

BETHLEHEM P.D.

by Daniel Wray



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Bethlehem P.D.

A Christmas Spoof
of the TV Show *Dragnet*
by Daniel Wray

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SERGEANT JOE THURSDAY: He's a cop. He carries a badge. And if you try to give him too many details, he'll tell you he just wants the facts. Basically a good-hearted cop who wants to get to the bottom of things.

OFFICER FRANK CANNON: The typical comedic sidekick cop who finds humor in all things. Also not one to beat about the bush, Frank is serious about the important things, like solving celestial disturbances and eating.

MAN: Typical hotheaded perpetrator with a camel whip and an attitude.

SHEPHERDS 1, 2, 3, and 4: Typical holiday fare with an understated understanding of the importance of the angels' visit. (Non-speaking shepherd extras may be added or parts may be doubled.)

INNKEEPER'S WIFE: Don't mess with her — she's busy. She also has an attitude, so get to the point.

MARY: She is the quintessential mother of Jesus: calm, sweet-natured, and eager to please.

JOSEPH: Ditto, only he's the father.

KINGS 1, 2, and 3: They are astronomers from the East, looking for the Messiah. When they find him, they must decide whether or not to relay the message to Herod.

BABY JESUS: The Christ child. 'Nuf said. (Maybe a doll, or — if you're brave — a real baby.)

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play is designed to be performed by youth groups, although this is not a must. It is a comic look at how some people, no matter how legalistic and focused they are, can rise above that and actually discover the real meaning of Christmas. I hope your audience enjoys it as much as you enjoy performing it.

COSTUMES: All the characters are in typical biblical garb — robes and headpieces abound, as well as crowns for the kings and staves for the shepherds. All but Thursday and Frank, of course. They are in three-piece detective suits. They also have trench coats and hats (which hang on the coat rack at the beginning of the play).

PROPS: The idea is to combine the modern, like fax machines, telephones, fast-food containers, etc., with the ancient, like camels, sheep, architecture, manger, etc. — anything from the time of Christ's birth. You will need a chicken bucket decorated with the Jehovah's Gyros logo. Use your imagination for baklava or some other tasty prop, and a child's Happy Meal toy, preferably with wheels. You will also need papers for the fax and notebooks, pens, and badges (either toys or foil-wrapped cutouts) for Joe and Frank.

SET: The set requirements are minimal. No special lighting is necessary; the play may easily be performed in the chancel area of a church. The main scenes are the police station, which is achieved with two tables and two chairs and the coat rack (a sign designating the station is optional.); the inn; and the manger scene, which can double as the slightly older infant Jesus' house at Downstage Center. The manger scene, with cardboard cutouts of animals, shepherds in full attire, hay, etc., can be as simply or elaborately done as time allows.

The actual stage is divided into three sections: left, center, and right, and while the scenes actually change, these can be achieved easily without a curtain, as the attention will be focused on where the action is; designate one or more stagehands to make the scene transitions smooth and less noticeable. All three stages can be set beforehand, at the director's discretion. The inn is Stage Left and remains there throughout. You will need a door for the inn. The stable is

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Center Stage and gives way to Joseph and Mary's house when the scene ends, via stagehands. The police station is Stage Right. The window in the police station may simply be implied.

MUSIC: The optional music referred to in the script is the traditional Dragnet "Dum-da-dum-dum" four notes which may be played on the piano Off-stage or may be recorded.

1 *(Stage Right is a typical police office, with OFFICER FRANK*
 2 *CANNON seated at a table processing an assault suspect.*
 3 *[MAN] Enter SERGEANT JOE THURSDAY, Stage Left.*
 4 *Characters should be portrayed as in the old TV show*
 5 *Dragnet.)*

6

7 **JOE:** There are a million stories in the big city. Bethlehem,
 8 while it's not that big, is no exception. There are people,
 9 and there are laws to uphold. When one of those people
 10 breaks one of those laws, well ... that's where I come in.
 11 The name's Thursday. Joe Thursday. I carry a badge.
 12 *(Shows badge as optional music plays.)* The story you are
 13 about to hear is true. The names have not been changed
 14 to protect the innocent, because that would be silly.
 15 Besides, this is the way it happened, and facts need to be
 16 told. My partner, Frank, and I were working late on a
 17 Monday night when the call came in. We had just broken
 18 up a disturbance at one of the local inns and were
 19 processing a couple of the perpetrators. You see, there
 20 was a census that had been ordered, and all the people
 21 of David's lineage had come pouring into town like cheap
 22 wine. The overcrowding was making everyone a little
 23 nuts. *(JOE stays Center Stage until the dialog between MAN*
 24 *and FRANK is over.)*

25 **FRANK:** So, there wasn't any room left in the inn that you
 26 went to, and you lost your temper?

27 **MAN:** That's right. That foul-smelling donkey offspring of a
 28 clerk lost my reservation!

29 **FRANK:** So you felt it would help your cause to hit him over
 30 the head with a camel whip?

31 **MAN:** Well, in retrospect, perhaps that wasn't the best move,
 32 but ...

33 **FRANK:** Perhaps not. Have a seat over there *(Points Off-*
 34 *stage.)* while I finish your paperwork, Mr. Bartholomew.
 35 *(MAN exits. FRANK crosses to JOE THURSDAY.)* Looks like

1 it's gonna be a long day, Joe.

2 **JOE:** Long night, Frank. It's nearly quarter 'til eleven.

3 **FRANK:** What? (*Looking out the "window"*) If it's that late, why

4 is it so bright out?

5 **JOE:** (*Walking over to where FRANK is*) You got a point, Frank.

6 It's nearly as bright as daylight out there. Must be a full

7 moon.

8 **FRANK:** It's not a full moon, Joe. It's that star over there.

9 **JOE:** A star? (*Pause*) You know, Frank, you may be right.

10 That's the brightest star I've ever seen.

11 **FRANK:** Me too, Joe. How come we never noticed it before

12 now?

13 **JOE:** I don't know, Frank. Probably the same reason we

14 never noticed that bright cluster of singing angels.

15 **FRANK:** What bright cluster of singing angels?

16 **JOE:** Right over there under that star. Just south of that new

17 Greek fast-food place, "Jehovah's Gyros."

18 **FRANK:** Oh. (*Pause*) Oh, wow!

19 **JOE:** It's something, all right.

20 **FRANK:** I'll say! A large order of baklava for only ninety-nine

21 shekels? How come we've never noticed that restaurant

22 before? (*SHEPHERDS begin to assemble Center Stage.*)

23 **JOE:** Like I said, Frank — it's new. Come on. We'd better go

24 check out the 4937.

25 **FRANK:** 4937, Joe?

26 **JOE:** Celestial disturbance of the peace, Frank. (*Optional*

27 *music. Both exit with coats in hand, walking to Center Stage*

28 *where a group of four or more SHEPHERDS are standing*

29 *around, staring at the sky.*) **After stopping to grab a bucket**

30 **of baklava,** (*FRANK should bend over to grab a fast-food*

31 *bucket that has been placed there and pretend to eat whatever*

32 *is inside. JOE should help himself as well.*) **we arrived at the**

33 **scene of the 4937. By the time we arrived, the bright**

34 **lights had disappeared. There was a large gathering of**

35 **shepherds in the clearing, however, so Frank and I**

1 moved in to begin our investigation.

2 **FRANK:** *(Licking the baklava off his fingers)* OK, OK, what's

3 going on here?!

4 **SHEPHERD 1:** Wow! Did you see them?

5 **JOE:** See what, sir?

6 **SHEPHERD 2:** Lights! Singing! Angels! There must have been

7 hundreds of them! We've gotta go do what they ...

8 **JOE:** Slow down, sir. All we want are the facts.

9 **SHEPHERD 1:** Well, we were just tending our sheep, when all

10 of a sudden ...

11 **FRANK:** *(Writing in his notebook)* Sheep?

12 **SHEPHERD 1:** Yeah, sheep. We're shepherds.

13 **JOE:** I don't see any sheep. *(SHEPHERDS all look around as if*

14 *this is their first recognition that the sheep are gone; a couple*

15 *of them start whistling for the sheep and calling to them.)*

16 **SHEPHERD 3:** *(Pause)* I think the angels must've scared them

17 off.

18 **FRANK:** Angels?

19 **SHEPHERD 2:** Yeah, angels. Hundreds of them!

20 **JOE:** I don't see any angels.

21 **SHEPHERD 1:** No, they're gone. To see the baby!

22 **FRANK:** Baby?

23 **SHEPHERD 3:** Yeah! A baby king.

24 **SHEPHERD 1:** Wrapped in swaddling clothes.

25 **SHEPHERD 2:** Lying in a manger.

26 **JOE:** I don't see any baby.

27 **SHEPHERD 1:** No, the baby's in Bethlehem. Under the star!

28 **FRANK:** Star? I don't see any ... *(Pause)* Oh, yeah ...

29 **SHEPHERD 2:** Yeah! *(Pointing)* That star! *(They all look.)*

30 **JOE:** Uh-huh. And you've seen this baby?

31 **SHEPHERD 3:** Not yet. The angels just told us he was there.

32 But we're going now!

33 **JOE:** Not so fast. You say those angels took your sheep?

34 **SHEPHERD 2:** Well ... no. I think the sheep probably just got

35 frightened and ran away.

- 1 **FRANK:** Did you follow them?
- 2 **SHEPHERD 1:** Well ... no. If a bunch of angels started singing
3 to you, would you worry about some sheep?
- 4 **FRANK:** I would if I were a shepherd.
- 5 **JOE:** Frank, it sounds like these angels may have created a
6 diversion just to make off with about four tons of leg of
7 lamb.
- 8 **FRANK:** It's the perfect time to unload it, too — right before
9 the holidays. *(They do a double-take look at each other.)*
- 10 **SHEPHERD 4:** Uh, listen — we'd really like to stay and chat,
11 but we'd like to go see the baby the angels were singing
12 about.
- 13 **JOE:** Well, I suppose we've got what we need. Just don't leave
14 town anytime soon — we may have a few more questions.
- 15 **FRANK:** In the meantime, we'll keep an eye out for the stolen
16 sheep.
- 17 **SHEPHERD 2:** Oh, don't worry, officers. I'm sure they'll come
18 home. *(SHEPHERDS exit quickly.)*
- 19 **JOE:** Yeah, yeah. Wagging their tails behind them. Tell it to
20 Mary.
- 21 **FRANK:** Who?
- 22 **JOE:** Never mind. But you know, Frank, there's something
23 that bothers me about this case already.
- 24 **FRANK:** What's that, Joe?
- 25 **JOE:** For a bunch of shepherds, they didn't seem to care an
26 awful lot about their sheep.
- 27 **FRANK:** Well, Joe, they were obviously very excited.
- 28 **JOE:** Maybe. But just the same, I'm not letting them pull the
29 wool over my eyes. *(Optional music as they begin to make*
30 *their way Stage Left. To audience)* After stopping back by
31 the office to file a 1422 — missing sheep report — Frank
32 and I decided to check out the shepherds' story. It wasn't
33 very difficult to do. We just followed the star past the
34 Greek restaurant to a little inn. We stopped on the way
35 for a couple of pita value meals.

- 1 **FRANK:** Man, Joe. I love that new Greek place. I wonder if
2 they deliver?
- 3 **JOE:** Don't be silly, Frank. Everyone knows the way that
4 place keeps its prices so low is that they don't pay their
5 help enough to cover delivery.
- 6 **FRANK:** Really? How much does a Grecian earn?
- 7 **JOE:** *(Pause)* Knock on the door, Frank. *(After FRANK is*
8 *knocking on the door)* Hey, Frank, you've got some
9 cucumber in your teeth.
- 10 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** *(Opening door)* Sorry, we're full. Come
11 back in March. *(Slams the door.)*
- 12 **FRANK:** Not a very friendly place. *(Knocking again)* Wonder if
13 the rates are good.
- 14 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** *(Opens door again.)* I said we're full!
15 Now beat it!
- 16 **JOE:** Bethlehem P.D., ma'am. We'd like to ask you a few
17 questions.
- 18 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** Police? Wow. Over a couple of stolen
19 towels?
- 20 **FRANK:** No towels, ma'am. Just wanted to ask you some
21 questions about the star.
- 22 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** The star? What star?
- 23 **JOE:** The one over your inn.
- 24 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** *(Stepping out and looking up at the night*
25 *sky)* Well, what do you know?
- 26 **JOE:** Are we to assume you know nothing about the star?
- 27 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** Well, no. Should I?
- 28 **JOE:** I suppose not. But it would make our jobs a whole lot
29 easier.
- 30 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** How so?
- 31 **JOE:** We're looking for a baby.
- 32 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** You too?
- 33 **FRANK:** Let me guess. Shepherds?
- 34 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** A whole flock of 'em. About a half hour
35 ago. They're still out back, with the lady who just had a

1 baby.

2 **JOE:** (*FRANK and JOE glance at each other.*) So, there is a
3 baby? (*Pause*) Out back? Out back where?

4 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** Uh, well ... I told you we were full.
5 Have been for a week. So I told them they could stay in
6 the stable out back.

7 **JOE:** Let me see if I get this straight. A lady shows up here
8 tonight. Says she's gonna have a baby. So you show her
9 to the barn?

10 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** (*Defensively*) Well, we didn't have any
11 rooms!

12 **JOE:** Charming. You have chickens back there?

13 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** Well ... sure. Why?

14 **JOE:** Thought you might tell her to help herself to some eggs.
15 Charge her at the bed-and-breakfast rate.

16 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** Now look here!

17 **FRANK:** Was this woman alone?

18 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** Her husband's with her. Look, I didn't
19 know she was going to have it right away. I was hoping
20 a room would open up.

21 **JOE:** Of course. Did these people say where they were from?

22 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** Why, yes. I heard them tell my
23 husband they were from Nazareth.

24 **FRANK:** Nazareth? Joe, that's more than fifty miles — in her
25 condition! (*SHEPHERDS and MARY, JOSEPH, and the baby*
26 *JESUS assemble Center Stage.*)

27 **JOE:** Is she all right?

28 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** Well ... I don't know. I haven't been
29 back there.

30 **JOE:** You what?!

31 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** Listen, I told you — we're very busy
32 looking after our guests!

33 **JOE:** I'm sure. Listen, lady. I've half a mind to run you in on
34 a 354.

35 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** 354?

- 1 **JOE:** Renting out a stable without a license.
- 2 **FRANK:** Can we see them? I'd like to ask them a few
3 questions.
- 4 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** They're out back. Listen, I did what I
5 thought was right.
- 6 **JOE:** We'll let it go this time. Just don't make it a habit.
- 7 **INNKEEPER'S WIFE:** Thank you, officer! *(She shuts the door.)*
- 8 **JOE:** Well, Frank? What do you think?
- 9 **FRANK:** Kinda gives the phrase "time to hit the hay" a whole
10 new meaning, huh, Joe?
- 11 **JOE:** *(Pause)* Let's go, Frank. *(They make their way to Center*
12 *Stage, where the SHEPHERDS and the HOLY FAMILY have*
13 *assembled. To audience)* As Frank and I headed around to
14 the stable, I got a strange feeling. Call it cop's intuition.
15 Or maybe a sixth sense. Frank thought it might've been
16 the pita. Whatever it was, I'll never forget the feeling. We
17 ran into some of the shepherds we had seen earlier. A
18 couple of them even had sheep. *(SHEPHERDS should all*
19 *be standing around staring in the direction of the manger,*
20 *Center Stage. Optional music, very loudly.)*
- 21 **FRANK:** OK, what's going on here?
- 22 **SHEPHERD 4:** Shhhh! You'll wake the baby! *(Optional music,*
23 *much more quietly)*
- 24 **FRANK:** *(Almost whispering)* Sorry. Where are the parents?
- 25 **SHEPHERD 4:** They're over there. Next to the manger.
- 26 **FRANK:** Look, Joe. They laid the baby in the manger.
- 27 **JOE:** I see that, Frank. Let's go talk to Dad. *(Approaches*
28 *JOSEPH, who sees him coming and steps toward him, away*
29 *from where the baby would be disturbed.)* You the father?
- 30 **JOSEPH:** Yes, sir. Well, I mean ... that's my wife, Mary.
- 31 **FRANK:** You got a name, son?
- 32 **JOSEPH:** Joseph. Of Nazareth. Can I help you officers with
33 something?
- 34 **JOE:** We're investigating a 4739.
- 35 **FRANK:** 4937, Joe.

- 1 **JOE:** Whatever — a disturbance of angelic origin outside of
2 town. You know anything about it?
- 3 **JOSEPH:** No, officer. As you can see, we've been rather pre-
4 occupied tonight.
- 5 **JOE:** I see. Congratulations, by the way.
- 6 **JOSEPH:** Thank you.
- 7 **JOE:** But keep your cigars in your pocket. This place would
8 go up like a Roman candle.
- 9 **FRANK:** I couldn't help but notice you hesitated when you
10 said you were the father.
- 11 **JOSEPH:** Well, yes. It's kind of hard to explain.
- 12 **JOE:** Try us. We're bright.
- 13 **JOSEPH:** Well, OK. You see, about nine months ago ...
- 14 **FRANK:** Uh, just give us the facts, son. Not the details.
- 15 **JOSEPH:** No — you see, that's just it. Nine months ago, an
16 angel appeared to me one night ...
- 17 **JOE:** An angel? *(Pause)* He didn't take any sheep from you,
18 did he?
- 19 **JOSEPH:** What? No!
- 20 **FRANK:** How about mint jelly? *(At this, both JOE and JOSPEH*
21 *turn to stare at FRANK, who shrugs his shoulders.)*
- 22 **JOSEPH:** No. Listen! This angel comes to me in a dream and
23 tells me that Mary over there, my fiance, is pregnant
24 with God's baby.
- 25 **FRANK:** God's baby?
- 26 **JOE:** Listen pal — all we want to do is figure out this
27 disturbance thing. What you and your girlfriend do is
28 your business.
- 29 **JOSEPH:** That's just it. We didn't do anything.
- 30 **FRANK:** There's at least six pounds of baby over there that
31 says differently ...
- 32 **JOSEPH:** Yes, but *God* is the one who made Mary pregnant.
33 The same angel appeared to tell her of his plans as well.
- 34 **JOE:** Let me get this straight. You're engaged to be married.
35 An angel comes to you and tells you you're going to be

1 a father.

2 JOSEPH: Actually, Mary knew first and told me she was
3 pregnant. And I was going to break it off with her
4 quietly, because I thought the same thing — that she had
5 been with another man.

6 JOE: But you didn't?

7 JOSEPH: No. That's when the angel came to me and
8 explained things.

9 FRANK: Such as?

10 JOSEPH: That Mary was going to give birth to the Messiah.
11 The one who will bear all our sins.

12 JOE: Uh-huh. So let me see if I understand. You haven't
13 known Mary, and yet nine months later, a baby is born.
14 And we're supposed to believe that it's God's baby.

15 JOSEPH: That's right.

16 JOE: Do you really believe that?

17 JOSEPH: Of course. If an angel came to you and told you
18 something, wouldn't you believe it?

19 JOE: Not without a few questions. But I'll let you get back to
20 your wife and baby now. I think we have all the
21 information we need right now.

22 JOSEPH: OK. *(Turns to go back to MARY.)*

23 FRANK: Uh, Joseph — will you be heading back to Nazareth,
24 in case we have any more questions?

25 JOSEPH: Yeah, probably soon after we name the baby at the
26 temple in a few days.

27 FRANK: What are you going to name him?

28 JOSEPH: Just what the angel told us. His name is Jesus.
29 *(Optional music. JOE and FRANK start to walk away.)*

30 FRANK: You buy this story, Joe?

31 JOE: Kinda tough to swallow. He seemed sincere, though.

32 FRANK: Well, one thing's for sure.

33 JOE: What's that, Frank?

34 FRANK: That is one lucky kid. He'll never have to shut a
35 door in his life.

1 **JOE:** Really? How so?

2 **FRANK:** Well, it's simple, really. If he leaves a door open,
3 what's his mother going to say? "What do you think —
4 you were born in a barn?" *(Pause)* He was!

5 **JOE:** *(Pause)* You're a very strange man, Frank. *(Optional music*
6 *as both make their way toward the police station, Stage Right.*
7 *As they do, the SHEPHERDS disperse and the HOLY FAMILY*
8 *retreats, setting up with the KINGS for the last scene. To*
9 *audience)* We headed back to the station, not saying too
10 much about the case. Partly because I didn't know what
11 to make out of a baby king that was sent from God.
12 Partly because I didn't want Frank making any more
13 comments like that. We filled out the necessary
14 paperwork and faxed it over to Jerusalem Central and
15 then we forgot about it — that is, until a few months
16 later, when we got an urgent fax from the big guy. King
17 Herod. Dirty Harry, we cops liked to call him. He had a
18 mean streak about him the size of the Gaza Strip. Frank
19 and I were back on the case.

20 **FRANK:** This just in, Joe. *(Handing him the fax)* Remember
21 that 4937 we looked into a few months back? Seems
22 Herod wants to talk to this Joseph guy. He's got some
23 astrologers heading out with some presents for the kid.

24 **JOE:** Hmm. I don't like it. *(Hands the fax back to FRANK.)*
25 Why would Dirty Harry want to be nice to an infant
26 who's got the title of future king?

27 **FRANK:** What do you mean, Joe?

28 **JOE:** Can I be frank?

29 **FRANK:** *(Pause, looking slightly confused)* Then who would I be,
30 Joe?

31 **JOE:** Never mind, Frank. I just mean I think Harry's up to
32 no good.

33 **FRANK:** I don't know, Joe. But he wants us to help locate
34 him.

35 **JOE:** And how we gonna do that, Frank? All we know is that

- 1 they were from Nazareth.
- 2 **FRANK:** Look outside, Joe. (*They go over to the "window."*)
- 3 **JOE:** Well, I'll be. That star is back.
- 4 **FRANK:** Yeah. And it's brighter than ever.
- 5 **JOE:** Just like you, Frank. Come on. Grab that fax and let's
- 6 follow the star.
- 7 **FRANK:** You want me to pull up the old file too, Joe?
- 8 **JOE:** No, Frank. Just the fax. (*Optional music. JOE and FRANK*
- 9 *head for Center Stage slowly.*) We stopped by and picked up
- 10 a couple of gyros before heading out for the star.
- 11 Something was beginning to bother me about the case,
- 12 and I knew what it was but couldn't say. As we neared
- 13 the star, we could see that it was right above a small
- 14 house outside of Nazareth. There were some camels
- 15 outside with foreign plates.
- 16 **FRANK:** Look, Joe. The astrologers must have followed the
- 17 star, too. This must be the place.
- 18 **JOE:** Must be. Go ahead and knock, Frank. (*FRANK knocks.*)
- 19 You got a piece of meat there on your cheek, Frank.
- 20 (*FRANK wipes it off as MARY opens the door.*)
- 21 **MARY:** Yes?
- 22 **JOE:** Bethlehem P.D., ma'am. Is your husband's name
- 23 Joseph?
- 24 **MARY:** Oh, dear. Yes, it is. But if it's about the towels at that
- 25 inn, I promise you we were going to return ...
- 26 **FRANK:** No, ma'am. Actually, we just need to ask some
- 27 questions of your visitors, if you don't mind. May we come
- 28 in?
- 29 **MARY:** Yes, certainly. But how did you know we had visitors?
- 30 **JOE:** That's our job, ma'am. (*Optional music as they enter the*
- 31 *house*) I see the little one is getting along nicely.
- 32 **MARY:** Why, yes. Have you seen him before?
- 33 **FRANK:** Yes, ma'am. The night of his birth. In the stable.
- 34 **MARY:** Oh, I'm sorry I don't remember. There was a lot going
- 35 on.



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