

THE ANGEL TREATMENT

Instructions: This sketch could be performed in a simple way with actors pretending to be two crows sitting on a wall. As an alternative, it could be acted out with crow glove puppets, readily available at a shopping website near you.

Scene: A wall, somewhere near Bethlehem. Enter Beryl (a common crow) and her posh pal, Cheryl (corvus morningsidus).

C: Squawk!

B: Squawk!

C: Evening Beryl.

B: Evening Cheryl. How's it going hen?

C: Mercy me! I'm fair puffed out, and that's a fact. Bethlehem's all a twitter!

B: Why don't you tell me all about it chook?

C: Righty ho. It's like this ... [pause]

B: Like what?

C: Och, that was just my wee dramatic pause.

B: I see. Carry on then. All in your own good time.

C: Thank you kindly. ... It was a da-a-a-a-ark and sto-o-o-o-ormy night ...

B: Oh, I know! See my nest, it was just about blown clean out of the tree with all those gusts. Where's that Michael Fish when we need him, eh?

C: No, no, no, Beryl! I'm trying to build the dramatic tension.

B: Well, in that case, would you mind if we sacrificed some of the tension in the interests of brevity? Sitting on this brick wall, my bum's pure freezing, so it is.

C: Alright, alright. Honestly, some people have absolutely no sense of the theatrical. Right. ... [Clears throat] Ahem! ...

B: Would you like a lozenge, dear?

C: A what?

B: A lozenge for your cough?

C: No! I was just clearing my throat in preparation for ... my grand tale.

B: A grand tail? It's no grander than my tail, I'll have you know. I've recently had it refeathered. Rather fetching, don't you think?

C: Not that kind of tail, you birdbrain!

B: Oh, beg pardon.

C: Ahem!

B: There you go again. Why don't you just take a sweetie, sweetie? "JD Crow's Magnificent Medicated Throat Lozenges: honey, menthol and roadkill flavour". They're really rather pleasant.

C: As I was about to say, before I was so rudely interrupted ...

B: *[To audience]* Get her! *[Parodying]* "Before I was so ... rudely ... interrupted."

C: Just listen. I was out for a wee flap, o'er Bethlehem's plains by night. It was dark – really dark.

B: Really, really dark?

C: Really, really, really dark.

B: That dark?

C: Yes dear, that dark. Though not for long, for suddenly the sky was filled with a strange ethereal light, shining in the darkness.

B: A strange ethereal light that shines in the darkness? Aye, right! You'd just flown too close to Bethlehem Villa's stadium. They're always testing their floodlights of an evening.

C: No, Beryl. This was a different kind of light altogether. A light so bright, a light so radiant, a light so other-worldly, that I knew it had to have come from heaven above.

B: *[Pause]* Have you been at the bottle again?

- C: No I have not! I'll have you know that I saw that celestial light with my own eyes. And I heard the voice too.
- B: The voice? What voice?
- C: The angel's voice.
- B: You have been at the bottle. I knew it all along. Right!
- C: Will you just let me explain, Beryl? I saw the light. I heard the angel. Oh, and there were shepherds too.
- B: Shepherds?
- C: Just below me: shepherds, abiding in the field.
- B: Keeping watch over their flocks by night?
- C: Well, it's what shepherds do, isn't it?
- B: *[Intrigued]* Go on Cheryl. Tell me more. What happened with the shepherds, when they got the angel treatment?
- C: Well Beryl, the glory of the Lord shone round about them.
- B: I bet they were sore afraid.
- C: And how. But this angel, he just looked at them all and said something along the lines of: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." ... Or words to that effect.
- B: *[Disgusted]* A baby, lying in a manger? Can you imagine it? I know our tree-tops aren't much to look at, but wouldn't you rather rear your chicks there than in a manger? At least our nests aren't covered in congealed oxen slobber.
- C: Thank you so much for that graphic image, Beryl.
- B: My pleasure Cheryl. Then what happened?

- C: *[Dramatically]* Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”
- B: That must have been almost as impressive as your use of the English language.
- C: Beryl, let me tell you that Sebastian Coe himself couldn't have laid on a better light show! But as soon as it had started, it was over. All good things come to an end, just like the Olympics.
- B: Here! Didn't Andy Murray do well?
- C: Yes, terribly well, although that's not part of the story.
- B: His Mum looked awful pleased with her wee boy.
- C: Listen, I'm just getting to the theological bit.
- B: And what about the US Open, eh? 7-6, 7-5, 2-6, 3-6, 6-2. It was quite a final. I wonder if he'll get his knighthood now.
- C: *[Exasperated]* I'll get a recipe for crow a l'orange, if you're not careful. I was about to say that this was the most special night of my life.
[Wistfully] A night when heaven came close to earth, and one wee crow was there, right in the middle of it all.
- B: That was certainly an eventful evening, Cheryl. Quite a surprise for you.
- C: It fair took my squawk away, I don't mind telling you. But I have a sneaking suspicion that the biggest surprise of all is yet to come.
- B: The biggest surprise of all?
- C: Aye, that a tiny little bundle of humanity, all wrapped up asleep in a manger, is going to grow up to change the world. For good.
- B: That's really quite a thought. But who, dear Beryl, gave you that idea?
- C: Och, I'm not sure I could be telling you that, Cheryl! So let's just say ... a little birdie told me.

[Beryl and Cheryl roll about in laughter, eventually falling off their perch.]

Copyright © 2012 by Robin Hill.

This sketch may be distributed, adapted and used (solely for non-profit purposes) on the understanding that a congregational offering to benefit the Church of Scotland HIV Programme will be taken up in church whenever a performance is made. Cheques should be made payable to "Church of Scotland HIV Programme" and sent to Marjorie Clark at the address below.

If you use the sketch, have fun, and let me know how it goes!

With best wishes, especially for Christmas when it comes,

Robin

Rev Dr Robin Hill
8A Elcho Road
Longniddry
East Lothian, EH32 0LB
Scotland

Church of Scotland HIV Programme
121 George Street
Edinburgh, EH2 4YN
Scotland

robinailsa@btinternet.com

hiv@churchofscotland.org.uk