



Bible Drama Scripts  
presents

## WISE MEN IN KING HEROD'S COURT

Drama Sketch in Two Voices for Christmas or Epiphany

By Patricia Souder

**SYNOPSIS:** A Court Attendant approaches King Herod to request an audience for the Wise Men who have arrived at the palace. Herod enumerates endless excuses for refusing to see them until he learns that they followed a star indicating a new King has been born. Paranoid and power-driven, Herod repeatedly threatens the Court Attendant. When Herod inadvertently reveals his evil intentions to eliminate the rival King, the Court Attendant demonstrates growing courage and true wisdom. Irony and subtle humor underscore God's ability to "out-wise the blood-thirsty Herod . . . in his own court."

**SETTING:** Herod the Great's palace when the Wise Men stop in Jerusalem.

**CHARACTERS:**

**KING HEROD:** Petulant, ruthless, power-driven Judean king appointed by Rome.

**COURT ATTENDANT:** Member of the Palace Court assigned to announce visitors.

**PERFORMANCE TIME:** 8 minutes.

**PERFORMANCE NOTES:**

- Although Herod the Great was known as a brutal tyrant, he no doubt saw himself in a positive light. Portray him as a self-centered character who dangles people and demands his own way, always believing he is right.
- A strong Herod gives the Court Attendant maximum room to grow from a "scared centipede" into a person of courage and prayer even though his "head is on the line."
- Characters perform lines together when marked with a star.

**TOPICS:** Christmas. Epiphany. Power. True wisdom. God's overarching plan.

**PERFORMANCE POSSIBILITIES:** Worship services. Christmas or Epiphany programs. Small groups. Men's groups.

**BIBLE REFERENCES:** Matthew 2.

**PROPS:** Throne, bowl of grapes, wine goblet, scepter. Scroll for the Attendant.

COURT ATTENDANT

*(Enters with a scroll. Unrolls scroll and clears his throat. Nods to Herod. Speaks with courtly formality.)*

Your Majesty, I've come to report that you have visitors.

Well, yes, Your Royal Highness, I'm sure you're busy. But I thought you would want to know about these visitors.

Probably not, Your Majesty. But they've traveled for a very long time and have requested an audience with you.

Well, not that I know of, Your Highness. But they do appear to be important men of impressive means.

No, Sir, nothing like that. Indeed, they seem to be quite peaceable. They came on camels . . . Not elephants or war horses.

Their camels are well taken care of, Sir.

I . . . I can check that out, Sir.  
*(Turns to leave.)*

*(Takes a deep breath and speaks quietly.)*  
I doubt that they're dolts, Sir. On the contrary, they seem to be quite intelligent.

*(Shifts weight uncomfortably while he waits.)*

KING HEROD

*(Enters and sits on throne. Sips wine and eats grapes throughout. Dismissive and derisive in tone.)*

Visitors? *(Rolls his eyes and looks bored.)*  
Can't you see I'm busy?

Really? Why?  
Have they come to bring me pleasure?

So . . . Have they brought me treasures?

Oh, don't tell me they've come to do me harm?

Camels? *(Wrinkles his nose and makes a face.)*  
Oh! What annoying animals!  
Bumpy . . . itchy . . . smelly . . .  
And you never know when they'll snarl  
or spit at you.  
You didn't allow them to park their camels  
anywhere near the palace, did you?

Far away, I trust.

Not now, Idiot!  
Tell me more about these foreign dolts.

Intelligent?  
Really?  
They ride on camels!  
*(Laughs in derision.)*  
That makes them dolts for sure!  
*(Shakes head with disdain; eats more grapes.)*

COURT ATTENDANT

They said they followed a special star that led them here.

*(Checks scroll briefly.)*

The men are Magi, Sir, who study the stars. This star was brilliant, dominant, and preeminent.

Begging your pardon, Sir, perhaps it's because you're always so busy . . . within the dome of your . . . palace here.  
*(Gestures around the palace and nods.)*

Yes . . . yes, Sir.  
*(Backs up nervously.)*

*(Moves forward slightly and takes a deep breath.)*

They're Magi, Sir, who are known as very wise men in the East where they live. This was a new star they'd never seen before. It seemed to hold great significance, so they felt compelled to follow it.

Yes, Your Majesty.  
*(Smiles weakly.)*

*(Checks scroll. Then speaks carefully.)*

They believe the star indicates the birth of the long-awaited King of the Jews.

*(Nods nervously.)*

KING HEROD

So why have they come to bother me?

A special star that led them here?  
*(Clears throat, rolls eyes, and shakes head.)*  
Exactly how does a star lead anyone anywhere?

Brilliant, dominant, and preeminent?  
Pretty impressive! *(Becomes angry.)*  
Then why wasn't I aware of this star?

If you value your life, Idiot, you'd better think of a better reason than that.

Now don't act like a scared centipede! Step up here and tell me why these strangers have come to bother me.

They're Magi who are thought to be wise?  
*(Laughs in great derision.)*  
And they followed a star?

I believe you said that star led them here?  
*(Laughs again. Then raises his eyebrows and smiles slyly. Gets up and paces around.)*  
But of course . . .  
This is the center of the universe.  
And I am Herod the Great, renowned builder and esteemed king.  
So what do they want?

*(Angrily.)*  
*They believe a King of the Jews has just been born?*  
**I'M THE KING!**  
And I wasn't born yesterday!  
Nor was anyone else in the palace.

COURT ATTENDANT

Yes, Your Highness, we already told them that.

*(Shifts weight, moistens lips, and checks scroll.)*

Well, Sir, they say this King's birth was prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures, so they stopped here to learn exactly what the prophets said.

I said they appear to be important men of means . . .

*(Takes a deep breath and swallows hard.)*

I've never heard of charging for Scripture, Sir.

Yes, Sir.

Yes, Sir.

Yes, S . . . *(Covers mouth in fear.)*

I mean, I'm on my way, Your Majesty.

*(Turns to go.)*

*(Turns around with a terrified look.)*

Oh, I think that's wise, Your Royal Highness.

*(Smiles weakly.)*

Me, too, Your Majesty.

Yes, S . . . *(Closes eyes and shudders.)*

I'm going to get them, Your Highness.

*(Turns to go.)*

*(Turns back.)*

Of course, Majesty.

KING HEROD

Then why are you bothering me?  
Why didn't you just send them away?

*(Strokes his beard thoughtfully.)*

Ah—So they need our help.

And I believe you said they were wealthy?

Which *means* that they can pay for the information they want.

Your head, Idiot!

Do you value your head?

*(Grabs his scepter and waves it as if cutting off the Attendant's head.)*

This sounds like the prophecy about the Messiah.

Stop Yes-Sirring me and go ask the scribes and chief priests if they know anything about this!

Not so fast! *(Slices the air with his scepter.)*

I've had a change of heart. *(Smiles wickedly.)*

I've decided to be gracious and grant those wise guy friends of yours an audience after all.

For your head's sake, I hope that's true . . .

Now, show them in by the secret passageway along the back corridor.

*(Waves scepter at Attendant.)*

IDIOT! YOUR HEAD IS ON THE LINE!

Not yet, Idiot! I have to have time to think out my questions and my strategy.

I have questions about that special star . . .

COURT ATTENDANT

*(Registers a change of expression from fear for himself to concern about Herod's intent as Herod speaks.)*

*(Closes his eyes and shakes his head as he realizes the extent of Herod's evil intents.)*

*(Opens eyes and stares at Herod.)*  
Yes, King.

*(Mumbles quietly.)*  
Heaven help them.

I said they'll need help, Your Majesty.

MY HEAD IS ON THE LINE. ★  
*(Nods feebly.)*

*(Raises arms in resignation as he begins to exit. Lifts his face heavenward and prays softly.)*  
God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . .  
I'd like to keep my head and all . . .  
But I'm really more concerned about these fine visitors and the little King.

MY HEAD IS ON THE LINE. ★  
*(Turns to audience.)*  
My head . . .  
Their heads . . .

KING HEROD

Questions about when they first saw it . . .  
Questions about why it seems so significant . . .  
*(Chuckles and flashes an evil smile. Then becomes quite animated and paces around while speaking.)*

Questions about why they left their countries to follow that star . . .

Questions about their future plans . . .

Questions about that new King of the Jews who will completely upset the balance of power.

And most of all . . .

Questions that will help me find that meddling little "King" so I can do away with him before he ever grows up!

*(Chuckles with the brilliance of his murderous intents and swings scepter as if beheading gives him great pleasure.)*

*(Turns toward the Attendant.)*  
IDIOT!

You can usher in those "wise" visitors from afar. *(Strokes beard.)*

It will be fun to watch them attempt to out-wise the Great Herod in his own court, now, won't it?

What did you say?

Yes, they'll need help, all right.  
And so will you if you don't fetch them immediately.

Remember: *(Points scepter at Attendant.)*

YOUR HEAD IS ON THE LINE.  
*(Laughs uproariously and returns to throne to sip wine and eat grapes.)*

IDIOT! What's taking you so long?  
Remember: *(Points his scepter at the Attendant and laughs derisively.)*

YOUR HEAD IS ON THE LINE.

COURT ATTENDANT

KING HEROD

The little King's head . . . *(Raises arms in prayer.)*

You, Great God, are the only One who is able  
to keep any of our heads from rolling.

But You are the all-wise God.

And I'm eager to see You out-wise the  
blood-thirsty Herod right here in his own court!

*(Rises from his throne in fury. Slashes his  
scepter from side to side as he strides toward  
Attendant.)*

IDIOT! IDIOT! IDIOT!

WHAT'S TAKING YOU SO LONG!

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN?

No! I haven't forgotten!

MY HEAD IS ON THE LINE!

*(Exits quickly, but triumphantly.*

*Calls from off-stage:)*

Gentlemen from the East:

King Herod has agreed to see you.

May God grant you wisdom to truly be

Wise Men in King Herod's court!

★

YOUR HEAD IS ON THE LINE!

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