

Seasonal shopping

On your marks:

Shopping for presents seems to have become the main focus of the Christmas season for so many. Huge amounts of time and money are spent at this time of year finding gifts for people who already have most things they really need. The choice out there is vast, and it is so easy to lose sight of the true meaning of the festival behind the stacked shelves, the persuasive advertising and the tempting shop window displays. Even for Christians who want to celebrate the birth of Jesus, Christmas shopping can so quickly become 'the straw that breaks the camel's back', leaving them frustrated and exhausted come the day rather than ready to enter into the wonder of the incarnation. The following piece tries to pick up on this theme in a short and, we hope, funny sketch for seven people.

Get set:

You will need seven people with good clear voices, ideally a mix of ages. The part of the 'nativity shopper' is pivotal as he or she is involved throughout the presentation.

Go!

Nativity Shopper (NS): Well, I've got my list (*produce a long strip of paper*)... my Christmas nativity list.

Now, let's see what I need first... (*studies list*) Ah yes, I need some sheep.

(*Walks up to shopkeeper 1*)

Excuse me, have you any sheep?

Shopkeeper 1 (S1): What sort?

NS: What do you mean, what sort?

S1: Well, do you want Cheviot, Cotswold or Romsey; do you want Blackface, Merino or Jacob; do you want Blue-faced Leicester, Soay, Texel or Badger-faced Welsh Mountain; do you want...

NS: Oh, I don't care... any old sheep will do.

S1: (*indignantly*) Any old sheep! Any old sheep! Oh dear, I'm not sure what the local

branch of the Shepherds' Union will say about that. *(Walks off shaking his/her head)*
Dear, dear... any old sheep - well, really!

NS: So, it looks like a nativity without sheep. Not a good start!

So, let's see what I need next... *(studies list)* Ah yes, I need some stars.

(Walks up to shopkeeper 2)

Excuse me, have you any stars?

S2: What sort?

NS: What do you mean, what sort?

S2: Well, do you want a pulsar or a quasar; do you want a white dwarf, brown dwarf, neutron star or a red giant; shooting star, pole star or a supernova; how many light years away should they be; what degree of luminosity should they have; do you want a cluster, a galaxy, a nebula or a constellation; do you want...

NS: Oh, I don't care... any old star will do.

S2: *(indignantly)* Any old star! Any old star! Oh dear, I'm not sure what the Astronomers Royal will say about that. *(Walks off shaking his/her head)* Dear, dear... any old star - well, really!

NS: So, it looks like a nativity without stars! This is becoming a problem!

OK, let's see what I need next... *(studies list)* Ah yes, I need a stable.

(Walks up to shopkeeper 3)

Excuse me, have you got a stable?

S3: What sort?

NS: What do you mean, what sort?

S3: Well, do you want a DIY stable, a MFI stable or a B&Q stable; do you want it flat pack or ready assembled; do you want it in pinewood, cedar wood, rose wood, oak wood, beech wood or mahogany; do you want it waterproofed, creosoted, painted or decorated; do you want...

NS: Oh, I don't care... any old stable will do.

S3: *(indignantly)* Any old stable! Any old stable! Oh dear, I'm not sure what the Worshipful Guild of Stablesmiths will say about that. *(Walks off shaking his/her head)* Dear, dear... any old stable - well, really!

NS: Now I am in danger of a nativity without a stable! This is hopeless!

Right, let's see what else is here... *(studies list)* Ah yes, I need a cow.

(Walks up to shopkeeper 4)

Excuse me, have you got a cow?

S4: What sort?

NS: I knew you'd say that! Look, I just want a straight-forward, run-of-the-mill, very ordinary cow.

S4: OK, so are you talking Friesian, Guernsey or Jersey; Highland, Hereford or Texas Long-horn; Belted Galloway, Dexter or Aberdeen Angus; do you want black and white, all white, all brown, brown and white, all black; are you thinking...

NS: Look, I really don't care... any old cow will do.

S4: *(indignantly)* Any old cow! Any old cow! Oh dear, I'm not sure what the Cattle Breeders' Association of Great Britain will say about that. *(Walks off shaking his/her head)* Dear, dear... any old cow – well, really!

NS: OK, so I suppose I will have to do without the cow as well!

What's next ?... *(studies list)* Ah yes, I need a donkey.

(Walks up to shopkeeper 5)

Excuse me, have you got a donkey? And before you ask... I just want one standard, thoroughly ordinary, instantly recognisable and well-behaved donkey. That's not asking too much is it?

S5: *(sharp intake of breath)*

Donkey , you say... mmm, well... let's see... donkey... *(thoughtful pause)* You do realise that they come in a variety of colours? So, would you be wanting grey, brown, black or the highly desirable patchwork sable and cloudy silver... It's this year's colour!

NS: Stop, stop! This is too much! Too much choice... too many options! Different sheep... different stars... different sorts of stable... and cows, and now donkeys. I just wanted *(loudly and with exasperation)* ANY OLD DONKEY!

S5: *(indignantly)* Any old donkey! Any old donkey! Oh dear, I'm not sure what the representatives from the National Adopt-a-Donkey Sanctuary Scheme will say about that. *(Walks off shaking his/her head)* Dear, dear... any old donkey - well, really!

NS: No sheep... no stars... no stable... no cow and now no donkey. It's not looking like much of a nativity.

Is that it? *(studies list)* No, of course, I need baby Jesus. But I am almost afraid to ask!

(Walks up to shopkeeper 6)

Excuse me, have you got a baby Jesus?

S6: Well... *(pause)*

NS: (*resigned*) I know... I know what you are going to say... 'What sort? What size? What weight? What colour eyes? What colour skin? What colour hair?' I give up. It's too much. Talk about a customised Christmas! I can't even get a simple nativity any more!

S6: Actually, what I was going to say was... there is only one baby Jesus. This baby is unique - a one-off, a not-to-be-repeated offer, a very special baby indeed; God in a baby shape. No other options, no other choices, no alternative versions, no other way for God to step into our world. No other baby will do.

NS: Brilliant, I'll take it! It's a pity that I couldn't get anything else for my nativity... but then again... maybe this is all I really need.

To finish, the Bible verse below could be read by all the cast together:

God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his ONLY Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life.

John 3:16, CEV

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BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon, OX14 3FE United Kingdom
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