

SPIRITS

by Mark Fitzpatrick



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A Program of 11 Christmas Monologues

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SYNOPSIS: A performance that doesn't require memorization takes the pressure off in the busy Christmas season! This complete hour-long program of monologues offers a nearly equal distribution of male/female roles. Alternately, the monologues may be performed separately or a few at a time, combined with music and other presentations in holiday services or concerts. Each one is approximately five minutes long. *Included are:* **1. A Magi; 2. Tabitha, the Servant Girl; 3. The Shepherd; 4. The Roman Soldier; 5. The Innkeeper; 6. Alsmer, the Field Hand; 7. Aaron, Joseph's Cousin; 8. Martha, Aaron's Wife; 9. The Innkeeper's Wife; 10. Anna, the Prophetess and 11. Mary, Mother of Jesus.** Though they are no longer with us (and in some cases never were), the lives of these characters will speak across the centuries and inform your Christmas season with a deeper understanding of Christ's birth.

CAST OF CHARACTERS: 5 females, 6 males

DURATION: 11 monologues, 5 minutes each

PRODUCTION NOTES

As written, *Spirits* is a complete hour-long program of monologues for use at any time during Advent or Christmas. The distribution of male/female roles is nearly equal. Monologues may be performed separately or a few at a time, however, and combined with music and other presentations in holiday services or concerts. (Some of the monologues are best performed in pairs, such as the husband-and-wife pair of Aaron and Martha.) For planning purposes, please note that each monologue's run time is around the five-minute mark, give or take a minute or so.

Spirits is very easy to present. Arrange ten chairs in a semicircle, where all the characters will sit except Mary, who makes her entrance later. You will also need some type of podium. Whatever is normally used in your sanctuary is fine. The characters will rise and approach the podium to deliver their lines.

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Off to one side are various pictures of Mary, including one very abstract image of her.

You may use biblical costumes for all the characters (robe, headdress, sandals). The robes of Alsmer, Tabitha, and the Shepherd would be the plainest. The Magi's would be the most ornate. All the others would fall somewhere in the middle. Characters might also carry a prop relating to their occupation if desired, such as a staff for the Shepherd or a fake sword for the Roman Soldier. Alternately, all the characters may simply be dressed in black. Aaron needs a beard, so if he doesn't naturally have one, he will need to wear fake facial hair.

No memorization is a plus in the busy Christmas season. Practice will help the actors to make better eye contact with the audience and not be buried in their scripts.

Though they are no longer with us (and in some cases never were), may the lives of these characters speak across the centuries and inform your Christmas season with a deepened understanding of Christ's birth.

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A MAGI

MAGI: O, stargazers! Astronomers! Celestial observers! Map makers of the heavens! Course plotters of the skies! Fellow Magi! I greet you as one of those who made that incredible journey that has become more legendary than Odysseus, more mythic than Jason and the Argonauts, and even more historically significant than Washington crossing the Delaware! That very first Christian pilgrimage. Although we did not go with any fixed destination, our arrival was not to any particular shrine or holy place, but to the Main Event itself. We who have studied the stars and have had our heads bent constantly heavenward suddenly changed our focus, suddenly left our perches, our high towers, and headed out into the great unknown, looking for the heavenly behind some tent, the Messianic in some shadowy doorway or street alley. What shall I say about our journey? It was long, wearying, life-threatening. It was exhilarating, energizing, adventurous! Conviction and passion propelled us on, firm in our faith that a great cosmic event occurred on earth, knowing that a king to supersede all other kings was born, knowing that human history—the world's destiny—was going to be profoundly changed.

Actually, there were six of us. Oh yes, it's traditional to have three—one for each gift. The Church came up with that idea in the sixth century. Melchior, Balthasar, Gaspar—they named us. The Church felt that these three represented the three races of humankind: Asian, African, and European. We do not protest or raise objection to this. The Church has made so many troubling mistakes over the centuries, that we felt this time it erred toward the good. So we have kept quiet.

And what was the hardest part of our journey? The traveling home. Our spirits were uncannily disturbed—not just from the fear of Herod, but something else, a new kind of anxiety. We felt once we got back, once we were entrenched in our work and back in our observatory, this spirit would be dispelled. But we were wrong. Our wives kept needling us, "What's wrong? What's

1 wrong?" Our instruments felt useless in our hands. The heavens
2 no longer compelled us. You see, all the things this birth
3 promised—peace on earth, harmony among peoples, a
4 flowering of love—we would have to wait for. None of us ever
5 knew Jesus. None of us heard his liberating words. None of us
6 witnessed his powerful miracles. None of us ever threw our lives
7 away to become part of his band. All of us died before he began
8 his ministry. We could only see these things from afar, and not
9 by looking through our lenses and using our instruments, but in
10 our hopes and visions of the future. The youngest of us got so
11 depressed, she took to her bed for years and years. And, sadly,
12 she never recovered. She lay there on her deathbed whimpering
13 to herself, "I shall never see it. I shall never see it." Alas! God
14 takes his time. God moves in his own way. I know not why. Even
15 I, a Magi, cannot explain this.

16
17 Still, we saw the conflagration when it was only an ember. We
18 saw the wheat field when it was just a seed. We were there. We
19 were there! And although we spent the rest of our days uselessly
20 tinkering with the tools of our trade, the rest of our nights
21 sluggishly staring at the same constellations in the same old sky,
22 we constantly thought about that child, Jesus, and his coming
23 kingdom. It didn't dawn on us, not until we were near death, that
24 we were partly living our lives the way we had followed the star—
25 waiting, searching, longing. And there was much to rejoice in
26 that.

27
28 **END OF MONOLOGUE**

TABITHA, THE SERVANT GIRL

TABITHA: Yeah, I was there! Really! You see, I was working at this inn in Bethlehem at the time. My father knew the manager so I got the job, which was kind of unusual in those days 'cause everything was kinda like a family business then, but I suppose it's a little like that with you guys nowadays—you really have to know somebody to get anywhere—am I right?

Well, anyway, I was working at the inn at that time, and I remember that night really well. Boy, were we busy! Everyone just kept streaming in and streaming in and streaming in 'cause of that census thing, you know. Everyone had to go to where their family was from to register for it. You know that part of the story, right? OK, well, we had this caravan of folks that just went on and on. Jeepers, I never saw so many people in all my life.

So that night I was running around fetching water and washing clothes and washing bowls and getting blankets and fetching more water and bringing things in and out of the kitchen and lighting lamps. So the boss says to me, he says, "Look—there's this young couple out in the stable since we got no room here in the inn. And the girl's pregnant," he says. "Looks like she's gonna burst any second." Now, you have to understand times then weren't like times now. Innkeepers weren't exactly what I think you call "cultured" people. No manners, you might say. So anyway, the boss sends me out there to help this pregnant girl have a baby. So I drop what I'm doing and I'm about to head on out when suddenly he grabs my arm real tight-like and whispers, "She's Galilean!"

Oh, for gosh sakes, I thought. What difference does it make? I mean, we Judeans were always bad-mouthing and making fun of the Galileans but, you know, any Galilean I've ever met was perfectly nice, and I never had a problem with any of them. Except for that guy who tried to sell me a sick donkey and had a problem taking "No!" for an answer. And the same with Samaritans! Although if I had said one good thing about

1 Samaritans in those days, I probably would have lost my job or
2 gotten a beating by a relative. So I go out to the stable, and man!
3 They were just the nicest couple you'd ever want to meet—and
4 hey, their little baby Jesus was just a doll, let me tell you. I could
5 have become a follower right then and there, just holding the
6 little tyke.

7
8 So basically, I helped the innkeeper's wife with the birth. She
9 was a big woman. And strong. I mean, she could lift piles of wood
10 while balancing a basket of laundry on her head. She knew what
11 to do, and I just did what she told me. For me, it was my first
12 experience of birth. *(Shudders.)* It was disgusting! I swore I was
13 never gonna have kids, and I didn't. I worked at the inn for most
14 of the rest of my life, which was good because although my boss
15 was crude, he treated the help pretty decently, and he was fair
16 with the pay. So if you got a good deal, then why not stay, know
17 what I mean? And I have to tell you, I really enjoyed meeting all
18 the different kinds of people you run across in this business.

19
20 But here's the best part, the part I never would have planned
21 myself in a million years. I was older and not really sure what I
22 was going to do because I was getting a little too old to really
23 work. I did have money saved, but probably not enough, and so
24 now I'm starting to regret not getting married and having
25 children. Then Jesus began his ministry, and I went and followed
26 him. At first I didn't know it was the same Jesus that was born in
27 our stable and who I helped bring into the world, but then I put
28 two and two together. I asked his mother if she remembered me.
29 She was really sweet. She kind of sighed and said, "How could
30 I forget you?"

31
32 Oh, and I was part of his church as well. Because I had all those
33 years of experience in hospitality, they made me a deaconess.
34 Yeah, me—a deaconess! Pretty good, huh?

35 **END OF MONOLOGUE**

THE SHEPHERD

SHEPHERD: We shepherds saw angels! Yep, we did! The sky was just ripped apart by light and song. Your Christmas festivals don't compare. Nor your—how do say it? Pirate technics? Nothing like what we saw!

At first, I didn't believe it. No, sir. Not at first. You see, I was known for nipping a little too much of the grape. Many a night I imbibed from my flask more than I should. That night weren't no different. Except there was this one angel talking about the Messiah. Then this whole choir. I swore I'd never drink again. But when I realized the others actually heard and saw it, I was overcome. Wow! It really happened.

Then I got scared. You don't know how many times people come along claiming the Messiah's here or there or this child is him or that guy is him. Our countryside was filled with rumors like this. Which is why I loved being in the hills, spending my days and nights under open sky, far away from noise and hubbub and mess like that. That kind of talk just begs for disappointment and trouble. I mean, so many of us prayed and yearned for the time when the Messiah would come and set things right. We shepherds, too. We wanted the Messiah to come, too. But that kind of longing can make you want to believe something or someone is an answer to all those prayers when they're not. Then you got to deal with the big letdown. And that's a load of sheep dung you don't want to step in.

Or you get yourself in trouble with the Sanhedrin or the Romans or King Herod or the Sadducees or whoever. Nothing like giving someone who don't like you a good reason to smack you down. You ever see a crucifixion? Awful. Your age is too desen—desen—you guys don't get sick at things you should get sick at.

So we shepherds, we stayed outta everybody's way. 'Sides, Judeans didn't much care for shepherds. They thought we were dirty, smelly, rascally people. (Pause.) And I guess we were.

1
2 But that night. Boy, that night sure shook the old palm trees a
3 bit. We decided to go see if what this angel said was true. Was
4 there a child in a manger? That'd be odd. Not even us
5 shepherds, as poor as we was, woulda put our kid in a manger.
6 So off we went. And, by golly, there he was! Just like the angel
7 said.

8
9 His father bought a house in Bethlehem, so some of us would
10 sneak off and visit them. Really nice people, they were. They'd
11 let us shepherds come in the house and play with the kid.

12
13 But as the days went by, we felt a sense of . . . boredom? No.
14 We felt antsy. Like when young calves get that frisky, playful
15 feeling in the springtime. We understood that no one's gonna be
16 the Prince of Peace and Wonderful Counselor at age two. So
17 we's gonna hafta wait for what this little baby's gonna do when
18 he's grown.

19
20 It seems to me that this spiritual life thing's got a lot to do with
21 waiting. I figure that's because it's not about me or us. It's about
22 everyone. And to get everyone under one really great big
23 blessing takes a good amount of time. At least, that's the way I
24 see it.

25
26 So us shepherds, we asked ourselves how we were gonna live
27 with this . . . truth? Well, we was always pretty communal. So we
28 became more so. We took in a few orphans lying on the street
29 ready to die and taught them to be shepherds. We made this
30 little dwelling and took in some really broken people and cared
31 for them. And we would sneak into Bethlehem or nearby towns
32 and leave a ewe at somebody's door who needed it. I shouldn't
33 be so proud, but we shepherds, we were the first Christmas gift-
34 givers. Only we did it all year round.

35
36 Then the parents and the child moved away, and we lost contact
37 with the family—and that terrible, awful tragedy struck
38 Bethlehem, courtesy of Herod. That great big blessing for

1 everyone seemed further and further away. Then we realized
2 something: we had been blessed. Not because we saw angels,
3 though I still think that's a real joy-jumper. But the way we lived
4 and the kind of people we were meant that we had been blessed
5 all along.

6 **END OF MONOLOGUE**

7

THE ROMAN SOLDIER

SOLDIER: I hate this time of year. The anniversary, the memory. I fight myself not to remember. But I always do. The scenes are so vivid, so clear, as bloody and grisly as they ever were.

I was a soldier. Part of the glory of Rome attached to King Herod's court. It was an honor serving Herod and Rome. I never wanted to be anything else but a soldier. Never. On those cold night watches, I would envision myself on a bitter wintry field, preparing for a great battle. Or imagine myself walking down a street and having other soldiers salute me. Someday my commands would determine events! The only thing—the *only* thing that could stop that from happening was if I got killed in the line of duty. And that, too, would have fulfilled my dream.

I was a soldier! I had seen mangled bodies and humanity reduced to pulp. I had been so afraid that it took everything in me to move and do my duty. I had been surrounded by the enemy so tightly, I thought I was going to die. I walked through heat that baked your skin off and cold that numbed you until your very thoughts froze. And I had crucified men! I had nailed them to the wood and hung them up to die.

But this. This! King Herod's orders: slay every male child under two. Kill children. *Kill children*. All because some Eastern idiots claimed one of them might be a king or revolutionary or some kind of God-man. They were just kids. Harmless, innocent kids! So what if they were Judean or Jewish or whatever. So what if one of them someday might rise against Rome or Herod! Weren't those entities big enough, strong enough? Weren't they powerful enough to not be threatened by a child?

I didn't want to do it. I didn't think I could. But a soldier follows orders. We attacked by night. I can't forget the children's eyes full of fear, or the mothers who clutched my cloak, pleading. The word "please" has had such a ghostly ring ever since. We left Bethlehem in blood and screams.

1

2

I never recovered. The nightmares, the sleepless nights, the guilt. I got thrown out of the military. Unfit for service. I heard the child escaped anyway. I pray that he did. I pray that he survived, and that someday he will pay Herod back for this sickness. I pray someday he makes Herod suffer the hell I have suffered.

3

4

5

6

7

END OF MONOLOGUE

8

THE INNKEEPER

INNKEEPER: I like the way I'm pictured in the story. Oh, it's only a bit part, but I am proud to have even a small part in such a colossal story. And some even craft the story to portray me as kindly. Well, I'm happy with that. Truth is, I charged them for the stable! Yeah, that census was a boon to my business. I made lots of money off that one time.

I knew the girl was Galilean. A young, naïve, pregnant Galilean. And he was a Judean, or his family was. That's why he was in Bethlehem. I didn't have any open rooms, but I did have the stable out back. Sometimes I put travelers out there, travelers who were so weary they didn't care where they dropped off to sleep. And I charged for it.

Since the girl was pregnant, I sent Tabitha out there to help. I figured she's a woman and would know what to do, and then I could also charge them some kind of nursing fee or birth attendant fee.

Anyway, right after the census, I took all that money and I added new rooms. They were VIP suites and everything, made with the finest lumber from Lebanon. I had some officials from Herod's court and Roman officials stay there from time to time. They were not high-ranking, of course, but still important enough so I could charge them extra for their accommodations.

I bought some more land, and I purchased a small farm. The farm didn't do as well as I thought it would, but when I retired I sold it for a good price. I sold it to a man named Judas Iscariot who claimed that he once knew someone from Bethlehem. I liked that guy Judas. He seemed to have a good head on his shoulders. Oh, he had a crazy period when he followed that Nazarene guy, Jesus. He referred to it as "a business venture that went bad." I could sympathize with that. He was out in the field when he had this real freak accident. His bowels burst, for some reason. The farm got sold for a steal. Luckily, I made my

1 money from it.

2

3 So I did well for myself. No complaints. And I get a bit part in one
4 of the biggest stories in the world. Not bad, I think . . .
5 (*Pensively.*) I think.

6 **END OF MONOLOGUE**

7

ALSMER, THE FIELD HAND

ALSMER: I don't much like talking about myself. And I usually don't. But . . . oh, boy! What a night! Crazy, crazy. crazy! That's what it was! I mean, I was working in our small field all day. I milked the goats and the cow, and I fed all the animals. I fed the camels and mules and horses, or whatever else anyone rode into town on. Then I got the sheep settled in their pens and collected the eggs the hens laid that day. Whoosh! So finally I went to the well to get some water and fill the trough, because it was going to be a real clear night without rain.

Well, I came back, and there's this young couple in the stable. And Tabitha is there, and so is the innkeeper's wife, and you could see they were all disturbing the animals. So I says, "Hey! What's going on here?"

And Tabitha snaps at me, "They're having a baby!"

"A baby!" I says. "Having a baby! Here? In the stable? Where's the baby gonna sleep—in the manger?"

(Pauses, smiles.) So that idea was originally mine.

Well, if that wasn't bad enough, once the kid is finally born, there's all these shepherds coming down from the hills. Shepherds! I got a little worried —after all, they were shepherds! They might steal the chickens or the eggs. You just don't know about shepherds.

So I says, "What are you shepherds doing here?"

And they tell me, "We heard angels!" And I thought to myself, *Sure you did.* Living out in the fields all your life, you get a little batty. They add, "We were told the Messiah was born here!"

"Oh, yeah!" I laughed. "You think the Messiah's here—lying around in the manger, I suppose."

1 And they said, "Yes." Well, at that point I was sure I might have
2 one of those demons of madness my Uncle Phillip was plagued
3 with. I mean, I was never a smart man. "Alsmer the dummy,"
4 they used to call me. Hmph.

5
6 Well, I thought about that night a lot. It changed me. I guess I
7 became a little friendlier, and generous. I didn't spend all my time
8 with animals anymore. And I loved animals. No animal ever
9 called me "dummy." I got along a lot better with Tabitha. And I
10 liked shepherds a bit more.

11
12 I was old when Jesus began his ministry. When I heard that he
13 was raising the dead and healing the sick and doing all this wild,
14 strange stuff, I said to myself, "That's him!" So Tabitha and I left
15 everything here and trudged up to Galilee, and sure enough—it
16 was him.

17
18 I never asked him if he was the little baby born in our stable. I
19 just knew he was. I mean, the first time I saw him, he was
20 squatting down and petting this dog and feeding it something.
21 He turned as if he recognized me, as if he was going to say, "Ah,
22 you made it, finally."

23
24 I told him I wanted to follow him. I told him that I knew I wasn't
25 able to be like one of the Twelve, but I would do what I could. He
26 smiled. He said, "No, you are not chosen to be one of the
27 Twelve. But in my kingdom, you are one of the most important."

28
29 He said it with such conviction and such seriousness. Even if I
30 didn't know what he was talking about at that moment, I do now.
31 I know what he meant. But I still can't explain it.

32 END OF MONOLOGUE

AARON, JOSEPH'S COUSIN

AARON: Well, I guess you won't hear about me in the stories. Mostly, that's my wife's fault. She had these very strict ideas, and I didn't want to cross her.

I was Joseph's cousin. We were all from the house of David, and we were Judeans. Parts of our family settled in other places, like Galilee, which didn't go over well. Old weird Uncle Jacob went to Samaria and actually married a Samaritan wife! Ooooh, the chamber pots went flying! No one ever spoke to Uncle Jacob again. I don't know how he got around the census, but he never showed up in town.

Well, when Joseph married Mary, it didn't go over as badly. Marrying a Galilean wasn't as bad as marrying a Samaritan, but it was bad enough. My wife wanted nothing to do with them when they came here. There was enough room. Everyone was tripled up in rooms, and my wife had a room of her own. But I suppose sharing it with a pregnant woman would have been an inconvenience. Still, she could have shared with someone else and we could have fit them in.

But it was grand having Joseph here in Bethlehem. I took him into my employ, and we did a good business together. I helped him purchase the house they lived in. I loved visiting them. That tyke Jesus and I had this game where I'd hide an egg in my beard and he'd try to find it. Oh, he'd laugh and laugh and laugh! And that Mary—she knew how to keep a house. Mary could have taught my wife a thing or two.

But then, they suddenly up and left. Something about angels. Weird stuff. And they split to Egypt, of all places. I thought that Joseph was as crazy as Uncle Jacob. But then the soldiers came. No one talks about the massacre. It was such an ugly, sad, sick time. We all want to forget it. I don't talk about it.

So maybe there's something to those stories of angels, I don't

1 know. I'm not a very religious man. Oh, I believe in God, and I
2 follow the rules. But I don't put a lot of stock into all that mystical
3 stuff. So when Jesus started preaching, well, I figured—like the
4 rest of us did—that he was as mad as Uncle Jacob. It's really
5 shocking how wrong you can be.

6 **END OF MONOLOGUE**

7

MARTHA, AARON'S WIFE

MARTHA: Hey, I'm Martha! I'm not in the story, but I really should be. I'm not part of it because of my husband. I am the sister-in-law of Joseph's second or third cousin, or something like that. We're all Judean. We're from the house of David, you know. So that kind of makes us royalty.

It's sort of sad. The part of the family that settled in Galilee was not welcomed here. Now, I understand they're a lower class than us and not as observant of religion as we are. But there was also a lot of bitterness. A lot of silly prejudices that I just didn't have.

My husband and Joseph kept in touch. My husband always really liked Joseph, even if he was in Nazareth and may have been contaminated by their ways. I mean, he wasn't as bad as Uncle Jacob, who married a Samaritan—can you believe it? I tell you, Uncle Jacob was as good as dead to the family. Well, Joseph actually married a Galilean wife, and he was bringing her here. And she was pregnant. And they hadn't been married all that long, if you know what I mean.

When they came here, there was just no room for them in any of the family's houses or inns. I was all for having her come here, but my husband insisted that we shouldn't be sharing a room with a Galilean, so I went with his wishes.

We had no idea how famous their son would be! Why, none of us would have expected it. Of course, if we even had an inkling about what he was going to do, we surely would have made some space for them. But how were we to know? It's not like angels told us!

But anyway, we're still blood kin with Jesus. And to prove it, we have some actual straw from the very manger he slept in, and several rattles that he used to play with as a child. And we're willing to let you hold these things for four drachmas. And for twenty drachmas, you can actually sit in the house where they

END OF MONOLOGUE

THE INNKEEPER'S WIFE

INNKEEPER'S WIFE: Oh, they don't need to put me in the story. Tabitha and I didn't really do anything spectacular. And it wasn't the first baby I helped deliver. I had some of my own.

My husband? Now, that's another story altogether. I won't blame that time for his undoing. I really do feel deep down inside me that he would have always been obsessed with money, even if he didn't make a ton of it. We were booked and busy for weeks at that time. And they weren't the only people he dropped in the stable. But he charged those guests. He charged that young couple too, but I secretly made sure they didn't actually pay.

That night was . . . (*Shrugs.*) I don't have the words to describe it. Sort of a mixture of everything. One of your carols says, "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." And that's the closest I can come to describing it. But there was also deep joy. And I really saw people—people I'd never noticed before.

Oh, I remember it so well. My husband had walked in with that smile that said, "I've just made some money." He boasted, "Am I lucky or what? Another two customers."

"What?" I said. "We have nowhere to put them!"

"I put them in the stable," he beamed. "They're tired and desperate enough. They'll drift off to sleep just as soon as she has the baby."

"Baby!" I shrieked. "What do you mean, 'baby'?"

"Oh, the girl is pregnant. And really close to her time. Probably any second now," he replied.

"And you left them out there alone in the stable to have a child?" I fumed.

“Oh, they’re not alone. I sent Tabitha out to help. I can charge them some kind of birth helper fee or something.”

“Oh, you fool! What does Tabitha know about delivering children?”

“Same as all women, I guess,” he dumbly replied.

“Oh, you fool!” I pushed past him and headed right out to that stable. Now, I didn’t think it anything more than some young couple who came for the census and needed a place to stay but had this pregnancy as a complication. That’s really all I thought. And it didn’t bother me that she was a Galilean, although I think it bothered Tabitha a bit at first. But Tabitha, at that time, would talk to anyone—and I do mean talk.

Well, Tabitha and I assisted at the birth. Mary, the mother, was such a brave young girl. We all handled it quite well, considering we were in a stable surrounded by animals and this was Mary’s first baby. The couple was so grateful. I went in to fix us some food and get some good wine for the occasion.

Then, as I’m walking out with all our refreshments, I nearly dropped everything at what I saw. Shepherds! All these shepherds mulling around. “What’s going on?” I asked.

Well, they told this story about angels and how they were told this baby was the Messiah. And they practically worshiped the child. I shook in my sandals. With talk like that, you could expect either Herod’s men, the Sanhedrin guard, or the Romans to come crashing into the place and arresting everyone at any second. I kept my mouth shut, and I advised Tabitha to do the same.

1 Eventually, the soldiers did come. They slaughtered our
2 children, our very young ones. Such a terrible time! An order by
3 none other than King Herod. After that, Herod was hated. Rumor
4 has it that the child he was looking for escaped. That made some
5 of us feel just a tiny bit better.

6
7 So for years after that, I would go out to the stable at night and
8 just sit, remembering. I would sit for hours and go over every
9 detail of that night in my mind. Strange things happened after
10 that birth. Not just the shepherds. I heard some dignitaries from
11 the East arrived to visit the child. And Alsmer and Tabitha grew
12 closer. Before that, they had kind of moved in their own circles—
13 Alsmer with his animals and Tabitha blabbing to whoever would
14 listen. But I saw them helping each other, and talking to each
15 other. Alsmer actually talking! Tabitha actually listening! And
16 they would laugh together. Now, that was quite miraculous.

17
18 Eventually my husband tore down the stable to build more
19 rooms. I cried for days. He didn't get concerned. Or mad. I would
20 have appreciated it if he at least got mad. No. He was too busy
21 making money to see or even care if something was wrong or if
22 I hurt deeply. That was the end of our marriage. I moved in with
23 my eldest daughter, Elizabeth, who had such a wonderful family.
24 They all took care of me in my old age.

25
26 When Jesus started preaching, Tabitha and Alsmer were sure
27 this was the same child, all grown up. Alsmer—always a dear,
28 but not very bright—just packed up and went to join the
29 Nazarene. Tabitha —no bright candle herself—was more
30 cautious, but she went with him. Eventually, they both wound up
31 in the Nazarene's party.

32
33 My dear daughter wanted to take me to hear the Nazarene, but
34 I was so gravely ill at the time. We hoped Jesus would come to
35 Bethlehem. He never did. I can't say I blamed him. We had such
36 bad attitudes toward Galileans, and he was exposed to that as
37 a very young child, so what would you expect?



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