

AN ACT OF WORSHIP

CHRISTMAS EDITION



Music and
Creative Arts



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INTRODUCTION

The Salvation Army believes drama can be much more than a means of entertainment and performance. It is a way of expressing faith, enhancing a theme or sermon in a meeting and a way of reaching out to non-Christians using a common medium. For many, drama has become synonymous with worship.

An ACT of Worship: Christmas edition is a new resource from Music and Creative Arts. It has been devised to be used alongside the other *An ACT of Worship* books providing Christian material to encourage drama in a corps setting.

Christmas is a time when drama is often more readily used, and this book contains a variety of scripts ranging from monologues to comedy sketches, to longer plays involving more people. Lots of different ways to tell the same amazing story!!!

Drama is unique in its style and presentation; subjectivity is present in its very writing. A certain degree of liberty may be taken within the pieces which would enhance the performance, whether to emphasise a point or to entertain. Therefore, please approach these scripts in the manner in which they are written – not as Shakespearean drama or literal translations of the Bible, but rather as acts designed to encourage and enhance worship.

Previous editions of *An ACT of Worship* are available in PDF format on the Music and Creative Arts resources web page.

All scripts have been kindly gifted and we are extremely grateful to those who have given their time and talents back to God in this way. It is wonderful that one person's vision and creativity can be used by so many people in so many ways, with the common aim of bringing people closer to God.

Stephanie Lamplough
*Assistant Director of Music and Creative Arts
(Creative Arts)*

If you have any scripts or monologues that you would like to be included in future publications of **An ACT of Worship** please send them to music@salvationarmy.org.uk for consideration.



'All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means "God is with us").'

Isaiah 7:14 (NLT)

SNOWBALLS

This script makes a point about the importance of Christmas in a light-hearted, humorous way.

Cast: Two Presenters and an Inventor (the script is written assuming this part is male, but there's no reason the part – and script – couldn't be adapted to make the part female).

Props: The two Presenters are dressed in clothes suggesting TV show hosts. One of them has a referee's whistle and red/yellow cards.

The Inventor is sat drawing/writing at a desk, with many crumpled-up pieces of white paper scattered in and around a waste paper basket a short distance away.

Music to 'Me and my shadow' to be played over the sound system.

Performance notes: Presenters to be slightly larger than life. Many of the lines involve them mimicking or interrupting each other or finishing each other's sentences, so the script needs to be rehearsed well before performing – ideally they deliver their lines from memory.

After the Inventor announces his invention, he should attempt to start a 'snowball' fight and then disappear as the paper fight finishes.

You know your audience best. Think of a way that will encourage them to get involved in throwing snowballs as well as a way to ensure they stop!

Snowballs

Written by Jon Bishton

1 Good evening

2 Good evening

1 And welcome to the show

2 And welcome to the show

1 Once upon a time

2 Once upon a time

1 There was an inventor...

2 There was an inventor...

1 Wait a minute!

2 Wait a minute!

1 Why do you keep repeating everything I say?

2 Because I'm your shadow!

(Music immediately strikes up and both start to do a dance to a version of 'Me and my shadow'.)

1 Stop! Stop! *(music stops)* This is not a song and dance act. This is a serious story!

2 *(To audience)* This is a serious story!

1 Stop copying me!

2 *(Feigns shock)* Me, copy you? As if! I am my own (wo)man!

1 Right! Can we start the story then? Once upon a time, there was an inventor.

2 There was an inventor... (*meaningful look at 1*) who invented things.

(Inventor enters, sits down and, as the presenters continue speaking, scribbles ideas excitedly on pieces of paper. But every few seconds he shakes his head, screws up the paper and throws it absentmindedly in the direction of the waste paper basket.)

1 He's invented lots of things, like...

2 (*Like a salesperson*) The solar-powered torch that only worked when the sun shone!

1 (*Similarly*) Fireproof matches!

2 The compass that was also a fridge magnet!

1 Invisible toilet paper!

2 So you can see he was a very good inventor.

1 But – he had a problem.

2 A big problem.

1 He kept running out of ideas.

2 He said, 'At first I was afraid, I was petrified...' (*spoken but gradually going into the song 'I will survive'*)

1 I'm warning you, any more songs and I'll...

2 (*Cuts in*) Sorry!

1 Where were we?

2 No idea!

1 That's right! The Inventor had no ideas, and he looked sadly around his little office at all the scrumpled-up bits of paper on the floor that were covered in useless ideas for inventions.

- 2 And then...
- 1 He had a brilliant idea!
- 2 He picked up one of his scrunpled bits of paper...
- 1 Threw it up in the air...
- 2 And caught it.
- 1 Then he looked out of his window. It was autumn. The leaves were falling off the trees and there were children playing in the park across the road.
- 2 So he took his idea outside...
- 1 And tried it out on the children in the park...
- 2 And it worked!
- 1 The children loved it.
- 2 So straightaway...
- 1 He rang the BBC,
- 2 And was invited to be interviewed about his invention.
- 1 The cameras arrived...
- 2 And the reporters...
- 1 And the sound men...
- 2 And the chorus line. (*Sings*) 'There's no business like show business...'
- 1 (*Ad lib stops 2*) Thank you. I warned you. One more time... (*to audience*) This was the Inventor's big chance and he took it.
- 2 He told the world about his...

- Inventor** All-season, unmeltable snowball!
- 1 & 2** His what?
- Inventor** *(Just as enthusiastically)* All-season, unmeltable snowball!
- 1** On live TV, he threw one to a child.
- (Inventor throws paper ball)*
- 2** Then another to a reporter.
- 1** Then another,
- 2** And another...
- 1** And then it just took off until it seemed like everyone had them.
- (Lots of paper balls are distributed. The Inventor and the two Presenters ad lib, aiming to start a paper ball fight and continue it for a short while. Presenter 2 then takes a referee's whistle out of their pocket and blows it to indicate the fight is over. They could even use yellow and red cards to show to anyone who continues throwing paper balls beyond the whistle.)*
- 1** But what happened next?
- 2** Well it's a funny thing, but you know how it is with crazes.
- 1** It was all going so well!
- 2** The world was going all-season, unmeltable snowball crazy until...
- 1** One day...
- 2** It snowed...
- 1** And snowed...
- 2** And snowed...

- 1 And snowed...
- 2 All over the unmeltable snowballs.
- 1 And can you guess what happened?
- 2 That's right! The unmeltable snowballs got wet and useless because they were just scrunpled-up bits of paper. But then...
- 1 Suddenly...
- 2 People discovered real snowballs...
- 1 Made of snow...
- 2 And they realised that the unmeltable snowballs weren't half as much fun as real snowballs, which splat when they hit people and can be rolled up to make snowmen and you can eat them... except the yellow ones.
- 1 And they realised that you can't beat the real thing!
- 2 Like Christmas!
- 1 Like Christmas?
- 2 *(Feigns irritation)* Don't you copy me! Yes, like Christmas, because Christmas can get wrapped up in paper too, but it's really about a baby born on earth to introduce us to his Father who is God.
- 1 Right! *(Pause)* You're not going to sing, are you?
- 2 No. Not this time.

(Presenters walk off – alternatively, if a carol is next on the running order, 2 could continue, 'But this lot are...')

MRS BUMP

A monologue performed by Mary, talking to her unborn child.

Cast: Mary

Props: Mary needs to look as though she is in the last couple of weeks of pregnancy. She may be more relatable to the audience if what she's wearing is more modern, but she could equally be dressed in 'traditional' Nativity attire. There is a chair, and perhaps a bed with a pillow.

Performance notes: The monologue will be more convincing if, over the course of the performance, Mary looks visibly uncomfortable in her late pregnancy rather than just sitting still in one place. For example, she could alternate between sitting, standing rubbing her belly, pacing or leaning on a chair, so it would be useful to have some basic furniture on stage with which she can interact.

Mary needs to take her time saying her lines, so that the audience feels as if she is just saying what is coming into her head. She speaks to her unborn child as a parent speaking to a baby.

The audience should feel as if they are witnessing a really intimate, private moment where Mary is particularly vulnerable and honest.

Mrs Bump (A Mary Monologue)

Written by Claire Brine

Mary

(Talking to baby bump)

Two weeks to go. Two weeks!

I hope it's not as painful as everyone's telling me it will be. Your mummy's useless when it comes to pain.

Could you maybe just pop out, when I'm asleep, and then I'd wake up to see you lying next to me on the pillow? That would be so much nicer for me, and I think Daddy God owes me that, don't you?

I still can't believe you're in there. I know you are, though, because you, Mister, are a wriggle-bot. Hmm.

Oh, Baby J. I hope you're going to help me be a good Mummy. I don't even know what I'm doing. I still need my own mummy sometimes. Yes, I do.

I wonder if you've got my eyes. I guess I'll find out soon, won't I? Because I'm going to meet you for the first time. And Daddy Joseph's going to meet you. Yes, he is. He's busy making your first cot. *(Gasp)* Aren't you lucky?

What are you thinking, Baby J, hmm? What are you thinking?

I'm thinking, I love you so much. I'm thinking, I really hope everything's going to turn out OK. I'm thinking, maybe I am just a little bit highly favoured after all.

Oh, my baby, there's so much I want to ask you. How much do you know, eh? Hmm? Do you know about the angel? Do you know about your Daddy? *(Gasp)* Where's Daddy?

He's up there. And he's going to look after you. He is. And while you're with me and Daddy Joseph, we're going to look after you too. We will. We're going to do our absolute best for you, do you know that? Because you are so special.

Mary

Two weeks, Baby J. Two weeks and it'll all be over. Or will it all just be beginning? I'm so scared. But I just can't wait to meet you.

(Exit, humming.)

THE NATIVITY ACTIVITY!

This sketch tells the Christmas story in an original way, using rhyming couplets.

Cast:

Narrators (N) - number as required
Mary (M)
Joseph (J)
Angel 1 (A1)
Angel 2 (A2)
Innkeeper (I)
Shepherds (S1, 2, 3)
King Herod (H)
Wise Men (W1, 2, 3)

Props: The narrators can be dressed either in traditional or modern dress. Other characters to use traditional costumes and props.

Performance notes: This works well as a narration for a children's nativity. With adults narrating, the children could be dressed up as the main characters and act without the pressure of learning many lines. Alternatively, if members of the corps possess the know-how, create an animated film or slide show of the story to run alongside the narration.

The lines assigned to the Narrator can be read by one person or divided up and given to two or more people, as you wish.

To enable your delivery of the script to flow, performers should gently emphasise the rhyme and rhythm of the lines. But take care not to rush it!

The Nativity Activity!

Written by Rachel Gotobed

N Ladies,

And gentlemen -

Everyone here! -

We're going to tell you a story that's dear.

Although you'll have heard this great story before,

We know that our version will not be a bore!

So please watch and listen to all that we do:

Herein lies a message – a message that's true.

(Enter Mary.)

N This woman is Mary – God loves her so well,

He's sent her a message through Gabriel.

(Enter Angel 1.)

A1 Greetings, dear Mary – do not be afraid.

The Lord has appointed you as his handmaid,

And you will give birth to a beautiful one

Whose name will be Jesus – God's only son.

M But how can this be? The fact is I'm not wed!

This message is making me feel full of dread.

A1 Don't worry, dear Mary, you're safe in God's hand,

And he will establish all that he's planned.

M I trust in the Lord – may it be as you say.

N So Gabriel left, and went on his way.
(Exit Gabriel and Mary – Enter Joseph.)

N But Mary was meant to be marrying Joe,

N And he was not happy when told this was so.
Yet he didn't wish Mary public disgrace!
He felt so conflicted – just look at his face!
(Joseph lies down.)
But while he was sleeping an angel came near:
(Angel 2 enters.)

A2 Please listen now, Joseph – there's nothing to fear.
This baby of Mary's is God's Only Son,
So marry her swiftly – it's got to be done!
(Angel 2 exits – Joseph gets up.)

N When Joseph woke up he did what had been said.
(Joseph goes to get Mary.)
But he and his wife didn't share the same bed!
Then came a decree from Caesar in Rome
That all men must head to their ancestral home.

J To Bethlehem, Mary – that's where we must go.
The timing is poor and I wish it weren't so.

M Don't worry, dear Joseph – all will be OK,
For God will be with us each step of the way.
(Mary and Joseph begin journey around hall.)

N So Mary and Joseph set off on their trip.
But they couldn't travel by railroad or ship.
Their journey was long and the road very rough,
And Mary – pregnant – found the going quite tough.
Eventually they got there, all tired and forlorn,
And the time had arrived for the babe to be born.
(Enter Innkeeper.)

N The innkeeper frowned, slowly shaking his head:
I There's no room for you here – except for the shed!
(Innkeeper leads Mary and Joseph to stable.)

N He took them out back where the animals lay –
It was quite warm and dry and had plenty of hay.
And right there in the stable, midst sheep, goats and ox,
Our Saviour was born and placed in a hay box.
(Enter Shepherds.)

N Nearby in the hills were some tenders of sheep
Who were settling down as their flocks went to sleep,
(Enter Angel 1.)

N When suddenly – boom! – the sky burst with bright light,
And it gave those poor shepherds a terrible fright!

A1 Do not be afraid!

N The Lord’s Angel said,

A1 I’ve come with good news – quick, get up, and head

To Bethlehem town, for there you will find

A baby’s been born who will save all mankind.

(Enter Angels.)

N Then suddenly, everywhere, from all around,

Came beautiful singing – a heavenly sound:

All A Glory to God, and to all, peace on earth.

Come, celebrate with us our dear Saviour’s birth.

Glory to God, and to all, peace on earth.

Come celebrate with us our dear Saviour’s birth.

(Angels exit.)

N The angels retired and the shepherds made haste.

S1 Let’s hurry to Bethlehem – no time to waste!

S2 I’ll take a fine sheepskin to wrap the babe in.

S3 And I’ll bring a lamb to donate to his kin.

(Shepherds go to stable.)

N So when they arrived at the old cattle shed,
 They worshipped the Christ-child asleep in his bed.
 Then on their way home they all worshipped and praised,
 And declared the good news so that all were amazed!
(Enter Wise Men.)

N There came from the East, from a country afar,
 Some Wise Men who'd journeyed, compelled by a star.
 They went to the palace to find the new King,
 But Herod was puzzled to hear such a thing.
(Enter Herod.)

H I've asked my advisers about your idea.
 They say, 'Go to Bethlehem, out in Judea',
 And when you have found him, come back to tell me,
 So I can go also this wonder to see.
(Exit Herod – Wise Men journey to stable.)

N The star in the night sky shone brightly ahead
 And led the Wise Men all the way to the shed.

W1 We've come here to worship – please take these presents.

W2 Mine's gold,

W3 Mine is myrrh,

W1 And mine's frankincense.

N They didn't go back to King Herod that day,
But, warned in a dream, went back home a new way.

Ladies,

And gentlemen,

Everyone here!

Let's celebrate richly and be of good cheer.

For God so abundantly loves everyone,

That he gave to the world the gift of his own Son.

So this Christmastime let us remember it's true:

The Saviour was born – for me and for you!

WHY ME?

A monologue from the heart of Mary, the mother of Jesus, little more than a child herself, who stops to share her innermost fears about the coming of her baby.

Cast: Mary

Props: None needed

Performance notes: This monologue takes place soon after God's plan has been revealed to Mary and Joseph, when it is still early in the pregnancy and both Mary and Joseph are struggling to process what is happening.

Mary needs to be emotional, vulnerable, on edge – speaking to God with a raw honesty, yet clutching hold of the angel's message as it is the only thing bringing her hope.

Why Me?

Written by Lara Perkins

Mary

(She kneels to pray and sings, unaccompanied.)

*Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and... (whispered) child*

(She pauses for a while before speaking.)

Where are you?
You said you'd BE here, but now I can't find you.
You put me in this mess –
Please don't leave me now.
I didn't think it would be this hard.
I thought I would feel you with me *every step* of the way.
But now when I pray... I feel nothing.
I CAN'T FIND YOU!

The angels said I was 'highly favoured' by you,
That this Jesus Child would be called 'Son of the Most High'
And that his Kingdom would never end!

Shouldn't he then be born to royalty?
Or, at least, a family with money?
I have nothing, Father –
And the little I do have is being pulled from beneath me.

Joseph can't look at me – and I don't blame him.
He's a righteous man.
He deserves better than this!
He deserves better than me.

Sometimes, when he holds me,
I can hear his heart aching,
Denying the strength his face is forced to show.

Sometimes, I can't look at him,
And I wonder: for how long can he stomach the whisperings?
I mean, who's ever heard of a virgin birth!

Mary

And yet, there's this gentle voice deep in the back of my mind,
Patiently convincing me that I'm special,
That I'm the chosen one.

I wish I hadn't been chosen:
I'm not good enough,
I'm not strong enough,
And I'm so, so scared!
I'm scared of losing Joseph,
And I'm scared of the journey ahead.

But most of all I'm terrified
Of this tiny heart forming inside of me,
When I have no logical explanation for how it got there.

It shouldn't be like this.

It shouldn't be like this.

SILENT NIGHT

Four monologues based around the theme of a 'silent night'.

The first of the four monologues tells the story of how the Christmas carol 'Silent Night' came to be written, introducing the thematic thread which the other three monologues continue.

The second and third monologues focus on events surrounding the Christmas story itself, albeit from the perspective of imagined or voiceless characters such as the innkeeper's wife and one of the shepherds.

However, the inclusion of the soldier in the fourth monologue reminds us that the words of the carol, the story of Jesus' birth that it tells, and indeed the Christ child himself, are all synonymous with peace throughout the world and throughout time.

Cast: The Composer; Innkeeper's Wife; Shepherd; Soldier (World War I); Carol Singers

Props: Traditional costumes

Performance notes: This can be performed as a series of monologues, punctuated by carol singers singing the three verses of 'Silent Night', or you could select just one of the monologues as a stand-alone piece.

If all of the monologues are being performed in succession, all four characters should be positioned on the stage from the beginning. Each character should stay frozen in a suitable position until it is their time to talk, as this will create an effective visual throughout.

Silent Night

Written by Stephen Burn

Monologue 1: The Composer

Composer

The silent night was born out of necessity.

There have been many fanciful stories that have accompanied my most famous composition; allow me to put some of them to rest.

It was Christmas Eve, the year was 1818, and my friend Josef Mohr came to me with a six-stanza poem he had written two years previously.

I was a mere elementary school teacher, who happened also to be choirmaster and organist at my local church. Josef was the priest who had been asked to prepare a new carol for the Christmas Eve mass.

People tell me that there are now legendary anecdotes about the circumstances of that evening.

For example, that a crazed mouse had eaten through the bellows of the church organ, and had only left the specific notes used in 'Silent Night' playable.

Or that the organ itself had been damaged, causing me to have to find an alternative instrument.

I am certainly a humble musician, and so I'm not surprised to hear that this carol has been credited to the great composers of the area like Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.

I hope they would all have been most pleased with my simple efforts.

The truth is this.

In my small apartment above the school house I composed the carol which now has spread worldwide, and become a lot of people's favourite Christmas carol.

Composer

It was written for a guitar accompaniment upon request; and it was performed that very evening by myself and the church choir repeating the last two lines of each verse.

I hold no claims to musical greatness; you will not hear any great masterworks from my pen.

But I do know, in that upper room something very special happened.

Through lyric and melody came the retelling in song of the most glorious night in history.

'Silent Night' became my gift to the world and it was inspired by our Heavenly Father who gave the greatest gift of all. Christ the Saviour is born!

Monologue 2: The Innkeeper's Wife

Innkeeper's Wife

The silent night! Well it wasn't that silent for me.

It was one of the busiest nights of the year!

When you're married to Bethlehem's self-proclaimed commercial real estate star and entrepreneur of the year, there's never a dull moment.

My husband thinks he could sell sand to the nomads of the Sahara!

In truth he owns one hotel, a stable, and his mother's house... when eventually she 'moves on'! (*Points to heaven and pulls a grimace!*)

You may or may not have heard of his latest invention.

It's a type of sandal which is moulded from some sort of strange new plastic material he found in the Red Sea, and the sandals have holes all over to allow the feet to breathe! He wants to call them Alligators; I've told him he's wasting his time – it'll never catch on!

Innkeeper's Wife

Anyway, let's get back to the night in question.

As soon as my husband heard about the census, he was so excited.

Never have I seen him work so hard to make every single room in our hotel liveable, and he'd overbooked the place two times over.

We even had to stay at his mother's house because he'd rented our rooms to paying customers.

Don likes to tell people that Bethlehem is going to be the next Babylon, with tourists flooding in to taste the cultural quintessence of this capital of class!

The truth is that anyone born in Bethlehem can't wait to get out of the place, and that's why we're the only real hotel!

But to his credit, on the night before the census took place we were packed.

He was eventually turning people away – with a tear in his eye, may I add, not because of their discomfort but the fact that he was watching their purses walk away!

Then in the early hours of the morning a young couple knocked at our door.

They told us about their long journey, and they couldn't hide that this young lady was also very pregnant.

How could we turn them away?

Ever the problem-solver, my husband came up with a solution.

He would allow them to use the stable for free (that's a miracle in itself!).

However, he would charge them if he had to move the animals!

They accepted so gratefully that we both felt terrible.

Obviously we eventually heard about the boy that was born in our stable.

The King of kings and Lord of lords they say!

Don is so excited about his plans for that stable now, with a theme park planned for 12 AD.

And yet I like to remember that our Saviour was born to this earth not in a palace, but in our lowly manger.

The silent night was one of the busiest of our lives, and yet from all of the confusion came the Saviour of all mankind.

Monologue 3: The Shepherd

Shepherd

The silent night was just that, silent.

That was until a heavenly throng arrived and shook the very foundations of the hill where we were minding our own business!

We shepherds always seem to get poor representation at this time of year, so I'm here to put that right.

I am not some dullard who was a career sheep care-giver.

This idea that every single shepherd eats with his hands like some sort of savage, grunts because he doesn't have the mental capacity to speak, and signs his name with an X because the mystery of writing might blow his pea-sized brain - that's all unfounded!

NO! Surely some of you have been forced into the family business, or maybe delivered the news scroll for a while whilst studying at the synagogue?

That doesn't make you into a caveman shepherd herder!

Shepherd

Unfortunately there are far too many of my work colleagues who reinforce the stereotype.

Jacob – or ‘Tiny’ as we call him – is an excellent example of your cliché.

He mainly enjoys sleeping, eating, and seeing how many sheep he can carry at one time.

His record is 27, by the way.

Yet even Tiny couldn’t miss what was going on that evening.

That night the sheep did as they always did – ate whatever grass they could find, slept and waited to be picked up by ‘Tiny’.

I was off on my own studying the Scriptures – when everything changed.

To be visited by one angel is rather unusual, but when you also get the full choir to back it up, it’s something that even ‘Tiny’ will never forget... and he thinks his real name is ‘Tiny’!

After some discussion the general consensus was that it had really just happened, and that we should probably go and check out this baby.

Some thought the choir might return but this time with lightning bolts, so we hurried down the hill.

I was astounded that the Messiah I had heard about in Isaiah would be born here amongst us.

I have been known to be rather sarcastic and sceptical.

However, the scene of serenity I saw in that stable removed all of the questions that I may have had.

All I could do was kneel and worship the child who would go on to be our Saviour.

I doubted the logic of Christ being revealed to such commoners as shepherds.

The idea that we should be the first to see him in all of his glory and then be charged with sharing the good news – it all seemed comical at first.

And yet it was for us that God sent his Son, for the whosoever.

The silent night will forever be with me, and I am proud to say that I am a lowly shepherd who knelt at the feet of Christ.

Monologue 4: The Soldier

Soldier

The silent night was never meant to happen; it wasn't approved by those who were commanding officers, and yet anyone who was there will tell you that it was the most sensible act in what had been an unbelievably stressful few months.

It was Christmas Eve, 1914, and the British troops had been dug in their trenches for the past three weeks.

It was stalemate with neither the British nor the Germans making any headway in what was turning out to be a bloody encounter.

Morale was low and the end of the war seemed an awfully long way off.

Those of us on duty that night in the cold, damp and rotten trench couldn't help but think of Christmas at home.

The first sign of what was to come came from the German side of the trenches.

Across 'no man's land' there could be seen small areas of light.

There were strict instructions about the black-outs during the night, as any erroneous light would usually be followed by aggressive shelling of that area.

Soldier

And yet that night, aggression was the last thing on anyone's mind.

Along with the candlelight came the voices of German soldiers singing 'Stille Nacht'.

We immediately recognised the carol 'Silent Night', and joined in with the beautiful melody.

That sound was the most foreign thing to hear in the desolate and war-torn land.

The carol singing lasted throughout the rest of the night.

In the morning – Christmas morning – both sides left their trenches and exchanged gifts with one another in the middle of 'no man's land'.

It was a time of sharing on both sides, a release of the great tension of the past few months and a chance to look into the eyes of the enemy and to see if they were just normal men like us.

A football was produced and a game started – and I promise you I was never off-side for that goal!

The silent night will forever be a light shining in the darkness, like those candles across 'no man's land'.

In the midst of the war that should have ended all wars, Christ's birth was celebrated by two foes.

He is and always will be my Wonderful Counsellor and Prince of Peace.

ANGELS UNITED!

This script imagines a scenario in which the Archangel Michael has been tasked with recruiting a choir to announce the birth of Jesus to shepherds.

Cast:

Archangels: Gabriel (AG); Michael (AM)
Angels: Daniel (Dan); Jophiel (Joe);
Kamael (Kam); Samael (Sam); Zachariel (Zac)

Props: Angels to wear similar clothes, whether that's 'traditional' white with wings and halos or a more modern take.

The younger angels are interested in sport so they could wear sports clothing with wings.

It should be clear that Gabriel and Michael are of a higher rank than the younger angels.

Both archangels carry an iPad and wear a watch. The younger angels carry smartphones.

Performance notes: This script would work well if you have a number of peers that could play the younger angels – particularly if they are enthusiastic about performing.

Depending on the confidence of those playing the younger angels, the singing elements could be performed a capella in parts, or accompanied by a piano or band with the angels singing the tune in unison.

Angels United!

Written by Rachel Gotobed

Scene 1

(Michael enters, sits down and starts looking at his iPad. Gabriel enters.)

- AG** There you are, Michael – did you not see the message I sent you on Messenger? I've been waiting for you to respond.
- AM** Sorry, Gabriel. I've had a busy morning so I'm only just logging in now – was it important?
- AG** Important? Yeah, it's of world-changing significance!
- AM** Wow, that sounds ominous, Gabe! World-changing?
- AG** Yes! The Boss has decided it's 'the time'.
- AM** 'The time'? *(Looks at watch)* 'The time' for what?
- AG** Michael! 'The time'... 'The time' the whole of Heaven has been waiting for!
- AM** Surely not 'the time'?
- AG** Yes! Exactly that – 'the time'!
- AM** Wow! We've been waiting so long for 'the time' that I actually thought 'the time' would never come!
- AG** Well 'the time' has come and we have a lot of work to do in order that everything happens according to 'the plan'.
- AM** Right – ah, yes – 'the plan'... Could you, er, just remind me of 'the plan', Gabriel? – It's a while since I read it!

- AG** 'The plan', Michael – which every angel should know – is that the Boss is sending his son to earth as a baby to be the Saviour of the world! I have already visited the woman who has been chosen as his mother – her name is Mary – and let her know that, even though she is still a virgin, she is going to have a baby and that he will be God's Son and that his name will be Jesus.
- AM** *(Shocked to silence, before answering sarcastically)* I'm sure she was thrilled at that news!
- AG** I have to admit she was a little disturbed at first, but I reassured her that everything was part of 'the plan' and she accepted it.
- AM** And is there a man in 'the plan' too?
- AG** There is. She has a fiancé called Joseph, and he was a little trickier to convince. When Mary told him the news he couldn't believe it and was going to break off the engagement. So God sent me to visit him in a dream and to assure him that Mary had spoken the truth and that the baby she was carrying was the fulfilment of 'the plan'.
- AM** You really have been a busy angel, haven't you, Gabriel? So what is it you need me for?
- AG** The Boss has decided that he needs a choir of angels to announce when the baby is born, and because of your, um, musical prowess he has assigned you to be the choir leader.
- AM** What? You are kidding, aren't you? How in heaven's name does he expect me to do that? Just because I like to sing in the shower doesn't mean I can lead a choir of angels!
- AG** Well, the Boss obviously believes you are the right archangel for the job. So you need to put together a choir that will be able to proclaim the Saviour's birth – and you've got just less than nine months to get it sorted.
- AM** And pray tell me, Gabriel, which palace do we have to sing this proclamation in?

- AG** What makes you think you will be singing in a palace?
- AM** Because even I know that the Boss's son is the King of kings, so where else would he be born?
- AG** My understanding is that the birth will actually take place in a more humble dwelling and that the proclamation is going to be sung to some shepherds on a hillside.
- AM** *(Flabbergasted)* Ha! I don't believe it! You're telling me that I have to find a choir of angels and prepare them to sing in a field! I'm sure they will all be queuing up to be part of that gig!
- AG** I understand that it may not appear to be the most glamorous of locations, but announcing the Saviour's birth is a once-in-an-eternity event, and I have no doubt in your skills to find other angels who will want to join the choir. I will let the Boss know that 'the plan' is in safe hands and look forward to receiving a progress report in due course. *(Gabriel starts to exit)* And of course, if you need any help, you only have to ask.
- AM** Thank you for your confidence – I wish I shared it! And you may well regret that offer of help!
- (Michael exits.)*

Scene 2

(Angels enter and sit around chatting and checking their phones.)

- Dan** Hey you lot – have you seen this on Wingstagram?
- Zac** Seen what?
- Dan** This advert.
- Joe** What advert?
- Dan** This advert looking for a team!
- Sam** Yeah – I've just seen it too.

- Kam** I haven't checked Wingstagram today – what's it about?
- Dan** It says, 'Wanted – Angels for a once-in-an-eternity dream job! Ideal for team players who are good in the field. Message now if you are interested!'
- Zac** What do you think it is?
- Sam** I reckon they could be looking for a sports team – after all, it does say you have to be good in the field.
- Joe** It could be cricket?
- Kam** I'm not doing that – I don't like insects!
- Zac** What are you talking about, Kam?
- Kam** Well, didn't the Boss send crickets as a plague to the Egyptians?
- Zac** I think you'll find that was locusts!
- Joe** Cricket is a team sport, Kam – you play it with a bat and ball.
- Kam** In a field?
- Sam** Yes, in a field! Of course, there are lots of sports played in a field, so it could be anything!
- Kam** But what if it's not a sport? What if it's ploughing or harvesting – they happen in a field too!
- Zac** Yes, but they happen every year, and this advert says it's a 'once-in-an-eternity' job.
- Dan** Do you think it might be football? I've heard a rumour before that the Boss was thinking about starting a Divinity League.
- Joe** I'm definitely up for that – and if we all apply we could be the dream team together.

- Zac** Yeah that would be brilliant... but we'll have to think of a good team name.
- Sam** What about Celestial City?
- Dan** Or Cherubs Rangers?
- Joe** I think it should be Heavenly Hotspurs!
- (Angels start to argue about the team name.)*
- Kam** *(Shouts)* Guys! We shouldn't be arguing about this. If we are a team, we have to be united! *(All stop and look at Kam)*
- Zac** That's brilliant, Kam!
- Kam** What is?
- Dan** Yes! We'll be Angels United! *(All agree – High 5s, etc)*
- Joe** It says we have to Message if we are interested. So come on, let's do it now. *(All start tapping into their devices)*
- Kam** I'm so not sure about this. Do you think we should research a bit more before signing up?
- Sam** Come on, Kam – we're going to be a great team – Angels United!
- Dan** And we promise that whatever happens we won't leave you out of the action.
- (Angels leave chanting 'Angels United!')*

Scene 3

(Gabriel and Michael enter and sit behind a table.)

- AG** Well, I'm very impressed, Michael. The Boss knew you were the right angel for 'the plan' and I have to admit he was right – how in Heaven did you manage to get this lot to sign up for a choir?

- AM** Let's just say that I used a little poetic licence in the advertising.
- AG** How poetic?
- AM** I just said it was a once-in-an-eternity opportunity for team players who are good in the field!
- AG** Did you mention anything about singing?
- AM** Not really – do you think I should have?
- AG** So what do these young angels think they are being auditioned for?
- AM** Heaven knows – but they signed up, so they must think they can do the job. Shall we see them now?
- (Angels enter and line up.)*
- AM** Welcome, angels – thank you very much for coming today. I would like to introduce you to Archangel Gabriel, who is helping me with team selection today.
- Kam** *(Aside to Joe)* Wow, this really must be an important job if Gabriel is here! *(Angels on both sides dig him in ribs to be quiet)*
- AG** Yes, this is indeed a hugely important job you have applied for. You will be representing Heaven for all the world to see and your efforts will be remembered for the rest of time and eternity.
- AM** Now, to ensure you are the right angels for this spectacular job, I need to test your skills. The Boss has suggested I get you to sing something to show how passionate you are about being selected for this divine team.
- Dan** *(Confused)* You want us to sing?
- AM** Yes, please.
- Sam** What shall we sing?

AM That's up to you really, but maybe something that shows us just how much this job means to you.

(Young angels huddle for a team talk.)

Kam We could sing 'God Save the Queen' – even footballers usually know the words to that one!

Joe No, I think 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot' is a better idea.

Sam But that's a rugby anthem, Joe, and we don't want to end up playing with the wrong-shaped ball!

Dan What about 'Abide with me' – surely the Boss will love it if we sing a hymn?

Zac Great idea, Dan – that should show them how much we want this job.

(Young angels stand back in a line.)

Zac All ready – after four – one, two, three, four...

(Angels sing first verse of 'Abide with me' – tuning is a little off!)

Sing *Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!*

AM Ummm... very impressive, young angels! What did you think, Gabriel?

AG Yes – well – I think you may have your work cut out there, Michael!

(Speaks to Michael as an aside) Remember the importance of this undertaking cannot be underestimated. The Boss has spent centuries getting ready for 'the plan' and his ultimate victory is dependent upon you getting it right.

AG *(Addressing young angels)* I will leave you now in Archangel Michael's capable hands to sort the training schedule.

(Gabriel exits.)

AM Right you lot. The job is yours... but it's going to mean a lot of practice – all your free time given to fieldwork. Are you sure you're all up for it? *(Angels all nod enthusiastically.)*

Excellent. So I'll see you all tomorrow for our first session.

(Michael exits. Angels all whoop and hi-5 in excitement.)

Sam I can't believe we've been selected, and all we had to do was sing!

Kam I can't believe it either – are you sure there isn't a catch somewhere?

Zac How can there be? We've just heard two archangels tell us we'll be perfect in the field for an ultimate victory.

Dan Yes, Kam – and Gabriel also said we'd be remembered for all time and eternity – how great will that be?

Kam I suppose so. But I just keep getting this feeling that all is not what it seems!

Joe Come on, Angels United – it's break time – we need to keep our strength up in preparation for this special assignment ahead. And I'm starving!

(Angels exit singing 'Food glorious food!')

Scene 4

(Angels enter jogging and chanting 'Angels United' – Dan first and Kam last!)

Dan Come on, you lot – we need to look enthusiastic. It can't be long now until the big match! We need to be fighting fit!

- Kam** But fit for what exactly, Dan? We seem to have done lots of singing with Archangel Michael but not a lot of playing football.
- Joe** Well, that's because he said he trusted us to practise our field skills in our own time and that a team that sings together will surely play well together.
- Zac** And I've actually enjoyed the singing anyway – much better than kicking a ball around in a muddy, cold field.
- Kam** Hmm – I'm still not convinced!
- (Enter Archangel Michael.)*
- AM** Not convinced about what, Kam?
- Sam** Oh, he's not convinced that we're quite ready for our big day – thinks we need more singing practice.
- AM** Well, I'm afraid you all have to be ready, as this will be our last rehearsal. The field awaits us – and Archangel Gabriel is coming to hear you – in fact, here he is now.
- (Enter Archangel Gabriel.)*
- AG** Ahh, there you all are. I'm so looking forward to this – Michael has assured the Boss that you are the dream team he wanted for 'the plan' and that your field play will be premier league.
- Dan** We'll do our very best, Archangel Gabriel.
- Joe** Yes – give it our all on the day.
- AG** Excellent! Perhaps I may be permitted a sneak preview?
- AM** Why, of course – we were just preparing for a final run through
Are you all ready?
- (Angels sing, to the tune of 'Sweet Chiming Christmas Bells!')*

All Sing

*We're here as Messengers from God
With such exciting news.
So shepherds, do not be afraid,
Instead put on your shoes!*

***Now go to Bethlehem (Yes, go!)
Now go to Bethlehem (Yes, go!)
For there you'll find a baby boy –
he's Christ the Lord.
He's come to bring you peace and joy –
he's Christ the Lord.***

*This baby he is God's own son,
A gift to all mankind.
So do not hesitate to go
But seek and ye shall find!*

***Now go to Bethlehem (Yes, go!)
Now go to Bethlehem (Yes, go!)
For there you'll find a baby boy –
he's Christ the Lord.
He's come to bring you peace and joy –
he's Christ the Lord.***

*This is a celebration day,
It's one you won't forget.
You've seen the dream team in the field,
And that you'll not regret!*

***Now go to Bethlehem (Yes, go!)
Now go to Bethlehem (Yes, go!)
For there you'll find a baby boy –
he's Christ the Lord.
He's come to bring you peace and joy –
he's Christ the Lord.***

AG Brilliant! Amazing! Fantastic! Michael, you have done a great job in preparing these angels – you can be really proud.

AM Why, thank you, Gabriel – I only hope the Boss will think so too.

AG I have no doubt he will be thrilled. *(Gabriel's phone rings)*

- AG** Hello... Yes, Boss... yes, they're ready... Right, so they need to go now? OK – I will send them straight away!
- Well, I'm sure you heard that, Michael. 'The time' has finally come! You're needed in the field now – you must go!
- Zac** Did he say we are going now?
- AM** Yes!
- Joe** To the field?
- AM** Yes, to the field. Are you all ready? *(Starts to exit – angels follow excitedly, except Kam)*
- Kam** *(To Gabriel)* Excuse me, but can I just ask where this field is exactly?
- AG** Kam! You know where it is – the prophets foretold it. It's Bethlehem Town!
- Kam** Bethlehem Town? We're playing Bethlehem Town?
- AG** Yes!
- Kam** But isn't that where the Messiah is going to be born?
- AG** Yes! And if you hurry and catch up with the others you will be part of the greatest event in all history.
- Kam** *(Hurriedly starts to exit)* Hey, you lot – wait for me! Angels United!
- (Michael re-enters.)*
- AM** Aren't you coming with us, Gabriel? We could sure use your help.
- AG** Thought you'd never ask!
- (All exit.)*

Optional Scene: Nativity tableaux forms during singing of a carol

Scene 5

(Angels enter all talking excitedly.)

Dan We were amazing! The best team ever!

Sam Our singing lit up the whole sky – it was awesome.

Zac Did you see their faces? Those poor shepherds didn't know what had hit them!

Joe You're right there – they looked petrified! *(Sings)* 'Now go to Bethlehem!'

All *(Sing)* 'Yes, go!' *(All laugh)*

Dan But to their credit, they did go and, having seen the Christ-child, they soon spread the good news that the Saviour had been born, all across the fields.

Zac Ha ha, yes – the fields! Oh how we fell for that one! 'A once-in-an-eternity dream job! Ideal for team players who are good in the field!'

Kam Not me! I always knew there was something not right about that, but none of you would listen to me.

Sam So you were a right cleverwings... but just think what we would have missed if we hadn't signed up!

Joe And just as Gabriel said, we did represent heaven for all the world to see.

(Enter Archangels Gabriel and Michael.)

AG You did indeed – and it was a spectacular performance, may I add. I'm so glad I got to come too.

- AM** Well, you did say I only had to ask if I needed help!
- AG** Always true to my word, Michael, and the Boss thought it was only right for me to be there when I'd already been to see Mary and Joseph. All part of 'the plan'.
- AM** Everyone did brilliantly... the sound was stunning... an outstanding team effort!
- AG** The Boss is so pleased with how it all went that there is a celebration party for all of Heaven and you are invited as special guests.
- Dan** The Boss wants us to go to his celebration as special guests?
- AG** Yes – so quickly go and polish your haloes, it starts in half an hour!
- Kam** We don't have to sing again, do we?
- AM** No – I think other people will forever sing about you and what you all did tonight. But as for you, Angels United (*sings*) 'You're not singing anymore!'

(All exit.)





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