

COME TO THE STABLE

by Micky M. Wolf



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Come to the Stable

A one-act play for Christmas

by Micky M. Wolf

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DEDICATION

To you, God, I give all the glory! I cherish the opportunity to use whatever gifts you have given me to inspire and encourage my fellow companions on our journey through this life.

Thank you, my dear husband Greg, for your love and understanding. Veronica and Adam, our wonderful children, now young adults about to begin your own walks, you bring immeasurable joy and wonder to my heart.

Thank you, Mom, for loving as only mothers can, and to you, Dad. I know you are there in eternity, supporting me all the way.

The original production of this play was a beautiful experience made possible by some very special people: Donna and Joe Shadle; Dave, Carol, Brent and Heather McKimm; Ron and Marsha DiFrango; Jim Klich; Maria Wallen; Krista Damico; Amanda Aman; Kathy and Paul Weber; Josh Pauley; Mike, Virginia, Martha and Rick McDonald; Frank and Joe Dyar; Maggie Connor; Kevin Powell; Terri Thompson; Father McKarns; Gretchen Rusnak; Jessica Morris and Mike Walker. May our loving Father bless each of you as you have blessed me with your kind and generous spirits!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARY:	Mother of Jesus
JOSEPH:	Husband of Mary
ANGEL:	Middle-aged male or female
SHEPHERDS:	Three males (non-speaking)
WISE MEN:	Three males (non-speaking, may be played by the shepherds)
FRANCINE:	Widow in her seventies
BEN:	Male in his forties — father of two
MICHAEL: female,	Teenage male (can be played as a Michelle)
KATHERINE:	Single female in her fifties
LOUISE:	Female in her eighties (non-speaking)

PRODUCTION NOTES

Come to the Stable was originally produced December 7th and 8th, 1996 at St. Paul Church in North Canton, Ohio. Attendance was over 200 for each performance (no admission charge, freewill offering taken). Publicity was generated through church bulletins and newsletters, posters in area businesses and the local news media.

RUNNING TIME: 45 minutes without any music. The original production included a 10-minute, pre-performance live music program. Five additional music numbers were incorporated within the play, at scene breaks and following the final curtain. Songs included seasonal material and other appropriate selections. (Including music in a similar format would expand production to approximately one hour.)

STAGING: The production was mounted in the sanctuary of the church to utilize the spiritual environment. Great care and attention was given to materials and the use of same so as not to damage carpeting, altar, etc. Risers were set in place to create a “stage” level with the top step of altar — clean sight lines to the rear of a large church.

LIGHTING: Two light poles (one on each side) with an array of lights/gels were positioned behind outside ends of second pews on each side of the church. All lights were run from a board situated in small offset along sanctuary left wall approximately 20 feet from first pew. A fixed spotlight, illuminating upwards, was set in place for special “Angel” and “Death Scene” sequences and activated by the actor stepping onto a foot pedal concealed by rocks. Although this drama is enhanced with the use of theatrical lighting, it plays well without it. All lighting instructions are optional.

SOUND: The three principal actors wore wireless microphones during the entire performance. Additional wireless microphones were shared among other actors as necessary. Newborn baby cries on tape were played at the appropriate time. A live vocal music group (with its own equipment) was individually miked and all performers were monitored through the soundboard approximately 75 feet from the staging area in the sanctuary aisle.

COSTUMES: Most of the period costumes were created from ready-made patterns using purchased/donated fabric. Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds all wore long robes in earth tones. All wore headpieces made from a length of matching fabric, with Mary's hanging loose, as was the style of biblical women, and Joseph's and the shepherds' tied to their heads with a length of cord, as the men did back then.

The angel wore a white robe but no halo; the focus was on the large wings radiating from her back. They were designed from heavy coat hangers that were draped with translucent material and worn in a criss-cross, lightweight body frame. (The exposed wire was wrapped with fabric to diminish visibility.)

The wise men wore crowns created from the bases of plastic gallon bottles. They were cut, shaped, painted and appliqued with craft decorations. If the same actors are doubling as shepherds and wise men, they need only exchange their shepherd headpieces for the crowns and exchange their walking sticks for gifts. If using separate actors for the wise men, you can make their robes of fabric that is richly colored — in jewel tones, for example.

The contemporary characters wear the following: Francine wears a jogging suit; Ben wears dress slacks, a sport coat and tie; Michael wears a torn shirt and jeans, an old leather jacket and a bandanna around his forehead; Katherine wears a stylish dress or two-piece suit; and Louise wears a nightgown and robe.

PROPS:

Mary: Cloth tote bag with stuffing (optional — may serve as a

“suitcase” of sorts) and baby doll wrapped in blanket

Joseph: Walking stick, cloth tote bag with stuffing (optional)

Wise Men: Gifts (painted/decorated boxes and bottles)

Shepherds: Walking sticks

Francine: Flashlight, ring (to be removed from wedding band finger)

Ben: Briefcase, large strip of credit cards, two photos

Michael: Couple of unlit cigarettes

Katherine: Handbag, tissues

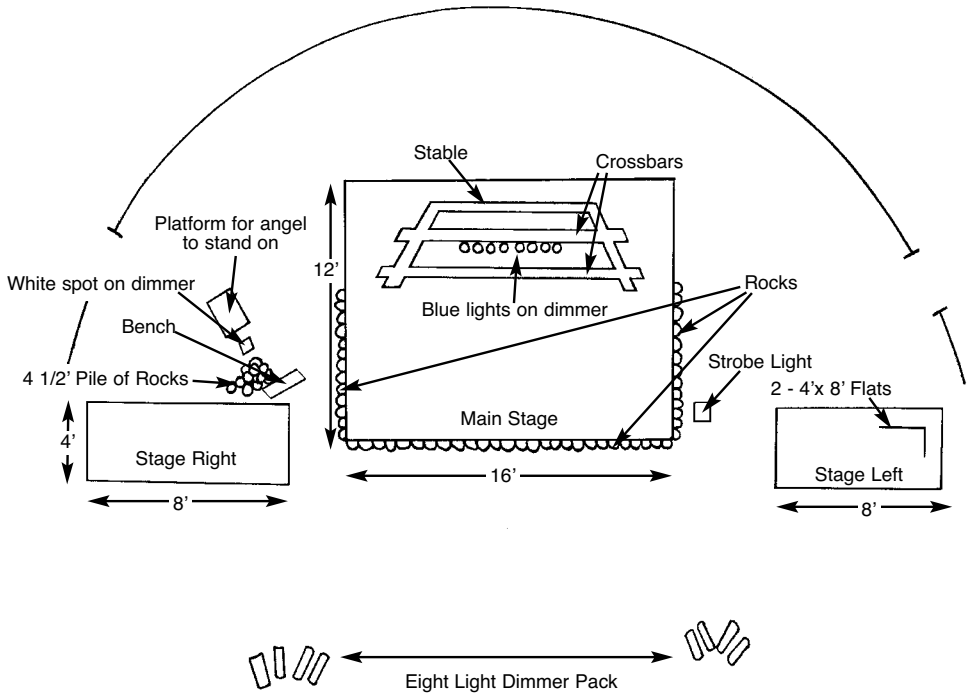
Louise: Wheelchair (IV pole optional)

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SET: We recognize that many smaller churches will not have the means to build an elaborate set for this production. That's fine. The only necessary set piece is the manger. The rest of the stage can be bare, and the play is just as effective. The following instructions will apply only if you want to "go all out." If you have the time and the talent in your congregation, you may use or modify the set used in the original production.

The primary set was a simple stable located front and center. It was assembled from a demolished wood garage. The stable walls were 7 feet high supported by crossbars, which also hid the blue lights used for several scenes. A manger, built from old scrap lumber, was placed in the middle of the stable. Bales of straw were positioned for actors to use as seating and for visual effect.

All platforms (risers) were carpeted to eliminate noise and to harmonize with the altar area. They were also edged to the floor with a rock disguise in the front. The rocks were made by cutting the bottom out of grocery bags and up the side, leaving one rectangular piece of brown paper. Paint the sheets of brown paper in a variety of hues: gray, black, tan, brown, dark green, and dark blue. Let dry. Then wrinkle the painted papers by crumpling them into balls. Go to the stage areas to be covered and unfold the balls of paper. Take two pieces and staple them together. Continue until you've covered the front of the risers. Then staple the "wall" to the risers. Remember, you can't do this wrong, because no two stone walls are the same.



1 *(The stage is dark. The SHEPHERDS, FRANCINE, BEN,*
 2 *MICHAEL, KATHERINE and LOUISE are scattered*
 3 *throughout the audience, ready to come forward at their*
 4 *appointed times. The audience hears cries of a newborn. Lights*
 5 *come up slowly on the stable set at Center Stage. MARY is busy*
 6 *tending to baby Jesus; JOSEPH is looking after baby Jesus*
 7 *and MARY. Music is heard. Recommended selections include*
 8 *“O Little Town of Bethlehem” and “Angels We Have Heard on*
 9 *High.” Music is heard through early dialog sequences, then*
 10 *fades. MARY arranges Jesus’ blankets one last time, then*
 11 *returns to a comfortable place on the straw. She appears very*
 12 *tired, but her face glows with happiness. JOSEPH is hovering*
 13 *over both of them, then he finds a place on the straw near the*
 14 *manger and sits down.)*

15 **JOSEPH:** Mary, please be still now. You have been with the
 16 child every moment.

17 **MARY:** I will, Joseph, but I must look at him. I know he is
 18 as beautiful a baby as any mother would want to have.

19 **JOSEPH:** He is a beautiful child, Mary. But you are his
 20 mother, and each new baby is special to his mother.

21 **ANGEL:** *(Enters from Stage Right. He looks to the manger, then to*
 22 *the Upstage area, a distant place. Music continues. He turns to*
 23 *the SHEPHERDS and the audience area where they are*
 24 *standing.)* Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace
 25 on earth to those with whom he is pleased (Luke 2:14)! I
 26 am here with good news for you, which will bring great
 27 joy to all the people. This very day in David’s town your
 28 Savior was born — Christ the Lord! What will prove it to
 29 you is this: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and
 30 lying in a manger (Luke 2:10-12).

31 **MARY:** *(MARY tends to the baby, then turns to the sounds Off-*
 32 *stage Left. Male voices are heard, then SHEPHERDS approach*
 33 *the manger, cautiously.)* Joseph, we have visitors!

34 **JOSEPH:** Welcome! Come and see this child. *(He motions to*
 35 *them and steps back as they slowly approach the manger,*

1 *escorted by the ANGEL. Music continues as each of the*
2 *SHEPHERDS views the baby, bows or kneels as if in prayer,*
3 *then slowly exits Stage Left. They talk among themselves*
4 *quietly and gesture to the others as they exit.)*

5 **MARY:** Joseph, it's so wonderful to see these shepherds come
6 to visit our baby. They're overjoyed to see Jesus. Word is
7 traveling fast ... the angels cannot be silent about this
8 occasion! *(She sits down near the manger.)* I am so humbled
9 by all that is happening! *(Music continues softly.)*

10 **JOSEPH:** Yes, many will come to this manger. *(Gesturing to*
11 *ANGEL)* He will speak to others who must hear what he
12 has to say, inviting them to visit with our newborn son.

13 **ANGEL:** *(Looks to Stage Right area and WISE MEN for the*
14 *following grand proclamation.)* Don't be afraid! I am here
15 with good news for you ... You will find a baby wrapped
16 in cloths and lying in a manger *(Luke 2:10, 12).* *(Music*
17 *brought up to full sound. It continues through this sequence,*
18 *with the bustling, majestic arrival of the three WISE MEN,*
19 *escorted by the ANGEL. The three WISE MEN stand at Stage*
20 *Left, then one at a time, they acknowledge MARY and*
21 *JOSEPH, proceed to the manger, bow, hand their gift to*
22 *MARY, then exit Stage Left in a "proper manner." Music*
23 *continues until all the WISE MEN have made their exit.)*

24 **MARY:** *(After the three WISE MEN have exited, she carefully*
25 *touches their gifts, then gently caresses the Baby in the manger.*
26 *She takes him from the manger, then holds him and rocks*
27 *him.)* Joseph, how blessed we are that these visitors
28 could spend time with us. Each one of them has been
29 pleased to share with baby Jesus.

30 **JOSEPH:** Yes, they have come with joy in their hearts. They
31 don't understand all that this birth means to them, but
32 they knew and accepted the songs of angels singing.
33 They spoke of the heavenly message, and they told me of
34 the star in the sky. Our world will never be the same
35 again, Mary. I am so humbled that our Lord chose you

1 and me for this magnificent occasion.

2 **MARY:** Joseph, the angels are announcing this birth to
3 others! Visitors! Joseph, he's telling us there will be many
4 more visitors who will come and see this child. Joseph,
5 will they know the angel when he speaks to them?

6 **JOSEPH:** Trust — they will, Mary! We heard him speak, and
7 we believed. They will know his voice and listen!

8 **MARY:** *(Carefully places Baby back in the manger.)* Joseph, do
9 you really believe they will hear his voice and come to
10 visit with us? An invitation from the angel may be more
11 than anyone can comprehend.

12 **JOSEPH:** Mary, Mary, my wonderful, sweet Mary. How you
13 fret and worry so ... Set aside your concerns. They will
14 come ... those who are called to share with our Son will
15 understand the presence of the angel and our Lord.

16 **MARY:** *(Moves close to JOSEPH, then next to baby Jesus.)* We
17 **must prepare!** *(Lights fade, then come up on the stable.*
18 *JOSEPH is seated near the manger. MARY is next to the baby.*
19 *The ANGEL moves to shadow each of the visitors. The time*
20 *period for all the visitors is the present day. MARY is looking*
21 *at the baby as FRANCINE comes up from the back of the*
22 *audience seating area, escorted by the ANGEL, and moves*
23 *timidly into the stable area from Stage Right. Her steps are*
24 *timid, but her curiosity is evident. The ANGEL acknowledges*
25 *her presence, then quietly moves away.)*

26 **FRANCINE:** I ... I ... *(She looks around, not in a fearful manner,*
27 *but with a questioning attitude.)*

28 **MARY:** It's all right, Francine. Come. Come closer.

29 **JOSEPH:** You are welcome, Francine.

30 **MARY:** We were expecting you. We're pleased to have visitors.

31 **FRANCINE:** This is the stable — and the manger. Mary, Joseph
32 ...

33 **MARY:** Yes, Francine, and this is Jesus.

34 **FRANCINE:** *(Cautiously approaches the manger.)* I have always
35 believed in God. I have read his book, the Bible. But for

1 me to have an angel appear ... I was taking my usual
2 evening walk, and this presence, this person — so real I
3 could've almost reached out and touched him — told me,
4 "You will find a baby wrapped in a blanket, lying in a
5 manger." I believe, Mary. I had to come.

6 MARY: *(Smiles.)* We know, Francine. *(Reaches out to touch her.)*

7 FRANCINE: *(Moves to the Baby, hesitates, then slowly moves*
8 *around behind the manger so she faces the audience. She sets*
9 *her flashlight aside as she looks down at Jesus.)* He's such a
10 beautiful baby ... *(Looks to MARY.)* Well, all babies are
11 beautiful, aren't they? I know, I have four children of my
12 own. *(Chuckles.)* All boys, too! Always rambunctious,
13 especially when they're all together — hardly ever a
14 moment's peace at times. But what a joy they are! Oh, we
15 have our times — disagreements, loud words, a meeting
16 of the minds, as Henry used to say ... a meeting of the
17 minds. *(Looks at MARY.)* Oh, Henry, he was my husband
18 ...

19 MARY: Yes.

20 FRANCINE: Everything seems so right here in this place. I
21 suppose I should be terrified, but somehow, it all seems
22 proper — as if it were meant to happen this way ... *(She*
23 *reaches out as if to touch Jesus.)*

24 MARY: It's all right. Go ahead.

25 FRANCINE: *(Gently moves the folds of the blanket.)* I wish Henry
26 were here with me. He might not believe me if I could
27 tell him. He's the kind who'd want to see for himself. *(She*
28 *holds her hands together, lightly fingering the hand with her*
29 *wedding band. This is an important action which the audience*
30 *must see.)*

31 MARY: You loved Henry very much, didn't you?

32 FRANCINE: Henry was the best ... as good as they come,
33 Mary. No man could've been a better husband or a better
34 father. He was so special. Well, OK, he wasn't perfect. I
35 mean, he did have a few little quirks. Heavens only

1 knows if there is any man who could be as, well ... as
2 disorganized as Henry. That man just couldn't put
3 anything away where it belonged! I'd try picking up after
4 him. I'd even holler at him — do you suppose that did
5 any good? No. Maybe it'd work for about an hour or two,
6 then he'd be back to his old habits again, leaving things
7 where he put them down ... clothes, tools, notes, his
8 glasses. Just anything — he'd set it down and go off to
9 something else. (*Looks at the Baby.*) Maybe I'm putting him
10 to sleep for you, Mary.

11 MARY: Talk to him as much as you want to, Francine. Your
12 visit is a special time for both of you.

13 FRANCINE: Thank you, Mary. Here I am — me, in a place
14 like this. (*She hesitates, looking around.*)

15 MARY: Is something wrong?

16 FRANCINE: The angel ... he told me I could bring a gift for
17 Jesus. But I am not a wealthy woman. It has taken most
18 of my resources these last years just to get along ...

19 MARY: (*Touches FRANCINE on the shoulder.*) Costly gifts are
20 for those who have them in abundance. What you have
21 to give cannot be measured by the stones of the jeweler
22 or in the fragrance of unusual oils.

23 FRANCINE: (*Looks at her hands again.*) Jesus, for so long my
24 Henry and I were so happy together. We shared forty-six
25 years. How I think back to the joyous times, and yes,
26 some of the not-so-good times. But it all fit together,
27 Jesus, just as Henry and I worked to make it so. We
28 always made an effort, we really tried our best most of
29 the time. We listened to one another and to you, Jesus.
30 We read your Word, we prayed to you, we asked for your
31 guidance, your direction. I cannot imagine getting up in
32 the morning or going to bed in the evening without
33 thinking of you during the day. And now, when some of
34 my days are so long and so full of stillness, you are there
35 especially to comfort me. (*She gently places her hand on the*

1 *Baby's cheek.)*

2 **MARY:** His love will always be there for us, Francine.

3 **FRANCINE:** *(Holds her hands together as she kneels down close*
4 *to the manger.)* I know you understand what I have
5 brought to share with you, Jesus, even if I myself am in
6 awe of this visit to your manger. My gift, I must give you
7 my gift ... but there is something else I want to tell you.
8 I do accept your will, that you called my Henry home to
9 be with you. I know he's there with your Father in
10 heaven. I know it in my heart. *(She holds her left hand*
11 *gently with her right hand, then stands up, but remains next*
12 *to the manger. She looks at the Baby, then to her left hand, and*
13 *slowly slips her wedding ring off her finger, holding it for a*
14 *moment. The audience must see this action, but it must not be*
15 *too exaggerated.)* I miss my dear, sweet Henry so much,
16 Jesus, but he is home where he belongs with you. I have
17 been thinking about what I could give you, Jesus. This is
18 what I offer. *(She carefully lays her wedding ring in the*
19 *blanket next to the infant's head.)* Henry will know who I
20 am when your Father comes for me, baby Jesus, even
21 without this ring on my hand. *(She looks to MARY, then to*
22 *JOSEPH, hesitates a moment, then picks up her flashlight, as*
23 *she quietly moves to exit Stage Left.)* Good-bye, Mary,
24 Joseph. Thank you. *(She turns for one more look at the*
25 *manger, then exits. Movement and some scuffling noises are*
26 *heard from Stage Right. The ANGEL moves to the edge of the*
27 *stable, then backs up a bit as BEN comes hurriedly onto the*
28 *set. He is carrying a briefcase, which he sets down. He looks*
29 *around himself and at the others, as if trying to orient himself*
30 *to the surroundings.)*

31 **BEN:** *(Gingerly takes a few steps. Scratches his head, attempts to*
32 *get himself organized.)* Ah ... ah ... good evening ...

33 **JOSEPH:** Good evening, Ben. My name is ...

34 **BEN:** Joseph, right ... Joseph! Ah, no disrespect meant, you
35 understand!

- 1 JOSEPH: None taken. You are welcome here to visit with us.
- 2 BEN: Yeah, that's what I understand. Do you believe it? This
3 angel came to me right there on the bridge between the
4 inner belt and my exit out to the suburbs! An angel — of
5 all people!
- 6 JOSEPH: We know, and we are glad you accepted his
7 invitation to visit our new baby.
- 8 BEN: Somehow I knew you were going to say that — you
9 really know all about this stuff, don't you? Ah, don't
10 answer, I already know what you're going to say! Joseph,
11 Mary, an angel, and ... and ...
- 12 JOSEPH: And our baby Jesus.
- 13 BEN: Yep, and I knew you were going to say that, too! (*Slowly*
14 *walks toward the manger.*) You know, there are a couple
15 questions a guy like me would like to have answers to
16 about now ...
- 17 JOSEPH: We can understand how you might feel at this time.
- 18 BEN: (*Carefully looking into the manger at the Baby*) Oh, you can,
19 can you? Right. You know, you seem to fit in around here
20 better than I do — I mean, well, this isn't the kind of
21 place I generally spend my day. My twenty-fifth floor
22 office downtown in the financial district is a whole lot
23 more familiar to me, if you know what I mean — but I
24 do respect this place, you understand!
- 25 JOSEPH: You have come here to visit. That is what is
26 important.
- 27 BEN: Ah, right, but that big angel — ah, he was really
28 convincing, if you know what I mean. I really don't think
29 he would've been too thrilled if I'd just kind of waved
30 him off. I didn't want anyone, or anybody (*Looks up.*)
31 getting upset with me for ignoring "him." Say, where did
32 that angel go, anyway?
- 33 MARY: (*Softly*) Come, come and look at our baby — isn't he
34 beautiful?
- 35 BEN: Yes, OK ... (*Walks to the manger and looks at the Baby.*)

1 Yes, he is a beautiful baby. Of course, they're all kinda
2 cute at this stage, eh? Well, OK, maybe cute is the wrong
3 word for this one. He really is the baby Jesus?

4 **MARY:** He really is the baby Jesus, Ben.

5 **BEN:** *(Shifts from one foot to the other.)* I believe you. How can
6 I doubt anything at this point? But everything happened
7 so fast, I —

8 **JOSEPH:** We know you have come prepared, Ben. The angel
9 has been wise in those he has chosen to come to this place.

10 **BEN:** Yeah, right, Joseph. You think so, eh?

11 **JOSEPH:** We know so, Ben.

12 **BEN:** Uh-huh ... but I do wish I was as sure about all this as
13 you two, er, three were. You really could've picked
14 someone better than me for this visit. Heck, I'm just an
15 average kind of guy working to take care of an average
16 kind of family. Nothing great about that ...

17 **MARY:** Yes, Ben, for you and for Jesus, there is something
18 very special.

19 **BEN:** *(Kneels carefully beside the manger and looks at the Baby.)*
20 Me, a guy like me ... in a place like this. Maybe, maybe
21 ... well, you know I haven't been the straightest-flying guy
22 around ... had my share of low spots, ah, times when I
23 probably could've done things differently. *(Looks at*
24 **MARY.)** Should I be talking to him like this? Can he
25 understand me?

26 **MARY:** Yes, he understands. His Father understands all that
27 you have to share with him.

28 **BEN:** *(Shakes his head in agreement, but with skepticism.)* Well,
29 Jesus, then you know I've messed up some, huh? *(Sits*
30 *back on his heels.)* We don't have to go into all that stuff,
31 do we? No? OK, that's good. You know, I was always
32 really happy to know about you, about your being born
33 and coming into this world as man. I admit, though, I
34 don't know a lot more than that about you. Oh, I know
35 a lot of those basic Bible stories. I learned those when I

1 was a kid. Yeah, that was a while ago ... a long time ago,
2 as a matter of fact. Ah, you probably know that already,
3 don't you? What I learned about as a kid, well, that's
4 what I know today. And now I've got kids of my own —
5 really neat kids, Jesus. Yeah, two of'em — a boy and a
6 girl, just what we ordered! Well, yeah, you definitely get
7 some credit in that! Good kids, too ... Craig is almost ten
8 and Laurel is eight. Good kids ... guess we're doing all
9 right so far! Of course, the heavy stuff is ahead, they all
10 tell me! Yeah, that's when you have to worry — when
11 they're teenagers! Boy, guess I'll really be doing some
12 praying when that time rolls around. Well, I do *some*
13 praying now ... well, actually I suppose I pray when I'm
14 really worried about something. Isn't that what
15 everybody does?

16 JOSEPH: (*Puts his hand on BEN's shoulder.*) You're doing fine,
17 Ben.

18 BEN: You know, I haven't thought about some of this stuff
19 for a long time. Actually, I really am the wrong guy for
20 this visit, don't you think? (*Looks up at MARY.*) OK, OK, I
21 know what you're going to say! (*Looks back at the Baby. His*
22 *hand shakes a bit as he gingerly reaches toward the blanket.*
23 *His voice breaks a little as he begins to speak.*) You really are
24 the baby Jesus ... and I'm supposed to have a gift for
25 you. I mean, you don't just get invited to an occasion like
26 this without bringing something ...

27 MARY: You have brought something with you, Ben.

28 BEN: It's been so long since I've been inside a church ... a
29 long, long time, Jesus. But what's even worse, Jesus ...
30 my kids haven't been inside a church or learned much
31 about you. Oh, my wife has tried to get us there, but I've
32 messed up — yep, it's a good part my fault. So that's
33 what this is all about, eh? Me. Me messing up, especially
34 with my kids. You know, that's what is really important
35 about all this — my kids! I'm not so sure I count at this

1 point, but what about them? Jesus, I know you're not
 2 talking back to me, but I know you understand. I'm not
 3 sure how, but I know you do. Jesus, my gift ... well, is it
 4 OK if I ask for some help with this? I know, here I am
 5 again, feeling the pressure and asking for help ...
 6 *(Carefully pulls out his wallet, opens it and lets a strip of*
 7 *plastic cards and photographs unfold.)* Jesus, for me, maybe
 8 it's way too late, maybe not impossible to get things right,
 9 but maybe too far down the road ... but for them? *(He*
 10 *carefully removes two photographs.)* Jesus, I give you Craig
 11 ... and I give you Laurel. I give them to you now, Jesus,
 12 to watch over them and guide them and look out for
 13 them and ... *(He brushes a tear away as he lays the*
 14 *photographs in the manger next to the Baby.)* OK, I have to
 15 be there with them. You want me in church on Sunday
 16 morning with them. Uh-huh, I know where you're coming
 17 from, but that's the way this is going to work, right? You
 18 put in, I put in? Simple. *(Swallows.)* I think. It's been a
 19 long time, Jesus. Those church walls may fall in on me
 20 ... *(Looks at JOSEPH.)* You know, if he would say
 21 something, this would be a little easier ...

22 **JOSEPH:** He has, Ben, he has. That's why you're here to visit.

23 **BEN:** *(Starts to stand up slowly. Arranges himself, then reaches*
 24 *over to touch the Baby.)* I can't be sure why this has
 25 happened to me and maybe not to someone else, but I
 26 pray that I will never forget this day ... that I will have
 27 the courage and the strength to search and find some of
 28 what I knew about you so long ago ... and that maybe I
 29 can build on that and grow ... grow with my kids. *(Moves*
 30 *to exit Stage Left, then pauses.)* Joseph, you are a
 31 remarkable man to be the father to him...

32 **JOSEPH:** *(Looks at BEN and smiles.)* Ben, you are no less a
 33 special father yourself.

34 **BEN:** Ah, thank you ... *(Looks around, sees his briefcase, moves*
 35 *to pick it up and begins to exit.)* I think it would be nice,

1 maybe, to stay a while, but, well ... Good-bye, Mary ...
2 *(He slowly gazes around the stable, then exits Stage Left. Lights*
3 *fade, then come up again. The sounds of a mumbling, agitated*
4 *voice are heard Stage Right.)*

5 **MICHAEL:** *(Enters Stage Right accompanied by the ANGEL. He*
6 *warily surveys the situation.)* I heard you, I heard you! I'm
7 coming, OK?! Hmmm ... is this for real or what?

8 **JOSEPH:** Thank you for coming, Michael. You are not living
9 in a dream.

10 **MICHAEL:** Right, this is real ... Excuse me, man, if I seem a
11 little surprised. Like, ah, I've had some trips in my day,
12 but this one, well ...

13 **JOSEPH:** This journey will not be as some you have taken ...

14 **MICHAEL:** Listen, maybe you better let me be the judge of
15 that, OK?

16 **MARY:** Michael, we understand if you are not sure what is
17 happening to you.

18 **MICHAEL:** Yeah, well, I can handle it. Just give me a few
19 minutes to get myself together.

20 **MARY:** We are Joseph and Mary, and this is our baby. Won't
21 you come and see him? He is a beautiful child.

22 **MICHAEL:** *(Looks around, avoiding the manger. Extends a pointed*
23 *finger toward each as he speaks.)* You're Joseph. You're
24 Mary. I'm Michael. So that must be — uh-huh, I know —
25 Jesus! And while we're talking about who's who —
26 where's the big vision, the one with the gold glow around
27 him? You know, when that dude came up to me in the
28 parking lot and took my arm, I was dang sure I'd popped
29 some rotten stuff! Like, just any old time a somebody like
30 him shows up! You know, I am clean — at the moment!
31 Man, I could understand seein' ghosts if I was blown
32 away, but man, I'm clean! It's been a couple days since I
33 took a hit! *(Shuffles nervously.)* And you know, this
34 "vision" acts like he's out for a stroll in the park — whew,
35 enough to give anybody a real scare — had me wonderin'

1 if I'd bought the whole nine yards and went bye-bye!
 2 *(Stands straight.)* Ah, I haven't bought the whole nine
 3 yards, have I? Like, I mean, this is not "it," is it?
 4 *(Whispers.)* I haven't died, have I?

5 JOSEPH: If you mean death of your body, no, you are very
 6 much alive.

7 MICHAEL: You're sure ... real sure?

8 JOSEPH: Yes, Michael, we're telling you the truth. We want
 9 you to know that we're pleased you've come to visit and
 10 share your gift with our newborn son.

11 MICHAEL: Right. I'm alive, yes I am. *(Touches his body.)* Uh-
 12 huh. *(Starts to go through his pockets.)* Man, I need
 13 something, something to help me get through this gig.
 14 *(Searches some more.)* Did you say gift? Ah, sorry, but I
 15 didn't exactly have time to hit the local gift shop on my
 16 way over here!

17 MARY: Michael, your gift need not be purchased from a
 18 merchant. What you have is your gift, and only yours
 19 to give.

20 MICHAEL: Uh-huh. Listen, I'm having one *(Hesitates.)* "heck"
 21 of a time — OK, sorry — trying to get a fix on what is
 22 happening here ... Come on —

23 ANGEL: *(Shadows MICHAEL.)* Will you not give yourself the
 24 opportunity to believe in us, and in him?

25 MICHAEL: So why should I believe in him? I believe there's
 26 a baby lying there. Isn't that enough?

27 ANGEL: That is a beginning, Michael, but this is a very
 28 special child, one who will live to die as your lamb of
 29 sacrifice.

30 MICHAEL: *(Looks around.)* You know, I'd feel a little better
 31 about all this if I could see everybody I'm talking to!
 32 *(Searches his pockets again.)*

33 JOSEPH: Sit and rest for a while. Then maybe you will begin
 34 to see and understand what is before you.

35 MARY: You must be very tired. Your days are filled with so

1 very many struggles.

2 **MICHAEL:** Hey, watch it — you're getting very personal! My
3 days are my business. *(Pulls a cigarette out of his pocket. His*
4 *hands are shaking as he puts it into his mouth.)*

5 **JOSEPH:** Michael ...

6 **MICHAEL:** OK, so I won't light it! The least you could do is
7 put up one of those dumb little "no smoking" signs! So
8 I'll just stick it in my mouth, OK?

9 **ANGEL:** Your heart is full of anger and pain. We are
10 saddened to witness the hurt you inflict upon your body,
11 your temple of life.

12 **MICHAEL:** You again! OK, so you really are an angel, and
13 this isn't a bad trip — and you know everything about
14 me. Isn't that just wonderful?! So let's all sit here and
15 watch. I'll just self-destruct for you! Isn't that what you see
16 for me?

17 **ANGEL:** Tell him of your pain and anger in your own way.
18 Share your hurt.

19 **MICHAEL:** Right, man, he's just a baby, even if he is Jesus!
20 Like a baby can do a lot for me, man!

21 **ANGEL:** He is an infant right at this moment, Michael, but he
22 will grow to be a man.

23 **MICHAEL:** Hey, man, I don't really believe in me — how the
24 heck you expect me to believe in him? Well, maybe if I
25 could take a hit on some good stuff right now, it'd be a
26 lot easier!

27 **ANGEL:** You do not need to take anything into your body,
28 Michael. You suffer too much physical pain, and your
29 spirit is wrenched with confusion.

30 **MICHAEL:** Says who, you? Well, whoopee! Don't you think I
31 know all that? It's easy for you to run around here, or
32 wherever it is you run around, talking about pain! Just
33 because I'm doin' it don't make me proud of it! You think
34 it's easy, huh? Drop the stuff, find a job, get a place to
35 live, fill my life with a bunch of cool people! It all just

- 1 happens, big guy, just like that?
- 2 ANGEL: We did not say it would be easy for you, Michael.
3 His Father has brought you here to find your way, his
4 way, for your life of freedom from bondage. Your pain is
5 his.
- 6 MICHAEL: Oh, yeah? Well, I think it's long past time for me
7 to cut from this place. Like how do I get out of here —
8 whistle for the big "vision"?
- 9 JOSEPH: (*Walks toward MICHAEL.*) You may leave any time,
10 Michael, but come, see the child for just a moment.
- 11 MICHAEL: (*Looks around, then toward the manger.*) He's really
12 Jesus?
- 13 MARY: (*Approaches MICHAEL, takes his hands and puts them in*
14 *hers.*) Every mother knows her child, from the smallest,
15 first movements of life within her womb. She feels her
16 baby grow to be strong. From birth into the world,
17 Michael. I know my child, my Jesus, will know joy and
18 he will know pain, wherever he travels. I will always
19 know, as only a mother can understand.
- 20 MICHAEL: But he's just ... a baby.
- 21 ANGEL: His moments of time here as a man will not be for
22 long, Michael. He will serve his days with us for his
23 Father, your Lord. And when he departs from you, he
24 will leave his Comforter to be with you. As a believer,
25 you will have him to guide you and lead you.
- 26 MICHAEL: Yeah, I remember my mom telling me something
27 about all that stuff in the Bible. The Trinity, right? OK,
28 so if I do accept the fact I get to "visit" here, how come
29 you picked on me? Why me? Tell me that, why me? I'm a
30 messed-up teenager.
- 31 ANGEL: We cannot bring everyone to this stable and this
32 manger, Michael. Some are invited but choose to ignore
33 our presence. For others, the time will come later, on a
34 more appropriate occasion. The Father knows when to
35 extend that invitation, and to whom it will be extended.

1 **MICHAEL:** All right, so I didn't take off like maybe I
 2 should've when you came up to me in the parking lot! I
 3 almost missed the "flying carpet," eh? And now you're
 4 saying it's because I rated this special invite, like it's "my
 5 time"?

6 **ANGEL:** This child's Father has perfectly ordered all time for
 7 his children. For some of his family, this birth is that time
 8 to accept and understand what he has given to humanity.

9 **MICHAEL:** *(Inches closer to the manger, sitting on some straw. His*
 10 *shoulders are slumped.)* God, I'm so tired. *(Tries to sit*
 11 *straight.)*

12 **MARY:** *(Walks toward MICHAEL, puts a hand on his shoulder.)* You
 13 can find rest here, then go ahead with your journey.
 14 *(MICHAEL looks at her hand, reaches to touch it, then pulls*
 15 *back.)*

16 **ANGEL:** You may accept what is offered, but perhaps you
 17 want to cleanse yourself before you leave your gift.

18 **MICHAEL:** Yeah, tell me about it — I know I need a shower.
 19 Sleeping in alleys is a long way from clean sheets and
 20 soap. Sorry, you'll have to put up with a little dirt and
 21 stink!

22 **ANGEL:** This child will never be concerned with the outside
 23 of you, Michael. Wash the stains from the inside.

24 **MICHAEL:** Oh, now I get it — it's confession time! After I
 25 confess, then I die. Is that how this is all going to work?
 26 Confess — come on, man, tell this baby about my filth
 27 and crud! Now I'm convinced this is a bad trip!

28 **ANGEL:** Release the weight from your life. The chains can be
 29 broken that bind your pain and anger.

30 **MICHAEL:** Chains, huh. You mean the stuff, don't you? The
 31 stuff I use — the drugs, right. Hey, man, I can stop any
 32 time! I've done it before! I've done it all, and none of it
 33 owns me — the pot, the PCP, the reds, yellows, greens.
 34 Yeah, even the crack and the ice! I've survived it all — I
 35 have — I've stopped whenever I really wanted to! *(He*

- 1 *begins to crumple to the floor.*)
- 2 ANGEL: Have you, Michael? Are you without those chains
- 3 now? Is there peace within you at this moment?
- 4 MICHAEL: *(Stands up, fighting back tears.)* Oh ... all right — so
- 5 I've been on the stuff the last couple weeks ... You know
- 6 that ...
- 7 ANGEL: And he knows, Michael, but he can help you. You
- 8 can leave your gift, return to those who love you, and
- 9 take his lasting peace with you.
- 10 MARY: You can begin again ... He will make all of that a part
- 11 of your life. Our God has spoken those truths to me, his
- 12 mother.
- 13 MICHAEL: I'm such a waste. I've messed up so bad — there's
- 14 so much to fix. So much of me is no good.
- 15 ANGEL: You can change all of that now — you have the
- 16 opportunity to understand, to accept, to leave your gift.
- 17 MICHAEL: *(Walks a little closer to the manger and looks in.)* You
- 18 keep telling me to leave my gift. I told you, I have
- 19 nothing with me, even if I wanted to give him something.
- 20 ANGEL: Michael, you have yourself to give to him.
- 21 MICHAEL: Me? Just me? Seems pretty lousy for a gift ... as
- 22 a gift for Jesus.
- 23 ANGEL: The finest gift of all is your life — you. It is a gift
- 24 he will cherish and use.
- 25 MICHAEL: Use?
- 26 ANGEL: When you give him your life, Michael, he will live as
- 27 the Comforter inside of you. He will guide you and lead
- 28 you. Through you, he will touch the lives of many others.
- 29 Together you will break chains of bondage. You will heal
- 30 hurt and anger. The Father knows those he has chosen
- 31 for his work.
- 32 MICHAEL: *(Approaches the manger and kneels beside it.)* No
- 33 more chains? No more drugs? No more pain?
- 34 ANGEL: The path will not always be easy to walk upon; there
- 35 will be times of challenge. But he will be with you for the



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