

A MALL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

by Fr Dan Kovalak (1998)

Overview: The program consists of two scenes. The first, a meeting of angels after initial narrator intro. The second, three mall locations (that may be staged simultaneously by banners). Costuming is casual, thus minimal. Small cardboard wings may be attached to angels (the major players). After the initial 'angelic interaction', players in the three areas are paired and have eight lines each. Props can be employed as needed (e.g. map with target).

The Players

1. Narrator (N)
2. Head Angel (HA)
3. Seasoned Angel (SA)
4. New Recruit Angel (NRA)
5. Gap Shopper 1 (GS1)
6. Gap Shopper 2 (GS2)
7. Sears Shopper 1 (SS1)
8. Sears Shopper 2 (SS2)
9. Bookstore Shopper 1 (BS1)
10. Bookstore Shopper 2 (BS2)

SCENE 1:

Heavenly Conference Room

Gathered around a table are HA, SA, & NRA reviewing maps. Narrator appears

N: Glory to God, Maker of Heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible!

If you think the earth is busy, especially at this time of the year, you should see heaven! Oh, that's right; you can't. It's invisible.

But reliable sources tell us that if we could just get a peek into it, we'd be blown away! Cherubim flying all over the place, moving clouds with the flapping of their wings. Seraphim rushing to choir practice. Archangels delivering the mail. Guardian angels tripping over each other to see who can catch the child falling off the swing set first. It's a madhouse.

Actually, it's probably a good thing you mortals can't see all this activity. In the Church the Lord left you, you just see some of the glory, the majesty, the jubilation, the pleasure, the joy... yada, yada, yada. All the easy stuff. But guess who keeps all the systems humming? Yes, of course, the Master is always directing the show. But who do you think is setting the stage, testing the microphones, holding the cue cards, and doing all the grunt work? The angels.

Sure, every now and then they get some attention. Like when the Master decided to visit the earth, He sent the SWAT team to announce it. That's the Select Wings Announcement Taskforce. Then, when He conquered death, He sent in the B team -- the Broadcasters -- to proclaim it. It's a shame you mortals applied this respected team name to your tasteless television industry. Anyway, the angels just do their work without much fanfare.

Now today, we have a rare opportunity indeed. Finally, a look 'behind the scenes'. As mortals get ready to celebrate another anniversary of the Master's visit, we'll observe some angels as they plan and execute their assault on, of all things, a mall.

[N exits]

HA: Finally, an assignment we can sink our teeth into!

NRA: Does that mean we get to eat?

HA: Quiet! This is serious business.

SA (to NRA): It's your first meeting. Just pay attention.

HA: Since Mike and Gabe had their hours cutback, I put in for overtime and was able to snag this job.

SA: Cutbacks! At this time of year?!

HA: Yeah. We're movin' on up to the big time. But we have to take little Nancy Novice here with us to show her the ropes.

NRA: My name's not Nancy!

SA: That's cool. What's the gig?

HA (pointing to map): Do ya see this x on the map?

SA: Is it a cathedral, a monastery, another Orthodox church...?

NRA: What's an Orthodox church?

SA: You'll find out soon enough. Those people are always trying to represent us.

HA: It's a shopping mall.

SA & NRA (together): A shopping mall!!

HA: A shopping mall. You know, where the mortals seem to hang out the most this time of year.

SA: Oh, you're talkin' big numbers!

NRA: One hundred is a big number!

HA: Biggest crowds since Pentecost when the doors of the Church were unlocked!

SA: The Master handled that one Himself!

HA: We've really got to do some planning on this one. It could be our claim to fame!

SA: So what's the scheme, O fearless leader?

HA: We have two objectives. First, we have to pinpoint our targets. I got their files from upstairs to show their background and anticipated locations.

SA: At the discount stores, right?

NRA: What's a discount store?

HA: No. These targets appear to frequent establishments on the higher end.

NRA: Which is the higher end?

SA: What's the other objective?

HA: We have to let Betty Beginner here get her wings wet?

NRA: My name's not Betty!

SA: Oh... she's supposed to make her first hit.

HA: You got it. Actually, she'll be able to get three stars, with us, all in the same mall.

SA: That's impressive. It took me seven before I got a promotion.

HA: So here's the deal.

NRA: Let's make a deal!

SA: Pay attention! This is your future we're talking about!

HA: We'll get them let's see [looking closer at map and pointing to locations] one at the Gap one at Sears and one at one at ... Waldenbooks.

SA: Waldenbooks?

HA: Yeah. High I.Q.

SA: Cool.

HA: Okay, Felicia First-Timer, start fluttering your wings and let's go.

NRA: My name's not Felicia!

HA: We hit tonight. Meeting adjourned.

SA: I second the motion. Let's hit the mall.

[angels exit briefly to prepare for....]

SCENE 2: The Mall

[N reappears, offset]

N: So off they went, these paramounts of proclamation, to accomplish their appointed task. What's that... you never heard them at a mall? Well, they're still singing "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace" just like they did when the the Master first visited. It's just that the mall music and all the jingle bells of the cash registers are so darn loud! Because of it, this assignment for our heralding heroes is going to be quite a challenge. Let's see how it unfolds as night settles in. Why at night? Hey, they're angels of light. They do their best work in the dark! The Master lights up their targets.

[at the Gap banner...]

GS1: Oh cool! Look at all this neat stuff. I'll take one of those and one of those and two of those and ...

GS2: Did something happen to you lately, like win the lottery?

GS1: As a matter of fact, I've got a pocket full of money from baby-sitting. I'm here to buy, buy, buy!

GS2: Your dad will have to build you another closet if you buy any more.

GS1: Yea. So. Whatever.

GS2: Those sweaters are nice. And on sale too!

GS1: Who wears sweaters? Show me some flannel.

GS2: Look at the shoes. Did you ever wear high heels?

GS1: To the dance last year. But it won't happen again. What those things do to your ankles! I can't believe my mom told me they used to wear them all the time.

GS2: All what time -- Civil War time? [they laugh]

GS1 [looking at GS2's top]: That's kinda nice. Where'd you get it?

GS2: I got it here, last month. And do you know it was cheaper then? How can they say it's on sale?

GS1: Dah.... it's a Christmas sale! That means they jack the price up, not down.

GS2: I guess you're right. It's a shame they take advantage of Christmas.

GS1: It's not Christmas they're taking advantage of. It's us.

GS2: I hate being used!

[angels come closer]

HA: Here's our first mark; a tough one. I better handle it myself.

SA: Are you sure you don't need help?

HA: No. All it takes is a little skill and timing. Watch how I deliver the mail.

SA[to NRA]: Observe the expert at work.

HA [whispers into ears of GS1 and GS2, who roll their eyes, while SA and NRA carefully observe]: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace."

NRA: That's it? That's all she has to do?

SA: You got it. Now see what happens.

GS1: Ya know, maybe I should get something for the kid I sit for.

GS2: You mean, spend your money on somebody else?!

GS1: What's the big deal. It's Christmas isn't it? Gift-giving, sharing... that whole thing.

GS2: My, my. It seems the Christmas bug has bitten.

GS1: Whatever. ... Let's go down to the toy store.

GS1: Sure. I love toys.

[GS1 and GS2 exit, leaving angels]

HA: And that's how it's done.

SA: You've really got talent!

HA: It's quite a gift isn't it?!

NRA: Can I have a gift?

SA: You've already got one. You just have to learn how to use it.

[moving to the Sears banner]

SS1: Did you see those patio cushions? I could use some new ones.

SS2: Patio cushions? Thinking of sitting outside in the snow?

SS1: For next Summer, silly.

SS2: But Winter just started!

SS1: Got to plan ahead, you know.

SS2: Maybe you could kill two birds with one stone. Do they have any cushions with poinsettias on them?

SS1: I'm always thinking of Summer. All this ice and snow.... blah.

SS2: Ah yes, Summer. Lawn-mowing, weed pulling, poison ivy, mosquitoes. What's to love?

SS1: Picnics, swimming, cook-outs... Now that I think about it, our bar-b-que grill is getting rather ugly, too. Do they still have some out for sale?

SS2: I think you've got your seasons mixed up. Unless you're planning to grill a turkey. I hear that takes about a week.

SS1: I wish my husband would put up that new storage shed he's been promising me for a hundred years. We've got no place left to put stuff.

SS2: How much can you fit under the lid of the bar-b-que?

SS1: You sure have a way of scrooging the Christmas spirit.

SS2: Right. I hope nobody gives me a grill for Christmas. Where're the snowblowers?

[angels come closer]

HA [to SA]: Okay, my capable companion. It's your turn. Let's see you do your stuff. [to NRA] And you, Tina Tenderfoot, look and learn.

NRA: My name's not Tina!

SA [whispers into ears of SS1 and SS2 who roll their eyes while HA and NRA observe]: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace."

HA: And now, presto, chango!

SS1: I just had a thought. I wonder if someone in the church could use my old furniture? It's still in pretty good shape.

SS2: Your furniture?! I've seen worse stuff in Martha Stewart's house. Where did that idea come from?

SS1: I don't know. Suddenly, I thought about the new family I met last Sunday. They came from Russia and have basically nothing. I'm sure they could use some things.

SS2: With your furniture, they'll think they're in some hotel. Sure, give it to them.

SS1: We'll stop by the church on the way back and get their number. Come on. You can get some help delivering it, right?

SS2: Sure. I can handle it. It'll be my good deed for Christmas.

SS1: So much for our night at the mall. We leave empty-handed.

SS2: You really didn't need anything anyway, do you?!

SS1: You know something ... you're right.

[SS1 and SS2 exit, leaving angels]

SA [proudly]: That's how it's done. Gimme five. [high fives HA]

NRA: Five what?

[moving along to Waldenbooks banner, where BS 1 and BS2 are examining books]

BS1 [holding book, to BS2]: Have you read this one? It's been on the bestseller list for months.

BS2: Why yes I have. But it was kinda like the phone book -- not much of a plot but what a cast of characters.

BS1: Here's a book of the latest medical studies [looking through book]. Did you know that studying can cause gingivitis and tooth decay?

BS2: I was wondering why my cousin dropped out of college.... Now that I think about it, he has perfect teeth, too!

BS1: Does that mean everybody who reads has bad breath?

BS2: Probably. That's why they sell mints in this bookstore.

BS1: Then why do dogs have bad breath?

BS2: That's different. They can't get their paws to hold dental floss.

BS1: Here's a beauty. Look at these masterpieces.

BS2: Another coffee table art book. Just what you need. You already have to move fifty books to dust!

BS1: And this one's cheap. Just eighty-five dollars.

BS2: That's reasonable. Does it come with fold-outs? [turning attention to another book] Now here's my kind of book. "How to Feel Good About Yourself Without Hating Everybody Else". Look! The pages are blank!

BS1: Must be a reject. Was it on the clearance table?

BS2: I don't think so.

BS1: I heard there's some nice gift books over here in the philosophy and astrology section. Let's see....

[angels come closer]

HA: Okay now Ricki Recruit, it's your turn.

NRA: My name's not Ricki! What am I supposed to do?

SA: You haven't been paying attention, have you? Didn't you see what we did?

NRA: Yeah. You just whispered in their ears. Is that all?

HA: No, of course not. First, and most important, you have to find an opening -- just the right opening.

SA: It has to be a time when you're sure they'll hear you.

NRA: But you talk in their ear!

HA: Doesn't matter. You could be all the way inside their brain! If they're not ready to listen, they won't hear.

NRA: How do you know when they're ready to listen?

SA: That's what the files were for. Didn't you read them?

HA: The files tell us the exact time to strike. They calculate the quietest moment available, figure in the target's faith, show us the best person they should be with ... they even tell us if the target sings in Church.

SA: The Master doesn't leave too much to chance.

NRA: What if it doesn't work?

HA: We're angels. We keep trying. That's our job.

HA: These targets are prime now, anticipating Christmas. Others will be hit during Lent, or Easter, or on some other holy day.

SA: We're not the only team out here you know.

HA: Some of them can be hit at any time. It's the Master's call.

NRA: Now I get it.

SA: So do your thing. Use your gift, little Abby Apprentice.

NRA: My name's not Abby! ... Here goes. [whispers into ears of BS1 and BS2 who roll their eyes while HA and SA observe]: "Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace."

HA: By george, I think she's got it.

SA: Nice job..... now watch.

BS1: Look. A Bible. Goodness, I haven't been able to find mine for some time.

BS2: Maybe it's on your coffee table pile.

BS1: I remember my mom reading it to me on Sunday afternoons, after we came home from church.

BS2: Stretching our memory a bit, aren't we? Let's see... I bet I can find the book of Daniel before you.

BS1: Does he have a whole book?

BS2: Hello. Does the lion's den ring any bells; or the fiery furnace? I've read all that. Even went to classes at church a few years ago.

BS1: Look. The story of Christmas. It's been ages since I read that. "for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." You know, I haven't read those words in years but somehow I happened to open right to that page.

BS2: I'd suggest you buy it. Someone's trying to tell you something.

BS1: Do they still have Bible studies at the church?

BS2: Just thought of your new year's resolution didn't you?!
[BS1 and BS2 exit with Bible, leaving angels]

HA: Bravo, young one! You hit a home run!

SA: Dittos. Now you've got it.

HA: Look out, Gabe and Mike. There's a new kid on the block.

SA: You passed with flying colors. Mission accomplished. Now come on. It's almost Christmas.

HA: No doubt, yet another assignment awaits the victors. [to NRA] Can you say "Christ is born."

SA and NRA [together]: Christ is Born.

HA: That's all you'll need for the next job. Let's hit the Orthodox church first. It'll be easy. They've heard it before.

[angels exit, N takes center stage]

N: That's our peek into the hussle and bussle of the invisible world. Pretty awesome, uh? And you thought angels only popped up at spectacular events. Maybe now you'll consider them a little more often. They're always around somewhere doing their thing.; carrying the prayers of children to heaven, delivering the Master's mail, and so forth. Some folks think they only visit churches during the day. Here, you saw them in a mall as the night visitors.

And by the way, what will be their next message?

ALL: Christ is Born!

N: Listen for it!