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The Magi
...they saw the star at dawn
based on Matthew 2:1-13
by Ralph Milton
from [Is This Your Idea of a Good Time, God?](#)
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This is the same story as the last one, but adapted as a chancel drama.

Caspar: I don't feel well.

Melchior: Breathe deeply, Caspar, and keep your eye on the horizon. You'll feel better."

Narrator: There was a hint of impatience in the old man's voice. This conversation had been repeated every day for a month.

Caspar: (*moaning*) "It's all right for you, Melchior, You're used to these ghastly camels. Why aren't we riding horses? They don't sway like camels. And they don't stink like camels."

Balthasar: "Stop complaining. Get down and walk for a while, if you must. We're on a journey to find God's chosen one, and you can't talk about anything except your queasy insides."

Narrator: Caspar was silenced; but he wasn't convinced. He was the junior member of the trio of Magi, on a long journey of faith from their comfortable home in Persia to....

Caspar had no idea where to.

Months before, he had stood with the older astrologers in the clear night of the desert, gazing at the stars, studying their movements, until one day they all agreed, there was a sign.

Melchior: (*breathlessly, excited*) "Do you see it? Messori, or Sirius, the dog star, is rising with the sun. Do you see its brilliance?"

Caspar: (*with excitement*) "Messori! The name means 'birth of a prince.'"

Melchior: "It is said by the wise ones of many nations that a king will be born in Judea."

Balthasar: "Then we must go and search for this king. We must go now and pay homage to this king of kings."

Narrator: So here they were, trekking across the desert on camels that gave Caspar motion sickness. They had been underway for a month now, and it seemed to Caspar that the only thing that kept him going was grim determination. Caspar would have turned and headed home long ago, but he didn't know the way back. Besides, alone in the wilderness, he would soon have been robbed and killed by passing brigands. So Caspar commanded his camel to kneel; and he got off and walked for a while. It helped a little, but Caspar could think of a thousand things he would rather be doing.

Melchior's annoyance melted into indulgent concern.

Melchior: "Patience, young Caspar. Tomorrow we will be in Jerusalem. There we will ask their sages for advice on where to search."

Balthasar: "I'm not looking forward to Jerusalem. We must be wary of King Herod. He is a sick and jealous tyrant. I have heard that in his jealousy, he has already killed two of his wives and three of his sons."

Melchior: "Caesar Augustus of Rome has said that it is safer to be Herod's pig than to be Herod's son."

Narrator: A disgusted smile crossed Melchior's faces. Caspar shuddered a little, partly from the cold evening air, partly in anticipation of the visit to Jerusalem.

(Pause/ change of scene)

Narrator: Oozing charm, Herod entertained the astrologers lavishly, brought in his best astrologers as consultants, and determined that this new and great king was to be born in the City of David.

Jewish Astrologer: "Great David's greater son is to be born in Bethlehem, the least of the cities of Judah."

Herod: (*with a note of protest*) "But there are no noble families in Bethlehem from which a king might be born,"

Jewish Astrologer: "Some of the ancients have written that God's chosen one will be of humble birth."

Herod: (*harrumphs a few times.*) Well, sages have been mistaken before and may well be mistaken again." (*Indulgently*) "So, for tonight, rest awhile, and tomorrow go and find this young child that is born. And if... when you find the child, come and tell me so that I may go and worship him also.

Narrator: A slave led the three astrologers to their quarters. As soon as the door was closed, Melchior whispered with fear and urgency:

Melchior: "We must go now. Tonight! We will wait until deep in the night. Then we will go so that we reach Bethlehem at dawn."

Caspar: "But why?"

Melchior: "Bethlehem is only one or two hours from here. We must go and find the child before Herod does."

Narrator: Caspar saw the fear and concern in the two older men. They had not been fooled by Herod's pretense. It was several hours past midnight when they left Jerusalem—pushing, whipping their reluctant camels.

Caspar: "There must be many newborn children in Bethlehem. How will we know which is God's chosen one?"

Balthasar: (*an excited whisper*) "Look!"

Narrator: Balthasar's whisper was almost a shout. A star had arisen in the east just as the first red glow of the sun brightened the sky.

Balthasar: "And it's right over that house. There. That one on the hillside. Do you see it? It is Mesori leading us to the prince. To God's chosen one!"

Narrator: A few more whips against the camels' flanks and they were there.

Caspar: (*knocking on the door*) "Is anyone there?"

Melchior: "We have come in search of God's chosen one. The sages and God's star have led us here."

Narrator: In answer to Caspar's knock, a frightened and somewhat pale man appears at the door.

Joseph: (*warily*) "A child has been born here. He is a child like any child. But you may come and see him.

Narrator: There was a long, full silence as the wise and wealthy astrologers looked at the child that was any child, and all children, and at the mother who was any mother and all mothers, at Joseph, who was any man, and all men.

Caspar was the first to kneel. Before the child he placed a bag of gold.

Caspar: "The gift of gold is for thee, O infant king."

Balthasar: (*kneels beside Caspar*) "I bring thee frankincense, a sweet perfume, for thou art God's high priest."

Narrator: Old Melchior was the last to kneel. His eyes filled with tears as he said,

Melchior: "And I must bring the Myrrh, to prepare your body for burial. Because you are chosen of God, many who fear and hate you will seek to kill you."

Narrator: The look of fear crossed Joseph's face again; as Melchior motioned Joseph to follow him aside.

Melchior: (*to Mary*) "Farewell, and God be with you."

Narrator: Outside, the old man whispered urgently to Joseph, who then moved quickly back into the house. Balthasar was already on his mount.

Melchior: "On your camel, Caspar. We must leave quickly."

Caspar: "Couldn't we stay, just for an hour or so? I hardly got a look at the baby; and besides, I'm tired."

Melchior: "Evil is strong, Caspar. Evil is strong and when God sends such a gift of love into the world, evil will try hard to destroy it. Evil lives in the hearts of the Herods and all like him who put their trust in wealth and power. Evil cannot live in the presence of love, and always seeks to destroy it."

Caspar: "But we have seen the face of God's love. I saw it in the face of that child. That child is God's chosen one!"

Narrator: The old man smiled broadly through his fear. Then reached out and gave the younger man a gentle hug.

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