

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Requiem for the Innkeeper
★ ★

A Christmas Play in One Act

by

Betty Andrews



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether it is presented for charity or for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, P. O. Box 109, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR HIS AGENT
THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.

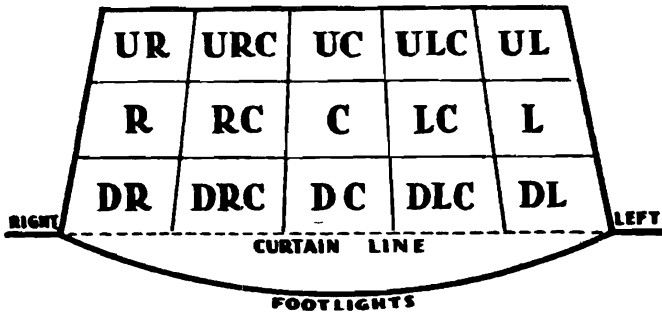
This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work.

REQUIEM FOR THE INNKEEPER

is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. On all programs this notice should appear. Produced by special arrangement with THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois.

©MCMLXXIX by
BETTY ANDREWS
Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(REQUIEM FOR THE INNKEEPER)

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: UR for *up right*, RC for *right center*, DLC for *down left center*, etc. A territory designated on the stage refers to a general area, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

CHARACTERS

INNKEEPER	himself
HIS WIFE	herself
ENOCH	as young shepherd, later as prophet
ESTHER)	
RACHEL)	servants at Inn
SARAH)	
JOSEPH AND MARY	who expect a child
BENJAMIN	hostler at Inn
GUESTS 1 AND 2	at Inn
DRUNKEN DANCER	who tries to entertain guests
MELCHIOR	King of Ethiopia
GASPAR	aged King
BALTHAZAR	astrologer King

Walk-on parts, or those with brief speeches or action:
TRAVELLERS, HAWKERS, FAMILY GROUPS,
VILLAGERS, SHEPHERDS, PICKPOCKETS, DANC-
ING GIRLS, KINGS AND THEIR RETINUES, BEG-
GARS, OFFICIALS, CHILDREN IN GROUPS OR
SINGLY.

Each part is of real, but varied importance. That of the INNKEEPER is outstanding. Though he is held in general contempt for turning away MARY and JOSEPH, it is through his eyes we witness the events of the FIRST CHRISTMAS.

REQUIEM FOR THE INNKEEPER

At Rise, the stage is empty. The INNKEEPER enters UL. He is an old man and is carrying something white rolled up under his arm. (We later see this to be a service apron which he puts on to move back in time to that first Christmas Night.) He angles slowly DLC. He doesn't seem to be going anywhere in particular. As he passes the stable he pauses, stares at it a moment, shakes his head, then moves on to the sign pole. Here he stops, contemplating the sign reading 'INN'. As he reaches the sign, the LIGHTS begin to BRIGHTEN. From DR comes the offstage sound of laughter and excited voices and the PEOPLE begin to enter -- a FAMILY GROUP, some YOUNG COUPLES, CHILDREN, assorted SINGLES of various ages and types. ALL are in a holiday mood. With the PEOPLE, the HAWKERS enter from DR. They carry cardboard shoulder trays and begin to cry their wares. One HAWKER may push a small cart as he enters UL. They follow the same path as the INNKEEPER and approach anyone who notices them or seems a possible customer.

HAWKER 1. Dates! Sweet dates! Buy my sweet dates! (HE offers them to a passing woman who simply walks on, dismissing him with an

impatient little motion of her hand.)

HAWKER 2. Fresh bread here! Fresh bread here!

(Moves on making occasional sales and pocketing small coins. **WOMEN** customers place their bread in baskets. **MEN** sometimes pull off hunks and eat as they walk.)

HAWKER 3. Yoghurt and honey! Come taste my yoghurt and honey!

(The **INNKEEPER** stays by the sign as the **PEOPLE** surge past him, heading across the stage toward the stable area. **LIGHTS** are **COMING ON** in and around the stable, making it a brilliant magnet. The sound of singing -- or of instruments -- comes from the area behind the curtain [not too loud -- or, if vocal -- indistinct]. Not far from where the **INNKEEPER** is standing, a **FAMILY GROUP** stops to buy food from a **VENDOR**, preceded by a child begging.)

CHILD. I'm hungry! I'm hungry, Mama. (Pulls at her sleeve.)

MOTHER. Oh, all right.

FATHER. Here, man! Over here. (Whistles through his fingers to get attention of **HAWKER 2**.)

Pays a small coin for hunk of bread and hands it to **CHILD**.)

CHILD (whining). Honey, too.

FATHER (sighs). Oh, well! (Snaps finger at **HAWKER 3**.) Over here! A bit of honey for the bread. (Takes out another small coin.)

(HAWKER 3. cuts a bit of comb and plasters it on hunk of bread. CHILD snatches and eats it greedily and licks her fingers. PARENTS continue walking looking at sights. CHILD wipes fingers on her clothes and follows. In a brief lull, the DANCING GIRLS step out and perform a short dance which the village women, in particular, watch with mingled disapproval and envy. The men watch, but more covertly. Another VENDOR, still calling his wares, exits DR. The man with the cart sets up at one side of the stable curtain. As the FAMILY is paying for their food, HAWKER 3. draws the FATHER of the family aside and whispers something in his ear. The FATHER turns and looks at the INNKEEPER, then back at the HAWKER, who nods his head vigorously. The FATHER then whispers to his WIFE who looks at the INNKEEPER and makes an instinctive backing-away movement. The CHILD jumps up and down, wanting to know what is going on. His MOTHER leans down, whispers, then before the CHILD can say anything, claps her hand over his mouth and leads him away - as if from a pariah. The INNKEEPER watches them moving away L from him toward the stable. He looks out at the house, steps DSC and speaks directly to the audience:)

INNKEEPER. It's easy enough to say what you would have done after the fact. But hind-

sight is just about as much use to a man as eyes in his backside!

(Some other PEOPLE who have witnessed the shunning of the INNKEEPER give him a wide berth. One MOTHER hides her CHILD's head with her skirt as she passes.)

INNKEEPER (still speaking to the audience). It is true I don't feel too good about it now. It is true I wish I had made other arrangements. (He stares hard at the PEOPLE crowded around the front of the stable.) But people who never made a decision in their lives, who never had the responsibility of making a living -- ! And in a town like this, that has only one good business season at the time of the taxing -- (The PEOPLE by the stable exit behind the curtain DL. The INNKEEPER turns back to the audience.) Well, people like that just had no call to come in and vandalize my inn. (He crosses back toward the sign and touches the pole in an almost caressing gesture. He tries to straighten the sign. It is no good. He turns back to the audience.) They had no call to start that story about the asses in my stable being better hosts than I was. Laughter can ruin a man, you know, although you wouldn't think it until it happens to you.

(Suddenly, TWO CHILDREN poke their heads out from behind the stable curtain and bray like

donkeys.)

CHILDREN. Hee-haw! Hee-haw! Hee-haw! (They collapse in laughter. Adult hands yank them back inside the curtain.)

INNKEEPER. You see? Children still bray at me -- Though not as often as they used to.

(Some LATE ARRIVALS enter DR and hurry across to the stable and exit behind the curtain. The HAWKER with the cart exits UL. The other HAWKER has gone out DL. The INNKEEPER picks up the stool that is outside the door jamb and brings it DC. He sits and speaks persuasively to the audience.)

INNKEEPER. When a business man loses the good will of his place of business . . . (Singles out one man in the house.) . . . Well, you know what happens to the price you can get for it when you have to sell. Not that the people who bought it are suffering any. Outsiders, they are, nobody knows too much about them. There's talk they've bought up some beach-front on Galilee, too, though I'm not sure about that. Anyway, you can see what they've done to the inn. (He rises in agitation and walks back toward the sign. It worries him that it dangles.) Why, when I ran this inn -- you can ask anyone old enough to remember, it was a good inn. No raw wine, and when my menu said, 'Lamb,' it was *lamb*. Not the

carcass of an old ewe past bearing. And clean -- my wife is the best housekeeper in town. No lice, except the ones the guests bring with them. Why, my inn . . . (Catches himself.) You'll excuse an old man's rambblings? As I was saying, you can see what they've done with the inn. But that stable! (Walking toward it.) Scrubbed within an inch of its life! And perfumed -- a cow would run from it! And all lit up, all night, every night!

(From behind the curtain, ENOCH' voice is heard.)

ENOCH'S VOICE. Fear not. For I bring you tidings
of great joy!

CROWD'S VOICES. Ahhhh!

INNKEEPER (gesturing toward sound). They've even
hired old Enoch, the shepherd, to tell the
story over, and over, and over, about that
night.

ENOCH'S VOICE. For unto you is born in the city
of David --

INNKEEPER. Why, listening to him, if I hadn't known
for years that he had nothing but straw in his
upper story, I'd begin believing in the angels
myself.

ENOCH'S VOICE. Ye shall find the babe wrapped
in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

CROWD'S VOICES. Ahhhh!

INNKEEPER. But sure as sunup, I didn't see any
angels, or hear any singing. And my eyes and
ears then were sharp as a hound dog's.

ENOCH'S VOICE. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

(A sound of applause comes from behind the stable curtain. INNKEEPER rises, a restless movement. He puts the stool back in place. Then he takes out the apron, flaps it open, and begins to tie it around his waist.)

INNKEEPER. The star I saw along with everyone else in town. And you can take my word for it, the only thing any of us thought it portended was trouble.

(The apron is on. Briskly he fixes the sign until it hangs straight. The years are falling away from him as he does this. Now he walks C and looks up. The LIGHTS DIM on the stable area and go OUT. From straight above, a LIGHT begins to SHINE down, growing in strength. As the INNKEEPER stands there, head up, two serving maids, ESTHER and RACHEL, enter UR in the inn area. They lower the scenic curtain of the inn. LIGHTS UP revealing a painted drop of a long table-top with food, dishes, cutlery and mugs all painted on it. GUESTS enter, also from UR. They sit upon the three-legged stools, facing the painted table. backs to audience)

ESTHER: (Climbs the stepladder and pokes her head out of the window frame. She looks up and gasps). 'Ahh!'
(Still looking up, begins to

gesture wildly behind her. INNKEEPER'S WIFE enters, sees ESTHER at window, tugs at her skirt to get her down. Some of the GUESTS have turned at ESTHER's gasp. They are now rising. One goes to the window. OTHERS walk toward the door and out through it. They, too, stand looking up as the INNKEEPER is. The INNKEEPER'S WIFE leaves ESTHER in the window and walks to the door jamb and stands in it. The faces of all are bathed in light. They are utterly silent. Slowly the INNKEEPER'S WIFE walks over to her husband. He puts his arm around her in a protective gesture. This seems to trigger a reaction both in ESTHER and in RACHEL, who mimics her.)

ESTHER (whose head is still sticking out the window, begins to moan and whimper). It's the end of the world. That's what it is. The end of the world! (She backs down the ladder, still making distressed sounds, and runs for the door. Once there, she glances up once again, lets out a strangled scream, throws her apron over her head, dashes across the stage and exits UL.)

INNKEEPER'S WIFE (takes a few steps after her, calling). Esther, come back. We haven't finished serving dinner! (No answer.)

RACHEL (hugging herself to stop her shivering and echoing ESTHER). The end of the world! The end of the world! (She keeps her head averted from the light, but throws her apron

over it anyway, for good measure, and runs out after her friend. INNKEEPER'S WIFE throws up her hands, but more is at stake than losing two servants on a busy night. The GUESTS are stirring uneasily. Obviously it is a time just before panic.)

INNKEEPER (rising to the occasion, whispers an urgent command). Quickly, wife, get more wine. (WIFE moves smartly through the GUESTS and into the inn, snapping her fingers at an invisible servant.) Ignorant country girls! (He strolls over to his GUESTS.) Anything a little out of the ordinary is always the end of the world with them. (He laughs, not too convincingly.)

GUEST 1. But what a strange light! You must admit it's a strange light. It could be an omen of evil or --

GUEST 2. Evil! Nonsense. It is a star. Just a star shining on a clear night. No dust in the atmosphere. A star on a clear night.

INNKEEPER. That's true. A very clear night. WIFE enters with a new jug of wine.) Please, gentlemen, go back to your dinner before the food is cold. My wife will fill your glasses with wine.

(The GUESTS go back through the door into the inn and retake their seats. The INNKEEPER'S WIFE follows with jug and gestures filling their glasses. INNKEEPER starts to follow, but pauses and looks up again enquiringly at the

star. He takes off his apron and lets it hang in his hand. He talks again to the audience:)

INNKEEPER. No matter what I said about those serving girls, I could sympathize with how they felt as that star came closer and closer to hanging right over our heads. And that gentleman was right about it making a strange light . . . Why, at first, when they came to the inn door, or when Joseph did, she was lagging behind not wanting to walk any more than she had to . . .

(Behind the **INNKEEPER**, **JOSEPH** enters **UL**. He walks a few steps **DL**. **MARY** comes in behind, slowly. **JOSEPH** sees the inn sign. He goes back to **MARY**, says something we can't hear, then walks on toward the inn. **MARY** waits.)

INNKEEPER. She was big with child, ripe as a watermelon. At first, it seemed that the light was coming from her, or from her belly. (An amber **LIGHT** begins to shine on **MARY**, growing in intensity, then fading.) Ah, I would have to be as half-witted as Enoch to believe that even after the fact, but for a minute there . . . (He ties his apron on again, turns and walks briskly to the inn door and meets **JOSEPH**.) I'm sorry. There is no room in the inn.

JOSEPH (looking at **MARY**). My wife, sir --