

# Christian Nouveau

**Setting:** this is a Christmas play about a Christmas play called Nativity Nouveau, a modernized, faux-Shakespearean version of the nativity story. The set can imply an empty stage or backstage for the first two acts (appropriate for a cast to rehearse a play), with props and equipment scattered about. During the third act, it will imply a backstage area. Two curtained entrances should be at either end of a fake wall, and curtains can also be in front of any existing entrances.

## Cast:

**Nicholas Frost:** the writer and director of Nativity Nouveau.

**Carol Winters:** the assistant director of Nativity Nouveau.

**Christian Pine:** actor who plays Joseph in Nativity Nouveau.

**Noelle Holliday:** actress who plays Mary in Nativity Nouveau.

**Eve Saint:** actress who plays the wise woman in Nativity Nouveau.

**Joseph Snow:** actor who plays the wise man in Nativity Nouveau.

**Rudolph “Rudy” Bell:** actor who plays King Herod in Nativity Nouveau.

**Holly Star:** actress who plays the angel Gabriel in Nativity Nouveau.

**Jasper Wise:** the theatre owner.

**Props:** 8 folding chairs; 9 matching script books with excerpts from Nativity Nouveau; one script book that has a “Shakespeare for Dummies” cover inside; director’s notebook; football; hammer; cup for water; leg cast (or something to imply a leg cast); wheelchair or crutches; large baby doll with swaddling clothes; handful of safety pins; loud objects to use for loud crashes backstage (the folding chairs work).

**Wardrobe:** football jersey for Christian, but street clothes everywhere else; during Act III, everyone gets stage costumes appropriate to Nativity Nouveau (except for Nicholas, Carol, and Jasper): angel outfit for Holly; king outfit for Rudolph; peasant robes for Christian and Noelle; fancy robes for Joseph and Eve.

**Media:** audience reaction sounds for clapping and laughing.

**Note:** all lines in italics with “R” in front of the name can be read straight from a script, so do not absolutely have to be memorized—the actors need only get familiar with them.

## Act I

### Scene I

**Open:** all cast members except for Christian are seated in 6 randomly placed folding chairs angled toward stage left (one seat is empty). From stage left to right, everyone sits in general order of introduction: Nicholas (standing), Carol, Noelle, Eve, Rudolph, Joseph, Holly. Two chairs are at stage left facing stage right; Nicholas stands in front one of those chairs facing everyone, and Carol is seated beside him.

### Nicholas

Hello, everyone. I’d like to welcome you to the first night of play practice! I hope everyone brought their scripts because we’re going to start with a read-through. I already know who you are, but let’s do some introductions. We’ll start here. What’s your name? (Sits down)

**Noelle**

(Stuffy tone) My name is Noelle Holliday. I'm a veteran of 23 productions. I have performed both on and off Broadway, enjoying no less than 14 curtain calls and countless standing ovations. I have been nominated 3 times for a Tony, and was even considered for an Obie.

**Nicholas**

That's outstanding! We're truly honored to have someone of your stature. And next?

**Eve**

My name is Eve Saint, and (giddy tone) Ms. Holliday, let me just say what an honor it is to be here with such an accomplished actress. The only thing I've ever done is a stage production of The Frog Prince.

**Noelle**

Oh how charming, darling! Were you the princess?

**Eve**

I was the frog.

**Nicholas**

Interesting. Glad to have you with us. Next?

**Rudolph**

I'm Rudolph Bell, but you can call me Rudy. I can't say my acting career is quite that distinguished, but I have about 10 plays and musicals under my belt, including Fiddler on the Roof and Phantom of the Opera. None of them were anywhere near Broadway, though.

**Nicholas**

Oh, classics nonetheless. (Motions to Joseph) And you?

**Joseph**

My name is Joseph Snow. Good to meet everyone.

**Nicholas**

Welcome, Joseph! What are some of the plays you've done?

**Joseph**

I've only done a few plays, but you've probably never heard of them.

**Nicholas**

Well...okay, okay, we'll go with that. (Motions to Holly) And you, miss?

**Holly**

I'm Holly Star. I'm pleased to meet everyone! I've only done a few plays, and they were all at this theatre a very long time ago, but I'm sure excited to be a part of this one!

**Nicholas**

Oh really? I've been doing productions here for a while and I haven't seen you, so that must have been... children's theatre?

**Holly**

Yep! You got it! They were fun times.

**Nicholas**

Excellent! Thank you, everybody. Alright, we're still missing someone, and his name is... (flips through director's notebook)

**Christian**

(Enters stage right wearing football jersey, tossing football) Christian. Christian Pine. Sorry I'm late. (Sits down, continues to toss football)

**Nicholas**

That's okay. We seem to have a trend going, so do you want to tell us about some of the plays you've done in the past?

**Christian**

(Serious; stands back up) Oh, I did some plays in college, like a Statue of Liberty, Flea Flicker, Quarterback Sneak, and one that I came up with myself: The Jelly Donut. It's this one where you—

**Rudolph**

(Interrupting) No, he means stage plays, not football plays.

**Christian**

OH! Sorry, just nervous I guess. This is my first time acting. (Sits)

**Noelle**

You're not acting yet, dear. These are just introductions.

**Nicholas**

Glad to have you as part of the cast, Christian. And next, I'll let my assistant director introduce herself.

**Carol**

Hello, I'm Carol Winters, the assistant director. I've worked on 11 productions. This is my 12<sup>th</sup>, but I won't bore you with details.

**Nicholas**

And I'm Nicholas Frost. As you all know from auditions, I'm the writer and director of our little play, Nativity Nouveau: the nativity story with a Shakespearean twist. Let's get started shall we? Everyone get into a circle for a read-through.

(Everyone pulls out their scripts and starts moving their chairs into a semi-circle facing the audience in this order from stage left to right: Nicholas, Carol, Noelle, Eve, Holly, Rudolph, Christian, Joseph)

**Christian**

A read-through? What's that?

**Eve**

Everyone just reads their lines from the script.

**Christian**

That doesn't sound very fun. Can we do something else?

**Noelle**

Quite the opposite, dear: read-throughs are entertaining and helpful.

**Christian**

I don't see how, just sitting there reading.

**Nicholas**

Okay, now let's start reading Act 1, Scene 1. Noelle, you're Mary, so you have the first line.

**R Noelle**

(Reads from script) *Joseph, my beloved, our child enters this world tonight.* (Pauses, waiting for response, then reads again with emphasis on every syllable) *Joseph, my beloved, our child enters this world tonight.*

(Silence)

**Nicholas**

Christian, that's you.

**Christian**

Huh? Oh. But I thought we were just reading.

**Carol**

Out loud. Noelle just said your cue line.

**Christian**

Oh! But wasn't she talking to Joseph? I didn't want to eavesdrop. Shouldn't you respond, Joseph?

**Joseph**

No, that's you. You're Joseph. Please tell me you've read this.

**Christian**

Of course I have! But...I just thought...okay, who's who now?

**Nicholas**

(Points to each one) You're playing Joseph; Noelle is playing Mary; Joseph is the wise man; Eve is the—

**Christian**

(Interrupting) Okay, wait, I'm playing Joseph the wise man?

**Nicholas**

No, you're Joseph, Mary's husband. (Points to Joseph) He's the wise man.

**Christian**

(To Joseph) Oh I didn't know your wife's name was Mary.

**Joseph**

No, I'm not married. You're Joseph in the play. I'm a wise man in the same play, and my name in the play isn't Joseph.

**Christian**

So what's your name in the play?

**Joseph**

I don't have one.

**Christian**

Wait, I'm confused now.

**Carol**

Look, for tonight, just read the lines that have the name Joseph above them. Got it?

**Christian**

Oh, okay, and Joseph is the wise man?

**Carol**

No. (Points to Joseph) He is the wise man in the script. You're Joseph in the script.

**Christian**

(Excited) Got it! Okay, so she's Mary, I'm Joseph, and he's a wise guy, but who's everybody else?

**Joseph**

(Begins to visibly protest, but Nicholas waves him away)

**Nicholas**

(Points to each) Holly is the angel Gabriel, Rudy is King Herod, and Eve is the wise woman.

**Christian**

Okay. So...wise woman? I don't remember a wise woman in the nativity story.

**Nicholas**

It's not historically accurate, and I added a couple of things. Do you understand the parts now?

**Christian**

Yeah, yeah, I'm ready now.

**R Noelle**

(Grunts, acts visibly irritated) *Joseph, my beloved, our child enters this world tonight.*

**Christian**

(Hesitates, "reads" from script) O...Mary, um...shouldn't we...get you to a hospital?

**Eve**

That's not in the script! (Crosses to Christian, snatches the script book out of his hands, and pulls out Shakespeare for Dummies) Oh great, this is Shakespeare for Dummies with a fake cover! (Crosses to Carol and hands it to her)

**Christian**

I lost mine!

**Carol**

(Crosses to Christian and hands him an extra script) Here, take this extra one.

**Noelle**

(To Christian) Are you quite finished?

**Christian**

Done. Ready. I'm Joseph. Let's do this.

**R Noelle**

*Joseph, my beloved, our child enters this world tonight.*

**R Christian**

(Robotically) *O Mary, what fortune and misfortune is upon us? We have no boarding save for this stable. The inns will not have us.*

**R Noelle**

*The beasts, then, shall be our innkeepers.*

**Christian**

Yes, my love, I—I'm sorry, but wasn't Mary a lot younger? Isn't Noelle too old...er?

**Noelle**

Well I never!

**Rudolph**

Oh you did it now.

**Noelle**

Of all the—Nicholas, is this the kind of production you're running?

**Nicholas**

(Stands and approaches Christian) Christian, let's go work this out. (Motions him to rise)

**Christian**

Wha—? But... (Exits stage right with Nicholas)

**Carol**

Alright, while those two are gone, I'll be Joseph.

**Noelle**

(Stares angrily at the exit and grumbles)

**Carol**

(Watches Noelle for a few seconds) Noelle, let's just forget about that and take it from the top.

**Noelle**

(Maintains angry stare over to Carol, but then laughs) Joseph the wise guy! Indeed! (Keeps laughing)  
Okay, okay, I'm okay. (Clears voice) *Joseph, my beloved, our child enters this world tonight.*

**Fade lights. End of scene.**

## Scene II

**Open:** cast members are standing or sitting around in different spots and listening to Noelle, who is standing upstage and is in the middle of relating an anecdote about a previous production. Holly is in Nicholas' seat.

### Noelle

And so here she came, strutting down this grand staircase with the missing prop in her hand, covered head to toe with white powder, and she looked down at the director and said, "Call the police! I'm blind!"

(Everyone erupts in laughter)

### Noelle

And that's how my very first production started. Oh that was a grand time.

(Christian and Nicholas enter stage right)

### Nicholas

Well, Christian, I'm glad this all makes sense to you now.

### Christian

It all makes perfect sense now. Thanks, man. (Walks back to seat chanting to self) I'm Joseph. Don't talk about Noelle's age. (Repeats)

(Everyone starts returning to their seats except Holly.)

### Nicholas

(Crosses to his seat) Carol, were you able to fill in while we were gone? (Starts trying to get Holly to leave his seat, and she does during the next line)

### Carol

Yes. We kept going and got through the end of Act II, but we took a break. We're ready to pick back up if you are. The angel Gabriel already talked to Joseph and Mary, and Herod is about to perform his monologue.

### Noelle

Before he starts, Joseph, would you be a dear and fetch me a glass of water? I'm simply parched.

### Christian

(Stands) Sure! I'll be right back. (Crosses toward stage right)

### Joseph

No, she said Joseph.

### Christian

(Stops) No, I'm Joseph. I'll get your water! (Exits stage right)



**Joseph**

Nicholas, where'd you dig this guy up?

**Nicholas**

Look, some people just act strangely when they're nervous. He did so well at auditions!

**Noelle**

Well I can say I'm enchanted. He has such a boyish charm, I can't help but adore him! He seems earnest enough.

**Rudolph**

I guess that's the importance of being earnest.

**Holly**

Oh, Rudy (laughs), you're so funny.

**Joseph**

Tonight is supposed to be a simple read-through, and it's already turned into an adventure.

**Eve**

I guess he does spice things up a bit, doesn't he?

**Nicholas**

Let's keep going. Everyone grab your scripts and follow along. Rudy, it's time for Herod's monologue.

(Everyone looks at their scripts to follow along; during the monologue, Christian enters with the cup of water, and sits and listens, immediately acting bored; he plays with the football, tossing it up at first, then getting up and trying to play catch with Joseph around the line "Do my scholars lie?"; Joseph tosses it back gently, but motions for him to stop; everyone else tries to get him to stop, and they end up trying to steal the football; they succeed around the line "How old be this King Child now?" and play keep-away; Christian loses sight of the football and everyone sits around the line "But their lips will not be loosed freely...", with Holly hiding the football; Christian starts looking around everywhere for his football; everyone should be seated again by the end of the monologue.)

**R Rudolph**

(Crosses to downstage center and reads from script) *What news do I hear? Wise folk from the east ask among the streets of Jerusalem for the King of the Jews? Fetch the travelers! Bring them hither! I am the king of the Jews, proclaimed by the emperor himself! Be this a ruse—a gamble by some foe hitherto unknown, bested by me on the field of battle in a skirmish barely worthy of mention—or be this truth spoken into mine ears? Shall I, though I be sure of myself and my reign, be concerned with a trifle such as this, or does such a threat exist? Do my scholars lie? Within Bethlehem shall the King be born, a savior for all. I know of the prophecy of this usurper, and indeed what it means. What brought them hither was a star; thus by a star shall He be found. But how do I know which child it is? How old be this King Child now? There are many children in Bethlehem, and none to betray this imposter to me—for they would all surely deceive even their current king for their new one. These wise travelers have come here with knowledge, yet know not where the child is—they would be there now were it otherwise. Hence, these travelers shall be brought before me here in my chamber and questioned so that I may learn whom I must kill. And then they shall be sent into that land to find the child and, lacking knowledge of my*

*intentions, report back to me. But their lips will not be loosed freely, so I will give my earnest promise to worship this new king, and that will gain their confidence—confidence enough to deliver the very child they seek into my waiting hands. But now I silence myself as they approach. (Sits back down)*

(Everyone claps)

**Noelle**

Rudy, that was remarkable for a first read-through. It contained so much emotion!

**Rudolph**

Thank you. Thank you.

**Nicholas**

Okay, Joseph, it's your line now.

**Christian**

(Sad) No it's not.

**Joseph**

You mean wise man, right?

**Nicholas**

Yes, yes, it's the wise man's line now. Sorry.

**Christian**

Can I have my football back?

**Holly**

Are you going to try to kill everyone with it again?

**Rudolph**

Wait, what did I miss?

**Christian**

I didn't try to kill anyone! Just because wise guy here didn't want to play...

**Noelle**

Ha! Wise guy again! Christian—

**Christian**

Joseph.

**Noelle**

Darling, you're going about this whole business the wrong way. There's no need to be blue. I believe you have the potential to be great at this.

**Christian**

How?

**Noelle**

Treat us as part of your team. Nicholas is the coach, and we're all teammates, but instead of throwing footballs, we throw lines, and it's up to you to catch them and run them into the...oh, what's that thing called—that big painted area at the end of a football field?

**Christian**

The end zone?

**Noelle**

Yes, that's it exactly! So instead of a field, we play on a stage.

**Christian**

(Thinks for a moment) And instead of jerseys, you wear costumes.

**Noelle**

Now you're getting it!

**Christian**

(More excited) And instead of an assistant coach, you have an assistant director. (Stands up) And instead of a cheering crowd, you have a cheering audience. And instead of Black Out, you wear stage makeup. And instead of dumping Gatorade on your coach, you dump wine on your director!

**Nicholas**

Well I don't know about that.

**Christian**

No, I get it now. Thank you! Wow! Okay, we need a good team huddle, coach.

**Nicholas**

Oh please don't call me coach.

**Christian**

No, let's do this. Let's get pumped! Come on! (Motions for everyone to gather around)

(Noelle rises and joins Christian, but everyone else slowly, reluctantly gathers around, and Christian puts his hand in the center, followed by everyone else)

**Christian**

Okay, on the count of three, let's do "Act!" Ready? 1, 2, 3, Act! (Throws his hand up; everyone else says "Act!" in their own way, some unenthusiastically, some getting into it, as their hands fly up) Whoo whoo! Yeah! I'm pumped! (Grabs his football and jogs out stage right)

**Eve**

Now where's he going?

**Holly**

I don't know, but he got the football back.

(Everyone sits back down)

**Carol**

(Waits) Well, if he doesn't come back, I'll fill in again. Joseph, it's your line anyway, so let's just—

**Christian**

(Shuffles back in from stage right) There's...there's not a locker room back here.

**Noelle**

Come join us, dear.

(Christian sits down)

**Nicholas**

Excellent! Joseph, it's... (looks at Christian)

(Christian smiles and points at Joseph)

**Nicholas**

(Looks back at Joseph) ...it's your line.

**R Joseph**

Alrighty. (Reads from script) *Herod the great king, your summons has called us.*

**Fade lights. End of scene. End of act.**

## Act II

### Scene I

**Open:** a week later. The cast is practicing the play, still with scripts. Noelle is laying down with Christian kneeling beside her. Noelle holds a baby doll in swaddling clothes. Nicholas and Carol are seated in their original chairs at stage left (all other chairs are gone), watching, and the rest of the cast is seated or standing out of the way.

**R Joseph**

(Enters stage left with Eve) *Hark! What light through yonder stable breaks?*

**R Eve**

*It is the East and the star that has led us here!*

**R Joseph**

*And there, be they the bearers of the King?*

**R Eve**

*We need but ask.*

**R Joseph**

*To ask, or not to ask, that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to—* (interrupted by the sound of hammering from backstage). *What's that?*

**Carol**

*I'll go find out. (Exits stage right)*

**Jasper**

(Enters stage left, hammer in hand, after Carol exits) *Oh, I'm so sorry! I didn't think to check if you were practicing before I started hammering.*

**Nicholas**

*Ah, Jasper! Hold on, everyone. You haven't had a chance to meet yet. This is Jasper Wise. He's the owner of this theatre.*

**Jasper**

*Oh, I already know this one, though. (Crosses to Holly and they hug) I've been wondering when you'd be at my theatre again, Holly. Good to see you.*

**Holly**

*You, too, Jasper.*

**Jasper**

(Crosses back to Nicholas) *Everyone else, it's a pleasure meeting you. I was just doing a minor repair back here, but I'll wait until you're done. May I watch you practice?*

**Nicholas**

Sure, you can watch! You might even give me a few pointers. I always value your opinions. (Sits down with Jasper and hands him a script) Okay, let's continue. Joseph, start from "to ask".

**R Joseph**

*To ask, or not to ask, that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to remain silent and be thought a fool, or speak up and remove all doubt.*

**R Christian**

*Mary, travelers approach!*

**R Eve**

(To Joseph) *What outrageous fortune! He saved us the trouble.*

(Christian crosses to Joseph and Eve.)

**R Joseph**

*A star led us here. We want to worship your child.*

**R Eve**

(To Joseph) *That sounds almost of madness.*

**R Joseph**

(To Eve) *Though this be madness, yet there is method in it!*

**R Christian**

*Pray thee, how then do you know my child is worthy?*

**R Eve**

*Even Herod himself knows. The King of the Jews has arrived!*

**R Christian**

*An angel of the Lord has said as much. Enter, then, and worship.*

(Joseph and Eve rush forward and bow down in front of Noelle. Christian moves near Jasper and Nicholas.)

**Christian**

Hi, Jasper, I'm Christian. What do you think so far? Pretty good, huh?

**R Joseph**

*We bear gifts, fair maiden! Gold, frankincense, and myrrh!*

**R Noelle**

*Joseph, what visitors be these?*

**Christian**

Wanna hear a joke? Why does Santa have three gardens? So he can hoe hoe hoe! (Laughs)

**Nicholas**

Christian, it's your line. Please stop bothering Mr. Wise. The others need you in practice.

**Christian**

Oh, sure thing, Nick. I was just making him feel welcome, that's all. (Returns to Noelle's side and Noelle starts chiding him silently)

**Jasper**

You let him call you Nick? I thought you hated that name.

**Nicholas**

I do hate that name. Christian acts so strangely when he's nervous. He did so well in auditions, and he's getting it, but...you should have seen him last week when he was leading us into a team huddle.

**R Christian**

*Mary, these travelers have come to worship our newborn son.*

**R Joseph**

*(To Eve) The lady doth protest too much, methinks.*

**R Noelle**

*I protest not! I merely inquire.*

**Jasper**

Well, let me ask you something: is this entire play just Shakespeare's most famous lines all put together?

**Nicholas**

No, but they just fit so perfectly in this scene!

**Jasper**

(Looks at script) And I don't think they were still in the stable when the wise men arrived, were they? Weren't they in a house, and wasn't it a lot later? And I thought Gabriel was a male angel, and didn't he arrive a lot sooner?

**Nicholas**

Yes, but this isn't historically accurate. I wrote it to *imply* the nativity story, not tell it all.

(Sound of crashing comes from back stage. Carol yells. Everyone stands except Christian and Noelle.)

**Jasper**

(Stands) What just happened?

**Holly**

That must be Carol! She went to find out about the hammering sound.

**Jasper**

Oh I hope she didn't hurt herself! My liability is...I mean...I hope she's okay! (Exits stage right; Nicholas stands and follows)

**Carol**

(Enters stage left) I'm okay, I'm okay! Where's Nicholas?

**Rudolph**

He went to look for you.

**Holly**

He thought you were hurt because you screamed.

**Carol**

I was just startled. Christian's football was rolling around on the floor, and I didn't want anyone to trip on it, so I tried to pick it up, but it slipped and rolled away.

**Christian**

You fumbled!

(Noelle removes the swaddling clothes and hits Christian with them.)

**Carol**

I chased it, but I ran into a ladder with a toolbox on it.

**Holly**

Oh, Carol, I'm so glad you're not hurt. Jasper was worried.

**Carol**

Jasper was here?! That must be who was hammering. (Another loud crash comes from backstage; Jasper screams) Oh no! (Exits stage right)

**Nicholas**

(Enters stage left) Oh great, now what happened?

**Joseph**

Carol's fine. She was just here, but Jasper screamed and she took off after him.

**Nicholas**

Oh no! (Exits stage right)

**Christian**

I'm getting dizzy.

**Holly**

Well this is just great, isn't it, Christian? Your football seems to be quite the troublemaker.

**Noelle**



(Stands and moves in between Holly and Christian, leaving the doll on the floor) Now now, it does no good to place blame. We don't really know what's happening at this point.

**Holly**

I'm going to see if I can help. (Exits stage right)

**Rudolph**

I'll come with. (Exits stage right)

**Noelle**

(To Christian) Well, it seems there's a little panic going on right now. Much ado about nothing, one might say!

**Carol**

(Enters stage right) Jasper's unconscious.

**Noelle**

Oh, that's not nothing.

**Eve**

Oh my! Do we need an ambulance?

(Holly and Rudolph enter stage right)

**Rudolph**

Where's the first aid kit?

**Carol**

Do we have blankets anywhere?

(Nicholas enters stage right)

**All at the same time**

**Rudolph:** Nicholas, do you know where the first aid kit is?

**Holly:** Is he going to be okay, Nicholas? Please tell me he'll be okay.

**Carol:** Do we need to get blankets? I'll go get blankets.

**Joseph:** I've heard you shouldn't move the victim. Nobody move him.

**Eve:** Do I need to call for an ambulance? Should we call 911?

**Noelle:** Do we need smelling salts? Sometimes all it takes is smelling salts.

**Nicholas**

Everyone—everyone—everyone! One at a time! Let's just calm down. I need to find a phone. (Pushes through the crowd and exits stage left)

**Holly**

There's one on the wall. I'll show you! (Exits stage left)

**Carol**

I'll find blankets. (Exits stage right)

**Eve**

I have a phone in my purse! (Exits stage left)

**Noelle**

I'll see if we have some smelling salts. (Exits stage right)

**Rudolph**

I'll try to find the first aid kit. (Exits stage left)

**Joseph**

I'll make sure nobody moves him. (Exits stage right)

**Christian**

(Watches each person leave) Oh I'm dizzy! (Falls backward like he's exhausted)

**Fade lights. End of scene.**

## Scene II

**Open:** everyone is on stage pacing around except for Nicholas.

(Nicholas enters stage left; everyone crowds him and starts asking what happened and if Jasper will be okay.)

**Nicholas**

(Motions for everyone to calm down) Okay, okay, it's okay. Jasper will be just fine. I just got off the phone with the hospital, and they said he's still unconscious, so they'll need to keep him under observation. That's all we know.

(Everyone spreads back out.)

**Joseph**

Now that this is all over, I'd like to know what happened. How did Jasper get knocked unconscious?

**Holly**

Well, you might ask Christian about that.

**Christian**

What?! I don't know anything!

**Holly**

Your football caused the whole thing. We found it by Jasper's feet!

(Christian starts slowly backing up toward stage right.)

**Noelle**

Are you saying that Jasper was knocked unconscious by tripping over a football?

**Holly**

That's exactly what I'm saying.

**Noelle**

Please explain how that's Christian's fault.

**Rudolph**

Now, Noelle, no one is saying that.

**Carol**

No one besides Holly is saying that.

**Holly**

If Christian hadn't brought that stupid football in the first place, or if he would have at least put it somewhere safe, this wouldn't have happened! When Jasper went to check on Carol, that football was still rolling around everywhere, and it tripped him.

**Noelle**

How do you know that's what happened?

**Holly**

What else could have happened?

**Joseph**

That makes no sense. That's a fallacious argument.

**Eve**

A lot of other things could have happened. We just don't know at this point.

**Holly**

Well I'm going to destroy that football. It's brought us enough trouble already.

(Christian finally makes it to the door and exits stage right.)

**Rudolph**

(Crosses to stage right while speaking) Stop! Look at us! Need I remind you that Christmas is right around the corner? We're practicing a Christmas play—Christmas: the celebration of the birth of Jesus, the very embodiment of love. And yet we're acting like children on a playground, placing blame and pointing fingers when we should be treating each other with compassion.

**Nicholas**

Rudy's right. This is getting us nowhere. We should be showing love toward each other. Yes, it's unfortunate that Jasper was hurt, but it will do no good for us to bicker.

**Rudolph**

Now can anyone tell me where Christian has gone? He's not even here to defend himself!

(Everyone gasps and asks where he went)

**Noelle**

I'll go try to find him. (Exits stage right)

**Rudolph**

Holly, when they come back, I'd like you to apologize to Christian.

**Holly**

(Sighs) You're right. I was just angry. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have lashed out like that. It couldn't have been Christian's fault.

**Rudolph**

Good. Say that to Christian when he comes back.

(Christian enters stage right, holding his football, followed by Noelle)

**Noelle**

I found him!

**Christian**

Hey, I found my football. I thought for sure I had left it outside when I came in today, but it was in the hall back here. Since it's caused so much trouble, though, I figured I'd get rid of it for you.

(Everyone shouts "No" and takes one step toward Christian.)

**Carol**

It was my fault that I ran into the ladder. It wasn't the football. I'm just clumsy.

**Holly**

Christian, I'm sorry for what I said. I overreacted. There's no need to destroy your football!

**Christian**

I wasn't going to destroy it. I was just going to take it home.

**Nicholas**

(Crosses to stage left) Well there's no need now. Everyone, I know that Jasper's sudden injury was a bit of a shock, so I'll leave it up to you: do you want to keep practicing, or call it a day and resume tomorrow?

We do still have a lot to cover.

**Holly**

The show must go on. I think Jasper understands that better than anyone here.

**Carol**

Yes, I think he'd want us to continue.

**Christian**

Let's act, coach! (Crosses to original position and sits, smiling)

**Nicholas**

Please don't call me—

**Noelle**

(Interrupts) Yes, let's act, coach. (Smiles)

**Nicholas**

(Resigned tone) Places, everyone.

(Everyone moves back to their positions. Christian picks up the swaddling clothes, wonders what they are, then sits on them for comfort on the hard floor. Noelle crosses to her position, picks up the doll, and starts looking around, but doesn't sit yet.)

**Nicholas**

Where were we, Carol?

**Carol**

I believe the wise man and wise woman had just entered the stable.

**Noelle**

I have the doll, but where did I put the swaddling clothes?

**Christian**

The what?

**Noelle**

The rags babies are wrapped in. I hit you with them earlier.

**Christian**

Oh! (Pulls out rags and holds them up) These?

**Noelle**

(Amusedly disgusted tone) Ah, yes, thank you, darling. Just...leave them there. (Lays down)

**Nicholas**

Okay, Noelle, start from "Joseph, what visitors...".

**R Noelle**

*Joseph, what visitors be these?*

**R Christian**

*Mary, these travelers have come to worship our newborn son.*

**Lights fade. End of scene. End of act.**

## **Act III**

### **Scene I**

**Open:** opening night. The cast members are “backstage” in costume. Some are pacing about, some are peeking through the curtains at the “stage”. Nicholas and Carol are not present. The mobile curtained entrances should have bright light shining from behind them to imply bright stage lights showing on stage.

#### **Joseph**

(Peeks through curtain of stage left fake door) Man, look at that crowd! There are so many people!

#### **Holly**

I hope no one throws tomatoes!

#### **Christian**

Great, we’re going to be covered in tomatoes?

#### **Rudolph**

No, we’re not going to be covered in tomatoes.

#### **Eve**

Yeah, no one throws tomatoes any more.

#### **Christian**

What do they do instead?!

#### **Nicholas**

(Enters stage right, crosses to center) Okay, everyone, we’re ready to go. This is going to be great! You’re all going to break a leg! (Moves back toward stage right)

#### **Christian**

Oh great, they break your legs now?! I don’t want to do this anymore.

#### **Carol**

(Enters stage right) Look who’s out of the hospital! (Jasper enters stage right in a chair or on crutches and wears a leg cast; crosses to center)

#### **Christian**

Oh great, they already broke Jasper’s leg! We’re doomed!

#### **Noelle**

Christian, darling, the term “break a leg” is a wish of good luck.

#### **Jasper**

No one broke my leg anyway. It’s just a severe sprain. I twisted my ankle when I fell, but the doctors said an old injury made it a lot worse than it should have been. Hence the cast.

**Christian**

I'm so sorry, Jasper! That was my football you tripped over. I shouldn't have been so careless with it.

**Jasper**

Your football? (Thinks for a moment) Oh yes, I saw a football outside the building that day, so I brought it in with me so I could find out whose it was. When I heard you practicing, I forgot it by my ladder.

**Carol**

So that's why it was rolling around!

**Jasper**

I didn't trip over the football, though. I didn't trip at all, in fact: my old knee injury acted up and my leg gave out. It hasn't done that for a long time.

**Noelle**

Well, there we have it, Christian! Your football isn't the culprit!

**Holly**

I'm glad you're doing okay now, Jasper.

**Nicholas**

My sentiments exactly, but we have a show to put on now, so let's get to it.

**Carol**

I'll go double-check the props. (Exits stage left)

**Jasper**

I'd like to watch the show. Can someone help me out to the audience?

**Nicholas**

I'll help you on my way out to do the introduction. (Exits stage right with Jasper)

**Carol**

(Enters stage left) Okay, I have the baby doll to stand in for Jesus, but where did his swaddling clothes go? They were here last night.

(Everyone looks around and says they haven't seen them)

**Carol**

I'll go find them. I'll get rags from the janitor's closet if I have to. Oh, but before I do, Eve, your robe needs adjusting. Let me get that. (Sets the doll down on a bench or chair, adjusts Eve's robe, then exits stage right, without the doll)



**R Nicholas**

(Speaks from the “stage” to the “audience”) *Good evening! My name is Nicholas Frost. I’m the director of the play you’ve all come to see, Nativity Nouveau.*

**Holly**

He’s introducing us!

**R Nicholas**

*I’d like to welcome you and let you know we’re about to get started. We have a great cast and crew, and we’re all eager to entertain you. As you may already know, this is the classic nativity of Jesus, but with a Shakespearean twist.*

**Eve**

This is so exciting!

**R Nicholas**

*Before we get started, though, I want to give a big round of applause to the owner of this theatre, Jasper Wise, for hosting us in this beautiful venue and making a point of being here on opening night! How about it?*

(Play audience clapping sound)

**Christian**

Oh, I don’t feel so good.

**Noelle**

It’s just butterflies, darling. You’ll get over it. You’re going to be great!

**Holly**

You’ll be great, Christian.

**R Nicholas**

*And now, without further ado, I present to you Nativity Nouveau!*

(Play audience clapping sound)

**Joseph**

(Looks out curtain) Okay, he’s done.

**Nicholas**

(Enters stage right through fake door) You’re on!

**Christian**

Oh here we go. (To Noelle) I’ll break your leg!

**Noelle**

No it’s...never mind.

(Christian and Noelle exit stage left through the fake doors)

**Nicholas**

Now where's my assistant director?

**Fade lights. End of scene.**

## Scene II

**Open:** Rudolph is on “stage” just finishing his monologue. Joseph and Eve are backstage prepared to walk to the “stage”, and Holly, Christian, and Noelle are listening to the monologue. Christian is tossing his football.

### R Rudolph

(Speaking from the “stage”) *And then they shall be sent into that land to find the child and, lacking knowledge of my intentions, report back to me.*

### Nicholas

(Enters stage right) I can’t find Carol anywhere. How far are we now?

(Everyone shushes Nicholas)

### R Rudolph

*But their lips will not be loosed freely, so I will give my earnest promise to worship this new king, and that will gain their confidence—confidence enough to deliver the very child they seek into my waiting hands. But now I silence myself as they approach.*

(Play audience clapping sound; Joseph and Eve exit stage left.)

### Holly

It sounds like Rudy did a great job with Herod’s monologue!

### R Joseph

(From the “stage”) *Herod the great king, your summons has called us.*

(Noelle looks out curtain at stage left and Christian paces downstage left.)

### Nicholas

You know, I think this is turning out great so far. (Sits down on the chair or bench where the doll is, then picks up the doll and looks at it)

### R Rudolph

*Be you the wise folk from the east?*

### R Eve

*Aye, and we have come at thy bidding, king.*

(Play audience laughing sound.)

### Nicholas

What?! Why are they laughing? That’s not a funny line! (Runs to curtain at stage right and throws doll back toward bench or chair, but misses; the doll ends up on the floor)

(Holly crosses to stage right and picks up the doll.)

**Noelle**

(Laughs) Eve's wardrobe seems to be malfunctioning.

(Christian rushes to the curtain at stage left and tries to look around Noelle.)

**Nicholas**

Okay, do we have some safety pins? We're going to need a minor repair.

**Holly**

I'll go get some. I know where they are. (Exits stage right, taking the doll with her)

(Play audience laughing sound again)

**Nicholas**

This isn't supposed to be a funny scene! This is a disaster! I can't watch. (Crosses to downstage and paces back and forth)

(Christian crosses to curtain at stage right to get a better look.)

**Carol**

(Enters stage left, carrying swaddling clothes; crosses to Nicholas) Nicholas, we should talk to Jasper about his cleaning crew. Swaddling clothes are not cleaning rags!

**Nicholas**

Carol, the crowd is laughing at our play!

**Carol**

What? Why?

**Noelle**

Take a look.

(Carol crosses to the curtain at stage left and Nicholas crosses to the curtain at stage right, pushing Christian out of the way; Christian crosses to stage left, but Noelle intercepts him and escorts him downstage left, taking the football from him and setting it down.)

**Carol**

(Looks through curtain at stage left) Oh dear, Eve's robe seems to be having issues again. I thought I fixed that.

**R Rudolph**

*Be well, travelers, on your journey to Bethlehem. Return to me the child so that I may worship him as well!*

**Holly**

(Enters stage right with a few safety pins, but without the doll) I found the pins!

**Nicholas**

Holly, Rudy just gave your cue! Take the pins with you and give them to Eve.

(Rudy enters stage left through fake door.)

**R Holly**

(Exits through fake door at stage right, then speaks from the "stage") *Hail, travelers! Fear not, for I bring good and weathered advice from the Lord.*

(Nicholas and Carol continue to look through their curtains.)

**Carol**

(Looks around fake wall toward Nicholas) What, are they going to do repairs on stage?

**Noelle**

I've done it before.

**Carol**

Good luck. (Exits stage left)

(Noelle crosses to and looks through curtain at stage left; Christian remains downstage left and tosses the football around again.)

**R Eve**

*To behold such a flaming countenance as this, it is torture, yet I cannot turn away!*

**R Joseph**

*Yea, it is too much full of beauty.*

**Nicholas**

See? She's got it already.

**Carol**

(Enters stage left, still carrying the swaddling clothes; crosses to center and looks around) Nicholas!

**Nicholas**

(Crosses to Carol) What?

**Carol**

Where's Jesus?

**Nicholas**

Huh?

**Carol**

Where's baby Jesus?! I had him earlier! Where is he?!

**Nicholas**

Oh, the baby doll! You set him right over—(points to empty seat at stage right)—well he was here just a minute ago.

(Nicholas and Carol cross to stage right and start looking around.)

**Carol**

Great. Just great. I spent all that time finding these rags for nothing!

**Nicholas**

He's here somewhere, I'm sure.

**Carol**

Do you have a flashlight? It's so dark back here I can't see anything.

**Nicholas**

No, but we have to find him.

**R Joseph**

*Heavenly traveler, we thank ye.*

**R Eve**

*We shall heed thy advice concerning Herod's deception.*

**Nicholas**

Oh great, that's the scene change. Joseph and Mary need to be on stage with the baby in just a few seconds!

**Noelle**

(Crosses to Carol) Carol, that's our cue. Do you have the baby?

**Carol**

Um...I'm afraid we've lost him.

**Noelle**

Oh goodness me! The scene opens any second!

**Christian**

(Crosses to Noelle) What's going on?

**Noelle**

Our child is missing and we're due on stage!

**Christian**

(Thinks for a moment) Wait, I have an idea. Give me the rags. (Takes the swaddling clothes from Carol, crosses to stage center, and holds up the football) I dub thee "baby". (Wraps the football) Now *this* is what you call a Hail Mary pass! (Hands Noelle the wrapped football and escorts her through the fake door at stage left)

(Holly enters through fake door at stage right and immediately exits stage right.)

**Nicholas**

(Stares out of the curtain for a little bit, watching the “play”; turns to the remaining cast backstage) You know, despite his faults, Christian sure turned out to be a boon. It's almost like he was meant to be here.

**Holly**

(Enters stage right with the doll) Hey, I just found the baby over here. Didn't Joseph and Mary need it?

**Carol**

Well there he is! (Sighs; crosses to Holly) Christian just used the football instead. (To Nicholas) I don't know if he was meant to be here, but I will say he added some spice to this sleepy little production of ours.

**Rudolph**

He sure did. And listen: he's giving us the reason for the season right now.

**R Christian**

(Offstage) *Pray thee, how then do you know my child is worthy?*

**R Eve**

(Offstage) *Even Herod himself knows. The King of the Jews has arrived!*

**R Christian**

(Offstage) *An angel of the Lord has said as much. Enter, then, and worship.*

**Rudolph**

That's it. “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.’” That's why we're here: not just to spread Christmas cheer and sing carols and frolic in the snow, but to celebrate the birth and life of the man who gave us reason to take over this ancient holiday and turn it into a celebration of selfless love—a celebration of the birth of the embodiment of love. Jesus.

**Christian**

(Pokes his head in from the curtain stage left) And egg nog! (Disappears behind the curtain)

**Fade lights. End of scene. End of act.**

## Epilogue

**Open:** everyone is seated in orderly rows angled to stage left. Nicholas stands in front of them.

### Nicholas

Well, folks, we had a great performance. Sure, we may have had a few hiccups, but we overcame them, and the audience loved the show. That's due in no small part to your dedication, quick thinking, and creativeness. I would like you to know just how much I loved being your director.

### Christian

(Stands up) And I'd like you all to know how much you mean to me. I may have been a real basket-case at the beginning of this, but I feel like a new man now. I looked up the meaning of "Nativity Nouveau", and it means "new birth". Well that's exactly what I've gone through: a new birth. You might call me Christian Nouveau! (Sits)

(Everyone laughs and claps)

### Nicholas

Merry Christmas, everyone! God bless, and have a safe and happy new year!

Script by Shawn Thornburg  
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