

CHRISTMAS DIARIES (Meetings with Strangers)

BY
Nick Warburton

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These monologues were first broadcast on BBC Radio 4 Extra during Christmas 2012 with the following cast ...

- Joseph: Adam Nagaitis
- Traveller: Nicola Walker
- Mary: Lizzy Watts
- Shepherd: Ben Crowe
- Lawyer: Anton Lesser

They were produced by Paul Arnold

There are several ways of presenting the monologues. You can announce them before they're read, or allow people to find out who's speaking by listening to what they say. You can present each group as a single performance, or choose one to fit in with a particular service. (If you present all of them, they should be done in the order given.)

They can be performed on their own or they can be combined with music and/or silence. They can be done as straightforward readings, either learned or read, or they can be dramatised – by adding light, movement, costume, music and so on. If they're presented in a church, you can make use of different locations in the building and move the audience round. Alternatively, they can be done simply as voices, with the speakers remaining unseen.

Joseph

A quiet roadside inn.

JOSEPH: She was perfectly tranquil about it but I said, "I don't know what's going on any more. You have to let me think.

"All I know," I said, "is that there'll be a baby and it won't be mine, so if we stay together, if we wed, that'll be a stranger in the house. In my house."

And that's the truth of it. To me it'll be a stranger. And everyone will know it.

So I walked away from her and I kept walking because I didn't want to talk anymore and I didn't want to see anyone. In the end I stopped at this table by the roadside, with an awning fixed to a tree to give a bit of shade. And I sat down and they brought me some wine and I sat there a good while, looking at the table. At the grain in the wood. It had a twisted grain, hard to work.

Then I heard this man ...

"It's solid, though. It makes a good table."

I don't know who he was. I didn't even know he was there till he spoke.

It was like waking up and finding you're in the middle of a conversation when you're still trying to remember what day it is.

Then he said ...

"So what is it you're afraid of? Is it the shame?"

And I thought, well, yes, because people will know, and I've seen what shame can do to a family.

"But where's the shame in this?" he said. "A baby? A baby brings hope. How is he a stranger if he brings hope?"

And he said, "He's only a stranger if that's how you see him."

I was staring down at the grain on the table, at the lines of it, and thinking about this. When I looked up to answer him he'd gone.

But I said what I was going to say anyway. I said it out loud.

“Then yes, he’ll bring hope,” I said. “So we’ll wed, we’ll stay together.

“And when the baby comes ... he’ll be mine, and I’ll be his.”