

DoveTale

By Ted Swartz, Lee Eshleman and Ingrid De Sanctis

SHEPHERDS WITH THEIR FLOCKS

Characters: Shepherds Maggie and Egan, Gabriel

Props: Knitting that has been started (same color as sheep sweater), knitting needles, wool blanket, 2 crates

Length: _6_ minutes

(MAGGIE and EGAN enter wearing wool sweaters, wool hats, carrying two crates which they put down center and make themselves comfortable. They speak with Irish dialects and are rough and simple folk, a bit dim-witted but quite charming. MAGGIE is draped with a wool blanket and trying to spool some wool with EGAN'S assistance.)

MAGGIE: Will ya hold still, Egan, so I can wind up this wool?

EGAN: Why do I always have to hold it and you have all the fun? *(EGAN speaks directly into her face.)*

MAGGIE: Quit your whining. *(MAGGIE smells the air and is a bit grossed out.)*
What is that stench?

EGAN: What stench do ya mean?

MAGGIE: That goaty odor. Don't ya smell it man?

(He looks at her and answers her, talking directly in her face.)

EGAN: No. I don't. Not a bit.

MAGGIE: It's yer breath man. *(Scolding him)* Don't ya ever clean yer teeth?
They'll rot out of yer mouth.

EGAN: And I'll be toothless.

(MAGGIE and EGAN have a huge laugh together and GABRIEL approaches very casually.)

GABRIEL: Is this the shepherding firm of O'Donnell and Ferguson?

EGAN: That's us. We're also the Egan and Maggie Knitting Company.
We've got loads of sweaters for your warmth and comfort. You look underdressed, man.

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GABRIEL: Thanks for your concern. I'm fine. I just want to be sure you are shepherds.

MAGGIE: We are.

(GABRIEL steps away and crosses up left to put on his angel outfit.)

What a fine lad.

EGAN: I was thinking the same thing.

MAGGIE: So with the sheep in the lower field that can't stand up and keep falling over, it is foot rot, then?

EGAN: Ay, foot rot. Better than the mange. It's what me Da said, better foot rot than mange.

MAGGIE: Ah, a wise man.

EGAN: A wise man. Dead though.

(MAGGIE and EGAN laugh hysterically and then GABRIEL reappears, opens his majestic and terrifying cloak and with lots of enthusiasm makes his announcement.)

GABRIEL: BEHOLD!! I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY!!

(MAGGIE is full of trembling and shock at the sight of the angel.)

MAGGIE: Great sheep scab and lamb livers, it's an ANGEL!! I am sore afraid!!

(EGAN is without the fear and trembling and quite confused by her.)

EGAN: What did you say?

MAGGIE: I said I am sore afraid.

GABRIEL: For unto you...

EGAN: What do ya mean you are "sore afraid"? Ya don't know what you're saying. You can be sore and you can be afraid but you CAN'T be sore afraid.

MAGGIE: *(Deeply offended)* Well, I can, too and I *am* sore afraid.

EGAN: You're making no sense at all.

GABRIEL: *(In majestic voice)* For unto you is born this day in the city of David.

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MAGGIE: David? I've never heard of the city of David. Have you ever been there Egan?

EGAN: Noooo.

GABRIEL: I said unto you is born this day—

MAGGIE: Unto me?

EGAN: Ya certainly have the wrong lad and lass, Mr. Angel.

(MAGGIE and EGAN laugh uncontrollably once again. EGAN falls off his crate. GABRIEL gets horn and gives it a good blast. This frightens the SHEPHERDS and they finally pay attention.)

GABRIEL: Thank you. If I may continue, whether you are sore or afraid. There is a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe...

MAGGIE: Well, congratulations. A baby!

GABRIEL: *(A bit frustrated)* I'm not done yet!

EGAN: *(Hurt by GABRIEL'S tone)* Well, ya needn't get irritable.

MAGGIE: We've just lonely ole shepherds.

EGAN: We never get visitors.

GABRIEL: *(Trying to explain)* I'm sorry about that. I'm just having trouble getting any momentum. You will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

MAGGIE: A manger is no place for a baby. *(Looks at GABRIEL.)* What kind of angel are ya?

EGAN: Swaddling clothes? What about some of our fine wool garments? Fresh off the sheep.

GABRIEL: *(Giving up now on the majesty of it all)* Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

MAGGIE: *(Deeply offended)* Men? What about the women?

EGAN: Cant' ya talk in plain English, man? I can't understand a word yer saying.

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GABRIEL: *(A bit of "river dance" stepping and then he stands behind the shepherds and speaks in an Irish dialect.)* A baby is born. In Bethlehem. To save ya. Go see him.

(As GABRIEL speaks, the SHEPHERDS' faces light up. They finally understand what he is saying.)

MAGGIE: Why didn't ya just say so? *(To EGAN)* Oh, Egan, it's a baby.

EGAN: A wee one.

GABRIEL: *(GABRIEL makes the story very clear to them now.)* Ay, a wee one. I just saw him meself. He's beautiful. It seemed like he'd never come. He's here. Ya should go see him. Ya should.

MAGGIE: I'd like to see that, wouldn't you?

EGAN: Oh, I would.

MAGGIE: *(MAGGIE jumps up very concerned about how this is going to work.)* But who's gonna stay here and watch the sheep?

EGAN: I'm going.

MAGGIE: If ya think I'm staying yer outta yer noggin.

(Suddenly EGAN has a great idea and talks to the ANGEL. MAGGIE gets distracted considering what to bring the baby.)

EGAN: Hey there, Mister Fancy Talker, why don't ya stay with the lambs? We'll be back after awhile.

MAGGIE: I'd like to bring the baby a nice wool garment. Maybe a blanket or some mittens or a sweater...

EGAN: Just pick one, Maggie. We must be on our way. *(Suddenly realizing)* Ya do know how to care for sheep?

GABRIEL: Well, I'm not exactly...

MAGGIE: Ya'll be fine. *(Hands over all knitting supplies)* We'll be back after a while. *(Stopping before she goes one step forward)* Do ya have the map, Egan? I don't want to get lost.

EGAN: Don't ya worry. *(Discovers star in the sky)* We'll just follow that star. Who needs a map?

MAGGIE: You do.

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EGAN: Don't ya start with me, Maggie.

MAGGIE: Fine. (*Eager for the adventure*) Why don't we do a jig as we head on down to Bethlehem?

EGAN: Always a good reason for a jig!

(*SHEPHERDS exit doing a silly exaggerated kind of Irish jig, leaving GABRIEL alone with the audience, somewhat perplexed at the encounter with the SHEPHERDS. GABRIEL exits.*)

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