



The First Christmas.

Once upon a time there was a true story. A story of a baby that would save the world. He wasn't a superhero baby. He couldn't fly. He wouldn't shoot lasers from his eyes. He couldn't stretch his arms to pick up his enemies from far away. He was an ordinary baby. He was an ordinary baby born to be extraordinary. He had an amazing dad. In fact he had two dads: his real dad and a step-dad.

Let's start at the beginning: a young teenager called Mary was busy doing chores. She'd finished washing up and was about to set the table for lunch when suddenly the room became really bright. She looked up from the table and stepped back in surprise. "Don't be frightened" said the angel, "I have a message from God. He is going to put a baby in your tummy that is His son. You will call him Jesus. Jesus has a special job to do when he is a man and you're going to be his mum."

Mary was pretty flabbergasted. Why had God chosen her? Would she be a good mum? And what on earth would her boyfriend Joseph say?! But she said "OK. If that is God's plan then I'll do my best." Joseph was pretty shocked when he heard. In fact, he was going to dump Mary, but an angel spoke to Joseph in a dream and told him God's plan – Joseph was to be Jesus' step-dad and it was a very important job.

All the people, wherever they lived, had to go to the town they were born in, to be counted. Joseph came from Bethlehem so he loaded up a few bags with food and a change of clothes and put them on his donkey's back. He helped Mary to get up on the donkey. She couldn't walk too far because she was very pregnant. They travelled and travelled and travelled until finally, dusty and exhausted they arrived in Bethlehem. The place was heaving. So many people had returned there and all the houses and hotels were full. Joseph knocked on a door. "Go away, I'm full" said an inn keeper. He wandered further down the crowded street and tried another. "Push off! Can't you see the sign – 'no vacancies'?" started another voice. Poor Joseph was about to give up when he spotted a small inn at the end of the street. "Joseph, I'm so tired and I think the baby is coming." Whispered Mary. Without much hope, Joseph knocked on the door of the small inn. "Please" he said before the innkeeper could say 'no', "Please, I desperately need somewhere to stay. My wife is ready to have our baby. We've travelled miles and my donkey needs water." The innkeeper felt sorry for this bedraggled looking man. "I don't have any room inside, but if you don't mind sharing, there is space in my stable." "Thank you so much!" said Joe.

Just outside town there were many fields of cattle and sheep. There was a group of shepherds looking after the sheep that were used for sacrifices. They were warming their hands by the fire and moaning about the cold wind. It was dark and they had drunk the last of their tea.

"Peace on earth and goodwill to all men!"

"What! Who said that?"

"Up there! In the sky!"

An angel was lighting up the sky. "Go into Bethlehem and you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. A huge choir of angels appeared in the sky, singing praises to God. The shepherds raced off to see this baby.

Now the villain in our story is a king called Herod. He was a mean and cruel man. Some wise men went to visit him, explaining that they had, for some months, been following a bright star and it had led them to this place. They believed they were coming to see a new king. "I'd like to meet this king" said Herod slyly. "Tell me where he is and I'll worship him too." Now, he had no intention of doing this. In fact, he wanted to kill the new king. "I'm the only king round here" he muttered to himself, "and that is how it's going to stay!" As the wise men went on their way they felt certain that they should not tell Herod when they found the new king.

The star shone brightest over a stable at the back of a small inn, where a young woman was holding her baby as her husband stood proudly by. The shepherds were speechless; the wise men gave gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and knelt before him.

Poor shepherds and rich wise men, the first to meet Jesus. He grew up to become a man. A man who truly saved the world. He saved the world by being willing to die, so that we could also meet him and his heavenly father. He is a true superhero.

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