First Christmas

By

Alastair Macdonald

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I'm a tired old donkey; my friends call me Zeke.
My body's now aching; my legs are so weak.
But once I was handsome and strong as an ox,
As I carried my master, his tools and workbox.

My master once said that the Scriptures forewarn,
For the prophet Isaiah wrote a child would be born.
Called him "Wonderful Counselor ... Prince of Peace,"
This child, he promised, would give us release
From a world full of anger, trouble, and strife;
Would grow into a man who will give us new life.

Let me tell you my story so hard to believe
Of the birth of this child, who was truly conceived
As a present from God in His power above,
His Son, the Messiah, a gift of His love.

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My master, young Joseph, in the carpentry trade,
Was engaged to be married to a sweet gentle maid.
Young Mary and Joseph had fallen in love,
Like a lightning flash that had come from above.

But one day dear Mary, with tears in her eyes,
Confided in Joseph a startling surprise.
"Last night came an angel, bright, shining, and white,
Into my room, causing me such a fright.
But the angel spoke gently, my fears went away
As I listened intently and heard him say:

'You've been blessed among women by God up above.
It is you God has chosen to carry and love
A child so special in a world truly blind,
He's the Son of God; He will save all mankind!'"

An angry young Joseph could not understand.
"We're soon to be married; I thought I was your man!
Now you tell me a story I just can't believe
That in you, somehow God has already conceived
A baby! A baby? How could this be true?"
And he stomped away, getting angry anew.

That night in his bed, Joseph tossed and he turned,
Then awoke with a start, shocked at what he had learned.
In a dream so intense it almost seemed real
An angel appeared making him an appeal.
"Look after sweet Mary. You truly are blessed
To provide for God's Son, so now do your best
To care for his mother and give them a home.
For God knows you'll love him as he was your own."

When Joseph told Mary about this strange dream,
He gazed into her eyes with a look that did seem
So deeply concerned, full of love and care,
She knew he'd be with her no matter what fared.

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Now the Roman invaders ruling over that land
Decided to count the total amount
Of people then living and eating and breathing
And talking and walking and sneezing and teasing.
The total amount they wanted to count
So they could exact the maximum tax
From the citizens of that land.

So the Roman consul announced a decree
That all of the people without delay
To their family city they must go back
To be counted and also to pay their tax.

Master Joseph, descended from David the King,
Was born and grew up in Bethlehem.
So Joseph made plans, for us all, to walk
From the Nazareth hills to the Bethlehem rocks,
A trip on a dangerous and dusty road,
A wife with child and a heavy load.

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It was late in the evening, the sun had gone down,
When we finally arrived in Bethlehem town.
The air was so cold and we were so tired
As we searched for an inn with food and a fire.

But nary an inn could be found in the town
With a bed to sleep, and a room safe and sound.
"All our rooms are taken! No place for you here!"
And Joseph began to worry and fear . . .

Just then sweet Mary looked up in alarm.

"The baby is coming, let him come to no harm!"

An innkeeper, seeing her precarious state,

Took pity upon us and told us to wait.

"There is room in my stable, a warm place to sleep,

If you don't mind donkeys, cows, oxen and sheep.

It is next to the inn, down this alleyway here.

Just open the door; you'll have nothing to fear."

Into the stable we moved with haste,

Where Mary and Joseph quietly embraced.

"Don't worry, dear Mary," he gently said,

"For our faith in our God, He has given this shed.

With its donkeys and cows, oxen and sheep,

I really don't know how we'll get any sleep!"

Before Mary could laugh, she felt a strong pain.

"I think my time's coming!" she told him again.

"In this empty corner, the hay is clean;

I will set up a bed fit for a queen!"

So he laid down a blanket, smooth and dry,

And fashioned a pillow where Mary could lie.

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The hour is late, the town is quiet;
The air is clear, the stars shine bright.
The only sound is a distant bark
Faintly heard coming through the dark.
Within the stable, a baby's cry!
A child is born. Oh my! Oh my!

A bright light surrounds that little body,
A baby boy snuggling up to his mommy.
Young Joseph stands by with a smile on his face,
Looking in wonderment, touched by his fate.
While the donkeys and cows, oxen and sheep,
Quietly watch as the baby sleeps.

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Out in the fields in the clear winter night,
Shepherds are watching their flocks close and tight.
Startled and scared by a sudden bright light
Surrounding an angel, overwhelming the night.

"Don't be afraid, for I bring you good news,

For great joy and peace will surely ensue.

This night in your village a baby is born,

God's Son the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Lord!

You will find this baby in swaddling bands,

Lying in a manger where the inn stands."

The shepherds arrive on bended knee

To see the Christ Child, and reverently,

They offer a gift, a baby lamb,

Giving thanks to God as best they can.

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As the shepherds return to their flocks of sheep,

With the rest of Bethlehem fast asleep,

Brightness takes over the nighttime skies,

The sound of music is heard to arise.

A throng of angels high above

Is singing God's praises, proclaiming His love.

What a wonderful sight it is to see

As the angels sing their melody:

A song of glory to God on high;

A song of peace on earth come nigh;

A song of wondrous things to come;

A song to celebrate God's Son.

Into the stars the angels ascend

As the light recedes and quiet returns.

A baby looks up from the manger stall

At me, Zeke the donkey, how well I recall!

'Twas a night to remember, I'll never forget

When Jesus, the Christ Child, and I first met.

~ ~ The End ~ ~