

# **THE GIFT**

A Christmas Play in Three Acts

by

**Delvyn C. Case, Jr.**

## **The Gift**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHARACTERS.....	ii
GENERAL PRODUCTION NOTES.....	iv
ACT I: THE PRICE.....	1
ACT II: THE TIME.....	11
ACT III: THE GIFT.....	22

**CHARACTERS**  
(in order of appearance)

MARY

JOSEPH

MR. THOMAS, DIRECTOR, 40's-50's

CHRISTINA, STAGE MANAGER, 30's--40's

ROMAN SOLDIER

INNKEEPER

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

LEAH, daughter of INNKEEPER and WIFE

RACHEL, daughter of INNKEEPER and WIFE

POLICE OFFICER, 30'-40's

SHEPHERDS (2)

WOMEN (2)

WISEMEN (3)



## GENERAL PRODUCTION NOTES

Costumes: MR. THOMAS: Black tee shirt, black suit, black socks, and black shoes.

CHRISTINA: Casual clothes for play rehearsal

MARY, JOSEPH, INNKEEPER, INNKEEPER'S WIFE, ROMAN SOLDIER, LEAH, RACHEL, SHEPHERDS, WOMEN, and WISEMEN: Traditional Bible dress

MARY, JOSEPH, INNKEEPER, INNKEEPER'S WIFE, ROMAN SOLDIER, LEAH, RACHEL, SHEPHERDS, WOMEN, and WISEMEN: Casual modern dress with winter coats (ACT III, Scene 5)

POLICE OFFICER: Police uniform

Properties: ACT I, Scene 1: two copies of script, clipboard

ACT I, Scene 2: rough bench, carpenter tools, piece of wood, background wall

ACT I, Scene 3: bedroll

ACT II, Scene 1: low wall, two large traveling bags, spear and sword

ACT II, Scene 2: table, two benches, cups, and bowls, towel

ACT III, Scene 1: campfire, two bedrolls, two staffs, and two pouches

ACT III, Scene 2: bales of hay, manger, blanket, two staffs, two pouches, small blanket, baby Jesus

ACT III, Scene 3: low wall, three crowns, one scroll

ACT III, Scene 4: three ornate boxes, scroll, hay, manger, one small blanket, baby Jesus, one large blanket

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** Names of companies/institutions/locations/distances referred to in the script can be changed to local companies/institutions/locations/distances in productions.

# The Gift

## ACT I: THE PRICE

Scene. The stage is bare.

### Scene 1: Mary

(MARY enters from stage right aisle. She is barefoot. She is anxious. She walks up stairs onto stage and crosses to center stage. MR. THOMAS and CHRISTINA are sitting in front row of stage right seats.)

MARY: (Hands outstretched) Wait, please don't go. (Pleadingly) Don't go. (Stops and looks around audience) He said he was an angel. I think he was. I...I mean, he must have been. He just appeared and then was gone (Arms up). (Looks up) And that light, the one that surrounded him, was it the light of Heaven?

(Crosses two steps to edge of stage) (Hands folded) Then all of a sudden he talked to me, (Hands to chest) to me. He said that I would be with child and give birth to a son, and should give him the name Jesus. And that he, Jesus, would reign over the house of Jacob forever and his kingdom would never end.

(Palms up) I told him that I was engaged and everything, but that I was a virgin. I mean, how could this happen? Then he told me the Holy Spirit would come over me and the power of the Most High would overshadow me (Puts hands to lower abdomen). (Pauses to think) And that the Holy One to be born would be called the Son of God (Puts hands across chest and bows her head for a moment).

(Looks up to audience) Then he said, (Emphasizing each word) "Nothing...is impossible with God". Then he left, (Waves left hand and arm) like that!

(Crosses to top of stage left stairs) (Shakes head) Joseph! Poor Joseph! How can I explain to him what God has done tonight? I'm now with child through some miraculous way according to what the angel...(Points up stage right aisle) said. (Hands over abdomen) And I'll be showing when we marry in six months. What will I do? (Turns to stage right) I'll need him to stand with me to explain all of this to my parents. (Turns toward stage left) And to his. (Turns forward) Or will I have to stand alone?

Is this how God works when He calls people? Turns lives upside down? Life was simple...until now. But He has called and I will do it.

(Down on knees with hands up) (With determination) I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said.

(MARY folds hands in prayer and looks down.)

[Spot off MARY]  
[Lights off]

(MARY exits off stage left.)

Scene 2: Joseph and Mary

Scene. Background wall. A bench right of center stage.

(JOSEPH is sitting on a bench right of center stage. He has carpenter tools. He is sanding a piece of wood.)

[Stage lights up]

[Spotlight on JOSEPH sitting]

[Spotlight on MARY as she enters and crosses]

(MARY enters from stage left. She has on a different headpiece.)

(JOSEPH hears MARY. He smiles broadly.)

JOSEPH: Mary!

(JOSEPH puts down carpenter tools on the bench and stands up to greet MARY.)

MARY: Joseph!

(MARY rushes to JOSEPH.)

(JOSEPH takes MARY'S hands.)

JOSEPH: It's been so long. I've missed you.

MARY: I had to visit my cousin. I needed time to figure things out.

JOSEPH: (Confused) Oh.

(JOSEPH releases MARY'S hands.)

MARY: What have you been doing?

JOSEPH: I've been busy at the shop...

(MARY nods with interest.)

JOSEPH: ...but (Picks up piece of wood in right hand) I've been able to work on the furniture for our home. (Holds up piece of wood) What do you think?

(MARY runs right hand over the piece of wood.)

MARY: It's very nice work, Joseph. But what is it?

(JOSEPH smiles.)

JOSEPH: I just started. It's part of the table. (Motions to bench) Sit down Mary. You must be tired from your trip.

(JOSEPH takes off carpenter tools from bench and puts them on floor.)

(MARY sits down on downstage side of bench.)

(JOSEPH sits down on upstage side of bench.)

MARY: (Sighs) I need to explain something to you, Joseph.

JOSEPH: (Moving tools, not listening) Gone for three months, that's a long time.

MARY: (Imploringly) Joseph!

JOSEPH: (Looks up at her) Sorry.

MARY: Just before I left, something very special happened to me.

JOSEPH: What was it?

MARY: An angel appeared to me.

JOSEPH: (Shocked) An angel? Mary, our prophets haven't had visitation from God or His angels for...(Thinking) (Shrugs shoulders) four hundred years. (Condescendingly) And certainly not to any people like us.

MARY: (Insistently) But it's true.

JOSEPH: (Rising left hand) You should've told me about it before you left.

MARY: (Pats his left arm) I couldn't, at least not then...

(JOSEPH scratches head and neck with right hand.)

MARY: ...So I went to Elizabeth's. When I got there, (Excitedly) she told me her husband had also seen an angel, just months before I did.

JOSEPH: (Not convinced, looks around) Now they're all over the place.

MARY: No Joseph, It was the same angel. His name was Gabriel.

JOSEPH: (Not believing) Gabriel.

MARY: And he told Zechariah, that Elizabeth and he would have a son and the son would be a great prophet.

JOSEPH: (Holds her hands) A prophet wouldn't be so bad for us, too.

MARY: (Gently takes her hands away) He's to be more than a prophet.

JOSEPH: (Not understanding) What?

MARY: Joseph...(Slowly) I'm going to give birth... to the Messiah.

(JOSEPH stands up excitedly.)

(MARY stands up.)

JOSEPH: (Flabbergasted, can hardly speak) Mary, that's wonderful. That's been the hope of every Jewish girl since Eve....

(JOSEPH reaches for her.)

JOSEPH: When will it happen?

(MARY moves back one step.)

MARY: (Hesitatingly) I'm...already pregnant.

JOSEPH: (Hands up) You can't be! (Thinking and getting angry) Mary, no!

MARY: It's all right, Joseph. It's not what you think.

JOSEPH: How can it be all right? What can I think?

MARY: (With intensity, trying to explain) When the angel visited me, he said I would be with child. I asked him how it could be since I am a virgin. He said the Holy Spirit would come upon me and the power of the Most High overshadow me. And right after, it happened. (She holds her belly with both hands) I knew it....

(JOSEPH watches intently as MARY holds her belly.)

MARY: ...(Takes hands away) (Imploringly) Joseph, you must believe me, at least you.

JOSEPH: (Shakes head in disbelief) I don't know.

(JOSEPH bends down and picks up his tools and the piece of wood. He looks at piece of wood and throws it down on the bench.)

MARY: What about Elizabeth and Zechariah? She's pregnant and almost ready to deliver.

JOSEPH: (Shrugs shoulders) What's so special about that? It's just natural.

MARY: It's a miracle! Elizabeth's beyond the age of child-bearing. Remember how they've tried for so many years?

JOSEPH: God could do such a miracle if He wants. He did it for Abraham and Sarah, our ancestors, many years ago. Sarah, too, was too old to have a child, and she got pregnant.

MARY: Couldn't God do a different kind of miracle to a virgin?

JOSEPH: (Shakes his head) That's...never happened before.

MARY: Of course it hasn't because...

(JOSEPH squirms not knowing what to think. He looks away.)

MARY: ...(Imploringly) Joseph!...

(JOSEPH looks back at MARY.)

MARY: ...because my son...my son is the Son of God.

(JOSEPH is shocked and tries to respond but cannot. He brushes by MARY and crosses toward stage left exit.)

MARY: (Reaching out to JOSEPH) Joseph, please!

JOSEPH: (Turning and talking as he walks backwards) I'll (Points to himself with his right hand) need some kind of miracle to believe that, Mary.

(JOSEPH turns and reaches exit.)

[Spot follows JOSEPH to exit]

MARY: (Takes to two steps toward JOSEPH) Joseph!

(JOSEPH exits stage left.)

[Spot off JOSEPH]

(MARY holds her hands up to her face in despair. She looks at stage left exit and shakes her head. She crosses to bench and sits down. She picks up piece of wood tenderly and shakes head. She looks forlornly at stage left exit.)

[Spot off MARY]

[Stage lights off]

### Scene 3: Joseph

Scene. The stage is bare.

(Joseph enters from stage left. He is barefoot. He carries a rolled-up bedroll and his sandals. His hair is messy from sleeping. He crosses to the top of stage left stairs and sits down. He drops the bedroll diffidently in front of him.)

[spot on JOSEPH as en enters stage left]

JOSEPH: (Putting on sandals) That's the end of sleep for tonight I guess! (Shakes head) My world's just crashed in around me and everything's supposed to be all right! (Anxiously) Sure, sure!

(Stands up) What was I supposed to say? The girl you're engaged to tells you she's pregnant...(Nervous laugh) by God! (Points to himself) I'm only a carpenter, but I know a little about...(Nods) such things.

(Crosses to center stage) I could have had her stoned-(Holds up hand) no one in

Nazareth would've blamed me. Or had an embarrassing trial. (Folds arms in front defiantly) I could've sat there and been angry throughout the whole thing.

(Unfolds arms and looks down) But I love her. (Looks up) So I thought I'd sent her away to her relatives in upper Galilee. It's out of the way. She'd live as a single parent and it'd be tough. But she'd be alive. (Slowly) She'd just have to manage.

(Crosses to top of stage right stairs) She'd told me an angel appeared to her and told her what God was doing for mankind. She said her spirit rejoiced in God her savior and God was mindful of her. She said the angel told her all generations would call her blessed. (Hands with palms forward to protest) Now I know about angels; but it makes a difference when someone you know says she'd talked to one. (Hands up) What was I supposed to think about that?

So tonight, back in my house (Left hand pointing to stage left exit), (Nervous laugh) and angel appears to... (Points to himself) me...in a dream. (Shakes head) Now they'll talk about me too (Rolls eyes).

(Crosses to center stage) The angel called me my name and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins". Then he said, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel-which means, God with us'".

(Looks around, notices the mat, crosses to the mat, and picks it up) So there you go: I marry her-pregnant, she has her son, and I name him Jesus. Simple.

(Shakes head) It can't get much tougher, can it? People can count. We'll be married three months and she'll give birth. (Counts on fingers) (With resignation) (Drops voice with each word) That...doesn't...compute.

(Looks forward with determination) But it's God's calling.

[lights down]

#### Scene 4: The Price

[spots on MR. THOMAS and CHRISTINA as they stand up]

(MR. THOMAS and CHRISTINA stand up, cross to stairs, and walk quickly up the stage right stairs as JOSEPH finishes last line of Scene 2. CHRISTINA follows MR. THOMAS by two steps. CHRISTINA is downstage to MR. THOMAS. MR. THOMAS carries a copy of the script. CHRISTINA carries the script on a clipboard. They cross to JOSEPH.)

MR. THOMAS: Let's stop there....

(MARY opens door off stage left aisle and walks up stage left aisle.)

MR. THOMAS: (To JOSEPH) That was very good.

[spot on MARY as she enters from stage left]

(MARY walks up stage left stairs and crosses to MR. THOMAS, CHRISTINA, and

JOSEPH.)

JOSEPH: Thank you, Mr. Thomas.

MR. THOMAS: (To Mary) Very passionate, especially the scene between the two of you (Points to JOSEPH and MARY). The audience's left hanging. (Dramatically) Will Joseph and Mary get back together? (Hands up) And how? ...(Points to JOSEPH and MARY for emphasis) I like it!

MARY: Thanks.

MR. THOMAS: (Motioning to the Lighting booth) Lights, please!...

[Lights up]

MR. THOMAS: ... (To MARY and JOSEPH) Your lines are fine. We're on schedule. Christina?

(CHRISTINA crosses to downstage side of MR. THOMAS.)

CHRISTINA: Yes, Mr. Thomas.

MR. THOMAS: (Patting script with right hand) I like this script. It's dramatic, honest, real. (Flips to front of script) This sounds familiar. Who wrote it?

CHRISTINA: (A little laugh) Matthew and Luke.

MR. THOMAS: Sorry. (Looks at script) It says...

CHRISTINA: ...I know. Matthew and Luke are two of the gospel writers. Much of the dialogue comes directly from the Bible, from the books they wrote.

MR. THOMAS: Really? Get me their agent. I'll want to talk with them about another project....

(CHRISTINA, MARY, and JOSEPH look at each other with puzzled look.)

(MR. THOMAS looks at them, realizing they didn't get the joke.)

MR. THOMAS: ...(Holds hands up) (Light heartedly) It was just a joke.

(MR. THOMAS looks at script with CHRISTINA.)

MARY: (With earnestness) Mr. Thomas?...

(MR. THOMAS looks up at MARY.)

MARY: ...Everyone in the cast thanks you for taking over on such short notice.

JOSEPH: (With enthusiasm) The rehearsals have gone real well. We really appreciate what you've done.

Mr. THOMAS: I'm glad to do it. My other gigs are professional productions. It's fun to get back into community theatre, even if the pay's not equity rates. (Sweeps stage with right left) Besides, this has even gotten me back into...(Looks up and waves around) a church again.

JOSEPH: Again?

MR. THOMAS: (Shrugs shoulders) I went as a kid-most did when I was growing up. But other things got more important when I went off to college and then to work. It's typical.

JOSEPH: Why haven't you been back since?

MR. THOMAS: (Shrugs shoulders) Still busy, I suppose. I've forgotten about it? A number of reasons...

JOSEPH: ...Excuses?

MR. THOMAS: Whatever.

MARY: (To MR. THOMAS) Have you done many Christmas plays?

MR. THOMAS: (Turns to MARY) I've done a version of the Grinch story in Kennebunk a couple, three years ago. That was a hoot. I've also done children's plays here in Portland about Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Frost the Snowman. Nothing religious like this. (Earnestly) I'm impressed how you're all so serious about it.

JOSEPH: It is Christmas.

MR. THOMAS: But it's different for different people. Christmas is in the eye of the beholder.

MARY: But are they Christmas?

MR. THOMAS: What do you mean?

JOSEPH: The Grinch, Rudolph, Frosty. Do they tell us what Christmas is all about?

MR. THOMAS: The story lines are seasonal. They got snow, presents, and good cheer. What's the real Christmas, anyway? I don't know if it makes a difference what we celebrate. What's important is that we celebrate something. It's "Happy Holidays", isn't it? (Turns to JOSEPH and MARY) Happy Holidays, everyone!...

(JOSEPH and MARY weakly smile at MR. THOMAS.)

MR. THOMAS: ...(Flips through pages of script) We certainly need happy holidays this time of year. (Looks up) (Change of voice) Act II! Let's take our places....

(JOSEPH and MARY cross to stage left talking and gesturing. They exit stage left.)

[spots off JOSEPH and MARY as they exit stage left]

MR. THOMAS: ...(Turning to CHRISTINA) Awesome price Mary paid for listening to God. I'm sure no one believed her in...(Looking for the word)

CHRISTINA: ...Nazareth.

MR. THOMAS: Thank you. And Joseph? That may've been two thousand years ago, but he wasn't stupid!

CHRISTINA: They must've thought it was worth it. Look at Mary's determination at the end of scene one. (With left hand up) (Excitedly) She was committed! She was going to do it!

MR. THOMAS: Joseph, too, after that explanation?

CHRISTINA: (Pointing to MR. THOMAS) That's what angels are for.

MR. THOMAS: Perhaps. But it was still too much. They must've been the butt of every joke, especially as she got...(Demonstrates with hands over his abdomen) bigger and bigger...and bigger.

CHRISTINA: They received God's special gift.

(MR. THOMAS shrugs shoulders.)

MR. THOMAS: (Shaking head) They got the gift all right; but they had to pay for it. Some deal! I don't know anybody else who'd paid such a price.

CHRISTINA: How 'bout God Himself? It cost Him His Son.

(MR. THOMAS acts uneasy.)

(MR. THOMAS shrugs his shoulders.)

MR. THOMAS: So the story goes. I couldn't do it. It's costing me a few bucks to direct this play 'cause its community. But it's not costing me what they went through!...

(CHRISTINA looks down at clipboard and leafs through pages.)

MR. THOMAS: ...(Change of tone to friendly) Talk about a gift, have you done your Christmas shopping?

CHRISTINA: My kids are...

MR. THOMAS: ...How many?

CHRISTINA: ...Three. Two are in the play.

MR. THOMAS: Of course.

CHRISTINA: I won't be done 'til the week of Christmas. And there's the wrapping!

MR. THOMAS: When does that happen?

CHRISTINA: Late...Christmas Eve, after dinner and church.

MR. THOMAS: (Kindly) I remember it well.

CHRISTINA: My husband will kill me. I already have five things we'll have to put together after the kids go to bed. But the one thing I got, that I'm most proud of, is my husband's gift.

MR. THOMAS: Really?

CHRISTINA: I knew it'd be expensive for our budget. So I put a deposit on it and have been paying it off each month.

MR. THOMAS: Since when?

(MARY enters from stage left.)

CHRISTINA: July. I've just made the last payment. It was a lot but it was worth it.

[spot on MARY as she looks in from stage left]

(MARY enters from stage left.)

MARY: (Calling from stage left exit) We're ready for the next act.

MR. THOMAS: Let's do it....

(MARY exits stage left.)

[spot off MARY as she exits stage left]

MR. THOMAS: ...(To CHRISTINA) Sorry.

CHRISTINA: It's OK. I'm used to interruptions-I have three kids, remember?

MR. THOMAS: (Calling up to lighting booth) Kill the lights. We doing Act II.

[Lights down]

(MR. THOMAS and CHRISTINA exit off the stage right stairs and sit in front row seats.)

[spots off MR. THOMAS and CHRISTINA as they exit off stage right stairs]

End of ACT

## ACT II: THE TIME

### Scene 1: Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem

Scene. A low wall upstage.

(JOSEPH and MARY enter from stage left. JOSEPH is upstage and MARY is downstage. JOSEPH carries two traveling bags. They cross to center stage and stop. MARY is stage right. ROMAN SOLDIER has spear and sword.)

[spots on JOSEPH and MARY as they enter stage left]

MARY: (Putting her hands to sides and thrusting her abdomen forward to stretch which reveals her advanced pregnancy) I'm going to walk the rest of the way, Joseph. I don't think walking on these roads can be any worse than riding on the back of our little donkey.

JOSEPH: We're here anyway. (Surveys the audience with left hand) Bethlehem!

MARY: (Looks over audience) It's so crowded. I didn't think it would be that way.

JOSEPH: It's because of the census. Our ancestral family of David is huge and they've all had to come here to register. Like us.

MARY: Why'd it have to come now? Why'd I have to travel, (Pats abdomen) in this condition?

JOSEPH: (Shrugs shoulders) Caesar's in charge.

MARY: (Holds abdomen with both hands) Tell that to this baby.

[spot on ROMAN SOLDIER as he enters from stage right]

(ROMAN SOLDIER enters from stage right and crosses to JOSEPH and MARY.)

MARY: (Stretches word) Maybe. (Looks over audience) For our sake, I wish we had fewer ancestors. Where are we ever going to stay?

(ROMAN SOLDIER reaches JOSEPH and MARY.)

SOLDIER: (Waving for JOSEPH and MARY to move) (Roughly) Keep moving, there's no loitering here!

JOSEPH: (Puts hand on MARY'S shoulder) My wife's almost ready to deliver, sir. We've only stopped for a rest.

GUARD: (Insistently) Move on!

(SOLDIER crosses to stage left exit and exits.)

(JOSEPH and MARY watch SOLDIER exit.)

[spot off SOLDIER as he exits stage left]

JOSEPH: They're everywhere.

MARY: At least we have Roman roads and can travel safely. It wasn't like that before they were here.

JOSEPH: Good timing, for us anyway.

(JOSEPH and MARY cross to the edge of the stage and stop.)

MARY: (Pointing toward stage right of audience) Look in the windows of that inn...

(JOSEPH looks stage right where MARY is pointing.)

MARY: ...It's packed! That man sitting on the windowsill looks like he's being squeezed out of there.

(MARY holds onto JOSEPH'S left arm for security.)

JOSEPH: That's all that might be available.

MARY: (Holds herself to JOSEPH) Will I have to give birth on the floor in an inn (Pans stage right with her left hand) like that with all those...(Fearfully) strange men sleeping in the same room? (To JOSEPH with concern) There won't be any privacy.

JOSEPH: (Pats MARY'S right arm with his right hand) God must have a plan. (Trying to reassure MARY) He's taken care of us during the last months at home and He'll take care of us here. His timing is perfect. He knows where He wants us to be and when.

MARY: (Reassured) Thank you, Joseph. God's in charge, not Caesar. I can believe that.

JOSEPH: (Looks up center aisle) How 'bout that street? It goes toward the edge of town. (Nodding to MARY) It'll be quieter there.

MARY: (Takes arm away from JOSEPH and holds abdomen with both hands as she feels labor pains) We'd better find a place soon. This baby's ready to be born.

(JOSEPH puts right arm around MARY and nods.)

JOSEPH: (Left arm pointing up center aisle) This way.

(JOSEPH and MARY walk off stage and up the center aisle and exit.)

[Spots of JOSEPH and MARY as they walk off stage]

[lights off]

Scene 2: Innkeeper and Wife

[lights low-night]

Scene. A table at center stage. On the table are cups, bowls, and a towel. There are two benches.

[spots on INNKEEPER and WIFE as they enter from stage right]

(The INNKEEPER and WIFE enter from stage right and cross to the table.)

WIFE: You put them where?

INNKEEPER: In the stable.

WIFE: C'mon.

INNKEEPER: Why not? The inn's full.

WIFE: Couldn't you find them even a little space inside? They're practically kids.

(WIFE cleans bowls with a towel.)

INNKEEPER: Business is good. The traveling merchants and the Roman soldiers keep me busy year round. But the pilgrims coming from all over Judea and Galilee for the census have made the big difference this winter. I've hated to do it; but I've had to send most of the pilgrims away.

(WIFE stops cleaning bowls.)

WIFE: Why do you think it's now?

INNKEEPER: What?

WIFE: The census. Now.

INNKEEPER: Taxes?...

(WIFE shrugs shoulders.)

INNKEEPER: ...No?

(WIFE turns toward audience.)

WIFE: (Waves hands) Have you ever seen such a movement of people? Is it just for...taxes? Why at this time? (Waves off) It's funny. (Wondering) I don't know.

(INNKEEPER crosses to behind WIFE.)

INNKEEPER: (Jiggles coins) I know it fills my pockets with coins. (Puts arms around WIFE) It's to make our life a little better. That's what it's all for.

(INNKEEPER hugs WIFE.)

(WIFE gently takes his arms away and turns toward INNKEEPER.)

WIFE: (Smiles coyly)(Tenderly) Of course, dear...  
(WIFE moves to stage left of table and moves bowls on table.)

WIFE: ...Why'd you let them have the stable?

INNKEEPER: Who?

WIFE: That young couple.

INNKEEPER: The fellow's wife was having labor pains as we spoke. What a time to be traveling!

WIFE: (Moves toward INNKEEPER and pushes him playfully) You do have a heart.

INNKEEPER: They're happy to have it. People are sleeping all over the place, even in the streets.

WIFE: (Hand to chin) It'll be quieter in the stable.

INNKEEPER: Sure will. The night's young and it's pretty rowdy inside there already (Motions back to stage right exit).  
[spots on LEAH and RACHEL entering from stage right]  
(LEAH and RACHEL enter from stage right stairs pushing each other and cross to INNKEEPER and WIFE. As they cross, they speak the following lines.)

LEAH: (Huffy) I too cleaned it out!

RACHEL: (Argumentative) No you didn't.

LEAH: I put the animals in the stalls and swept the extra hay (Sweeps with her hands)... into a corner just like dad said.

RACHEL: It looks like your bed. A mess!

LEAH: No it doesn't!

RACHEL: (Pointing to LEAH) You see, you admitted your bed's a mess.

(LEAH and RACHEL reach INNKEEPER and WIFE.)

INNKEEPER: Girls, please!...

(LEAH pushes RACHEL.)

(RACHEL sticks out tongue at LEAH.)

INNKEEPER: ...Did you girls just come from the stable?

LEAH: No. After...(Makes a face at RACHEL) I cleaned it up, we went into town to see our friends.

RACHEL: But the Roman soldiers turned us back because of the crowds.

LEAH: They're sooo mean. They were poking everyone with their spears.

RACHEL: Some one should poke the soldiers--like the Zealots want--(Thrusting forward with her upstage hand like a sword) all the way through.

WIFE: Rachel, you shouldn't say that. The soldiers are there to protect us.

RACHEL: No they're not!

INNKEEPER: (Hands up) That's enough. I want you...  
(RACHEL folds her arms defiantly.)

INNKEEPER: ...both of you, to go out to the stable and help the young couple I let stay there.

RACHEL: Do we have to?

LEAH: I just cleaned it. They'd better not make a mess.

RACHEL: It couldn't look any worse than it is now.

LEAH: (Pushes RACHEL) Stop it!

WIFE: Go! Do what you father's asked.

INNKEEPER: (Kidding) I'll send the Roman soldiers after you.

RACHEL: You wouldn't!

WIFE: (Points stage left) Go!

(LEAH and RACHEL cross to stage left exit in a huffy fashion.)

(INNKEEPER and WIFE watch LEAH and RACHEL exit.)

[spots off LEAH and RACHEL as they exit stage left]

(INNKEEPER shakes his head vigorously.)

WIFE: Did you find out where they're from?

INNKEEPER: Who?

WIFE: The young couple in the stable.

INNKEEPER: Nazareth.

WIFE: That's eighty or so miles from here. That must have been tough.

INNKEEPER: Anything for Caesar. They should know better about the soldiers. They keep the peace.

WIFE: They do, dear. They're just talking. Why don't you bring the young couple some fresh hay?

INNKEEPER: (Sounds hen-pecked) Sure, dear.

(INNKEEPER crosses toward stage left exit.)

WIFE: (Louder and more bossy) And don't forget to put the fire on when you get back. It's getting cold.

INNKEEPER: (Answers without turning) (Hen-pecked) Yes, dear.

(The INNKEEPER exits stage left.)

[Spot off INNKEEPER]

(WIFE exits stage right.)

[Spot off WIFE]

[lights down slowly]

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