

DO YOU BELIEVE?
A CHRISTMAS STORY

by Christy Šust

Character List
(in order of appearance)

Simone
Gossiper #1
Gossiper #2
Roman Soldier
Wise Men's Servant #1
Wise Men's Servant #2
Shimona
The Census Counter
A Tax Collector
Priest
Scribe
Innkeeper's Wife
Unbelieving Shepherd
Believing Shepherd

Setting: A merchant shop. There is a table in the center with goods and objects for sale on it. At stage right, there is a standing counter with a box on it for money. Behind it, there is a bookcase with various papers and objects on it.

At rise: The store is empty. SIMONE merrily enters the store from stage left, humming a Christmas tune and carrying a burlap sack of supplies. They stop and notice the audience.

SIMONE

Oh! Hello there! Welcome to Simone's Store of Super Specific Stuff, where you can find anything you need no matter how specific! I am, of course, Simone! I run this shop with my best friend, Shimona. She'll be here soon to take over since my shift is almost over.

[She goes to the counter and sets the burlap sack down on the floor, then walks around to the other side.]

This little store of mine gets pretty busy since it's the only stop between towns. If you're ever bored, just come into the store and you'll be sure to hear some exciting tales from people on their travels!

[Two women come in chatting excitedly to each other. SIMONE puts on her best smile.]

SIMONE

Welcome to Simone's Store of Super Specific Stuff! Feel free to take a look around!

GOSSIPER #1

Thank you! *[to GOSSIPER #2]* Oh. My. GOODNESS. Did you hear about the newest scandal?

GOSSIPER #2

Tell me everything.

GOSSIPER #1

It has to do with that girl Mary. You know, the one who's engaged to Joseph? I heard *[looks around as if checking that no one else is listening]* she's PREGNANT.

GOSSIPER #2

No, no, you misheard. She's not pregnant. I mean, she's not even married yet! Can you imagine? No, what I heard was that she's malignant. You know how sick she's been feeling recently? And how bloated she's been? Turns out it was all just the flu! Or maybe it was indigestion? Well, one of the two.

GOSSIPER #1

You need your ears checked! I could have sworn that what I heard was pregnant! AND that she's going around saying that God Himself gave her a child!

GOSSIPER #2

Girl, YOU need your ears checked!

SIMONE

Um, ladies? I think I might have just the thing for you! [*she ducks behind the counter and comes up with two cans tied together with string*] You hide one can in a room, put the other can up to your ear, and you'll be able to hear all the conversation in that room! You'll never mishear the town gossip again!

GOSSIPER #1

Ooo! Thanks, Simone! [*to GOSSIPER #2*] I'm gonna try this on my cousin!

[*The GOSSIPERS exit, excitedly talking about their new gadget. As they leave, a ROMAN SOLDIER enters carrying an armful of flyers.*]

ROMAN SOLDIER

Greetings, citizen! I have some flyers here to remind people to go to their hometowns for the Roman census. Every person counts! Heh, get it? 'Cause it's a census...where we count how many people there are? [*SIMONE just smiles awkwardly*] Wow, tough crowd. Anyway, if you could just make sure people see these and maybe put some up around your shop, it would be a big help!

SIMONE

Yeah, sure! I bet a lot of people are already on their way to their hometowns. Some families have a long way to travel!

ROMAN SOLDIER

Yeah, to be honest I don't know where most of these towns are. One guy said he was going to...Bathe-a-lamb?

SIMONE

Uh...you mean Bethlehem?

ROMAN SOLDIER

Oh, yeah I guess that's probably it. Unless he meant that new shop in town where they give your lamb a bath so it can be white as snow. Business has been booming since they opened! Well, I gotta get the rest of these flyers up around town. Thanks for your help!

[He exits.]

SIMONE

[calling after him] No problem! *[to the audience]* "Bathe-a-lamb?" People come up with the craziest business ideas now-a-days. What's next? Hiring people to give you a ride on their carts? *[she chuckles to herself at her clever idea]*

[The WISE MEN'S SERVANTS enter, seeming to have a tense discussion about something.]

SIMONE

Welcome to Simone's Store of Super Specific Stuff! How can I help you?

SERVANT

Thank goodness we found your shop. My bosses sent me in here to find a map. We're completely turned around.

SIMONE

Sure, I got all kinds of maps! What region?

SERVANT

They gave me these instructions for you to read. *[she hands SIMONE a folded piece of paper]*

SIMONE

[She mumbles as she reads] Hm...heavenly star...find a baby...savior of the world...*[she looks to the SERVANT]* So, let me get this straight. Your bosses are wise men looking for a star? And this star is going to lead them to a baby that's going to save the world?

SERVANT #2

Well, I don't know if I could say any of them are wise men. They're out here chasing a random star in the sky trying to find some superhero baby! How is that wise?

SIMONE

Um...it says here *[reading]* He's the one the prophets told about in the Jewish scriptures, the one who is going to save the world.

SERVANT #2

Yeah... 'cause he's a superhero! I hope he has laser beam eyes; that would be SO cool.

SIMONE

Well, whatever kind of baby He is, you all are in luck. I do have a star map right...here! *[she hands the map to SERVANT]*

SERVANT #1

[opens the map and looks at it briefly] This is perfect! Thank you so much for your help! *[SERVANT exits]*

SIMONE

Don't mention it! I hope you find your super baby! *[to audience]* Well, what did I tell you? You'll hear the craziest stories in this shop!

[SHIMONA enters from stage left where we can assume the "back door" or employee entrance might be.]

SHIMONA

Hey Simone!

SIMONE

Hey! *[they do a best friend handshake, then SIMONE addresses the audience]* Everyone, this is my cousin Shimona who I told you about earlier. Shimona, this is...everyone!

SHIMONA

[She waves to audience] Hey guys! So, anything interesting I should know about before I start my shift?

SIMONE

Well, I heard that Mary from Nazareth is either pregnant or recovering from the flu...or has indigestion, something like that.

And Joseph, her new husband, went to that new shop Bathe-a-lamb; remind me to ask him about their prices. Oh! And we're supposed to

remind our customers about the census [*She indicates to the flyers. They both roll their eyes and look generally annoyed.*] And finally, these two servants came in for a star map. They were going on and on about how their bosses were looking for some superhero baby with laser beam vision?

SHIMONA

Sounds like the usual to me! I'll see you tomorrow, then.

SIMONE

Let me know if you hear any more interesting stories! Bye!

[*SIMONE exits stage right. Without missing a beat, the next customers, a TAX COLLECTOR and a CENSUS COUNTER come in. They are both dressed lavishly; clearly, they make good money from their lines of work.*]

TAX COLLECTOR

Ugh, I'm famished! Ma'am, do you have any quick snacks for a poor tax collector who's been hard at work all day?

[*SHIMONA obviously does not like either of the customers since tax collectors and census counters work for the Romans, who the Jews hate.*]

SHIMONA

Afraid we're fresh out.

CENSUS COUNTER

Come on. We'll pay a pretty penny!

[*She holds up a small bag, which she shakes so we can hear the many coins inside. SHIMONA seems to be at war with herself for a moment until she finally sighs.*]

SHIMONA

I just remembered, we have some fresh fruit right here! [*She dips under the counter and brings up a bowl of fruit.*] Help yourselves!

CENSUS COUNTER

[*sarcastically*] You are most kind! [*She tosses SHIMONA the bag of coins.*]

TAX COLLECTOR

What did I tell you? Money can get you anything!

CENSUS COUNTER

Yeah, even just being related to the right people can get you pretty far. Some of the stories I've heard from people about who they're related to would make you roll your eyes. Like this one guy from Nazareth I just checked in. He said his ancestor was King David himself! HAH! As if. I bet his wife is the Queen of Sheba, too!

TAX COLLECTOR

Are you talking about that Joseph dude? Psh, there's no way he's related to King David. He's dirt poor. Unless...he could be hiding his wealth. Ooo, I'm gonna get so much money out of him next time I collect his taxes!

[The CENSUS COUNTER and TAX COLLECTOR both laugh maniacally as they exit the store. SHIMONA rolls her eyes and shakes her head in disgust.]

SHIMONA

People who work for the Romans will squeeze every coin out of you, then show off their own wealth and act as if they're doing you a favor. *[She looks up as she talks to God.]* You know, we could really use that Messiah right about now to get rid of these oppressors! *[She shakes her head again in discouragement.]*

[The PRIEST and SCRIBE enter the shop as the SCRIBE implores the PRIEST with her theory about the Messiah.]

SCRIBE

I'm telling you! The signs all line up! I think the Messiah could be right on our doorstep!

PRIEST

Bah! You don't know what you're talking about! You're just seeing coincidences and thinking they have some meaning.

SHIMONA

Greetings, Rabbi!

PRIEST

[turning attention to SHIMONA] Ah! Shimona! *[crossing to her counter]* You wouldn't happen to have any more of those amazing lentil cakes you had last week?

SHIMONA

Well, you're in luck. I made another batch just yesterday!

[She dips behind the counter and brings up a bundle of cloth, supposedly wrapped up lentil cakes.]

PRIEST

Oh, thank you! These are becoming my guilty pleasure!

SCRIBE

Rabbi, there's something much more important happening here than a new batch of cakes! How else can you explain the star in the sky? Or the pregnant woman who just came to town? People say she's crazy, but if what she says is true and God Himself gave her this child, then this could be the Messiah we've been waiting for! They even came to Bethlehem of all places, just like the prophecies say!

PRIEST

That girl is confused and deranged, and her husband only encourages her! Besides, what woman doesn't believe their child is a "special gift from God." *[to SHIMONA]* What do you think about this, Shimona? Have you heard anything interesting lately?

SHIMONA

Well, I heard that this Mary girl isn't pregnant at all, just suffering from some indigestion. I also heard about some guys looking for a baby with laser eyes? *[She shrugs]*

PRIEST

[to SCRIBE] You see? It's all nonsense. Stop paying attention to all these crazy conspiracies. Focus on God instead!

[The PRIEST exits the store.]

SCRIBE

But that's exactly what I'm trying to do!

[She follows after the PRIEST and exits the shop just as the INNKEEPER'S WIFE walks in hurriedly.]

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

[to SHIMONA] You wouldn't happen to have a spare manger, would you?

SHIMONA

Hmm...an odd request. But, this IS Simone's Store of Super Specific--

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Right, right, I get it. Sorry, but I'm in a hurry. All these people are in town for the census, and I'm incredibly busy.

SHIMONA

Let me see what I have. [*She dips behind the counter. While she looks, she continues to talk to the INNKEEPER'S WIFE.*] Why do you need a manger anyway?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Ah, well, I had to put a family in the barn because we're out of normal rooms. The wife is about to have her baby, and the husband asked if there was somewhere they could put it when it was finally born, so I told them to use the animal manger. But I forgot my spare one broke a couple days ago, so here I am. [*she thinks for a second and then nervously says*] It's a really nice barn though! It's practically a 5 star suite! It has a jacuzzi and a california king bed and everything! It just has that trendy rustic look to it, that's all. It's actually the best room I have to offer! Heh, heh.

SHIMONA

[*popping back up from behind the counter*] Well, you're in luck! We have one last manger right here! [*She drags the manger out from behind the counter*] You really don't have any more rooms available?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

[*her stress has finally boiled over*] No, I don't! The inn is bursting at the seams! Do you know how stressful it is to offer a complimentary breakfast to 200 strangers?! I have my reputation to protect! It starts with a simple complaint about how the rooms are too cold and then the next thing you know, everyone will be talking about how terrible it is that I put a family and their newborn in a rundown barn with filthy, smelly animals-- [*she quickly puts on a fake cheerful tone*] which have all received their immunizations and are perfectly safe for children to be around! Anyway, gotta go!

Thanks for the manger!

SHIMONA

Anytime! [*to audience*] Well, sounds like this Mary and Joseph I keep hearing about are in the best room in town! I wouldn't mind relaxing in a nice jacuzzi myself!

[*The two SHEPHERDS come in, clearly having an animated discussion.*]

BELIEVING SHEPHERD

I'm telling you, it was angels! I know what I saw!

UNBELIEVING SHEPHERD

That's ridiculous! Why would a choir of musical, majestic angels show up to a bunch of sweaty, smelly shepherds out in a field in the middle of nowhere Bethlehem?

BELIEVING SHEPHERD

I don't know why, all I know is that it happened! I know you didn't get to see it yourself, but how could you not believe the rest of us? Did we all just happen to have the same hallucination?

UNBELIEVING SHEPHERD

You know what? You all drank that old goat's milk earlier! And I didn't because I'm lactose intolerant! That must be it. You gotta be careful with that goat's milk, it'll do things to you. Make you see things.

BELIEVING SHEPHERD

[Grabbing the UNBELIEVING SHEPHERD by the shoulders and shaking her a bit] I'm telling you, it's true! *[She lets her go]* The angels said the Messiah is born, then they gave us some directions, and He was exactly where they said he would be! He's gonna save us all!

UNBELIEVING SHEPHERD

Yeah, you have fun with that. I'll stay here with the sane people. Shimona, you got anything for a headache?

[Before SHIMONA can answer, the GOSSIPERS enter, both with a can up to their ear.]

GOSSIPER #2

Sounds like some juicy gossip is going down here!

[The PRIEST and SCRIBE enter as well, still arguing about the signs and wonders of recent events. Then, the ROMAN SOLDIER comes in, looking curious about all the hub-ub. The CENSUS COUNTER and TAX COLLECTOR follow him in as well. By this point, there is a steady hum of excited talk amongst everyone in the shop. The WISE MEN'S SERVANTS enter as well, followed by the INNKEEPER'S WIFE.]

Finally, SIMONE enters from stage right and is surprised by all the commotion in the shop.]

SIMONE

Hey! [*Everyone keeps talking over her.*] HEEEEYYYYY!!!! [*Everyone stops and looks at her.*] What in Tarshish is going on?!

BELIEVING SHEPHERD & SCRIBE

[*in unison*] The Messiah has come! [*they stare at each other*] You know about the Messiah?!

SHIMONA

Wait, wait, wait. This is all about that superhero baby?

SCRIBE

Well, I'm not sure that's how I would describe Him, but..wait. What have you heard?

SHIMONA

Let's see...Well, Simone told me Mary from Nazareth might be pregnant but that it's probably just indigestion. And that Joseph used that new Bathe-a-lamb service. [*to SIMONE*] I haven't had a chance to ask him about it yet. And then you [*pointing to the WISE MEN SERVANTS*] told her you were looking for a superbaby with laser vision. And then I heard from these guys [*pointing to the TAX COLLECTOR and CENSUS COUNTER*] that Joseph is related to King David and Mary is actually the Queen of Sheba. Which isn't too hard to believe since they get to stay in her [*pointing to the INNKEEPER'S WIFE who starts to look nervous again*] nice, trendy barn with a jacuzzi, comfy bed, and cute animals. And now she [*pointing to BELIEVING SHEPHERD*] is going around spouting nonsense saying angels are showing up singing songs about the Messiah being born. [*She heaves a big sigh after all that talking.*]

SIMONE

Wow, a lot has happened in one day. One could even say 9 months worth of events!

BELIEVING SHEPHERD

You've got it all wrong, though! Mary is pregnant! Or at least she was. And God really did give her this baby because...He's the Messiah! He's not some superhero with laser beam vision, but He is the savior of the world. Instead of beating up bad guys or people we don't like, He's going to save us from our sins and make us right with God!

SCRIBE

And while I'm not sure about Mary being the Queen of Sheba, the scriptures do tell us that the Messiah will be born from King David's lineage. The prophet Micah also said that the Messiah will come from Bethlehem. *[reading from a scroll of scripture]*

"But you, Bethlehem...shall come forth to me the One to be Ruler in Israel." It was also prophesied by Isaiah that he would be born from a virgin. "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

BELIEVING SHEPHERD

[to UNBELIEVING SHEPHERD] See? It is the Messiah! *[to SHIMONA and SIMONE]* You guys really need to get your facts straight. For starters, why in the world would you think that barn is a nice place to stay? It's dirty and smells like a wet goat!

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Alright, fine, it's not a fancy room with a king bed and a jacuzzi. Unless you count a pile of hay as a king bed and the pigs' mud puddle as a jacuzzi. But what was I supposed to do? They were desperate to have a roof over their heads! Oh, what will people say when they hear about this?

GOSSIPER #2

I think the only thing you have to worry about people talking about is your kindness and compassion.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

[she sighs with relief] Thank you. Now, I have to get back to my guests!

[She exits]

GOSSIPER #1

Well, I think all this excitement about the Messiah must be the juiciest story we've heard yet!

GOSSIPER #2

Yeah, let's go tell everyone!

[They rush out of the store.]

ROMAN SOLDIER

I better go tell the higher ups about this. The boss ain't gonna like hearing that a tiny baby is gonna end up being King of Israel one day.

[He exits.]

PRIEST

[to SCRIBE] Stop this nonsense at once! You're misinterpreting the scriptures! The Messiah is supposed to come with an army and save us from the Roman oppressors. He's not supposed to be a helpless baby!

SCRIBE

But the scriptures don't say he's going to come with an army and save us from the Romans! The prophet Isaiah said [*reading from the scroll*]

"He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets."

And here too it says, "his name shall be called...Prince of Peace."

That doesn't sound like a war commander to me.

PRIEST

This is blasphemy, I tell you. Blasphemy!

[He storms out of the shop.]

CENSUS COUNTER

Well, this has all been very fun. Thanks for the entertaining story!

[She leaves as well. The TAX COLLECTOR goes to follow her, but then stops and turns.]

TAX COLLECTOR

Is it true that the Messiah can save us from our sins? Even...someone like me?

BELIEVING SHEPHERD

All I know is that I'm not the same person I used to be after seeing Him. He's given me hope, and somehow...He made me a new person, even though He's just a baby. I think He could save anyone if they really wanted to be saved.

TAX COLLECTOR

[She smiles] Thanks.

[The TAX COLLECTOR exits.]

SERVANT

[to BELIEVING SHEPHERD] Um, excuse me? We've been looking for this baby too. Do you think you could show us where He is?

BELIEVING SHEPHERD

Yeah, of course!

[The SERVANT exits looking excited. Before leaving, the BELIEVING SHEPHERD turns to look at the UNBELIEVING SHEPHERD.]

BELIEVING SHEPHERD

You coming?

UNBELIEVING SHEPHERD

I still don't know if all this is true.

BELIEVING SHEPHERD

Well, maybe if you keep seeking, you'll find out the truth for yourself.

[They both exit, leaving SIMONE and SHIMONA alone together on stage.]

SHIMONA

Well, this was certainly a story for the books!

SIMONE

I almost think the real story is even wilder than the one we thought was real!

SHIMONA

I guess that's the question, then. Do you believe it's true?

SIMONE

I'm not sure yet. *[to audience]* How about you all? Do you believe?

THE END

Set

- ☒ ~~Counter (standing desk w/ wood backdrop)~~
- ☐ Bookcase
- ☒ ~~Table (classroom)~~
- ☒ ~~Various Objects~~

Props

- ☐ Census Flyers
- ☐ Old Map
- ☐ Manger
- ☐ Cans attached with string
- ☐ Burlap sack (optional)
- ☐ Small coin bag with coins inside
- ☐ Cloth-wrapped "lentil cakes"
- ☐ Scroll of scripture

Mic Transfers

Mic #1 - Shaya & Loria

Mic #2 - Hailey > Destiny > Alexa > London > Luciana > Natalie >
Luciana/Hailey > Alexa > Addison > Destiny > Allison

Mic #3 - Luciana > Addison > Phillip > Victoria > London > Phillip

Mic #4 - Tyler > Natalie > Allison > Tyler > Victoria > Loria