

STRANGERS AT THE INN

By James Rhodes

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Strangers meet at an inn in Bethlehem after the birth of Jesus. They all had things they wished to give Him but one by one, they gave their gifts to needy people. Finally, as a group, they decide to go to the stable and seek out the baby with the one thing they have left to give - their love. A symbolic story which shows that we are all strangers, in a way, until we meet through the person of Jesus Christ. An optional nativity scene creates a beautiful ending.

SETTING/PROPS

Scene 1: In the street in front of an almost full inn. Innkeeper needs a broom and Caleb and the Man need packs.

Scene 2: In the hills outside of Bethlehem. Stars can be seen above, and on stage are trees, shrubbery, rocks, etc. Silas and Leah need packs, a knife, and fruit.

Scene 3: Also in the hills outside of Bethlehem. Miriam and Vashti need packs and a basket of pomegranates. Beggar needs a rough wooden cane.

Scene 4: In the hills outside of Bethlehem.

Scene 5: Anna and Joel's inn represented by a simple table and chairs. Anna needs a dust rag and cup of water.

Optional nativity: Setting should be placed below the stage or in the back of the auditorium.

Playing Time: 30 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 m, 5 w)

ANNA: Serves as narrator, wife of Joel.

JOEL: Runs an inn in Bethlehem.

CALEB: A man who gives up his lodging.

LEAH and SILAS: A young couple who gave up their donkey to a needy family.

MIRIAM and VASHTI: Two widows who give their gift of food to a beggar.

INNKEEPER: Surprised by Caleb's generosity.

MAN: In desperate need of a room.

BEGGAR: Receives gift of food (*Innkeeper or Man can double as Beggar.*)

ANGEL: Tells the good news to Caleb.

COSTUMES

All wear Biblical garb. Man and Beggar look especially poor and dusty. Leah must wear sandals that can be easily removed. The angel wears lighter colored robes but does not have wings.

SCENE 1

(BEFORE CURTAIN: ANNA enters SR.)

ANNA: Hello, my name is Anna and I lived in Bethlehem. The story I am about to tell must be told in pieces. But the pieces all fit together in the end. Like the strands of a tapestry that gather together to form the completed work. The first thread of the tapestry has to do with Caleb. He has come to Bethlehem for the census. Caleb is a kind, gentle, generous man who has traveled with his wife a great distance. Caleb has a strong love for his God and he has anxiously awaited the coming of Messiah. Here is Caleb. *(SHE exits quietly.)*

(AT RISE: SL is lighted. INNKEEPER is sweeping as CALEB enters. Stage is bare except for a door to the inn UPS.)

INNKEEPER: *(Spying CALEB.)* Ho, Caleb. *(Motioning UPS to HIS inn.)* We have one room left. Such a week this has been! I hope we never have another census taken. I saved the room for you and your wife.

CALEB: I thank you for that. My wife is down the street buying some bread. It has been a long, tiring journey.

INNKEEPER: Can you imagine such a thing. Whole families traveling across the land. Just to register. It's crazy ... crazy, I tell you. *(Shakes HIS head.)*

CALEB: I agree ... but what can we do? Maybe when Messiah comes ...

INNKEEPER: Messiah! Messiah! I hear that all the time. Why there is even talk that He will be born here in Bethlehem. The world has gone mad.

(A MAN enters. He is covered with dust from traveling.)

MAN: Excuse me, are you the innkeeper? My wife and I and our children have been traveling for a long time. We wonder if there is room for us?

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INNKEEPER: No rooms. No rooms left. You are just too late. Try some place else.

MAN: We've been to every inn in Bethlehem. Every place we go ... we've been turned away. It's not for myself but my wife and children. Our youngest is sick. We'll take anything.

INNKEEPER: I cannot house everyone in the world. This is only a single inn. I'm sorry about your little one.

MAN: *(Turns to leave.)* Now what are we going to do?

CALEB: Wait ... don't leave. Please ... wait. Are you sure you've tried every place?

MAN: We've looked and looked. There just isn't anything left.

CALEB: Go get your wife and children. Innkeeper ... give our room to these people.

INNKEEPER: *(Surprised.)* But ... but ... there are so many and the room is so small. Are you sure you want to do this? Why, you don't even know these people. Why go out of your way for them? It isn't done.

CALEB: All I know is that they are in need. My wife and I can sleep in the desert tonight. We have a tent and we've done it before.

MAN: I can't let you do this ... I can't take your room from you .

CALEB: You aren't taking it from us ... just think of it as a gift. Besides, my wife and I wouldn't sleep very well knowing a sick child had to be sleeping on the ground.

MAN: How can I ever thank you enough? May you and your wife be blessed. I must tell my wife and family.
(Exits.)

INNKEEPER: You are either a fool or a very wise man. People just don't do that sort of think these days. Why did you do it?

CALEB: I don't know ... I just know it was the right thing to do.

(LIGHTS fade out.)

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: LIGHTS come up as ANNA enters SR.)

ANNA: On the road to Bethlehem many strange things happen. Many people's lives are changed. Let's listen in on Silas and Leah. They are a young married couple who have come a great distance to register for the census. Both Silas and Leah, like Caleb, love their God and anxiously await the Messiah whom they have heard so much about.

(ANNA exits quietly and LIGHTS dim SR. SILAS and LEAH enter carrying packs. It is night in the hills outside of Bethlehem and lots of stars can be seen. They walk CS and sit down on large rocks or the ground.)

LEAH: How much farther is it, Silas? Bethlehem can't be far away. *(Exhausted, sitting down.)*

SILAS: *(Also sitting down.)* Just over that hill, Leah. Are you all right?

LEAH: Yes, my husband. It hasn't been such a tiring trip. In a way I'm glad Herod decided to have this census. *(Taking off sandal and rubbing HER foot.)*

SILAS: Glad? What do you mean? *(Opening a pack for a piece of fruit for HER.)*

LEAH: It gave us time to be alone. We haven't had much time to ourselves since we got married.

SILAS: Just you and me and the donkey.

LEAH: Now it's just you and me.

SILAS: Do you think I did the right thing, Leah, with the donkey, I mean? *(Cutting the fruit and handing HER a small bite.)*

LEAH: Oh, yes, Silas. They were in such need. The woman was so tired. Can you imagine coming all this way on foot?

SILAS: They couldn't help it. They were so poor they could hardly afford the sandals on their feet.

End of Freeview

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