



THE LOANED MANGER

Created by Steve Moore • Rob Howard • David Guthrie

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Running Time: 41:00

(music begins to “Ready for Christmas”)

(Curly runs forward, calling excitedly to everyone on stage.)

CURLY:

Hey y’all! Come on! This town ain’t gonna decorate itself for Christmas! Let’s get a move on!

(The townspeople begin decorating and celebrating.)

SONG: “READY FOR CHRISTMAS”

chorus 1

Guess what it’s here again
That most wonderful time of year when
We all get saddled up for Christmas
Climb on your horse, let’s ride
Pull on your boots, it’s workin’ time
Let’s get this town ready for Christmas
Everyone ’round here’s been waitin’
To see the decoratin’
We’ve spent all year creatin’
Just for you
Now before you know it
Our town will be explodin’
Everyone from far and near
Grab your hat and Christmas cheer
Let’s get this town ready for Christmas

chorus 2

Our favorite time of year is
When red and green appear and
We get all the fixin’s out for Christmas
Bring out the vittles, let’s eat
Workin’s better with somethin’ sweet
Let’s get this town ready for Christmas
We’re known throughout the west



For doin' up Christmas best
Y'all forget the rest and
Come on down
This is a sight to see
Christmas comin' for you and me
Bring your neighbors, bring the kids
Don't leave any tree untrimmed
Let's get this town ready for Christmas

dialog (*at ms. 51*)

DUSTY:

Oh, *howdy!* Y'all just get here? Yeah, a lot of people been comin' into Incarnation lately.

What's Incarnation y'ask? It's the town we're in right now! "Where in tarnation is Incarnation?" I'd show ya on a map, but we're not really "on" many maps. It's just a normal town ... 'cept for one thing ... Incarnation has always been crazy for Christmas!

bridge

Deck the halls y'all
With boughs of holly
Fa la la, la la la, la yeehaw
Fa la la, la la la, la yeehaw

tag

We decorate with style
We're fixin' to go hog wild
Let's get this town ready
We've more than sung plenty
Let's get this town ready for Christmas
Let's get this town ready for Christmas

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Scene 1

(Song ends with people gleefully decorating and getting ready for Christmas. Dusty ambles out to center stage and takes off his hat to dust it off, slapping the dust out of it. The townspeople mill about, talking among themselves. Dusty walks forward and speaks directly to the audience.)



DUSTY: **Name's Dusty! I prospect a claim up in the hills north o' here. Pard'n mah dust. Born and raised here in Incarnation; a town that celebrates Christmas maybe better'n any town in the west.**

(A train whistle in the distance interrupts Dusty momentarily.)

 *SFX 1: "Train Whistle"*

DUSTY: **Hear that? Train whistle. The sounds of change. Suppose that's why yer here, to see the first train arrive in Incarnation. Big doin's. But this is 1891 fer goodness sakes! We've become "modern!"**

(Dusty moseys across the stage toward the train depot and joins a group of townspeople.)

 *SFX 2: "Train Arriving"*

SHERIFF: **Well here they come, our first visitors. Incarnation's been here for near a hunnert years and the very first train is about to arrive at our new station.**

CURLY: **Took the railroads long enough to push through to Incarnation, Sheriff. But whoever gets off that train, I hope they need a haircut!**

STATIONMASTER: **Announcing the arrival of the very first Christmas Express Special! Inbound from Kansas City, Wichita and parts east, arriving on Track One!**

(A few passengers carrying luggage and wrapped presents enter and are greeted by the townspeople. One is a photographer carrying a large camera complete with tripod and black curtain over the rear of the camera.)

SHERIFF: *(to photographer)* **What is that contraption you've got on your shoulder, ma'am?**

PHOTOGRAPHER: **This, Sheriff is called a "cam-er-a." It captures images of things.**

CURLY: **These take actual pictures of folk?**



PHOTOGRAPHER: **Shore do! I've come in to Incarnation to document your Christmas celebration. Thank goodness for the train. Hey, can I get a picture of y'all?**

(Curly and the Sheriff strike a dramatic pose.)

PHOTOGRAPHER: **Say cheese!**

CURLY & SHERIFF: **Cheese!**

(After the photo, as the photographer exits, Elvin, Mrs. Sneef, and Jane approach the Sheriff.)

ELVIN: **Sheriff, anything about what's happ'nin today bother you?**

SHERIFF: **Why would it, Elvin?**

MRS. SNEEF: **I'm afraid of the criminal element comin' in on the train. Strangers! Outsiders! Bandits!**

JANE: **I even hear the Lonesome Stranger is loose!**

SHERIFF: **Now just hold your horses! The last thing I need are you three getting all worked up about something that ain't never gonna happen!**

ELVIN: **What if it does?**

SHERIFF: **Don't have time to talk! I got too much goin' on already! I'm greeting our new School Marm and Choir Director!**

CURLY: **She's on this train?**

SHERIFF: **Shore is! And there she is!**

(Miss Polly enters from the train depot, carrying some luggage. She is greeted by the Sheriff and the others.)

SHERIFF: **It shore is good to meet you in person, Miss Polly!**

MISS POLLY: **And it's certainly good to meet you, Sheriff Laramie! I've heard so much about your wonderful, very meaningful Christmases here in Incarnation. So intimate and quaint! I'm so excited.**



SHERIFF: Well you can't be half as excited as we are ta have ya. Sally here's our postmaster, I'm sure she'd be glad to help ya get yer things.

SALLY: Shore thing, Sheriff. Come on Miss Polly, foller me.
(Sally picks up Miss Polly's bags and they walk off stage.)

CURLY: Ya see! That's what I was afraid of!

SHERIFF: What?

CURLY: Are ya deaf? Didn't ya hear her say "quaint?"

STATIONMASTER: Shore did! Uh, what does "quaint" mean?

CURLY: It means "charming" and "old fashioned!" Miss Polly's from the big city; *Wichita Falls*—the "big time." We're small taters to her.

STATIONMASTER: We're not small taters! We got that new bandstand in Town Square!

JANE: It's not a bandstand, it's called a ga-zee-bo!

CURLY: We gotta come up with an idear that will impress everyone this Christmas! An idear that will be amazing!

MRS. SNEEF: Like what?

CURLY: I don't know! Put yer minds together. We gotta make this Christmas the best one yet! Modern! Big! Think!

(music begins to "The Best One Yet")

ELVIN: I'm thinkin' but nothin's happening!

SONG: "THE BEST ONE YET"

chorus

I've got it, it's the best one yet
Better than what we've seen before
We'll do the town proud
It'll bring out the crowd
And have 'em all beggin' for more



The best idear is forming up here
And in just a minute you'll be impressed
With my forward thinkin'
To make this season
The Christmas we'll never forget
I've got it and it's the best one yet

dialog 1 (*at ms. 27*)

CURLY: **It's got to be modern! It's got to be new! Something they've never seen before! Something they'll never forget!**

JANE: **How 'bout we do what we did back in 1888 and put candles all over our Christmas trees?**

SHERIFF: **Because it burned down half of Incarnation!**

DEPUTY: **Nobody ever forgets *that* year!**

ELVIN: **Hey! I can make a life-size angel outta iron. We can hang it in the church!**

CURLY: **With what, anchor chain?!**

chorus

I've got it, it's the best one yet
Better than what we've seen before
We'll do the town proud
It'll bring out the crowd
And have 'em all beggin' for more
The best idear is forming up here
And in just a minute you'll be impressed
With my forward thinkin'
To make this season
The Christmas we'll never forget
I've got it and it's the best one yet

dialog 2 (*at ms. 66*)

CURLY: **Wait! I've got it!**

DEPUTY: **What! What's your idea?!**

CURLY: **It will put us on the map! It'll make *history*!**



JANE: **Is it a better idea than when we dressed the cows up as sheep for the Christmas Eve Service?**

CURLY: **Of course! That was a disaster!**

JANE: **Only 'cause of a tiny mistake!**

SHERIFF: **Tiny? You accidentally dressed up the bulls instead of the cows, then let 'em loose in the chapel!**

JANE: **Tell me that wasn't *unforgettable!***

bridge

We gotta keep thinkin' 'bout
Christmas bells ringin'
And angels wingin' while shepherds are sheepin'
And purdy soon our genius is bound to come out
Without a doubt

chorus tag

All these brains are like runaway trains
The best idear just has to be near
So if you know, it let it be said
And we'll have a Christmas we'll never forget
I've got it and it's the best one yet
I've got it and it's the best one yet

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Scene 2

(At the end of the song, a small group gathers around Curly, awaiting her important announcement.)

JANE: **Don't keep us in suspense, Curly! What's the idear?**

CURLY: **It's the e-lectric light!**

ELVIN: **Huh?**

SHERIFF: **What're you getting at, Curly?**

CURLY: ***(dramatically)* We'll create The Star of Bethlehem with the e-lectric light!**



(Townspeople applaud, Oooh and Aaaaah.)

CURLY: **And I can build it!**

SALLY: **Just wonderin' Sheriff ... I mean, we always had good Christmas celebrations afore. But now that other people are in town, we didn't need to change things. Cain't we just be ourselves?**

SHERIFF: **She's got a point, fellers!**

CURLY: **Sally, I know you're the Chairman of the Incarnation Christmas Committee, but let me explain. These people are used to bigger things than we got! We don't want to seem small and get laughed at.**

SALLY: **There's nothing small about the Creator of the World becomin' a man ... after all, that's what the name of our town means ... God becomin' man. I'd say that's plenty big!**

CURLY: **Thanks for your thoughts, Sally, but I b'lieve we done decided.**

MRS. SNEEF: **Well, that's one problem solved, but what're we gonna do about bandits?**

ELVIN: **Mrs. Sneef is right, ya know! Fer all we know, that train is fixin' to bring a peck o' trouble to Incarnation! Might even rob her store, or my blacksmith shop!**

MRS. SNEEF: **Heavens!**

SHERIFF: **Now Elvin, yer all as jumpy as a long-tailed cat in a room full o' rockin' chairs.**

JANE: **You might should be a little nervous yerself, Sheriff! I heard the Lonesome Stranger is in these parts.**

SHERIFF: **I cain't have all three of you wrapped up trying to find a bandit what don't even ... wait ... no. I got it!**

(The Sheriff motions Jane, Elvin and Mrs. Sneef in close to him for secrecy.)



- SHERIFF: **I got a secret and dangerous mission for you hombres!**
- ALL THREE: *(ad lib, excited)* **What is it? Tell me!**
- (The Sheriff pulls three badges out of his vest pocket and pins them on the three as he speaks.)*
- SHERIFF: **I am dep-YOO-tizing the three of you as my *posse*, to apprehend that side-winder “the Lonesome Stranger” if’n he tries to get into Incarnation.**
- ELVIN: **You won’t regret this, Sheriff!**
- (The three are immensely proud and salute the Sheriff.)*
- JANE: **We won’t fail you, Sheriff!**
- (The three exit dramatically, as Miss Polly returns.)*
- MISS POLLY: **It’s all true what I’ve heard about Incarnation—you have the most wonderful Christmas decorations! But I want to add to that a very special piece for the Christmas Eve service, and it’s coming all the way from Dodge City!**
- (The townspeople ad lib. excitement and questions “What is it?” “Oooh!” “I wonder what it is!” etc.)*
- MISS POLLY: **It’s a very special manger, made by my great-great-great-grandfather, and passed through the generations in the family.**
- CURLY: **Well, it ain’t no e-lectric star, I can tell you right now!**
- MISS POLLY: **This manger’s over 200 years old, Sheriff. It’s the oldest Christmas decoration in the west. And this year, it will be right here in the town of Incarnation.**
- SALLY: **Very nice!**
- CURLY: **Very old. I still say this Christmas we need somethin’ modern.**
- SALLY: **I think this Christmas we need more of what people always need—more hope, more love, more joy ...**



(music begins to "This Christmas")

MISS POLLY: **And that's what I hope this manger will remind us of ...
we need more Jesus!**

SONG: "THIS CHRISTMAS"

verse 1

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear

chorus

This Christmas we need more
We need peace, love, hope, and joy
This Christmas we need more
We need peace, love, hope, and joy
We need more of Jesus
This Christmas

verse 2

O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace

chorus

This Christmas we need more
We need peace, love, hope, and joy
This Christmas we need more
We need peace, love, hope, and joy
We need more of Jesus
This Christmas

bridge

Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

chorus

This Christmas we need more
We need peace, love, hope, and joy
This Christmas we need more
We need peace, love, hope, and joy
We need more of Jesus
We need more of Jesus



This Christmas

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Scene 3

(It is two weeks later. Miss Polly readies the choir. Dusty comes forward to speak to the audience.)

DUSTY: **Well, Miss Polly took the bit and galloped! Boy, a lot's happened in the last two weeks. She has that little choir ready for their first demonstration.**

Oh, and the big news is that Miss Polly's manger arrived just minutes ago on the afternoon train!

(Dusty rejoins the townspeople.)

STATIONMASTER: **Depity, you better look at this! Winnie the Telegraph Operator just handed this to me. She just got the message and wrote it out longhand.**

(Hands the note to the Deputy who begins reading from it. As he does, his "posse" of Miss Sneef, Jane, and Elvin runs up.)

DEPUTY: *(looking at the note)* **What is this? E-gyptian heiroglyphics?**

STATIONMASTER: **Naw, it's just the Telegraph Operator's handwritin'. She used to be a doctor, you know.**

JANE: *(looking over the Deputy's shoulder)* **I can't make heads nor tails of it!**

DEPUTY: **Well, if I'm reading this right, looks like Dodge City warned us that the Lonesome Stranger arrived in Incarnation on the afternoon train today!**

ELVIN: *(gasps)* **Same train the manger came in on! Bet he's thinkin' of stealin' the priceless manger!**

DEPUTY: **Well, we better keep an eye out! Sally, you're the postmaster, you see his wanted poster all the time; what does he look like?**



- SALLY: **He always wears a big brim black hat and a black overcoat!**
- ELVIN: **Depity! I think I saw that hombre get off that train today! Big black hat with a wide brim, big moustache, and he had a long black coat!**
- DEPUTY: **Okay, then, y'all better keep your eyes out. Now I don't want the town panicking. So we're just gonna keep it between us, okay?**
- POSSE: *(ad libs) Got it! Yup! Sure thing, Depity, etc.*
- MISS POLLY: **Excuse me everyone! We'd like to have your attention!**
(Everybody turns and quiets. Miss Polly is center stage, behind the loaned manger.)
- MISS POLLY: **As we all know, Christmas is two weeks away. And this year is the 150th anniversary of Handel's famous piece, the "Messiah." We have worked very hard on a version of "The Hallelujah Chorus" from that remarkable work.**
- CURLY: **Oh good. Now we've gone from 200 years ago to 150. At least we're going in the right direction.**
- MISS POLLY: **I just wish my father, Parson Whitfield was here ta see this. He was pastor of Dodge City Church, until last year, when he "went to a better place."**
(All the women bow their heads, and the cowboys all place their cowboy hats over their hearts for a beat. Then, as they put their hats on again, Polly continues.)
- MISS POLLY: **My daddy wanted to be here today, but obviously ...**
(puts tissue to her nose, fighting back tears) **God had other plans.**
(All the women bow their heads, and the cowboys all place their cowboy hats over their hearts for a beat. Then, they put their hats on again.)
- MISS POLLY: **Well, we're ready for our first performance, and all we need is for some musical accompaniment.**



SALLY: **Well, Miss Polly, we're just simple folk, not like the pro-fesh-un-alls you worked with back in the east. We don't got no violins or harpsifork, er ... harpsi ... harpo ... trumpets!**

(music begins to "Hallelujah")

CURLY: **All we got are guitars and fiddles!**

MISS POLLY: **That's all we need!**

SONG: "HALLELUJAH"

verse 1

In the stillness, the earth asleep
Stars light up the sky
Lonely shepherds, a flock of sheep
Another silent night
Then as light explodes with amazing force
Good news comes blazing forth

chorus

Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah
I bring you good news, great joy
Today your Savior is born
Hallelujah, hallelujah

verse 2

Angel brilliance, breaks the night
But do not be afraid
The shepherd's hillside bathed in light
As night becomes like day
Glory to God in the highest rings
From a heavenly chorus on angel wings

chorus

Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah
I bring you good news, great joy



Today your Savior is born
Hallelujah, hallelujah

bridge

For unto us a Child is born
For unto us a Son is given
And He shall be called Wonderful
Counselor, Prince of Peace

chorus (with bridge)

Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah
I bring you good news, great joy
Today your Savior is born
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah

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Scene 4

(Dusty steps forward to talk to the audience.)

DUSTY:

Well, two days until Christmas, and Incarnation's celebration plans are moving forward like a runaway train! Only thing we don't have yet are the bulbs for Curly's Star of Bethlehem. But the Stationmaster promises us they'll be here in time.

What am I doin' out here? Just ... waitin' for the fireworks!

(Dusty nods to two people coming before he runs to hide. Mrs. Sneef comes out from behind a barrel.)

MRS. SNEEF:

Shhh! Yer makin' more noise than a cat fight!

(Elvin and Jane arrive on the scene.)

ELVIN:

There you are! I hope we got that trap set right. If the Lonesome Stranger goes for the bait, we got him!



JANE: **For shore that net'll fall on him, and if we get him we'll hear that bell ring.**

 SFX 3: *"Bell Ringing"*

(At that very moment, they hear a bell ringing loudly from the opposite side of the stage. Everyone on stage responds with surprise and excitement as Jane, Elvin and Mrs. Sneef run offstage and immediately return with someone caught in a net. The captive is walking and stumbling, his back is mainly to the audience and he can't be seen clearly.)

SHERIFF: *(under the net)* **Let me go!**

ALL THREE: *(ad lib.)* **We got 'im! We got 'im! We got the Lonesome Stranger!**

(The photographer rushes forward, setting up the camera.)

MRS. SNEEF: **Now, Mr. Lonesome Stranger, it's time to find out what you look like!**

(The three pull the net off the victim, and under the net is the Sheriff. He only appears mildly annoyed and, fork in hand, is eating a piece of apple pie on a plate.)

JANE: **Hey! He's the spittin' image of the Sheriff, ain't he?**

ELVIN: **He is the Sheriff, Jane.**

JANE: *(momentarily perplexed)* **Wait! Are you telling me that ... the Sheriff ... is the Lonesome Stranger! How could you, Sheriff?!**

ELVIN: **No, ya galoot! It means we ambushed the wrong person! What did you use for bait, Mrs. Sneef?**

MRS. SNEEF: **I done used a slice of my warm apple pie!**

(Photographer starts setting up camera to take a picture of the capture.)

SHERIFF: *(explaining)* **I got up for a snack and doggone if I didn't smell that hot apple pie ...**



PHOTOGRAPHER: **Can I get a photo of the capture of the Lonesome Stranger?**

SHERIFF: **But I'm not the Lone ...**

PHOTOGRAPHER: **Say cheese!**

GROUP: **Cheese!**

(Everybody, including the Sheriff with his pie, take dramatic poses representing how they captured the Lonesome Stranger. The photographer snaps her picture and breaks down the camera.)

(They release the Sheriff.)

SALLY: **What's going on here?**

DEPUTY: **Well, I might as well tell you all now. We have a reason to believe that the Lonesome Stranger has snuck into Incarnation.**

(Townspeople ad lib fear, gasps, etc.)

SHERIFF: **Now don't panic! We don't know if that's true or not!**

DEPUTY: **I got a telegraph!**

SALLY: **Don't you see what's going on here? We're getting all wrapped up in things that really don't matter to our celebration of Christmas. Listen, people, Christmas is about Jesus in the manger; not being modern or catching some bad guy we haven't even seen!**

SHERIFF: **Sally's right. That's why God sent Jesus, so we don't have to live in fear! Remember the first thing the angels had to say to the shepherds? Fear not!**

ELVIN: **So God don't want us to be afraid of desperados?**

MISS POLLY: **That's not the point, Elvin. The point is, in God's town, we're *all* desperados. We were separated from God. We were hidin' from God. Except that in God's town, nobody's good. *Everybody's* a desperado.**



- SALLY: **We're all out here trying to catch some outlaw like we ain't all outlaws ourself! Long time ago, the trail we was on split from God's trail and we chose to go our own way. Since then, we're the outsiders, we're the outlaws!**
- SHERIFF: **Imagine us catchin' the Lonesome Stranger, an' someone come up and says, "I'll go to jail for him!"**
- JANE: **Aw, pshaw, who'd love an outlaw?**
- MISS POLLY: **Jesus would. He came into our world as a baby so we didn't have to be separated from God no more!**

(music begins to "God with Us, Emmanuel")

SONG: "GOD WITH US, EMMANUEL"

chorus

Born today in the city of David
God with us, Emmanuel
Born our King, born our Savior
God with us, Emmanuel
Let the heavens rejoice, Christ is born
The Prince of Peace, the Lord of Lords
Let the earth rejoice, the Light of the World is
God with us, Emmanuel

verse 1

While shepherds watched their flocks by night
A little baby was born
While the star in the sky was shining bright
A little baby was born

chorus

Born today in the city of David
God with us, Emmanuel
Born our King, born our Savior
God with us, Emmanuel
Let the heavens rejoice, Christ is born
The Prince of Peace, the Lord of Lords
Let the earth rejoice, the Light of the World is
God with us, Emmanuel

verse 2

All glory be to God on high



A little baby was born
Sing His praise throughout the night
A little baby was born

chorus

Born today in the city of David
God with us, Emmanuel
Born our King, born our Savior
God with us, Emmanuel
Let the heavens rejoice, Christ is born
The Prince of Peace, the Lord of Lords
Let the earth rejoice, the Light of the World is
God with us, Emmanuel
God with us, Emmanuel
God with us, Emmanuel

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Scene 5

(Dusty walks forward to speak to the audience.)

DUSTY: **Well, it's Christmas Eve and the service is about to start! Everybody's pretty excited, 'cept Curly the Barber. Her bulbs haven't got here yet and she's only got one train left ... and it's comin' into the station right now!**

 *SFX 4: "Train Arriving"*

(A train whistle announces the arrival of the train as a porter enters from the train depot carrying a package marked "Fragile! Special Delivery!")

STATIONMASTER: *(yelling into the Barber Shop)* **Whatcha doing just sittin in yer shop, Curly? Arise! Shine! For your light bulbs have come!**

(Curley comes running out of the shop, excited. A customer runs out of the shop with shaving cream on his face and a Barber's apron on.)

CURLY: **I don't believe it! There's no time to waste!**



(Curly grabs the package from the porter and runs back into her shop, followed by her customer. A loud ruckus is heard offstage as three unfamiliar cowboys and the Blacksmith, Mrs. Sneef, and Jane come in.)

ELVIN: **Depity! We caught these desperados comin' off the train!**

DEPUTY: **Desperados?**

MRS. SNEEF: **Bandits fer sure!**

STATIONMASTER: **Don't look much like bandits!**

ELVIN: **Well, it's three cowpokes, and they ain't from around here! And they're wearing *black hats!***

COWPOKE 1: **Howdy y'all!**

SALLY: **They don't sound much like desperados, Elvin.**

ELVIN: **Don't be fooled! Remember the black hats?**

COWPOKE 2: **Are we in time?**

MRS. SNEEF: **Fer what? To rob us?!**

COWPOKE 3: **No! To go to your Christmas Celebration!**

(The Sheriff arrives, followed by the photographer who sets up his camera.)

SHERIFF: **Just what in the name of Sam Hill is going on here?**

DEPUTY: **It may be the Lonesome Stranger's gang, Sheriff! The posse caught the yellow-bellies trying to sneak into town!**

PHOTOGRAPHER: **Say cheese!**

GROUP: **Cheese!**

(All pose in dramatic poses showing how they caught the dreaded Lonesome Stranger gang. After the photo is snapped, the photographer tears down the camera and starts to leave.)



PHOTOGRAPHER: **Who wants copies?**

(Everybody raises their hands.)

COWPOKE 2: **We're not in anybody's gang, Sheriff!**

COWPOKE 3: **We just came in from the East, because of what we read in the newspaper.**

COWPOKE 2: **Well, East Texas, at least. We've traversed afar! Just wanted to see how Incarnation worships Jesus at Christmas!**

COWPOKE 3: **Field and fountain, moor and mountain. Following yonder star!**

JANE: **The Star of Bethlehem?**

COWPOKE 1: **Naw, the Kansas City Star. It's a newspaper.** *(produces a ragged copy of a newspaper and points to it)* **It printed train schedules to Incarnation on page three.**

SHERIFF: **Y'all see this? You're all hammers and tongs about strangers coming into your town, and ya caught three guys just wanting to celebrate the birth of Jesus!**

MISS POLLY: **Doesn't that even remind anybody of anything?**

(blank stares)

MISS POLLY: **The Wise Men! God showed them how to find His Messiah, and they left what they were doin' and followed.**

SALLY: **When Jesus was born, God made sure that even people far off, like the Wise Men, found out about it and could come to worship Him. Looks like God is still bringing people from all over to worship Jesus!**

(music begins to "Your Light Has Come")

SONG: "YOUR LIGHT HAS COME"

verse 1

Wise men travel



Saddled on their camels
Ready for a long ride
No matter how far
Follow that star
Lighting up the night sky
Leading to the true Light

chorus

Your Light has come
Shining in the darkness
Your Light has come
To all the world
Go tell everyone
The star tonight is big and bright
Your Light has come

verse 2

We carry through the desert
Three nice presents
Gold, frankincense, myrrh
What we bring is only
Fit for the King
To celebrate the holy birth
Glory to all the earth

chorus

Your Light has come
Shining in the darkness
Your Light has come
To all the world
Go tell everyone
The star tonight is big and bright
Your Light has come

bridge

Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright

chorus

Your Light has come
Shining in the darkness
Your Light has come
To all the world
Go tell everyone
The star tonight is big and bright
Your Light has come



Go tell everyone
The star tonight is big and bright
Your Light has come

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Scene 6

(The townspeople and choir are in place, ready to start the Christmas program. Dusty comes forward to speak to the audience.)

DUSTY: **Well, the whole Christmas Eve Service is about to start. Curly's got her bulbs and we're all set. Trouble is, not ever-body's here. That cain't be good.**

(Dusty rejoins the townspeople as Sally steps forward with an announcement.)

SALLY: ***(to all)* Attention everyone! As Chairperson of the Incarnation Christmas Committee, it gives me great pleasure to open our Christmas Service and welcome guests for the very first time!**

(Jane runs in from off stage, followed by Mrs. Sneef, and Elvin, both of whom are pushing a man, covered with a blanket, toward the stage.)

JANE: **Wait! We got 'im! Caught 'im in the act!**

MRS. SNEEF: **We've got the Lonesome Stranger! For reals this time!**

SHERIFF: **Oh no!**

ELVIN: **No, Sheriff! This time it's the right one! He's the hombre I saw getting off the afternoon train the other day!**

SHERIFF: **Where'd you catch him?**

MRS. SNEEF: **Right whar you think he'd be! Stealin' Miss Polly's two-hunnert year old manger!**

MISS POLLY: **Oh no ...**



ELVIN: **Caught him red-handed! Stealin' a priceless relic!**

MISS POLLY: **Did he seem to be cleaning the dust off the manger?**

MRS. SNEEF: **Yup, but he was a'gonna steal it after, fer sure.**

MISS POLLY: **That was *my father*.**
(Now everybody turns and looks at Polly, incredulous.)

DEPUTY: **Your *father*?!**

SALLY: **You said your father passed away!**

MISS POLLY: **No I didn't!**

MRS. SNEEF: **You said he went to "a better place!"**

MISS POLLY: **He did. He retired to Florida. You ever been to Dodge City? Trust me, Florida's a better place!**

JANE: **But y'also said that he "wanted to be here, but God had other plans!"**

MISS POLLY: **Well, he said he was gonna try and make the first train, but he wasn't on it, so I decided he wasn't gonna come. Turned out he just missed the train! Came two weeks later and surprised me!**

ELVIN: **So the mysterious man with the hat at the train station ...**

MISS POLLY: **Is my father, Parson Whitfield, who passed the manger down to me.**

SHERIFF: **Elvin, why don't y'all take that blanket off Parson Whitfield?**
(The Blacksmith pulls the blanket off of Parson Whitfield, and the Parson looks around, deadpan.)

PARSON: **Pleasure to meet y'all.**

MISS POLLY: **Daddy just wanted to see your faces when you first saw the manger.**



SHERIFF: Well, I bet this would be the perfect time to start the na-tivity pageant!

MISS POLLY: Absolutely! Ladies and Gentlemen! Let's begin!

(reading to the townspeople) “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”

(music begins to “Everlasting Light”)

SHERIFF: “And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.’”

(During “Everlasting Light” the characters of the nativity story enter and take their place around the manger.)

SONG: “EVERLASTING LIGHT”

verse 1

For God so loved the world
That He gave His only Son
And if we believe in Him
We will have life everlasting
Life everlasting

chorus

Jesus, Everlasting Light
Shine through my darkness with hope so bright
Jesus, Everlasting Light
Shine through my darkness
Shine through my darkness tonight

verse 2

I am the light of the world
He that follows me
Will not walk in darkness
But will have the light of life
The light of life



chorus

Jesus, Everlasting Light
Shine through my darkness with hope so bright
Jesus, Everlasting Light
Shine through my darkness
Shine through my darkness tonight

chorus

Jesus, Everlasting Light
Shine through my darkness with hope so bright
Jesus, Everlasting Light
Shine through my darkness
Shine through my darkness tonight

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Scene 7

(At the conclusion of “Everlasting Light,” Miss Polly comes forward.)

MISS POLLY: **And now, something we’ve all been waiting for.**

(Miss Polly motions for Curly to join her. Curly carries a simple metal star structure, covered in clear-glass light bulbs.)

CURLY: **Thank you all for your support. In honor of Incarnation and our Christmas celebration, I give you, the Star of Bethlehem!**

(She turns on a simple switch connected to the star structure, and it blazes forth. The audience responds with appropriate exclamations of wonder.)

SHERIFF: **Look around you, Curly. Have you ever seen so many people worshipping Jesus at Christmas? This is absolutely the best one yet!**

(music begins to “O Come, Let Us Adore Him”)

SONG: “O COME, LET US ADORE HIM”



chorus

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord

verse 1

O come, all ye faithful
All ye joyful and triumphant
Come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels

chorus

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord

verse 2

Sing, choirs of angels
Won't you sing in exultation
Sing, all ye bright hosts of heaven above
Glory to God, all glory in the highest

chorus

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord

bridge

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord

verse 3

Yea, Lord we greet thee
Savior, born this happy morning
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing
Glory to God in the highest
Christ the Savior is born

chorus

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord
Glory to God in the highest



Christ the Savior is born

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Scene 8

(Dusty comes forward to speak to the audience as people in the background are quietly glowing about the events of Christmas Eve.)

DUSTY:

**And that's the way it went the year the railroad
changed everything!**

**As years went by, more and more people rode the train
to Incarnation to celebrate Christmas and hear the good
news of the Savior born to be the Light of the World.**

**What about that Loaned Manger? Well, even though
the Parson almost got mistaken for the Lonesome
Stranger and tossed in the pokey, turned out he fell in
love with Incarnation, and settled here for good. Guess
you can say the Loaned Manger became our own. The
Loaned Manger ain't loaned no more!**

 SFX 5: "Train Whistle"

**And if I ain't mistaken, that would be the last train into
Incarnation tonight, bringing friends, family,
worshipers, and loved ones!**

**But, I'm getting' ahead of myself. The good folks of
Incarnation still have some celebratin' to do. We got a
whole lot of Good News to share!**

Hall-le-lu-jah!

(music begins to "The Loaned Manger Curtain Calls")

SONG: "THE LOANED MANGER CURTAIN CALLS"

"Hallelujah"

bridge

For unto us a Child is born



For unto us a Son is given
And He shall be called Wonderful
Counselor, Prince of Peace

chorus (with bridge)

Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah
I bring you good news, great joy
Today your Savior is born
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah

“O Come, Let Us Adore Him”

verse 3

Yea, Lord we greet thee
Savior, born this happy morning
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing
Glory to God in the highest
Christ the Savior is born

chorus

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord
Glory to God in the highest
Christ the Savior is born

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THE END.