

THE INNKEEPER'S ENCOUNTER

by Greg Sullivan

GENRE: Drama

SYNOPSIS: The Jewish proprietor of an inn along the Jericho road has no idea what's in store for him tonight. As he is cleaning up at the end of a long day, the door swings open to reveal a dreaded Samaritan bearing the near-dead body of a Jew. What begins as anger and confusion at the sight of this outsider in his inn quickly turns into admiration and respect for the amazing display of unconditional love he witnesses.

TIME: Over 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 4

TOPIC: Love, Kindness, Biblical Times

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Luke 10:30-37

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any

SUGGESTED USE: Worship Service, Bible Study

CHARACTERS:

INNKEEPER ("Keeper") - middle-aged man, very nervous acting

GOOD SAMARITAN ("Sam") - young to middle-aged man, refined acting

PRIEST - middle-aged to older man, serious in his speech and actions

LEVITE - younger to middle-aged man, funny

PROPS: 1) Two to three small tables surrounded by chairs spaced around the stage

2) Jar filled with coffee and coffee cups

3) Dishes and silverware

4) Broom

5) Rag

COSTUMES: Biblical garb

SOUND: Four wireless mikes

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: An Inn

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Director's Tip:

The key to the success of *The Inn Keeper's Encounter* is not so much in its staging but in the development of its characters. The piece can be staged as written or as a reader's theater presentation. You can make it a period piece (dress the actors in authentic garb of the period) or update the costumes and present it as a modern story. Either way will work very well, as long as your actors have a firm grasp on the characters they are playing.

Let's take a look at a couple of ways to create and maintain a compelling character. First, you must fully commit to the character you are playing. Total commitment and a real characterization will change a monotonous performance into one of sparkling color and detail.

Secondly, you should try to find aspects of yourself that are similar to the character that you are playing. Even when playing a character who experiences and expresses emotions very differently from the way you do, you can still draw on your own feelings as behavior. The reason great actors are so compelling is that they have the courage to bring their personalities to bear on everything they do. Don't ever play a part as someone else would play it. There is a great saying in the theatre that is attributed to Stanislavsky, "The person you are is a thousand times more interesting than the best actor you could ever hope to be."

The INNKEEPER of the inn is seen stage right, sweeping the floor nervously and pacing quickly back and forth. He is obviously troubled by something. He stops and looks at the audience a couple times as if to speak, then shakes his head, looks down and continues to sweep. Finally he looks up and speaks to the audience.

KEEPER: *(He speaks in quick sentences.)* What am I going to do? *(Pause)* What am I going to do? I can't believe this. I don't even know exactly what happened here last night. *(He pauses to think, as if a realization has suddenly hit him.)* That's it! Maybe it never happened. Perhaps I dreamed the whole thing. *(Another pause)* Oh, how insane is that? Of course it happened. I was here—I saw it all with my own eyes. I... touched... him. *(He looks at his hands in amazement, and then he looks up off to the side of the stage, as if looking up a stairway.)* He's still up there—both of them are still there. *(He shakes his head.)* Oh, why here? And why last night?

(He stops sweeping, picks up a rag and starts to wipe off the tables. After a moment, he speaks to the audience again.)

This is the only inn between Jericho and Jerusalem, but last night started out so slow and peaceful. I was cleaning up from supper—it seems I'm always cleaning up from something around here.