

# Scene 1

*(As intro music plays (CD track 9) the children enter and take their positions for the first scene. Fade the music when ready.)*



**Narrator 1** We're sure there won't be many of you out there who don't know the story of the very first Christmas. Most of you must have seen (or even taken part in) a fair few nativity plays over the years, so Mary, Joseph, the innkeeper, angels, shepherds, wise men and of course the baby Jesus will all be very familiar to you.

**Narrator 2** Now, these characters will play an important part in *our* story, but we'll also be introducing you to one or two less well-known ones, whom you probably won't have heard of! But even though you've not come across them before, they still had an important part to play in what happened all those years ago.

*(Joseph enters carrying a chisel and a saw.)*

**Narrator 3** But let's start off with someone who is well-known. Joseph, whom we mentioned earlier, was a well-respected, hard-working carpenter. He lived in a village called Nazareth, but he wasn't born there. No, Joseph was born and grew up far away, a four-day journey to be precise, in a town called Bethlehem.

**Narrator 4** Bethlehem was where, in his youth, he learned the carpentry trade. Along with other keen youngsters in the town, he spent his early years mastering the saw, hammer, chisel and plane, until he and his friends became qualified, skilled craftsmen.

*(The other carpenters enter, each carrying tools of their trade.)*

**Narrator 5** And oh, what a jolly bunch the carpenters of Bethlehem were, never happier than when they were busying themselves at their workbenches, surrounded by sawdust and wood-shavings. They would whistle merrily as they turned a piece of timber into a door, a table, a cartwheel or a simple set of bowls and plates. For them life was busy, and life was good.....

## **Song Life's Good** *(CD tracks 1 & 10, lyrics p16)*

*(Carpenters supported by the whole cast)*

*(As the song finishes Joseph stands forward of the other carpenters. A suitcase is slid across the floor to him. He picks it up.)*

**Joseph** Friends, gather round; I have an announcement to make. Although I'm very happy here, Bethlehem has more than enough carpenters, so I'm leaving to set up in business where there's a little less competition!

*(Simeon, with a grey beard, stands forward and embraces Joseph, who then exits.)*

**Simeon** *(waving to Joseph)* Joseph, my dear, dear friend. I've known you since you were a child. Things just won't be the same here without you!

**Narrator 1** Simeon was one of Bethlehem's oldest and most experienced carpenters. When Joseph was a boy he had been Simeon's apprentice. That means Simeon had taken Joseph under his wing, taught him all his carpentry skills and had given him his very first job.

**Narrator 2** They worked happily together for many years and became the best of friends. But now, with Joseph deciding to move away, Simeon was a man down. He couldn't manage everything on his own, so there was only one thing for it.....he had to find himself a new apprentice.

**Simeon** I need to find myself a new apprentice, and I know just the place to go!

*(The trades people enter; builders, bakers, weavers, farmers etc, two or three of each, all carrying a sign showing the tools/products of their trade and the word 'HIRING'. With the carpenters, they stand in their groups at one side of the stage – see staging suggestions/props.)*

**Narrator 3** One day every month the local trades people would gather in Bethlehem's town square, to hire youngsters who were looking for work.

*(The children nervously enter and stand on the other side of the stage.)*

**Narrator 4** These children, many from poor families, were keen to start earning a living. They would come to the town square hoping to be chosen as apprentices by the local bakers, builders, weavers, farmers and, of course, carpenters.

**Narrator 5** It was an arrangement that everyone benefitted from. In this way the town prospered and everybody kept themselves busy.

## **Song Scratch My Back** *(CD tracks 2 & 11, lyrics p17)*

*(Trades people and children supported by the whole cast)*

*(As the song finishes the trades people and children mingle. The trades people inspect the children, checking their hands, muscles, teeth and behind their ears. As the following conversations take place, they 'pair-up'.)*

**Weaver** Hmmm, on closer inspection you're a bit grubby, but I reckon after a good scrub we could make a decent weaver out of you!

**Builder** Well, you’re nothing but skin and bone. Still, with a few good meals inside you and a bit of fattening up, we’ll have you carrying bricks in no time. You’re hired!

**Baker** You’re kind of rough round the edges. You need a haircut, and a pair of shoes wouldn’t go amiss, but I think you show promise. Fancy being a baker, you little whipper-snapper?

**Farmer** *(sniffing)* Phew! What a pong! You’ll certainly fit in on my farm, particularly with the goats and sheep! They’ll love you!

**Carpenter 1** One..two...three.....ten whole fingers - good! That means it doesn’t matter if you lose a couple while you learn how to use a saw! Come on, you’re going to be a carpenter!

*(The rest of the children and trades people mingle then all exit in pairs, leaving only one tradesman, Simeon, and one child, Sarah. Sarah sits cross-legged, looking sad. She has a cloth bag slung across her shoulder.)*

**Narrator 1** When the carpenters, farmers, weavers, builders and bakers had chosen suitable apprentices, they took them to begin their training in the skills of their new trades.

**Narrator 2** Nearly every trades person now had a new apprentice. Simeon, however, had found no-one. He still needed a youngster who could fill the position left by Joseph, but the only child remaining was a little girl called Sarah who, quite frankly, didn’t look up to the job.

**Narrator 3** Sarah was from a poor family who lived on the outskirts of Bethlehem. They were relying on her to earn extra money so they would have enough food and clothing to see them through the coming winter. If she couldn’t find a job, they would really struggle.

**Narrator 4** But a small girl like this couldn’t become a carpenter, surely? Who’d ever heard of a girl making a living hammering and sawing great lumps of wood? Simeon certainly hadn’t. Nevertheless, he was a kind man and the least he could do was offer this lonely little girl a few minutes of his time.....

If you require a shorter, simpler version of this script, one can be obtained free-of-charge by contacting Edgy Productions directly.

## **Song** **The Lucky Ones** *(CD tracks 3 & 12, lyrics p18)*

*(Sarah and Simeon supported by the whole cast)*

**Narrator 5** Simeon longed to help Sarah, but what could he do? There was no way he could make this small, weak girl his apprentice. As he put a comforting arm around her, he noticed the cloth bag she had over her shoulder.

**Simeon** What is in your bag, child?

*(Sarah takes out three or four intricate wooden carvings – **see staging suggestions/props**. She hands them to Simeon.)*

**Sarah** I like to carve wood, you see. I make these ornaments and try to sell them to get money for my family. I know they're not very good, not as good as a proper carpenter like you could make.

**Narrator 1** But Simeon was astounded at the quality of the carvings. Never in his life had he seen such beautiful woodwork, especially not created by the hands of a small child. He immediately had a change of heart.

**Simeon** Well I never! This changes everything. I'd be a fool not to make you my apprentice. Sarah....you're hired!

*(As **intro music** plays (CD track13) Simeon and Sarah exit and the stage is made ready for the next scene. Fade the music when ready.)*

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