

The Innkeeper at Bethlehem

A Christmas Play



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This is a modernised version of the original Christmas story, before the actual birth of Jesus. It is situated at Bethlehem, New Zealand, and set in the present time, with the Play being centred around the Innkeeper, Roger Walters who is the main character in it. As the Bible tells us, there was no room at the Inn, and our story is based on that piece of information, and the reasons surrounding it. It is set in 3 Scenes.

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The Innkeeper at Bethlehem

A Christmas Play

Scene 1. Full House

Performers

Roger, the Innkeeper
Katy, his wife

Props

Desk
Chair
Laptop
Phone etc

Our tale is set at the Holiday Inn, at Bethlehem, Tauranga, New Zealand. Roger and Katy, the owners are preparing for the Christmas-New Year holidays. On the road on this fateful day, a nondescript couple were sent by Heaven to their Inn, to find lodgings for the night.

Scene 1. Roger is standing at the front desk of the Holiday Inn, while Katy is sitting in a chair beside it, reading a magazine.

Rog. (Holding out the Guest Register and talking excitedly). "Look at this Darling!...Look!...Fifty rooms booked already!...If this keeps up, we'll have a full house before Christmas!...Oh...I'm going to have a tally-up, see how much we'll make?...This is a grand day!"

Kat. (Who speaks with a lisp). "You do dat darling..."

Rog. (Excitedly). "Aren't you excited?...We're going to make more money in a day than we normally make in two weeks!"

Kat. "Exthided?...How can I be exthided about changing that many bedth every day?...Yeth, I'm exthided...to see you tho exthided..."

Rog. "Suzy can help with the beds...she'll be on holiday..."

Kat. "Thuthy?...Thuthy won't be home...the'll be all over the plaith with her frenth..."

Rog. "After the New Year, we'll take a month off...go overseas somewhere...Oh...aren't you excited?"

Kat. (Looks at Roger and shakes her head).

Rog. "Oh...The Jazz festival...the Surf Competition...the Speedway...the Home Show...So many Events...and all happening at the same time...Who would have believed it?...and we're going to have a full house...!" (Pretending to pick up a telephone). "No, sorry...no vacancies!...No, I'm sorry...we

don't have any spare rooms...No, I can't help you there...we already have a full house...Sorry!...I might buy a race horse...and name it Full House..."

Kat. (Looks at Roger and shakes her head).

Rog. (Opens his laptop). "Look!...Look!...Three more bookings...If I had a son today...I'd name him Full House...in honour of this momentous occasion!" (Stands up straight). "Three cheers for the full house!...Hip, hip...Hooray!...Hip, hip...Hooray!...Hip, hip...Hooray!...and may we have many more of them!"

Kat. (Shakes her head). "Full Houth...What thort of an idiot would name a kid Full Houth?"

Rog. (Phone rings, and Roger picks it up). "Roger here...I'm sorry, but we have a full house..." (Realises what he's said). "No! No! No!...We don't have a Full House yet...Sorry!...Sorry!...I don't know why I said that?"

Kat. (Looks at Roger and shakes her head).

Rog. "Yes, of course we can...How many is that?...Two adults and three children...and how many nights?...Fourteen?...Yes please!...No...I mean, Yes, thankyou...Yes, we can!"

Kat. (Looks at Roger and shakes her head).

Rog. (Puts his hand over the mouth piece of the 'phone). "Make that six weeks holiday..."

Kat. (Nods).

Rog. "And a name for the Booking?" (Taps on his keyboard). "Yes, all done...We look forward to seeing you...and I'm sure you'll have a wonderful two weeks here at Bethlehem...Good day."

Kat. "How many woomth ith that Woger?"

Rog. "Fifty-four!" (Standing up straight and saluting). "Never before in the course of human history...have so many...stayed for so long...at the Bethlehem Holiday Inn!"

Kat. (Shakes her head).

Rog. "Where's the calculator?...I'm going to have a quick tally-up, and see what our winnings are?"

Kat. "Behind you...thecond drawer...at the back..."

Rog. "We might even be able to retire?...Take our ease?"

Kat. "In your dreamth Mithter!"

Rog. "I'm feeling faint...all this excitement!"

Kat. "You wanna feel faint?...You should try changing bedth all day?"

Rog. "Da da dum dum dum ..."

Kat. (Looks at Roger and shakes her head). "Thum of uth can't thit around all day...I've got bedth to change...tho I better get to it, darl..." (She gets up and walks out).

Rog. (Tapping on the calculator). "Well...Could it really be that much?...I better try it again...Man...We could go on holiday for a year...Where to?...Hmm...everywhere!...That figure was right after all...Man...I'm rich!...Oh..."

(Phone rings and Roger answers it). "Holiday Inn...Roger Richman speaking...Oh...Jeff...Hi...No...no, that was just a private joke...It's still Roger Walters...What can I do you for?...Tonight?...Yes, sure...Yes, we'll be over...after the night staff come on...maybe eight?...Good...see you then...Bye..."

(Puts phone down and it rings again. Roger answers it).

Rog. "Yes, Jeff?...Oh, sorry...no I thought it was someone else...How can I help you?...Yes we can do that...which days?...Twenty-fourth to the third of January...yes sure...and how many?...Two?...Yes, we can do that..." (Taps on his Laptop). "Name?...Yes, good...I've booked you in now...Have a safe trip and we'll see you here on the Twenty-fourth!...Yes, thankyou...Bye..."

(Puts the phone down, stands up and raises his fist quickly).

Rog. (Out loud). "Yes!...I don't think I can count any higher...Maybe I'll change my name to Roger Richman after all!...Roger Fullhouse Richman!...I think...that's..."

Kat. (Walks in). "Woger Fullhouse Wichman?...What's that?"

Rog. "I was er...just thinking about writing a short story...I was thinking out loud..."

Kat. "You?...Write a thtory?"

Rog. "Just an idea?...But, I've got good news!..."

Kat. "Full Houth!...You already told me that!"

Rog. "Not a full house yet...but getting close...I've decided that...wait for it...After the New Year, we're going to sell this place and retire...travel the world...take our ease!"

Kat. "And hooth gonna change the bedth?"

Rog. (Huffs and says sharply). "There won't be any beds, Darling...you'll be a lady of luxury...sitting in the sun...drinking wine all day long...We'll never have to work again!"

Kat. "Take our eathe?"

Rog. "Yes...This place is worth a fortune...The land itself is worth so much I can't even count the zeros...and with what we're making over the Christmas-New Year period...we can retire in style!"

Kat. "I'll need to retire after changing that many bedth over Chrithmith!"

Rog. "You'll deserve it then...good girl...I'd better keep an eye on the emails...and fill up those other empty rooms...Full House...It's my new favourite word!"

Kat. (Shakes her head and leaves).

Rog. "I'd better check the mail too..." (He stands and leaves the room).

Curtain Falls.

End of Scene 1.

The Innkeeper at Bethlehem

Scene 2.

Joseph and Mary

Performers

Joseph
Mary

Scene. Mary is sitting on a seat outside a shop, drinking a coffee, when Joseph comes out of the shop and sits beside her.

Jos. "I've phoned most of the Motels in Bethlehem and Tauranga...but they're all full...There are some big events happening there and all the accommodation is booked up, it seems?"

Mar. "Can't you find anything at all?"

Jos. "Well, there's the Holiday Inn at Bethlehem...It's big, so we can probably get a room there...but I couldn't get through to them...We'll go there when we arrive...How are you feeling?"

Mar. "I'm good...but the baby has stopped moving...My mother said this would happen...just before he's born...so, I hope we can make it to Bethlehem?"

Jos. "I'm sure we will...We couldn't have made it to Hicks Bay though...and besides...there's no hospital near the Bay...I've had this funny feeling all day that we would stay the night at Bethlehem...I don't know why?...It's like that story in the Bible where the Lord said to Elijah...I have commanded a widow woman to feed you... it seems like the Lord has commanded someone at Bethlehem to give us a room for the night...there's nothing else we can do anyway..."

Mar. "It's been a long day...such a long day!"

Jos. "Yes, it has...It's a long road from Wellington...and there weren't any shortcuts I could take...we couldn't have got here much quicker...even if I was speeding..."

Mar. "We don't need to speed...I'll be happy just to arrive in one piece...and break into two pieces when we get there..."

Jos. "In the hospital...not on the side of the road..."

Mar. "Yes, please!"

Jos. "We'll have to let everyone know where we are...if we don't go on to the bay?...Especially family...I've got some old friends near Bethlehem...they're shepherds...I'll get them to come visit us tomorrow, while we're there...They can be the first of our friends to see the baby..."

Mar. "This has been a long day...and I have a feeling it's going to be a long night too...We should get –

going soon..."

Jos. "Yes, we should...but we should get something to eat here...It's going to be at least two hours before we arrive in Bethlehem...and we'll concentrate on finding accommodation once we arrive there..."

Mar. "Okay...Chinese?"

Jos. "I'm thinking fish and chips?"

Mar. (Pretends to act sad).

Jos. (Looks at Mary). "Chinee sounds good?"

Mar. "Thankyou Darling...I'm not in the mood for greasies..."

Jos. "Nah...it's all good..." (Takes Mary's hand). "Come on...Let's go find some Chinee...Do we need anything for when the baby's born?"

Mar. "Yes, we do..."

Jos. "What?"

Mar. "A hospital would help?"

Jos. "I'll keep that in mind!...Come along...fodder time..."

(They walk off, hand in hand).

Curtain Falls.

End of Scene 2.

The Innkeeper at Bethlehem

Scene 3.

A room with a view of the future

Performers

Roger
Katy
Ronald
Joseph
Mary

Props

Desk
Seats

Scene. Holiday Inn, Roger and Katy are seated at the Reception desk, looking at a laptop, planning their overseas trip.

Kat. "But what's to thee in Greeth?"

Rog. "Are you serious darling?...What's to see in Greece?...It's only the cradle of civilization, that's all...The history of the world is in Greece!...Athens...you must have heard of Athens, surely?"

Kat. "Athenth?...Is that in Greeth?"

Rog. (Shaking his head). "I don't believe this?...Yes...they've just put it there!..."

Kat. "Have they?...Where wath it before?"

Rog. "It was wherever you think it was, Darling..." (Sarcastically). "Is this your wife Sir?...She must be off her meds...she just asked me which way you go to get to Adelaide?...She thinks Adelaide is the capital of Greece. No, it's always been there Darling...It's the capital..."

Kat. "I thought it was the capital of Italy?"

Rog. "No Darling...Rome is the capital of Italy...Athens has always been in Greece...you're going to learn a lot, that's for sure...Maybe we'll just get a Tour...do the whole of Europe over a year...See Paris...Notre Dame..."

Kat. "Thatth where the hunchback ith...ithn't it?"

Rog. "So...you do know something!" (Smiling). "Yes, it is!"

Kat. "I'd like to meet him..."

Rog. (Shaking his head). "Katy...he isn't real...he's a character in a novel...you'll have to watch a

movie, if you want to see him!...Quasimodo..."

Kat. "That's right, Quathimodo...What elthe can we thee?"

Rog. "The Louvre...the Mona Lisa...Renoir's paintings...Monet's paintings...Turner...you name them, they're all in the Louvre...Rembrandt..."

Kat. "Sounds ecthiting!"

Rog. "Now you're getting excited?"

Kat. "You thaid we were going to thit in the thun drinking wine for the retht of our liveth?...That'th okay...but it ithn't very ecthiting?"

(There's a knock at the door and Ronald enters)

Ron. "Hello, I'm Ronald...I need a room for the Home Show...Five days I think?...Do you have one free?"

Rog. "No...I'm sorry, but we're full..."

Kat. "No, we aren't Darl...Fifty-four is thtill empty..."

Rog. "No, I've reserved that for someone..."

Kat. "For who?"

Rog. "I don't know?...But I'll know them when they arrive..."

Kat. "Are you feeling okay?"

Rog. "Yes...I just have this feeling that I have to reserve fifty-four for someone special...So I have!"

Kat. "You've never done that before?"

Rog. "I know...but I've never had this feeling before..."

Ron. "I'll give you double the normal rate for it!"

Rog. "It's got nothing to do with money..."

Ron. "I thought that's what being in business was about...money?"

Rog. "It is...but this is different!"

Ron. "One body in a bed is no different than any other body in a bed...That's how I would see it?"

Rog. "I do too...But this is Christmas Eve...and something special is going to happen during this

night...and I'm going to be a part of it..."

Ron. "I'll tell you what's special tonight...I'm offering you three times the normal rate for an empty room...if that isn't special...nothing is?"

Rog. "I've got to wait..."

Ron. "How do you know you weren't keeping it for me?...To give you triple dip for it?...That's more than anyone else would pay!"

Rog. "I don't know?...Hmm..." (Thinking). "Okay...You can have it..."

Ron. "Thanks...and I meant it about the triple dip...I appreciate this!"

Rog. "Well...You'd better hurry up and seal the deal before I change my mind!"

Ron. "Immediately..."

(They arrange the room and Ronald pays for it).

Ron. "Thanks again...and I'd better get my room set up...catch you later..."

Kat. "Bye!"

Rog. "See you...That reminds me, Darling...Jeff's having a Birthday bash tonight...at his...I told him we'd come over..."

Kat. "Good, that'll be fun!...Now, where were we before Wonald awived?"

Rog. "In France some where?...The Louvre I think?...Talking painters?"

Kat. "Yeth...we were I..."

(The phone rings and Roger answers it).

Rog. "Hello...No sorry...we're full...there's no room at the Inn...yes...yes...Bye."

Kat. "We could've made a living off all the people we've turned away today?"

Rog. "Don't remind me...it hurts to sat no..."

Kat. "Tho, why did you really thave that room?"

Rog. "I told you...There's something big going down tonight...and I'm going to be a part of it...I'm sure of that..."

Kat. "Okay...So, what about America?"

Rog. "Please don't tell me America's in the Louvre?"

Kat. "No, it's a country...it's stuck on to Canada..."

Rog. "Good...I won't have to have you committed then!"

Kat. "I'm not that stupid Darling?"

Rog. "I know...I'm only joking...I..."

(Phone rings and Roger answers it).

Rog. "Hello...No, I'm sorry we're chocca...not an empty bed anywhere...Thankyou...bye."

Kat. "It's been a good day...thuch a good day...a perfect day!"

Rog. "Yes, it has...and I..."

(The phone rings again).

Rog. "Pretend you didn't hear it...and it'll go away..."

Kat. "What about Denmark?"

Rog. "It's in Europe...we'll go there on our Tour...Maybe we should just do a world cruise?"

Kat. "On a boat?...I can't swim?"

Rog. "Then stay in the boat...Look at this!..." (Holding up the Guest Register). "Christmas Eve and we're fully booked!" (Seriously). "Full House Gentlemen...I believe that makes me the winner!"

Kat. (Shakes her head).

Rog. "It's been a good day..."

Kat. "I'm going to get ready for Jeff's birthday now...I'll be back thoon..."

Rog. "Do that Darling...I'll tidy up in here..."

(There's a knock at the door and Joseph walks in, looking travel-weary, in crumpled dust-stained garments, with his young wife, who is obviously very pregnant, standing shyly, half hidden, behind him).

Jos. "Excuse me...do you have a room?"

Rog. (Looks Joseph up and down then bluntly says). "Excuse me...can you read?"

Jos. "Yes...I can!"

Rog. "Good...Then go outside and read that sign up on the roof..."(Pointing up with a finger).

Jos. "Yes, alright" (He looks at Mary, then goes out the door, looks up, and returns inside).

Rog. "So?"

Jos. "It says...No vacancy..."

Rog. "Yes, it does...Yes!...That's what I thought too...And it says it for a very good reason...Yes!...Because we don't have any vacancies...Comprehend?"

Jos. "I was hoping you could *find* a vacancy somehow?...We've travelled all day to get here and we've tried everywhere else...But no-one has a vacancy..."

Rog. (Sarcastically). "Most people book ahead, you know...Reservations...have you heard of them?"

Jos. "Yes, of course I have...we were meant to carry on to Hick's Bay...but it looks like Mary's going to have her baby tonight...so we really need to stop in Bethlehem for the night..."

Rog. "Look...I'm being very patient with you, Mister!...and sob stories aside...I can't help you...so don't waste your time trying to twist my arm..."

Jos. "Um...can..."

Rog. "No!"

Jos. "But..."

Rog. "No!"

Jos. "Could we..."

Rog. "Emphatically...No!...Now good night...go away!"

Jos. (Turns and walks out slowly, closely followed by Mary).

Rog. "Should learn to read properly..."

(Roger sits in his chair, looking out of the window, when Katy returns).

Kat. "Did I mith anything?"

Rog. "Not really...just another couple who ignored the no vacancy signs..."

(Roger sits quietly. Katy looks at him, concerned).

Kat. "Whatth wrong Darl...you're awfully quiet?...It ithn't like you?"

Rog. "I don't know?...I just have this very strange feeling...like I've forgotten something?...Or missed something?...but I don't know what it is...It's not a happy feeling either?"

Kat. "Forgotten what?...I can't think of anything?"

Rog. "Nor can I...It's like I was meant to do something...but I didn't do it...it's hard to describe..."

Kat. "Was it Jeff's birthday?"

Rog. "No...that's later on...8 o'clock...after the Night Staff come on..."

Kat. "You'll forget all your troubles when we're at the party Darl!"

Rog. "Um...Look...I may not go..."

Kat. "But you have to tell Roger...Jeff's your best friend?"

Rog. "No, I can't...Something's wrong and I wish I knew what it was?...I might just go to bed and sleep it off, if I can..."

Kat. "Are you certain, Darl?"

Rog. "Yes...Look...You go on over to Jeff's now...give him my apologies...I'll look after things here till the Staff come on...Have fun!"

Kat. "I'll stay too...and we can keep planning our trip?"

Rog. "Ah...The...the trip...Um...no, I don't want to think about the trip...it doesn't really matter just now...No, you go over to Jeff's and have fun, Darling."

Kat. "Okay..." (Stands and kisses Roger on the head). "Night Darl!"

Rog. "Night, Darling!"

Kat. (Leaves).

Rog. (Cradles his head in his hands). "Oh man...What have I done?...What have I done?"

Curtain Falls.

End of Scene 3.

Finis.

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Ed.M.