star stage right.)*

[spots on ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL entering from stage right]

*( ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL enter from stage right, laughing and punching each other.)*

*(MICHAEL stops. He looks at JACOB and puts hands on hips.)*

**MICHAEL:** *(Playfully)* Friends, we must be done for the night. *(Points to JACOB)* Jacob's just gazing up at the stars. He must have put all the sheep in the pen for us.

**BENJAMIN:** He's thinking about his fiancée.

**ASHER:** That doesn't help much. *(Points up to star)* Her family keeps her as far away as one of those stars.

*(They laugh).*

**MICHAEL:** *(With cynical laugh)* And she's likely as cold as one of them.

*(They cross to JACOB.)*

**JACOB:** *(Annoyed)* I heard that, Michael. Rebecca's a warm person.

**MICHAEL:** How do you know? Rebecca was picked by your parents.

**ASHER:** (*winnish*) We're God's people, remember? We've always got to do it the right way. (*Waving right hand up and down in preaching fashion*) Arranged marriages are the *right* way. (*Waves off with right hand*)

**MICHAEL:** Asher's right. You can't even talk alone ...or be alone (*He snickers*), even when you're engaged.

**JACOB:** It's not as bad as that.

**MICHAEL:** And the engagements are a year long. That's too long for me.

**BENJAMIN:** (*To MICHAEL*) You don't even have a girlfriend!

(*MICHAEL pushes BENJAMIN.*)

**MICHAEL:** I'm working on it, Benjamin!

(*They laugh at MICHAEL.*)

**ASHER:** Jacob, (*Motions with hands running off*) why don't you just run off with some Roman lady?

**MICHAEL:** No Roman lady would want to run off with a shepherd!

**ASHER:** Nor does any Jewish woman!...

(*ASHER and MICHAEL laugh.*)

(*BENJAMIN tries not to laugh.*)

**ASHER:** ...Look what Jacob's stuck with.

**JACOB:** Stuck with?

**ASHER:** (*Holds up hand with fingers extended—points to thumb*) His fiancée is the oldest girl in her family. (*Counts four fingers*) Her four sisters are all married. If a marriage can't be arranged and the daughter gets old--you know sixteen...

**MICHAEL:** ... ancient...

**ASHER:** ...right, like Rebecca, she gets a shepherd. It's her last chance.

**JACOB:** Come on, Asher. I love Rebecca. I know she's the oldest but she's pretty....

(*They whistle.*)

**JACOB:** ...And...and...

(*They hoot.*)

**ASHER:** ...yes...yes...

**JACOB:** ...(Proudly) she has a heart for God!

*ASHER and MICHAEL laugh*

*(BENJAMIN puts hand to mouth trying not to laugh)*

**ASHER:** *(Mockingly)* A heart for God! That's got to be *some* consolation, for a shepherd. *(Waves off)* Big deal! *(Snickers)* A lady of principles, too *(He bows mockingly)* ?

**JACOB:** *(Sheepishly)* Yep.

*(They laugh).*

**ASHER:** I'd rather have a Canaanite girl. They're hot numbers. The Rabbis don't let anyone read about them in the Scriptures; but I've peeked at those scrolls.

**MICHAEL:** You can't even read!

**ASHER:** I can, ... a little. *(Pushes MICHAEL)* I thought you were on my side.

**BENJAMIN:** I'm afraid the Canaanites were a long time ago, Asher.

**ASHER:** Too bad.

**MICHAEL:** You can't trust rabbis anyway. Who knows what they're really reading to you.

**ASHER:** Right! *(Pushes MICHAEL)* See, I'm on your side.

**BENJAMIN:** *(Sighs)* At least Jacob has someone.

**ASHER:** I'm looking, just like Michael. *(Points to himself)* But I got time-- I'm the youngest!

**MICHAEL:** *(With mocking)* Six months, whoa!

*(MICHAEL and BENJAMIN laugh.)*

**BENJAMIN:** Asher...Michael..., Rebecca's...*(Points to JACOB)* our friend's girl. She should be our friend as well.

**ASHER:** *(Indignantly)* A friend, a girl? *(Still after JACOB)* Maybe you'll be lucky Jacob, and Rebecca will have some Philistine blood, like Delilah. "I want to kiss you, Samson".

*(JACOB crosses to center stage.)*

*(ASHER chases after JACOB making kissing noises and trying to embrace him.)*

*(MICHAEL laughs.)*

**BENJAMIN:** *(Trying to get the others to be kind)* Guys! C'mon.

**ASHER:** Lighten up, Benjamin. We're just joking.

*ASHER crosses back to MICHAEL at stage right.)*

*(ASHER and MICHAEL snicker.)*

*(BENJAMIN crosses to JACOB.)*

*(JACOB and BENJAMIN cross several steps toward stage left).*

**JACOB:** Thanks, Benjamin. It's hard to take it sometimes, especially from Asher.

*(BENJAMIN nods)*

**BENJAMIN:** *(Waves off with his hand)* He doesn't mean any harm. You know that.

*(JACOB shrugs his shoulders.)*

**JACOB:** We'd better check the sheep in the lower field *(He points).*

*(JACOB looks away again at the star stage right.)*

**BENJAMIN:** What's that?

**JACOB:** *(Looks away at star and then at BENJAMIN)* A new star that's come out of the East.

*(BENJAMIN looks up at star then at JACOB.)*

**BENJAMIN:** That one low in the sky? *(He points)*

**JACOB:** Yeah... *(He points)* over there.

**ASHER:** *(He listens to JACOB and BENJAMIN and looks at star)* I haven't learned much about stars in Shepherd's Field. Jacob must have gone to synagogue school.

*(MICHAEL shakes his head and crosses to JACOB.)*

**MICHAEL:** What do you think it means, Jacob?

**JACOB:** It's in the Scriptures...something about a star and the King coming.

*(ASHER crosses to JACOB.)*

**ASHER:** Our scholar *(He laughs smugly).*

**MICHAEL:** *(To ASHER)* I've heard that too, Asher. Give him a break!

**ASHER:** *(Annoyed)* All right! All right!

*(ROMAN SOLDIER enters from stage right, crosses stage toward stage left exit.)*

**MICHAEL:** It'd be a good time for a King to come, anyway. Get Rome off our backs. Soldiers everywhere. Every time you go somewhere...it's oppression. The Roman boot!

*(MICHAEL raises a menacing fist at the ROMAN SOLDIER as he exits stage left.)*

**BENJAMIN:** We get a lot from Rome.

**MICHAEL:** *(Hands on hips)* Like what?

**BENJAMIN:** *(Thinking)* Agh...

**MICHAEL:** ...We've gotten nothing from Rome. All they want from us *(Points to the others)*... is taxes... and more taxes.

**JACOB:** Michael, you don't make enough to pay taxes!

*(MICHAEL waves JACOB off.)*

**ASHER:** Someday we'll fight the Romans....

*(ASHER swings in the direction of where the ROMAN SOLDIER exited).*

**ASHER:** ...*(Raises arm like a sword)* with swords.

**MICHAEL:** *(Brings arm down like a club)* And clubs.

**JACOB:** Rome's not the cause of *all* our problems.

**ASHER:** What are you talking about? *(Scornfully)*

**MICHAEL:** *(Fist toward where ROMAN SOLDIER exited)* Get that pagan culture out of our land and we'll be right again.

**ASHER:** *(Raises a fist toward ROMAN SOLDIER)* You said it!

**JACOB:** Just because something is allowed doesn't mean we have to do it.

**ASHER:** *(Motions toward JACOB)* First a scholar, now a riddler.

**JACOB:** Divorce's easy under Roman law, right?

**ASHER:** *(Motions toward JACOB)* And a lawyer. *(Toward others)* *(Change of tone of voice)* Everybody knows that. So what?

**JACOB:** Why are our own Hebrew men walking away from their marriages? They don't have to.

**ASHER:** *(Shrugs shoulders)* Who knows?

**JACOB:** And the violence in the hippodrome. We don't have to go.

**MICHAEL:** *(Hands up to protest)* Wait a minute. I like sports. What else is there to do around here?

**JACOB:** What's happened to our religion? That's not Rome's doing, either.

**BENJAMIN:** What do you mean, Jacob?

**JACOB:** Our people have thumbed their noses at God since Malachi's days. No one goes to the temple. (*Points to MICHAEL*)

**MICHAEL:** (*Points toward to JACOB*) We go.

**JACOB:** When?

**MICHAEL:** (*Shrugs shoulders*) On holidays....

**JACOB:** ...Exactly!...

**MICHAEL:** ...most years.

**ASHER:** We need our own king.

**JACOB:** He's coming.

**MICHAEL:** (*Hands on hips defiantly*) We're ready.

**JACOB:** The King who's coming isn't what you're expecting. He's the Messiah....

(*ASHER turns away.*)

**ASHER:** ...(*With disdain*) Messiah!

**JACOB:** That's God's message throughout Scripture. The Messiah will come and...(*Points to his heart*) change our hearts.

(*ASHER turns back.*)

**ASHER:** (*With scorn*) There's no God!

**MICHAEL:** If there is a God, he's abandoned us. Four hundred years, not even one prophecy (*Points up one finger*) since Malachi.

**JACOB:** (*Pointing to star*) (*Pleadingly*) But we have the star now....

(*ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL look at star.*)

**JACOB:** ...He's coming,...

(*ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL look back at JACOB.*)

**JACOB:** ...He must be!

**MICHAEL:** So?

**JACOB:** (*Pats chest*) I'm gonna see Him.

**MICHAEL:** Not us?

**JACOB:** Why should you? You don't even believe!

**ASHER:** (*He waves his arm in disgust*) Prophets! (*Points to the star*) A star! (*Looks up*) The Messiah! Who cares?

*ASHER shakes his head in disbelief and turns away.)*

**JACOB:** You should care. Whoever sees the Messiah will be changed.

**MICHAEL:** I want change all right: change from Roman domination. Change here *(Points to his heart)* — some other time. What do you think, Benjamin?

*(BENJAMIN looks at ASHER and MICHAEL.)*

*(ASHER and MICHAEL look glaringly at BENJAMIN.)*

**BENJAMIN:** *(Confused)* ( To ASHER and MICHAEL) I understand what you mean....

*(ASHER and MICHAEL smile.)*

**BENJAMIN:** ...but I see what Jacob...

*(ASHER and MICHAEL turn away in disgust.)*

**JACOB:** ...*(To BENJAMIN)* Let's get the sheep. They must be tired enough to be rounded up by now.

**BENJAMIN:** That's something we can agree about.

*(ASHER and MICHAEL turn back to JACOB and BENJAMIN.)*

*(All gather their belongings.)*

*(ASHER and MICHAEL cross to stage left and exit stage left.)*

[spots off ASHER and MICHAEL exiting stage left]

*(JACOB and BENJAMIN cross to stage left with Jacob upstage.)*

**JACOB:** What's gotten into Asher?

**BENJAMIN:** *(Shrugs shoulders)* He's like the rest of us. Times are hard. He doesn't know what to believe. You hear it from everyone: "Where is God?" ...

*(JACOB nods in agreement.)*

*(JACOB and BENJAMIN cross to stage left exit.)*

**BENJAMIN:** ...Do you think we really have to see Him to be changed?

**JACOB:** Sure. Like during the days of Moses.

*(JACOB and BENJAMIN exit stage left.)*

[spots off JACOB and BENJAMIN exiting stage left]

[lights out]

[stage position #2]

Scene 2. *The next day. A home in Bethlehem. REBECCA enters from stage right and crosses to a bench at center stage. She sits down. She sews.*

[lights up]

[spot on REBECCA on bench]

[spot on JACOB entering from stage right]

*(JACOB enters from stage right.)*

**JACOB:** (Happily) Shalom, Rebecca.

**REBECCA:** (Happily) Shalom, Jacob.

*(He runs to her. She gets up. They hold hands.)*

**JACOB:** (Eagerly) Is our chaperone here yet?

**REBECCA:** No.

**JACOB:** Good. Maybe we'll have a few minutes alone *(They sit down close together with JACOB stage right. They hold hands and look into each other's eyes.)*

[spot on SIMEON entering from stage right]

*(SIMEON enters from right.)*

**SIMEON:** (Clears throat) Sorry I'm late.

*(REBECCA and JACOB drop hands and stand up quickly, a little embarrassed.)*

*(REBECCA moves away from JACOB. She smooths her hair.)*

**REBECCA:** Shalom, grandfather.

**JACOB:** Shalom, sir.

**SIMEON:** (Sternly) This is Jacob, I presume. An introduction is in order, Rebecca.

**REBECCA:** (Takes SIMEON'S arm) Grandfather, *(Motioning toward JACOB)* this is Jacob. Jacob, *(Motioning toward SIMEON)* this is my Grandfather, Simeon.

*(REBECCA releases SIMEON'S arm.)*

**SIMEON:** Glad you meet you, Jacob. *(They shake hands)* I've not had the opportunity of meeting you until today. Your name is notable in the history of our people. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-- one of the great patriarchs.

**JACOB:** Thank you, Sir. Yes, Sir.

**REBECCA:** *(To JACOB)* Grandfather is a rabbi. He spends most of the time at the Temple. *(To SIMEON)* *(Teasingly)* I'm surprised you could be our chaperone today, Grandpa.

**SIMEON:** Your mother says I spend too much time in the Temple. *(Points to REBECCA)* This is a grandfather's job as well, I've been told. *(Smiles broadly)* For my favorite granddaughter I'm glad to be here.

**REBECCA:** Thank you *(She hugs his arm).*

**JACOB:** *(Clears throat)* Sir, because you're a rabbi I'd like to ask your help.

**SIMEON:** Please.

*(SIMEON motions JACOB to speak.)*

*(JACOB crosses to stage right stairs and points above to star.)*

*(SIMEON crosses to JACOB.)*

*(REBECCA crosses to JACOB.)*

**JACOB:** At night in the fields I've seen a new star. It's been in the East, and it seems to be moving toward us. Does the star mean anything?

**SIMEON:** *(Strokes beard)* I've been watching it too, Jacob. It's a star predicted long ago. It means something's going to happen soon, something wonderful.

**REBECCA:** What, Grandfather?

**SIMEON:** It means the Messiah's coming.

**JACOB:** The Messiah? That's what I told my friends was happening.

**SIMEON:** And you are right. The prophets Isaiah and Zechariah have said that during dark days the Messiah will come. *(Waves arms over audience)* Consider the terrible condition of our people today.

**REBECCA:** There's always been talk in Jerusalem about the coming of the Messiah.

**SIMEON:** For good reason, Rebecca. The scrolls tell us that God will send His people a deliverer.

**REBECCA:** But it's always some day in the future.

**SIMEON:** Now it is different.

**REBECCA:** How can you be so sure?

**SIMEON:** Please....

*(SIMEON rubs his back and motions toward the bench.)*

*SIMEON SITS ON BENCH.)*

*(REBECCA sits on floor in front of bench at center stage.)*

*(JACOB sits on floor in front of bench stage right of REBECCA.)*

**SIMEON:** ...Several years ago I had a vision.

**REBECCA:** A vision?

**SIMEON:** Yes, my child. The Spirit of God revealed to me that I would not die until I would see the Messiah--the Christ.

**REBECCA:** *(With astonishment)* Grandpa!

**JACOB:** It will happen soon?

**SIMEON:** Look at me....

*(JACOB and REBECCA look at SIMEON.)*

**SIMEON:** ...*(Sweeps his arm over himself)* I'm getting old. It can't be much longer because I can't live much longer.

**REBECCA:** Grandpa!

**SIMEON:** It's true, Rebecca.

*(SIMEON stands up and crosses to the edge of the stage. He looks over the audience and then back at JACOB and REBECCA.)*

**SIMEON:** ...Have you noticed the crowds here in Bethlehem?

*(JACOB and REBECCA cross to Simeon.)*

**JACOB:** Because of the census?

**SIMEON:** Caesar has decreed this census, obviously with new taxes in mind for his military objectives. But God is working through Caesar to bring the prophecies to fulfillment. It is my opinion that Caesar's a pawn in God's plan!

**JACOB:** A pawn?

**REBECCA:** In God's plan?

*(SIMEON nods up and down.)*

**SIMEON:** *(Turns and surveys the audience)* There's a vast movement of our people with this census. Thousands are coming to Bethlehem, all of them of the family of David.

**REBECCA:** That's where they're supposed to come, aren't they?

**SIMEON:** Precisely, Rebecca. But think. Where is the Messiah to be born?

**REBECCA:** You've taught me the prophet Isaiah says right here.

**SIMEON:** Why?

**REBECCA:** Because that's where David was born and the Messiah will come from his line.

**SIMEON:** I'm proud of you, Rebecca. You've learned well....

*(SIMEON smiles at REBECCA.)*

*(REBECCA smiles at SIMEON.)*

**SIMEON:** ...The Messiah could be born of one living here. Or He could be born of one of the travelers. This vast movement's not for nothing. He's to be born of one of the travelers.

**JACOB:** You say that the Messiah will come from David's line. There's something I don't understand.

**SIMEON:** What, Jacob?

**JACOB:** The prophet Isaiah has said, "A virgin will be with child and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel". What does that mean?

**SIMEON:** *(Waves off) (Looks off stage)* Some kind of special birth, I suppose. The rabbis at the synagogue are always arguing about that verse....

*(SIMEON turns toward JACOB and REBECCA.)*

**SIMEON:** ...It's *(Scratches head)*...obviously something unique.

**JACOB:** *(Excitedly)* So, we're here. In the right place. At the right time. We'll get to see Him. *(Hands up)* The Messiah's coming! *(Excitedly)* The Messiah's coming!

**SIMEON:** *(Smiles)* Yes, yes. *(To REBECCA)* *(Laughs)* Youthful exuberance! What would we do without it?

[spots on BENJAMIN, MICHAEL, and ASHER entering from stage left]

*(BENJAMIN, MICHAEL, and ASHER enter hurriedly from stage left.)*

**ASHER:** *(Harshly)* Jacob...

*(JACOB, REBECCA, and SIMEON turn toward ASHER.)*

**ASHER:** ...Jonah's looking for you.

**JACOB:** Jonah?

**ASHER:** Our boss? The one who pays us? He wants you to take the sheep to the Temple in Jerusalem. I did it last week.

*(JACOB LOOKS AT MICHAEL.)*

**MICHAEL:** Don't look at me. I did it the week before.

*(JACOB looks at BENJAMIN.)*

**BENJAMIN:** I'll help...

**ASHER:** ...*(Firmly)* He said Jacob.

**JACOB:** *(Agitatedly)* I can't.

**ASHER:** You what?

**JACOB:** I might miss the Messiah. I should be here.

**BENJAMIN:** *(Trying to reassure)* Don't worry. You won't miss anything. Nothing ever happens in Bethlehem.

**JACOB:** But...

**MICHAEL:** ...I'm glad it's not me.

**ASHER:** Me, too! *(Mockingly)* I'd hate to miss the Messiah.

**MICHAEL:** *(Mockingly)* And my heart. It'd be changed when I'd see him. Right, Jacob?

**JACOB:** *(Shakes his head)* Benjamin's said you don't know what to believe.

**ASHER:** Really?...

*(ASHER looks sharply toward BENJAMIN then at JACOB.)*

**ASHER:** ...I know what I believe—*(Points toward JACOB)* I believe you're going to Jerusalem, not me!

*(ASHER and MICHAEL laugh.)*

*(BENJAMIN, MICHAEL, and ASHER exit left.)*

[spots off BENJAMIN, MICHAEL, and ASHER exiting stage left]

**JACOB:** I'd better get the sheep ready. Shalom, Rebecca *(He reaches for her hand.)*

*(SIMEON looks at JACOB sternly.)*

*(JACOB takes back his hand with embarrassment.)*

**REBECCA:** *(Sadly)* Shalom, Jacob.

**SIMEON:** I expect to see you again soon.

**JACOB:** Yes, sir. I hope so. Shalom.

*JACOB exits hurriedly stage left.)*

[spot off JACOB exiting stage left]

**SIMEON:** Nice boy....

*(REBECCA nods and smiles)*

**SIMEON:** But his friends. And their manners.

**REBECCA:** Will they ever change?

**SIMEON:** I don't know. *(Points to stage right)* Let's go to your mother.

**REBECCA:** *(Sadly)* Of course, Grandfather.

*(REBECCA takes SIMEON'S right arm. She is upstage.)*

*(SIMEON and REBECCA cross toward stage right exit.)*

*(REBECCA looks longingly toward stage left exit as she crosses toward stage right.)*

*(REBECCA and SIMEON exit stage right).*

[spots off REBECCA and SIMEON exiting stage right]

[lights off]

[star position #3.

[lights up low]

### *Scene 3.Evening.*

[spots on PILGRIMS entering stage right]

*(A group of PILGRIMS enter from the right of the stage, cross the stage slowly.)*

[spot on JACOB entering stage right]

*(JACOB enters from stage right.)*

[spots on JOSEPH and MARY entering stage left]

*(JOSEPH and MARY enter from stage left. They look around.)*

*(PILGRIMS nod and smile at JOSEPH and MARY.)*

*(JOSEPH and MARY smile at PILGRIMS.)*

*JACOB looks drunkenly at JOSEPH and MARY and PILGRIMS, then over the audience, and at the ground. He crosses to the top of the stage right stairs.)*

*(PILGRIMS exit stage left.)*

[spots off PILGRIMS exiting stage left]

**JACOB:** *(Thinking deeply) (Touches chest)* Why'd I have to go? Something's going to happen. I know it is and I'm going to miss it. *(Motioning to the PILGRIMS)* All those people. Simeon's right. It could be anyone of them!

*(JACOB sits down on the top of the stage right stairs.)*

*(JOSEPH and MARY take three steps toward center stage.)*

**MARY:** *(Waves her arms)* The streets are *so* crowded. Where will we stay? It's not Nazareth!

**JOSEPH:** At least it's not Jerusalem....

*(JOSEPH puts his left arm around MARY.)*

**JOSEPH:** ...There'll be a place here, I'm sure.

**MARY:** *(Holds stomach)* I wish I were home. Why'd we have to travel here, just when I'm due?

**JOSEPH:** You know why: it's because of the census. I'd never ask you to walk eight miles let alone eighty miles to Bethlehem in your condition.

[spots on PILGRIMS entering stage left]

*(A group of PILGRIMS enter from stage left, cross the stage, and exit stage right.)*

[spots off PILGRIMS exiting stage right]

[spot on ROMAN SOLDIER entering stage right]

*(A ROMAN SOLDIER enters from stage right, crosses the stage, and exits stage left.)*

[spot off ROMAN SOLDIER exiting stage left]

*(MARY holds her stomach because of a labor pain. She is in distress.)*

**MARY:** There'd better be a place soon, Joseph.

**JOSEPH:** Mary, what is it?

**MARY:** It's almost time....

*(MARY puts JOSEPH'S right hand on her stomach.)*

**MARY:** ... feel that!...

*(JOSEPH holds her stomach and nods. He takes his hand away.)*

**MARY:** ... The contractions are coming closer together. We'd better hurry.

*(JACOB stands up and looks out at the audience.)*

**JOSEPH:** *(With determination)* Someone must know where we could stay....

*(JOSEPH looks around. He spots JACOB and points toward JACOB)*

**JOSEPH:** That shepherd?...

*(MARY looks at JACOB.)*

**JOSEPH:** ...I'll ask him.

*(JACOB is looking vacantly toward JOSEPH and MARY. He looks at the star. He looks annoyed and frowns.)*

[spot on PILGRIMS entering from stage left]

*(PILGRIMS enter from stage left and cross in front of JACOB.)*

**JACOB:** *(With agitation)* I must see Him.

**MARY:** I don't know. He looks so angry. Who knows if he can even help us.

**JACOB:** *(To the PILGRIMS)* You're in the way. I can't move the sheep.

*(PILGRIMS cross hastily to stage right exit and exit.)*

[spots off PILGRIMS as they exit stage right]

**MARY:** I can't take anyone else agitated tonight. All that pushing and shoving in the census lines this afternoon.

**JACOB:** *(With agitation)* I'll get to the Temple as fast as possible and get home. He'll be there in Bethlehem. I know it.

**MARY:** It was miserable. We didn't even make it to the front of the line. We'll have to try again tomorrow.

**JOSEPH:** *(To MARY)* Let me... *(Turns to JACOB)* Shalom, sir...

*(JACOB looks at JOSEPH.)*

**JACOB:** ...I'm busy...

**JOSEPH:** ...my...

**JACOB:** ...I must be on my way...

**JOSEPH:** ...wife...

**JACOB:** ...You're all blocking the way!

*(JACOB walks down the stage right stairs.)*

*(JACOB shakes his head and exits up stage right aisle.)*

[spot off JACOB exiting up stage right aisle]

*(JOSEPH shakes his head.)*

**JOSEPH:** *(To MARY)* He's... Now I'm discouraged.

**MARY:** ...*(Pats JOSEPH'S arm)* It's all right, Joseph....

[spot on ROMAN SOLDIER entering stage left]

*(A ROMAN SOLDIER enters from stage left, crosses across stage, and exits stage right.)*

**MARY:** ...One person can't stop us. The angel Gabriel appeared to me, and God spoke to you in a dream. That's why we came here. *(Touches abdomen)* This baby's going to be born where *He* wants it and in *His* time. Not any man, *(Points to where ROMAN SOLDIER exited)* not even Rome can stop what's happening. God's in charge.

*(JACOB nods at MARY.)*

[spot off ROMAN SOLDIER exiting stage right]

[spot on PILGRIM entering stage right]

*(A PILGRIM enters from stage right and crosses to center stage.)*

*(JOSEPH and MARY look hopefully at PILGRIM.)*

**JOSEPH:** *(Desperately)* Madam, my wife's going to give birth....

*(The PILGRIM slows down and looks at MARY and JOSEPH.)*

**JOSEPH:** ...We don't have much time 'til she delivers.

*(The PILGRIM stops.)*

**PILGRIM:** What can I do?

**MARY:** Please. We are looking for somewhere to stay, anywhere.

**PILGRIM:** *(Kindly)* Up there, at the edge of town.

*(The PILGRIM points up left aisle.)*

**JOSEPH:** But...

**PILGRIM:** ...They'll be a place.

**JOSEPH:** Thank you.

*(The PILGRIM exits stage left.)*

[spot off PILGRIM exiting stage left]

**JOSEPH:** She pointed over there. She sounded hopeful. Shall we try it?

**MARY:** At least here we're in the center of town. There won't be anybody or anything out there *(Points up stage left aisle)*, ... except sheep.

**JOSEPH:** I'm sure there'll be. And if not, *(Sheepishly)* I'll help, you'll see....

*(MARY reacts to labor pain.)*

*(MARY puts her hand on JOSEPH'S arm.)*

**JOSEPH:** ...I'll really try.

**MARY:** You've been so good to me, Joseph. But you, a widwife?

**JOSEPH:** *(Nervously)* I can do it.

*(JOSEPH points up stage left aisle. JOSEPH and MARY exit off stage left stairs and up stage left aisle.)*

[spots off JOSEPH and MARY exiting stage left stairs]

[lights out]

[star position #4]

[lights low]

Scene 4. *Later the same night, Shepherd's field. There is a campfire mid center stage.*

[spots on BENJAMIN, MICHAEL, and ASHER entering stage right]

( BENJAMIN and MICHAEL enter from stage right and cross to the edge of center stage. ASHER enters after them and looks around perplexed.)

**BENJAMIN:** *(Rubbing his arms)* It's cold...but quiet, anyway.

**MICHAEL:** What do you mean?

*(ASHER reaches BENJAMIN and MICHAEL and listens to them diffidently.)*

**BENJAMIN:** *(Points to the audience)* You saw the crowds in the center of town. You heard the noise. Unbelievable! *(Sighs)* At least nobody'll come out here.

*(ASHER crosses to edge of stage left and looks out above the audience.)*

**MICHAEL:** The inn'll be packed. *(Indignantly)* That's good!

**BENJAMIN:** *(Backs away in disbelief)* What?

**MICHAEL:** Squeeze them in there so they'll complain even more what's Rome doing to them. Then give 'em each a sword or a spear and we can take our land back. *(Looks around for ASHER then sees him)* Right, Asher?

**ASHER:** *(Diffidently)* *(Slowly)* Sure. Sure.

*(BENJAMIN and MICHAEL look at each perplexed. They cross to ASHER.)*

[lights lower]

**MICHAEL:** What's the matter?

**ASHER:** *(Looking at over the audience)* It's so calm.

*(BENJAMIN and MICHAEL look around and at each other. They don't understand.)*

**BENJAMIN:** Quiet, sure. Except for the animals.

*(BENJAMIN looks at MICHAEL. MICHAEL nods agreement.)*

**ASHER:** *(Shakes head)* No. *(Slowly)* Calm. Peaceful. *(With emphasis)* Something special's happening.

**MICHAEL:** Don't you remember, Asher?: "Nothing ever happens in Bethlehem".

**BENJAMIN:** I said that.

**MICHAEL:** Right. If something's going on, it'll be in Jerusalem. That's where Jacob is. He'll see it there. He won't miss a thing.

*(ASHER points to back of theatre.)*

*(MICHAEL and BENJAMIN look to where ASHER is pointing.)*

**ASHER:** That couple we saw at dusk, walking along the ridge....

*(ASHER points along moving toward stage left side of theatre.)*

*(MICHAEL and BENJAMIN look along where ASHER is pointing.)*

*(ASHER stops pointing and looks at MICHAEL and BENJAMIN.)*

**ASHER:** ...The husband leading a donkey. His wife, very pregnant, sitting on it. Why were they there?

**MICHAEL:** For the census.

**ASHER:** Of course. But something more. *(Imploringly)* Don't you see?

**BENJAMIN:** No room at the inn?

*(ASHER looks away thinking.)*

*(MICHAEL and BENJAMIN look at each perplexed and shake heads.)*

**ASHER:** *(Turns toward BENJAMIN and MICHAEL)* If I were bringing my *(Taps his chest)* wife...

**MICHAEL:** ...*(Points toward ASHER)* You don't have a wife....

**ASHER:** ... *(Frustratedly)* You know what I mean. If I'd brought her here from...somewhere, in *that* condition, I'd be mad.

**MICHAEL:** Now you're talking.

*(ASHER points stage left.)*

*(BENJAMIN and MICHAEL look stage left then at ASHER)*

**ASHER:** *(With agitation)* He'd be mad. He...they'd be tense. *(Calmly)* But they were calm. *(Earnestly)* They were...steadfast. What do they know we don't know?

[lights lower]

**MICHAEL:** *(To BENJAMIN)* We've got a riddler here. *(To ASHER)* Asher, you're sounding like Jacob! **ASHER:** *(Looking up at the star)* *(Not listening to MICHAEL)* And that new star's so bright and overhead.

**BENJAMIN:** *(Grabbing ASHER'S right arm)* Come, Asher. *(Points to fire with right arm)* Let's sit by the fire. It's *really* cold now, with the sun down....

*(BENJAMIN leads ASHER to the campfire.)*

*(MICHAEL follows them, looking around. He's worried something is happening)*

**BENJAMIN:** ...This is Bethlehem! Nothing happens here.

[lights very low]

*They cross to the fire. They put down their belongings. They sit down around the fire. They rub their hands.)*

*(Pause)*

[A bright blinding light shines from the left edge of the stage]

*(ASHER, BENJAMIN, AND MICHAEL stand with amazement and fear.)*

**ASHER:** What the ...?

**MICHAEL:** ...What's going on?

**BENJAMIN:** Let's get out of here!

[spot on ANGEL OF THE LORD and ANGEL entering from stage left]

*(An ANGEL OF THE LORD and ANGEL appears from the midst of the bright light stage left.)*

*(ASHER, BENJAMIN, AND MICHAEL put up their arms, terrified)*

**ANGEL OF THE LORD:** Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

**ANGEL:** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests.

*(The bright light starts to dim. The ANGEL and ANGEL OF THE LORD exit stage left as the light goes out.)*

[spots off ANGEL OF THE LORD and ANGEL exiting stage left]

**MICHAEL:** *(Excitedly)* What's this?

**ASHER:** *(Excitedly)* Could it be?

**MICHAEL:** *(Shrugs shoulders)* Where would we find a feeding trough?

**BENJAMIN:** *(Excitedly, he points in the distance to stage left)* At the edge of town, where the stables are.

**MICHAEL:** That must be it! Let's go!

*They take their belongings and turn toward stage left stairs.)*

**ASHER:** *(Pointing to stage left)* That couple. Something special *has* happened. *(Nods excitedly)* Jacob was right! It's coming true! The Messiah's here!

*(They exit excitedly off stage left stairs and up extreme stage left aisle.)*

[spots off ASHER, BENJAMIN, AND MICHAEL exiting stage left stairs]

[lights out]

[star position #5]

Scene 5. *At stage left, JOSEPH and MARY are sitting on a bale of straw. JESUS is in a manger in front of them. They are sitting on straw. There is straw around.*

[lights up]

[spots on JOSEPH, MARY, and JESUS]

[spots on ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL entering stage right]

*(ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL enter from stage right.)*

*(MARY takes JESUS from the manger and puts him to her breast.)*

*(ASHER, BENJAMIN, AND MICHAEL cross closer. They are in awe. They approach JOSEPH and MARY. ASHER stands. MICHAEL and BENJAMIN kneel in front of JOSEPH and MARY.)*

**ASHER:** *(Out of breath)* Is this the special child the angels just told us about?

**JOSEPH:** Angels?

**MARY:** Yes.

*(MARY looks at JOSEPH then at the shepherds).*

**MICHAEL:** What's His name?

**JOSEPH:** An angel appeared to us months ago. *(He points to JESUS)* He told us to name Him Jesus.

**ASHER:** *(Excitedly)* "God saves"--that's what his name means.

**MICHAEL:** *(Excitedly)* He's really come to save us. *(He looks at ASHER and BENJAMIN)* It's really happening *(He speaks to ASHER AND BENJAMIN).*

*(ASHER and BENJAMIN nod.)*

**ASHER:** You're the couple we saw last night coming from the inn.

**JOSEPH:** The inn was full of people arriving for the census. The kind innkeeper said we could stay out here in his stable.

**MICHAEL:** Kinder then you think. This was probably the best place to give birth. If you were in the inn, you probably would've had people lying all around you...

**BENJAMIN:** ... It wouldn't have been very private.

**MARY:** God's been very good to us. He's preserved us at home and all the way here. Even tonight He's provided the best place to be, as you say.

**MICHAEL:** Where *is* home?

**JOSEPH:** Nazareth.

**ASHER:** The world's turned upside down. The Messiah's from an out of the way village. His birth's here in Bethlehem. *(Surveys the scene with his arm)* He's surrounded by sheep and cows, not priests or princes. His first visitors are...

**MICHAEL:** ...shepherds who can't even vote.

*(ASHER, MICHAEL, and BENJAMIN nod at each other.)*

**BENJAMIN:** *(To MARY)* What can we do to help?

**MARY:** *(Looks around then points to manger)* *(Smiling)* We need some fresh straw for bedding.

**MICHAEL:** There's some outside...

**BENJAMIN:** ...at the bottom of the hill.

**JOSEPH:** We appreciate your kindness.

*(BENJAMIN and MICHAEL start to stand.)*

*(ASHER holds each down with an arm.)*

**ASHER:** *(Passionately)* God... is with us!

*(BENJAMIN and MICHAEL look at ASHER.)*

*(ASHER, BENJAMIN, and MICHAEL look at JESUS, MARY, and JOSEPH.)*

[spots off ASHER, BENJAMIN, AND MICHAEL]

[spots slowly fade off JESUS, MARY, and JOSEPH]

End of ACT I

**Please order the script to read the rest.**

