**The Towneley Second Shepherds’ Play**

(A modernization by Míċeál F. Vaughan [August 1996; revised August 1998]—

with some thanks to Martial Rose’s translation in

*The Wakefield Mystery Plays* [New York: Doubleday, 1963])

**Scene One (in the moor fields)**

***Coll***. Lord, this weather is cold! and I’m poorly dressed;

I am almost stone-cold since I laid down to rest;

My legs are all frozen, my fingers are chapped:

It is not what I’d have chosen, for I am all wrapped

In sorrow.

In storms and in tempest,

Now in the east, now in the west:

Have pity on one who can’t rest

Today or tomorrow!

But we simple shepherds who walk on the moor,

In faith, we are almost thrown out the door;

No wonder, the way it stands, if we are poor,

For the produce of our lands is as bare as the floor,

As you know.

We are so lamed,

Overtaxed and maimed;

We are made hand-tamed,

By these gentle-men.

Since they deny us our rest, may Our Lady them harry!

These proud men are a pest: they make the plow tarry.

Though some say it’s for the best, we find the contrary;

For the workers are oppressed with threats they’ll us bury

Alive.

So the bosses hold us under,

With their bluster and blunder;

It would be a great wonder,

If we ever should thrive.

Now there comes a nobody, a proud peacock you know,

He’s got to borrow my wagon, and my plow also;

This is all for *my* benefit: he wants me to know.

So we live now in pain, in anger and woe;

Night and day, (*he takes a drink from his flask*)

What he wants he will get,

However much I regret;

I’d hang, that’s a bet,

If I once told him “Nay.”

It does me good, as I walk out here on my own,

About this world to talk and my troubles to moan.

To my sheep now I’ll stride and listen alone;

There will I abide or sit on a stone

Very soon.

For believe you me,

If any true men there be,

We’ll get more company

Before it is noon. (*he goes to sit down*)

***Gyb.*** (*enters from audience*)

Blessings upon us! what can all this mean?

This world ever goes thus: as we’ve so often seen!

Lord, this weather is terrible, with winds sharp and keen.

And the frosts are so horrible; snow-blinded I’ve been:

It’s no lie!

Now I’m dry, now I’m wet,

Now in snow, now in sleet

My shoes freeze to my feet--

Nothing’s easy!

But as far as I know or can yet understand,

There is nothing but woe for every poor husband;

More and more sorrow—more than we can stand.

While our hens come and go in a fine clucking band,

We’ve got trouble;

If they start to sputter

To groan or to stutter,

Then we’re off to the cutter: (*mimes cutting his neck*)

Right now, on the double!

We men who are married cannot do our will;

God knows we are carried very roughly and ill;

When we’re hassled and harried, we lie quiet and still;

In our beds we are buried. We cannot speak our fill

Even now!

My part I have learned,

From the lessons of life;

In sorrow I’ve burned,

Since I married a Gyll.

But young men out wooing, to God cast your thought; (*puts hand on man’s shoulder*)

Be slow to your wedding and learn what you’re taught:

‘Had I known’ is a thing that worth less when it’s bought;

We’ve got sorrow and mourning—that’s what marriage has brought—

And grief;

And many a shower

Will fall every hour,

And life will taste very sour—

For as long as you’re live.

I’ve read Paul’s epistle! and the partner I’ve here,

She’s as sharp as a thistle and as rough as a briar;

With her eyebrows that bristle, she lacks beauty, I fear.

And when she wets her whistle she can sing loud and clear (*climbing to stage*)

Her *Pater Noster*.

She is as small—as a whale,

And as sweet—as sour ale;

By the Cross and the nails,

I wish I had lost her.

***Coll****.* Look over the hedgerow; are you deaf where you stand?

***Gyb.***Yeah? Wash out your mouth, the devil’s at hand.

Seen Daw about?

***Coll*** Yeah, out on the meadow land

I heard his horn blow; here comes his pipe-band

Have a care;

Stand still

***Gyb.*** Why?

***Coll***. He’s coming, thinks I.

***Gyb.***Let’ hide here nearby,

And give him a scare

***Daw.*** May Christ’s cross me speed and Saint Nicholas!

Of that I’ve real need; it’s much worse that it was.

Whoever can should take heed and let the world pass.

It is doomed as decreed and brittle as glass;

Away it slithers.

This world’s at its worst,

And with marvels we’re cursed;

Now we’re well; now we’re burst.

And everything withers

Since old Noah’s flood have such floods not been seen;

Winds and rains and rich mud and storms so sharp and keen;

Some stumbled, some stood in doubt, some in between;

Now may God bring some good from this trouble, I mean.

But ponder

These floods do all drown

Both in field and in town,

And suck us all down

And that is a wonder.

We who walk out at nights our cattle to keep,

We see fearful sights when other men sleep.

Now I think my eye lights on some rascals that peep;

Two bastards, by all rights! I will take my sheep

For a turn.

Much trouble, no doubt,

As I here walk about;

But I’ll now mend my mouth,

Forgiveness to earn.

Sir, may God save you and my master so fine!

I could sure use a drink, too, and to sit down and dine

***Coll***. May Christ’s curse be on you you’re a filthy young swine!

***Gyb.***No, don’t let him get to you; hold back, take your time;

We’ve eaten.

A curse on his head!

Though it’s past time for bed,

He still must be fed—

Then beaten.

***Daw.*** Such servants as I who labor and sweat

Eat our bread very dry and that’s a cause for regret;

We’re often wet and weary when our masters sleep yet;

When we’re late home and dreary the meals that we get—

*Real* relaxed!

Both our lady and master

Tell us to run faster; —

But our pay’s a disaster—

And overtaxed!

Take my word for it, master, for the wages you pay me

I will work—but no faster than the sheep who obey me;

I will work—but no harder—however you pray me;

Unless there’s more from your larder on my back I will lay me

In the fields.

Why should I weep?

With my staff I can leap;

“A bargain that’s cheap

Gives very small yields.”

***Coll.***You’re a troublesome fellow, and not much of a valet

For one a-wooing to go with not much in his wallet.

***Gyb.***Peace, boy, I say so, and no more of your jangling,

Or you’ll cry before I go, by heaven’s high king,

For your meal.

Where are the sheep that we’ve shorn?

***Daw.*** Sir, since this very morn,

They’ve been out in the corn,

Since the church bells did peal.

They have very fine pasture and cannot go wrong. .

***Coll.***That is right, by the cross! and these nights are so long,

But before we depart I’d most like a song.

***Gyb.*** You’ve just read my mind: it would our pleasure prolong.

***Daw.*** I agree.

***Coll***. So, the bass am I.

***Gyb.*** I’m the treble, on high.

***Daw.*** Then the middle I’ll try;

Let’s try it, all three.

**[shepherds sing]**

**Scene Two (the moor fields)**

*(At this point Mak enters–through the crowd—dressed in a short cloak over his tunic.*

*He chants a psalm and wears a Dominican cloak.****)***

***Mak****.* Now lord, for you names seven, who made both moon and stars

Innumerable in heaven, your desires, lord, be ours;

I am often uneven with jangles and jars.

I pray God I were in heaven where no children’s weeping mars (*reaching edge of audience)*

The quiet….

***Coll***. Who’s that singing so badly? (*loudly—at “mars”)*

(*Mak fades, croaking, after “quiet”; climbs “stage”; struts, enjoying the new cloak he has “acquired”*)

***Gyb.***Mak, where have you been? Tell us your tidings?

***Daw.***Is he now on the scene? Then watch your belongings! (*He comes up on Mak from behind and*

*pulls the cloak off him*)

***Mak****.* What! I’m a friend of the queen and the companion of kings; (*grabs cloak again and puts it on)*

A messenger, as can be seen, who great news brings.

No lie!

Fie on you! Get thee hence (*shoves Daw away*)

Out of my presence!

I must have reverence; (*draws cloak “royally” around him*)

Look! Who am I? (*holds hands up as if giving a blessing*)

***Coll***. Quit your acting so quaint? Mak, you’re doing wrong.

***Gyb.*** We know you’re no saint: we’ve known you too long.

***Daw.***We seen through your face-paint; with the devil you belong!

***Mak****.* I shall lodge a complaint—and retune your song (*shakes fist at Gyb*)

With one word.

Your ways are uncouth. (*sticks nose in air*)

***Coll***. Mak, is *that* the truth?

Pull out that lawyer’s tooth,

And stick it in a turd!

***Gyb.*** Mak, you’re a devil, I see; it’s a blow *you’ll* be getting. (*shakes staff at him*)

***Daw.*** Mak, don‘t you know me? You’ll soon, now, be sweating. (*pulls cloak over his head*)

***Mak****.* May God bless you, all three; is it you? I was betting

It was a fine company. (*takes cloak back*)

***Coll***. How quick you’re forgetting!

***Gyb.*** Why do you creep

Hereabouts in disguise?

Don’t you realize

That you hold the grand prize

For the stealing of sheep.

***Mak****.* That I’m true as steel: of that there’s no debate. (*moves toward Gyb*)

But it’s a sickness I feel that’s got me in this state.

My belly’s missing its meal; it’s in awful condition

***Daw.*** Give the devil his deal: there’s no room for contrition.

***Mak****.* For this reason: (*moves toward Coll*)

I feel seriously ill,

Even standing stone-still.

I’ve not eaten a noodle (*holds belly*)

This whole season.

***Coll***. How are things with your wife? how’s she keeping? (*hand on Mak’s shoulder*)

***Mak****.* Lies next to the fire, for her life, without peeping!

The house with babies is rife—they’re all over, creeping;

When not drinking, the wife spends all her time sleeping!

What think you?

She eats when she can;

And in every year’s span

She adds a child to our clan, *raise one finger*)

And in some years two. (*and a second*)

(*Pause; draws himself up pompously*)

But because I’m more bounteous than the Pope is in Rome,

She’s eaten me out of house and out of my home.

Yet she is so obnoxious if I don’t leave her alone!

You would call her a louse if she were your own—

But alas!

Will you see what I’d proffer:

I’d give everything in my coffer

If tomorrow you’d offer

Her funeral mass.

***Gyb.***There is no one so sleepless in all of this shire:

In bed I would weep less if they paid better hire.

***Daw.*** I’m so cold that I’m speechless—I would *really* like a fire. (*sits, then lies down*)

***Coll***. I am weary, near leap-less since I’ve run in the mire: (*also* *sits, then lies down*)

(*to Gyb*) Watch there!

***Gyb.*** Not so fast, my good friend, (*pulls Daw up*)

I will sleep; you attend. (*lies down*)

***Daw.*** I’m as good, in the end,

As this pair.

But Mak, you come near now, and between us lie down.

(*Mak lies down between Gyb and Daw on top step; Coll on bottom. All grab hold of Mak’s cloak.)*

***Coll****.* We’ll have little to fear now, while we’ve got hold of his gown.

***Mak****.* (*sits up to say his night prayers)*

From my top to my toe,

*Manus tuas commendo,*

*Pontio Pilato*,

With the sign of the cross.

(*Then he gets up, while the shepherds are sleeping—and snoring loudly.)*

Now it’s time for a man who is out in the cold,

To creep, as quietly as he can, to the nearest sheepfold,

And work carefully by plan, and not be *too* bold,

For he might regret the bargain if all were told

At the end.

All about you be a circle as round as the moon! (*casting spell*)

Until I’ve done my work well—until it is noon—

Lie there stone still until I have done;

And I’ll very little, just some magic I’ll croon.

Over you,

Above your heads I lift my hand, (*sings lightly)*

To blind your eyes all round this land,

But I must do as I have planned,

To get my due.

Lord, they are sleeping hard! That you can well hear;

Never before was I a shepherd, but I’ll learn while I’m here.

If the flock’s a bit scared—still I’ll crawl very near,

Till I’ve got one ensnared. (*grabs lamb*) There! That will clear

All our sorrow:

A fat sheep, I must say,

A good fleece, for no pay;

I’ll settle up someday,

But this one I’ll *borrow*.

**Scene Three (Mak and Gyll’s cabin)**

**Mak:** (*at cabin door*) Oh, Gyll, are you in? Get us some light.

***Gyll.***Who makes such a din at this time of night?

I was just sitting to spin; there’s no reason I might

Get up, even money to win. I curse them by right!

Oh, the sores

That a housewife must bear:

Rushed here—and now there.

Other people don’t care

That she’s burdened with chores.

***Mak****.* Good wife, open the hatch, don’t you see what I bring?

***Gyll.*** I’ll let you lift up the latch. Oh, come in, my sweeting.

***Mak****.* Yeah, you don’t care a snatch about my long standing!

***Gyll.*** By your naked neck you’ll stretch for the victuals you bring!

***Mak****.* Away!

I deserve what I eat:

I gain by deceit

More than those who work in the heat

All the long day.

This has fallen to my lot; Gyll, I received it through grace.

***Gyll.***I would be a foul blot to be hanged for this case.

***Mak****.* I have escaped, my Gyll-ott from a much tighter place.

***Gyll.*** But so long goes the pot to the well, the wise man says,

That at last

It comes home broken.

***Mak****.* I know well that token,

But never let it be spoken;

Come here and help, fast.

Butchered I wish he were; I’d very much like to eat

I’ve not been for a year so hungry for lamb-meat.

***Gyll.***I hope that before he’s killed here they don’t hear the sheep bleat!

***Mak****.* Then I might have something to fear; I’d sweat without any heat!

Go bar

The front door.

***Gyll.***Yes, Mak.

If they’re right at your back….

***Mak****.* Then I’d get from that pack

The devil’s own war.

***Gyll.***A good trick have I spied since you can find none.

Here shall we him hide until they are gone;

By the cradle I’ll abide; just leave me alone,

And I shall lie by its side as in childbed, and groan.

***Mak****.*  A good turn!

And I’ll say you were this night

Delivered of a child, our delight.

***Gyll.***The day now seems bright,

As when I was first born.

This is a good plan and it’s very well cast;

The advice of a woman provides help at the last.

Quick , back as quick as you can and see what has passed.

***Mak****.* If they awake while I’m gone, there will be a cold blast! **[Mak returns to the shepherds]**

I will lie down to sleep.

This gang is still sleeping,

And carefully I’m creeping,

As if I’d been keeping

Away from their sheep.

**Scene Four (in fields)**

***Coll***. *Resurrex a mortruis*! take hold of my hand.

*Iudas carnas dominus*! I scarcely can stand:

My foot’s asleep, by Jesus and I’m dry as the sand.

I thought we had laid us very near to England.

***Gyb.***Ah, me!

Lord, I have slept well;

As fresh as an eel,

And as light do I feel

As a leaf on a tree.

***Daw.***Blessed be all here in! My body has the shakes;

My heart breaks out of my skin such beating it makes.

Who makes all this din? My head really aches;

I don’t care what I win. Up, boys, dawn wakes

Weren’t we four?

Anything of Mak in view?

***Coll***. We were up before you.

***Gyb.*** To give him his due:

I can still hear him snore.

***Daw.*** I dreamt he was wrapped in a wolf skin.

***Coll***. There’re many thus clapped now, especially within.

***Gyb.*** When we had long napped I dreamt he’d gone in

And a fat sheep trapped—but it was quiet as a pin.

***Daw.***Be still:

Your dream makes you mad:

It’s a nightmare you had.

***Coll***. Pray God it’s good, and not bad,

According to His will.

***Gyb.*** Get up, Mak, for shame; you’re sleeping too long.

***Mak****.* May Christ’s holy name now be all us among.

What’s this? By St. James I can’t move along!

I think I’m the same. Oh, my neck lay wrong;

Something popped.

Many thanks! Since last night,

By St. Stephen’s light,

A dream gave me a fright

And my heart nearly stopped.

I thought Gyll began to groan in the labor she had;

And early at dawn bore us a young lad;

We’ve a flock of our own, of which I’m not glad.

But I must reap as I’ve sown, take the good with the bad.

Oh, my head!

In a house full of kids—

I could knock off their lids—

My life’s on the skids

And there’s so little bread!

I must go home, by your leave, to Gyll, I am thinking.

But look up my sleeve: make sure I steal nothing:

I don’t want to grieve you or take anything.

***Daw.*** Get out of here; we believe what you’re saying.

But this morning, let’s see:

Is everything there?

***Coll***. I’ll look here with care;

Let us meet.

***Gyb.*** Where?

***Daw.*** At the bent thorn tree.

**Scene Five (Mak and Gyll’s cabin)**

***Mak****.* Open the door! Look who’s here? How long must I stand?

***Gyll.***I’m not deaf in the ear! Go walk in some bog land.

***Mak****.* Oh, Gyll, don’t you hear: it is I, Mak, your husband.

***Gyll.***Let’s all give a cheer for the devil’s own band,

Sir Guile;

He sings a harsh note

As though held by the throat.

My work can even get my vote—

Once in a while.

***Mak****.* Will you listen to her griping when I disturb her rest.

She’s never done with sniping; she does *that* very best.

***Gyll.***What do you mean by your piping? I look after our nest

With my cleaning and wiping, my cooking and the rest.

And then,

It is sad to be told,

Whether hot now—or cold—

It’s a very bad household

That’s lacking its woman.

But how have you done with the shepherds, Mak?

***Mak****.* Their last word but one when I turned my back,

Was that they’d check, in the sun, if all their sheep were in the pack.

They’ll not be pleased at the one which they’ll notice they lack.

You’ll see:.

However the game goes,

It’s me they’ll suppose

Does not smell like a rose;

They’ll cry out against me.

But you must do as you said.

***Gyll.*** To that I’ll agree.

I’ll wrap him up in the bed right here, as you see;

Don’t trouble your head; just leave it to me.

I’ll go straight to bed; come and help.

***Mak***Quickly.

***Gyll.***Behind!

If Coll’s troops him uncover,

With ropes us they’ll cover,

***Mak****.* Some help I’ll discover

If this sheep they now find.

***Gyll.***Listen now for their call; they’ll be here soon.

Come and make ready all; on your own, sing a tune.

A lullaby—don’t bawl! Make it soft—just croon!

I’ll groan by the wall; praying Mary “a boon!”

In pain!

Now, lullaby fast

When you hear them at last;

And if my role is miscast

Don’t trust me again.

**Scene Six (at the thorn tree)**

***Daw.*** Ah, Coll, good morning to you; why’re you not still asleep?

***Coll***. I wish your greeting were true! We’ve lost a fat sheep.

What shall we do?

***Daw.*** God forbid! Are you sure?

***Gyb.*** Can you guess, at all, who might have been on the moor?

***Coll***. Some sneak-thief, no doubt!

I have searched with my dogs,

All over these bogs,

In and out of the fogs.

All but one, I make out.

***Daw.*** I will bet, so I will, by St. Thomas of Kent,

That it was Mak or Gyll who staged this event.

***Coll***. Careful now! Don’t speak ill! I watched him as he went;

This is slander! Keep still! You ought to repent,

With good speed.

***Gyb.*** Were I facing my death-day,

By the faith of my creed,

I’d have nothing to say,

But that he did this deed.

***Daw.*** Let’s head for his homestead and run with our feet.

I shall never eat bread till I’ve proved his deceit.

***Coll***. No drink for my head, until with him I meet.

***Gyb.***I’ll not rest in my bed before I can greet

That “brother.”

My promise I plight:

Till I’ve got him in sight,

I will not sleep one night

Where I do another.

**Scene Seven (Mak and Gyll’s cabin)**

***Daw.***Will you hear how they croak? They certainly can croon!

***Coll***. I have never heard folk sing so clear out of tune;

Call him.

***Gyb.*** Mak! Are you choking? Unlock your door soon!

***Mak****.* Who’s it that spoke, as if it were noon,

Aloud?

Who is that, I say?

***Daw.*** Your friends, were it day!

***Mak****.* My friends, now, I pray,

Please, not so loud.

My wife’s sick in bed; she’s not well at ease;

I would rather be dead than she felt more *dis*ease.

***Gyll.*** Quiet down; oh, my head; I’m not well. Away! Please!

Each step that your tread puts my brains in a squeeze!

It’s true!

***Coll***. Tell us, Mak, if you may,

How are you, we say?

***Mak****.* Are you in town for the day?

How are *you*?

You’ve been out in the mire and you’re wet still a bit.

I’ll light you a fire if you’re planning to sit.

A nurse I would hire if I found one that was fit.

My dream was no liar: the babies don’t quit

For a season.

I have kids, if you knew,

Somewhat more than a few.

But we drink what we brew—

And that stands to reason.

May I offer some food ‘fore you go? You’re famished, I think.

***Gyb.*** That’s not what we need. No! We’ll not eat or drink.

***Mak****.* Are you ill? Why act so?

***Daw.*** A great loss, we think:

That’s the source of my woe. A lamb gone in a blink!

***Mak****.* Drink up, my friend!

The thief would have had to beware.

If I had been there!

***Coll***. Some think that you were!

And you only pretend!

***Gyb.*** Mak, some people believe that it’s one of you two.

***Daw.*** We suspect you deceive, your sick wife or you. ,

***Mak****.* If that is your peeve, come on, all of you

Take a look—and don’t leave unexamined even an inch or two!

Look around!

No sheep have we got;

Cow or calf have we not;

And Gyll’s stayed by the cot

Since she laid herself down.

I am as true as steel, to God here I pray,

That *this* will be the first meal that I’ll eat today.

***Coll***. Mak, that oath’s a big deal; consider carefully, I say.

One learns quickly to steal who can never say “Nay!”

*Gyll.* I’m faint!

Thieves, leave us alone!

You’ll rob us, I’ll own.

***Mak***. Can’t you hear her groan?

Show restraint!

***Gyll.*** Thieves, away from my child; away—out the door!

***Mak****.* If you knew,, you’d be mild, your hearts would be sore.

You are wrong—not beguiled; this has happened before:

Wives are always reviled—but I’ll say no more!

***Gyll.***Oh, my middle

I pray God so mild,

If I have you beguiled,

I will eat now this child

That lies in the cradle.

***Mak****.* Take it easy, for God’s sake and do not cry so;

You’ll only make your head ache and that’ll increase my woe.

***Gyb.*** I think our sheep is slain; do you two, also?

***Daw.*** All our work is in vain; we may as well go.

These matters

Have me tied in a mesh.

I can’t find any flesh—

Salt, dried, or fresh,—

Nothing but two empty platters.

No creature but this, tame or wild.

He smells, grant me bliss, not so mild.

***Gyll.***No, I’ll give him a kiss; God bless me and my child!

***Coll***. We’re astray! It’s a miss! We’ve all been beguiled.

***Gyb.*** We’re done!

Sir, may our Lady bring joy

To your child—it’s a boy?

***Mak****.* Any lord would enjoy

To call him his son.

When he wakes up he smiles; it’s a joy to behold!

***Daw.*** May he have good fortune in piles and happiness untold.

Who’s hurried long miles at the font him to hold?

***Mak****.* Bless them—they filled up the aisles!

***Coll***. A lie, now—fresh rolled!

***Mak****.* May God give them thanks:

Perkin, and Gibbon Waller were two,

And John Horn led the crew.

These three filled the pew

With their long shanks.

***Gyb.*** Mak, now friends let us be, for we are all one.

***Mak****.* We? Don’t include me, for regrets hear I none.

Farewell now, all three; I’ll be glad when you’re gone.

***Daw.*** Fine words there may be, but no love to be won

This year.

***Coll***. Did you give the child anything?

***Gyb.*** No! Not a farthing!

***Daw.*** I’ll go back with our offering.

You wait for me here!

Mak, be of good cheer: may I go to your son?

***Mak****.* No; you’ll disturb him, I fear, as you’ve already done.

***Daw.*** He’ll not cry a tear, your day-star—not one!

Mak, let me come near; our birth-gift don’t shun.

It’s only sixpence.

***Mak****.* No, please: he is sleeping.

***Daw.*** He seems to be peeping.

***Mak****.* When he wakes, it’s with weeping.

I pray you go hence.

***Daw.*** Let me give him a kiss and uncover his head.

What the devil is this? His snout’s long and red.

***Coll***. He is marked amiss. And we’ve been misled.

***Gyb.*** Evil plottings like this have the stench of the dead.

Enough talk!

He the twin of our sheep!

***Daw.*** What, Gib! May I peep?

***Coll***. This cunning will creep

Where it can’t stand to walk.

***Gyb.*** This was a rare trick, by God, and craftily cast.

A most extravagant fraud.

***Daw.*** And it just about passed!

Let’s burn these false shepherds! Let’s tie them up fast.

It’s right that such bastards should hang at the last.

So shall they.

Will you look how they gather

His four feet together?

I’ve not seen such another

Horned child yet today.

***Mak****.* Peace, I pray you. What! Put accusations away;

I am the one who him got, and she bore him this day.

***Coll***. Mak’s heir is his lot? His name? Did you say?

***Gyb.*** We’re done at this spot. Trouble-making will stay

When we’re gone.

***Gyll.***A prettier child than he

Never bounced on my knee;

He’s a darling, don’t you see,

And a bundle of fun.

***Daw.*** There’s our mark on his ear; that’s a sure token.

***Mak****.* I’d tell you, sirs, if you’d hear, how his nose, here, was broken.

And the priest told us last year what such signs do betoken.

***Coll***. Still more lies around here! It’s time our weapons had woken

Themselves.

***Gyll.***He was bewitched by an elf,

I saw it myself.

When that clock on the shelf

Struck twelve.

***Gyb.*** You two are well matched: you were made for each other.

***Daw.*** For this plot that they’ve hatched, let’s hang them, my brother.

***Mak****.* If I trespass again, you can chop off my head.

I’ll leave my fate to you, then.

***Coll***. Sirs, let’s do this, instead.

For this crime

Let’s neither curse nor chide,

No vengeful homicide—

But rather, let him ride

In canvas for a time.

**they toss Mak in a blanket]**

**Scene Eight (in the fields)**

**Coll.** Oh Lord! I’m so sore and ready to burst.

I can’t do any more, so I’ll grab me some rest.

***Gyb.*** Like a sheep of seven score he weighed, I’d have guessed.

To lie down and snore: that’s what seems to me best.

***Daw.*** Now I pray you, .

Lie down on this meadow

***Coll***. There’s more thieves in the shadow.

***Daw.*** Leave that for tomorrow:

That’s what I advise you.

*An angel sings ‘Gloria in excelsis’—afterwards let him say:*

***Angel***. Rise up, shepherds—friends—for now He is born

Who’ll take back from the fiends Adam’s children forlorn.

Their power now ends, for this night is He born.

God with us attends on this bright Christmas morn.

Leave now your flocks;

At Bethlehem you’ll see

Him who now sets us free;

In a crib very low, he

Lies between ass and ox.

***Coll***. This is as rare a sound as I’ve ever yet heard.

It’s a wonder to astound those who listen to our word.

***Gyb.*** God’s Son visits our ground the angel averred.

And the woods all around with bright light were stirred.

Did you hear?

***Daw.*** He spoke of a Baby,

Born in Bethlehem is He.

***Coll***. That star then is His! See!

We will find Him quite near.

***Gyb.*** Did you pick up his song? Did you hear how he cracked it—

Three shorts to a long.

***Daw.*** To be sure: he had packed it!

No crochet went wrong: there was nothing that lacked it! it.

***Coll***. Let’s all sing along! I can lead, now I’ve tracked

I’ll start.

***Gyb.*** Let’s see how you croon.

Can you bark at the moon!

***Daw.*** Hold on now! In tune.

***Coll***. Attend to my part.

**[they sing a parody *Gloria*]**

***Gyb.*** To Bethlehem he told us that we should all go:

We may suffer if we hold us and delay ourselves like so.

***Daw.*** Be merry now; don’t scold us! Our song is joy, not woe.

Eternal joy will fold us in happiness we know.

In quiet!

***Coll***. Okay, let’s go together

To that child and his mother—

Even though from this weather

We’re all tired and wet.

***Gyb.*** In the prophets we find it—let’s keep down your din!—

Isaiah and David, and more of their kin,

In prophecy proclaimed it: in the womb of a maiden

He would lie—so they named it—to redeem all our sin;

And take it,

Our nature, from woe;

As Isaiah said long ago:

*Ecce virgo*

*Concipiet* a child that is naked.

***Daw.*** Very glad may we be and look for that day

That fair maid to see that all powers do obey.

Lord, it would be wonderful for me if just once I might pray,

Down low on my knee, and some humble words say

To that Child.

But the angel has said,

In a crib was He laid,

And so poorly arrayed.

But both humble and mild.

***Coll***. Patriarchs that have been and prophets did yearn

Long ago to have seen this child that is born.

And they left this world green, with their hopes all forlorn

And we’ll see him, I mean, before it is morn,

As a token.

When I see him and feel

Then I’ll know that it’s real,

That it’s as true as steel,

What the prophets have spoken.

His message He first sent to us poor fellows here:

Told us what He meant and where He would appear.

***Gyb.*** It is time that we went; the place is quite near.

***Daw.*** That’s just my intent: let’s seek out that dear,

That treasure.

We’re not all that smart,

But, dear Lord, from Your heart

Of joy grant us some part

Your own Son to pleasure.

**Scene Nine (at Bethlehem stable)**

***Coll***. Hail, comely and clean! Hail, blessed young Child!

Hail, Maker—God, I mean—of a maiden so mild!

You’ve removed from the scene that warlock so wild;

That false beguiler unclean now he is beguiled.

See, He’s merry;

See, He’s laughing, entreating,

At this happy meeting.

My word bears repeating:

Take this branch from my cherry.

***Gyb.*** Hail, Sovereign Savior! You have us well sought:

Hail, blessed food and fair flower that everything wrought!

Hail, full of favor that made all of naught!

Hail! I kneel down and cower. A bird have I brought

To You as You are.

Hail, little tiny mop,

Of our creed You’re the top:

I will drink from Your cup,

Little day-star.

***Daw.*** Hail, darling dear, full of Godhead! .

I pray you be near when I have need.

Hail! Sweet is Your cheer! My heart would bleed

To see You sit here dressed so poorly, indeed,

With no pennies.

Hail! Though Your hand is quite small,

I have brought You a ball:

Play with it You shall

At the tennis.

***Mary***. The Father of heaven, God omnipotent,

Made all in days seven, His Son He has sent.

My own name did He speak. In me, through assent,

Came His strength, though I’m weak; I conceived what He meant.

And now is He born.

May He keep you from woe:

I shall pray Him so!

Proclaim as you go,

And remember this morn!

***Coll***. Farewell, lady, so fair to behold,

With your Child on your knee!

***Gyb.***But he lies there so cold!

Lord, it’s the best that may be. We’ll return to our fold.

***Daw.*** In truth, it seems to me, the story’s already been told

Very often.

***Coll***. What grace we have found!

***Gyb.*** We’re redeemed now, unbound!

***Daw.*** Our song we must sound

Aloud: not soften.

(*going back toward fields, singing*)