

SWEETHEART'S MANGER

by Nina R. Welding



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Sweetheart's Manger

A Christmas playlet for children

by Nina R. Welding

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SWEETHEART, the Innkeeper's donkey

MUFF, a sheep

PUFF, a sheep

FLUFF, a sheep

E.B., a sheep

ELI, the bull

ELIZABETH, the cow

ELLEN, the calf

CLEO, the mouse

OG, the owl

DORCAS, a dove

MARCUS, a dove

SHALON, the spider

SHEP, the dog

SHEBA, Mary and Joseph's donkey

MARY

JOSEPH

THE THREE WISE MEN

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play is written for performers in the elementary grades. It is designed to give as many children speaking parts as possible. When it was first performed — at River Valley Community Church in Mishawaka, Indiana — it preceded a musical put on by the junior high group of the church. It may also stand alone. It runs approximately 20 minutes.

The time is shortly after the birth of the baby Jesus. Set in the stable beside the inn, directors may elect to provide a very elaborate stable with walls, roof, stalls and hay. We opted for a simpler set: a manger with a little hay around it, a backdrop of a town like Bethlehem and a frame to indicate the stable. The stable may be the entire stage or just a framed area depending on your needs.

Costumes were more involved. Each child playing an animal had a full headdress that looked like the animal he/she was playing; these were made specifically for the play. Clothing, except for Mary and Joseph and the Wise Men who were all dressed traditionally, was a single color. For example, the sheep wore all white. The spider wore all black. A simple long-sleeved turtleneck and pants were all that was needed to accomplish the effect. However, making sure that the animals had tails — the donkeys, cows, mice and sheep — added to the illusion, as did lacing a spider web in one corner of the stable frame. We then painted noses and whiskers on the animals as appropriate. Each church group has the option of keeping costuming at a minimum or going all out.

Props were also simple: a manger, some hay, a doll for the baby Jesus, a staff for Joseph, a blanket for Mary and Joseph to carry, crowns and gifts for the Wise Men.

- 1 *(In the stable at night. MARY, JOSEPH and the ANIMALS*
 2 *are grouped around the baby in the manger. The WISE MEN*
 3 *are presenting gifts to the baby Jesus.)*
- 4 **WISE MAN 1:** Gold I bring for the King.
- 5 **WISE MAN 2:** Frankincense is my offering.
- 6 **WISE MAN 3:** A gift of myrrh to honor the Lord. *(They exit.)*
- 7 **MARY:** What wonderful gifts! Just look at them, Joseph ...
 8 Joseph?
- 9 **JOSEPH:** Yes, they are marvelous, Mary.
- 10 **SWEETHEART:** It helps if you look at them, Einstein.
- 11 **JOSEPH:** Did you say something, dear?
- 12 **MARY:** No.
- 13 **JOSEPH:** That's funny. I thought I heard someone.
- 14 **OG:** Who?
- 15 **MARY:** It's just the animals, honey.
- 16 **JOSEPH:** Yes, well ... we'd better get some sleep. We've had
 17 quite a bit of excitement. *(JOSEPH and MARY lie down to*
 18 *sleep.)*
- 19 **SWEETHEART:** I'll say you've had some excitement. First you
 20 take over our stable, and you swipe my manger. But
 21 that's not enough. Then you bring in all sorts of people
 22 ... trampling on my bed ... slobbering over my clean hay.
- 23 **SHEBA:** Hush, you'll wake the King.
- 24 **SWEETHEART:** That's another thing. What king? All I see is
 25 some little rug rat wrapped up in a bunch of rags.
- 26 **CLEO:** Excuse me. But whatever is in that manger is not a
 27 rug rat.
- 28 **SWEETHEART:** It's just an expression, Cleo.
- 29 **CLEO:** Hmph!
- 30 **SHALON:** Well, it's not a king, because it doesn't have a
 31 crown!
- 32 **SHEP:** And how would you know?
- 33 **SHALON:** Because last winter I stayed with my sister in the
 34 palace. She showed me a crown. And that thing doesn't
 35 have one.

- 1 SHEBA: But he is the King.
- 2 OG: Who?
- 3 SHEBA: Jesus.
- 4 OG: Who?
- 5 SHEBA: Jesus, the child in the manger.
- 6 SWEETHEART: But that's my manger. The kid is in my
7 manger.
- 8 SHEBA: He is the King. I've been with his mother and Joseph
9 for quite some time now. In fact, I carried her most of
10 the way from Nazareth.
- 11 ELIZABETH: My, my ... she came all the way from Nazareth
12 with a baby on the way.
- 13 ELLEN: What's a baby?
- 14 ELIZABETH: It's a human calf.
- 15 ELLEN: Can I see?
- 16 ELIZABETH: Yes, child, but be very careful. Don't make him
17 cry.
- 18 ELLEN: Look, Mother, he's awake, and he's smiling at me.
- 19 ELI: Let me see. (*ELI peers into the manger.*) Probably just gas
20 ... Well, they do get those gas bubbles, you know.
- 21 ELIZABETH: Since when have you become the expert?
- 22 OG: Who? (*All ANIMALS gather around the manger.*)
- 23 MUFF: He's very little.
- 24 PUFF: Like a baby lamb.
- 25 MUFF: Are you sure he's a king?
- 26 PUFF: He looks more like a lamb than a king. Whatever a
27 king looks like.
- 28 FLUFF: He doesn't look like a lamb — no wool at all. No
29 wonder they had to wrap him up. E.B., bring some of that
30 hay over here. We'll put a little more in the manger to
31 keep him warm.
- 32 SWEETHEART: Oh, no you don't. He takes my manger, and
33 now you want my hay!
- 34 E.B.: Well, what do you want us to use to line the manger,
35 Sweetheart?

- 1 SWEETHEART: Sly! I told you to call me “Sly.”
2 E.B.: I forgot ... “Sweetheart.”
3 SHEBA: Sweetheart? Your name is Sweetheart?
4 SWEETHEART: Yeah. Want to make something of it?
5 DORCAS: His master named him Sweetheart. Said he got a
6 sweetheart of a deal.
7 SWEETHEART: It’s a terrible name. I hate it. And I won’t
8 answer to it, so you’d better call me “Sly.”
9 SHEP: At least you got an original name.
10 SWEETHEART: What’s that supposed to mean?
11 SHEP: Do you have any idea how many dogs in this town are
12 named “Shep”?
13 CLEO: Shhh! You’ll wake up the parents.
14 OG: Who?
15 MARCUS: He’s not the father.
16 OG: Who?
17 MARCUS: The one called Joseph. He’s not the father.
18 SHALON: Of course he’s the father. Don’t you know anything
19 about humans? When I was in the palace last winter ...
20 DORCAS: Marcus is right. Go ahead, tell them.
21 MARCUS: Well, when Dorcas and I were out in the fields last
22 night, we saw some shepherds.
23 SWEETHEART: No kidding.
24 MARCUS: Well, we followed them here.
25 SWEETHEART: And that’s how you know that man is not the
26 father ... because the shepherds told you, and you
27 followed them here?
28 DORCAS: Of course not, silly. It was the angels.
29 OG: Who?
30 DORCAS: The angels.
31 MUFF, PUFF, FLUFF, and E.B.: *(Together)* Angels?
32 DORCAS: The angels told the shepherds.
33 CLEO: What did they say? The angels, I mean.
34 DORCAS: They told the shepherds that a king would be born
35 in a stable in Bethlehem, and he would be God’s Son.

- 1 ELLEN: What's an angel?
2 ELIZABETH: A messenger from God, child.
3 ELLEN: Who is God?
4 ELIZABETH: Just listen, child. (*While the other ANIMALS are*
5 *studying the baby, ELI and SHEP get a closer look at JOSEPH*
6 *and MARY.*)
7 ELI: Well, this one doesn't look like a king, either.
8 SHEP: And the mother looks dog tired — pardon the
9 expression.
10 SWEETHEART: Let me get this straight: This little wad of
11 humanity is a king.
12 SHEBA: Yes.
13 DORCAS: That's not all. Oh, you should have been there to
14 see the angels. It was beautiful.
15 SHALON: Beautiful or not, why does that make this baby a
16 king?
17 MARCUS: But he's not just any baby. That's the whole point.
18 The angels said he is God's Son.
19 CLEO: Imagine that. God's Son.
20 SWEETHEART: Right. Why would God's Son come down to
21 earth like this?
22 SHEBA: That's the really beautiful part. He's supposed to live
23 as a human and teach other humans how to live.
24 OG: Who?
25 SHEBA: Jesus.
26 SWEETHEART: Like they're going to listen ... I've watched
27 my master enough to know that!
28 SHEBA: Oh, they won't listen. God already knows that.
29 SHEP: But that doesn't make sense.
30 SWEETHEART: It's crazy, if you ask me!
31 MUFF: Well, no one asked you.
32 PUFF: Yeah, no one asked you.
33 CLEO: Quiet. I hate to admit it, Sheba, but Sweetheart's —
34 SWEETHEART: Sly!
35 CLEO: Sly's got a point.

- 1 ELIZABETH: Why would God send his own Son if he knew
2 humans wouldn't listen?
- 3 DORCAS: Oh, the angels said he would save people from
4 their sins.
- 5 ELLEN: What's sin?
- 6 ELIZABETH: When humans do things they are not supposed
7 to — things God is not happy about — that's sin.
- 8 SWEETHEART: We're straying off the path here. Why Jesus,
9 and why my manger?
- 10 SHEBA: The manger is just part of the plan. He has to die
11 for humans, too.
- 12 MUFF, PUFF, FLUFF, and E.B.: Die!
- 13 OG: Who?
- 14 SHEBA: Jesus.
- 15 SHEP: Why?
- 16 SHEBA: Because that's the only way to save these humans.
- 17 SWEETHEART: Well, I think it's a terrible way. I mean, why
18 does he have to die just because he's king?
- 19 SHEBA: He wants to do it, Sweetheart ... I mean, Sly.
20 Because he loves humans so much.
- 21 SWEETHEART: That's a lot of love.
- 22 SHEBA: Yes, it is. (*JOSEPH wakes up.*)
- 23 JOSEPH: Mary. Mary. Wake up. We have to leave ... now!
- 24 MARY: Leave? Why?
- 25 JOSEPH: I had an awful dream. Something terrible will
26 happen to Jesus if we stay. God is telling us to go.
- 27 MARY: All right. It will be good to be home again.
- 28 JOSEPH: We're not going home. If he is going to be safe, we'll
29 have to travel much farther than that.
- 30 MARY: Where?
- 31 JOSEPH: Egypt. (*The ANIMALS gasp.*) We've got to leave now!
- 32 MARY: All right, Joseph.
- 33 SHEBA: Looks like we're heading out.
- 34 CLEO: Oh, Sheba, take care. And watch out for Jesus.
- 35 SHALON: Be very careful in Egypt. It's not a nice place

1 there — at least that’s what they say in the palace.

2 **ELLEN:** Good-bye, Baby Jesus.

3 **ELI:** God go with you, Sheba.

4 **SHEBA:** He is.

5 **SWEETHEART:** Good-bye, Baby King. I don’t know why you
6 love these humans so much, but they should be very glad
7 you do. *(Pause)* Sheba ...

8 **SHEBA:** Yes?

9 **SWEETHEART:** If you ever come back this way, the baby can
10 use my manger. It really didn’t bother me that much. I
11 wish it were a little nicer. I mean, the King should have
12 a really nice bed.

13 **SHEBA:** Thanks, Sly.

14 **SWEETHEART:** Oh, I guess you can call me Sweetheart.

15 **OG:** Who? Who?

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32 *NOTE: The numerals running vertically down the left margin*
33 *of each page of dialogue are for the convenience of the director.*
34 *With these, he/she may easily direct attention to a specific*
35 *passage.*



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