

# Back to the Nativity

*By Andrew M. Frodahl*

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## **DEDICATION**

*The play is dedicated to my dear friend Hope Bunch. I'm thankful and inspired by her support, insight, and passion to use the arts to further the gospel.*

## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Did the Nativity costumes just come alive? Pastor Hadley doesn't know what to think when he is washing the Nativity costumes and the first sheep pops out of the dryer. Granted, he hasn't been doing well after the recent loss of his fiancée, taking a leave from his ministry and turning away from God. Last night's church fire just proves that when it rains it pours. Maybe that wasn't a sheep he saw...but then out of the dryer comes Amir the Sheep Shearer and Jesse the Angel. Turns out the dryer is a time tumbler, and time and prophecies once fulfilled have been altered. The sheep shearer who came through was staying at an inn within the town of Bethlehem. Now he is here, and there is space at the inn, meaning Mary and Joseph will find a room! Pastor Hadley and his brother Cliff need to go back to make sure the prophecies of Christ's birth are fulfilled. Wearing a rich Samaritan and stinky camel costume, the brothers guide Mary and Joseph to the stable, lead the shepherds to the fields, and find hope in baby Jesus. This story blends brotherly love, adventure, humor, and marvelous mystery, but most importantly, it shows us about finding faith again. Runs about 80 minutes.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(4 m, 3 w, 6-7 flexible, 2 kids, doubling possible)*

**PASTOR HADLEY NORRIDGEWOCK:** The Pastor of Piddlesfoot Community Church who has lost hope after the death of his fiancée, Hannah.

**CLIFF NORRIDGEWOCK:** Hadley's younger brother, a bit out of shape and has always lived in his brother's shadow.

**DINAH:** A retired woman who is very involved in the church. Good friends with Crystal.

**CRYSTAL:** Was Hannah's best friend. She tries to be a comfort to Hadley, but it is hard for her to hide her adoration for him.

**JESSE THE ANGEL (flex):** Mysterious angel, not so typical.

**DEPUTY NUTE (flex):** The sheriff investigating the church fire.

**AMIR THE SHEEP SHEARER:** A shepherd terrified of sheep.

**JOSEPH:** The Earthly father of Jesus, Mary's husband.

**MARY:** The mother of Jesus, wife of Joseph.

**SHEPHERD #1: (flex):** A hardworking shepherd looking for lost sheep.

**SHEPHERD #2 (flex):** A hardworking shepherd looking for lost sheep.

**INNKEEPER (flex):** Innkeeper of Ruth's Tavern.

**THE PARAMEDIC (flex):** Helps Hadley. If possible, should be doubled as Jesse the Angel.

**BETHLEHEM COP (flex):** A Bethlehem traffic cop. No lines.

**SHEEP #1:** A sheep lost in time. *(A kid would work best due to size)*

**SHEEP #2:** A sheep lost in time. *(A kid would work best due to size)*

**ANGELIC HOSTS (flex):** One line to share the news of Jesus's birth.

*Doubling requires 4 m, 2 w, 3 flex, and 2 kids. The Angel can play the Paramedic, Deputy can play Cop, Amir can play Joseph, Crystal can play Mary, Dinah can play Innkeeper.*

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

### Act I

**Scene 1:** Current day, Piddlesfoot, VT. The church parsonage three weeks after Thanksgiving.

**Scene 2:** The church parsonage an hour later.

**Scene 3:** The church parsonage an hour later.

### Act II

**Scene 1:** The fields of Bethlehem the night Jesus was born.

**Scene 2:** The streets of Bethlehem and Ruth's Tavern.

**Scene 3:** The fields of Bethlehem moments before the angels proclaim Christ's birth.

**Scene 4:** The church parsonage twenty minutes after Hadley got shocked by dryer plug in Act I, Scene 3.

## SET

**Church parsonage:** USR is the front door. A small window is next to it. CSL is a bedroom door. A kitchen island counter is USR. Far DSL is an antique-looking washer and dryer set built up against the wall. The dryer should be sturdy and larger than normal to accommodate actors climbing in and out. Behind the dryer is backstage. CS is a couch and an end table with a cell phone and lamp on it.

**Fields of Bethlehem:** Large and small boulders cover the counter and washer/dryer. The boulder covering the washer/dryer can work as the cave, with the dryer hole as entrance to the cave. Palm trees cover the USR door. A large backdrop of a city scape of Bethlehem covers the US walls. The manger/nativity scene happens CSR in front of the boulder hiding the counter.

**Streets of Bethlehem/Ruth's Tavern:** DSL is made to look like a market covering the washer/dryer. A sign pointing offstage left reads "Hosea's Hideaway." USC door serves as the entrance to Ruth's Tavern. Above the door a sign reads "Ruth's Tavern." The USR door serves as the tavern's exit. The counter works as the clerk desk. Two chairs and a table are DSC.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: The church parsonage. PASTOR HADLEY NORRIDGEWOCK is asleep on the couch that is CS. He is unshaven, hair a mess, and wearing a bathrobe and slippers. The floor is covered in pizza boxes, chip bags, and soda cans. In his lap is a brown paper bag. SFX: A knock on the front door. Hadley doesn't move. SFX: The pounding on the door continues.)*

**CLIFF:** *(OS.)* Hadley! Hadley! Open up! It's Cliff. It's cold out here. *(To himself.)* Where did he hide that key? *(Beat.)* Ah ha! Got it.

*(The door unlocks and CLIFF NORRIDGEWOCK enters, tripping on boxes at the door.)*

**CLIFF:** *(Cont'd.)* Ah! Ouch. *(HE gets to his feet. He takes his jacket off and places it on coat rack while holding his nose from the stench.)* Ooh! Did something die in here? Oops, maybe that was a poor choice of words. I didn't mean it. *(Notices HADLEY on the couch. He tries to gently shake him awake.)* Hadley, Hadley. I have been standing outside for half an hour.

**HADLEY:** *(Wakes up groggy.)* Cliff? What are you doing here?

**CLIFF:** To see if you were alive. Mom has called for the past two weeks and no answer. *(Picks up Hadley's cell phone.)* No charge, I see.

**HADLEY:** I don't feel like talking. To anyone.

**CLIFF:** I would ask how you are doing, but you look terrible. Have you showered...at all?

**HADLEY:** I don't see the point.

**CLIFF:** *(Sniffing.)* Please, tell me that isn't— I smell smoke. You haven't picked up smoking again, have you?

**HADLEY:** What if I have?

**CLIFF:** Hadley, you are a pastor of a church.

**HADLEY:** Was a pastor.

**CLIFF:** No, you are a pastor. Just on a leave of absence.

**HADLEY:** *(Pulls out a cigarette from under the couch cushion. He puts it to his lips and grabs a lighter.)* That's what they think. I will be giving them my notice. Wrote it on the pizza box.

*(HADLEY kicks the box. CLIFF sees Hadley about to light a cigarette.)*

**CLIFF:** Hey! *(Knocks the cigarette from HADLEY'S mouth.)*  
Give me that. I knew it. I will not let you self-destruct and throw everything away.

**HADLEY:** I didn't throw everything away. It was taken from me.

*(HADLEY pulls out a beer from the paper bag and pops off the lid. He takes a swig. CLIFF'S eyes go wide.)*

**CLIFF:** Hadley James Norridgewock!

**HADLEY:** *(Sarcastically.)* Mom, is that you?

**CLIFF:** I know you are grieving, but this destructive behavior is unacceptable.

*(SFX: A knock at the front door.)*

**DEPUTY:** *(OS.)* Pastor Hadley? This is Deputy Nute. I need to speak with you.

**CLIFF:** *(Whispering.)* The police?! We got to hide the booze.

**HADLEY:** Why? It's not illegal to drink, Cliff. I am in my house.

**CLIFF:** This is actually a parsonage, so technically God's house. Are you going to answer the door?

*(SFX: Stern knock again.)*

**HADLEY:** You can get it. I am comfortable right here. Plus I am not wearing pants.

**CLIFF:** Police make me nervous, like clowns at a circus. I sweat profusely.

**DEPUTY:** *(OS.)* Pastor Hadley!

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*(CLIFF goes the door. He looks through the peephole. He wipes his brow then slowly opens the door.)*

**CLIFF:** Hi there.

**DEPUTY:** Hi. Who are you?

**CLIFF:** Well, who are you?

**DEPUTY:** I am Sheriff Deputy Nute. I need to speak with Pastor Hadley.

**CLIFF:** It's kind of a bad time right now. He just woke up.

**DEPUTY:** It's 2:30 in the afternoon. I must speak with him immediately.

**CLIFF:** Deputy Boot—

**DEPUTY:** Nute!

**CLIFF:** Nute. I am not sure if you are aware, but my brother's, fiancée past away a few weeks ago...

**DEPUTY:** I'm aware. It's part of the reason I'm here.

*(DEPUTY NUTE pushes past CLIFF and enters.)*

**CLIFF:** Hey! Do you have a warrant?

**DEPUTY:** Pastor Hadley...

**HADLEY:** You can drop the pastor, deputy. It's just Hadley.

**DEPUTY:** Oh? I was told you were just taking a leave of absence.

**CLIFF:** He is...

**HADLEY:** No, I'm not.

**CLIFF:** Yes, you are!

**DEPUTY:** *(Sitting on the couch.)* The church had a pretty bad fire last night.

**CLIFF:** *(Sitting.)* What?! What do you mean?

**DEPUTY:** It caught fire. The firemen were able to save a few things but most of it is just ash.

**HADLEY:** *(Without care.)* When it rains it pours.

*(HADLEY reaches for the beer, but CLIFF quickly grabs it and hides it behind the couch before the deputy sees it.)*

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