

MERRY NOËL

by
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CHARACTERS

MERRY is a woman in her mid sixties who lives alone. She is clever and theatrical, changing from wild to sweet in a moment, a counselor, challenging and slightly insane.

NOEL, in his mid 30s, is married with two boys, somewhat darling and overly proper. He owns a small antique shop in the town's fashionable district and lives nearby. He is proud of his accomplishments. Kind but proud.

MIEN Late 40s. Hard working, focused on his family. He and his family are immigrants from an eastern country.

CHANTHA Mid 40s. Mien's wife who enjoys her life in America.

SAMNANG a young teenager who is embarrassed by his/her parents inability to fully Americanize.

JOE late 30s and thoughtful. Able to glimpse a person's problems. Lost.

SHEPHERD 1 Late 30s. He is a confused cop.

SHEPHERD 2 Early 20s. His confusion has made him scared.

~**EEE**~

The MIENs should just speak the words, trippingly on the tongue, without accent. Each supporting character is demure and naive about their place in the play.

The setting is in MERRY'S front yard where it looks like Jesus and Santa crashed and exploded. Anything having to do with Christmas is hung, stuck, stapled, taped, stretched, propped or plastered over the yard. Extension cables abound. There is no pattern to the mess, yet somehow it looks beautiful. Her house glows from off stage.

It is a hot evening on July the sixth.

Everyone who does dark deeds hates
the light, and will not come into the light
for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

John 3:20

(The stage is dark. O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM PLAYS over scratchy speakers, interrupted by the whistling, booming SOUND of fireworks. Lights come up reveling MERRY, outside, amidst a landfill of Christmas decorations. Her house is OFF STAGE from which lights SHINE. MERRY tinkers on one of many baby Jesus who sputters with light and goes out three or four times. MERRY gets electrocuted.)

MERRY

Oww! Little bastard!...

(begins to kick the plastic baby but stops to laugh)

Bastard! Get it? You are a bastard!

(that Jesus lights up...)

Thank you Heaven!!

(...but all the rest, including the MUSIC, go out.)

Oh, Hell.

NOEL

(ENTERS, searching)

Excuse me, Ma'am... Is this 1520?

MERRY

No!

NOEL

...1520 Wittenberg Avenue, I mean?

MERRY

What's your purpose!

(NOEL begins to exit off opposite side of stage.)

NOEL

I am sorry... Are you Mrs. Merry Maker...?

MERRY

I just got the Bejesus shocked out of me and I ain't mak'n no converts just now. Come back later...

NOEL

I have been sent by the Council to...

MERRY

Council!

NOEL

Yes. Forgive me. My name is Noel. Noel Crux... Mrs. Maker? I was sent by the Council to...

MERRY

What 'council?'

NOEL

Our Neighborhood Council. I'm your newly elected official and I'm afraid I'm officially here... On official business, I mean.

MERRY

How officious...

NOEL

I own the antique shop over on Proctor and...

MERRY

Ain't buying no antiques.

NOEL

No...

MERRY

Just keep mov'n 'cause I ain't buy'n.

NOEL

That is not why I am here. I am sorry. Let me start over for you. I have sent you letters, Mrs. Maker and you haven't...

MERRY

You might as well quit with that Mrs. crap. There ain't no mister so I can't be no Mrs. What's your name?

NOEL

(Overlapping)

Noel. Noel Crux. The first letter I sent you was on...

MERRY

Now that's a nice name. Suits you just fine.

(pronouncing his name with two syllables)

Noël. Your mamma and daddy must be proud of you, naming you Noël.

NOEL

Actually just one syllable, Merry. Noel.

MERRY

One name I can't stand is Jesus. It's a Spaniard name, Jesus. It means Jesus, as in Christ? Don't you think that's terrible pretentious, Noël?

NOEL

No, no. It is just Noel, like hole or mole... Noel.

MERRY

I catch wind of someone's name being Jesus and I drop to kiss their feet. You should see the looks! ...When you sign your name, do you put them two little dots above the 'e'?

NOEL

No. You misunderstand. My name is...

MERRY

Well you should. Imagine having a beautiful looking and sounding name...

NOEL

Listen, Ms. Maker...

MERRY

Name's Merry! Damn glad to meet you.

NOEL

Listen, Merry... This is my first time going out like this and...

MERRY

Take your time. Hangin' on every word you say, Noël.

NOEL

...Thank you... I have sent you many letters and, according to my records, you have never...

MERRY

Don't read 'em! You thirsty?

NOEL

You don't read your mail?

MERRY

Not if I don't ask for it.

NOEL

But nobody asks for mail.

MERRY

Then nobody should read it. Want some tea?

NOEL

What do you do with it?

MERRY

...I pour it in a cup and drink it, Young Man.

NOEL

No. I mean your mail. What do you do with your mail?

MERRY

Box it.

NOEL

You throw away unopened mail?

MERRY

I said I box my mail... You know, put it up. Like cannin' tomatoes. You thirsty yet?

NOEL

But I have sent important court papers that specifically outline...

MERRY

Tell me, Young Man. Do you have every piece of mail ever sent you, neatly collected, tied and tucked away, by date?

NOEL

...No!

MERRY

No. You. Don't. ...Thirsty yet?

NOEL

Look. I have sent important notices that clearly outline how you are to maintain your property in accordance with fire safety laws and...

MERRY

Would you like a nice cup of Christmas Tea?...

NOEL

Safety and respect for your neigh... Pardon me?

MERRY

Christmas Tea?

NOEL

...no. No! No, thank you. I was sent by the Council, your Council, to talk to you, Ms. sorry... Merry. To talk to you about your house and how... Well, how awful everything looks. Now I'm sorry for saying...

MERRY

I agree with you there, Young Man. This is awful!

NOEL

You agree?

MERRY

Hell yes, I agree! My beautiful daughter helped me put some of this up and every time I look at the flashy colors in the European crystal, some of these things is European crystal you know, every time I see these plastic Santa's elves bringing gifts to Little Baby Jesus and those glow-in-the-dark praying hands for Santa's halo... I am Full-Of-Awe at God's greatness.

NOEL

That is a different awful than what I...

MERRY

Ain't she awe-full? Don't she just take your breath clean away!

NOEL

That's exactly why I've come. You see...

MERRY

But you really can't appreciate it during daylight. Have you beheld it at night, Noël?

NOEL

...Yes.

MERRY

A sight, if I do say. I make sure and push all them plugs in each and every evening, to get folks into the Christmas Spirit. Just working on that now...

NOEL

But there, right there. Stop just for one minute. ...Stop... 'Christmas Spirit?' You see, that is the problem, Merry. It's July. This is July sixth and there is no Christmas Spirit. At ALL. I mean, we just had fireworks, Merry.

MERRY

...You need some Christmas Tea, don't you? I'll get us some nice, hot...

NOEL

No. I do not want... Listen, Merry. I'm here now to see if we can't work something out. You and me. Before the others arrive... The City Council got complaints, Merry. They got complaints so they dumped it in the Neighborhood Council's lap and the Neighborhood Council dumped it in my lap, because I'm new, I guess.

MERRY

Ain't no bother, Young Man. Got it right here. Make yourself useful.

(hands NOEL a large Thermos)

Now, let me see... Where'd them cups get to?

NOEL

Merry. I have no time to sit and...

MERRY

Found those cups!

(MERRY goes to a Christmas decoration; a Styrofoam ball about which the bottoms of many used paper coffee cups are taped. Removing two, she blows into one and spits into the other, rubbing it 'clean'. She hands that one to NOEL all while humming The First Noël.)

NOEL

Actually, that is not necessary. Merry... I would rather not. No thank...

MERRY

Oh yes you would.

NOEL

(as MERRY pours)

No. Really! Please? I... Thank you.

MERRY

You're welcome. Would you like some placenta jerky?

(MIEN, CHANTHA and SAMNANG ENTER.)

MIEN

How you do? You have lovely light!

CHANTHA

We nearby and see beautiful glow...

MIEN

And follow light here.

SAMNANG

A little over the top, isn't it Ma?

MIEN

No, no. Beautiful...

CHANTHA

Lovely!

MERRY

You folks want a closer look?

MIEN

Thank you so much. My name, Mien. This wife, Chantha Mien. That son, Samnang Mien. Mien family think you do beautiful work with light.

MERRY

You're so kind.

MIEN

Please, may we take photo?

MERRY

Take all you want! Can I bring you some tea?

MIEN

(taking pictures)

Thank you, no. We just eat.

SAMNANG

(to MERRY)

You'll have to excuse my parents. They saw your lights and think it must be Christmas.

NOEL

It's not Christmas.

SAMNANG

I know that! But all they can say is, "Christmas on way... Christmas come soon." They're suddenly possessed!

MERRY

Where you folks from?

MIEN

We come from far away...

CHANTHA

We three come from East. ...East Thirty-eight Street and McKinley Avenue.

NOEL

You mean across town?

MIEN

Yes. East Side... Your light wonderful. Why no one else have light?

NOEL

Christmas is over.

CHANTHA and MIEN

It Over?!

SAMNANG

I've been tell'n you two...

CHANTHA

Lady, you know what date is?

MERRY

Hell no. I'm retired.

MIEN

Can we pay money for photo?

MERRY

No...

CHANTHA

You like incense?

MERRY

Really, it's OK...

MIEN

I have liquid for embalming corpse!

SAMNANG

DAD!

MERRY

...No. Thanks just the same.

MIEN

We travel off.

CHANTHA

Night still young. Come Samnang.

(To MIEN)

You have my cigarette?

MIEN

Your cigarette? *(EXIT)*

CHANTHA

My Camels! I need Camels for long trip to East side! *(EXIT)*

SAMNANG

I'm really sorry about this. Back in the old country they were collage professors. Now they scrub schools at night. Man! Move to America and 'So Long Sanity!' *(EXIT)*

MERRY

Collage professors? Hugh. Three wise Mien.

NOEL

Does that happen often?

MERRY

Not quite like that.

(Offering NOEL tea)

Would you? Could you?

NOEL

What?

MERRY

Want your tea here or there?

NOEL

I do not want it here. I do not want it there. ...I do not want it anywhere.

MERRY

No tea?

NOEL

I'd rather...

MERRY

You're not going to insult an old lady, are you? A little old lady who votes for councilmen.

NOEL

...No. No, I'll not insult you.

(tentatively, NOEL smells his drink, then deeply inhales it)

I've smelled this before, somewhere. What kind of tea is this?

MERRY

Taste it to find out.

(NOEL drinks first a sip then a gulp.)

NOEL

Oh my! This is one strong cup of tea, Merry.

MERRY

Thank you.

NOEL

Strong, but good. Evaporates in my mouth.

MERRY

Warms up the Spirit, I say...

NOEL

There's something else, though... I've had this before.

MERRY

My own recipe. Christmas Tea, I call it.

NOEL

What's that taste! This is... Very good, Merry.

MERRY

Noël, thank you.

NOEL

It's. There's something... Strong.

MERRY

That's the booze.

NOEL

You put alcohol in?

MERRY

Sacrilegious, ain't it. I slipped you a Mickey.

NOEL

Lips getting warm...

MERRY

Makes the tea stand up and say, "How do you do!"

NOEL

(breathing his tea deeply then sipping)

Lace... Aunt Dot...

MERRY

How's that?

NOEL

That's where I've had this before. My Great Aunt Dot used to mix cognac in her tea. She used a lot more tea, though... Every time I. Can I tell you something?

MERRY

Most people do about now.

NOEL

No I mean, something personal.

MERRY

I know.

NOEL

(inhaling his tea)

Once a year we'd go to my Great Aunt's house, on Christmas Eve before church ...

MERRY

Something to build on...

NOEL

She'd have these little Norwegian cookies laid out on doilies. My favorite were these, I never could say the name right, but they were these round things. Like lace, dusted with sugar. We'd eat dessert there before going to midnight service...

MERRY

Fine lady...

NOEL

We'd each get a candle in church and sing Christmas hymns. The First Noël was my favorite. Pastor Roe would read the Christmas story... From Matthew, I think?

MERRY

Luke. "And in that region there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night..."

NOEL

Yeah. Shepherds abiding....

MERRY

(to herself, as NOEL speaks)

"And the glory of the Lord shone round about them. And they were sore afraid. And the angel said to them, 'Fear not for I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"

NOEL

Then we'd light out candles and sing The First Noël there, in the dark. The candle light flickered on faces, making them scared and warm. And just then, at that moment came ecstatic beauty, sitting in the dark, watching Pastor's daughters faces flicker, singing The First Noël. ...Seems like centuries past...

MERRY

Don't have to be...

NOEL

Our church was shaped in a cross and we'd see everyone. Even now I see each candle lit face,
shining in the dark like; Like a Rembrandt.

(chuckles)

...Sorry. I'm not the best sentimentalist.

MERRY

Shining in the dark is what a sentimentalist does best.

NOEL

But those were good times, Merry.

(NOEL sips his tea.)

MERRY

You still believe?

NOEL

In what?

MERRY

Miracles.

NOEL

Randomly, scientifically explained natural phenomenon? ...I used to.

MERRY

Used to? You, with twin baby boys? Used to. Who babies mature and live and learn alongside you?
While wrestling and crawling over you, smothering you with their bulging, onesie cotton bodies?
You can't find miracles? With joyfully squealing babies? That know nothing bad, no horror can ever
happen to them while Dad keeps me safe in his arms? While Father will always, always protect me?!
...You, used to?

(beat)

You've quit on miracles? ...Poor Aunt Dot.

NOEL

My wife thinks church would be good. Says it's for the kids. But I think she has other thoughts. No. I
don't need miracles or a building to be with God.

MERRY

Ohhh. A homeless Christian. ...Better known as a hypocrite.

NOEL

Real hypocrites go to church.

MERRY

We don't become perfect in church. We become Christian... Followers. Tryers. Re-creators. ...All you need is some good scrubbing out, Noël. Some Sanctifyin'...

NOEL

Hey, I don't steal or kill or smoke. And until a few minutes ago, I didn't drink.

MERRY

You've never stolen the heart of a beautiful woman when your wife wasn't looking? Or competed with someone so hard that you killed 'em? Ever send someone's dreams up in smoke?

NOEL

It's supposed to be happy, isn't it? I mean, shouldn't I just...

MERRY

How can you be happy with a belly full of sand?

NOEL

But I mean Christmas...

MERRY

Don't you know? Christmas leads to the Cross.

NOEL

And look where that lead.

MERRY

To Easter!

NOEL

Ears are hot! Lips. Can't feel my lips!

MERRY

It's a sign! One of two things, Noël: Either that's the Holy Spirit fighting off the Devil...

NOEL

Or what else?

MERRY

Or else you can't hold your liquor.

(MERRY drinks. NOEL follows.)

NOEL

As nice as this is... Please, Merry. We've got to talk.

MERRY

Would you like some placenta jerky with that cognac?

NOEL

No thanks.

MERRY

You almost loosened up there, Noël. Almost made it. Take off that coat and lose the tie. Your head looks like a purple balloon about to explode.

NOEL

It is hot out. Dang wool suit. I wasn't sure what you'd be like.

MERRY

(taking his coat off him)

Now you see I'm just a defenseless old maid. Can't do a thing... Without my walker.

(nods to a broken walker holding up a lit plastic Santa)

Care for some brownies?

NOEL

Brownies!

(chuckles)

NOEL (Cont'd.)

No thank you. Who knows what's in those.

MERRY

...No! ...Not these.

NOEL

Merry, what are we going to do about your yard?

MERRY

No beating around the wreath with you.

NOEL

(increasingly agitated through these lines)

We're wasting time. People think your place looks trashy.

MERRY

You think I think about what people think?

NOEL

What?

MERRY

Do I give a rat's rump what The Hypocrites say?

NOEL

But you turn night into day.

MERRY

Exactly right!

NOEL

Your neighbors can't get to sleep!

MERRY

Everyone who does dark deeds hates the light.

NOEL

It's not Christmas time, Merry!

MERRY

I'm trying to fix that.

NOEL

But this is a garbage heap! It's ugly! This is an ugly mess!!

(beat)

People make fun of you, Merry. They call you names. Say you're crazy and you don't belong here.

That you're dangerous. No one likes this. No one gets your message. And you convert no one...

You're a laughing stock and people... Pretty much despise you.

(MERRY goes to her front door where a little glowing angel hovers.)

MERRY

This Guardian Angel was the first thing I put...

NOEL

(gathering his things, starting to leave)

What a waste of time...

MERRY

My daughter helped me...

NOEL

(EXITING)

She crazy too?! Like her mother?

MERRY

She ain't crazy, Noël. She's dead.

NOEL

(stops short of leaving)

What?

MERRY

She, don't use her name out loud any more... She drove down the mountain but a dump truck was goin' up... I sent her with white knee-high socks that afternoon... But even them. Even her socks turned red. Well, my damn husband gave right up. Just quit. He. Turned hollow... I started to wrap myself up in a cocoon of sickness. Loved hating myself. Others... God. But not my Dear Daughter! To her I clung and with that weight, sunk. ...Then, when I was near the end, something wonderful happened. Someone came after me. Crept in my crafted cocoon with me. Refused to let me keep drown'n. Faith foamed over me. And I was wooed to belief again.

NOEL

...How?

MERRY

I was on my hands and knees, weeping in the living room; praying one last time that God would take my little girl 'cause I had to give her up. Out the window, in the black sky streamed a brilliant shooting star. As big as a burning bush... Perfect. Clear. He had my beautiful baby. And I... I could let go of, Amelia... Amelia...

MERRY (Cont'd)

(beat)

The next day, when I remembered the star, I was overcome with joy and tears. Cocoon crumbled. I was set free with another chance... Putt stuff up next to her Angel. Just never stopped...

NOEL

You're alone...

MERRY

God's own are never alone. On this very sidewalk, crowds congregate and I plug in these lights and people are in awe of these awe-full decorations. I come out, slip 'em a little Christmas Tea and we talk. Together. They come usually to cuss at me. Sometimes throw somethin'. But they do come and that gives this old lady a chance to let God's Glory shine. A wrinkled paper holding a holy message. But what about you, Young Man? Who can you become? What is your purpose? ...Drink up, Noël, it's Christmas Eve and time for you to shine like a Rembrandt in the dark.

NOEL

I've never seen a miracle.

MERRY

(impassioned whisper)

We're in the midst of miracles.

(MERRY hands NOEL her cup and, singing THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE, goes back to fixing the Baby Jesus whose light is out.

ENTER JOE.)

JOE

(to NOEL)

My goodness gracious! "Scuse the interruption, folks. I'm a bit lost. Look'n for the Holiday Inn... This is some get-up you got, sir.

(Staring at the angel, NOEL makes no move)

JOE (Cont'd.)

(to MERRY)

Am I intrudin'?

MERRY

No.

JOE

You do this by your lonesome, Ma'am?

MERRY

Merry. Had help.

JOE

Name's Davidson. Joe Davidson. I'm up for the Craftsman Convention out at the Holiday Inn. 'Course there weren't no room in the Inn so I'm staying elsewhere...

MERRY

What do you do?

JOE

Work with wood, mostly. On my way to register but got lost. Am I headed in the right direction?

MERRY

Yes, Joe. It's on the highway, North of town.

JOE

Thank you very much. Sorry if I cut across his grain.

MERRY

Oh, he's all right. Just having a little epiphany.

JOE

(to himself)

...But by Grace alone.

(to NOEL)

Sorry for intrud'n.

NOEL

No, no. I. Actually I'm sorry, a... What's your first name again?

JOE

Joe. And yours?

NOEL

Noël. Noel! I mean. God... Well, I'm not certain.

JOE

How many first names you got?

NOEL

.....Two.

JOE

You got kids?

NOEL

We're blessed, with the curse of twins.

JOE

Two miracles in the same house?

NOEL

...Yeah.

JOE

Me and the wife. That is to say, we don't have no kids. We, I mean I... I. I should be on my way, really. Thank you for the lights, Merry.

MERRY

Pleasure's mine, Joe.

JOE

Cherish your children, Mr. Two-First-Names. (*EXIT*)

NOEL

This is a remarkable place you have here, Merry. Remarkable. ...OK, listen. We've got people comin' here. Now.

MERRY

They always do.

NOEL

No. I mean other people, Merry. My people. D.S.H.S. is coming.

MERRY

...What the hell does that spell. DISHES? Dishes is coming?

NOEL

No. The Department of Social and Health Services is comin' and they're bringing the police and the police are bringing a city garbage truck.

(beat)

NOEL (Cont'd.)

And they're coming to clean everything out, Merry. Everything.

MERRY

They can do that...?

NOEL

(beginning to straighten up the place)

You live in the middle of a fire hazard, Merry. It's for your own good...

MERRY

HA!

NOEL

If we could, could just clean it up some, before the police...

MERRY

Get rid of it?

NOEL

No. Not throw anything away. Just put it up. Like cannin' tomatoes or somethin'. Straighten it!

MERRY

I'm the one who's got it straight!

NOEL

Maybe we can get most of this stuff inside your house before they get here.

MERRY

Hell, inside the house is worse than out here...

NOEL

It might go better for you if you were helping...

MERRY

(sitting, to herself)

It's not the decorations. Been meaning to change those anyway, but it's my property! My husband died, thank God! I got this house. Ha! He got a pine box!

NOEL

Listen, Merry...

MERRY

It's a democracy, for damn sakes! Freedom of Religion, or Freedom of Speech, or whatever the hell I'm doing here. Freedom of somthin'!

NOEL

Calm yourself, Merry. They're due now...

MERRY

There is no reason we can't live Christmas year round!

NOEL

I agree with you!

MERRY

You do?!

NOEL

Yes!

MERRY

...Don't need to yell, Young Man. Now we're gettin' somewhere.

NOEL

(stops cleaning)

Oh, it's too late...

MERRY

It's never too late.

(The SOUND of a dump truck is heard, back-up warning signal, air brakes engaged, doors slammed.)

MERRY (Cont'd.)

Some of these things is European crystal.

NOEL

Been buying thousands of dollars worth of antiques, Merry?

MERRY

No. My dead husband's great grandmother brought 'em over from the Old Country.

NOEL

What? May I... Can I look at it?

MERRY

Goodness to Heaven! It's right in front of you, Young Man... Ever since rats moved in, the Holy Manger of the North Pole's been lookin' a might disreputable. Been thinking of changing the theme to Easter anyway...

NOEL

Merry... I had no idea. Some of this is authentic Victorian. ...And beautiful stained glass!

MERRY

It takes scrutinizin' to find some folks' beauty.

NOEL

If we could sell this in my shop...

MERRY

Not my angel! Everything else but not my angel!

NOEL

I'll make sure she stays right where she is, Merry. But do you 'spose your neighbors would buy this stuff?

MERRY

Hell Yes! They're all Hypocrites, ain't they?

NOEL

(blue and red lights begin to flash off stage)

All of us are, Merry. But we can still serve a purpose. ...Merry.

MERRY

Noël?

(ENTER Officers SHEPEHERD.)

NOEL

(to OFFICERS)

Just one minute officers! Be right with you.

(taking MERRY aside)

I've come to a decision, standing here, talking with you.

MERRY

...Well?

NOEL

...Can't you guess?

MERRY

This is no time for suspense, Young Man. The cops is lookin' over my brownies!

SHEPHERD 1

Folks... Excuse me. I'm Officer Shepherd, and this is also Officer Shepherd. No relation.

NOEL

Wait a minute... Just a. You're saying... Are you telling me, you're... Shepherds?

SHEPHERD 1

Sir. We're Shepherds.

NOEL

Did you hear that, Merry? Shepherds! We've got real Shepherds!

(Over the next few lines, MERRY pushes in plugs. Christmas lights sparkle on stage and among the AUDIENCE profusely. Entire place shines.

Her OFF STAGE, house shines intensely.)

MERRY

I heard.

NOEL

(pacing)

Who were those first people that came? The ones that...

MERRY

I get a lot of people around...

NOEL

Those collage professors. From the East side... Mien. You said they were Three Wise Mien.

MERRY

Guess I did...

NOEL

Then came Joe, What's-His-Name...

MERRY

Joe Davidson... Son of David.

NOEL

(frantic, exuberant)

Oh, My Gosh! Now Shepherds! Isn't that perfect? I think it's... Oh, My Gosh! You guys are perfect!

(lunging for the cops)

Just per!...

SHEPHERD 1

(reaching for his weapon)

Stop right there, sir.

SHEPHERD 2

Stop! ...Sit down! Sit!

(NOEL sits)

...Cross your legs!

NOEL

(sitting)

What?

SHEPHERD 2

Cross your... Criss-Cross applesauce.

NOEL

(happily obeying)

Oh.

SHEPHERD 1

And calm yourself!

(to SHEPHERD 2)

What a lousy night... I'm going to be sick tomorrow. Calling in sick!

SHEPHERD 2

I'm going to be sick right now.

SHEPHERD 1

Shepherd, shake off your drowsy sleep!

(to MERRY)

Ma'am, let me explain. We were abiding in a field...

SHEPHERD 2

Keeping watch over a flock of teenagers by night...

SHEPHERD 1

When we got a call to meet a Councilman Crux at this address. Now I don't...

NOEL

That's me! I'm him! That would be me. This is perfect...

SHEPHERD 1 and SHEPHERD 2

You!

SHEPHERD 2

You're Crux?

SHEPHERD 1

Councilman Crux?

NOEL

(arpeggio)

Me, me, me, me, me, me, me.

SHEPHERD 1

(helping NOEL up)

We're supposed to assist you, sir.

SHEPHERD 2

Actually, Sergeant Gabe said we're supposed to 'behold him.'

SHEPHERD 1

I know that! But who talks like that? What does that mean, 'behold'?

SHEPHERD 2

...Well, I think it means to, roughly to... To observe him?

SHEPHERD 1

We're not just going to stand around and look at him, Shepherd! We've got to do something! To fulfill our purpose!!

SHEPHERD 2

OK, then, a. We should. Well, let's assist him.

SHEPHERD 1

I apologize, folks. We were abiding in that field a pretty long time.

SHEPHERD 2

Tell 'em what we saw....

SHEPHERD 1

I'm NOT talking about what we saw! Will you drop it, already!

NOEL

What! What did you see? Did you hear songs? Did the Heavens open...

SHEPHERD 1

Suffice it to say we were sitting out there so long that I'm Sore, he's Afraid.

(SHEPHERD 2 vigorously nods his head yes.)

MERRY

Fear not for I bring you fresh brownies!

NOEL

No! No. No. No,no,no,no... They won't want any of that.

(to both SHEPHERDS)

Listen, Shepherds, I...

(cackles)

I need just one more minute with Merry. I've almost got this thing closed. Maybe you could go, I don't know, go count sheep or something.

(Long beat.)

SHEPHERD1

...A councilman with a sense of humor.

SHEPHERD 2

Miracles abound in this place!

SHEPHERD1

What a miracle!

SHEPHERD 2

What a night...

SHEPHERD1

What a place! We'll wait in the car, Sir...

SHEPHERD 2

With Our Doors Locked!

SHEPHERD 1

Lousy night.

(to SHEPHERD 2)

You and your "Behold!"

(Both SHEPHERDs EXIT.)

MERRY kicks the speaker forcing THE FIRST Noël to quietly begin.)

NOEL

OK Merry, listen to my decision. From now on, whenever I sign my name, I'm going to put those two little dots above the 'e' in Noël. ...It's kind of a July Christmas present. For you.

MERRY

... Me? You're changing your name for...

NOEL

I'm not changing my name. Just adding the two dots in my signature. No one will ever know, except you and me.

MERRY

I... It's lovely. It's... Thank you.

NOEL

No. Thank you. I. I'd like you to meet my wife and kids sometime if you...

MERRY

Love to.

NOEL

Really? You'll like our baby boys. They have your same sense of decoration. But we won't say anything about dots. You and I will just think of my name as, "Noël Crux..."

MERRY

Eeyuck!

NOEL

(to off stage)

It's all right, Officer...

MERRY

(overlapping)

No! No, no, no, no, No!

NOEL

(to OFF STAGE)

I think we've just reached a solution, here.

MERRY

It's got to be Noël Cross. Think of it Young Man. "Christmas Easter!" Now that is beautiful!

NOEL

(as NOEL escorts MERRY off stage)

One name at a time Ms. Maker.

MERRY

The name's Merry! God Almighty you're a stick in the mud!

(from off stage)

You boys want some Christmas Tea?

*(The First Noël, along with a smattering of fireworks
SOUND, as LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.*

The ANGEL remains AGLOW.)

THE END.