

THE GREATEST PREQUEL EVER TOLD

by Patrick Rainville Dorn



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An Updated Humorous Pageant with Flexible Casting

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SYNOPSIS: If you've got a "seen one, seen them all" mindset when it comes to Christmas pageants, you'll be surprised and delighted by this upbeat performance. A handful of adults, teens and/or capable elementary-aged kids may carry the show's larger lines while countless toddlers and preschoolers may play dancing angels, gamboling sheep and other cute-and-adorable, just-lead-me-around roles. Features snappy dialogue with no lines too long, enough of the biblical Nativity characters and events to satisfy even the staunchest of traditionalists (including the prophecies) and a deft touch of humor throughout. Only minimal rehearsal required. This pageant also functions as a carol sing-along, inviting the whole congregation to celebrate the birth of Jesus through their vocal participation.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male, 7-8+ either; 5+ extras)

NARRATOR (m/f).....	(9 lines)
GABRIEL (m/f).....	Archangel. (16 lines)
ISRAELITE (m/f).....	(3 lines)
ISAIAH (m/f).....	(2 lines)
MARY (f).....	(17 lines)
JOSEPH (m).....	(15 lines)
SHEPHERD 1 (m/f).....	(13 lines)
SHEPHERD 2 (m/f).....	Optional. One Shepherd may handle the lines. (10 lines)
ANGELS (m/f).....	A host of them. (3 lines)
CHILD (m/f).....	A shepherd with a penchant for drumming. (2 lines)
DONKEY (m/f).....	(Non-Speaking)
BARNYARD ANIMALS (m/f).....	Especially cows, sheep, and doves. (Non-Speaking)
EXTRAS:	Additional Israelites, Barnyard Animals, Angels, Shepherds, and Sheep as desired. (<i>The more the merrier!</i>)

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PRODUCTION NOTES

CASTING NOTE: You will only need a handful of teens or adults for the larger speaking roles. Smaller speaking roles may easily be played by capable elementary school children, who may also join preschoolers and toddlers in the cute-and-adorable, just-lead-me-around roles.

SET: The stage area should be pre-set with a feeding trough/manger with straw or raffia inside, a stool behind the manger, and a music stand, podium, or pulpit for the Narrator, with a complete script to cue the other actors if needed. This is the minimum. Use other set pieces, backdrops, and props as desired.

COSTUMES: Typical “Bible times” costumes, with robes, headdresses, and sandals or bare feet for the “humans.” Mary should wear a blue shawl. Shepherds should look more “rustic” than Isaiah, the Israelites, Mary, or Joseph. They may carry canes or crooks. Animal costumes may be simple or elaborate, from face paint and headbands with ears attached to a full costume and mask. White robes, wings, and halos will do for the Angels.

PROPS: Christmas star on a pole (Angel), Scroll with Isaiah 9:6 written on it (Isaiah), Basket containing doll “Baby Jesus,” covered by a swaddling cloth (Mary), Blanket (Joseph), Drum (Boy)

MUSIC: “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus,” “What Child Is This?” “The Friendly Beasts,” “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” “Angels We Have Heard on High,” “Away in a Manger,” and “Joy to the World.” These selections are included in most hymnals, with possibly the only exception being “The Friendly Beasts” (lyrics included), which is in various compilations of Christmas songs. Please note that the carols included in this script are only suggestions. Use whichever carols you prefer. The congregation may sing all the carols.

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SONG: “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

As the congregation sings, an ANGEL carries a Christmas star on a pole up the aisle, followed by the CAST in procession. The CAST is arranged in appropriate groups, with the smaller children “wrangled” by an adult or teen costumed to match. The ANIMALS should station themselves by the manger. JOSEPH, DONKEY, and MARY are on the opposite side. The NARRATOR steps into place behind the podium. The CAST stays in their various areas onstage throughout the pageant. The ANGEL places the star behind the Nativity scene, then all the ANGELS work their way to the back again to await their big entrance.

THE PROPHECY

NARRATOR: This is the beginning of the greatest story ever told.

What is it about, you ask? It’s about the best Christmas present you could ever get. Ever! Could you be more specific, you ask? It’s the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. How long is this going to take, you ask? We’ll see.

ISRAELITE: *(In the aisle.)* Hey, Isaiah. Any news about the Messiah?

ISAIAH: *(Reads from a scroll.)* “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” *(Isaiah 9:6)*.

ALL ISRAELITES: *(Ad-lib.)* Wow. Amazing. Cool. *(Etc.)*

ISRAELITE: How long before this comes to pass?

ISAIAH: About seven hundred years, give or take.

ISRAELITE: That’s a long time to wait until Christmas!

ISAIAH and ISRAELITES exit. Optional: they may change into costumes of whatever group they wish [ANGELS, ANIMALS, etc.] and join them onstage.

SONG: “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

GABRIEL VISITS MARY

MARY steps forward.

NARRATOR: Then seven hundred years later, give or take...

GABRIEL: (*Approaches MARY.*) Hi, graceful Mary. God is with you. Here. Right now. Amazing, right?

MARY: Yikes! An angel!

GABRIEL: Don't be scared. God wants to ask if you would like to have a baby. The Son of the Most High.

MARY: God knows I'm not married, right?

GABRIEL: He's already got the name picked out. Jesus. What do you think?

MARY: I'm not sure how all this works...

GABRIEL: Nothing is impossible with God. The Holy Spirit will take care of everything. This kid is going to be a miracle! Super holy.

MARY: Well, OK.

GABRIEL: That's a relief. You could have said "no," you know.

MARY: To God? I don't think so. I'm his servant. I guess this means I'm going to be the most famous mom ever. Not what I'd planned, but OK. Just so God gets all the glory.

GABRIEL: Thanks, Mary. Bye! Say hi to your boyfriend for me. (*Exits.*)

MARY: (*Realizes.*) Joseph! Uh-oh.

SONG: "What Child Is This?"

BETHLEHEM BIRTH

NARRATOR: Nine months later...

JOSEPH: (*Crosses to MARY.*) How are you feeling, Mary?

MARY: (*Clutches stomach.*) Like I'm going to have a baby. Really soon.

JOSEPH: So here's what I was thinking. How about we go to Bethlehem? All of our relatives are going to be there.

MARY: Now?

JOSEPH: Sure. It's only about a hundred miles. If we cut through Samaria, we can get there in four days.

MARY: I'm due any minute!

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JOSEPH: Yeah. Here's the thing: we have to go. It's a decree. Politics and stuff.

MARY: Seriously?

JOSEPH: Sorry.

MARY: Get us a reservation at the inn, OK? I'm going to need a King of Kings-sized bed.

JOSEPH: I'll take care of everything.

MARY: I guess I'd better pack a few things.

JOSEPH: *(Fist pump.)* Road trip!

MARY picks up a basket containing "baby Jesus" covered by a cloth. JOSEPH leads DONKEY. They cross the stage to the Nativity scene area.

NARRATOR: Four days later, Mary and Joseph arrived at Bethlehem.

MARY: Are we there yet?

JOSEPH: Sure are. I never knew we had such a big family. This town is packed!

MARY: Good thing you made a reservation for us at the inn.

JOSEPH: Yeah. About that...

NARRATOR: Joseph found a barn. Or a cave. Filled with livestock.

ALL ANIMALS: *(Making their various sounds together.)* Moo, coo, hee-haw, baa. *(Etc.)*

JOSEPH: What do you think?

MARY: You don't want to know.

JOSEPH: *(Gestures to feeding trough.)* Here's a manger. You could put the baby in there, like a cradle. Hmmmm. I'll just clean it up a little first.

JOSEPH pantomimes cleaning, then holds up a blanket, giving MARY "privacy" as she takes the baby doll Jesus out of the basket. He peeks, then makes a surprised face. When he lowers the blanket, MARY is holding the baby up in a classic "trophy" pose.

NARRATOR: That night the baby was born. Mary wrapped him in a warm cloth and laid him in the manger. *(She does so.)*

JOSEPH: The manger was my idea.

SONG: "The Friendly Beasts"

DONKEY, COWS, SHEEP, and DOVES may step forward at their appropriate verses.

JESUS OUR BROTHER, KIND AND GOOD
WAS HUMBLY BORN IN A STABLE RUDE
AND THE FRIENDLY BEASTS AROUND HIM STOOD,
JESUS OUR BROTHER, KIND AND GOOD.

DONKEY steps forward.

"I," SAID THE DONKEY, SHAGGY AND BROWN,
"I CARRIED HIS MOTHER UPHILL AND DOWN;
I CARRIED HER SAFELY TO BETHLEHEM TOWN."
"I," SAID THE DONKEY, SHAGGY AND BROWN.

DONKEY steps back. COWS step forward.

"I," SAID THE COW ALL WHITE AND RED
"I GAVE HIM MY MANGER FOR HIS BED;
I GAVE HIM MY HAY TO PILLOW HIS HEAD."
"I," SAID THE COW ALL WHITE AND RED.

COWS step back. SHEEP step forward.

"I," SAID THE SHEEP WITH A CURLY HORN,
"I GAVE HIM MY WOOL FOR HIS BLANKET WARM;
HE WORE MY COAT ON CHRISTMAS MORN."
"I," SAID THE SHEEP WITH A CURLY HORN.

SHEEP step back. DOVES step forward.

"I," SAID THE DOVE FROM THE RAFTERS HIGH,
"I COOED HIM TO SLEEP SO HE WOULD NOT CRY;
WE COOED HIM TO SLEEP, MY MATE AND I."
"I," SAID THE DOVE FROM THE RAFTERS HIGH.

DOVES step back.

THUS EVERY BEAST BY SOME GOOD SPELL,
IN THE STABLE DARK WAS GLAD TO TELL
OF THE GIFT HE GAVE IMMANUEL,
THE GIFT HE GAVE IMMANUEL.

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE ANGELS

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, shepherds were watching over their flocks by night. Suddenly, an angel appeared to the shepherds.

GABRIEL: *(Enters down aisle.)* Hi there.

ALL SHEPHERDS: *(Ad-lib shock.)* Aaagh! Aaagh! Aack.

SHEEP: *(Ad-lib confusion.)* Huh? Baa! Baa!

GABRIEL: Could you guys hold it down for a second? I have an important message from our sponsor.

SHEPHERD 1: It's the end of the world!

SHEEP: *(Together.)* The sky is falling! The sky is falling!

GABRIEL: No, nothing like that. This is good news. Great news! For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord *(Luke 2:11)*.

SHEPHERD 2: City of David?

GABRIEL: Bethlehem. *(Points.)* Right over there.

SHEPHERD 1: Oh, right. A Savior, you say?

SHEPHERD 2: Like the Messiah?

GABRIEL: Well, right now he's pretty much just a baby. But you'll recognize him. The one with a halo over his head. He's all snuggled up and lying in a manger.

SHEPHERD 1: A manger?

SHEPHERD 2: Sounds like he was born in a barn.

SHEPHERD 1: Or a cave.

GABRIEL: I'm going to need some help getting the message across.
Hey, heavenly host!

ALL ANGELS: *(Enter down aisle and chant, popcorn-style.)* Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia!

ALL SHEPHERDS: *(Ad-lib shock.)* Aaagh! Aaagh! Aack.

SHEEP: *(Together.)* The sky is falling! The sky is falling!

GABRIEL: Let's see if this helps.

SONG: "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

SHEPHERD 1: We ought to go visit this newborn King.

SHEPHERD 2: But who will watch the sheep?

ALL ANGELS: *(Together.)* We will!

SHEPHERD 1: Do you know anything about shepherding?

ALL ANGELS: *(Together.)* No!

GABRIEL: Go visit the Baby. The sheep may safely graze.

SHEPHERD 2: Let's go see the baby!

ALL SHEPHERDS: *(Ad-lib excitedly.)* Yeah! We get the night off! A king baby! *(Etc.) (SHEPHERDS cross to the barn/cave.)*

SHEPHERD 1: Hi there.

JOSEPH: Can I help you?

SHEPHERD 2: We were invited to see the newborn King.

SHEPHERD 1: By angels!

MARY: Come in, but wipe your feet first.

ALL SHEPHERDS: *(Wiping their feet, then admiring the baby.)* Ooh. Aah. What a cute little baby! *(Etc.)*

JOSEPH: He's going to save the world.

SHEPHERD 1: I guess good things really do come in small packages. *(GABRIEL and ANGELS bring SHEEP to the Nativity scene.)*

GABRIEL: Amen.

SHEPHERD 2: Hey! Who's watching the sheep?

GABRIEL: We brought them along.

SHEEP: *(Ad lib.)* Baa! Baa!

CHILD: *(One of the other SHEPHERDS.)* Can I give the baby a present?

MARY: What is it? Something appropriate for a newborn?

CHILD: Well, *I* think so. It's a drum solo.

SONG: "Angels We Have Heard on High"

CHILD may play their drum to the chorus of this song, but not the verses. CHILD can really ham it up during the drawn-out "glorias."

SHEPHERD 1: This is soooo exciting.

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