# I Carry the King

*By Karen Jones*

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## STORY OF THE PLAY

It's late at night in a small stable in Bethlehem. The animals have been run out of their warm stable because of some human intruders. As they complain and question the fairness of the whole situation, they meet a stranger in the corral, a small and weary donkey. As the humble donkey talks about his trip and his masters, the animals are joined by a dog who has followed his master down from the hills. He tells them a wild story about some flying creatures that spoke to them about a "Savior" that had just been born. Next, they are joined by the haughty camels who demand the best accommodation of the small corral. After all, "they carry kings" and deserve it. As the others object, the old owl is disturbed and when he looks into the stable, things become even stranger. The kings that the camels were so proud of are actually bowing down to the newborn in the hay offering Him gifts. While the animals can't really understand all that's going on, they are aware that something momentous is taking place.

## SETTING

Stable in Bethlehem. Left side of the stage contains a typical stable scene with mounds of hay and a small manger. Right side of the stage contains a small corral. Two of the posts (possibly a disguised bar stool) should be large enough for the owl to perch on. A partition can be place between the two with a large opening indicating a window between the two areas.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(9 flexible, 1 female, extras for nativity creche)*

**OX:** Tired, steady character.
**GOAT:** Cranky.
**DOG:** Excited.
**EWE:** Calm, levelheaded. Mother to the lamb.
**LAMB:** Inquisitive.
**DONKEY:** Humble.
**CAMEL #1:** Haughty, arrogant.
**CAMEL #2:** Haughty, arrogant.
**CAMEL #3:** Leader of the camels. Business like.
**OWL:** Wise.

Non-speaking parts:

**INNKEEPER**
**MARY**
**JOSEPH**
**SEVERAL SHEPHERDS**
**THREE KINGS**

## COSTUMES

Animal costumes to match each character. For example: the ewe can be dressed in white sweatsuit with black shoes/ boots and gloves to portray hooves with a corresponding headdress. In addition, the camels should have elaborate harnesses with bells, etc. The owl can have a brown cape to portray wings. The nativity characters are dressed in appropriate Biblical attire.

## SOUND EFFECTS

Baby crying
Mouse squeaking
Heavy thuds….. (Sounds of a camel walking)

## PROPS

Staff
Lantern
Money pouch/ coins
Wiseman’s gifts
Staffs

## Scene 1

*(AT RISE: A spotlight is directed toward the corral. The stable area is left in darkness. A small DONKEY is standing at the center of the corral. The OX, GOAT, EWE and LAMB are herded from the right side of the stage by the INNKEEPER directing them with a staff. The donkey moves further to the right to make room for them. The Innkeeper turns and exits stage right.)*

**OX:** *(Moos.)* This just isn't fair. Those humans have no right to push me out of my warm stall. After all, I've worked hard all day and deserve a good rest.

**GOAT:** *(Bleats.)* What about me? At least, you get to sleep until they have their breakfast. They wake up at the crack of dawn to get my milk.

**OX:** Big deal. I'd trade places with you in a heartbeat. You don't have to work in the fields. You just get to scamper around and eat. Not like pulling a plow.

**GOAT:** I do not scamper around and eat. *(Pauses.)* Well I do, but even so, it's to clear the land so you can plow it later.

**OX:** *(Sarcastically.)* Yeah, I've been meaning to thank you for that.

**EWE:** *(Bleats.)* Okay. Calm down, everyone. There's no need to argue about it. We all have our assigned duties to perform. And that's determined by our master.

*(LAMB has moved closer to the Donkey checking out the newcomer.)*

**GOAT:** That's easy for you to say. All you have to do is stand around and grow a coat. Like that's anything. The most strenuous thing I've ever seen you do is wander to the manger to get a bite to eat.

**EWE:** Now wait just a minute. I'm taking care of my child. And that's not as easy as it seems. He's always trying to wander off. I can't let my guard down for one minute.

*(EWE notices the LAMB is not near and moves to gather him.)*

**OX:** Aren't we getting off the subject here? The point is why can't those humans stay at the inn like the rest of their kind?
**GOAT:** Precisely. Why bother us poor animals out here in the stable?

*(During the animals' conversation, the INNKEEPER returns carrying a lantern and leading MARY and JOSEPH. He hands the lantern to Joseph, who in turn hands him a coin from a money pouch. The Innkeeper exits. Mary and Joseph enter the stable where Mary finds a seat in the hay. Joseph extinguishes the lantern.)*

**DONKEY:** *(Brays softly.)* I'm afraid they didn't have much of a choice. There weren't any rooms left in the inn. We barely arrived here before dark.

*(The GOAT and OX turn and look at the newcomer.)*

**GOAT:** So these are your humans?
**DONKEY:** Yes, they are, and they're very good masters.
**GOAT:** Well, if they are so good, why are they in there where it's nice and warm and you are out here in the cold?
**DONKEY:** Oh, it's not so bad. We've been on the road for so long I'm just glad to be able to rest for a bit. It was a pretty rough journey and I had to be really careful. My mistress wasn't feeling too well.
**OX:** Then maybe she should have stayed home where she belonged.
**DONKEY:** I don't think they really had a choice in the matter. Something to do about a census.
**EWE:** What's that?
**DONKEY:** I'm not sure. I only know my master had to make this journey because of it.
**OX:** Oh, does it even matter? They're humans. They can do whatever they want.
**GOAT:** But it's still not right that we have to give up our beds for them.

*(The ANIMALS agree with their appropriate sounds. During this an OWL swoops in unnoticed from stage right. It settles on a corral post and starts to preen his feathers.)*

**LAMB:** Well, I'm glad. Now I get a chance to see how all my friends are living. They've been taken up into the hills and get to sleep outside every night.
**GOAT:** Well, if this is so thrilling, why don't you just join them?
**LAMB:** I can't. My master said I was special and had to stay behind.
**OX:** Really now? You look rather ordinary to me. What makes you so special?
**LAMB:** *(Proudly.)* I don't have any blemishes.
**OX:** Say again?
**LAMB:** *(Repeats.)* I don't have any blemishes.
**GOAT:** What's a blemish?
**LAMB:** Hmm. I'm not exactly sure, but it must be a terrible thing to have. Otherwise, I'd be out in the hills with the others. Isn't that right, Mama?
**EWE:** Yes, it is, sweetie. *(To OTHERS.)* Our master is very proud of him. He's supposed to go to some prestigious place in Jerusalem.
**GOAT:** What's prestigious?
**OX:** And what is a Jerusalem?
**EWE:** I'm not sure. All I know is only the best of the lambs gets to go there. In fact, my master says that more lambs from his stable have been chosen for this honor than all the other stables in Bethlehem. And I'm proud to say quite a few of those lambs have been mine.
**GOAT:** Well, la-de-da. Aren't we special?
**OX:** Now there's no need for us to be turning on each other. We're just animals. We have to do as our masters dictate.
**GOAT:** I know. But wouldn't it be nice if they would show us a little consideration every now and then? The houses are for humans, the stables are for animals. It's as simple as that.
**DONKEY:** Like I said, they could find no other room. They were all taken.
**OX:** I find that hard to believe. Bethlehem is hardly a bustling metropolis—

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