

# AWAY WITH THE MANGER

This sketch is particularly suited to the Christmas season, pointing out how the central character of the nativity is often relegated to a merely supporting role. The two speaking parts (ISAACS and BAILEY) represent the popular media. The sketch is suitable for a family audience. Care should be taken to ensure that the audience is not expecting to see a traditional nativity play, as they may be led to believe by the opening scene.

Only two speaking parts have been scripted, so as to allow the smallest of drama groups to feel they can attempt this sketch. Supporting cast need little acting experience and can be co-opted for the occasion. The rhyming is important - and not as easy as it may at first appear.

SCENE: Mary and Joseph, seated on straw bales, watch over the baby Jesus. The baby is amidst straw in a free-standing box-like manger. Little other scenery except to create "typical nativity effect".

COSTUME: As for nativity scene - except ISAACS and BAILEY are in modern garb; the former with a notepad and pen, the latter strewn with cameras and associated paraphernalia.

*To the audience as much as to Mary and Joseph*

**ISAACS**

Good evening, I'm Isaacs.

*Waving folded newspaper  
As if quoting publicity blurb*

**BAILEY**

How d'you do? The name's Bailey.

**ISAACS**

From your local newspaper -

**BAILEY**

"The Daily Israeli"

**ISAACS**

"The people's parchment ...

*Taking up the quotation  
Completes the quote  
Aside to audience*

**BAILEY**

with all of the news ...

**ISAACS**

for all of the people."

**BAILEY**

That's "all of the Jews."

**ISAACS**

We heard half a rumour and wondered if maybe ... we could make it a story?

**BAILEY**

With shots of the baby.

**ISAACS**

Might make the stop-press,

we could give it a spin ...

*Suggesting a headline*

**BAILEY**

"Late, late arrival out at the inn."

**ISAACS**

A heading,

**BAILEY**

A picture, with your permission,

**ISAACS**

"Mother and baby in stable condition."

**BAILEY**

So let's keep it simple; just the kid in the shot.

*Suggesting alternative headline  
Ushers Mary and Joseph to side of stage*

**ISAACS**

"The babe in the manger."

They'll love it ... a lot!

Who's a coochy-coochy-coo?

*Moves to the manger to prepare for the shot. Talks in "baby-talk"  
To Mary*

**BAILEY**

Can you get it to smile?  
Maybe...

**ISAACS**

Mary

**BAILEY**

... the mother, could sit with the child?  
Look loving,

**ISAACS**

Look homely ... Look down a bit ... to the

**BAILEY**

right.

**ISAACS**

Is that any better?  
Yeah ... except for the light.

**BAILEY**

What about you?

**ISAACS**

Who?

*To Mary, being helpful  
Looking through view-finder, fiddling with camera*

**BAILEY**

*Anxiously, to Bailey*

**ISAACS**

*Noticing Joseph*

**BAILEY**

*Looking round*

**ISAACS**

**BAILEY**

<i>Joseph is mildly surprised but just as compliant as Mary</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	Joseph, the dad
<i>Forgetting name again</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	Stand there behind ...
<i>Reminding him again</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	Mary!
<i>Directing Joseph</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	Look down at the lad. Now put your arm gently around your wife's shoulder.
<i>As Isaacs helps position Joseph, he notices the ox</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	Silent but strong - that's how you'll come over - like the ox at the back.
	<b>BAILEY</b>	Hey! We must have that creature!
	<b>ISAACS</b>	But it's covered in muck!
	<b>BAILEY</b>	So ... we'll make it a feature.
	<b>ISAACS</b>	Could we not clean it up?
<i>In disbelief</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	You mean, just for one shot?
	<b>ISAACS</b>	I'd feel a lot happier.
<i>Conceding</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	I don't see why not.
	<b>ISAACS</b>	Hey! There's even a donkey back here on the ground!
	<b>BAILEY</b>	Could you pull it in closer?
<i>Sarcastic</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	D'you want the ox to look round?
	<b>BAILEY</b>	Looks better all the time ...
<i>A few tentative shepherds enter</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	It's certainly fuller.
	<b>BAILEY</b>	What it needs now is a touch of local colour.
<i>To the shepherds</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	Hey! What about you guys?
<i>Enthusiastic</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	Bring the sheep, too!
	<b>ISAACS</b>	Though it's getting to look a bit like a zoo.
<i>Directing shepherds</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	Crouch on the floor there.
	<b>ISAACS</b>	Mind that ox-muck! Never mind.
<i>Resenting the interruption</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	Just stay kneeling right there.
	<b>ISAACS</b>	Out of sight, out of mind.
<i>Things now get a little out of hand as more and more people come onstage to be included in the shot. The pace gradually quickens</i>		
<i>Three kings enter (with gifts etc)</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	That's everybody in ...
<i>Noticing the kings</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	Except these three kings. The gifts and the robe, the crowns and the rings would just add some glamour ...
	<b>BAILEY</b>	Squeeze in at the side!
<i>With abandon</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	But could you perhaps leave the camels outside?
<i>A little more cautious</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	Hey, Isaacs! Look up!
<i>An angel appears "above" the scene (perhaps on raised platform to rear of stage?)</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	What is it? A ghost?!
	<b>BAILEY</b>	You fool! It's an angel ... and a heavenly host.
<i>To angel, uncertain how to address such a being</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	Excuse me, er ... sir?
	<b>BAILEY</b>	Could you stay there and hover?
	<b>ISAACS</b>	A little to the right, If it's not too much bother.
<i>Some children enter, dressed in carol-singing garb, complete with old-time lanterns, etc.</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	Course, we gotta have children ...
	<b>ISAACS</b>	
<i>Enter Santa</i>	<b>BAILEY</b>	Singing carols
<i>See what you can do!</i>	<b>ISAACS</b>	Lamps bobbing ...
	<b>BAILEY</b>	And Santa ...
	<b>ISAACS</b>	And reindeer ...

*Assembled company all launch handfuls of "snow" into the air*

*It may be possible to rig up a larger-than-life plastic robin in flight - or something equally incongruous. (Maybe someone in a costume?!) Mary and Joseph are a little overwhelmed by it all, as are the kings and shepherds. The children are all keen to have their picture taken. Santa is ho-ho-ho-ing. General confusion. Mary and Joseph almost hidden. The manger is still forward and central.*

*Explaining ...*

*Two shepherds dutifully remove the manger to the side of the stage. There is a brief pause. Looking through view-finder. To crowd, knowingly.*

*The camera-flash goes off. No movement. No noise. A pause. The baby cries. All heads turn to look at the manger and the child. Realisation.*

**BAILEY** Some snow ...

**ISAACS** And a robin!

**BAILEY** Look, I know I'm a nuisance, but it's masking the ox,

**ISAACS** Could somebody shift that dirty old box? Yeah, in the middle of the scene it's a bit of a danger

**BAILEY** A fire risk!

**ISAACS** A hazard!

**BOTH** Away with the manger!

**BAILEY** Good

**ISAACS** Relax for a second.

**BAILEY** Be there in a while ...

**BOTH** Now... closer together ... and, all at once Smile!

**- END -**