

HAY PRESTO

SCENE ONE

The roads are full of people walking in various directions to the towns of their birth. Donkeys, horses, goats and sheep could also be on the move. We hear snippets of various conversations from some of the people when they arrive at the front.

Rachel Jacob, are you sure this is the right way?

Jacob Of course: I'd know my way to Jericho backwards.

Rachel But we're not going to Jericho; you were born in Hebron.

Jacob Oh . . . oh yes. Oh dear.

He looks around in confusion, unsure which way to go, then they head off as Benjamin and his two sons come forwards.

Thomas I'm tired. Are we nearly there yet?

Benjamin I'm afraid not.

John Will we be there by nightfall?

Benjamin I'm afraid not.

John Do you know what you call an old rope in a tangle?

Benjamin Afraid not.

John That's exactly it – a frayed knot!

Thomas (*shaking his head*) This is going to be a long journey.

They move off as Ruth, Leah and Joanna come forwards in mid-conversation.

Ruth Honestly, I don't know what Simon's doing: he hasn't caught a fish in weeks.

Leah He's obviously just going through a dry patch.

Joanna Well no wonder he's not caught anything. Tell him to cast his net elsewhere.

Ruth I was actually thinking about suggesting he pack it in and become a shepherd instead.

Leah So why don't you?

Ruth He's allergic to wool.

The others smile, then move off as Mary, Joseph and their donkey come forwards.

Joseph I wonder if Bethlehem will have changed much.

Mary Do you remember it well?

Joseph Not particularly.

Mary Do you think we'll find somewhere to stay?

Joseph Oh, yes, for sure. The people of Bethlehem are renowned for their hospitality.

Mary When do you think we'll get there?

Joseph Another day or so I think. Come on, let's get a wriggle on.