

# **A MIDNIGHT CLEAR**

by

King James

**FADE IN**

**EXT. ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL- FRONT LAWN - NIGHT**

A well-worn and weathered Nativity Scene is set-up on the snow covered lawn. Small ground-mounted spotlights illuminate all the figures that surround an EMPTY MANGER.

The Three Wise Men, CASPAR, MELCHOIR, and BALTHASAR, stand off to the side of JOSEPH and MARY. A SHEEP and DONKEY are set back in the shed.

CASPAR

Hey, Mel. Where's da new guy?

The Wise Men all sound like Mafia wise-guys.

MELCHOIR

Don't fret. He'll be out soon.

BALTHASAR

Gotta keep him safe, ya know.

CASPAR

Yeah, thievin' punks. Makin' off with the kid like dat.

MELCHOIR

Jesus Christ!

CASPAR

What? What'd I say?

MELCHOIR

Quit callin' him Kid.

BALTHASAR

Really, Caspar, show a little respect. He's Lord our Saviour.

CASPAR

The kid was. Dis guy's a stand-in. Jesus left the building last year.

A shaft of light hits the manger as a side door to the church opens.

MELCHOIR

Heads up. Here he comes now.

An ALTAR BOY tromps through the snow carrying a brown shopping bag to the Nativity Scene.

He pulls out a brand NEW BABY JESUS made of shiny resin with glass eyes. The baby's arms are outstretched as if begging for a hug. It clashes with the other older figures.

The Altar Boy looks closely at the figurine and shudders.

ALTAR BOY

Yuck.

He puts him in the manger and runs back to the church.

MARY

Oh, Joseph! Look at our new baby!

JOSEPH

He has your eyes.

Caspar scoffs.

CASPAR

Yeah, right. Yo, bambino, where're you from?

NEW BABY JESUS

Ni Hao!

CASPAR

Oh, boy, that answers that.

MELCHOIR

So he's Chinese. Get over it.

BALTHASAR

The Jersey factory burned to the ground years ago. Get over it.

NEW BABY JESUS

I speak English too.

MARY

Our boy's so smart!

JOSEPH

He takes after his mother.

Casper laughs.

Just then, an old model sedan approaches from down the street. The headlights go dark as it rolls to a stop in front of the Nativity Scene.

CASPAR

Well, I wouldn't get too attached if I was you.

When the doors open, clouds of smoke billow out as stoners SETH and FRANCO (both 20), in a black hoodies and knit caps, jump out and run to the manger.

BALTHASAR

Hey, it's those two hoodlums from last year!

Seth grabs the donkey and Franco heads toward the sheep.

MARY

He just grabbed my ass!

Franco skids to a stop by the manger.

FRANCO

Hey, Seth! They got a new one.

Franco holds up the new Jesus figurine.

SETH

Oh, dude, let's switch 'em out!

FRANCO

Go get him. He's in the back seat.

Seth runs back to the car, reaches in the back seat and pulls out another figurine.

He trots back and places it in the manger. Both stoners stand back and laugh at the yet UNSEEN replacement.

SETH

Oh, man, this is too funny.

FRANCO

Do you think they'll notice the difference?

Now they break into uncontrollable laughter as they return to the car with the new Jesus and drive away.

CASPAR

Well, well. The prodigal son returns.

MELCHOIR

We thought you was dead.

MARY

My baby!

JOSEPH

That's no son of mine.

BALTHASAR

What'd they do to you?!

CLOSE ON MANGER

OLD BABY JESUS has a hole in his mouth and belly-button. The belly button hole has a screen with burned pot resin. His arms are covered with crude sharpie tattoos and all his fingers broken off except both middle fingers.

OLD BABY JESUS

Oh, man, what a long, strange, trip its been.

BACK TO SCENE

The Nativity Scene is quiet. An uncomfortable silence. A light snow begins to fall.

CASPAR

Yo, J.C.

OLD BABY JESUS

Yeah?

CASPAR

It's good to have you back.

MELCHOIR

Yeah. Welcome home, Goomba.

BALTHASAR

It wasn't the same without you.

OLD BABY JESUS

Thanks, guys. Merry Christmas.