

# The Midnight Star

## Story Experience



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### How To Use:

This story is a creative re-telling of the Journey of the Magi. It is suitable for adults and children aged 9+. Use this material with your small group, youth or drama group, children's classes, or for a festive family get together.

Each page will take about five minutes to read aloud. You may wish to choose different story-tellers for each page.

To turn your story into an interactive experience, simply hand around the food and props, as prompted during the story. All prompts are in square brackets. Items to prepare are listed on the following page. If using this material with older children or teens, encourage a few volunteers to prepare and lead the session for you.



“ Conclude with a discussion about how this story differs from the real Christmas story. Use bible references to guide your thoughts. Ask participants to write (or draw) their own version of the Christmas story, finding a unique or interesting angle to make it really fun. ”



# You will need:

**A kaleidoscope, a plastic crown.**

**Pots of custard and teaspoons, inflated balloon and pin, sparkly fake jewellery in a 'treasure' box.**

**Sound effects:**

- drum-roll, horses-hooves, woman screaming, marching feet, lightning storm.

**Feather-duster, back-pack, swimming goggles, toy cutlass, joke-shop skeleton, baby doll swaddled.**

**Cups of stew, curry or casserole:**

- which can be kept warm in the oven until you are ready to serve them.

**A photo of two boys in rags.**

**A cuddly toy with a label that says:**

- Love you Grandma!

**A nativity scene**

- preferably three dimensional.

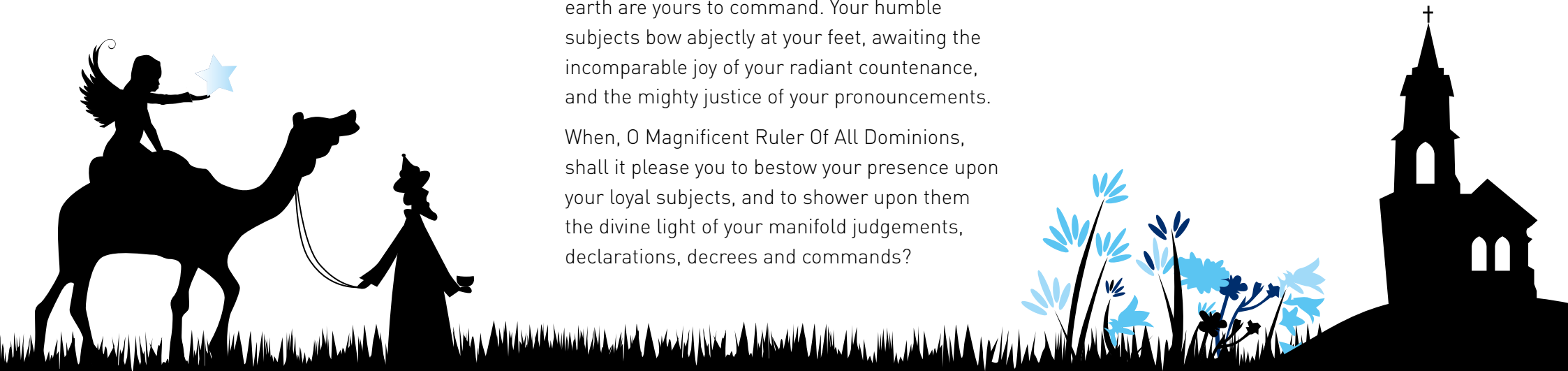
**Torch, strings of fairy lights.**

**To make a scroll with the following words:**

- Great Wise and Merciful King, heaven and earth are yours to command. Your humble subjects bow abjectly at your feet, awaiting the incomparable joy of your radiant countenance, and the mighty justice of your pronouncements.

When, O Magnificent Ruler Of All Dominions, shall it please you to bestow your presence upon your loyal subjects, and to shower upon them the divine light of your manifold judgements, declarations, decrees and commands?

To help keep the story flowing, you may wish to ask a helper to hand around the props/prepare the food, whilst you concentrate on reading the narrative.



# The Midnight Star

Read out this story to your group, stopping as prompted to hand around props and photos.

[Prompt: Pass around the kaleidoscope.]

King Melchior The Fearsome And Fabulous looked into his telescope and sighed despondently. The velvet skies lapping against the towers of his castle left him unmoved. The gravity defying walls, strong enough to repel any number of barbarian armies, gave him no pride. The great festoons of stars illuminating his vast, unconquered kingdom offered him little pleasure. Even the cascade of diamonds glowing on his hands and feet could not lighten his gloomy mood.

[Prompt: Put on the crown.]

“Why great fearsome, fabulous King like me, surrounded by provincial foolish men,” he muttered to himself.

“All is much wrong- wrong. All is joggle-boggled. All is flopsy-turvey,

“Why no men of science and wise thoughts to keep great King company?

“Why no big brains of enlightenment? Why no big head to helpee helpee magnificent King ? Why no wise wisdom grown inside he?”

You will most certainly have noticed that King Melchior had a little something by the way of an accent. Being a man of great wisdom, and learning, the king made it his business to master languages from the four corners of the earth.

His weekly practice was to change from one language to another. Luckily, the week that we

drop in on King Melchior is the very one set aside for brushing up on our fair tongue. And as you will have already discerned, the King’s command of the Queen’s English was still a charming work in progress.

Just as King Melchior was sinking into a decidedly unfabulous funk, his unfortunate man servant, Ho-ho-min-to, happened to bow himself into the King’s observatory.

“You fool of fools,” hissed the King. “Why tumble you upon great King’s studies wearing face lookee lookee like a donkey? Why no leavee leavee King in peace to make much wisdoms for all people?”



“Kwa zon zoo moo chick haa,” stuttered the hapless Ho-ho-min-to. Obviously, the poor man did not have his sovereign’s natural aptitude for foreign languages. So for the purpose of smooth narration, I shall be obliged to paraphrase.

[Prompt: Hand around the scroll for people to read as you say the next lines.]

Ho-ho-min-to’s reply was roughly thus:

“Great Wise and Merciful King, heaven and earth are yours to command. Your humble subjects bow abjectly at your feet, awaiting the incomparable joy of your radiant countenance, and the mighty justice of your pronouncements.”

“When, O Magnificent Ruler Of All Dominions, shall it please you to bestow your presence upon your loyal subjects, and to shower upon them the divine light of your manifold judgements, declarations, decrees and commands?”

I know what you’re thinking. You can’t believe that he said all that, with just: “Kwa zon zoo moo chick haa?” Well, don’t be too quick to rush to unfair conclusions. I am absolutely not making anything up. One of the idiosyncrasies of Ho-ho-min-to’s particular dialect was its ability to conjure up several, extravagantly flourishing paragraphs with just a few, well chosen words... But I digress.

“You pig-faced baboon,” shrieked King Melchior, hopping crossly from one foot to the other.

“Why chuck you on Great King all manner of bible and babble. Why burden you Great King with hopeless sillinesses of stupid peasant people.

“What care King like I for lives of the flabber-jabberers and wasteful lazy-makers? Get from

sight of me. Or I takee takee giant pot of custard and in it throw you, useless monkey.”

[Prompt: Hand around teaspoons and pots of custard for people to enjoy.]

I am sure you are making out the general gist of all this, even though Melchior’s English vocab was, at times, a little muddled.

And to be fair to the King, this account may not paint him in the light of a well-mannered and caring employer. But he was normally very even-tempered. Sadly for Ho-ho-min-to (and the kingdom at large) Melchior’s nerves, of late, had been shredded. Disappointment had been piled atop disappointment. Anxious days had come hot on the heels of restless nights.



Naturally enough, the King had grown exhausted and irritable. He felt like a deflated balloon.

[Prompt: Pop the balloon.]

His diet and lifestyle regime had gone out of the window. He'd stopped exercising. And bathing was a thing of the past. Predictably, his gloomy situation was compounded by the fact that he'd started to whiff. He smelled a bit like this...

[Prompt: Hand around the onion for people to sniff.]

In short, King M was at breaking point. His mental equilibrium was looking pretty wobbly. Little surprise then if his only solace came from dishing out a whole heap of crazy. Boilings of hapless servants in custard, or jelly, were at an all-time high. The poor people of Melchior's realm had never seen him in such a tyrannical tizz.

But why, you may be wondering was he getting his knickers in such a knot?

Well, as it happens, King Melchior was an avid collector of the world's most valuable things. He would spare no efforts to secure the priceless, the ancient and the unusual. In his quest for the most precious objects that the world could offer, he had plundered the tombs of the pharaohs. He had also fought mythical beasts of every description, and climbed Everest with no winter coat. With the help of arm-bands and a rubber ring, he'd even conquered his fear of water, and rescued wondrous treasures from long-drowned wrecks.

[Prompt: Hand around your 'treasure' box containing fake jewellery.]

Yet, though he was rich as the richest of Emperors, and brave as the bravest of warriors, Melchior still hadn't found what he was after. For the King was

searching for a jewel of great price. He knew from ancient prophecies that he was destined to find it. He knew that he had been chosen to search, and not to search in vain. What's more, he even knew how his search would begin. The Book Of Infinity (helpfully) summarised the signs that would augur the beginning of his quest. It spake thus:

'When the blood-red moon and the blackened sun ripen together in perfect harmony, when mighty lightning and deafening thunder pour down upon all peoples, the sacred vault of the highest heavens will be ripped in two, and will reveal...'



Erm. Hold on. Oh goodness. Let me think... 'will be ripped in two, and will reveal'... Now what were the exact words again? If I can just cast my mind back to that book. Ah, yes, I think I have it...

'Blah blah blood-red moon blah blah blah... The sacred vault of the highest heavens will be ripped in two, and will reveal ...

[Prompt: Play your drum-roll sound effect here.]

'A star so beautiful that the whole universe shines suspended at its core.'

And then, somehow, although the Book Of Infinity wasn't overly specific on this bit, the quest for the jewel would begin.

Well, the weird thing was, quite a lot of this had actually come to pass. The blood-red moon and blackened sun had happened two ago weeks. Lightning/thunder/ all-people... That was done and dusted too. But still, no ripped vault of heaven, and no star, and therefore, no jewel.

In truth, the King was a wreck of a man. He was a mere shell of the muscular and gym-toned leader he had once been. Ho-ho-min-to looked upon the King's despairing countenance and weedy wasting body. He decided that it might be an idea to scarper. But lo! The pitter-patter of the manservant's feet had barely died away, when there came an insistent knocking upon the King's door.

Knock, knock!

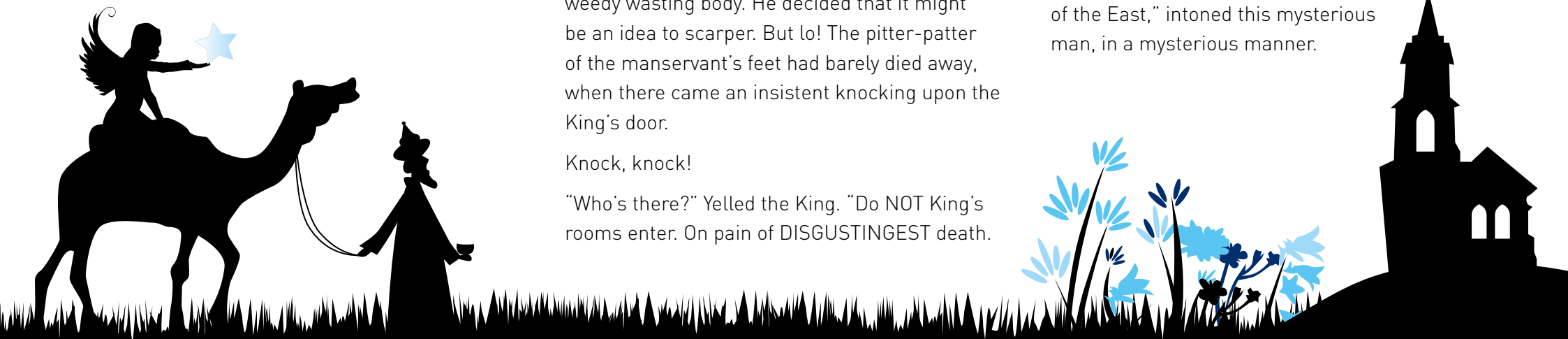
"Who's there?" Yelled the King. "Do NOT King's rooms enter. On pain of DISGUSTINGEST death.

"Run and hide, you stinksome fish-bottoms! Before I make cruel soldiers to torture torture you with big tickle of awful feathers."

[Prompt: Tickle some of your listeners with a feather-duster.]

But Melchior's fevered words went unheeded by the intruder. Into his observatory strode a tall and mysterious man. His face was bearded. His robes shimmered. A glorious diadem was set upon his brow. At his feet stood a small boy clothed in rags.

"All Greetings to you Fearsome Melchior of the East," intoned this mysterious man, in a mysterious manner.



"I Balthazar, Ruler of The Kingdom of the North, have come with wondrous tidings. The sacred vault of the highest heavens has ripped in two. The Midnight Star has descended. The light of the universe is at its core. The Star has led me to you, O King.

[Prompt: Put the back-pack and swimming goggles on one of your participants.]

"Together, we must climb many mountains and swim many seas. Our journey will not be in vain. For we shall behold the Jewel of Great Price and learn the secret of eternal life.

"Come with me now! For fortune and for glory!"

Giving Melchior no time to breathe, let alone collect his scattered thoughts, Balthazar and the boy bundled King M into the waiting darkness.

## Optional interlude

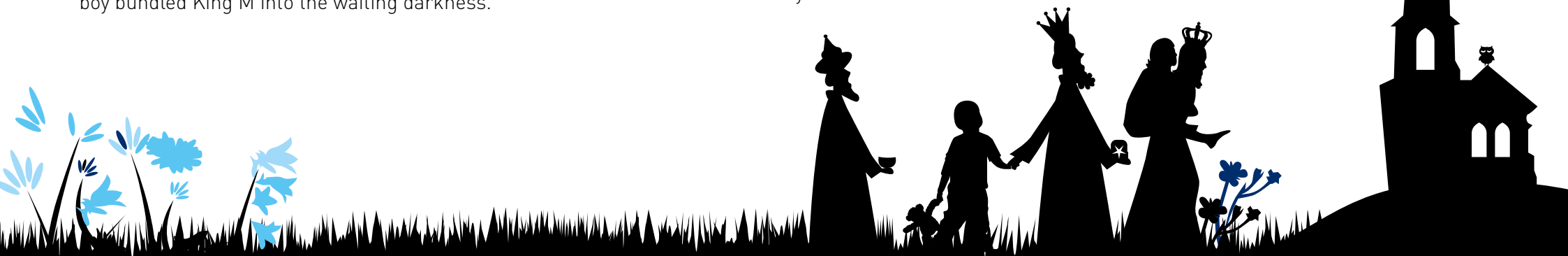
[Prompt: Play the horses' hooves sound-effect.]

The night was dark and wide and infinitely empty, ahead of them... nothing but the Midnight Star. King Melchior's heart galloped faster than the fiery steed he rode. At his right flank, thundered Balthazar, his face aglow with gallant intentions. On his left, the ragged boy clung to his pony with an exhilarated grin.

Now Melchior still hadn't quite worked out how this kid fitted into the story. He looked more like

a street urchin than a suitable squire for a man of Balthazar's status...But there was no time for questions...

How had this happened? What road was this? What unfathomable power was helping them cross these endless expanses of jungle and wasteland. The speed-crazed horses foamed and whinnied. Following the star's light, they ate up the miles with the iron-sparks of their hooves.





Mighty oceans trickled into streams. Dizzying mountains crumbled at their feet. The moon and the sun span crazily in their orbit. The days and months and seasons were whipped together into a whirlpool of starshine and confusion.

The constant motion of the journey lulled King Melchior. His fury and disappointment ebbed away with his receding Kingdom. His power and riches were a distant memory. The Midnight Star was all and everything. It bobbed on the horizon, throbbed in his aching mind, haunted his dreams. The heat of the desert days beat down upon his head. The vampire bite of the night

wind sucked at his skin. But all he could think about was the star. Nothing but the star.

“Stop. Drink. Rest. For see, we have come to the old country.” Balthazar slipped from his steaming horse and looked quizzically at his royal companion. The ragged boy began making camp. Soon he had whipped up a crackling fire and a splendid meal.

[Prompt: Hand around cups of stew, curry or casserole, prepared before the session.]

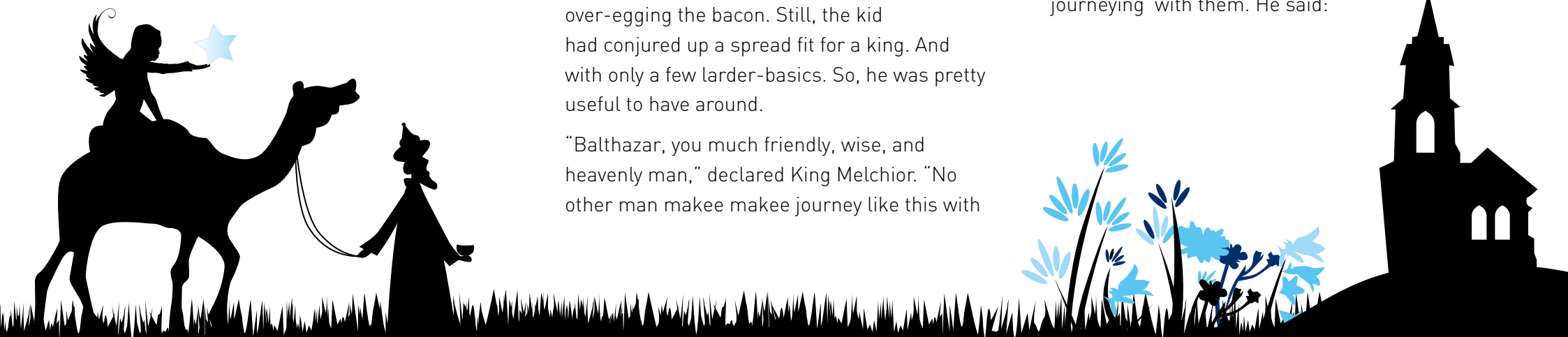
Now, I am not saying that Melchior was feeling exactly warm and squidgy about this little ragamuffin. That might be over-egging the bacon. Still, the kid had conjured up a spread fit for a king. And with only a few larder-basics. So, he was pretty useful to have around.

“Balthazar, you much friendly, wise, and heavenly man,” declared King Melchior. “No other man makee makee journey like this with

Great King. For this kind of star-following, man must be built from many scientific conclusions. And have huge belly of braveful courage.”

[Prompt: Hand around the photo of the boys in rags.]

King Melchior and King Balthazar were just bowing to each other, as is the custom of monarchs expressing mutual admiration, when another ragged boy popped up. He appeared to have come from... well ...nowhere in particular. He was filthy and skinny. He was, more or less, the identical twin of the child already journeying with them. He said:



“Please follow me quickly O Kings. For there is little time and great evil stalks this place. The Dark Lord, Herod, has commanded your presence at his palace. I beg you, do not, on pain of death, attend upon him there.

“Herod’s mind is black and poisoned with cruelty. He has been consumed by the power of the Evil One. He means to cut the heart out of the Great Jewel . And steal the power of eternity for himself.

“You must follow me. Quickly majesties! If Herod captures you, he will roast your agonised bodies over a thousand fires.”

Now, this might be sounding like rather bad news to you. Your first instinct, like mine, would probably be to run for the hills. But let me tell you, Melchior and Balthazar

were made of sterner stuff. They were the fearless rulers of powerful dominions. Cowardice was abhorrent to them.

[Prompt: Wave around a toy cutlass energetically.]

Melchior spoke first: “Quickee quickee little kiddy. Lead me to ugly-mugly King of dark-black-badness. Hurry, so I may kill he with a thousand chops chops of my shiningful sword.”

Balthazar, meanwhile, advocated a more subtle approach: “Fear not. We have the blessing and protection of heaven to cling to. Therefore, no evil thing shall harm us.

“Take us to this King so that we may have speech with him. But do not be afraid. For no power of darkness can conquer us. We will not

lead this evil-doer to the jewel he seeks... Plus... I have a plan.”

So they all dutifully traipsed in the direction of the palace. The closer they got, the creepier the set-up appeared to be. Yes, the palace gates were encrusted with rubies and diamonds, and all sorts of fripperies and fancies. But you couldn’t exactly ignore the headless bodies swinging in the breeze. Or decorating the throne-room as the travellers entered. The bodies were a bad sign. A very bad sign indeed...

[Prompt: Uncover the plastic skeleton you have hidden. Play the ‘scream’ sound-effect.]



“Well now what have we here?” The evil King rubbed his hands with glee and licked his slavering chops with his bulbous tongue. His eyes gleamed with the cruel deaths he was imagining for these exotic men standing at his throne. First though, he must trick the fools into divulging the secret of the jewel. His obsession for its beauty was eating his heart out.

“Gentlemen. You are most welcome at my humble palazzo,” Herod said greasily. “Please stay here and be my guests for long as you may wish. But first a, few quick questions about a precious jew...”

Melchior, interrupted Herod before he could even finish his sentence.

“Sorry Kingee. We no speakee speakee your lingo. Never heard of no jewel. We here in so-so-lovely land to make kind visit to our aged granny-mums. They live many distances away.”

[Prompt: Hand around cuddly toy with label saying: Love You Grandma!]

“So off we go,” Melchior continued. “No stay here Sir. Kindly thank you. We get going now. Toodles-bye-bye.”

With that the Kings exited as quickly as they could. Of course, it was a matter of only minutes before Herod’s soldiers set off on their trail. But Balthazar had planned for this very eventuality...

### Optional interlude

[Prompt: Turn light off and play marching feet sound effect. Use a torch so you can continue reading.]

“SSh! We’ve got to stay quiet or the game’s up,” the ragged boy whispered to his ragged companion. Far on the horizon, Melchior and Balthazar disappeared in the other direction.

Round and round in the creeping darkness, the boys scuttled. On their backs shimmered Balthazar and Melchior’s kingly robes. On their feet glimmered jewelled boots; leaving a false trail of king-sized footprints behind them. In hot pursuit, and gaining ground, Herod’s soldiers bayed and roared for the blood of the two Kings. The baddies had not yet realised their mistake.



“Perhaps, after all, these hateful men might harm small children like us.” The ragged boy murmured, paralysed with fear. His little friend squeezed his hand tightly and replied:

“Remember what Balthazar told us: The shield of holy light will protect you. Have faith. For you have been chosen to speed onwards the revelation of everlasting glory.”

Typical Balthazar stuff there then. Sounds like mystical hoo-doo to me. But it seemed to do the trick. The brave little boy closed his eyes, clung to his friend tightly, and had faith. Great faith!

And behold, piercing the darkness shone the breathtaking Midnight Star. From its flawless depths, a sea of flames lashed down upon Herod’s fear-stricken men.

[Prompt: Play lightning storm sound effect.]

“OO. Aaah. OOOOOOOOh. Blimey. Me eyes! Me eyes! I can’t see nothing,” they cried.

“Stan, you there? Derek? I’m been blinded. Help! Help! Somebody. Anybody. Mummyyyyyyy. Waaaa!!!”

Herod’s soldiers screamed and wailed, clawed at their eyes, and each other, and generally lost the plot. Around them in a dizzying vortex, the star’s gravitational pull whipped up sand. Sand erased every footstep. Sand piled up in drifts. Sand buried the blinded baddies, never to be seen again. Sand, like a magic carpet, carried the boys to a small town, and dumped them at a stable door.

[Prompt: Switch fairy lights on. Hand around the nativity scene.]

Above the stable, the Midnight Star blazed on with its pure and perfect light. In front of the stable, Melchior was making a low bow to a young woman. At his side Balthazar was cuddling a baby. There with a decidedly gooey expression on Balthazar’s face...

“We Kings have searched for many moons and many suns to find the jewel of great price. Now we rejoice. The jewel that brings enlightenment is here.” Balthazar explained, holding out the baby to the ragged boy and his friend.

[Prompt: Hand the baby doll to one of your participants.]

“Stopee. Stopee. No give Christ-child to little runty street-boy. He too full of



smelly-dirts to touchy. His stinky friend no touchy neither. Why must lonely-boney kiddy be at birth of big-world-changing-saviour?" Melchior gumbled.

"Why must the boy be here?" the young woman exclaimed.

"Well...

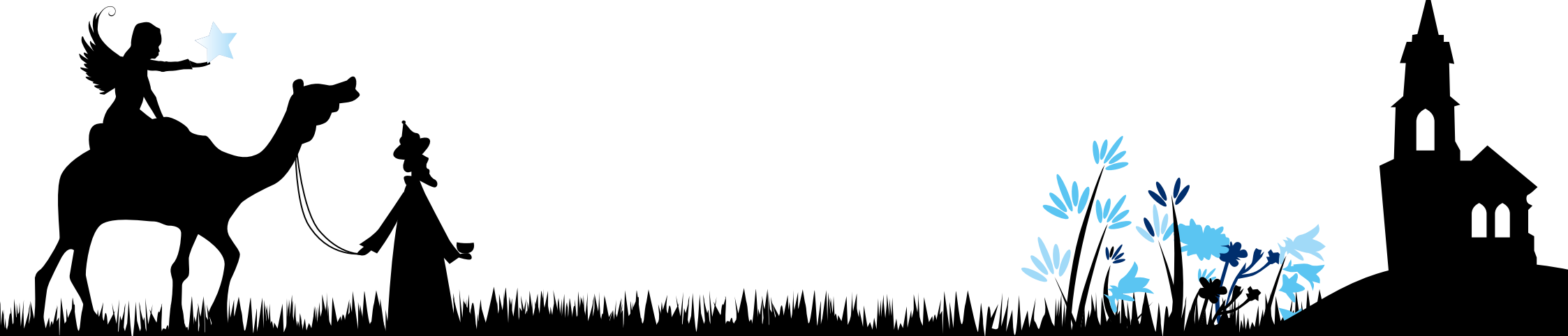
"... because he is The Third King, I always knew there would be three of you."

The ragged boy's eyes shone with tears of joy. They told the story that his lips would never utter. He was a child who had been homeless,

and unwanted and unloved. For his whole life he had gone unnoticed. But the Midnight Star had led King Balthazar to him. And that wise man had recognised him for the treasure that he really was. Just as he had recognised that the tiny baby would save mankind from sin.

The young woman bowed low to the ragged boy.

"Caspar," she addressed him. "I am sure that there is a wondrous crown for you in heaven. For your faith has led you to humbly serve the Living God."



# On The Margins – Toybox and Street Children

Just like the ragged boy in the Christmas tale, it can be all too easy for us to overlook children who exist on the margins; children relegated to the peripheries of our own story.


In a world where children living in poverty experience extremes of marginalisation, street children are the most easily ignored of all.

Living with fear and ill-health and subject to mistreatment and abuse, life for too many street children is a cheerless struggle, leading nowhere but early death.

## **But you can help Toybox to change this.**

Just £32 will pay for Toybox to fund the legal costs associated with retrospectively registering a street child's birth and providing official identity cards.

No matter what age a child may be at the time of their registration, this will enable them to officially exist, and to be recognised by their government. A simple piece of paper will give street children the chance of the help and protection which is every child's right.



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street children.

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