

THE PET DOVE

By John Bea
Author of "A Captive Maiden in Damascus"

A children's play in Four Acts

CHARACTERS

Gaspar- One of the Magi. A large man with a long white beard.
Samuel- Boy of Bethlehem. About 14 years old.
David- Boy of Bethlehem. About 12 years old.
Phillip- An odd little fellow from Ramoth-Gilead. 12 years old and small.
Tirzah- Phillip's widowed mother.
Tabitha- A young neighbor of Tirzah
Zillah- Little Shepherdess of Bethlehem
Hannah- Little Shepherdess of Bethlehem
Naamah- Little Shepherdess of Bethlehem
Beulah- Little Shepherdess of Bethlehem
Miriam- Little Shepherdess of Bethlehem
Esther- Little Shepherdess of Bethlehem
Ruth- A little pet dove belonging to Samuel

Incidental persons

In Act 2- the two other Magi
In Act 3- a quartet of ladies' voices
In Act 4- a woman to appear at a doorway

COSTUMES

The costumes in this play need only be of the simplest forms of present day apparel in the Orient; that of boys and of girls being almost identical, the girls wearing ornaments on their heads, arms and ankles; the boys quite plain. All should either wear sandals or go barefoot. No hosiery. The angels should have long, drooping wings; white, flowing robes, arms bare and no ornaments. Some little make-up, judiciously used, may add to the illusion.

SYNOPSIS: *Phillip, an odd little boy from Ramoth-Gilead, and his widowed mother, Tirzah, are sojourning in Bethlehem about the time of the visit of the Wise Men. The boy is very unhappy because certain personal peculiarities seem to make him unacceptable to the other boys of the village; but, at his mother's urgent plea, he makes another effort to get upon friendly terms with them.*

Gaspar, one of the Wise Men, finds an opportunity to lend a helping hand and then, with the aid of some little shepherdesses, a few angels, a little music and magic and a Pet Dove belonging to one of the boys, Phillip gains his heart's desire to become a real boy, and all ends happily.

PLACE: *Bethlehem*

TIME: *The arrival of the Magi*

ACT 1

(The auditorium dark. On the stage the interior of Tirzah's cottage in Bethlehem, very poor and plain. Tirzah sitting alone on an ottoman, mending a little boy's jacket; looking up and listening as if anxious. A rap at the door)

TIRZAH: Come in! *(Tabitha enters leading Phillip by the hand; the boy scantily clothed, barefoot, scared)*

TABITHA: Is this your little boy? He says he's gone and lost himself and I've been trotting him round among the neighbors trying to find the right mother for him.

(Phillip runs to Tirzah, embraces her, then sits on floor)

TABITHA: *(After watching them a moment)* Well, from the way things look I guess you're it all right.

TIRZAH: Oh yes. Yes. Thank you, thank you good neighbor. The Lord reward you.

TABITHA: Oh, that's all right. I'm glad he's found you. Good day. Goodbye, little boy. Don't you go and lose yourself again without letting me know. *(Tabitha retires, smiling, shaking finger at Phillip)*

PHILLIP: *(Ardently)* Oh mother, I'm so glad to be here! You don't know how glad I am.

TIRZAH: And I'm pleased to have my little boy with me again. But you need not have been frightened. Among such kindly people you would be safe anywhere you know. I haven't been worrying about you. *(Cheerfully)* And so you've been out playing with the other boys this afternoon, and had a real good time?

PHILLIP: *(Slowly and hanging his head)* Well, I tried to make friends with some of them, but they spoke cross and ran away from ma *(A pause, then turning to her, looking up, eagerly)*. Is it because we are poor and strangers here, mother? Or is it because there is something the matter with me, so that I'm not like other boys? They all laugh at me, and I can't help it. You know that, mother.

TIRZAH: *(Consolingly)* Try not to mind them, sonny. They will know you better by and by. Maybe you only imagined they meant to be rude. You are only mother's little man now, but by and by you will grow up and be my great big Phillip, "a lover of horses!" Won't that be fine?

PHILLIP: *(Plaintively)* Oh, I don't believe I want to grow up, mother. I only want to be like you. And I don't like to live here in Bethlehem. Do you? It's so lonely. I'd rather go back to dear old Ramoth-Gilead where everything was so far and quiet and solitary, and no rude boys to bother.

TIRZAH: (*Petting him*) I know, sonny. So would I, if all were well with my little boy. You know we came over Jordan because I wanted to make a little offering in the Temple, for fear that in some way your father or I had sinned. And then I wanted to have you bathe in the bubbling pool of Bethesda. But nothing seemed to help; so we came here to live in seclusion and rest. Someday, when God is more gracious, we will go back to dear old Ramoth-Gilead and be happy, just you and I.

(*Phillip looks up, smiling and satisfied; then lovingly strokes his mother's hair and speaks softly*)

PHILLIP: Why didn't they call you Julia, mother, you have such "soft and tender hair?" Or Rhoda, "a wild rose"; or Se-rah, "the morning star?"

TIRZAH: (*Fondling the little boy*) And why didn't I call my little son Ar-non, my "sunlight," or zith-ai, my "shadow," for you are both to me. Or, (*slowly*) even Shen-ir, "the light that sleeps?"

PHILLIP: (*Softly, deprecatingly*) No, mother. No! Those are not names for boys. Only holy Angels have names like those. (*With hesitation*) May I ask you a question, mother?

TIRZAH: Yes, my son, what is it?

PHILLIP: (*Slowly*) If the names of the Angels were all brought over from Babylon how is it they don't understand the Chaldean language? I've been worrying over that all day.

TIRZAH: (*Aside*) My poor little boy!

PHILLIP: Did you ever see an Angel, mother? (*No response*) How I would love to see La-i-lah, the "angel of dreams"; or Shed-ur, the "field of light"; or Pa-ran, the "angel of beauty." (*Looking up brightly*) I know what angels live on, mother. They live on Manna and the beams of the Divine Glory. And they keep busy, too. I know of one who is a weaver. And I once dreamed I saw him weaving crowns for God out of the prayers the other angels carried up to heaven. But I didn't see ours there. Do you suppose, maybe, a careless angel lost them on the way up? But do you know, mother, somehow these things don't seem so real and true to me over here as when I sat on the mountain side away over in Ramoth-Gilead looking at the sunset across the valley of Jordan. I used to know everything by its name. I called the lovely moonlight Nem-u-el, it looked so much like "the sleeping of God." Don't you think that's a pretty name for it, mother? (*Ardently*) What's the trouble here? Can't you tell me? I catch you looking at me so strangely sometimes; and then you—hug me so tight. It seems as though you were afraid that, maybe, while you weren't looking, a big hand might steal out of the shadows and touch me so that I should wither; or that, maybe, something like a soft, bright mist might fall all around me and when it faded away I shouldn't be there anymore. I often feel that way. Is that it, mother dear?

TIRZAH: (*Hiding her face and rocking back and forth*) Oh, Phillip, Phillip, you will break my heart if you talk that way. I can't answer you. No, no, my son. Don't think about such things. Go out once again. Go out among the little fellows in their play. Maybe they will be more gentle with you after a while. You are all I have in the world. Try once more. Play real hard. Be a real boy.

PHILLIP: *(Rising, speaking cheerfully)* All right, mother dear. I'll try again, and maybe if I try real hard I may get to be your true Phillip, riding over the hills on a big horse. *(Starts away, then pauses and asks in disappointed tone)* But aren't you coming along this time, mother?

TIRZAH: No, sonny. You will get on better without me. I shadow you too much. Go and play, that's a dear. Good little son. Don't go too far away. I'll be watching for you while I'm mending your jacket.

PHILLIP: Well then; all right. Goodbye, mother dear. If I get lost again somebody will bring me back, I know. There are lots of kind people in the world, aren't there? Goodbye, mother! *(Looks back longingly as he goes out, waves his hand; then comes back, lays his hand on her shoulder and murmurs)* I'm so glad you aren't a boy. *(Phillip goes out reluctantly. Tirzah looks after him; sighs, shakes her head sadly; wipes away a tear; then goes on mending the little jacket)*

CURTAIN

ACT 2

(The same afternoon. A cottage doorway seen at one side of the stage, with a light above it. For a central background the wall of the town. Samuel and David lying lazily in the sun. David playing with his harp; Samuel, lying on his back fondling his pet dove, which he carries in the flap of his shirt. Suddenly they look up and watch the approach of someone not yet in sight of the audience)

SAMUEL: Well, what a queer looking lot of people. Do you see them, David? Look, they are coming this way too.

DAVID: They can't be Jews 'cause they've got camels to ride on.

SAMUEL: I wonder why they don't go up to the inn.

DAVID: Well, they'd better not, for the inn is full and has been for two or three weeks. I've been there and I know. There's an awful crowd there now.

SAMUEL: I wonder where they came from, and if they're going to stay long.

(The caravan of the Magi has halted not far away. Boys watch with interest, only now and then touching their playthings)

DAVID: It would be lots of fun to go down some day and see their camp, wouldn't it?

SAMUEL: I'll go with you. We needn't go close up you know. And I haven't seen any dog, have you?

(As they are watching the Magi, Phillip slowly wanders near, a pitiful little creature, continually looking about him as if in fear)

DAVID: Aw! Here comes that silly Phillip again! We can't go anywhere without having him tag after us. I'm just sick of it.

SAMUEL: Now Phillip, you just go back where you came from! We don't want you with us. What are you looking for?

PHILLIP: *(Timidly)* I, I thought, maybe, I might find somebody down here to play with.

SAMUEL: *(Harshly)* Oh yes. You're always thinking something, but it's only because you're silly, that's all.

PHILLIP: I'm lonesome, and I'm cold too; real cold.

DAVID: Well, that's not our fault, is it?

SAMUEL: Why didn't you put on your coat; you knew it was cold, didn't you?

PHILLIP: I couldn't 'cause mother is mending it for me. *(To Samuel)* Oh, what a pretty bird you've got! I never saw anything so *(putting out his hand, as if to touch it)*

SAMUEL: Aw! Keep your hands away! She might bite you. She gets awful savage sometimes.

PHILLIP: Oh, I didn't know. I never had a live bird in my hand and I just thought I'd like to see how they feel.

SAMUEL: Well, just go on home now, Phillip. We're busy.

PHILLIP: I haven't any home here. I wish you boys would let me stay and play with you a little bit.

DAVID: No. You'd better run along. It's getting dark and I see three strange men down yonder. Hurry up. *(Acts as if scared)*

(Phillip looks about timidly, and then scurries off out of sight while the boys fasten their eyes on the three men, who have left the tent and now pass slowly across the front of the stage, toward the doorway of the cottage opposite)

SAMUEL: I wonder what they're up to now.

DAVID: Each of them has a bundle. Where do you suppose they're going?

SAMUEL: And what are they all looking at? They think they see something, that's sure, and they're walking straight toward it. I see them looking at something. *(Boys gaze same way)*

DAVID: I believe I see what it is!

SAMUEL: Do you? Where?

DAVID: *(Pointing)* Over yonder. Don't you see a light, high up over that little house? It looks like a star. I wonder if it really is one?

SAMUEL: Why, that's where those poor folks from up country are staying.

DAVID: I know. The place where they've got the baby; the one that was born in the stable, don't you remember?

SAMUEL: Yes. But look. They're going in.

(Magi rap at cottage door; enter, and light disappears)

DAVID: And what's gone with that star? Well, if that isn't the greatest. Say, Samuel, I feel sort of queer. I'm about half scared to stay here. My folks will wonder what's keeping me. Come on, let's go.

SAMUEL: Hold on a minute 'till I put my bird in a good warm place. *(Samuel puts the dove in his shirt flap. Boys start away. A voice heard not far off. Phillip reappears)*

PHILLIP: Oh, boys! Wait for me, won't you? Please wait for me! I can't find my way home alone. *(Boys hurry off without replying)* I wish somebody cared for me. I'm awful lonely!

(Just here the shepherdesses appear with their crooks and harps and pipes. They're dancing about and chattering in true girl fashion. Suddenly they come upon Phillip, alone and disconsolate. They gather round him, Beulah behind the others)

ZILLAH: Well, I declare, what's this? What are you doing here, little boy? What's the matter? Are you sick? Or lost? Or...what?

PHILLIP: I'm waiting 'till somebody comes along who will be kind to me and show me how I can get home.

HANNAH: Where do you live? We are going into town pretty soon.

PHILLIP: OH, are you? Then, please may I go with you?

NAAMAH: *(Aside)* Poor little lamb. I'm sorry for him; he looks so cold and pitiful.

BEULAH: *(Pushing in from behind the others)* Say, little boy, does your mother know you're out here?

MIRIAM: Now don't start teasing, Beulah. You can't be happy unless you're poking fun at somebody.

BEULAH: Well, isn't that all right? Doesn't the Good Book tell us there's a time to laugh? What's to hinder my thinking I've got there right now? *(Laughs and points to Phillip)* Look at it.

MIRIAM: Yes, but in The Book the time to weep comes first, and this looks more like it to me.

PHILLIP: Aren't you girls going into town now?

ESTHER: No. We're going for our sheep first.

PHILLIP: Which way are you going?

ESTHER: Down past that tent.

PHILLIP: Will you take me there and let me wait 'till you come back? Then you can take me home, maybe?

ZILLAH: Yes, come right along. *(Zillah takes Phillip's hand and leads him to the door of the empty tent, where she leaves him; the girls go on their way, chattering and singing. Zillah looks back and waves a hand to the boy; then all disappear. Phillip stands looking wistfully after them)*

PHILLIP: I wish I were a girl!

CURTAIN

ACT 3

(The next afternoon. Stage same as last scene. Gaspar sitting quietly in front of his tent, reading from a scroll. Samuel and David slowly edge their way, boy fashion, toward the place. Gaspar watches until they come quite near, then speaks quietly)

GASPAR: Come here, boys. I would like to see you. *(Boys shyly draw near and make their salaam)* What are your names, boys?

DAVID: My name's David.

SAMUEL: And I am Samuel.

GASPAR: Well, those are fine names. Ah, Samuel, my boy, what a pretty bird you have. Is it a pet? And what do you call it?

SAMUEL: It's a little wild bird that I caught in a snare. It soon got very tame. Lots of boys have tame birds.

GASPAR: I hope you are very kind to it. You know every wild bird is a sort of little brother or little sister to you; and if you keep it you become like a little father or older brother to it.

SAMUEL: My birdie's a girl, and her name is Ruth; so then I suppose she's my little sister. One day when I was carrying her off on a long trip what do you think happened? Guess. Why she laid a little egg right in my shirt. The cutest thing you ever saw. I've got it at home now and I'll show it to you some day, if you like.

GASPAR: (*Laughing*) Well now! That's delightful. Have little Jewish boys many amusements as fine as that?

DAVID: Oh, no, not many. We play with slings and arrows and balls and music and pet birds—but girls—they wear all sorts of silly, tinkling things on their legs and arms.

SAMUEL: (*Boastfully*) My sister wears great big rings in her ears! My auntie gave them to her and she's awful proud of them.

GASPAR: We have a great many little boys over in Chaldea, where I live, and we like them to keep pets because in that way they learn to be kind to everybody.

SAMUEL: Did you folks come for the big Registration? Almost everybody has; and they don't like it.

GASPAR: Oh no. We are here on a very different errand. Would you like me to tell you about it?

SAMUEL AND DAVID: Oh, yes, please. We like to hear stories.

GASPAR: Well, sit down here by me and I'll tell you. (*They sit*) Over in Chaldea our people call us Magi, not altogether because we practice Magic, but because we are students. We study the stars; and they sometimes tell us very strange things. Among others that a wonderful new King was to be born somewhere in the far west; and we have followed His Star until we reached our journey's end.

DAVID: We saw that light and watched you going across to the cottage. But that wasn't the place, was it?

GASPAR: Yes. That was the very place. We went in and saw the little King and made Him some presents.

SAMUEL: Was that what you were carrying in those bundles?

GASPAR: Yes, and we were very glad to find Him, for we have been journeying a long, long time.

DAVID: How long? A whole week?

GASPAR: Oh, we have been on our way for more than two years!

SAMUEL AND DAVID: (*Astonished*) Two years! All just to see a baby?

GASPAR: Yes, but you see some babies are very remarkable. Don't you think they must be?

SAMUEL: Yes, and I know people say some awful strange things about babies; the queerest things you ever listened to. Would you like me to tell you what my mother says about them?

GASPAR: Yes, I would; very much indeed.

SAMUEL: (*In a low, distinct voice*) Well, my mother says that babies, all the time they're waiting to be born, can see everything there is up in heaven; and when it's time for their birthday an Angel comes down and sweeps his wing across the baby's mouth and that wakes him up in this world, and when he's born he don't see heaven anymore, only things in this world.

GASPAR: It would be fine if they could tell us what they saw up there, wouldn't it?

DAVID: Yes, but they can't. They've forgotten it all.

GASPAR: Oh, no. I don't think they could ever really forget it. But, you see, they haven't any heaven words with which to tell about it. It's all there all the time. Almost everybody thinks he can remember some of it, now and then; but he can't tell it.

SAMUEL: Maybe they just dream it. I dream lots of times. The other night I dreamed I was—

GASPAR: (*Interrupting*) But now listen, boys. I want to ask you a very serious question. What do you suppose would happen if that Birthday Angel got thinking about something else, and was careless, and just about half forgot what he was doing, and didn't shut off all the lovely things, and didn't more than about half wake up the baby in this world?

SAMUEL: (*Very soberly*) Well, I declare! I never thought of that.

GASPAR: Now, boys, that sometimes happens. And when it does don't you suppose that, as the baby grew up, he would seem to be about half dreaming all the time and seeing queer things he couldn't tell about? We have boys like that over where I live, and I'm pretty sure you have them here too. Sometimes they go about like strangers, or lost people, and seem to care very little for anything around them. Thoughtless children sometimes make fun of them and treat them very shabbily. (*Phillip calls*) Listen! Is that someone calling you? (*All listen, Phillip calls in a plaintive style*)

PHILLIP: Oh boys, where are you? Where are you?

SAMUEL: (*Impatiently*) Oh there's that plaguey Phillip again. He just follows us everywhere. He's no good. He can't play anything and he's awful queer. People say that somebody with the evil eye must have looked at him when he was a baby.

(Phillip appears, in pitiful guise)

DAVID: *(Sharply)* Now you just go home, Phillip. We don't want you following us around everywhere. This is private.

(Phillip half turns away; frightened. Uncertain what to do)

SAMUEL: He's always trying to say something, and he keeps standing around looking that queer way. It just makes me tired. He spoils everything.

GASPAR: But maybe Phillip has come to see me. Poor boy! Oh, I wonder, now! Maybe Phillip's Birthday Angel was very careless when he was born. Maybe that is why he is always thinking he sees things. I wonder if that might not be just his trouble. In Chaldea we sometimes call that sort of people Seers. I could tell you a great many interesting things about them.

SAMUEL: You can't get them to tell you what they saw, if they haven't any heaven words, can you?

GASPAR: No, but sometimes we can find out in other ways. Now let me tell you something, boys. Last evening I found Phillip sitting here at my tent door, waiting for some kind girls to take him home, and, after we had gotten a little acquainted, I took him over to visit the baby King yonder in the cottage. And as we came out a very curious thing happened. Phillip stood perfectly still, as though he were looking away down a long, long road. And as I watched him I saw a soft, gentle smile come over his face and he lifted his hand, slowly, as though he saw something very, very beautiful, away down in the far off years to come. I didn't ask him what it was. Maybe he couldn't have told me if I had. But I think I can find out, even if he has no words with which to tell about it. I feel pretty sure I can arrange it so that you and David can see what he saw. Would you like me to do that for you?

SAMUEL: OH, yes. Do. I wonder if it was anything about that baby? We're awfully curious about Him. Everybody is.

DAVID: *(Seriously)* Maybe that Angel was real careless when Phillip was born; and maybe he saw something away down there that looked like heaven to him. Oh, I'm sorry we've been so cross and mean to him. Do; please ask him what he saw that time. I've always wanted to know about heaven. My mother talks a lot about it, but I don't think she really knows anything more than what our Rabbi tells her.

GASPAR: Well, I'm willing to do what I can for you, but, of course, boys, you understand that the heaven things Phillip might see now could only be what we would call heaven-on-earth things; for he couldn't tell about any others and we couldn't understand him if he did. But they might be pretty good for all that; don't you think so? Even if the two worlds did get a little mixed.

Come here, Phillip, my little friend.

PHILLIP: Yes, I'm coming. But I'm afraid those boys there won't like it very much, --maybe.

GASPAR: Oh yes, I think they will. Come; sit down here with the boys and me.

(Phillip comes. The boys make room for him pleasantly)

GASPAR: Now, boys, I want to try a little experiment. Phillip, I want you to sit in the middle and look straight before you and think of what you saw when you came out of the cottage where we were last night. Samuel, you sit on his right hand and David here on his left. Now each of you take one of Phillip's hands and lean up against him. There; that's right. Now sit very still, while you each eat one of these little honey-cakes. It won't be long until you go to sleep. Then you will each have a dream and in your dream you will see just what Phillip is thinking of. Now sit very quietly. We are all ready. *(Gaspar slowly rises, gives Samuel and David each a little cake, then takes his place behind the group. Phillip fixes his eyes on the distant vision. Samuel and David finish their cakes, then fall asleep and soon it grows entirely dark around them. While they continue motionless a concealed quartet of ladies' voices sing an angel's song; at first as if from far away; slowly increasing. Light comes on slowly)*

ANGEL'S SONG:

Wake, oh wake, the shadows flee away;
Sleep no more, for Lo, the day is breaking.

Mists of doubt and sorrow, wan and gray,
Vanish in the smile of kindness growing.

Angels come to bless the happy morning
Come to clear the dawn of sadness; Oh,

Wake, the rosy sky with love is glowing.
Stars are melting in the dawning gladness.

(At the words "Angels come" a group of three angels, in filmy white, silvery robes, noiselessly glide in out of the darkness and stand behind the boys, like angels in a dream, looking down smilingly upon the group, with hands extended, as if in blessing; these are Zillah, Hannah, and Naamah, in dim light only)

ZILLAH: *(Very softly and slowly; as a voice in a dream)* The Angel who redeemed them from all evil bless the lads!

(Phillip extends his hand and pleads, as one in a dream)

PHILLIP: Oh that these boys were as my little brothers!

HANNAH: *(Very softly)* Listen, my sisters! Someone has given him a drink of the "wine of the best beloved," and the little one *(pointing to Phillip)* is talking in his sleep. He has fallen into a

trance with his eyes open. He is sitting in the mingled twilight of two worlds and as yet it is neither clear nor dark around him.

NAAMAH: Are not angels Ministering Spirits sent forth to minister unto such as these? Let us wake them gently, here in the Land of Dreams, while we wave above them our banner of love.

(Angel's Song. A capella. A quartet of Ladies' Voices)

ZILLAH: *(Touching Samuel and David. The others waving their hands)* Wake, little sleepers. Dream no more of a far off land of loving-kindness. Near at hand the Day of Love is breaking. The shadows of chill loneliness are ready to flee away.

(David and Samuel slowly stir themselves; rub their eyes and look around them, sleepily. Hannah comes near and lays her hand on Phillip's shoulder)

HANNAH: Wake, little lad, and as one whom his mother comforteth, so will we comfort thee. *(Phillip stirs a little)*

NAAMAH: *(Laying a hand upon Samuel and David, as they remain silent)* Lo, God hath sent His Messengers that ye may know how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. The heart that is alone knoweth only its own bitterness; and for this cause two are ever better than one and the three-fold cord of love with which we bind is never quickly broken.

ZILLAH: Love is better than the wings of the morning. A friend loveth at all times; and even little brothers are born to help in the hour of adversity.

(Beulah, in angel's garb, enters, daintily, carrying a platter of wafers, and dropping flowers as she comes)

HANNAH: What tidings, little sister, from the Land of Kindly Hearts and Loving Thoughts? *(Beulah comes to center of group and speaks slowly)*

BEULAH: Once, long ago, in time of loneliness and trouble, man did eat Angel's food; and now I bring you bread from heaven for food on earth, for Love is the bread of God. *(Offers wafers. Boys take them and eat as if dreaming. Beulah retires)*

ZILLAH: *(Waving her hands above the boys)* Lo, with this bread eaten in secret let all your sorrows turn to joy.

NAAMAH: Long ago I heard a voice, wet with tears, which said, "Woe unto him that is alone when he falleth." So now, let any evil hefall them, come, my sisters, let us bind them together with the cords of love. *(The Angels now gently weave the boys' arms around each other; Phillip in the middle. Then, all smiling and happy, they stand together, making a perfect tableau of peace and love. While they stand the concealed voices begin to sing again.)*

“Wake, Wake, the shadows flee away”

(The sound growing more and more soft and indistinct as the light slowly vanishes. Then the dream fades entirely away, and all grows dark. Quickly and noiselessly the girls retire and the boys rearrange themselves, precisely as they had been placed by old Gaspar; David and Samuel asleep; Phillip gazing before him.)

ACT 4

(When all is ready the light is quickly turned upon the stage. Samuel and David rise, rub their eyes and fasten them upon Phillip. Presently they offer him their hands and he rises also, but with a curious smile upon his face)

SAMUEL: *(Drowsily)* Why, wasn't somebody talking to us boys? Where are we now? I thought I saw us outside somewhere just a minute ago. Did you call me, David?

DAVID: No, I didn't say anything. You must have been dreaming. But I'm sure I saw myself somewhere else, and, say, Samuel, --did you notice what was happening? *(No answer)*

PHILLIP: Was I there, boys? Did you see little Phillip tagging around anywhere?

SAMUEL: Oh Phillip, please don't say that mean word again. Yes, you stood in the middle and my arm was around you, --so.

DAVID: And mine too, Phillip. Didn't you feel me give you that big hug; like this? *(Boys arrange themselves as in dream)*

PHILLIP: I guess it must have been so, for I really believe this is just what I saw. But maybe it was only a dream. It seems too much like heaven on earth to be true. It seemed sort of mixed and there were almost too many angels around for this world. Didn't you boys see them?

SAMUEL: I'm not sure about that, but if you saw them that's enough. Some boys can see angels where others can't, you know. But even if we didn't see angels we are going to make the dream come true anyway. What's the use of having dreams if they don't come true?

DAVID: Well, I know it's not a dream now. I'm awake all over, for I've pinched myself in three different places and it was ME every time.

SAMUEL: Why, Phillip, you are trembling. Are you cold? Here, let me put my outside jacket on you. *(Puts it on him)*

DAVID: And...Oh, I forgot! I've some cakes and figs here in my scrip. Take some, Phillip, for I know you must be hungry. *(David gets a fig, Phillip eats it eagerly)*

SAMUEL: And look. Why, Phillip, your feet are bleeding, where you've been walking over the rough stones. Wear my sandals awhile. I love to go barefoot.

PHILLIP: (*Overcome*) Oh, boys! It seems too much like a vision. It don't seem as if it could be true. I've been so lonely I couldn't help following you boys around. You always looked so happy. But I didn't mean to be a bother. I just couldn't help it. I know I don't seem like other boys. Maybe if you will help me I'll be more like them now, but. Oh, I wish you could see some of the beautiful things I have seen! Like this, only far more so.

SAMUEL: Well, Phillip, we have seen and heard enough, and it has made us over into new boys. Tell you what, David, there's only one thing for us to do now. We've got to adopt Phillip for our brother. What do you say to it?

DAVID: Why, sure. That would be just like the dream come true. For he is really our brother, you know. He's just a sort of little wild bird we've caught, you know. So that's settled. He belongs to us. (*A pleasant silence falls upon the trio, then, with a smile, and fumbling in his shirt a moment, Samuel says softly:*)

SAMUEL: And say, Phillip, how would you like to carry little Ruth awhile? I love her more than anything in the world, but it seems as though I just couldn't be selfish anymore about anything. She's your sister now, too, you know.

DAVID: (*In glee*) Oh that's fine! That's fine! But, let me give you some advice, little Brother Phillip. Look out for yourself, maybe she'll lay a little egg in your shirt.

PHILLIP: (*Eagerly holding out both hands*) Oh, boys! There's something queer about it, but if there's one thing in the world I've longed for more than another it is to know how it would feel to hold a little, live bird in my hands. I've always felt that way, though I couldn't explain it to anybody.

SAMUEL: All right, Phillip, it's your turn now. Here, Ruthie, go and make your new brother happy. (*Samuel gently passes Ruth into Phillip's hands. Phillip fondles the little bird, then slowly raises her to his cheek and closes his eyes; his face beaming with delight. The boys watch him in smiling silence. Then, just as he moves the soft little body across his lips, he stops as if startled by some strange, unexpected, thrilling sensation and exclaims, in great agitation:*)

PHILLIP: Oh, boys! Wait a minute. I've just felt something! Angels have feathers on their wings, don't they? Oh, now I know. IT'S MY BIRTHDAY ANGEL! There, I felt him again. I guess he was sorry for me and came back to touch my lips again so that I might be a real boy, like you. Yes... Yes... that's it. That's it! I know it now. Come on, boys; let's have a good time together. I'm all right! I'm a real boy. My! Isn't it fine!

(*Boys caper and dance around, chasing each other in glee. Phillip puts dove into the flap of his shirt. Just at this moment they hear the shepherdesses calling their sheep.*)

(*Passing the tent, the girls come toward the boys, pause, and then, recognizing them, surround them gleefully*)

DAVID: Why, where have you girls been all this time?

MIRIAM: Oh, we've been looking for our sheep. But I guess they must all be in, for we can't find them anywhere.

BEULAH: *(Pointing to the boys)* You needn't worry about that, Miriam. Here are three little woolly lambs running loose yet.

PHILLIP: Why, I've seen all these girls before. Oh, I remember now, it was in my dreams. But you were Angels then, with big, white wings.

BEULAH: Well, you saucy boy, aren't we angels now just the same, all but the wings?

PHILLIP: Well yes, of course, but...oh now I see who it is. You're the one who fed us with manna, aren't you? I've been thinking a lot about your land where kindness reigns. *(As the song ends, Beulah slips round, slaps Phillip on back)*

BEULAH: Tag! You're IT!

(Instantly the spirit of play comes over them. They have a real game of Tag, one of the oldest of Syrian games. Anally retreating from the stage. When all is quiet, the flap of the tent is slowly thrown back. Gaspar looks all around, and then steps out upon the platform. Nods again and again as if in complete satisfaction, then smiles and says:)

GASPAR: It is enough. Our quest is ended. A gentle star has led us to the King we sought. In the voice of His mother we heard the lingering echo of one of the songs of Heaven. And now, in the rustle of the wings of a little dove, and amid the happy voices of children, it sounds again in nearer, and clearer tones, the deepest, sweetest heraldry of His Everlasting Kingdom.

“Peace on Earth, good will toward men.”

(Then he retires into the tent, the light fades away and the play is over.)