

TRUNCATED SAMPLE SCRIPT

This is a series of excerpted scenes from the full script, which runs to 70 pages--about 70 minutes in performance.

If you purchase the rights to the play, I will send you a full script—as a PDF—from which you can make as many copies as are needed by your cast & crew. There is no per-script-fee.

If you wish to secure the performance rights to this script, pre-recorded music tracks and pre-recorded sound effects, contact Sales@RuyaSonic.com

THE NATIVITY PLAY

(70-minute version)

Written for the stage by

Anthony E. Palermo

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TRUNCATED SAMPLE SCRIPT
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presents

THE NATIVITY PLAY

Written for the stage by
ANTHONY E. PALERMO

Long bio:

ANTHONY E. PALERMO (PLAYWRIGHT) is a dramatist, radio performer, and educator based in Los Angeles. His work is heard on NPR and Satellite Radio as well as in audiobooks and on-stage with L.A. Theatre Works, California Artists Radio Theater, numerous theatre troupes, and on national tours. His holiday-themed plays, *A Christmas Carol*, *It's A Wonderful Life*, *Auntie Scrooge--a BACKWARDS Christmas Carol*, and *The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow* have seen productions around the world since 1998. Tony's sound effects work on Yuri Rasovsky's *Sherlock Holmes Theatre* contributed to its winning the 2006 *Audie Award*--the Oscar of audiobooks. Tony directed the 60th anniversary production of Norman Corwin's *On a Note of Triumph*--for which he also re-created Bernard Herrmann's orchestral score. Recently, Tony provided live SFX for shows such as Eric Idle's *What About Dick?*, CART's *Ray Bradbury's Leviathan '99*, LATW's *Hamlet* and *Frost/Nixon*, as well as performing 65 solo shows at the California State Fair. Tony's *Sonic Storytelling Studio* at San Francisco's Exploratorium is a permanent exhibit that has seen thousands of visitors since 2006. His *Sparx Audio Adventures* assembly programs and workshops are popular with schools and colleges across California, the U.S. and the world. Tony also hosts the RuyaSonic Radio Drama Resources website, offering info on writing, directing, scoring, engineering, and sound effects. www.RuyaSonic.com

Short bio:

ANTHONY E. PALERMO (PLAYWRIGHT) is an Audie Award-winning performer, dramatist, composer and educator who has produced dramas and workshops for broadcast, stage, and schools. Tony hosts the RuyaSonic website, offering info on writing, directing, scoring, engineering, and sound effects. www.RuyaSonic.com

NOTE: Up-to-date text of the bios is available at www.RuyaSonic.com/tp2bio.htm You can cut & paste the text into your playbill or program and thus not have to worry about typos.

The Nativity Play (70-minute version)

Cast

NARRATOR	The narrator (Male or Female)
MARY	16 year-old farm girl (F)
JOSEPH	20 year-old carpenter (M)
ANGEL #1	Angel messenger(Gabriel) (M/F)
ANGEL #2	Angel messenger(M/F)
ANGEL #3	Angel messenger (M/F)
ANGEL #4	Angel messenger(M/F)
ELISABET	Mary's aged kinswoman (F)
ZAKARIAS	Elisabet's husband (M)
HEROD THE GREAT	Tyrannical "King of the Jews" (M)
MALKIOR	Persian Magi (M/F)
GASPAR	Indian Magi (M/F)
BALTAZAR	Assyrian Magi (M/F)
JOAKIM	Mary's blustery father (M)
HANNAH	Mary's sympathetic mother (F)
AUNT MORAG	Mary's stern aunt (F)
INN-KEEPER	Crusty inn-keeper (M/F)
SIMEON	Pious old man (M)
ANNA	Old Prophetess (F)
ESDRAS	Joseph's carpentry mentor (M)
AMBASSADOR LIVIUS	Roman Ambassador (M)
BO'AZ	Old, wizened shepherd (M/F)
EFRAYIM	Cynical shepherd (M/F)
SHEP	Young shepherd (M/F)
RACHAB	Inn-keeper's kindly slave (F/M)
CHASIDA	Mary's friend (F)
LIAT	Mary's friend (F)
OFFICER	Nazareth constable (M)
ETAN	Herod's minister (M/F)
QUEEN MALTACE	Herod's wife (F)
HIGH PRIEST DIVREE	Herod's High Priest (M)
MASTEMA	Abusive construction foreman (M/F)
THIEF	Bitter thief (M/F)
LAMBS/INFANTS	Bleating lambs, infants (F/M)

Small cast: 16 actors (4 male, 5 female, 7 male-or-female)

Large cast: 34 actors (9 male, 8 female, 17 male-or-female)

See appendix for suggestions about doubling roles.

This script refers to pre-recorded sound effects are available as downloadable MP3 tracks for a fee. Contact Sales@RuyaSonic.com for information.

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

The Nativity Play is adapted from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. It seeks to reconcile differences between the two infancy narratives while depicting the human drama of all the characters--good and evil.

Act 1 begins with comical/philosophical shepherds lamenting life after The Fall and wishing for a Messiah, then it shifts to a Nazareth marketplace, where a charitable and pious Mary meets Joseph, then the Annunciation, Mary's visit to Elisabet and Zakarais, Joseph's carpentry work on King Herod's palace, the birth and naming of John The Baptist, Mary's family difficulties upon her return home, Joseph's dilemma regarding Mary's pregnancy, Joseph deciding to "divorce Mary, quietly", an angel dream, and the reconciliation between Joseph and Mary.

Act 2 begins with wicked King Herod plotting with the Roman ambassador about a census, Mary and Joseph deciding to travel, their Journey to Bethlehem, No Room At The Inn, the Birth of Jesus, the angel appearance to the shepherds, the prophecies of Simeon and Anna, Herod questioning/tricking the Magi, the Adoration of the Magi, Herod's fury, the Slaughter of the Innocents, The Flight to Egypt and the Return from Egypt.

The play includes the full canticles from Luke: Mary's "Magnificat," Zakarias' "Benedictus," and Simeon's "Nunc Dimittis"--all in English.

For information about the stage-play versions of *The Nativity Play*, visit www.ruyasonic.com/stageplay-the-nativity-play-script.html

For a full listing of Anthony E. Palermo's plays, including *Christmas Carol, It's a Wonderful Life!* and *Auntie Scrooge - a BACKWARDS Christmas Carol*, visit www.ruyasonic.com

SCENE 1 - THE WELCOMING
EXT. BETHLEHEM HILLSIDE - DUSK (JANUARY)
(NARRATOR)

SETTING:

The stage is split between a Pastoral backdrop (STAGE RIGHT) and a town square/courtyard (STAGE LEFT).

The Pastoral area has some olive trees amidst the green hills. When the shepherds are in this area, it is a hillside in Bethlehem. When Mary and Joseph are there, it is an olive grove in Nazareth.

The town square/courtyard has adobe walls and a functional doorway--preferably with a top/bottom split door--but a regular door will serve.

AT RISE:

No one is on-stage.

THE NARRATOR ENTERS from LEFT to introduce the story. THE NARRATOR takes CENTER STAGE and addresses the audience directly.

NARRATOR: Welcome, one and all, to our recounting of The Nativity; How--amidst darkness and despair--there came a Light from Heaven; A Light of salvation, of forgiveness, of peace...

NARRATOR: And a Light of joy!...the birth of Jesus Christ. A birth into the world and a birth within our hearts.

NARRATOR: However, our tale does not begin on Christmas morning. No, it winds through the months before the birth of the Divine Child.

SFX TRACK: [FX-01] WINTER WINDS, SHEEP, THUNDER--UNDER NEXT SCENE

NARRATOR: This world--B.C. Before Christ--was in need of redemption. We begin here--one Winter's night, on a hillside near Bethlehem, (EXITING SL) amidst "certain poor shepherds in fields where they lay..."

SCENE 2 – THE SHEPHERDS’ LAMENT
EXT. BETHLEHEM HILLSIDE – NIGHT (JANUARY)
(EFRAYIM, SHEP, BO’AZ, SHEEP #1, NARRATOR)

EFRAYIM ENTERS from RIGHT. SHEP plays a jaw harp--under, until his line

EFRAYIM: (SHIVERS) Ohh! Winter! Such terrible weather for a herder of sheep!

BO’AZ ENTERS from RIGHT.

BO’AZ: (APPROACHING) ‘Tis true, Efrayim!
 (“eff-ray-EEM”) So cloudy! I have not seen such weather since... well.... since Noah.

SHEP: (AMAZED) Noah? Of the Ark?

BO’AZ: Yea! It looked like rain then, too!

EFRAYIM: (SKEPTICAL) What? Noah? Tell me, Bo’az?
 (“BO-ahhz”) How old are you?

BO’AZ: Me? Errrr... quite old! I forget... hmm... three-score and ten? Seventy? No... Eighty...?

SHEP: But Noah and the Ark? That was thousands of years ago!
Time out of mind!

BO’AZ: Yes! Hmmm, Shep. (“SHEP”) Let me recall... (COUNTS ON FINGERS) Eighty... eighty-one... eight-two... a thousand!
Yes! Yes! I am very old. Very old!

EFRAYIM: (SCOFFS) A thousand? Bah! You are a mere shepherd--and all that you say is but ill-spun wool!

ALL THREE SHEPHERDS: (LAUGHTER--AD LIB) oh-oh-oh!

SHEP: Ah, but what a filthy, cold life this is!

SHEEP #1: (BLEATS-INDIGNANTLY) Baaaaa!

EFRAYIM: Such is our lot, young one. And yet, to be a herder of sheep is no despicable occupation.

BO'AZ: Yea! David--the great King David--was once a "mere" shepherd boy. But the Lord avored him, and David did great deeds... (SIGHS) But that was so long ago...

EFRAYIM: But that is what we need to-day! A new David! Look about you: poverty, oppression! We lie crushed--beneath the heel of that tyrant, Herod!

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BO'AZ: Yes. We are sheep... preyed upon by wolves.

SHEP: That venomous Herod! And the Romans!

BO'AZ: Herod and the Romans are only the most obvious evil-doers. The wolves are man-kind! Wickedness burns in every heart! For we are separated from the Lord... alas... (SIGHS) for-ever.

SHEP: (SIGHS) Then life is hopeless.

EFRAYIM: That is why we labor here, close to nature. Better the real wilderness--this mountainside--than the wilderness of spirit, amidst the towns and villages.

SHEP: Oh, what a dismal world! A night-mare! How shall I ever sleep again?

SHEEP #1: (BLEATS--INNOCENTLY) Baaaahh.

BO'AZ: (CHIDING) Um... Well... have you tried... have you tried... counting... sheep?

SHEEP #1: (BLEATS-DERISIVELY) Baaaah.

ALL THREE SHEPHERDS: (LAUGHTER--AD LIB) oh-oh-oh!

EFRAYIM, SHEP and BO'AZ all EXIT RIGHT. NARRATOR ENTERS from LEFT to DSC.

NARRATOR: These simple shepherds tend their flocks, keeping them safe from harm. But life differs--elsewhere. In Galilee--far north of Bethlehem--lies Nazareth, a quaint farm village, with its fields, its groves and its market. But--unlike the pastoral hillside of the shepherds--in Nazareth's marketplace, the "wolves" walk on two legs...

SFX TRACK: [FX-03] NAZARETH WINTER AMBIENCE--UNDER SCENE

SCENE 3 - WICKEDNESS AND MERCY IN NAZARETH
EXT. NAZARETH MARKETPLACE - AFTERNOON (JANUARY)
(CHASIDA, THIEF, OFFICER, LIAT, MARY, AUNT MORAG)

A mob enters from LEFT, stopping DS of the town backdrop SL. The mob is surrounding and man-handling THE THIEF. Prominent in the mob are CHASIDA, OFFICER, LIAT and AUNT MORAG. Other extras can also join in the commotion. THE THIEF has several pomegranates in his hands.

CROWD WALLA: (ANGRY CROWD)--"HOLD HIM", "WE HAVE HIM", "YOU DOG!"--UNDER

THIEF: (STRUGGLING) Let go! Unhand me!

CHASIDA: Thief! Thief! Stealing pomegranates, eh?

OFFICER: No mercy for you, thief! Thirty lashes!

LIAT: Give him forty lashes, Officer! Chasida ("cha-SEE-dah") and I spied him before! He would steal from all of us! The dog!

CROWD WALLA: (ANGRY TAUNTS)--THEY QUIET UNDER MARY

MARY ENTERS from SR.

MARY: (RUNNING UP) Stop! Those were my pomegranates! I brought them here to sell. (TO MORAG) Did I not, Aunt Morag?
(“MORE-ahhg”)

AUNT MORAG: Mary speaks the truth! (TO OFFICER) Officer! This thief has several of her pomegranates in his hands! See?

LIAT: Look! He has no thumbs! The punishment for stealing!

MARY: Wait! (TO THIEF) Sir. If you have nothing to trade, can you labor in exchange? Some farm chores? My father shall...

THIEF: Chores...? Farm chores? (ARROGANTLY) For peasants like you?

AUNT MORAG: Mary! This thief deserves whipping!

MARY: No! Scripture says, “Despise not a thief if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry.”

OFFICER: But Scripture also says, “Punish the wicked for their iniquity!” So, forty lashes for stealing!

CROWD WALLA: (ANGRY TAUNTS)--THEY QUIET UNDER MARY

MARY: No! No! (TO ALL) It is not stealing if I give him the pomegranates, is it? A little less for us shall suffice! (TO THIEF) Here, take the pomegranates. Take them. I insist.

THIEF: (SOURLY) Insist? A peasant-girl insists? Bah!

MARY: We do not have much, but we have... enough.

THIEF: (NASTILY) Well, this is how I regard your “enough.”
(SPITS)

CROWD WALLA: (GASPS)

THIEF: (NASTILY) And your fruit!

THIEF throws down pomegranates. stomps them into the dirt.

CROWD WALLA: (ANGRY TAUNTS--AD LIB) “YOU DOG!” “BEAT HIM”

CHASIDA: You deliberately crushed them! All of them!

THIEF: (DEFIANTLY) Hah! Pomegranates grow on trees!

OFFICER: That scorn shall reap nine extra lashes, swine! (HITTING THE THIEF WITH EACH WORD) “Thou. Shalt. Not. Steal!”

THIEF: (TO ALL) Go! Flog me! A curse upon all of you! (CRIES OUT IN AGONY) Ahhhhh!

OFFICER hauls THE THIEF away, EXITING LEFT. Extras in the mob follow along, pelting THE THIEF.

CROWD WALLA: (ANGRY, THEY HARRY HIM OFF-STAGE, AD-LIB)

AUNT MORAG: (ANGRY) Mary! You simpleton!

MARY: (PEEVED) Aunt Morag, I am not! But that man welcomed the flogging! Why did he do that?

CHASIDA: (STERNLY) It is you who confound me, Mary! Throughout Nazareth, it is said: (SNOOTY) “Mary--sixteen and still un-wed.” “Tsk, tsk, tsk.” “Mary... a spinster!”

LIAT: You sift and sift and sift! We all married at thirteen or fourteen! Do you think yourself more worthy?

MARY: No, but my father said...

AUNT MORAG: Your father! Saddled with a “too-old” daughter--a burden to the family.

MARY: I am not a burden! I work hard.

AUNT MORAG: You sacrificed your family’s hard work by giving that fruit to that thief--who ground them into the dirt!

CHASIDA: (DISGUSTED) Filthy vagabonds! (NOTICES JOSEPH) Look! Another! (TO JOSEPH) You, there...! Tramp! Why are you here?

JOSEPH: (APPROACHING) (TO MARY) I... errr... saw how that man crushed your pomegranates.

MARY: Yes?

JOSEPH: (ON MIC) Errr... May I have what is left of them?

MARY: Now? But they are crushed into the dirt.

JOSEPH: I am hungry. But I have no valuables to barter with.

LIAT: (TO MARY) Caution, Mary. Another vagrant. Thieves run in packs.

MARY: (TO JOSEPH) Sir, I have no pomegranates other than these ruined ones. But... you may have them.

JOSEPH: Thank you. (EATING THEM) I would... I would... errr... be willing to work to repay you.

AUNT MORAG: Repay? For these? Do not lie, young man.
(TO CHASIDA) Chasida! Run for the Officer.

CHASIDA: (EVIL LAUGH) Yes! (TO LIAT) Liat!
("LEE-yot") Go! (EXITING) And bring Yakob!

CHASIDA and LIAT EXIT, RIGHT.

LIAT: I shall! (EXITING) And his men!

AUNT MORAG: Come along, Mary! (PAUSE) Mary...?

MARY: (TO JOSEPH) Sir... You would not shirk farm chores? Have you any skills?

JOSEPH: Uhh... well... some...

MARY: Tool skills? Here... pound this nail--so I can hang a fruit basket upon this tree.

JOSEPH takes hammer and nail, seeking to pound it into tree. He pounds 1-2-3, but hits his thumb!

JOSEPH: (IN PAIN) Owwww!

MARY: Lo!... You are not a carpenter... Are you?

JOSEPH: Sadly, not a carpenter. (SIGH) Just a laborer. I haul stones. I shovel dung. I dig wells.

MARY: Dig wells?

AUNT MORAG: (STERNLY) Mary! That is enough! Come along!

MARY: (TO JOSEPH) Sir? I feel... you will do. Come to our farm... I am Mary. What is your name?

JOSEPH: Umm... my mother named me Joseph.

AUNT MORAG: Oh, Mary! You fool! (SWATS FOREHEAD)

MARY, JOSEPH and AUNT MORAG EXIT, RIGHT.

THE NARRATOR ENTERS from LEFT, crossing to DSC.

SCENE 4 - THE HIRED HAND
EXT. NAZARETH MARKETPLACE - DUSK (MARCH)
(NARRATOR, JOSEPH)

NARRATOR: And so... a poor farm girl in Galilee gave a young vagabond... a chance. Joseph labored as a hired hand on her family's small farm. And--in time--Mary found him an apprenticeship with the master carpenter of Nazareth.

(OFF-STAGE) JOSEPH hammers 1-2-3, but hits his thumb!

JOSEPH: (OFF-STAGE) Owwww!

NARRATOR: And--much to the consternation of Aunt Morag--it came to pass that Mary and Joseph did fall in love and become betrothed to one another. But as was the custom in those times, Mary did remain with her family until the day when Joseph could provide her with a home. So she did labor--spinning flax, milling barley and baking bread.

SCENE 5 - THE ANNUNCIATION
EXT. OLIVE GROVE - NIGHT (LATE MARCH)
(NARRATOR, MARY, ANGEL #1)

SFX TRACK: [FX-04] MARCH WINDS, CRICKETS--UNDER SCENE.

NARRATOR: One night--weeks later, in the early Spring--Mary searched for a lamb, which had wandered off from his pen. She came unto a verdant olive grove--a place of great peace and contemplation...

NARRATOR EXITS, LEFT.

MARY ENTERS, from RIGHT, carrying lamb (toy). An off-stage voice will deliver the lamb's lines below.

LAMB #2: (BLEATING) Baaaaaaah.

MARY: Ah! There you are, my little one! Whatsoever brought you here, so far from home?

LAMB #2: (BLEATING) Baaaaaaah.

MARY: (PICKING UP THE LAMB) We were all searching for you... But I have found you! Let us return. Father shall...

SFX TRACK: FADE WINDS AND CRICKETS--UNDER

LAMB #2: (BLEATING) Baaaaaaah.

MARY: Hush! (WHISPERS) It has become so quiet... Look!
(PUZZLED) Oh! The moon grows bright! What... what be this? This... light?

ANGEL #1 ENTERS, from LEFT.

AUDIO NOTE:

Try using hidden wireless mics for all the angel appearances throughout the play, so their voices can have a reverb effect applied. The first line of their dialogue in a scene will specify [REVERB].

ANGEL #1: [REVERB] Rejoice, Mary! Hail thou--that art highly favored! The Lord is with thee! Bless-ed art thou among women!

MARY: (FEARFUL) Bless-ed...? Me...? Oh, sir. What manner of salutation is this? Who...? Wha...?

ANGEL #1: Fear not, Mary. Rejoice! For thou hast found favor with The Lord.

MARY: (PUZZLED) Favor...? But...

ANGEL #1: Behold! Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son!--the anointed one--the Christ! And thou shalt call his name... Jesus.

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SCENE 7 - THE VISITATION TO ELISABET
EXT. - ELISABET'S COURTYARD - DAY (EARLY APRIL)
(NARRATOR, MARY, ELISABET, ZAKARIAS)

NARRATOR: After eight days of travel, Mary came to the home of Elisabet and Zakarias. Despite being old and stricken in age, Elisabet would--in three months time--bear the future John The Baptist. It was to this house that Mary did arrive...

MARY ENTERS from RIGHT, to stop in the courtyard, SL. ELISABET and ZAKARIAS ENTER from LEFT. ZAKARIAS carries a slate tablet and marker with him.

MARY: Ahh! (EXCHANGING KISSES) Elisabet! Zakarias! Peace be unto you and your household. Oh, Elisabet! My mother told me you were with child. What a blessing!

ELISABET: But, Mary! Blessed art thou! And blessed is the fruit of thy womb!

MARY: (STARTLED) My...? Then... you know of the miracle? How could the...

ELISABET: (JOYFULLY) Miracles abound, my dear! When you spoke-- just now--the babe within me leaped for joy!

ZAKARIAS: (HUMS IN ASSENT) Hmm-mmmm!

MARY: Oh, Zakarias, you must be so proud.

ZAKARIAS: (HUMS "Yes but...") Mmm-mmmmmm.

MARY: (TO ELISABET) Elisabet, what has happened? Why joy admixed with sorrow? ...from Zakarias? Can he not speak?

ZAKARIAS: (HUMS "No") Mmm.

ELISABET: Oh, but Mary, that is part of how I came to be with child! Six months ago, Zakarias was chosen to offer incense in the Temple Sanctuary. But once he was within, he had a vision! An... (AMAZED) an angel of the Lord... appeared unto him.

MARY: (PUZZLED) To Zakarias? (AMAZED) As with me! An angel of the Lord? I saw--

ELISABET: Wait! And the angel promised that I... would--after twenty years of being barren--conceive a son!

ZAKARIAS: (HUMS IN ASSENT) Hmm-mmmm!

MARY: (REALIZING) Oh, Elisabet! We have so much to talk about! I knew I could only speak to you about this. You see... that very thing did happen unto...

ELISABET: But wait! When the angel told him, Zakarias doubted the prophecy! He did! And--in rebuke for his lack of faith...

ZAKARIAS: (HUMS "Hey!") Hmm!

ELISABET: (INSISTING) ...his lack of faith, Zakarias was rendered mute!

ZAKARIAS: (HUMS a troubled "yes") Mmmm!

MARY: And so he cannot speak?

ELISABET: He cannot. But I have come to realize... (SMILES) that--in a husband, silence... is a virtue!

ZAKARIAS: (HUMS “Hey!”) Hmm!

ELISABET: (CHUCKLES) Heaven-sent!

MARY: (LAUGHINGLY) Oh, Elisabet!

ELISABET: But, come... Mary... tell us of your life. Your mother and father--are they well?

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ZAKARIAS marks upon his slate tablet: “Let us pray!”

ELISABET: Wait! Zakarias writes... (READS) “Let us give thanks.” Oh, yes. Pray, my dear.

MARY: I... I-I feel the Spirit! Uplifting me...
(JOYFULLY)
Ohhh! My soul doth magnify the Lord!
And my spirit rejoices in God--my Savior.
For he has regarded the meekness of his handmaiden. And
from henceforth, all ages shall call me... blessed.
The Mighty One hath done to me great things, and Holy is
his name;
And his mercy is upon them that honor him-- from
generation to generation.
(MORE...)

MARY: (CONT'D) He hath shown strength in his arm:
 He hath scattered the Proud in the conceit of their hearts;
 He brought down the rulers from thrones, And he exalted...
 the Humble.
 The Hungry he hath filled with good, And the Rich he hath
 sent away... empty!
 He--having mind of his mercy--helped Israel, his child...
 as he promised--to our fathers, to Abraham--and to his
seed--for-ever! (HUMBLY) Amen.

MARY and ELISABET and ZAKARIAS EXIT, LEFT.

NARRATOR ENTERS from RIGHT.

NARRATOR: And so, Mary did thank the Lord for the blessing he had
 bestowed... a new covenant for all man-kind.

SCENE 8 - THE CARPENTERS LABOR

EXT. - CAESAREA MARITIMA SHORE - DAY (EARLY APRIL)
 (NARRATOR, ESDRAS, JOSEPH, MASTEMA)

SETTING:

The carpenters will work in front of the adobe town square set. First century-style saw horses hold lumber. Carpenter's tools-- saws, mattocks (hammers), planes, chisels etc.-- are littered about. On one saw horse is a half-built brace (a part of an arch-support).

One option is to have extras carry these items on-stage under the narration, with Joseph and Esdras following them in and beginning to work. Seagulls and waves are heard in the background--as this worksite is near the beach--but not ON the beach.

AT RISE:

JOSEPH is sawing some wood, while ESDRAS (who is blind) is feeling a plank of wood, "measuring" a cubit's length with his arm, checking and being disappointed.

SFX TRACK: [FX-09] SEASIDE AMBIENCE--UNDER SCENE

NARRATOR: But--on the shore of the Great Sea-- Joseph did now labor at Herod's palace in Caesarea. He served the old carpenter, Esdras ("EHZ-druhs"), who, while he had lost the sharpness of his sight, had lost not the sharpness of his tongue...

NARRATOR EXITS, RIGHT

SFX: _____ JOSEPH SAWING WOOD--UNDER. STOPS WHEN HE SPEAKS

ESDRAS: (ANGRILY) Joseph! You ox! This plank must be a cubit in width! That is not a cubit!

JOSEPH: (JOKINGLY) But Master Esdras, how can you tell? You are blind!

ESDRAS: (MOCKINGLY) Yes!...but noooo! I can still feel, can I not? This plank is a span too narrow! (RHETORICALLY) Oh..., why did I accept you as my apprentice?

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ZAKARIAS: (CONT'D)
To give knowledge of Salvation unto his people for the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, by which the day-break from Heaven... shall visit us, shining light to those who sit in darkness... and in the shadow of Death,
And guide our feet... into the way... of peace. Amen!

INFANT JOHN: [Perhaps secretly voiced by someone in the crowd]
(CRIES) Waaaahhh!

ALL EXIT, RIGHT.

NARRATOR STEPS FORWARD (OR ENTERS from LEFT).

NARRATOR: And thus, John The Baptist was set upon his path... to be the fore-runner of Christ: Savior of all men.

SCENE 10 - MARY RETURNS TO NAZARETH
EXT. MARY'S FAMILY'S FARM COURTYARD - DAY (EARLY JULY)
(NARRATOR, JOAKIM, MARY, HANNA, AUNT MORAG)

SFX TRACK: [FX-10] SUMMER BARNYARD--UNDER SCENE

NARRATOR: Mary had remained in the house of Zakarias and Elisabet for three months, but now did return home unto Nazareth. However, her family was much vexed to find her with child. Alas, good news is not always greeted as such...

JOAKIM, MARY, HANNAH and AUNT MORAG ENTER, from LEFT--Already in argument.

NARRATOR EXITS RIGHT.

JOAKIM: (ANGRY) Mary! You have brought disgrace upon us!

MARY: Father! I have done nothing wrong!

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(several pages later...)

ESDRAS: You have traded one bitter fruit for another, Joseph. Such is life. (PAUSE) Tomorrow, we shall go to the scribe. And prepare a writ of divorcement. The Law of Moses must be upheld!

ESDRAS EXITS, LEFT. JOSEPH beds down for the night.

NARRATOR ENTERS, from RIGHT--and remains in scene, observing--when not speaking.

SCENE 13 - JOSEPH'S ANGEL DREAM
INT. ESDRAS WORKSHOP - NIGHT (JULY)
(NARRATOR, JOSEPH, ANGEL #2)

SFX TRACKS: [FX-12] WORKSHOP NIGHT AMBIENCE--UNDER SCENE

NARRATOR: Esdras was resolute. His many years had taught him to doubt all; to trust little. But Joseph still felt kindly towards Mary. And it came to pass--at evening-tide-- that Joseph's sleep was much troubled.

JOSEPH: (TOSSING IN BED, MUMBLING) No! No! Mary! (AD-LIB) Mother!

NARRATOR: His mind was awash with stirred feelings and great dread. And--at this dark moment--lo!, an angel of the Lord spoke to him in a dream...

ANGEL #2 ENTERS, from LEFT.

ANGEL #2: [REVERB] Joseph--of the House of David! Hearken now unto my voice! Fear not to take unto thee Mary as thy wife, for the child conceived within her is of the Holy Spirit!

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT
(several pages later...)

SCENE 14 - THE RECONCILIATION
EXT. OLIVE GROVE - NIGHT (JULY)
(NARRATOR, JOSEPH, MARY)

NARRATOR: And Joseph did walk until he came to find himself in a grove of olive trees. And there--under the stars--did he ponder she who had died while giving birth to him...

JOSEPH: (HEAD BOWED) Mother, I wonder about you--down in Sheol. You died--aged but fifteen years--birthing me. Why was your life so short? Why is my life so full of woe?

MARY quietly ENTERS, from LEFT and watches Joseph.

- JOSEPH: Mother, you did name me Joseph--which means "God give increase"--but all I see... is loss. I did leave Bethlehem. I am betrothed to a woman... who bears not my child. Why, Mother...? Why? Did you not love me? Does the Lord not love me?
- MARY: (DISTANT) I love you, Joseph. I always have.
- JOSEPH: (STARTLED) Mary! How do you come to be here?
- MARY: (APPROACHING) I, too, could not sleep, Joseph. My life at home is troubled. I came here to pray. It is special--this grove.
- JOSEPH: I came here because I saw this grove in a dream--one that I do not understand.
- MARY: This is where the angel of the Lord appeared unto me--just after we were betrothed. You had left for Caesarea. The angel promised that the Holy Spirit would infuse me with God's grace.
- JOSEPH: (STUNNED) An angel! Appeared unto you?
- MARY: I was also puzzled--at first. He proclaimed that the Lord had chosen me to bear his Son--a redeemer. And that... his name shall...
- JOSEPH: ...his name shall be... Jesus.
- MARY: (GASPS) Ahh! (STUNNED) Yes! Jesus. Jesus! How can you have known such...?
- JOSEPH: Then my dream was true! In it, a voice said you had conceived of the Holy Spirit and that this child shall be named Jesus!
- MARY: An angel in your dream, my husband?

JOSEPH: Yes! And that this son would “save his people from their sins.”

MARY: Then... do you... forgive me, Joseph?

JOSEPH: (STUNNED) Forgive... you? (REALIZING) Oh, Mary. Please forgive me! For I did doubt you. Esdras pressed me to divorce, yet... I cannot but love you. (THEY EMBRACE) Oh, how shall we proceed?

MARY: See how the stars shine? God’s grace is painted across the sky.

JOSEPH: Beautiful!

MARY: And the stars are there all day! We cannot see them, but we know they are there. That is how I love you, Joseph... And that is how the Lord loves his people. Always there.

JOSEPH: (HUMBLY) May I prove worthy of your love, Mary.

MARY: As we vowed at our betrothal, Joseph:
“We shall be happy together, drink deep and lose ourselves in love.”

JOSEPH: “My lover is mine... and I... am hers.”
(THEY KISS)

NARRATOR: And so... Mary and Joseph were reconciled under the light of Heaven. They found themselves--through faith and surrender. And it would come to pass that together, they should carry forward the Lord’s purpose of the reconciliation of God and Man!

--END OF ACT 1--

--START OF ACT 2--**SETTING:**

Herod's throne room is STAGE RIGHT. It can be a temporary structure of stone columns with a drape between them, flanking a throne--preferably on a riser. The throne room is just a bit DOWNSTAGE of the Pastoral backdrop.

The town square backdrop remains STAGE LEFT. Once the story moves to Bethlehem, a temporary stable will sit DOWNSTAGE and LEFT of the town square.

AT RISE: Herod and his court are in session--but silently conversing.

NARRATOR ENTERS, from RIGHT and addresses the audience.

SCENE 1 - THE MONTHS PASS**INT. HEROD'S JERUSALEM PALACE - NIGHT (DECEMBER)****(NARRATOR)**

NARRATOR: Now fully wed, Mary and Joseph did spend the next months preparing for the birth of the Divine Child.

But, as Winter approached, cold winds did blow and the days grew shorter. Yet, a darkness... of a different sort ruled Jerusalem, where sat King Herod-The-Great--old, and well-stricken in age--yet, full of the arrogance which treasure and sword had won him...

NARRATOR EXITS, LEFT.

SCENE 2 - HEROD'S PLOY FOR THE CENSUS**INT. HEROD'S JERUSALEM PALACE - NIGHT (DECEMBER)****(ETAN, HEROD, AMBASSADOR LIVIUS, QUEEN MALTACE, NARRATOR)**

HEROD sits upon his throne. QUEEN MALTACE sits beside him. Various extras as guards or courtiers can flank the royals.

ETAN ENTERS, from RIGHT and prostrates himself before Herod. Bowing his forehead to the ground as he speaks. HEROD is ill, scratching his rash and coughing--as scripted.

ETAN: Lord Herod, sire! I announce Ambassador Livius--just returned from Rome.

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS ENTERS, from RIGHT. Bow--at the waist--to Herod.

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: Hail, Herod! I bear salutations from Caesar Augustus.

HEROD THE GREAT: (COUGHS) Livius! (SARCASTICALLY) The court of Herod The Great is always eager to lick the (COUGH) boot of Rome.

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: I admire the boldness of your hypocrisy, you old fox. (TO MALTACE) Ahh, fair Queen Maltace. Is your husband... ailing?

QUEEN MALTACE: Perhaps, Livius. One of the court physicians thought Herod suffered from scabies... “mites.” Another thought gangrene... but...

HEROD THE GREAT: They could not decide. (COUGHS) So I executed them both. Yet, still, I cough and I itch.

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT (several pages later...)

HEROD THE GREAT: But... hear me out, Livius--there is a craftier way to convince the Jews to participate in this census. And avoid riots.

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: That would suit Rome well, Herod. Explain...

HEROD THE GREAT: We Jews--and I am half-Jewish myself--are proud of our heritage.

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: As are the...

HEROD THE GREAT: ...Romans. (COUGHS) Yes. But I could declare that this census is to certify the genealogies of the Twelve Tribes of Israel... Who begat whom, et cetera.

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: Go on...

HEROD THE GREAT: The Jews--in order to document their family lines--would flock to their ancestral villages, clamoring to be enrolled. Any resistance would be a “sin against God.”

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: Very well, Herod. But even though Winter begins soon, Caesar wishes you make it so.

HEROD THE GREAT: (TO ETAN) Etan! (CLAPS HANDS 2X) Draft a royal edict commanding the enumeration. It shall take place over the upcoming Winter Solstice.

ETAN: (BOWING) Yes, Majesty.

HEROD THE GREAT: (TO LIVIUS) My ploy shall cause the Jews to enroll-- despite the weather and travel involved.

QUEEN MALTACE: See, Ambassador! Rome benefits exceedingly from Herod's brilliance!

HEROD THE GREAT: But, Livius... When the new taxes are collected, I expect my share shall be enlarged... (COUGHS) in appreciation of my cunning.

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT (several pages later...)

JOSEPH: (SIPPING WATER) Hmm. This well-water, Mary, is bitter, but welcome nonetheless. Here...

MARY: Thank you, Joseph. It will do--for now. There is sweet water ahead. And better days in our future...

JOSEPH: (SIGHS) You think of the future, my wife... I merely feel this moment. (QUIETLY) But if you do carry the Son of God--the Messiah--what thence shall come?

MARY: You must trust the Lord, Joseph. Share my faith!

JOSEPH: I do! But to be parents of... (WHISPERS) the Messiah...? Are we worthy of such a task? Will he be a prophet? A priestly-king?

MARY: It is puzzling, yes...

JOSEPH: I am a mere carpenter! You, a farmer's daughter! How can we foster... a king? Raise... a king? What do we know of ruling over people?

MARY: Rule? (SIGHS) We only know how to serve others.

JOSEPH: And what could we possibly teach the Messiah?--He that shall bring justice to all.

MARY: Justice? I know only mercy.

JOSEPH: I worry. How can we--poor people--be the ones to...

MARY: The Lord has called upon me--upon us--to serve him. I surrendered myself to God. And though his ways are beyond our knowing, I shall not waver from the path he set me upon.

JOSEPH: Indeed... I pledged myself to you, Dear. I shall serve you--and The Lord--as well as I am able. Let us continue now...

SFX TRACK: [FX-15] BETHLEHEM WINTER WIND--UNDER SCENE

SCENE 5 - NO ROOM AT THE INN
EXT. BETHLEHEM INN - NIGHT (DECEMBER 24TH)
(NARRATOR, JOSEPH, INN-KEEPER, MARY, RACHAB)

SETTING:

DOWNSTAGE LEFT of the town square backdrop is the Stable/Cave: just some wooden poles with a cross-beam, and perhaps, even a peaked roof--like a traditional Christmas crèche. It is open faced DOWNSTAGE, with hay bales or boxes inside. An Ox and donkey can be seen UPSTAGE standing in stalls. Straw can litter the stable floor.

AT RISE:

JOSEPH and MARY begin CROSSING LEFT, towards the-(UPSTAGE) doorway of the Inn--the functional split door in the town square backdrop.

NARRATOR: Joseph and Mary journeyed through the wilderness. And-- at the end of nine days travel--after going up through the Valley of Hinnom, they arrived at the tiny village of Bethlehem. But it was crowded with other pilgrims, seeking to enroll. Joseph and Mary came unto the only inn to be found in the village.

JOSEPH leaves Mary and approaches the door. He knocks (3X). The INN-KEEPER opens it. Behind him we HEAR raucous travelers dining--beneath the scene.

RACHAB--quietly--ENTERS, from STAGE LEFT. She stops and observes the conversation.

JOSEPH: Excuse me, inn-keeper, sir. Do you have lodging available for my wife and myself? We have traveled--many days-- from Galilee and are weary.

INN-KEEPER: (WEARY) No! There is no room. No room! Every straw pallet is full! People are sleeping in the courtyard--even on such a windy night. There is no room for any-more travelers!

JOSEPH: But, you see, my wife is expecting a child.

INN-KEEPER: Sleep in the fields below. Or the road.

JOSEPH: She is due to bear the child... soon. Perhaps to-night.

INN-KEEPER: (TAKEN ABACK) Uhh.. I am sorry. I cannot help you. Go!

INN-KEEPER shuts door--cutting off the raucous traveler voices abruptly.

JOSEPH: (TO HIMSELF) Oh... What shall I do? (CALLS OUT) Mary?

MARY: Yes, Joseph.

JOSEPH: They have no room. We shall have to look elsewhere.

MARY: (DISTANT) There is not much time...

RACHAB CROSSES to CENTER STAGE.

RACHAB: (APPROACHING) Wait! Sir! Ahaz (“AY-hez”)-- the inn-keeper--is my master, but I think you could lodge in the stable.

JOSEPH: The stable? But my wife...

RACHAB: The stable is dirty, yes. But it is dry--and out of the cold. (POINTING LEFT) Go around there!

JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate your generosity...

RACHAB: Rachab (“raw-CHOB”) is my name. Ahaz may beat me for my “generosity”, but you need somewhere to stay. I was homeless once, myself.

JOSEPH: Thank you, Rachab.

RACHAB: If you should require anything, come ‘round the kitchen. (WHISPERS) But avoid Ahaz. He angers easily. Now, go!

JOSEPH gets Mary and begins to lead her and the donkey LEFT, towards the stable.

JOSEPH: Mary! We have found respite...

As they go in, RACHAB watches.

RACHAB: (TO HERSELF) Ohh! What a life they must lead, the poor wretches. And bringing a child into such a world! (SIGHS) Fools...

SFX TRACK: [FX-17] _____ LATE NIGHT AMBIENCE--UNDER SCENE

SCENE 7 - THE BIRTH OF JESUS
INT. CAVE/STABLE - AFTER MIDNIGHT (DECEMBER 25)
(NARRATOR, INFANT JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH)

NARRATOR steps forward--still LEFT of the stable.

MARY--illuminated as a shadow behind the linen curtain--performs the actions described in the narration.

NARRATOR: While a rustic stable was hardly where one imagined the Savior of man-kind to come into the world, this was all the poor couple could provide. (PAUSE) Yet... just after midnight, it came to pass that Mary gave birth to her child...

INFANT JESUS: (NEWBORN CRY) Waaaah! (3X-QUICKLY)

MARY: (HOLDING HIM UP) There, there, now... my beautiful boy...

NARRATOR: And she named her son, Jesus--thereby fulfilling the prophecy of the angel of the Lord.

MARY: (TO JOSEPH) Joseph! Come see!

JOSEPH rushes in, from LEFT, joining Mary, who continues to follow the actions described by the narration.

SHEPHERDS--quietly ENTER, from RIGHT to occupy the Pastoral set. They pay not attention to what's taking place STAGE LEFT.

JOSEPH: (APPROACHING) Ohhhh! How wonder-ful!

NARRATOR: Then Mary washed the Holy Child. And did take a small vial of olive oil, and dabbed some upon his head, and kissed him. A new light had come unto a weary world. And it was good...

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT
(several pages later...)

ANGEL #3: [REVERB] Behold, shepherds!

SHEEP #1: (BLEATING--FRIGHTENED) "Baaahhh!"

BO'AZ" Shep! Wake! Wake up! We must flee!

SHEP: (WAKING) ZZZZZ--Wha...? (SCREAMS) Ahhh!

ANGEL #3: [REVERB] Fear not, shepherds!

EFRAYIM: (WHISPERS) What is it? A star?

SHEP: (WHISPERS) Stars do not make sounds! They just twinkle.

ANGEL #3: [REVERB] Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy!

EFRAYIM: (FRIGHTENED) J-J-Joy?

ANGEL #3: [REVERB] Unto you is born this day--in the city of David--a Savior!

SHEP: City of David? That is here! Bethlehem!

BO'AZ: (TO SHEP) Hush! (TO ANGEL) A... a savior?

ANGEL #3: [REVERB] A redeemer! Christ, the Lord!

EFRAYIM: (STUNNED) The... the... Messiah! He has come!

ANGEL #3: [REVERB] You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

SHEEP #1: (BLEATING) "Baaahhh!"

SHEP: A... a manger? A trough to feed animals?

A host of ANGELS ENTERS, from LEFT. (They can each hold a star aloft.)

BO'AZ: (SHUSHES SHEP) Shhh! The... the stars! Look! Angels!
(AMAZED) ...Angels!

ANGELS: [REVERB] "Glory to God in the highest! And--on Earth--peace and good will toward men."

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT
(several pages later...)

SHEP: (APPROACHING) Oh! How small! How helpless he is!

BO'AZ: (TO MARY) Thank you, both of you. (STUNNED) How amazing! I recall... from the book of Isaiah:
“For unto us, a child is born,
And his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince... of Peace.”
(TO EFRAYIM) Come, Efrayim. Gaze upon... the Savior!

EFRAYIM falls to his knees, stupefied by the child.

EFRAYIM: (TIMIDLY) I... I... (TO MARY, WHISPERS) Thank you.

BO'AZ: (TO JOSEPH & MARY) Forgive my friend here. This is not the... “conquering” Messiah he expected.

ALL: (GENTLE LAUGHTER) Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha...

MARY rises and picking up the child, offers him to EFRAYIM.

MARY: (TO EFRAYIM) Here, then! Hold him.

SHEP: Go, Efrayim! Hold the child!

EFRAYIM: (TAKING THE CHILD) I... I...

INFANT JESUS: (NEWBORN CRY) Waaa-aaaa!

EFRAYIM: (GASPS) Ohhh! (PANICKED, GIVES CHILD BACK TO MARY) Here...!

ALL: (HEARTY LAUGHTER) Ha-ha-ha-ha!

BO'AZ: If this humble... infant can be the Messiah, then, surely, any of us may enter... the Kingdom of Heaven.

SHEP: (TO JOSEPH) I regret.... we have no gifts... other than our praise.

JOSEPH: Thank you! Your joy is our reward.

BO'AZ” Our joy comes from full hearts. Bless you!

SIMEON: (TO THE CHILD) Ahh... Jesus. How suitable a name!
(LOOKING UP) Bless the Lord!
Now may I depart this life in peace,
for mine eyes have seen thy salvation
which thou hast prepared for all to see!
A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles,
and the glory of thy people, Israel.

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT (several pages later...)

ANNA THE PROPHETESS: Be not afraid! The Lord watches over you. Listen with your hearts. Feel for others. Be ever-willing to give of yourself. This child--fragile as he is--shall, one day, do so! And he shall transform the world!

MARY: Thank you for your blessing, madam.

ANNA THE PROPHETESS: But depart thee from Jerusalem with haste! Some would postpone the redemption of the world... for their own needs... Go!

JOSEPH and MARY, EXIT, LEFT. ANNA EXITS, RIGHT.

NARRATOR ENTERS, from LEFT.

Under the narration, Herod's throne set is restored. His court attends him.

NARRATOR: The age-d prophetess spoke the truth! For, that very day--at Herod's palace, nearby--there arrived three foreigners from the East. Herod was suspicious--as always--and more so, for these were Magi ("MADGE-eye")--skilled in the science of astrology and ancient lore...

ETAN ENTERS, from RIGHT, followed by the MAGI.

SCENE 10 - HEROD AND THE MAGI

INT. HEROD'S JERUSALEM PALACE - LATER THAT DAY (EARLY FEBRUARY)

(ETAN, HEROD, AMBASSADOR LIVIUS, QUEEN MALTACE, MALKIOR,
GASPAR, BALTAZAR, HIGH PRIEST DIVREE, NARRATOR)

- ETAN: (TO HEROD) Sire... the visiting Kaldeans (“kal-DEE-anz”)... Baltazar--of Assyria, Malkior--of Persia, and Gaspar of India! They have traveled far to seek an...
- HEROD THE GREAT: (TO ETAN) Silence, Etan! (TO MAGI) Hail, esteemed Magi. The Court of Herod bids you welcome. (COUGHS) As does Divree, here--the High Priest of the Temple, and Livius Octavianus (“ock-tah-vee-AHN-us”)--the Roman ambassador. (MOCKINGLY TO LIVIUS) Livius, these travelers from the East are not Roman subjects, (COUGHS) are they?
- AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: No, Herod. (SMUGLY) Not... yet.
- HEROD THE GREAT: (TO MAGI) Still you are welcome here. I am told you astrologers desired an audience with me. Why, may I ask?
- BALTAZAR: We seek the King of the Jews.
- HEROD THE GREAT: Well, that is I! Herod The Great! (COUGHS) I am the King of the Jews. (TO LIVIUS) Am I not, Livius?
- AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: (AMUSED) Appointed king by the Roman Senate, over thirty years ago...
- GASPAR: (TO HEROD) With no disrespect, sire, we seek he that is born King of the Jews--as foretold in prophecy!
- HEROD THE GREAT: (CATCHING ON) Ah! I take it you mean a... future King of the Jews?
- MALKIOR: Yes. The Anointed One! The Messiah!
- QUEEN MALTACE: But my lord, Herod, is the Messiah! He that rebuilt the Temple of Solomon!

HEROD THE GREAT: (ANGRY) Maltace! (SUDDENLY CALM) My wife... shall hold her tongue. (TO BALTAZAR) The Messiah? ... Oh... (SLYLY) “Wonderful!” (COUGHS) So you come to greet this new Messiah?

BALTAZAR: Yes. From the East, we saw a new star rise--a brilliant light in the Heavens--and we have followed it here. You see, the stars portend, “As above... so below”--therefore the star has led us to the Messiah and we...

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT (several pages later...)

ETAN: Sire, should I have soldiers follow these foreigners? To find this “Messiah” and... kill him?

HEROD THE GREAT: No, Etan. What can a newborn “king” do? Raise an army overnight? I am Herod The Great! If I am to be overthrown, let it be by the light of day! (COUGHS)

NARRATOR ENTERS, from LEFT.

Under narration, MARY and JOSEPH quietly ENTER--settling DOWNSTAGE the town square door. This is now the interior of a room at the Inn.

NARRATOR: Later that evening in Bethlehem, the Holy Family--having completed their Temple obligations--were at rest. Joseph had done some carpentry for the inn-keeper--in exchange for a humble room--for Mary and the infant, Jesus. The family would return unto Nazareth once the winter rains had abated...

NARRATOR EXITS, LEFT.

SFX TRACK: [FX-21] SHED AMBIENCE--UNDER SCENE

SCENE 11 - THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

INT. INN-KEEPER'S SHED - DAY (FEBRUARY)

(MARY, JOSEPH, INFANT JESUS, GASPAR, MALKIOR, BALTAZAR, NARRATOR)

MARY: Joseph, I am troubled by that prediction today. The one the old man made. About “a sword shall pierce my soul.”

JOSEPH: Mary... the Lord called upon you to bear this child. He will not let you suffer. As the old woman said, “the Lord watches over you.”

MARY: Yes. (CHEERING UP) As we watch over the Lord--this... “little lord.” (TO CHILD) Ahh, my child?

INFANT JESUS: (COOS, GURGLES) Ooooooh!

JOSEPH: There are many years ahead. Once we have returned unto Nazareth, I shall build a proper home and...

Behind the function door--UPSTAGE--MALKIOR knocks (3X). JOSEPH opens the (full) door. The MAGI are outside the door.

JOSEPH: Yes? (TAKEN ABACK) Oh, pardon me...

MALKIOR: Peace be unto you, sir. Are you Joseph, the carpenter? The kitchen slave said we could find Joseph--and his family--in this shed.

JOSEPH: I am Joseph. This is my wife, Mary. And our infant son... Jesus. He is but a few weeks old.

MALKIOR ENTERS, from door.

MALKIOR: Newborn! Just a few weeks? (TO OTHER MAGI) We are correct, my brothers. He is here! (TO JOSEPH) May I--and my companions--enter?

MARY: (TO MALKIOR) Yes, but...? Such finely dressed men as yourself... seek to visit us? How...?

BALTAZAR: We are Magi--astrologers from the lands of Persia, India and Assyria.

GASPAR: We have followed a star in the heavens, that has led us here--to the Messiah.

INFANT JESUS: (COOS, GURGLES) oooh--ooooh!

MALKIOR: Although we--ourselves--are not Jews, we come... to pay homage to the great Messiah of all nations.

JOSEPH: Homage? I... uhh...

MARY: Do! Do come in. We are but a poor family, yet you are welcome here. Truly!

The other MAGI ENTER--from door.

MALKIOR: (TO OTHER MAGI) Behold! A Messiah not of glory and palaces, but of humility ...and loving-kindness!

GASPAR: (REALIZING) Of course! The Lord... come to Earth... as a son of man.

BALTAZAR: (PROSTRATING HIMSELF) Bow! Bow, my friends, before the Redeemer, the Christos! (“KREEST-os”)

JOSEPH: Fine visitors, we have nothing... nothing to offer you. No wine, no food.

MALKIOR: Let us just behold him, please.

BALTAZAR: It is we who bring offerings to you--to him!

GASPAR: Here... gifts!

MALKIOR: (OFFERING) Gold dust... That he may transmute the baseness of man-kind into the gold of Heaven!

GASPAR: (OFFERING) Frankincense... the perfume of the Sanctuary-to drive away the stench of Evil.

BALTAZAR: (OFFERING) Myrrh... to infuse the scented oil for anointing this Divine Child.

INFANT JESUS: (COOS, GURGLES) oooh--ooooh!

MARY: We thank you. Thank you for these gifts--and that you... believe so. (SIGHS) May the Lord's blessing be upon you and all your people.

NARRATOR ENTERS, from LEFT.

The MAGI EXIT, through the door.

NARRATOR: And the Magi--having bestowed their gifts--and feeling great joy--did go. (PAUSE) But, while they had promised to bring the wicked King Herod news of the Messiah, they were warned--each--in a dream, not to return to his palace. And so, they departed--by another route--to the East. (PAUSE) And thus, Herod's anger was greatly kindled against them...

NARRATOR EXITS, LEFT.

SCENE 12 - HEROD'S FURY

INT. HEROD'S JERUSALEM PALACE - THAT NIGHT (FEBRUARY)

(HEROD, AMBASSADOR LIVIUS, ETAN, QUEEN MALTACE)

HEROD angrily bangs a goblet down on a table.

HEROD THE GREAT: (SEETHING) They lied! (COUGHS) They betrayed my trust, Livius!

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: (AMUSED) Can it be? The Magi deceived... Herod The Great?

HEROD THE GREAT: You mock me, Livius! As did they, (COUGHS) who promised to return. How could those astrologers know...?

QUEEN MALTACE: We have lost our chance to find this new Messiah--and kill him! And his destiny is to overthrow you--and the Romans! Are we doomed, Herod?

HEROD THE GREAT: Oh, hardly, my queen. (CLAPS HANDS 2X) (TO ETAN) Etan! Go! Dispatch troops to Bethlehem. Have them kill all newborn sons. This "Messiah" will surely be among them.

ETAN: Newborns, sire?

HEROD THE GREAT: Yes... ...wait! One of those Magi (COUGHS) told me the star may have risen two years ago! Have... (COUGHS) Have the troops kill all male children up to two years of age! ...And anyone who resists! Go! (CLAPS HANDS 2X) Herod so commands!

ETAN: (EXITING) Yes, sire. All males up to two years...

ETAN EXITS, RIGHT.

QUEEN MALTACE: Herod! Butchering peasant children? No!

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: Herod! Why such worry? You are age-d and ill! You shall be dead before this child could ever threaten your rule!

HEROD THE GREAT: (BITTERLY) The Jews have always despised me-- (COUGHS)--throughout my reign. No matter what I did-- were it bringing peace, (COUGHS) prosperity, even rebuilding the Temple of Solomon! They reviled me. Hated me! (COUGHS)

QUEEN MALTACE: But many rulers are hated!

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: Yes--even Caesar.

HEROD THE GREAT: However... since they detest me so... if this Messiah of theirs has come, I shall put him to the sword! ...Just to spite the Jews! And extinguish their hope!

AMBASSADOR LIVIUS: (IRONICALLY) Such is your “justice”?

HEROD THE GREAT: Yes! I may be dead soon, but Herod The Great shall outlive their Messiah! History... shall remember... Herod! (COUGHS)

NARRATOR ENTERS, from LEFT.

JOSEPH, MARY and INFANT JESUS are asleep in the Inn.

SCENE 13 - THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS
INT. INN-KEEPER'S SHED - NIGHT, MINUTES LATER (FEBRUARY)
(NARRATOR, ANGEL #4, JOSEPH, MARY, INFANT JESUS)

NARRATOR: Yet, before Herod's troops could depart on their wicked assignment to Bethlehem, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph--in a dream... saying...

ANGEL #4 ENTERS, from LEFT.

SFX TRACK: [FX-22] SLAUGHTER DREAM--UNDER ANGEL AND NARRATION

ANGEL #4: [REVERB] Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt! And be thou there until I bring thee word--for Herod will seek the child, to destroy him.

As the narration below describes, JOSEPH and MARY will gather the child and EXIT RIGHT .

NARRATOR: Immediately, Joseph arose. And he, Mary, and the child did flee that night. And departed toward Egypt--as the angel of the Lord had instructed.

NARRATOR: Then went Herod's soldiers unto Bethlehem... And there, did slaughter the innocents... sparing none! Evils were multiplied in the earth. And much mourning and lamenting was heard among the Bethlehem-ites.

SCENE 14 - THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT
EXT. ROAD TO EGYPT - NIGHT, HOURS LATER (FEBRUARY)
(NARRATOR, JOSEPH, MARY, ANGEL #4, INFANT JESUS)

SFX TRACK: [FX-23] DESERT WINDS--UNDER SCENE

JOSEPH, MARY (holding INFANT JESUS) ENTER--quietly, from RIGHT and settle DOWNSTAGE from Pastoral set. They pause from their travels.

NARRATOR: Mary and Joseph did join a caravan south... and so, escaped the violence. And later, Joseph did explain to Mary, once safely away...

SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT

(several pages later...)

ANGEL #4 ENTERS, from LEFT.

ANGEL #4: [REVERB] Arise! And take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: For they are dead which sought the child's life.

JOSEPH, MARY (holding INFANT JESUS) stand--CENTER STAGE--facing the audience.

NARRATOR: And, so, the Joseph, Mary and Jesus did return into the land of Israel. And came and dwelt once more in Nazareth. (PAUSE) Thus... did a new chapter in the life of man-kind continue; One with endless promise, divine mercy and eternal gain! (PAUSE) Rejoice! The Savior had come--for now and ever-more!

FULL SCRIPT RUNS 70 pages, about 70 minutes long.

==THE END==

CASTING EVALUATION: *The Nativity Play*

Date: _____

Small cast: 16 actors (4 male, 5 female, 7 male-or-female)

Large cast: 34 actors (9 male, 8 female, 17 male-or-female)

_____	NARRATOR	The narrator (Male or Female)
_____	MARY	16 year-old farm girl (F)
_____	JOSEPH	20 year-old carpenter (M)
_____	ANGEL #1	Angel messenger(Gabriel) (M/F)
_____	+ BALTAZAR	Assyrian Magi (M/F)
_____	ELISABET	Mary's aged kinswoman (F)
_____	+ ANGEL #3	Angel messenger (M/F)
_____	EFRAYIM	Cynical shepherd (M/F)
_____	+ ZAKARIAS	Elisabet's husband (M)
_____	+ INN-KEEPER	Crusty inn-keeper (M/F)
_____	SHEP	Young shepherd (M/F)
_____	+ ESDRAS	Joseph's carpentry mentor (M)
_____	+ GASPAS	Indian Magi (M/F)
_____	THIEF	Bitter thief (M/F)
_____	+ JOAKIM	Mary's blustery father (M)
_____	+ MALKIOR	Persian Magi (M/F)
_____	BO'AZ	Old, wizened shepherd (M/F)
_____	+ ANGEL #2	Angel messenger(M/F)
_____	+ ETAN	Herod's minister (M/F)
_____	LIVIUS	Roman Ambassador (M)
_____	+ MASTEMA	Abusive construction foreman (M/F)
_____	HEROD THE GREAT	Tyrant "King of the Jews" (M)
_____	+ OFFICER	Nazareth constable (M)
_____	HANNAH	Mary's sympathetic mother (F)
_____	+ LIAT	Mary's friend (F)
_____	+ QUEEN MALTACE	Herod's wife (F)
_____	AUNT MORAG	Mary's stern aunt (F)
_____	+ RACHAB	Inn-keeper's kindly slave (F/M)
_____	SIMEON	Pious old man (M)
_____	+ DIVREE	Herod's High Priest (M)
_____	ANNA	Old Prophetess (F)
_____	+ CHASIDA	Mary's friend (F)
_____	+ ANGEL #4	Angel messenger(M/F)

Off-stage voices for on-stage dolls

_____	SHEEP/INFANTS	Bleating sheep/lambs, infants (F/M)
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CASTING MONOLOGUES: *The Nativity Play*

All actors are asked to read some lines, called “sides,” aloud, to audition. The director will cast the roles in our production based upon these readings. Please take a moment to read the lines below several times, both silently and aloud. These monologues can also provide some “back story,” giving an idea of who the characters are and what kind of story we are producing. Since actors often play several parts, we encourage the use of different voices or accents when auditioning for the different roles.

NARRATOR: I am the Narrator and I speak in a measured style, often using a biblical syntax. For example: But--on the shore of the Great Sea--Joseph did now labor on Herod’s palace at Caesarea. He served the old carpenter of Nazareth, Esdras (“EHZ-druhs”), who, while he had lost the sharpness of his sight, had lost not the sharpness of his tongue...

MARY: Scripture says, “Despise not a thief, if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry.” It is not stealing if I give this man the pomegranates, is it? A little less for us shall suffice! I am not a simpleton, Aunt Morag! But that man welcomed the flogging! Why did he do that?

JOSEPH: He said, “no Galilean carpenter would work terebinth.” Well, I am not of Galilee. I am a Bethlehem-ite! I shall gladly work this terebinth lumber. But Wait, Mary! All Spring I did work in Caesarea and learned much about carpentry. And... today... (JOKING) I have invented... the wheel! (HOLDS UP SQUARISH WHEEL) Look!

- ANGEL #1: Rejoice, Mary! Hail thou--that art highly favored! The Lord is with thee! Bless-ed art thou among women! Behold! Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son!--the anointed one--the Christ! And thou shalt call his name... Jesus.
- HEROD THE GREAT: (COUGHS) Livius! (SARCASTICALLY) The court of Herod The Great is always eager to lick the (COUGH) boot of Rome. But, you have not come to merely warn me of the latest rumors of these “zealots” with their false-messiahs. (COUGHS) I smell... gold!
- OLD BO’AZ: Yea! David--the great King David--was once a mere shepherd boy. But the Lord favored him, and David did great deeds... (SIGHS) So long ago... Herod and the Romans are only the most obvious of evil-doers. The wolves are man-kind! Wickedness burns in every heart! For we are separated from the Lord... alas... (SIGHS) forever.
- BALTAZAR: From the East, we saw a new star rise--a brilliant light in the Heavens--and we have followed it here. You see, the stars portend, “As above, so below”--therefore the Messiah shall come from Bethlehem. But you are wise, great Herod... for a king.
- ESDRAS: (FRUSTRATED) Joseph! You are as unstable as water! You have lost Mary! You are un-lucky! In days past, Scripture said, “Bring her forth and let her be burnt.” Well, yes... but noooo!
- ELISABET: Oh, but Mary, that is part of how I came to be with child! Six months ago, Zakarias was chosen to offer incense in the Temple Sanctuary. But within, he had a vision! An... (AMAZED) an angel of the Lord... appeared unto him. And the angel promised that I would--after twenty years of being barren--conceive a son!

- AUNT MORAG: Bethlehem!? It is a long journey. Weeks! And in the rainy season! There could be bandits! Only a fool would attempt it! Joseph, if Mary travels with you... she may need help. (POMPOUSLY) Therefore, I shall accompany you!
- RACHAB: Wait! Sir! Ahaz (“AY-hez”), the inn-keeper--is my master, but I think you could stay in the stable. Ahaz may beat me for doing this, but you need some-where to stay. I was homeless once, myself. If you should require anything, come ‘round the kitchen. (WHISPERS) But avoid Ahaz. He angers easily.
- ANNA THE PROPHETESS: Be not afraid! The Lord watches over you. Listen to your hearts. Feel the spirit. Be ever-willing to give of yourself. This child--fragile as he is--shall do so! And he shall transform the world!
- ANGEL #4: Arise, Joseph! And take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: For they are dead which sought the young child's life.
- SHEEP #1: (BLEATING) “BAAAHHH!”
(BLEATING--FRIGHTENED) “BAAAHHH!”
(BLEATS-DERISIVELY) BAAAAH.

SOUND TECHNICIAN'S NOTES: *The Nativity Play*

Electronic Effect:

A reverb effect on wireless microphones for the angels would be nice. This would be to depict the heavenly quality of the angels. It is not essential. Many mixing boards now come with on-board reverb effects..

Playback devices:

This show uses many pre-recorded sound effect background ambience tracks (crickets, rain, birds, etc). This may require TWO playback devices, so you can cross-fade between them at transitions.

Pre-Recorded SFX tracks

01	Winter Winds, Sheep, Thunder
02	Wintry Winds, More Thunder
03	Nazareth Winter Ambience
04	March Winds, Crickets.
05	Flourish, Then Wind & Crickets
06	Wind Picks Up, Thunder
07	Cloudburst, Rain
08	Farm Morning Ambience
09	Seaside Ambience
10	Summer Barnyard
11	Nazareth Summer Ambience
12	Workshop Night Ambience
13	Crickets, Wind
14	Desert Winds
15	Bethlehem Winter Wind
16	Stable Ambience
17	Late Night Ambience
18	Wintry Winds, Sheep
19	Stable Ambience
20	Temple Courtyard Ambience
21	Tool-Shed Ambience
22	Slaughter Dream
23	Desert Winds