

**Born in a Barn**  
**A Christmas Story for All Ages by Aaron McEmrys**  
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2In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 4Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem. 5He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7And she gave birth to her son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

7 Then Herod secretly called for his wise men and 8then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word.' 9When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had been following,\* until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10When they saw that the star had stopped,\* they were overwhelmed with joy. 11On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

This, my friends, is one story of the birth of Jesus. It is probably a familiar story to many of us. But this evening, I want to share a different story with you – a story that didn't, for some reason, make it into the bible. Well, last night, as Eliza and I were eating Christmas cookies, and

our dog and cats were snacking on liver and salmon treats, our puppy, “Willow” asked for a Christmas story. Gabriel, our wise old Siamese cat, doesn’t usually like Willow very much, but last night he cleared his throat and, as we all gathered round, Gabriel began to tell us the traditional Christmas story – as the animals remember it. This what he said:

The first thing humans forget about is that when King Herod, was first trying to make the wise men go spy on baby Jesus for him – they were overheard by a small green bird that lived in a golden cage next to King Herod’s table. When the bird heard that King Herod wanted to know where baby Jesus was so he could send soldiers to kill him, the bird was afraid and decided he had to escape and warn baby Jesus. So when dinner time came, and a servant opened the door of the cage to feed the little green bird, the bird flew out of the cage, out the nearest window – and into the dark night.

The bird followed the bright shining star he had heard the wise men talking about, flying all night long until his wings so tired he didn’t think he could go on much longer. Just before dawn, the little green bird landed in a tree near the little town of Bethlehem, outside an old barn.

The little green bird flew up onto a beam at the top of the barn and began singing to get everyone’s attention. When all the animals finally noticed him, the little green bird told them everything he had heard.

The animals had never heard of such a shocking and ridiculous story! And this particular human was so cute with his little fingers and toes and wrinkled little face...there was no way they were going to let anything bad happen to that baby!

So the animals hatched a plan, putting their heads together and talking in low voices. They needn't have bothered of course, since the humans, with their limited vocabulary, couldn't understand animal talk anyway. Just before dark, all the grown up animals set off down the road to intercept the so-called wise men. Leading them was the wisest of all the animals, an old, scruffy-feathered parrot named, "Moses."

The animals found the wise men sleeping by the side of the road. Their fire had almost gone out, and the humans were sleeping soundly. Taking in the scene, Moses the parrot told all the animals exactly what to do. First, all the animals began to sing in all their many voices: they thought it sounded rather good, but the humans woke up terrified at the mysterious racket. Then Moses began speaking to them in the language of the humans, but his voice sounded very strange and frightening because he was a parrot. He said, "How dare you go to spy on a little human baby!? Don't you know that this little baby is one of you – like a little brother? How dare you call yourselves wise when you have obviously forgotten even the most basic lesson of this world – that we are all in this life together, and that nobody should have the power of life and death over anyone else!"

Then the animals kicked up an enormous racket, which terrified the wise men all over again. “Fools! There is nothing more precious than new life – inside every single baby is a world of possibility and promise – every living thing has a role to play in this world. The King is a greedy little man and has forgotten these lessons – you must not obey him.”

The wise men were wise enough to realize that there was truth in what the parrot said – although they didn’t know he was a parrot. But they were still afraid of the King, so they said – “well, we hear what you are saying, but the King is very powerful...” But the wise man didn’t get to finish his sentence, because the parrot screeched out in his loudest voice, “Power!? You want power? Hear me now – you be nice to that little baby and bring him some acceptable birthday presents or else you will have to answer to us! And with that all the animals began baaing and screeching and clucking and singing and braying at the top of their lungs.

“Okay, okay, we get it – we’ll be nice, we promise!” The parrot let them go on like that for a little while and then said gruffly, “Well, that’s that then. Have a safe trip, humans. Pay attention and you may finally become truly wise.” Then the animals all went back to the manger for a good long nap.

The wise men woke up feeling very tired and confused. But still – they remembered everything the parrot had told them. And the more they thought about it the more sense it made.

They eventually made it to Bethlehem, and to the manger where the baby Jesus was. The three men carefully entered manger, ducking their heads under the low wooden beams.

The wise men tip-toed over to the crib to peek at the baby, who they were afraid might be some kind of scary supernatural creature. But they quickly realized how wrong they had been. Jesus looked up at them with his tiny wrinkled old man's face. He twisted his lips around and opened them, as if to speak –the wise men leaned forward, ready to hear the wisdom of this mighty baby's words. And Jesus said, "baaa! Baaa baaa baaa!" and reached out his pudgy little hand and gave one of the wise men a squeeze right on the nose.

These three men, after all their years of study and learning – finally got it. They finally understood how beautiful life is and how special the connections between us, even between strangers, can be. Their hearts warmed, and they all took turns bouncing the baby on their knees and playing peek-a-boo, which as we all know, is Jesus' favorite game even now. After a splendid afternoon, there was no way in the world they were going to tell the King where Jesus was

On their way out, the remembered Jesus' birthday presents. The wisest of the three wise men, who were now much wiser than they had been, stood before Jesus and his parents as the animals looked on. He shuffled his feet nervously and said, "We brought some presents for you, little

guy, but now we see that they aren't exactly right for you...first we brought you a sword, because all King's are mighty warriors, but we can see now that you will never use a sword. So here, let me give you this little gold coin. The gold originally came from deep inside the earth – may it give you the strength and resilience of the earth, reminding you to always keep your feet on the ground. We also brought you a crown, since all the Kings we know like to wear lots of jewels and to look important – but we can see that a crown wouldn't really suit you. So here, this is called Frankincense, it is the sap of a tree that can grow anywhere, even in the hardest rock – may it remind you always to look for life and hope everywhere, especially in the least likely of places. Finally, we were going to buy you your very own servant, since all the kings we know like to be served and have power over others. But we can see that you will never be this kind of person. So here is an ointment made of myrrh. This ointment has special healing properties, and can make even terrible injuries feel better. I suspect this may come in handy as you get older. May it remind you always to care for others just as your parents care for you now.

And with that the wise men set off, now, finally following the path of wisdom.

Gabriel finished his story, lapped up some fresh warm milk and asked, “Any questions?”