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The Flint Street Nativity

A comedy with music

Tim Firth

A Samuel French Acting Edition



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THE FLINT STREET NATIVITY

Adapted from a play for television and first produced for stage by the Everyman Liverpool Playhouse on the 28th December 2006 with the following cast:

Innkeeper	Andrew Schofield
Mary	Gillian Kearney
Wise Gold	Annabelle Dowler
Shepherd	Natalie Casey
Gabriel	Leanne Best
Star of Bethlehem/Ass	Nick Bagnall
Angel	Rina Mahoney
Narrator	Paul Kemp
Herod/Joseph	Neil Caple
Wise Frankincense	John Marquez

Director Matthew Lloyd
Designer Robin Don
Lighting Charles Balfour
Sound John Leonard
Musical Director Gavin Kaufman
AV Designer Chris O'Neil

CHARACTERS

Boys
Innkeeper
Star
Ass
Narrator
Herod/Joseph
Wise Frankincense
Shepherd

Girls
Mary
Wise Gold
Angel
Gabriel
Shepherd

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1	Mrs Horrocks' Classroom
Scene 2	Mrs Horrocks' Special Place
Scene 3	The Wings
Scene 4	The Stage
Scene 5	The Playground
Scene 6	The Wings
Scene 7	The Stage

ACT II

Scene 1	The Stage
Scene 2	Mrs Horrocks' Special Place
Scene 3	The Stage
Scene 4	The Playground
Scene 5	The Wings
Scene 6	Mrs Horrocks' Special Place
Scene 7	The Stage
Scene 8	Mrs Horrocks' Special Place
Scene 9	Stage and wings
Scene 10	Mrs Horrocks' Adult Size Classroom
Scene 11	The Playground
Scene 12	Mrs Horrocks' Classroom

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT 1

No 1	Something About Virgins	Everyone
No 2	My House Always Smells Of Beer	Innkeeper
No 3	Don't Grow Up Like Your Dad	Star and Everyone
No 4	A Way To Kill Mary	Mary and Gabriel
No 5	Watch How Mummy Does It	Mary and Herod and Chorus

ACT II

No 6	Shiny Silver Caravan	Shepherd and Everyone
No 7	If There Was A God	Ass and Wise Frankincense
No 8	Lucky Lady	Wise Gold, Angel, Narrator and Everyone
No 9	Massive Newt	Everyone
No 10	I Wish	Everyone

The piano/vocal score is available on hire from:

SAMUEL FRENCH LTD, 52 FITZROY STREET, LONDON W1T 5JR

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The first act comprises activity in the childrens' classroom prior to the performance and the first part of the nativity proper. The second act concludes the nativity proper then returns us to the classroom, only this time at the scale of adult, the actors now playing the part of their respective child's parent.

Describing action in a busy infant classroom is of course like trying to describe the structure of a vegetable soup. Conversations swirl around, occasionally interlocking, sometimes occurring almost simultaneously in more than one location.

For ease of navigation through this soup the single set of Mrs Horrocks' classroom is sometimes subdivided into different 'areas' if it's vital that dialogue takes place in these areas. If it isn't, then it could take place anywhere.

Never has the word 'deadpan' been more apposite than when describing the comedy of children. They are never aware of their humour in this play. The less funny they find it, the funnier it will be.

The style should take its tone from the most gritty naturalism of adult dramas which have dealt with similar brutality, as *Goodfellas* or *The Godfather*.

Basically, the playing should be as realistic as the situations would seem for those kids involved. The more real, the more pointed it is.

STAGING NOTES

Part of the challenge of *The Flint Street Nativity* is the creation of the scaled props and classroom. The only direct prerequisite is that there be a small flight of steps leading from classroom floor up to the acting area of the stage, the ones that Herod will attempt to scale from inside his cape in the second act.

The major coup of course is turning one scale into the other, moving from the world of children to that of adults. In the original production this challenge

was ingeniously met by Robin Don. The stage on which the nativity is performed was placed up a small set of steps; at the crucial moment, this whole module separated to reveal the same classroom, only now of adult scale, hidden behind it.

As ever, there will be other ways in which an inspired designer can pull off this coup. The key is to allow it its own little moment of glory and relish the theatre of the reveal, rather than attempting some fast cinematic cut.

MAKING FLINT STREET *YOUR* STREET

It is vital that the play is thoroughly owned by the area in which it is performed. To this end there are a small number of direct local references which should be tweaked to make it feel that Flint Street Primary could be a school the audience had unwittingly walked past to get to the theatre. The list is as follows:

page 4. Peter Crouch — anyone famous enough for kids to know, who is tall and noticeably thin of stature. Peter may suffice for a long time in this role. If there are local alternatives, use them.

page 5. JRL Sports Liverpool Half Marathon — replace Liverpool with local city capable of hosting such an event

page 5. Maghull — nearby small town with dull name

page 6. Westlife — mass-appeal kid-friendly pop band of the day

page 6. Netto — Local own-brand, low-priced supermarket

page 6. Flint Street — this can remain Flint Street as a generic street name or be customized to a known area or road in the region

page 6. Poundstretcher — local budget shop

page 7. Question of Sport/Ally/Sue — the tv sports quiz of the day, which probably for a long time will remain the BBC's *A Question of Sport*. The host, Sue, and a team leader, Phil Tuffnell, may well vary over time.

page 8. Nugget — local playground insult of the day

page 11. Ernie Els — contemporary sportsman with unromantic name

page 13. Morecambe — nearby resort of limited ambition

page 24. Hope University — local university, ideally of one syllable length In the song you can get away with two syllables at a pinch and three at a push.

page 46. Matalan — this may remain for centuries as a budget clothing giant. Should it not, use whatever locally replaces it.

page 47. Jordan — female glamour figure of the day

page 52. Brannigan's — local pub chain or nightclub

page 54. The Empire — local commercial large-scale theatre house

page 64. John Prescott — local overweight public figure, preferably a politician.

Finally, thanks are due to Peter Elias-Jones for producing the original TV film, Marcus Mortimer for directing it, and to a combination of Geoff Edkins, Suzanne Bell, Deborah Aydon and Gemma Bodinetz for seeing potential in the stage version. Also to Gavin Kaufman for his crucial help preparing the piano score.

Tim Firth



Photograph by Robin Don



Photograph by Robin Don

Other plays by Tim Firth
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Calendar Girls
The End of the Food Chain
A Man of Letters
Neville's Island
The Safari Party
Sign of the Times

ACT I

Scene 1

Mrs Horrocks' classroom

The front cloth is liveried with a Victorian junior school and the graffiti: "The Flint Street Nativity".

From within are the unmistakable sounds of children 'happily playing'

There is a tambourine shake and slap

Sudden silence. The cloth goes up to reveal a group of seven year olds standing in a clump staring directly at the audience. Here are Mary, Herod, Gabriel, Innkeeper, Shepherd, Wise Man Gold, Wise Man Frankincense, the Star of Bethlehem, Angel, and Narrator

The group are all pinned like escaping convicts by a fierce, very defined white spotlight. This is the gaze of their teacher, Mrs Horrocks

Behind them is a teacher's chair which dwarfs them, and to one side a swing bin which also dwarfs them. They are variously holding art material rubbish: a cornflake box, a roll of silver foil, an egg carton. These have clearly gone into the recent making of a star on a hook which looks like a glitterball, and which one of them is holding

They are, by the way, in a distinctly Victorian infant school classroom with high windows designed so kids couldn't be distracted by thoughts of freedom whilst working. Through the main window at the back we can see the top of some brightly-painted playground apparatus

The room has a raised stage at the back with the Home Corner on it, accessed by steps on both sides, and in front of that, some of the debris of a normal classroom. This includes tables, chairs, and a nature table with a plastic stick insect tank on it. There is also an interest area with an astronaut suit and a sign saying "Marcus's uncle works for NASA", with various photos to substantiate this claim. On the art wall are several children's paintings of the nativity. On the "Who's Been Good?" chart, no- one has more than two stars, except for Jenny, who has twelve. Next to Bradley has been written: "I have".

The children just stare right at the audience. They do nothing but hold their rubbish. Absolutely nothing. This goes on for a good few seconds. Then they suddenly all nod. Mary leads this. Mary leads everything. The nodding stops. Suddenly everyone shakes their heads. Then this stops. Then everyone points at the Innkeeper

Innkeeper (*fiercely*) I never. I didn't. I never. I——

Suddenly the white light snaps to red, accompanied by a tambourine struck against a hand, which Mrs Horrocks uses to warn of a coming ill — like a rattlesnake

The Innkeeper jerks his finger on his lips and shuts up

(*Muttering*) Sorry, Missis Horrocks.

This causes the red light to go back to white

(*Dropping his finger from his lips; muttering*) Never.

The light snaps to red again for a second. The Innkeeper jerks his finger back to his lips. Several hands go up. Who's first? Surprise, surprise, it's Mary

Mary Yes. We all have to look at the clock and sing clearly and not go (*as if singing without knowing the words*) Mrrrrllllrrr.

Pause. Mary looks around. Clearly, no-one else knows the answer, so she puts her hand up again

We won't need the carol words on the overhead projector because we've all taken them home and learned them all off by heart.

There is a pause as all the other kids turn slowly to look at Mary. It is immediately clear this point is doubtful

The Wise Man Gold puts her hand up and down

Wise Gold Can I? Mizz Horrocks? If Darren's got chickenpox, can I do the myrrh as well?

Shepherd (*hand up*) Mizz Horrocks? My dad says at the end if we all have to carry flags from the children of the world, can ours not be France please, 'cause the French are a load of — shttp.

The teacher light snaps to red, causing Shepherd's finger to shoot up to her lips

Mary (*nodding*) Practice. (*Relaying to those around her*) Practice. We have to practice a carol. You stand there.

This continues as the piano starts the introduction to...

Music 1. Something About Virgins

Everyone shuffles ready for take-off

Everyone (*with some gusto*) O come, all ye faithful.

Mary carries on, loud and true. Everyone else instantly has no idea of the words, and descends into the usual mush

Mary	**Everyone else**
Joyful and triumphant.	nmm rrr mmr hmm brmm mmm
O come ye, o come ye	nrr brr rrrh mrr car brr mmm

Ah, here's a bit they all know (*together*; *with gusto*)

To Be-ethlehem.	To Be-ethlehem.

As they continue, everyone else looks at Mary, as she sings the right words

Mary	**Everyone else** (*singing the wrong words*)
Come and behold him	I wish I'd learned my
Born the King of Angels	Words like Jenny Bennet has.
O come let us adore him.	I wish that I had learned them.
O come let us adore him.	Miss Horrocks said to learn them
O come let us adore him	I didn't, so I just go hrr
Christ the Lord.	mrrr-rr-ne-nurr.

Mary continues to sing a virtual solo in the background, becoming a quiet underscore to everyone else

The other kids look up, around, anywhere, losing interest in the song

Mary (sotto voce)
True God of true God,
Light from Light Eternal.
Lo, he shuns not the
Virgin's womb.
Son of the Father,
Begotten not created.
O come let us adore him.

Wise Frankincense (*lisping*)
True God of thomething.

Gabriel Something about virgins.

Herod Mum said to ask my dad what virgins are.

Narrator & Star My uncle, Ted, flies Virgins to America.

Innkeeper I like this where we go quiet.

Everyone Shh.

O come let us adore him.

O come let us adore him

Innkeeper And then we get much louder.
Everyone Shh.
Innkeeper (*shouting*) And then they let us shout.

The red teacher light shines on the Innkeeper. All the other kids turn to look at him

Christ the Lord.

Everyone else Bradley's got done.

The Innkeeper is clearly "sent off" and trudges up to the Home Corner, once inside of which he shuts the door

The other kids start, one by one, to put their hands to one ear in replication of Mrs Horrocks doing it

Mary (sotto voce)
Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation;

Sing, all ye citizens of
Heaven above.
Glory to God,
All glory in the highest.

O come let us adore him.

O come let us adore him.

O come let us adore him
Christ the Lord.

Wise Gold
Angel
(*together*) Why has Miss Horrocks
Started doing that now?

They all point to their mouths, doing excessively exaggerated mouth movements

Everyone Whyy izzz Miss Horrocks dooing Tharrt weeth herr mouth?
Shepherd If she's a lady
Why's she got a hairy lip?
Narrator
Star
(*together*) Jesus had a moustache.
Gabriel
Herod
(*together*) Miss Horrocks has a moustache.
Everyone So maybe Missis Horrocks is Christ the Lord.

Immediately the song ends, all hands fly up to ask various questions

Everyone (*variously*) Mrs Horrocks! Mrs Horrocks!

But Mrs Horrocks has gone. No worry

Mary (*taking control*) Yes, Miss Horrocks. Move tables ready for the mums' and dads' chairs. (*Nodding and pointing*) Miss Horrocks wants... Peter Crouch needs moving, but no goin' in the special cupboard. Marcus,

move the spacesuit. Tim you look after new Adrian. I'll get Jesus. Ryan, learn what Joseph says and comb y'r hair. And all stuff from making the star goes in the bin.

Hand-held debris is put in the swing bin by Wise Frankincense, Joseph, Shepherd and Narrator

Wise Frankincense, Joseph, Shepherd, Narrator and Herod exit

Ashley?

Gabriel We all heard.

Star busies himself taking down the astronaut suit. He is carrying a silver-sprayed cardboard star and is wrapped in a thermal blanket which reads "JRL Sports Liverpool Half Marathon"

Star It's not a proper star, this. What Missis Horrocks wants to come up over Bethlehem. *That* isn't. (*Indicating the pointy silver one they've just made*) 'Cause stars don't have (*waving at its "starry" points*) all that comin' off. My uncle works for NASA an' he gave me a wallchart and this, right... (*indicating his graphically accurate one, on his head*) ...this is Sirius. This actually IS Sirius. But Missis Horrocks says it might be a star but it doesn't look like one an' I can't go up the rope anyway 'cause they don't let kids up ropes since that boy in Maghull fell off a climbing rope an' his leg came out through his bum.

Gabriel (*with the dead-eyed steel of a mafia boss*) Shamima. Get Jesus.

Angel and Wise Gold instinctively look to Mary, who has sat down and got out her Jesus and started to brush his hair

Wise Gold There's Jesus.

Gabriel (*deadly*) The other Jesus.

Angel and Wise Gold immediately go scurrying off and exit to the girls' cloakroom

Star Did y' know? That's... (*pointing to display*) My " Uncle Ted works for NASA". This (*pointing to his head*) is actually Sirius, which is...

The Narrator enters from the boys' toilets. He is the only one in school uniform, albeit it somewhat shabby and long-trousered. He has large pieces of cardboard with his words Sellotaped on

(*No breath taken, to the Narrator now*) It's not a star proper, that, 'cause

of having these (*gesturing the "spikes"*) comin' off.

Angel sticks her head round from the girls' toilets

Angel Is Jesus in the Westlife bag or the Netto bag?
Gabriel (*staring out like the godfather*) Westlife.
Narrator (*giving speech-cards to Mary*) Hold them, will y'?
Star (*to Gabriel*) They've got a Jesus. What are you?
Gabriel (*staring at Mary*) Gonna be Mary.
Star I thought you were the Angel Gabriel.
Gabriel I am. But I'm gonna be Mary.
Narrator (*closing his eyes*) "Welcome to the Flint Street Nativity."
Star Y'know Declan who was gonna be Joseph? He was sick. In a sock.
Narrator "We were hoping..."
Star My mum met his mum in Poundstretcher.
Narrator (*sneaking look at card*) Let us see it again.
Mary What y' doing?
Narrator Me words. (*Showing Mary*) Gonna know all me words so I can show me dad.

The daisy-henchmen, Angel and Wise Gold, enter from the girls toilets and present Gabriel with a baby Jesus, also in a shawl, and a comb

Mary Ryan won't know his words.
Narrator (*peeking another crib*) Let us see.
Mary He was just Herod but now he's got to do Joseph as well 'cause of Declan having chickenpox, and he won't know his words.
Narrator If you know the words...
Mary Not without looking down, and you're not allowed. (*She rises*) He'll have to practice.
Narrator People are proud. Mrs Horrocks said she'd be proud if we learnt all the words to the carols. It makes people proud.

Mary looks at him a beat

Narrator My dad's coming.
Star Voyager Ten. This is NASA to Voyager Ten.

Mary puts down baby Jesus and exits in search of Herod/Joseph

Star recreates a NASA flight with a model space shuttle

Narrator "We are in Mrs Horrocks' classroom again this year because the

builders diggin' the new school hall found some Great Crested Newts which means they have to (*reading it with difficulty*) notify the environment agency."

Wise Gold can't help noticing the baby left behind

Wise Gold Ashley?

Star (*into the stick insect tank*) Everyone's dead, over. Everyone on 'ere's dead with red hangin' out.

Herod mooches in and, during the following, installs himself at a chair and table, rather like a TV panel show host

Star Monster was on here with teeth, an' he opened it, an' there was more teeth on his tongue. (*He does an "Alien"*) Yash yash.

Wise Gold (*to Gabriel, smiling and wincing simultaneously*) Is that Jesus?

Gabriel (*combing baby Jesus' hair. Pause. Comb, comb*) This is Jesus.

Wise Gold (*looking at the Jesus which Mary left*) Isn't there already a Jesus?

Gabriel This is Jesus. (*Pause, comb, comb*)

Wise Gold Isn't Jenny Bennet Mary and...

Gabriel SAY HALLO JESUS.

Wise Gold Hallo Jesus.

Herod (*singing the "A Question of Sport" theme*) *La laaa laarrr nurr nuh-nuh.* Clap clap clap. (*He claps*) Hallo. And welcome to Question of Sport. Ally McCoist, pick a number. (*He changes voice slightly — it's not good enough to be an "impression"*) Ooooo er now... (*Scratching his head*) Let's see. Number nine. (*Changing his voice slightly*) Number nine, now John, who is that? (*Changing his voice slightly*) How the hell do I know, Sue?

Pause for huge comic effect

He's got a hat on! (*Going immediately serious, like a producer in an edit*) Laughs now. Ha ha. Laugh, laugh, laugh.

Mary enters and spies Herod, her prey, whom she joins

Wise Gold wanders off to survey some of the nativity pictures on the wall

Angel notices that Wise Gold has gone, and has instinctively been drawn away from the "godfather" Gabriel to comfort Wise Gold after being shouted at

Angel (*pointing out a picture)* That's mine. (*Pointing out characters on the painting*) Jesus. Mary. Wise Man. Is that you?

Wise Gold is too hurt to respond

Angel Jess? What are you?
Gabriel (*combing Jesus; without turning*) Fat cow.
Wise Gold Wise man.
Gabriel Fat man. She's a fat man. Isn't she Shamima?
Angel (*calling*) Yeah. (*To Wise Gold*) Sorry.
Wise Gold S' OK.
Star (*knocking on the door of the Home Corner with some trepidation*) Bradley?

Mary is trying to comb Herod's hair from under the crown on his head

Herod Get lost, y' nugget.
Mary You 'ave to! Y' should be learnin' — was that you learnin' y'r words then?
Herod I was playin' the "Question of Sport" game. (*Batting her hand off*) Get ——
Mary What?
Herod Like on the telly.
Mary What game?
Herod I made it up. What y' do is you sit down... (*That's it, really*)
Mary And then what?
Herod Y'do "Question of Sport" like it is on the telly.
Mary (*grabbing him*) Come here.
Herod (*knocking her hand away*) Look I'm havin' a crown.
Mary Not when y'r Joseph y'r not!
Herod I don't wanna be Joseph. Joseph's a nugget.
Mary It won't look — Ryan-n! My dad, when he got married, OK there's photos everywhere, to my mum, and his hair is flat, OK. It's *flat*. It's dead, totally, completely — D'you know your words without looking?
Star (*aware his actions are dangerous*) Bradley—y? Bradley—y? Are you ——? (*Jumping but quietly*) Argh.

The door opens. The Innkeeper is there, like something from a Hitchcock film. Eerie music accompanies this. It is the music of what Star feels in his heart

(*Mouth instantly dry*) We have — we — we have to move Peter Crouch.

The Innkeeper's look is deathly, his silence crippling

For the nativity. So he dun't get knocked. Miss Horrocks said.

Nothing

(*Gesturing feebly*) Round the corner. Now. Sort of.

The Innkeeper emerges, slowly, like a gangster and stands

(*In meltdown*) Are y' comin'...? Are we goin'...?

The Innkeeper gives the tiniest of head-flicks, suggesting Star gets moving

We're goin'. Right.

Star shoots off to the nature table, the Innkeeper follows him, walking in his own time

Wise Gold and Angel are still inspecting pictures on the picture wall

Wise Gold (*indicating characters*) This one's got Jesus. Donkey. (*Next one*) Jesus. Mary. Donkey.
Angel (*pointing out another painting*) Jesus. Joseph. Fat man. Donkey.
Wise Gold (*pointing out another painting*) Duck with an ice cream.
Angel That's Moira's. She's Jehovah's Witness. She said she can't do Christmas or assembly or anything so Mizz Horrocks just told her to paint something happy.
Star (*rotating, asteroid-like, round the cool, malevolent Innkeeper*) What it is, right, it looks like a stick an' what that is, right, that's when like things, yeah, that might eat them, when things go past they think "Oh, that's a stick down there. That's just — I'm not eating that, that is definitely just a——"
Innkeeper (*quietly*) Pick it up.

Pause

Star (*same volume, trying to avoid the challenge*) —Definitely just a stick". An' where my uncle lives, in (*nodding*) in Florida, Ted, they have stick insects (*indicating a rather unlikely size*) that big.
Innkeeper Dares y'.
Star Where the rockets... (*blinking*) He's coming for Christmas.
Innkeeper (*shark-eyed*, *slowly*) Dares y'.

Pause

Star (*almost inaudibly*) Virgin seven-four-seven.

The Innkeeper kills him with a look and thrusts his own hand into the tank

(*Like an ITN war correspondent*) Peter Crouch! He's — oh, he's — Bradley's getting Peter Crouch out!

Mary reacts instantly and walks off at some pace

Mary (*petrified*; *to herself, as she goes*) No, no, no, no.
Star He's out! He's got Peter Crouch out!

Gabriel doesn't miss a beat of Mary's discomfort

Mary heads out past the incoming Wise Frankincense in his Laura Ashley curtains. He is a slightly posher kid, but has a slight lisp

Wise Frankincense We have to move Mith Horrock's chair into the... Whoa no! Peter Crouch! (*Turning randomly*) Mith Horrocks!

Wise Frankincense exits immediately

Gabriel Eh. When she comes back, get Jenny Bennet an' show her that, right up here. (*He gestures "dead close"*) She loves crawly insects. People who can pick 'em up and put 'em right up here.
Star (*on auto pilot*) My Uncle Ted's coming tomorrow.

Innkeeper brusquely puts the insect back and eyeballs Star

Innkeeper (*nodding at the insect*) You. Now. Miss Horrock's special cupboard. (*He gets behind the insect trolley*; *challenging Star*) Dares y'.

Star and Innkeeper wheel the insect trolley off and exit

Star (*trailing off*) My Uncle Ted is...
Angel (*pointing at another painting*) Is that Gabriel?
Wise Gold That's Angel Gabriel. I did Gabriel because she's one of the angels who ——
Gabriel (*snapping*) It's not "one of the angels". It's the number one angel. Gabriel is boss of all the angels. He was absolute... all the others— he was the very...absolute... (*She searches for a higher rank, mouths a couple to try them out, then gives up*) Shamima. Let's not talk to Jess.

Gabriel waltzes out with the baby Jesus

Wise Frankincense enters

Angel flicks a shrug smile at Wise Gold, but she's been summoned by 'the almighty'

Angel exits after Gabriel

Wise Gold is left behind and looks stricken

Narrator "In the fields around Bethlehem there were some shepherds."
Wise Frankincense (*nudging Narrator*) We have to put Miss Horrocks' chair in the corridor. (*He starts collecting chairs*)
Narrator (*closing his eyes*) "An angel came down, and——
Wise Frankincense (*badgering Narrator*) We have to put Miss Horrocks' chair in——
Narrator —and the shepherds were sore... The Shepherds had sores. I'm afraid."

The Shepherd enters. She is a brutally factual girl with a Spanish straw donkey which has a lascivious wink and a sombrero

Shepherd Right.
Herod (*still conferring in his game*) He dun't believe me. He dun't believe — I told y' it was Ernie Els!
Shepherd Donkey.
Herod (*going dead serious again*) Laugh, laugh, laugh.
Shepherd This is y'r donkey, right, an' you don't pull his ears.
Herod Herod dun't 'ave a donkey.
Shepherd Yeah well, Joseph has a donkey, an' you're Joseph an' all now so you have to 'ave him an' y'don't pull his ears, or he says rude things in Spanish, an' y'don't tell Miss Horrocks that either, or she won't let him be the donkey.
Herod (*different voice*) Yes, that's correct. It was indeed Ernie Els at the American open in Augusta. Two points Ally.

Wise Frankincense gravitates in

Wise Frankincense What'th hith name?
Shepherd Mum calls her Sparkle but if you turn that (*turning the saddle cloth*) the other way it says "Dirty Pedro".
Herod Clap clap clap.
Wise Frankincense I've been to Thpain.
Shepherd (*frowning at that word*) You've been to what?

Wise Frankincense becomes immediately panicked about his lisp

Wise Frankincense (*dodging the subject*) We don't have them, you thee. We give him prethenth.
Shepherd (*frowning again*) You give him what?
Wise Frankincense (*sweating*) We used to have a house in Thpain.
Shepherd Where you come from do they all talk like you?
Wise Frankincense Daddy playth golf. There's hith name on a board.
Shepherd (*staring into Wise Frankincense's mouth*) Is there summat wrong wi' your mouth?
Wise Frankincense Where we uth-ed to live, my dad wath captain of all golf.

Pause

(*Bottling*) Have to move the chair.

Wise Frankincense exits. Ass enters, passing Wise Frankincense on the way. This is a boy in a shabby school uniform, his own head obscured by a donkey's head made out of painted cereal packets. His energy is that of someone who doesn't give a toss and slightly shouts most things

Narrator "There appeared above them all the beautiful star of Bethlehem." (*He checks his accuracy against the prompt cards*)

Wise Gold stands, rudderless and friendless

Herod (*continuing his show with another voice*) We'll go for number five, Sue. (*Conferring*) Mnnnnnnrgggrrrmmm...

The Shepherd is combing the mane of her clopping donkey

Ass joins Herod and sits next to him during the following speech

(*To camera*) We think-k... Tiger Woods. (*He pauses then throws hands in the air*) Yes! (*He claps, dead serious*) Clap-p. Clap. Clap. Clap. (*Turning back to his imaginary team mate*) Mmmmmrrrrm-mmm. Ahaha ha ha. Laugh, laugh, la—— (*He turns back to find his co-panellist is now Ass*)
Ass (*always slightly shouting*) 'E's not a proper donkey.
Herod (*grimly*) Y'r sitting on Ally McCoist.

His voice echoes inside his head. He points to "Pedro"

Shepherd 'E is a proper donkey.
Wise Gold (*gravitating for company*) He's from Spain. I've been to Spain!

Shepherd You're not a proper donkey. You just got a donkey 'ead.
Wise Gold We always go. We go at weekends.
Shepherd Y'can't go t' Spain f'r weekends.
Wise Gold (*swallowing*) Y'can.
Shepherd Can't.
Wise Gold Y' can, but... (*Struggling*) ...it's a special bit of Spain.
Shepherd Where?
Wise Gold Morecambe.

Shepherd retreats to the picture wall

Herod Who is it, Sue? (*Changing voice*) Have to hurry you. (*Changing voice back*) Don't do this to me. (*Changing voice again*) Have to hurry you-u.
Ass (*inside the mask*) CAN I BE IN IT?

Herod grudgingly turns

Herod Dunno how to play.
Ass (*nodding*) I DO.
Herod This game?
Ass (*nodding*) YES.
Herod With the sportsmen.
Ass (*nodding*) YES.

Herod evaluates whether he should give the Ass an inch, and decides to

Herod OK. (*Assuming question master's role*) Phil. Who in nineteen seventy-two won seven Olympic golds for swimming?
Ass MY DAD.
Herod (*instantly pointing for him to leave*) Off you go.
Ass (*standing*) OK.

As Ass stands, Wise Gold attempts friendship with the departing Shepherd

Wise Gold Zoe? That's yours! (*Pointing at a picture*) That picture. Isn't it. That's good, that one. It's the best. With Joseph and Mary and the fat man. Can I sit with you in Bethlehem?
Shepherd (*pointing to another picture*) Who did the duck with the ice cream?
Wise Gold That was Moira.
Shepherd Oh, right. (*Nodding*) Her who smells of Marmite and can't have birthdays.
Wise Gold Ashley's not friends with me any more.

Shepherd (*waving a hand at the gallery*) Anyway, none of it really 'appened. My mum's got a farm an' she says they would never've ad' oxes and asses in the same stall cos' they 'ave different bone meal.
Wise Gold Ashley ... isn't——
Shepherd Y'r a king, not a shepherd. Y' have t' stand with the kings.
Ass (*wandering off, addressing the world in general*) AM A DONKEY.

Gabriel enters, killing Wise Gold with the worst look of all — not looking at her

Gabriel (*singing*) Away in a manger...
Wise Gold (*hopefully*) Hi?

Angel enters. She finds this "ignoring her to death" more difficult and gives Wise Gold a sad passing smile

Ass (*quieter*) *Am* a donkey.

Ass wanders off, unnoticed, exiting via the boys' toilets

Wise Gold limps off, unloved, exiting via the girls' toilets

Narrator (*learning his lines with his eyes closed*) "And children came from all over the world"

Gabriel starts combing her Jesus' hair again

Angel looks after where Wise Gold exited

Angel Do we ever talk to her again?
Gabriel Mmnope.

Never is a long time but the Angel has to accept it

Angel So did...? Is...? (*Thinking how to put it diplomatically*) Why are you going to be Mary?
Gabriel (*snapping*) Prettiest is Mary.
Angel (*almost jumping*) Prettiest is.
Gabriel Is the rules. And who's prettiest out of me and Jenny Bennet?
Angel You are.
Gabriel I know.

Mary enters, as if on cue, having avoided the stick insect

Narrator (*finishing with a flourish*) It truly was — a silent night.

Herod OK. Ally McCoist, who is this? (*Falling to the floor in "slow motion", clutching his knee, apparently fouled, and then, still in slow motion, rolling around in agony mouthing terrible words and sticking the "V"s up*)

His new wife, Mary, puts a stop to this

Mary Right, so the Wise Man comes on——
Herod Geddoff.
Mary (*combing Herod's hair*) And he says "Have you 'ad a baby?" And you have to say "yes". And he says "what's his name?" And you say "Jesus". And y've got to look up. (*Raising Herod's head up*) You can't look down.
Herod Geddoff.

Herod bats his wife off and exits

Mary (*shouting after her husband*) And y've not combed y'r hair. Y've not... He's not combed his hair.
Gabriel (*to Mary, slyly*) You touched Ryan.
Mary (*slapping her hands on her sides in a very adult fashion*) Honestly, he'd go out without his trousers if they weren't on the chair.
Gabriel His step-brother had chickenpox.
Mary (*ignoring her and pointing*) And his crook! He's gone without his crook.
Gabriel The poxes are in your hand now.
Mary Honestly.
Gabriel In your hand, going up to y'r head, an' y'll sick up.
Mary (*leaving/escaping*) **Gabriel** (*shouting*) (*together*) Crook. Crook. Crook. In a sock. Y'll sick in a sock an' y' won't be Mary. You're not gonna be Mary.

Mary escapes to the art wall where Shepherd is

Gabriel (*after a beat; quieter*) She's not gonna be Mary.
Angel No. You are.
Gabriel I am.
Narrator (*shuffling the cards to start again*) We were hoping to be in our new school hall.
Mary (*engineering a conversation at short notice*) So anyway so that's fine so who's him in the middle? Mary, Joseph...who's that fat man?
Shepherd John Burdgeon.
Mary Who?

Shepherd John. Who was there. Burdgeon. Who was there with Mary and Joseph. It says.
Mary Was 'e the one who dropped the baby off?
Shepherd Y' don't drop babies off. I saw one come out on the farm once. It comes out of your bum cover'd in yak.

Pause. Mary swallows audibly

Then this other thing comes out called a play centre an' that's like a pancake of blood. An' that lands on the floor, an' the dogs lick it and y'r mum kicks 'em. She says, "Go on, fly, bugger off."

Pause

Also y' moo a lot.
Mary Moo?
Shepherd Yeah.
Mary Like a cow?
Shepherd Yeah?
Mary Why?
Shepherd Cos it kills.
Gabriel (*combing Jesus; without turning*) So Jenny. *Still* want to be Mary?
Mary Yes.

Wise Gold and Star enter, arguing

Star Isn't. Isn't. Isn't.
Wise Gold It is. I'm just——
Star Isn't.
Wise Gold (*looking round; to Shepherd*) Zoe? When they have mince pies? Is it...when you leave mince pies for Father Christmas, who eats it? Is it Father Christmas or the Reindeer?
Innkeeper (*off, from his lair; calling*) MY DAD.

They all turn

The Innkeeper creaks opens the door of his lair, the Home Corner. Somehow he's got in there again. It's as if he has secret entrances to this place

Once again, that eerie music

Innkeeper A' seen 'im. In the living-room. All six mince pies. And the sherry.

The lair door creak-ks shut again. Everyone stands for a moment to ruminate on that piece of information

Suddenly the white teacher light appears, cueing huge clamour from everyone

Everyone (*variously*) Mizz Horrocks...!/Can I...?/He said.../Mizziz Horrocks...

This lasts for about two seconds, when the teacher light suddenly goes red accompanied by a tambourine slap

Everyone jabs fingers on lips. Silence

Under orders, the class shuffles into two clumps; boys (Narrator, Wise Frankincense and Star) on one side, and girls (Wise Gold, Shepherd, Mary, Angel and Gabriel) on the other

Looking up at the teacher light, Gabriel moves forwards

Gabriel (*sweetly*) Yes, Missis Horrocks.

They all watch the teacher light go off, at which point Gabriel snaps back to being Gabriel, only now with power

Toilets everyone. Boys go.

The boys shuffle off and exit to the boys' toilet

Girls go.

The girls shuffle off and exit to the girls' toilet

(*To Mary*) Not you, Jenny Bennet. You have to stay and tidy up.
Mary You're not monitor.
Gabriel (sotto voce, *spooking Mary out*) Wet, wet, wet.
Mary She just said "hold the door". That's not "toilet monitor".
Gabriel (*deadly; starting to follow the girls out*) "Hold the door" IS toilet monitor. Disobeyin' monitors IS naughty. Naughty DOES get you one sticker peeled off the "Who's Been Good?" Chart.

Gabriel smiles, evilly and spooks Mary again

Wet, wet, wet.
Mary (*bitterly, trumped*) Don't need to go.

Gabriel *Psssssss.*
Mary Been already. Went before I came.

Pause

Gabriel starts to leave but comes back

Gabriel (*trying to psyche Mary out*) Don't wee y'r knickers, Jenny.

Gabriel exits

Mary doesn't want to get into trouble, so she can't disobey a monitor. She picks up the baby Jesus and starts to finish off any tidying up

Innkeeper draws a curtain in his lair and watches her

Innkeeper You know Aladdin?

Mary carries on tidying

Who we're seein' the panto of? In the panto? We're seein' the panto "Aladdin"?

Mary carries on tidying

That's where Jesus come from. (*This being his gold nugget of wisdom*) Out that lamp.

Mary carries on tidying

The Innkeeper emerges fully

My cousin saw it with cubs and when he rubs the lamp there's a big bang and glitter flies up which is on fire an' Aladdin drops the lamp and runs round holding his hand shouting: "Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Get Pauline". An' then the lights come on an' everyone has to go in the bar an' have a Fanta. You know Peter Crouch?

Mary carries on tidying

I picked him up.

Mary carries on tidying, unimpressed

An' once I picked up a great crested newt.

Mary does stop tidying at this, and turns

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