

# Nestled in the Stable

*By  
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*Master*

*Nestled in the Stable*

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**STORY OF THE PLAY**

Various animals in the stable aren't happy when two strangers intrude upon their quiet night. The sparrows, cows, and sheep, along with mice and doves are upset and wish the humans would find another place to stay. They don't want to share their grain or warm hay. And after walking for miles, the poor donkey is too tired to help Joseph and Mary. But then God fulfills his most glorious promise: Baby Jesus is born. Everything changes as each group of animals gives a special gift to comfort the Baby and his parents. At last, as all finally sleep, the tired donkey stays watchful over the beautiful stable.

This play is designed to solve the common production and rehearsal problems of Sunday school and youth programs. It requires minimal scenery, adjusts to any performance space, needs no special lighting, requires minimal costumes, can be rehearsed in small units, and has a flexible cast size.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### Storytellers

STORYTELLER #1: Emily Loeppky

STORYTELLER #2: Ivy Link

### Animals

(Each grade or age group can represent a group of animals.)

MICE: Preschool Class

SPARROWS: Grade 1 to 4 Class - Girls

SHEEP: Grade 1 to 4 Class – Boys

SHEEP 1: Freddie Vranckx

SHEEP 2: Spencer Vranckx

SHEEP 3: Morgan Wissink, Remi Cyr

DOVES: Grade 5 to 6 Class – Girls

COWS: Grade 5 to 6 Class – Boys

COW 1: Owen McNamara

COW 2: Zach Peters

COW 3: Daniel Cook

COW 4: Simon Vranckx

DONKEY: Abe Peters

### Citizens

TOWNSPEOPLE/ANGELS: Selena Peters, Randy Nunn, Cedric Tomico,

Ryan McNamara

INNKEEPER: Caleb Peters

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The scenery is a simple wooden manger in the center of the playing area. To the left and right of the manger are small wooden fence pieces that help suggest the inside of the stable. Down stage of the manger is an open playing area large enough for each group of children to execute the movements of the animals. The manger should be filled with 'angel hair-pillow filler', a white fibrous material that resembles cotton. Underneath the angel hair is a bright light that can be turned on at the moment of Jesus' birth. The light will symbolically be the Baby Jesus. The angel hair will hide the lighting instrument. When the lighting instrument is turned on, the angel hair will diffuse the light and give the illusion that the entire manger is glowing with God's warm and captivating love.

Storyteller #1 and #2 are on opposite sides of the manger and talking directly to the audience. They should sound almost like one voice; clarifying and explaining the story kindly and carefully. Their lines suggest possible movements to help the children characterize the animals. The lines should not continue until the children complete the movement. An actual Joseph and Mary is not needed. The narrators describe Joseph and Mary's actions. The emphasis in the manger scene needs to be the Baby, which is represented by pure light.

The specific lines can be reassigned to include more students as animals. Elaborate costumes are NOT required. Simple prop or costume accessories would suffice to suggest the personality of the animals. For example, pretty feather masks for the doves; mice ears and tails for the mice; etc. The physical gestures and actions of children are much more effective than extensive costuming to create the personality and presence of the animals.

The entire selection should be underscored continuously with a medley of Christmas carols played softly on the piano or organ.

## **Nestled in the Stable**

STORYTELLER #1: Long, long ago, in a country far, far away,

STORYTELLER #2: On a night that MIGHT have been just like any other winter night;

STORYTELLER #1 With a brisk cutting wind, that blew the clouds south, and left the sky crystal cold and black.

STORYTELLER #2: The kind of night that made the tiny sparrows ...

(The SPARROWS enter from audience into playing - semi circle around center stage microphone)

STORYTELLER #2: Lift their wings ...

(SPARROWS lift their arms.)

STORYTELLER #1: Flip their tails ...

(SPARROWS spin in place.)

STORYTELLER #2: And soooar!

(SPARROWS run tight circles with arms outstretched.)

STORYTELLER #2: (Continued.) Resting finally in their warm stable nests.

(SPARROWS stop running and pose in center for the lines.)

SPARROWS: (In unison.)

It's so cold outside

We think we'd better hide.

STORYTELLER #1: And just as fast as tiny sparrows could glide ...

(SPARROWS stand with arms outstretched, ready to take off again.)

STORYTELLER #2: They flew this way ...

(Half SPARROWS run SL and the remaining half run SR.)

STORYTELLER #1: Then that way ...

(SPARROWS run to opposite sides of the stage.)

STORYTELLER #1: (Continued.) Then this way again.

(SPARROWS run clockwise, forming a big circle around the circumference of the stage.)

STORYTELLER #2: And again they went back that way.

(SPARROWS run counter-clockwise around the circumference of the stage.)

STORYTELLER #1: Until at last ...

(SPARROWS tighten and slow the circling motion until they are all nestled in a bunch at the center of the stage.)

SPARROWS:

Now at last we can be still and rest  
and pile all our straw into a cozy warm nest.

STORYTELLER #2: Then the sparrows chirped ...

SPARROWS:

This straw is ours.  
And we don't care,  
Who else is cold,  
Because we don't share.

(SPARROWS slowly move in all directions and position themselves at the **back right side** of the stage. The sparrows don't have to "freeze" in a sparrow position until their next entrance, rather; they should just watch and enjoy the other animals.)

STORYTELLER #1: And then the sparrows nestled down in their nests near the roof of the little stable.

STORYTELLER #2: But this dark black night, didn't STAY dark and black.

STORYTELLER #1: First the moon came up, round and white, and very proud.

STORYTELLER #2: And very full.

STORYTELLER #1: So full that it out twinkled the tiny stars ...

STORYTELLER #2: And filled the fields with shadows.

STORYTELLER #1 and #2: But then something else came up.

STORYTELLER #1: Something new.

(COWS begin to enter from the audience. Their movement is very slow and swaggering. Perhaps their mouths exaggerate a cow chewing.)

STORYTELLER #2: Something different.

STORYTELLER #1: Something that the cows who were lazily munching their midnight cuds ...

STORYTELLER #1 and #2: Never, never EVER expected.

COW #1: (Looks up.) Uh, oh.

COW #2: (Looks up, identical movement for all cows.) Uh, oh.

COW #3: (Same.) Uh, oh.

COW #4: Oh my!

STORYTELLER #2: Said the cows as they looked up high above them.

STORYTELLER #1: They saw that the moon was going to have to share the sky with the biggest ...

STORYTELLER #2: The brightest ...

STORYTELLER #1: The whitest star that these cows had ever seen.

COWS: (To audience.) That is the whitest star I have ever seen!

STORYTELLER #2: All of them just stood there swishing their tails and staring at that huge-beautiful Bethlehem star.

(COWS stand in place looking up at the star as if spellbound. They still exaggerate their chewing.)

STORYTELLER #1: Until finally, they just looked at one another and said:

(During the following lines, whatever simple movement is selected for the COWS should be done in unison.)

COWS:

We shake our heads  
We don't know what to say.  
We've seen many things,  
But never a star so bright  
It turns night into day.

STORYTELLER #2: And the cows put their heads together to think about this very strange star shining above them.

(COWS form a tight circle with the top of their heads touching. Each removes head from circle and speaks to audience during their line. After speaking, each cow puts head back into circle.)

COW #1: This just ain't right.

COW #2: It's not day, it's still night.

COW #3: We know our world well.

COW #4: We know what should and should not be.

COWS: (All now look at audience.)  
So we'll just pretend,  
That we don't see.

(All COWS cover their eyes after they speak.)

COW #1: I don't see nothing.  
COW #2: Not me.  
COW #3: Not me.  
COW #4: Nor me.

(As the narration continues **COWS circle Once Around** the playing area and try to peek through their fingers at the star. They are distressed to see that the star is still there. The cows then plod off with their heads lowered to the back of center stage.)

STORYTELLER #1: So the cows closed their eyes,  
STORYTELLER #2: Shut down their hearts,  
STORYTELLER #1: Turned off their brains,  
STORYTELLER #2: And lowered their heads, continuing to munch.  
STORYTELLER #1: Not paying any attention at all to the huge bright star that outshone the sun,  
STORYTELLER #2: And seemed to hover right above their little stable.  
STORYTELLER #1: With each passing minute, the star grew brighter and brighter.  
STORYTELLER #2: Lighting up the lakes, streams,  
STORYTELLER #1: forests, and fields.

(The SHEEP now move slowly from the audience and pose in the center of the playing area with their heads down.)

STORYTELLER #2: The huge star burned so brightly in the sky ... that the sheep, who were bunched together on the hillside looked up,

STORYTELLER #1: Stood up.

(SHEEP stand up from their spot in the audience.)

STORYTELLER #2: And walked about in the pasture.

(SHEEP enter the stage and position themselves around the microphone. They should look like they are almost clinging to each other for security as they walk.)

STORYTELLER #1: The sheep were amazed as only sheep could be amazed.

SHEEP #1: I think I'm amazed.

SHEEP #2: Well, if you're amazed, then I guess I'll be amazed too.

SHEEP #3: Well, if you are both amazed, then I'm sure I'm amazed too.

SHEEP #1: Maybe I'm just more than amazed, maybe I'm awe-struck.

SHEEP #2: Then I guess I'll be awe-struck too.

SHEEP #3: Then I'm awe-struck three.

SHEEP #1: Well, I'll only be awe-struck if you will be.

SHEEP #2: Well, I will if you will be.

SHEEP #3: I will if you both will be.

(SHEEP circle once slowly, staring at the star and nearly stumbling over each other as they walk.)

STORYTELLER #1: And the sheep circled for a long, long time.

STORYTELLER #2: Hoping that one of them would decide whether they should be amazed or awe-struck.

SHEEP: (In unison.)

Maybe we should go  
And see what's there  
I'll go if we all go  
That's only fair.

STORYTELLER #1: So they all started off down through the pasture toward the little Bethlehem stable where the star was shining.

(SHEEP form a line and begin to cross SR.)

SHEEP #1: I can't go first. (Scurries to the back of the line.)

SHEEP #2: I can't lead, I fear. (Scurries to the back of the line.)

SHEEP #3: One of you go first. (Scurries to the back of the line.)

SHEEP: (In unison.) I'll bring up the rear.

(SHEEP #1, who is at the head of the line, attempts to follow SHEEP #3, who is at the back of the line. This of course results in the sheep again forming a circle.)

STORYTELLER #2: So each of the sheep started following the other sheep.

STORYTELLER #1: Each sheep thinking and hoping that the other sheep would lead the way.

STORYTELLER #2: And they followed.

(SHEEP reverse direction.)

STORYTELLER #1: And they followed.

(SHEEP reverse direction.)

STORYTELLER #2: And they followed.

(SHEEP reverse direction.)

(SHEEP stop circling when they hear the word "stopped")

STORYTELLER #1: Until they stopped to rest and hoped that one of the others would lead them toward the star.

SHEEP #1: I'm tired.

SHEEP #2: And I'm cold.

SHEEP #3: And I'm not that bold.

SHEEP: (In unison.) I can only go where I'm told.

(SHEEP settle to pose at stage left near manger.)

STORYTELLER #2: And they sat, wide-eyed and wondering, watching the star and listening to the silence.

STORYTELLER #1: After a while the sheep saw a donkey trudging toward the little stable.

(DONKEY enters slowly through the audience area. The lines are delivered to the audience members as he passes them.)

STORYTELLER #2: His head hung down so low.

STORYTELLER #1: His tail swishing slowly.

STORYTELLER #2: His tired feet hardly lifting off the ground from step to step.

DONKEY:

I've clip-clopped and clop-clipped  
From morning till night.  
Miles and miles  
I've used up all my might.

STORYTELLER #1: Said the exhausted little donkey.

(Still crossing from audience to stage.)

DONKEY:

Joseph walked beside me,  
With Mary on my back.  
But Mary's going to have a baby,  
So she's like a double-sized pack.

STORYTELLER #2: The poor, tired little donkey stopped and shook his head sadly.

DONKEY:

Poor Joseph and Mary,  
They can't find anywhere to stay.  
But I know where I'm going ...  
That stable in a big pile of hay.

(Has now reached stage.)

STORYTELLER #1: For a minute the donkey turned around and looked back at the town where Joseph and Mary were going door to door looking for someplace to spend the night.

STORYTELLER #2: But each door slammed shut very tight, people saying -

(The children who are the TOWNSPEOPLE are scattered randomly in the audience. Each stands to deliver the line.)

TOWNSPERSON #1: We are full!

TOWNSPERSON #2: This is the busy time of year!

TOWNSPERSON #3: We are full as well.

TOWNSPERSON #4: There's no room here.

TOWNSPERSON #1: You'll have to keep looking

TOWNSPERSON #2: Here's another place, try them.

TOWNSPERSON #3: You'll be lucky to find a room

TOWNSPERSON #4: In all of Bethlehem.

DONKEY:

I should go back and get them.

They don't know where to go.

But I'm just too, too tired

And my feet hurt me so.

STORYTELLER #1: So the little donkey thought about his sore feet and kept walking toward the stable that had the bright and beautiful star perched on the top.

(DONKEY crosses to SR and settles down to rest.)

STORYTELLER #2: Joseph was tired, too.

STORYTELLER #1: And Mary knew she needed to find a place that was warm and safe.

STORYTELLER #2: So when the last innkeeper said ...

(INNKEEPER runs to center stage to give his line)

INNKEEPER: I'm sorry, there's no room in this inn, but if you really want to, you're welcome to spend this cold windy night out there in the stable.

STORYTELLER #1: Joseph just said, thank you.

STORYTELLER #2: And helped Mary down the starlit road toward the stable.

STORYTELLER #1: But then the little mice, who had spend all night long gathering cheese and grain, saw the Donkey,

STORYTELLER #2: And Mary,

STORYTELLER #1: And Joseph,

STORYTELLER #2: Walking toward the stable door,

STORYTELLER #1: The only thing the little mice could think about was how different and strange the humans and the donkey looked.

STORYTELLER #2: Because you see, the little mice only liked other little mice.

STORYTELLER #1: They don't like strange, other kind of creatures, like humans and donkeys.

(MICE creep tentatively to CS and pose. They shake their fingers harshly toward the audience.)

MICE: (In unison.)

NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!

Stay away, stay away

Find some other place to stay.

STORYTELLER #2: The little mice didn't think about how cold it was outside.

STORYTELLER #1: Or how tired Joseph and Mary and their poor donkey were after traveling all day.

STORYTELLER #2: All they could think about was how different the humans were.

STORYTELLER #1: So they grabbed their little paws together to form a wall and shouted once again in their little voices.

(The MICE join hands together and block the stage area.)

MICE:

You're not mice

So you're not nice.

You're not mice

So you're not nice.

STORYTELLER #2: But still Joseph and Mary and the donkey kept coming.  
STORYTELLER #1: So the little mice hurried and scurried as fast as mice legs could run.

(The MICE scatter in a frenzy to gather the cheese, as if they are terrified of the humans.)

STORYTELLER #2: And gathered up all the cheese and grain.  
STORYTELLER #1 and #2: And HID it.

(The MICE hide the cheese behind their back)

STORYTELLER #1: They didn't want to share their grain with a tired, hungry donkey.

MICE: NO WAY!

STORYTELLER #2: They didn't want to share their cheese with the tired and hungry humans.

MICE: NO WAY!

STORYTELLER #1: They didn't want to share anything with anyone who wasn't a mouse.

MICE: NO WAY!

(The MICE now exit to sit on the stairs of stage right)

STORYTELLER #2: As Joseph opened the rough wooden stable door to bring Mary in,  
STORYTELLER #1: A cold blast of air raced through the stable,  
STORYTELLER #2: Ruffling the feathers off the doves quietly sleeping in the rafters.

(DOVES walk majestically to the manger. They speak slowly, as if loving the sound of their own voices.)

DOVES (Mariah):  
How crude.  
How rude.  
How awfully inconsiderate!

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STORYTELLER #1: The doves cooed harshly.

(DOVES “primp” with a comb or mirror as they recite their dialogue.)

DOVES (Christina):

Don’t they understand.  
We are the best birds in the land.  
And when you’re the best.  
We need our beauty rest!

STORYTELLER #2: And the doves stared smugly down their delicate beaks at Joseph and Mary still shivering in the doorway.

DOVES (Mariah):

They need to learn a thing or two,  
About what to do and not to do.  
Cause disturbing our evening rest time,  
Is an unforgivable crime.

STORYTELLER #1: As Joseph shut the door and helped Mary to lie down on the straw, the doves whispered.

DOVES:

They’re not the kind we care to know,  
Their social status appears quite low.  
To be with this crew, in any case,  
Is a humiliating disgrace.

STORYTELLER #2: And the doves turned their pink beaks skyward and huffed and snorted and stared at the strangers.

(The DOVES move to the edge of the playing area with the sparrows.)

(Nudge Kevin to move Manger)

STORYTELLER #1: Joseph slowly set his little pack down.

STORYTELLER #2: And unrolled the two blankets.

STORYTELLER #1: He used one blanket to soften the small bunch of rough straw into a bed for Mary,

STORYTELLER #2: And the other blanket to drape over her to help keep out the chilly night wind that whistled through the splintered cracks in the stable walls.

STORYTELLER #1: And for several shivering moments, the stable became very silent and very, very still.

STORYTELLER #2: The sparrows peered from the rafters listening.

(The SPARROWS stand to peer into the manger.)

STORYTELLER #1: The mice strained quietly from tiny corners.

(The MICE stand to look toward the manger.)

STORYTELLER #2: The doves watched unmoving from the eaves.

(The DOVES stand)

STORYTELLER #1: The cows stopped munching.

(The COWS stand stop munching, then sit back down)

(The COWS lumber slowly, moving to peer into the manger over the top of the MICE and SPARROWS.)

STORYTELLER #2: And the sheep stopped circling.

(The SHEEP stand to peer into the manger.)

STORYTELLER #1: Even the donkey lifted his tired head and flipped his ears forward watching and waiting.

(The DONKEY stands and peers into the manger.)

STORYTELLER #2: Outside the stable the little stars stopped twinkling as if straining their bright eyes to see clearly.

STORYTELLER #1: And the north wind stopped blowing, as if holding its chilling breath, waiting to see what was about to happen.

STORYTELLER #2: In fact, for the first and only moment since God made the universe,

STORYTELLER #1: Everyone and everything in all God's wonderful creation stopped what they were doing,

STORYTELLER #2: And listened and looked toward that little stable in Bethlehem.

(ALL the "animals" surround the acting area. Everybody is unmoving and every eye looks only into the manger.)

STORYTELLER #1: Only Joseph moved.

STORYTELLER #2: Holding Mary, cradling her head and soothing her.

STORYTELLER #1: And as Mary cried softly, the huge star that hovered above the stable got even bigger!

STORYTELLER #2: Shining brighter than the moon, the stars, and the daytime sun, wiping out all darkness,

STORYTELLER #1: And turning every shadow on earth into light.

STORYTELLER #2: In that instant, as the world listened and waited,

STORYTELLER #1 and #2: God fulfilled his most glorious promise.

(The LIGHTING instrument in the manger slowly grows brighter and brighter as the narration continues.)

STORYTELLER #1: In that instant, the Baby Jesus,

STORYTELLER #2: God's very own son,

STORYTELLER #1: The Savior of the entire universe, was born to Mary.

(The LIGHT in the manger is now at its full brightness. All other lights in the playing area are off and the manger light is shining into the faces of all the animals that surround it.)

STORYTELLER #2: And Mary wrapped the baby in swaddling cloths and laid him very gently in the manger of straw.

STORYTELLER #1: And the only sound that could be heard was the Baby Jesus cooing softly in that straw-filled bed.

STORYTELLER #2: All of a sudden, high overhead, above the stable,

STORYTELLER #1: High above the pastures where the sheep stood transfixed,

STORYTELLER #2: The heavens opened!

STORYTELLER #1: A chorus of shimmering and shining angels proclaimed:

(The people who played the TOWNSPEOPLE become the angels. They stand from their places within the audience to give the angels' line.)

ANGELS: Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace and good will to men!

STORYTELLER #2: The little mice heard the angels first and scurried from the stable corners to see what God's very own son looked like.

(MICE move from their corners to manger as noted.)

STORYTELLER #1: And after seeing the little baby, the mice turned to the sparrows peeking out from the shadowy rafters and said ...

MICE:

Joseph and Mary need to eat.  
Let's bring cheese for their tummies.  
And warm straw for their cold feet.

(The MICE set cheese for Mary and Joseph; then move to the front steps in front of the manger.)

STORYTELLER #1: And the little mice gathered their straw and cheese to share with the Baby Jesus.

STORYTELLER #2: And the sparrows flapped down to gaze into the manger.

(SPARROWS surround the manger, bringing some straw from backstage with them to lay on the manger.)

STORYTELLER #1: And as the sparrows watched the Baby Jesus shivering in the cold, the sparrows looked at the cows and said ...

SPARROWS:

Jesus' manger is cold and bare.  
He needs to know that we care.  
Let's bring our feathers and more straw.  
Because we WANT TO SHARE.

STORYTELLER #2: And the sparrows fluttered around the manger filling the simple wooden trough with warm feathers and more straw.

(The SPARROWS exit to Stage Right stairs – looking toward the manger)

STORYTELLER #1: The sheep straggled slowly down the hill to the stable and nestled next to the cows to stare at the Baby Jesus through the stable window.

(The SHEEP cross the playing area to stand where the cows were and the COWS form a half circle in front of the manger.)

STORYTELLER #2: And the cows chewed and thought, thought and chewed, until finally, the cows turned to the gentle sheep and said ...

COWS:

We can't turn our heads,  
And pretend not to see.  
This Baby is God's greatest gift,  
Given to set us free.

(COWS exit to sit on stairs Stage Left – looking toward the manger.)

STORYTELLER #1: And the cows lumbered into the stable to share their milk and their warmth with Joseph and Mary.

STORYTELLER #2: The sheep looked at one another, then looked at Baby Jesus ...

STORYTELLER #1: And for several brief moments, the sheep forgot to ask each other what to do.

(SHEEP step forward to surround the manger)

SHEEP:

We see God's son,  
So tiny and so cold.  
We know what to do,  
We won't wait to be told.

(SHEEP exit to sit on the floor in front of the cows – looking toward the manger.)

STORYTELLER #2: And each sheep let itself into the stable and nestled its warm and wooly body around Joseph, Mary, and the tiny Baby Jesus to help keep them warm.

STORYTELLER #1: Only the doves and donkey still cowered in the stable's pale shadows.

STORYTELLER #2: The doves saw the sparrows' feathers, and the mice's cheese, and the sheep and cows all cuddled tightly around the shivering family, and the doves said ...

(DOVES step forward to give their line in front of the manger.)

DOVES:

We feel so ashamed.  
After what we have done.  
We've given nothing to anyone.  
Yet God's given his only Son.

(DOVES exit to join sparrows.)

STORYTELLER #1: So the doves swooped down, perched on the manger rail and cooed the most beautiful lullaby that doves could coo to help Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus and all the other animals to sleep.

(Play Track)

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STORYTELLER #2: Now only the donkey stood by himself.

STORYTELLER #1: Still very, very tired.

STORYTELLER #2: Still very, very cold.

STORYTELLER #1: Then slowly, the donkey trudged his tired hooves over to see the sleeping animals and people.

(DONKEY moves to look at the manger.)

STORYTELLER #2: Then the donkey said ...

DONKEY:

I'm still so tired,  
After such a long, long day.  
But someone must keep watch  
Over this king lying in the hay.

I'll be the one to stand guard,  
Until first morning's light.  
I'll keep watch with the star,  
This special, silent night.

STORYTELLER #1 and #2: And that's what the donkey did.

(The DONKEY moves to position himself sitting on the floor downstage of the manger as if to guard the area. ALL animals are now positioned very close to the manger and are focused on the bright manger light. All God's creatures are still as the LIGHT fades gently to black. Then everyone positions themselves for the final song, during the following narration)

STORYTELLER #1: As the night deepened over Bethlehem, something extraordinary had taken root in the humble stable. One by one, the animals who had watched the Holy Child's arrival felt their hearts stirred in ways they had never known.

STORYTELLER #2: The quiet glow of the manger had touched them—softening fear, lifting burdens, and filling them with a joy that seemed to shimmer in the very air around them.

STORYTELLER #1: No longer were they simply witnesses to a moment. They were part of a miracle. And as the light of Jesus' love settled upon them, their voices—once ordinary—grew brave and bright.

STORYTELLER #2: Now, filled with wonder and transformed from within, the animals cannot hold back their song.

STORYTELLER #1: And so, with hearts awakened and spirits renewed, they lift their voices to share the good news of the light they have seen.

SONG: *Animals in the Manger*

**THE END**