

The Star of Bethlehem



By Stewart Auty

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This is a simple, but original traditional Nativity story. The 'Star of Bethlehem' is a small inn, helping Bethlehem cope with the sudden influx of visitors in town for the Census. Innkeeper Jacob grumbles about the extra work. Naomi, his long suffering wife thinks only of the extra profits, and the possibility of meeting someone famous. The story helps to explain 'star quality' as mistakes are made about the importance of visitors. So as well as an entertaining production, it has good curriculum links with PSHE.

At various points in the script, songs/carols are suggested to enhance the production. These can be omitted, or replaced with others considered more appropriate.

No music (or music licence) is supplied with this production

SCRIPT SAMPLE FOR EVALUATION ONLY

Most of the stage setting is occupied with the outside of the Star of Bethlehem inn, complete with inn sign, with the stable area off to one side. A small table with two stools/chairs is also required.

The backdrop could be a simple Bethlehem skyline against a sunset sky, or alternatively, more ambitious but very rewarding, a large depiction of Starry, starry night by Van Gogh!

In total there are 20 speaking parts. Extra non-speaking parts can be added as more shepherds or soldiers to accompany King Herod.

Cast in order of appearance:

Narrator 1	Narrator 2
Jacob, Innkeeper	Naomi, his wife
Ruth, their daughter	Fortune Teller
Minstrel	Isaac, Impresario
High Priest	Joseph
Mary	Shepherd 1
Shepherd 2	Shepherd 3
Shepherd 4	Melchior
Balthazar	Gaspar
King Herod	Soldiers

Scene 1: The Star of Bethlehem.

Full cast on stage for opening song: YOU'RE A STAR

Yesterday I was happy to play
For a penny or two a song
Till a fellah in a black sedan
Took a shine to my one-man-band
He said, "We got plans for you, you'd never dream"

You're a star, you're a star
A lamé suit and a new guitar
And I know that you'll go far
'Cause you're a star

You're a star, superstar
On you go, it's your finest hour
And I know that you'll go far
'Cause you're a star

I signed my name and the Friday came
When the song that I used to sing
Came out on a forty-five
I sang it on the TV live
Yes, the music played and I heard the people say

You're a star, you're a star
A lamé suit and a new guitar
And I know that you'll go far
'Cause you're a star

You're a star, superstar
On you go, it's your finest hour
And I know that you'll go far
'Cause you're a star.

(Exit all, except for two Narrators who sit on a bench/at a table outside the Star of Bethlehem Inn.)

NARRATOR 1: You seem to know a lot about what's going on in Bethlehem.

NARRATOR 2: I suppose being a librarian keeps me informed, as I do read things every day.

NARRATOR 1: So tell me then, seeing as you know almost everything....

NARRATOR 2: Oh, I wouldn't say that.

NARRATOR 1: This inn, the Star of Bethlehem, how did it get its name?

NARRATOR 2: What you're really asking is for me to define the word 'star'. So what do you think?

NARRATOR 1: Well, the star player for Bethlehem United is their striker. He's a superstar!

NARRATOR 2: He scores lots of goals – that's why they're top of the league.

NARRATOR 1: So, he's definitely the one for me, and he's quite handsome too!

NARRATOR 2: And that's sooooo important! I suppose that's one meaning. If it's not your star striker, your favourite goalscorer, could it be anything else?

NARRATOR 1: Well, there's all sorts of celebrities and famous people, including your royals in Jerusalem, not forgetting the military generals and people in government. They all think they're stars.

NARRATOR 2: Fame now means you've been on a television reality show, you know, The Only Way is Galilee, that sort of thing.

NARRATOR 1: Me? I'm not so sure they're stars at all. They just think they are.

NARRATOR 2: It could just be a star, up in the sky, simple as that.

NARRATOR 1: But there's millions of them, and they're all the same, not one stands out. If there was one a bit different, well, that might help.

NARRATOR 2: For star quality, there has to be something else. The X factor which makes something special, a bit different.

NARRATOR 1: So if it's none of those we mentioned, what are we left with? After talking to you, I'm none the wiser. You haven't answered my question.

NARRATOR 2: And that's because I don't know the answer, unless the inn is simply named after one of the stars in the night sky.

NARRATOR 1: We could ask the innkeeper, perhaps he would know.

NARRATOR 2: He's been here for as long as I can remember, so he might be able to help us.

(Enter JACOB)

JACOB: Come along there, have you no homes to go to?

NARRATOR 1: Perhaps you can settle an argument for us.

NARRATOR 2: We've not really been arguing, more of a discussion.

JACOB: I'll help if I can. What do you want to know?

NARRATOR 1: We just wondered how this inn got its name.

NARRATOR 2: Has it always been The Star of Bethlehem?

JACOB: Always The Star.

NARRATOR 1: So what does it mean?

JACOB: Whatever you want it to mean. Star is one of those words open to interpretation.

NARRATOR 2: Great! We're no nearer the truth.

NARRATOR 1: Perhaps the truth is too elusive.

JACOB: The truth is, it's time you both went home, and it's time I went to bed.

NARRATOR 2: Yes, we should be going. Sorry if we've kept you up.

NARRATOR 1: I'm still puzzled. I'm determined to find the truth about the real Star of Bethlehem.

(Exit all)

(Next morning)

(JACOB is sweeping, watched by NAOMI and RUTH who are sitting at the table.)

JACOB: It's fine, just sit there you two! I'm slaving away on my own, all by myself.

NAOMI: Oh, you poor, downtrodden man! Life can be hard sometimes.

JACOB: I do wish you would help me, Naomi. There is so much to do.

NAOMI: Where were you at the crack of dawn?

JACOB: The crack of dawn, when it's still dark?

NAOMI: That's right, and I'll tell you where you were! Still in bed, snoring away, as usual!

JACOB: A man needs his sleep.

NAOMI: I do know we're busy, Jacob, but I've been up and working since dawn. You've only just got up!

RUTH: And I was here helping, father, whilst you were still in bed.

JACOB: Well, I was tired.

NAOMI: So now it's my turn to rest. You'll just have to manage on your own.

RUTH: *(Sighs)* I'll help you father. Mother deserves a rest. It's the census causing all the rush.

JACOB: I don't know why there has to be a census. We will be crowded out with visitors.

RUTH: It seems such a nuisance...

JACOB: *(Sighs)* ... And so much work.

NAOMI: The Romans have ordered it, so it has to happen. So we just get on with it.

JACOB: But I don't understand...

NAOMI: You never understand, Jacob, even when it has been explained to you.

JACOB: I've got so much to do. There's the stable to clean, animals to feed, and new guests coming.

NAOMI: Can't you manage without me for a minute?

JACOB: No. I have too much to do. I can't do it all by myself.

RUTH: I'll do the stables and feed the animals if that helps.

(Enter FORTUNE TELLER)

NAOMI: Well, you will just have to try. I think my fortune teller is here.

JACOB: Whatever next? A fortune teller – give me strength!

RUTH: Come on father. We can do this together.

JACOB: You're a good girl Ruth. Always willing to help your old father get things done.

(RUTH and JACOB exit)

NAOMI: Are you the fortune teller?

FORTUNE TELLER: Yes. You booked a consultation on line, via my website?

NAOMI: That's right – www.i'vegotacrystalball.com. I'm so glad you're here.

FORTUNE TELLER: You'll need to cross my palm with silver before I begin.

NAOMI: But I paid up front with my credit card when I booked!

FORTUNE TELLER: So you did! My mistake! Silly me! What am I like?

NAOMI: I have asked you here to tell me my fortune. We might get a few minutes peace. Let's sit down.

(Fortune Teller produces crystal ball from a Lidl carrier bag or similar and places it on the table)

FORTUNE TELLER: *(Using suitably dramatic hand movements over and around the crystal ball)* I can see you are going to be very busy.

NAOMI: You don't need a crystal ball to see that! What else can you tell me?

FORTUNE TELLER: I see many visitors, yes, you will have many visitors.

NAOMI: You don't say! That's what being busy means, lots of visitors, you know? This is an inn, if you hadn't noticed. Wow!

FORTUNE TELLER: Give me a chance! I'm still warming up!

NAOMI: There must be more than that!

FORTUNE TELLER: Some of your visitors will be very special.

NAOMI: This is all a bit vague! Special? What on earth does that mean?

FORTUNE TELLER: You will meet important people, very important.

NAOMI: That's better! Might they be famous? Can you tell me that?

FORTUNE TELLER: More famous than you can imagine.

NAOMI: This is getting better by the minute! Are they.... celebrities?

FORTUNE TELLER: I can say no more. You will have to be patient.

NAOMI: But when will they arrive? Who will they be? How will I recognise them?

FORTUNE TELLER: That I cannot say. But, be ready. Make them welcome.

NAOMI: Can't you be more helpful?

FORTUNE TELLER: I have said enough. I must be going. Your time is up. Unless you want to pay for another appointment.

NAOMI: I think this is a con! I paid good money for this, and all you can say is that some of my visitors might be famous?

FORTUNE TELLER: I've told you what I see. That should be enough.

NAOMI: I should report you to Trading Standards!

FORTUNE TELLER: Your visitors will bring great honour to you and your family. As today unfolds, I don't think you will be disappointed.

NAOMI: I suppose I'll just have to wait and see. Thank you.

FORTUNE TELLER: My pleasure. I'm going to the Palace now to see King Herod. He's a bit worried about what the future might bring.

NAOMI: King Herod eh? I wouldn't have thought he had much to worry about.

FORTUNE TELLER: Don't be too sure! No good news for him, I'm afraid.

NAOMI: I must tell my husband. Goodbye. Jacob! Jacob!

(Exit FORTUNE TELLER and NAOMI)

Scene 2 - Later that Morning.

Carol: 'Rat-a-tat-tat -There isn't any room for strangers' (first part only)

JACOB: And you believe everything that the fortune teller told you?

NAOMI: And why not?

JACOB: You're too gullible. Sometimes I don't understand you.

NAOMI: Sometimes you don't understand anything at all.

JACOB: But what was all that about important visitors?

NAOMI: Special people, might even be famous she said! We might meet a star, a real star!

JACOB: Think of all the extra work!

NAOMI: Think of all the extra money! If they're celebrities, we can charge them more!

JACOB: And just how will we recognise these special visitors? Would you know star quality if it poked you in the eye?

NAOMI: I'll know, Jacob, I'll just know. I'll use my intuition, that's how I'll know.

JACOB: Your intuition as you call it didn't help with my lottery numbers.

NAOMI: Now, are all the preparations made? Is everything ready?

JACOB: Yes, dear. I hope it is all going to be worthwhile.

(Enter MINSTREL)

MINSTREL: Oh, Hi there! Good day to you, kind people. Peace be upon you and yours.

JACOB: What do you want? We are very busy.

NAOMI: Don't be so rude, Jacob.

MINSTREL: I need a room to stay for a few days. I play in the orchestra at the Palace.

JACOB: You're a musician? I know you! Have I seen you on 'Bethlehem's got Talent'?

NAOMI: Don't be silly Jacob.

JACOB: I'm not being silly Naomi, he might be famous! Remember what the fortune teller said! He could be a star, a real rock star!

NAOMI: Don't be so stupid Jacob! *(To Minstrel)* Are you a rock star? Have you been on 'Bethlehem's got Talent'?

MINSTREL: Well not exactly. I did think about going to the auditions though.

NAOMI: Then be off with you! You're wasting our time. We have more important guests arriving soon.

MINSTREL: Perhaps I could entertain them? I sing and dance, tell amazing stories, and I can juggle and ride a unicycle, but not at the same time.

JACOB: Clearly a man of many talents. But star quality? I think not.

NAOMI: You will have to go away, we have no time for your sort here. Jacob, see that he goes. He is little more than a beggar.

MINSTREL: But I only....

JACOB: You'd better do as she says. Find somewhere else to stay. *(Exit NAOMI)*

MINSTREL: But Bethlehem is so crowded, Can't I stay here? Please? You have such a kind face.

JACOB: You can't stay inside. Go round the back. We have a stable. Wait there and I will bring you some food later.

MINSTREL: Thank you, you are very kind.

JACOB: Soft in the head, not kind. I'll be in trouble for this. Now go, before she sees you.

(Exit MINSTREL; Enter RUTH)

RUTH: Mum wants to know if he's gone.

JACOB: Of course he's gone! I soon got rid of him! No time for time wasters!

RUTH: Good. Mum said we can do without people like him. We might have more important people to see to. *(Enter ISAAC)*

JACOB: Hey now! Look at him! WE don't get many people wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase!

RUTH: And look at his hat!

JACOB: Do you think he's one of your famous people?

RUTH: There's only one way to find out! *(To ISAAC)* Can I be of any assistance, Sir?

ISAAC: Certainly, young lady. I need somewhere to stay, but all the best hotels seem to be full.

JACOB: We might have some rooms to spare....

END OF SCRIPT SAMPLE

But here is a snippet of the ending

NARRATOR 1: So you see, everything has finally been explained.

NARRATOR 2: Surprisingly, the innkeeper was the only one who understood.

NARRATOR 1: He recognised star quality when he saw it.

NARRATOR 2: Everyone else was fooled by imposters and tricksters.

NARRATOR 1: Star quality is not fame.

NARRATOR 2: Star quality is not self promotion.

NARRATOR 1: Star quality is very hard to define.

NARRATOR 2: It's easier to say what it's not.

NARRATOR 1: The baby Jesus was the new born star.

NARRATOR 2: Without a doubt, he was the Star of Bethlehem.

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