

THE CHRISTMAS GUEST

*by John W. Walker
& Beverly E. Piper*



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THE CHRISTMAS GUEST

A musical adaptation of Markham's
poem "How the Great Guest Came"

By John W. Walker
& Beverly E. Piper

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CONRAD, the shoemaker (an old man)

WILLIAM (a boy)

1ST NEIGHBOR

2ND NEIGHBOR

A BEGGAR

AN OLD WOMAN

A SMALL CHILD

THE VOICE OF THE LORD

COSTUMING

Suggestion: mid 18th Century adaptations

CONRAD: Trousers, long-sleeved shirt (bloused sleeves),
woolen vest, a beard, a coat and hat

WILLIAM: Knee length breeches, long-sleeved shirt
(bloused sleeves), a coat

NEIGHBORS: Coats and woolen scarves

BEGGAR: Ragged clothing, bare feet wrapped in cloth,
will also need a pair of socks and shoes

OLD WOMAN: Long, dark-colored dress, short coat,
bonnet and gloves, a large bundle

CHILD: Long coat, scarf, hat and gloves.

STAGE SETTING

The shoemaker's home and shop:

Table and two chairs.

Shelf with a few pairs of shoes on it.

Bench with a few tools on it.

Mantle and fireplace (logs).

A kettle on the floor by the fireplace.

A large pot of "stew" on the fire.

On the table are stacked cups and
bowls, silverware, a loaf of bread
on a platter, a candle covered by
a hurricane glass, matches, a cloth
towel.

Evergreen boughs on the floor.

Coat rack (two coats hanging on it).

Doorway to back room (offstage).

Front door (outside is offstage).

A window.

A broom, plain wrapping paper.

*Author's Note: The setting here is perhaps a bit involved,
but if care is taken, a warm and touching atmosphere can
be created from which the gentle and beautiful story will
quietly unfold.*

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THE CHRISTMAS GUEST

Musical Selections

1. He's Never Broken His Promise
2. I Thought It Was Him
3. Come, Lord Jesus
4. When Did We See You, Lord?

THE CHRISTMAS GUEST

1 VOICE: *(From Offstage) (Darkened stage.)*

2
3 This is a story of Christmas,
4 A story old but new,
5 The story of Conrad the shoemaker,
6 A story of me and you.
7

8 *(Lights up bright. CONRAD enters from back room,*
9 *carrying a pair of shoes and some wrapping paper. On the*
10 *workbench he wraps the shoes and then places them on*
11 *the shelf. He picks the evergreen boughs up from the*
12 *floor and arranges them upon the mantle. He then sets*
13 *the table. WILLIAM enters from back room with a broom,*
14 *which he props against the wall.)*
15

16 WILLIAM: I've finished sweeping up! Is there anything else?

17 CONRAD: No, no! That's fine, William. You have helped
18 so much already!

19 WILLIAM: *(Sitting at table)* Conrad, tell me again, please,
20 about the dream you had this morning!

21 CONRAD: *(Also sits down at table.)* It was the Lord, William!
22 The Lord appeared to me in the dream and said, "I am
23 coming this day to be your guest." He said this to
24 me, a poor old shoemaker.

25 WILLIAM: Do you really think *the Lord* will come here?

26 CONRAD: He will come and I am ready! I will serve him at
27 my table. I will break bread with him. I have made a
28 pair of shoes to be a gift for him. I have cleaned this
29 home . . . and you have helped . . . and even decorated
30 a little. It is not much but when *he* comes this little
31 place will shine! *(A knock at the door. CONRAD and*
32 *WILLIAM both jump, startled, and sit looking at each*
33 *other. Again, the knock. CONRAD rises and hurries*
34 *to the door while WILLIAM watches. Two neighbors*
35 *in coats and scarves enter gaily.)*

1 NEIGHBORS: (*Both speaking at once*) Hello! Hello! Merry
2 Christmas! Merry Christmas, Conrad!
3 CONRAD: Merry Christmas! Come in, my friends, come in!
4 1ST NEIGHBOR: We wanted to stop on our way home and
5 wish you a Merry Christmas!
6 CONRAD: Thank you! It is always good to see you! How
7 are you?
8 1ST NEIGHBOR: Very well! And you?
9 CONRAD: I am just fine.
10 1ST NEIGHBOR: Same as always . . . happy and hardworking,
11 and still the best shoemaker who ever lived!
12 2ND NEIGHBOR: And how are you, William? Still helping
13 in the shop?
14 WILLIAM: (*Standing*) Yes, sir (*or ma'am*).
15 CONRAD: And he's a very big help, too! (*CONRAD and*
16 *WILLIAM exchange glances.*) I'm glad you came just
17 now. I have something to tell you!
18 WILLIAM: When you knocked at the door we thought
19 you were . . . I mean we were expecting . . . well, you
20 see, Conrad had a dream.
21 2ND NEIGHBOR: A dream?
22 CONRAD: Good news! Something wonderful!
23 1ST NEIGHBOR: Tell us!
24 CONRAD: At dawn today the Lord appeared to me in a
25 dream, and said he would be coming here this very day
26 to be my guest!
27 1ST NEIGHBOR: That is wonderful indeed! Tell us more!
28 CONRAD: That is all there is! I have made everything ready
29 and . . .
30 WILLIAM: And now we wait for him to come!
31 2ND NEIGHBOR: You say the Lord told you this in a
32 dream?
33 CONRAD: Just at dawn.
34 2ND NEIGHBOR: Are you sure it was really the Lord
35

1 speaking to you? Maybe it was just a dream, Conrad.
2 CONRAD: Oh, no! It was God! I know it!
3 2ND NEIGHBOR: But what if he doesn't come? Then what
4 will you think?
5 WILLIAM: But he *will* come!
6 1ST NEIGHBOR: William is right. God has never broken a
7 promise.
8
9 SONG: "HE'S NEVER BROKEN HIS PROMISE"
10
11 (*Chorus*)
12 He's never broken his promise;
13 He's never broken his word.
14 From the rainbow to the manger
15 The good news has always been heard.
16
17 1ST NEIGHBOR: The Lord promised Noah a deluge;
18 He promised to keep him dry;
19 Then he helped him remember his
20 promise
21 With a rainbow in the sky.
22
23 (*Repeat the chorus.*)
24
25 CONRAD: The Lord promised Abram a nation
26 The Lord promised Sarah a child
27 The Lord promised Moses the promised
28 land
29 A Messiah to those exiled.
30 (*CONRAD joins in on Chorus.*)
31
32 (*Repeat the chorus: sung by all three*)
33
34 WILLIAM: The Lord promised he'd be with us.
35 He's promised to come to you.

1 Like those who've come before us
2 We'll discover his promise is true.

3
4 *(Repeat last two lines of the chorus.)*

5
6 1ST NEIGHBOR: Conrad, I think God must love you very
7 much. Better still, I think he knows how great your love
8 is for him. He will come. *(Places hand on CONRAD'S*
9 *arm. Very brief pause.)*

10 2ND NEIGHBOR: *(Gently)* We must be on our way now.
11 Our families are waiting.

12 1ST NEIGHBOR: *(To CONRAD)* We will be anxious to
13 hear about your special guest. You will tell us?

14 CONRAD: I will. Gladly.

15 1ST NEIGHBOR: Well then, Merry Christmas and God bless
16 you.

17 2ND NEIGHBOR: Merry Christmas!

18 CONRAD: *(As neighbors are leaving)* Merry Christmas! God
19 be with you!

20 WILLIAM: I did think it was Jesus at the door!

21 CONRAD: So did I!

22 WILLIAM: Maybe he will come now. *(CONRAD sits down*
23 *at table.)* Shall I put the kettle on?

24 CONRAD: Please do! I'm glad you thought of it. *(WILLIAM*
25 *puts the kettle on the fire and sits down at the table.)*

26 WILLIAM: What do you think he will look like, Jesus I
27 mean?

28 CONRAD: I can't say, but we will know him.

29 WILLIAM: Will he be wearing his robe and sandals like when
30 he lived in Galilee?

31 CONRAD: Perhaps.

32 WILLIAM: But it's snowing here.

33 CONRAD: Well, we will invite him in and give him a good,
34 hot cup of tea and break the loaf of bread with him.

35 WILLIAM: And don't forget the shoes!

1 **CONRAD:** No, I won't forget the shoes.
2 **WILLIAM:** I hope they fit. *(They both laugh. A knock at*
3 *the door. WILLIAM jumps up.)* I'll go! *(CONRAD*
4 *nods in agreement and stands as WILLIAM runs to open*
5 *the door. A BEGGAR stands outside.)*
6 Oh, Conrad, it's not him. It's a beggar.
7 **CONRAD:** *(Approaching door.)* Let me see. Let him come
8 in then.
9 **WILLIAM:** Come in.
10 **BEGGAR:** *(Entering)* Thank you.
11 **CONRAD:** Here, come and sit down. William, fill a cup
12 for him, please. *(WILLIAM fills a cup from the kettle*
13 *and places it on the table.)*
14 **BEGGAR:** *(Takes a drink.)* Thank you. You're very kind.
15 **CONRAD:** You don't look well.
16 **BEGGAR:** Ah, sometimes life is hard.
17 **CONRAD:** You must have something to eat. *(CONRAD*
18 *fills a bowl from the pot, places it on the table. The*
19 *BEGGAR eats.)*
20 **WILLIAM:** *(Taking CONRAD aside)* What if he comes while
21 the beggar is here?
22 **CONRAD:** It will be all right. Don't worry. Maybe the
23 beggar will be meeting him for the first time. *(They move*
24 *back to the table. CONRAD sits down.)* Where are your
25 shoes?
26 **BEGGAR:** I haven't any. Shoes cost money, and I haven't
27 any of that either.
28 **CONRAD:** *(To WILLIAM)* Bring the shoes from the shelf
29 please, William.
30 **WILLIAM:** Which ones?
31 **CONRAD:** The pair that is wrapped.
32 **WILLIAM:** But Conrad those are . . .!
33 **CONRAD:** Bring them. *(WILLIAM gives the shoes to*
34 *CONRAD who unwraps them and hands them to the*
35 *BEGGAR.)*

1 **CONRAD:** These will just fit, I think. Try them on.
2 *(BEGGAR unwraps his feet and they see his feet are*
3 *bare.)*
4 **WILLIAM:** Wait! *(WILLIAM runs to the back room and*
5 *returns with a pair of socks and hands them to the*
6 *BEGGAR.)* These were to be your Christmas present,
7 Conrad, but he can't wear your beautiful shoes
8 without good, warm socks. Perhaps my mother can make
9 another pair for you. *(BEGGAR puts on socks and*
10 *shoes.)*
11 **BEGGAR:** Thank you. Thank you both. I never thought I
12 would be given a gift at Christmas.
13 **CONRAD:** All is done in the name of Jesus.
14 **BEGGAR:** I won't forget your kindness. I'll be going now.
15 You are expecting company. *(He stands.)* Thank you
16 for everything. *(WILLIAM closes door as BEGGAR*
17 *leaves.)*
18 **WILLIAM:** Oh, Conrad, you gave away the shoes you made
19 for Jesus!
20 **CONRAD:** The beggar needed them. And besides, shoes are
21 but a poor gift to give to the Savior of the World. And
22 thank you for my socks! I liked them.
23 **WILLIAM:** But you didn't even get them!
24 **CONRAD:** *(Laughing)* Oh, well!
25 **WILLIAM:** I really thought it was him that time. I really
26 thought it would be him when I opened the door!
27
28 **SONG:** "I THOUGHT IT WAS HIM"
29
30 **WILLIAM:** I heard the knocking at the door
31 And thought that it was Him.
32 Oh, run, be quick to open it
33 And welcome Jesus in!
34
35

1 (*Chorus*)
2 Alas it wasn't Jesus
3 This person I did see!
4 It was a poor, cold beggar
5 With no shoes upon his feet.
6 It was a poor cold beggar
7 With no shoes upon his feet.
8
9 CONRAD: My heart filled with compassion, well,
10 The poor man must come in!
11 For we have something we can share
12 And we must care for him.
13
14 (*Chorus, sung by CONRAD and*
15 *WILLIAM.*)
16
17 CONRAD &
18 WILLIAM: My heart is beating calmer now
19 Although it was a shock!
20 I was expecting Jesus and
21 That wasn't who we got!
22
23 (*Chorus, sung by CONRAD and*
24 *WILLIAM.*)
25
26 CONRAD: You know, it's getting late. I think maybe you'd
27 better run along home.
28 WILLIAM: Oh, no! Not yet! He might come any minute
29 now! Please let me stay!
30 CONRAD: (*Putting his arm around WILLIAM'S shoulders*)
31 You will stay then. (*A knock at the door*)
32 WILLIAM: It is him! (*CONRAD opens the door. An old*
33 *woman with a large bundle is outside.*)
34 CONRAD: My dear woman! How is it that you are traveling
35 alone with such a heavy load?

1 OLD WOMAN: Please. I have heard of the kindness of
2 Conrad the shoemaker. Would you please let me come
3 inside where it is warm and rest for a moment?
4 CONRAD: Of course. Put your bundle here by the door
5 and come sit down. (*OLD WOMAN puts bundle down*
6 *and sits at table.*) Do you have far to go?
7 OLD WOMAN: No. Only to the end of town now. I'm going
8 to my sister's home. I just became so tired. I was
9 hurrying. My sister is not well. I didn't like to ask
10 anyone to help me because everyone is busy with
11 their families on Christmas eve.
12 CONRAD: William is a good, strong boy. I think he would
13 carry your bundle to your sister's for you. Would you
14 William?
15 OLD WOMAN: But I don't like for him to have to do this!
16 WILLIAM: It's all right. I don't mind. (*To CONRAD*) But
17 if he comes while I'm gone . . .
18 CONRAD: I will ask him to wait until you return.
19 OLD WOMAN: I am ready then. Thank you and Merry
20 Christmas. (*WILLIAM puts on his coat, picks up the*
21 *bundle and he and the woman leave. CONRAD, who*
22 *has seen them out, sits down in the chair and closes*
23 *his eyes.*)
24
25 (*Dim lights Onstage to signify day becoming evening.*
26 *CONRAD rises and lights the candle on the table. Door*
27 *opens, WILLIAM rushes in.*)
28
29 WILLIAM: I'm back! I ran all the way! Did he come! Is he
30 here?
31 CONRAD: He has not come yet. (*WILLIAM removes his coat*
32 *and hangs it up.*)
33 WILLIAM: Maybe he is waiting until night, when it is
34 really Christmas eve. (*WILLIAM peers out the window.*)
35 CONRAD: Are you worried he won't come?

1 *(WILLIAM sits down at the table with CONRAD,*
2 *saying nothing.)*
3 **CONRAD:** Long ago, people on earth hoped for a Savior.
4 They looked for him and waited for him for hundreds
5 of years. He came when he was ready, when the time
6 was right. And when he did come, as a baby in
7 Bethlehem's manger, many people didn't even recognize
8 him.
9 **WILLIAM:** They were looking for a glorious king, not a
10 baby. *(A knock at the door. CONRAD opens it. A*
11 *small child stands outside crying.)*
12 **CONRAD:** Who is this crying on my doorstep?
13 **CHILD:** I'm . . . lost.
14 **CONRAD:** Lost! Come in here out of the cold. *(He brings*
15 *the child inside and closes the door.)*
16 **CHILD:** I can't find my house.
17 **CONRAD:** *(Kneeling)* No more tears now. You're not lost
18 anymore! You see, I know where you live. We must hurry
19 and get you home. Your mother will become worried.
20 *(CONRAD puts on his coat, then turns to WILLIAM.)*
21 Would you wrap the loaf of bread please? I'll be
22 taking it with me. This child's family can use it,
23 I think. *(WILLIAM wraps the loaf and hands it to*
24 *CONRAD. CONRAD takes the child's hand and*
25 *opens the door.)*
26 **WILLIAM:** Conrad! *(CONRAD turns.)* If he comes . . . I'll
27 ask him to wait. I'll tell him where you've gone. He'll
28 understand. *(CONRAD nods and leaves with the*
29 *CHILD. WILLIAM sits down at the table.)*
30
31 **SONG:** "COME, LORD JESUS"
32
33 **WILLIAM:**
34 *(Or an Offstage voice)*
35

1 *(Chorus)*
2 Come, Lord.
3 Come, Lord Jesus
4 To this humble place.
5 Come, Lord.
6 Shining Savior!
7 Come, our hearts a wait.

8
9 Born in a cattle stall,
10 Lain in bed of straw.
11 Maybe you won't mind this
12 Home so rough and small.

13
14 *(Repeat the chorus.)*

15
16 Men looked for your coming
17 Once before on earth,
18 But they were not looking
19 For a baby's birth.

20
21 *(Repeat the chorus.)*

22
23 There will be no angels
24 Singing here for you.
25 Heart of God, Messiah,
26 Perhaps our love will do.

27
28 *(Repeat the chorus.)*

29
30 *(WILLIAM lays his head upon folded arms on the table*
31 *and falls asleep.)*

32
33 *(Lights dim again. CONRAD returns, entering quietly. He*
34 *sees WILLIAM sleeping. He removes his coat and hangs*
35 *it up. Sighs heavily.) "Why is it, Lord, that your feet*

1 delay? Did you forget that this was the day?"

2

3 **SONG:** "WHEN DID WE SEE YOU, LORD?"

4

5 **CONRAD:** When did we see you Lord?

6 When did we chance to meet?

7 We offered you food and shelter Lord

8 And shoes for your feet.

9

10 *(Speaking)* *But you didn't come, Lord.*

11

12 *(Singing)* But we didn't see you Lord, so we

13 sheltered a woman who was tired and

14 alone

15 And we didn't see you Lord, so we gave

16 away your food to a child far from home.

17 And the shoes Lord — when you didn't

18 come, shod poor feet cold and bruised

19 We're so sorry Lord but we've given

20 away all the things meant for you.

21

22 *(Music continues — VOICE OF THE LORD speaks*
23 *script lines)*

24

25 "Conrad, three times I came to your

26 friendly door,

27 Three times my shadow was on your floor.

28 I was the beggar with bruised feet;

29 I was the woman you chanced to meet;

30 I was the child lost on the street!"

31

32 **CONRAD:** When did we see you, Lord?

33 **VOICE OF LORD:** I was the beggar with the frozen feet.

34 **CONRAD:** When did we chance to meet?

35 **VOICE OF LORD:** I was the woman and the child who was lost.



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