



While Stockmen Watched the Mob One Night

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Opening scene. Three stockmen holding mugs, sitting on logs (or camp stools) around a fire.

Narrator (off-stage), words on the screen: Luke chapter 2, verses seven and eight: 'While they were in a wool shed, Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She placed him in a feed-trough because there was no room for them in the pub. And there were stockmen out in the paddock keeping watch over their mob overnight...

Sam: You know, Tom, I never get tired of those Outback stars. Bloomin' marvellous.

Tom: Yeah, mate. You never see 'em like that in the city.

Sam: Too much ruddy pollution, I reckon.

Doug: What about the dingoes, Sam? Think they'll leave us alone tonight?

Sam: Dingoes? Doug, we haven't seen a bloomin' dingo for five years!

Doug: Yeah, but you never know, mate. There's always a first time.

Tom: Biggest ruckus we'll hear tonight is your snorin'! It's enough to flamin' wake the dead.

Doug: Stop whingeing, Tom. *I* never hear anythin'.

Tom: Very funny.

Sam: Well, let's hope for some peace and quiet tonight.

Tom: Yeah, dunno about you blokes, but I'm ready to tuck in. Be glad when we get these ruddy sheep to the sale yards and we can have a decent night's shut-eye again.

Doug: As long as there aren't any dingoes.

Tom: You and your bloomin' dingoes! For goodness sake, Doug, bag it and go to sleep! *(All lie down, wriggle and shuffle. Then Tom sits up.)* I tell yer what. 'Ow about a bit of a song to calm the nerves, eh?

Sam: Your singin' wouldn't calm a storm in a billy can, Tom.

Doug: Oh, he's not that bad, Sam. My dog stopped 'owlin' once when 'e started singin'.

Sam: Yeah. 'E probably thought it was unfair competition.

Tom (reaching for his guitar): Why is it so bloomin' bright tonight? You'd think the sun had forgotten to go down.

Sam: It's that star. Look. 'Ave you ever seen one like that before?

Doug: It is star-ting. Hahaha. Star-ting. Get it?

Tom (Sigh). Yes, Doug. We get it. *Picks up the guitar, strums a bit and begins to sing slowly and thoughtfully as if composing the word as he goes. Looks up at times as if at the star.)*

There's a star in the sky
that has splintered space on high
like a... heavenly laser beam.
All the galaxies are fading
with planets cavalcading
like...androids in a dream.
Is it...some kind of portent?
Is it...Venus or Mars?
Is it...God's revelation?
A...new avatar?
There's a star in the sky and my heart is asking why—
it's such an awesome, glorious scene.
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(Tune: 'Along the Road to Gundagai'; lyrics: Barry Chant © 2016)

All lie down. Quiet. Doug begins to snore...

Angel #1: (in distance, off stage) Cooo-ee

Doug (sitting up fast): There! Told yer! Dingoes!

Angel #1: Cooo-ee

Tom (standing): That's no blinkin' dingo. That's some blinkin' drongo, who's 'ad a few too many—yelling out in the middle of the bloomin' night.

Sam (standing): Yeah. But who? And what in the world are they doing' pokin' around 'ere when they should be 'ome in bed?

Doug (snooping around and not listening): There's a sneaky dingo around 'ere somewhere!

Enter Angel #1, dressed like the other stockmen. He doesn't look like an angel.

A1: Oh, there you are, Sam. G'day.

Angel #2 (also entering): Owyergoin'?

Sam: Hey! How do you know my name?

A2: We know a lot of things, Sam—and Doug—and Tom.

Tom: 'Ang on, what's goin' on 'ere? You been checkin' up on us?

A1: I guess you could say that. But it's not what you think. The fact is, I've got some good news for you blokes.

Sam: It'll need to be good this time o' night.

Doug: What? No dingoes?

A1: Better than that.

A2: We have wonderful news for everyone, everywhere.

Sam: Must be pretty good sorta news if it's for everyone.

A1: Yes, it is, Sam. It really is. We bring good news of peace—peace for the whole world.

Tom: We 'ad peace till you blokes came along... Except for Doug's snorin'.

A1: Look, Tom, tonight God's done something pretty special. He's sent his one and only Son to the world! He's going to change everything! No more conflict. No more fear--

Doug: No more dingoes?

A2: Right, Doug. No more dingoes. No worries. You'll never be afraid of dingoes again.

Doug: You're 'avin' me on. 'Ow you gonna manage that?

A1: Simple. When people experience God's love, there's no reason to be scared any more. And they stop fighting each other. That's called peace.

Tom: Hey, wait a minute. 'Ow do we know you blokes are on the level?

A1: Find out for yourselves. Hop in the ute, scoot back to the station and have a squiz at the wool shed. It'll be easy to find with all that starlight around it. You'll find a young couple there with a new baby. He's the One.

Tom: Fair dinkum?

A2: Sure, Tom. Fair dinkum. He's God's own Son.

Sam: Now you're really pushin' it. God's Son out 'ere? And why tell *us*, anyway? Why aren't you telling those geezers down in Canberra?

A1: We're telling you because you'll probably believe us.

A2: Oh, and something else. You'll find the baby wrapped in a flour bag.

Sam: In a flour bag! Doesn't sound much like the Son of God.

A1: God's full of surprises.

A2: Why don't you check it out?

Tom: We-e-ell, I suppose there's no harm in looking... I guess the mob'll be OK for half an hour.

Doug: What about the dingoes?

Sam: For cryin' out loud, Doug, give us a break will yer? Can't you forget about dingoes for five minutes? If what these fellas say is true, you'll 'ave more to think about than bloomin' dingoes.

Suddenly... the (loud) sound of Handel's Hallelujah Chorus can be heard over the PA system. The three stockmen look up and around in amazement. Meanwhile, the angels quietly disappear. Music fades after a few seconds.

Doug: Crikey! What was that?

Tom: You don't suppose those blokes were...

Sam (visibly shaken): I think we'd—we'd better—er—do what they said, don't you?

Tom (also in awe): I reckon.

Doug (stage whisper): Do you think there really won't be any dingoes?

Tom: Aw put a sock in it, Doug! Even if there are, if those guys are on the level, they won't bother us any more.

Doug: Wow, that sounds a bit of all right, really. No worries, eh?

Sam: I wonder if this baby really is the Son of God. Now that'd be somethin' to tell the wife and kids when I get home...

Tom: More than that! That'd be something worth tellin' the whole world! Come on! Let's get goin'! This could be the biggest thing since Phar Lap won the Melbourne bloomin' Cup!

All move off stage.

A sign appears on the screen or on a large placard held by a stage attendant Simply saying: HOURS LATER. The stockmen reappear.

Doug: Wow, that was blinkin' amazing.

Sam: Yeah, what was it about that baby? I mean, all babies are cute, but he wasn't just cute he was—I dunno what he was.

Tom: He was—well, when he looked at me it seemed like he *knew* me... like he actually *cared* for me. A baby! And there was something else. Something I just couldn't get hold of, somehow.

Doug: It was uncanny—mysterious—but not scary.

Sam: Am I dreaming or did we actually kneel down in front of him?

Tom: We did...kneel...down. All of us. I could almost feel a hand on my shoulder coercing me.

Sam: Yeah, me too. And such peace. And yet such...exhilaration! I felt I wanted to get up and tell everyone what I'd seen!

Doug: Me...I was filled with hope! Even though it was night time, everything seemed brighter than ever before. It was unbelievable!

Tom: You know, that baby, 'e looked right into me. I wanted to hide. He seemed so pure and I felt so...so...grimy. And yet...I know it sounds ridiculous...I mean...we're talkin' about a baby here. But I knew that if I believed he really was the Son of God, my life would be changed forever.

Sam: Yeah, I felt the same thing. I can't believe I'm sayin' this, but I reckon I would follow 'im anywhere in the world if it came to that.

Doug: Follow him anywhere? That's a bit extreme isn't it? I mean, why would you want to...follow a baby! What if he finished up being executed or something?

Tom: Executed! The Son of God! Cmon', Doug. Not likely... Although these days you never know what might happen. Sometimes good people get the worst treatment. And now I think about it, *that's* what I saw in his eyes that puzzled me so much. It wasn't just care... it was sadness. Both for him and for me... (*He picks up his guitar again and begins to sing. If possible there needs to be a choir and additional musicians to join in with the chorus. All the other actors can also sing the chorus. It is important to reflect the mood of the lyrics by varying the speed, the volume and the 'feel' of the music.*)

Once a little baby slumbered in a tucker box
Under the shade of an olive wood tree;
And he sang to the crooning of his Mother Mary,
Who'll come and carry the cross with Me?

*Who'll come and carry, who'll come and carry,
Who'll come and carry the cross with Me?
And he sang to the crooning of his mother Mary,
Who'll come and carry the cross with Me?*

Loud cried the angels in the highest heaven,
Glory to God for eternity!
And the shepherds responded to the voice of majesty,

Who'll come and carry the cross with Me?

*Who'll come and carry, who'll come and carry,
Who'll come and carry the cross with Me?
And the shepherds responded to the voice of majesty,
Who'll come and carry the cross with Me?*

Bright shone the star above the town of Bethlehem,
Down came the wise men—one, two, three—
And they knelt as they gave their myrrh and gold and frankincense,
Who'll come and carry the cross with Me?

*Who'll come and carry, who'll come and carry,
Who'll come and carry the cross with Me?
And they knelt and they gave their myrrh and gold and frankincense
Who'll come and carry the cross with Me?*

High hung the Saviour on the cross of Calvary,
Deep in the sleep of the grave lay He;
Then He rose from the dead, O grave where is your victory?
Who'll come and carry the Cross with Me?

*Who'll come and carry, who'll come and carry,
Who'll come and carry the cross with Me?
Then He rose from the dead, O grave where is your victory?
Who'll come and carry the Cross with Me?
Who'll come and carry the Cross with Me?*

Tune 'Waltzing Matilda' Lyrics © Barry Chant 2016

*The three stockmen stand quietly for a few moments and then pick up their things
and walk off quietly singing the last chorus quietly and unaccompanied. Singing
should be a bit ragged and not necessarily harmonious. Just before they
disappear a Voice is heard off stage with the words on the screen:*

From the Gospels of Matthew and of Luke: Praise the Lord... because he has
come and redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us... to
rescue us from the hand of our enemies and to enable us to serve him without
fear... Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favour
rests...

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny
himself and take up his cross and follow me."

END

Notes

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The play

This play is ideal for use in a Sunday service or a youth gathering. It is deliberately brief so it does not require extensive memorisation or complex stage settings. It can be performed by adults or young people or even by older children. The players need to be energetic and expressive in their acting.

Themes

The play can open up various themes that can be incorporated and developed in other parts of the service/meeting e.g. in the hymns/songs, the preaching/teaching, items etc.

Several themes could be teased out such as worship, a sense of awe at the glory of God, willingness to believe, obedience, the incarnation, being crucified with Christ. The Aussie setting causes us to think about how we would react had we been among the shepherds at Bethlehem.

Characters

There are only six players needed.

Doug, Sam and Tom: Australian stockmen (or jackeroos). With minor modifications to the script, Sam could be a female (a jillaroo). Tom needs to be a country singer.

Angels: Biblically, and in the context of the play, these should be male. However, the roles could be taken by females.

Narrator: Male or female.

Music

The lyrics of both the songs are set to traditional Australian folk tunes. Music scores are readily available for both of them on the internet. There does not appear to be any copyright restriction on either tune, except in America where Carl Fischer Music has registered a copyright on 'Waltzing Matilda'. Ideally Tom is a guitarist, but if not, there needs to be a backup musician or musicians especially when the choir sings.

Definitions

- A dingo is an Australian wild dog.
- An avatar is an incarnation of a god; a supreme manifestation of an object of worship.
- Coo-ee is a call used in the Australian bush to attract attention. The first syllable is extended and the second rises rapidly with a shrill pitch.

- Phar Lap was a famous Australian racehorse who won the internationally recognized Melbourne Cup in 1930.
- A drongo is a stupid or slow-witted person, perhaps named after a racehorse in the 1920s that never won a race.
- To have a squiz is to look at something.
- Fair Dinkum is an Australian term that means true, genuine or authentic.
- A geezer is an odd person.
- Canberra is Australia's capital city where the Federal parliament sits.
- 'Ute' is short for 'utility', a vehicle with a both cabin for people and a rear tray for loading stock, materials etc. Popular with farmers.