

WILLIBALD KRAUTMANN' S TRIP TO HEAVEN

Characters:

Willibald Krautmann, the
mangerscene maker-----Caleb
Josephine, his wife -----Esther
Hannes, the tramp -----Nathan
Widow Lina-----Kaitlyn
Baby -----doll
Christina -----Jonara
Jory-----Jamian
Father Gutmann -----Tyron

The Innkeeper -----Julian
Joel-----Justin
Innkeeper's wife -----Marie
Franz, the Butcher -----Jacobi
St. Peter -----Loren
Angels -----
Rachel, Stephanie, Leah, Angie

INTRODUCTION

Center Stage

Willibald: [Enters from left with a flourish]

I am Willibald Krautmann, artist, wood carver, and mangerscene-maker, all in one - and the best there is! With these very hands I have built over sixty manger scenes. At the woodcarver's conference in Innsbruck, my manger scenes have fetched the first prize each time. And...with my good work, I have made a little penny here and there. My wife and I have all we need and a little to spare. After all, we need to think of our old age, you know!

Josephine (Willibald's Wife):

[Calling from next door] Willibald! Dinner is ready!

Willibald:

Yes, yes, dear wife. I'll be right there, but give me a chance to finish my introduction!

[To audience in a whisper] My wife, you see-- she is rather bossy and very strict about time! But just so you know, I am Willibald Krautmann, the greatest manger scene master in all of the Tyrol! [Puts his hat on again and struts like a turkey]

Josephine:

Willibald! Hurry up, old man!

[Josephine appears on stage. Willibald shows worry]

The dinner is getting cold, while you stand here and boast and blow your own trumpet with your stupid pride! [To audience] Please excuse my husband. He's a talker. But when it comes to the nitty-gritty, he's never there to do the job. You can see what I have to put up with.

Willibald: I'm coming old woman. Don't be angry. I'm only human! Right now, I'll be pleased to have a good dinner and a bottle of beer! So, good-bye folks, we'll see you later!

Josephine: [To audience] Yes indeed. We shall see you later. [To Willi] Come now, Willibald. I am ready for a good meal! [Both Exit]

PART ONE

SCENE I

Outside the Bakery

A tall girl, Christina, 12 or 13 years old, hurries to the front of the stage, looking for her younger brother, Jory.

Christina: Jory! Come home! It is getting dark and Mama wants you to come home at once!

Jory: [Rushes in with a loaf of bread] I had to wait at the baker's so long! Here is the bread.

Christina: I am hungry, Jory. Hmmm, it will taste good! We've had nothing to eat all day. Come now, quickly!

Jory: [Interrupting excitedly] But do you know what I saw? There in Master Krautmann's window [he points down the road] I saw the figures of Joseph and Mary and the baby, so lovely, so beautiful. I looked and I looked!

Christina: Sooooo! That is what kept you from coming home sooner!

Jory: No! But listen, Christina! It will soon be Christmas. Do you want to see the manger scene?

Christina: Not now. [Quite excited also] But we'll look at it tomorrow. For now, we better hurry home! [She puts her arm around her little brother and both exit.]

PART ONE

SCENE II

On the Roadside

[One can hear Christmas music in the background. On the steps in front of the main stage sits the tramp, Hannes, huddled up in the cold. It is snowing. From the right an imposing figure, dressed in black, is coming down the road. It is the priest, Father Gutmann. When the tramp sees him, he shows both respect and desperation and reaches out for a penny.]

Hannes: Sir, Reverend, please can you help me? I am hungry! Please!

Father Gutmann:

Oh dear. That's too bad. Let me see. [He rummages in his pockets and finds a small coin which he gives him.] So sorry my dear man, but it seems I have little time just now.

Hannes: Oh please, your Reverence, is there not any way you could help me? A job? A bed? Some food? See, I lost my job when I got sick. I worked hard for the miller down the road, but then I got sick. Now I am homeless.

Father Gutmann: [Nods his head sympathetically. Folds his hands and gazes upwards in great piety]. Poor old sinner. Right now I can not help you any more. I am late as it is. I have some urgent business to attend to.

Hannes: And all men turn me from their door!

[The priest hurries off. Tramp cowers down by the roadside, freezing.]

PART ONE

SCENE III

Willibald's Workshop

[Light on Willibald's workshop. Set includes work bench, tools, some carvings finished and unfinished.]

Willibald: [Looks out of window or door up the road from where Father Gutmann is coming.]

Who is that person approaching my humble dwelling? He looks important with lots of money. (Rubs both hands together, stops and then says as Father Gutmann enters:) Good afternoon, Reverend!

Father Gutmann: I am Father Gutmann, serving in the Church of Oberhausen.

Willibald: Come in, your Reverence. Come in!

Father Gutmann: I have heard of you. You are a wood carver, are you not?

Willibald: Yes, Father Gutmann. In a humble sort of way I make my living by that trade.

Father Gutmann: Well, you are certainly well-known beyond this town for the beautiful manger scene figures you have carved. Yes, dear Master Krautmann, I have seen some of your work here and there in churches and chapels. Your praise is sung even by the bishop in Innsbruck.

[Willibald bends his head in false humility]

Willibald: Thank you, Father Gutmann. I am just an honest craftsman. That is all.

Josephine: [Sticks her head in the door] Willi. . . Oh, I am sorry. I did not mean to disturb you, Father. Excuse me. [She disappears again, but is seen by the audience listening with her ear to the keyhole.]

Father Gutmann: [In the meantime he has put on his spectacles and looks at the various figures displayed around the workshop, nodding his head with approval.]

Yes, these figures are beautiful! The three kings... and the camels... and there the stable with Joseph, Mary and the baby. But to come to the point: Master Krautmann, I have come to buy a manger scene for my church for Christmas. [In a quieter voice to Willibald's ear] We'll get the money together quickly by a rousing Christmas collection. (They both laugh loudly, and Willibald pats the Reverend on the back.)

Willibald: Well, as it happens, I have some larger Christmas figures made. I keep them in the cupboard. Here, let me see if they meet your approval.

Father Gutmann: Oh yes. Let me see. [Willibald unlocks the cupboard and shows him the carvings, one after the other.]

Willibald: You see, the larger the figures, the more carefully I choose the wood. These are carved of Linden. It has to be well-seasoned and must be free of cracks.

Father Gutmann: [Looks the figures over carefully] Oh! They are very beautiful. The manly expression on Joseph's face! Mary's tender love for her

child! Yes, Master carver, they are exquisitely carved and of perfect design.
I will buy them!

Willibald: My price is low. I should really ask twice the amount. I am asking 50 dollars for Joseph. Look at his gown, his long beard, and his hands!

Father Gutmann: Excuse me. What did you say? 15 dollars for Joseph?

Willibald: Oh no, your Reverence. ~~50~~ I said. I worked for weeks carving each of these figures. Look at Mary: Look at the drapery of her cloak. She will be worth more than Joseph. I ask 60 dollars for her. And... 40 for the baby.

Father Gutmann: [Is shocked at the prices.] For Heaven's sake! Have you lost your mind, Master Krautmann? This is outrageous! How can you dare to ask such a price, and that from a poor minister?

Willibald: I am sorry, Father Gutmann. But for the whole set with Mary, Joseph, the Child, kings, shepherds, angels, and all, including the livestock: I ask a mere small sum of 500 dollars.

Father Gutmann:

[Stamps his foot and shouts:] 500 dollars!! That is downright robbery! Are you not a Christian? How can you ask such a sum? [Gutmann goes for the door, attempting to leave.]

Willibald: [Sweetly] I am sorry, your Reverence, but I have to make a living. But never mind. [He starts putting the figures back in the cupboard.] No one can live from love and air alone!

Father Gutmann: [Stops Willibald from packing up the manger-scene] Hold it! Hold it! Master Krautmann! I'll pay you 400 dollars. A deal?

Willibald: [Goes on packing up.] At 500 dollars it's yours. No more, no less. Take it or leave it.

Father Gutmann: You have a shrewd mind for business, Master Krautmann. You ask a lot—much too much money for the set. [He gets out a well-stuffed wallet with deliberation.] Well, here's the money. [He slams the sum on the table.] Pack the manger up carefully and send it by mail to my church at Oberhausen. I guess I have to coax some money out of my congregation. [Looks out the window.] I better be on my way. It is getting quite late.

Willibald: Thank you, Father Gutmann. It shall be done as you have ordered. Good night.

Father Gutmann: Good night. [He exits.]

[All during the above conversation Frau Josephine has been listening at the keyhole and her expressions and gestures mirror in a very lively way her approval of her husband's good deal. Now she hurries in, clapping loudly and shouting:]

Josephine: Well done, darling! My dear husband! An excellent deal. Surely the good priest can afford the price! The church does not lack money, I dare say!

Willibald: I should say not! In any case he will pump out the payment from his congregation!

PART ONE

SCENE IV

On the Roadside

[The tramp still sits huddled in front of the main stage on the steps. It is snowing. He shivers. It is cold. Down the road from left to right the widow with her three children come. 12-year-old Christina is the oldest. Then Jory, the little boy we met fetching bread, comes pulling a cart of fire wood. Lina, the widow, carries a tiny baby. As they approach the tramp rises slowly.)

Hannes: Dear mother, I can see you haven't much yourself, and I surely would not want to bother you. [He shakes with hunger and cold.]

Lina: But why are you out here in the cold? Where are you from? Go home. You'll freeze.

Hannes: I am Hannes. I lost my home and I have nowhere to go, for the inn is full. I lost my job through poor health. I am stranded. I have nothing.

Lina: May the Lord have pity on you! Surely I have little that I can offer, but you can not stay out here. I have yet food for another day. Next to my hut is a shed where you may spend the night. Come children. Come Hannes. Let's go.

Hannes: May the Lord reward you, dear mother.

[They all exit to the right, Hannes helping with the cart of wood.]

PART ONE

SCENE V

Willibald's Workshop

[Willibald enters, yawning and tired. Gets to work at his bench with a carving. He reaches for a chisel.]

Willibald: Now where's the mallet?

[He looks in vain all over the work bench.]

What little devil comes in at night and hides my tools?

[He stumbles over the mallet which had fallen to the floor.]

Stupid! What's that? Ha! The mallet I lost!

[Picks it up and starts work. The chisel slips and makes an ugly mark on his carving.]

Crazy tool!! Darn it! A blunted chisel? No use at all!

[He throws it down.]

Someone was here using my tools, breaking them, hiding them while I was gone!

[He hits the mallet on the work bench several times and in doing so, hits his thumbnail. He jumps up shouting:

Ouch! [Sucks his thumb.] Ouch! Oh, that hurts! [He dances around the little room, holding his thumb.

Stupid ass! The devil shall get you!

[At this moment, Josphine enters with a cup of coffee and a sandwich.]

Josephine: Hallo husband! Have you had a bad start this morning?

Willibald: A bad start? Stop prattling at me! I couldn't get started at all!

[Holds thumb.]

Josephine: Well now. Come, come. Here's some breakfast. Take a break and-- what have you done to your thumb?

Willibald: Hit it with a mallet!

Josephine: [Looks at his thumb.] Oh! It looks ugly! Let me bandage it up, dear. Oh! It must hurt!

Willibald: You won't touch it!! It's sore enough without you meddling with it. [Takes a sip of coffee.] But this coffee is good. The pain will lessen by and by. I thank you, wife.

Josephine: Very well, dear. If you need me, just holler. But I must get on with my house work now. [She exits.]

Willibald: Drat it! This place is haunted! [Starts work again.]

I will show them who is master here! [Bumps thumb again.]

Ouch! My thumb again. [Looks at it.] The nail is all blue! Get out of here you beast--whoever you are! [He gives a mighty kick with his foot and bashes his toes against the wall. Now he shows real pain.]

Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! My toe! My thumb! My head! Everything is against me! Everything hurts! Damn it! I can't take it any more! The Evil One is playing tricks on me. The Devil is trying to catch me! I'll show him how I manage my affairs! (takes coat and storms out)

PART ONE

SCENE VI

Lights dim. Wife sweeps quietly, then leaves. After a minute Willi re-enters, carrying a brown paper bag and followed by the Innkeeper.

Willibald: (Puts bottle on table.) Come in and drink a few with me, friend. I have had a rough day. Lets have a drink! Innkeeper! A strong one, quick!

Innkeeper: Hold on there, Willibald! What's the rush? Who crossed your path today?

Willibald: (pours two glasses) Here you are.

[Empties glass in one gulp.] That's better, sir. Another one.

Innkeeper:

What happened? What upset you so, Master Krautmann?

Willibald: Oh, it's nothing. But you know, [to his ear] Someone seems to come into my shop when I'm gone. The place is in utter confusion. I can't find a blooming tool. But I feel better already.! Hey there, Innkeeper! More drink. . and---

Josephine: [To Willibald] So there you are! I have been looking for you, and here I find you drinking!

Willibald: Come, come, old girl. Here, sit down and join me. A glass of wine? Or a beer? What do you like?

Josephine: I'll have a beer. But really, Husband!

Innkeeper: All right. Now a song. One of the best! Watch out, and I'll give the introduction. You all join in! (they sing jolly song)

Innkeeper: I must be getting home. Good night! Good night! Good night, everybody! Josephine, Willibald! Sweet dreams!

Willibald: Here, come little wife. (He gets up and tries to walk) Ha, ha, ha, ha! Can you hold me up, my dear? Yes, that's better. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, that was a jolly evening! Look! There's the door post! Watch it! [He stumbles right into it.]

Ouch! What's the matter? Can't you hold me up, good woman? I'm tired, that's all.

Josephine: Willibald, watch out now! Here's a step.

Willibald: [Stumbles over the step and falls, gets up, and laughs a bit silly. Never mind. That song--ha, ha, ha,--was so good! Ha, ha, ha! [He stumbles off stage, singing and laughing, with Josephine hanging on to him.]

PART ONE

SCENE VII

On the street at Willibald's Door

[Christmas music is heard. The widow with her three children come down the road from the right. She looks troubled and close to tears. She carries her baby. Christina holds Jory's hand. They knock at Willibald's door: Once, twice, three times....]

Willibald: [Impatiently opens door.] What's up? What's the matter? It is Christmas day! You ought to be home now like any honest person and celebrating the birth of our Lord!

Lina: I wish we could, but....

Willibald: Nonsense! There are no buts, Mother! You go home now and remind yourself of this holy day. [He wants to close the door.]

Lina: Just a moment, sir! Can you not help us? Oh, just a little bit. We have nothing to eat! My children are starving! I am a widow! You know how hard my life has been. I just can not make ends meet! Please help me!

Willibald:

Look here, good woman! I am so sorry. But really! I can not help you. I have still some very important work to finish before the holiday is over. There is great blessing on those who are poor. So have courage, good woman, and be sure that the good Lord is *very* close to all those who are hungry!

Lina: Oh, Master Krautmann! I know that. But are we not also meant to share what we have? See my child? My little boy is so thin and sick! We are hungry!

Willibald: Yes, yes. That is a great need. Bear your burden with courage, good mother. This time I just can not help. Go up the road. Maybe Franz, the butcher, will help you out this time.

Josephine: [Brings bowl of leftover crusts from the table.] Here, Lina. There's a little food. It is all we have at present, but it will stay your hunger.

Lina: Thank you for even a little. [She turns with her children away from the door.] But oh! We were turned out of our house on this cold night. All doors are closed for us. We will try the inn. I know there is a stable where we could stay.

[Door closes and Lina shares the crusts, standing outside the door, with her three children. She wipes her eyes, turns from the closed door, and walks slowly up the street and out of sight. Lights dim and fade.]

PART ONE

SCENE VIII

Willibald' s Workshop

[A lamp is lit in Willibald's workshop. Willibald enters his workshop. He lights a lamp, goes to the cupboard, opens it and gets a bottle and a glass. He settles into an easy chair with his glass of schnapps.]

Willibald: That was a long day! At last I have peace! The Lord gives peace to those who love him. [He yawns and pours himself another drink.] Why do the poor always knock at my home? This time let others help. Franz the butcher can help the Widow, Lina, this time. Sweet rest and good dreams for dear, old Willibald Krautmann!

[He falls asleep and snores loudly. One hears steps approaching. Josephine enters in night cap and gown.

Josephine:

So there you are! Well, let him sleep. I only wondered why he never came to the bedroom. Well, now I see why. [She points to the bottle.] Let me try a sip. Hmm. Not bad. Good night. [She blows out the lamp and leaves.]

END PART I

PART 2 [Part 2 of the play begins with an angel song, music (The Hallelujah Chorus) heard as if far away. A light begins to shine on the heavenly gate, faintly at first, then brighter, coming from the left.

SCENE I

Willibald on his way to Heaven

[Willibald enters on the right. A flood light shines right across from the right to the left entry in order to give Willibald a long way to walk and talk. Again the "music" is heard, faintly.]

Willibald: Now my time to go up to heaven has come. What a long way! But of all days, it is Christmas Eve! Now you see how the Christ Child honors those who are worthy of honor! Surely I am needed up there to fix the heavenly manger scene for them. It is rather late for that though. But I better hurry! It's quite a way! [He stumbles and falls.] Darn it!! [He claps his hand over his mouth]

Pssht!! Sorry, it just slipped out! But why did they not send a carriage to fetch me? [He sits down and rests, wiping his forehead.] And what are all the angels in heaven doing? Not a single one has come to meet me! [Willibald

gets up and walks on, haltingly. A bright light shines out from behind stage like a star and moves across stage. Then a red star, yellow, green, and blue stars appear. The music gets louder.]

Willibald: Well! At last something is happening. Now they will come! At last they have realized *who* is on the way to heaven!

[The colored lights are gone. Willibald sits down on a rock and shakes his head.]

Willibald: But is there no one, to meet *me*, Willibald Krautmann yet? Perhaps they haven't realized that I am already on the way.

[He climbs onto a rock, waves his hat, and begins to shout:] Hallooooo!!

[A little angel appears and looks around quickly, then disappears.]

Willibald:

Ah, now it's going to begin. Now all the bells will ring. You just wait and see, old Willibald! They are going to shoot the cannons off for your welcome!

[He listens. Nothing happens. Then a beautiful singing is heard far away. "The Hallelujah Chorus."]

Willibald: Very nice. Very nice. But what does it mean? [He shouts again:] Hey there! Hallo! I'm coming!

[Some little frightened heads look but from behind the clouds. Colored lights sweep across the stage as Willibald exits on the left. The music back stage continues.)

PART TWO

SCENE II

At the Gate of Heaven

[Now the bright flood light comes from the left and shines directly on the heavenly gate. Willibald enters from the left. He slowly approaches the gate, examines it, feels it, and shakes his head in disbelief.]

Willibald: Still nothing? Ah, I know. They want to make a surprise for me! Yes, yes. That's how it is. Well, I never was one for surprises! But if they enjoy such in heaven, then in the name of goodness let them have the fun! [More colored lights mingle with the flood light as Willibald now walks up to the gate. He looks around. All is quiet as before.]

Willibald: Good heavens! What shall I make of that? Is no one around to welcome me, Willibald Krautmann, the manger scene carver who worked all his life long for Christmas? Well, I can wait!

[He sits down near the gate, which suddenly opens and a crowd of angels passes through, past Willibald. They are singing, laughing and gesturing in great excitement. St. Peter gives some words of advice to them:]

St. Peter: Gently, gently. That's right. Now fly down to the earth and bring the good news to men of good will. Tell them that this is the night when Jesus was born.

[The angels hurry down the stage and exit left and right. Willibald tries to make himself noticeable. He coughs, stamps his feet, and even claps his hands. He is not noticed. The gate closes behind St. Peter.]

Willibald: Have they forgotten me all together? In all this Christmas rush, have they forgotten that I am coming? Very well then, I shall make myself known!

[At once he reaches for the bell pull and tugs it for all he is worth. The window opens and St. Peter shows his head.]

St. Peter: Who is pulling our gate bell out of its post? What kind of a roughneck are you anyway?

Willibald: It is I, Willibald Krautmänn!

St. Peter: Willibald Krautmänn? What an odd name. I suppose you are asking to come in?

Willibald: Of course! Of course! I have been waiting for an hour already!

St. Peter: Oh, you have, have you? Let me see what the book says about you.

[Fetches the book.]

Willibald: Well, thanks a lot for your friendly welcome! They don't even know me up here, and they first have to go to check up on the book! I would not have thought that it was like that in heaven!

St. Peter:

[Studying the book] Yes, yes. That's right. Willibald Krautmänn. But you can not enter.

Willibald: *I . . . I I can not enter?!*

St. Peter: Just listen to this: You have been arrogant and vain, proud of your own work and achievements, while considering others worthless.

St. Peter: Don't make a fuss over such small things, Mr. Heavenly Gate-Keeper! Through my work I have touched many human hearts. As a fisherman you have no understanding of how an artist feels!

St. Peter: And it says even more, I mean, about your pride. I can not scratch it out!

Willibald: Yes, yes. Every man has some faults. I am not perfect! Come on, let me get in!

St. Peter: But here it says you have been impatient. When things did not come your way, you sometimes broke out in fierce anger.

Willibald: But Mr. Gate-Keeper! That was holy anger. Sometimes the little devils played tricks on me. They hid my tools and ruined my work. Then truly, holy anger came over me.

St. Peter: But the things you said were anything but quick prayers!

Willibald: For goodness sakes! I have never hurt anyone in my anger like others did. I never struck an *ear* off anyone's head!

St. Peter: Are you trying to argue with me? If so, you'd better start looking for a better argument.

Willibald: Just let me into heaven, Sir, please!

St. Peter: Nothing that is impure may enter heaven. Now let me read to you the heaviest debt you have on your account. You have had far too little love for your neighbor. You did not help when help was needed.

Willibald: Heavens! I had to use my last pennies for my Christmas work!

St. Peter: No Christmas work means so much as a warm-hearted gift of love to people in need. Only last year on Christmas Eve you turned away a widow with three children from your door.

Willibald: Goodness me! Last Christmas I had exceptionally much to do. I spent all my money on paint and wood and material for the manger scene of the church at Oberhausen. These days everything is so expensive.

St. Peter: But you had enough money left to buy some whiskey - more than just to quench your thirst.

Willibald: Good heavens! That was just a little joyful celebration. A very small one at that!

St. Peter: What? Are you now lying on top of it all? First you drank more than was good for you, and then you bought two bottles of the most expensive whisky!

Willibald: Dear St. Peter. Don't take it ill. Little white lies like that often come over the best people! Once I read of someone who lied himself out of trouble *three times* before the cock crew.

St. Peter: But he wept for it his whole life long! Now that's the end of my patience! Go now where you belong! [Slams window shut.]

[Willibald realizes that this is now in earnest. Humbly he knocks at the window.]

Willibald: Open! Please! Please! Open, St. Peter! I was wrong. You were right! I won't do it again! [He pulls on the bell rope. No sound is heard.] I am locked out! [He tip-toes around the gate. There he finds a small crack through which heaven shines.]

There, there they all are! Listen! Listen! They are singing!

(Willibald sinks down as the music becomes louder. He puts his head in his hands and weeps quietly)

(Set up workshop around Willibald)

Lights on in workshop.

Josephine:

Wake up, man! Wake up! What's going on? For heaven's sake!

[Willibald opens his eyes. Now he realizes that he is in his own room and that everything was but a dream!]

Josephine: What is the matter, man? You are groaning and whimpering as if someone had cut off your ears!

Willibald: Oh--I have just been in heaven!

Josephine: A fine heaven that is where you have to yell and weep and howl.

Willibald: [Gets up slowly. Looks around and realizes more and more that he

is given another chance.] Woman! Woman! You do not understand. I never got to enter heaven. Oh no! I was not allowed to go in. But now I can see it all. Let's go. There is much I have to put right. First we must find the widow, Lina, and her children. Come, come quickly!

[Willibald takes Josephine's hand and they both exit.]

PART TWO

SCENE III

At the Stable of the Inn

[The main stage is now made into a barn or stable by shifting the entry sign of the Inn to the far right. There should be live barn animals if possible, sheep and donkey, and bales of hay. The poor widow, Lina, has made herself at home here. A duffle bag and a basket holds their belongings in the little cart. Lina is feeding the baby. Hannes is there and lights a lantern. Christina prepares a manger for the baby.]

Hannes: It is rather chilly here. There is not much to eat. I will go and ask the innkeeper if he has some leftovers to spare for us.

Lina: A little food would be wonderful, Hannes. At least for the children.

[Hannes exits.]

Jory: Isn't it Christmas Eve, Mama? The night when Jesus was born?

Lina: Yes, Jory. Come close beside me, and look at our little one. The baby Jesus was so poor. Born in a stable with straw for a bed.

Jory: Like us.

Lina: Just so.

Christina: And there is the manger.

Jory: And the sheep.

Christina: And the baby.

Lina: [Starts singing: "Away in a manger".]

Christina & Jory: [Join the singing]

[Knocking is heard at the door. Inn keeper and wife enter.]

Innkeeper: My dear Lina! I am sorry, but we had not one room left in the inn.

Innkeeper's Wife: [butting in] But we've come to bring you food and a warm blanket.

Innkeeper: Here is bread and some butter.

Innkeeper's Wife: And some milk for the baby.

Hannes: [Enters and takes his place, symbolizing Joseph, behind Lina and the children.] Thank you, thank you good people. I am sure the good Lord will reward you.

[More knocking at the door.]

Lina: Come in! Come in!

[In stumble Franz, the butcher, and Joel.]

Franz: Ho! Ho! Lina! So this is where you have landed, poor soul!

Joel: Yes! We heard about it! The news is spreading throughout the village. You lost your house, and everything. Can we help you?

Lina: Yes, we lost everything. But now it seems help is here.

Franz: I brought you a fine sausage!

Joel: And I brought a hunk of cheese.

Hannes: May the Lord of Heaven reward you for your kindness, dear friends.

Lina: How richly you provide for us. And think of all the many, many thousands of people on this earth who have nothing. There are so many who starve, without clothing or shelter, because there are no friends to help them in their need.

[Loud knocking at the door.]

Lina: Come in, please!

Willibald: [Storms into the room with Josephine, out of breath, clutching fat wallet.] So here you are! And here are your dear children! [Still panting for breath] And the tiny little baby! [Looks at baby with great pity.] I have closed my door to you this night, on Christmas Eve! I left you standing on the street in the bitter cold! (He bends down to touch the baby's cheek)

Willibald: (continues)

In my pride I had no room left in my heart for pity and the need of my neighbor. Oh, Lina! Not even your little ones melted my cold heart! But here, here, Lina! Take this please! I lied to you. I had plenty of money. Oh, now it burns in my pocket, in my hands. Here. Now it is yours. Please! And... and... if you can - please forgive! Can you forgive me, Lina?

Josephine: I too did not take you in! I am no better! Take my shawl. [Puts shawl around Lina's shoulders] And this basket of fruit. Dear Lina! Please forgive me this night, the holy night of Christmas!

Lina: But--but--what do you mean? I gladly forgive you. But I can not accept so much money. You earned it, dear Willibald, with your carving and hard work.

Willibald:

Listen, Lina! And all you who are gathered in this stable, listen to me: I had a dream last night. I dreamed that I had died and was walking up to heaven, grumbling and proud! And there was St. Peter the gate-keeper. He would not let me enter. He knew my sins to the last detail, my pride, and anger. Above all, he saw my coldness to my neighbors. He knew my heart better than I did myself. In the end, he closed the door to me, and I stood in the dark.

The dark was so great and so horrible.

And then, dear people, I awoke. I realized that it was all just a dream. I was given, by the grace of God, another chance. I am longing to be your friend and your brother.

[Willibald kneels down in front of the baby with Josephine. The others press closer around.]

Willibald:

o Lord! Forgive us this holy night of Christmas, and let us take part in the joy of your birth!

Josephine:

Oh tiny child! Bless us this night!

Franz:

May Christmas enter into each of our hearts!

Lina:

May God bless and protect all those who truly seek him.

[Angels enter from left and right, carrying burning candles. All villagers enter as peasants and shepherds with appropriate gifts for the child. All kneel around manger. Christmas singing until curtain falls.)

THE END