

Hope Is Coming

Characters

Floor Manager	In charge of a TV studio that is filming a chat show
Don Key	Chat show host
Wally Jumper	Shepherd
Baaaa Humbug	Wally's sheep
Dr Wiseman	Professor of Astronomy
Humptoo	Dr Wiseman's camel
Mary	Ummn, well, Mary
Jack Derriere	Mary's donkey
Applause	Person who holds up APPLAUSE card (no lines)

Floor Manager and Applause are humans and Don Key is a donkey puppet.

The other characters can either be played by person puppets and animal puppets, or by humans in costume. All six should be puppets, or all six humans, not a mixture.

Costumes and Props

Floor Manager	human, modern dress, has large, obvious head set and clipboard
Don	donkey puppet in Biblical robes
Wally, Wiseman, Mary	traditional Biblical robes, Mary has a big baby bump
Humbug, Humptoo, Jack	animal puppets, or humans dressed in white (sheep), brown (camel) and grey (donkey) with headbands saying 'Sheep', 'Camel', 'Donkey'. Humptoo has a map.
[Applause]	large sign with APPLAUSE written on it. Can have STOP on the other side.

Staging

For puppets as the guests, the whole action can happen in a puppet theatre, with the Floor Manager dashing on and off stage in front of the theatre.

For humans as guests, Don Key appears in a low puppet theatre (about 1m) and the guests sit on two chairs placed to the side.

Applause person sits or stands to one side and holds up card when script says **[Applause]**

Hope is Coming

Scene 1

[Floor Manager enters, talking to director on headset, having trouble with the earpiece]

FM: Sorry, what was that? I didn't catch what you said. You want me to check the *whites and browns*? [listening] Oh, *lights and sound*. [checks clipboard] Yes, we're ready to start broadcasting the show. Just as soon as Mr Key comes out of makeup and wardrobe.

[pressing earpiece] What was that? Sorry, my earpiece isn't working well. *The pests are in a mood, you know*? What pests? [listening] Oh, *the guests are in the studio*! Yes, that's right. [checking clipboard] We have three guests lined up for tonight's chat show.

[listening] Ummm hm. The first guest is *washing their what*? [quizzical look] OK, whatever.

[listening] Say again? You *hope he's coming*? You hope *who's* coming? Are we waiting for someone else? [to self, tapping headphones] Darn this headset. I can't hear a thing.

[off stage] Mr Key, are you ready on set?

[Don enters]

Don: Yes, yes, just coming, luvvie. Never fear, Don is here.
I'm not sure about this headdress. Do you think it makes my nose look big?

FM: Not at all, Mr Key. You look wonderful.

Don: I know, I know. The camera loves me. Who's my first guest tonight?

FM: It's Mr Jumper, a shepherd who has been *washing his socks* [presses earpiece and listens] Sorry, *watching his flocks*

Are we ready, everyone? Silence on set. Live broadcast of the Christmas edition of 'From the Donkey's Mouth'. Cameras in 3, 2, (1). [Show fingers for 3, 2, 1. Mouth '1' then point]

[Applause]

[FM exits]

Don: Thank you, so kind. So kind. Oh please don't, don't, don't stop. Thank you. So kind. Welcome to 'From the Donkey's Mouth', with me, Dooooooooon KEY! [rising tone]

[Applause]

Our first guest tonight has come all the way from Oswaldtwistle-cum-Chortledale. Let's put our hooves together to welcome shepherd, Mr Walter Jumper.

[Applause]

[Wally and Humbug enter]

Welcome, Welcome. I see you've brought a friend with you. Mr Jumper. May I call you Wally?

Wally: [in broad Yorkshire accent] Ay, 'appen. This is me sheep. He's called ...

Hum: BAAAA!

Wally: ... Humbug.

Don: What the Dickens? Well, it's great to meet the two of you. I understand you witnessed something extraordinary earlier today.

Wally: Ay, 'appen we did an' all. There we was, abidin' in t' field, one Silent Night, In t' Bleak Mid-Winter, when Humbug here taps me on the shoulder, points to t' sky an' says ...

Hum: Haaaark!

Wally: Well, I were right shocked, I can tell you.

Don: I can believe that. How surprising! A talking animal!

[Silence while *Wally and Humbug look at each other, then slowly look at Don*]

Wally: It was more what she were talkin' *about*. Tell 'im what you was talking about, Humbug.

Hum: Angels from the Realms of Glory!

Wally: Aye! Winging their flight o'er all t' earth!

Don: I see. And what did the angels say to you?

Hum: The First Nowell the Angels did say

Wally: Were to certain poor shepherds in fields as we lay – and we was right terrified, I can tell thee! Teeth all a-chattering and knees all a-knocking.
An' poor Humbug here – her wool were black before. Clean turned white with fear, it did!

Don: That sounds most alarming. What happened next?

Hum: "Fear not"

Wally: ... said he (for mighty dread had seized our troubled minds),

Hum: "Glad tidings of great joy I bring, to you, and all mankind."

Wally: Aye. [*to Humbug*] An' sheep-kind too, I'm sure.

Don: Did the angel say what this good news would be?

Wally: 'Ope.

Don: Nope? The angel didn't tell you?

Wally: 'Ope.

Don: Soap? The good news is soap?

Wally: 'Ope!

Don: Rope? Pope? Slope?

Hum: HHHHope!

Don: Oh, Hope! I see,

Wally: Yeah, an' we got to go and find it now. So if you don't mind, we'll be off.

Don: Well, thank you, Wally Jumper and Humbug for taking the time to chat with us. I'm sure we all wish you well in your search for Hope.

[*to audience*] Join us after the break for our second guest. We'll be right back!

[Applause] [FM enters]

FM: And cue commercials! That was lovely. Everybody take five. Thank you, Wally and Humbug. You can get coffee in the green room.

[Don exits]

Wally: Well, Humbug. What do you think of the famous Mr Don Key?

Hum: He's shorter than I expected. I suppose you could say he's a ...

Both: Little Donkey!

[Wally and Humbug exit, giggling]

FM: [talking to director] Is there any news on the extra guest? Does anyone know who it is? What's that you say? You *hope he's coming*? Yes, I hope he's coming, too. Whoever it is.

[FM exits]

Scene 2

[FM enters]

FM: [earpiece] Is there any news on this extra guest someone mentioned? [listening] You *hope he's coming*? That's a bit vague, can you find out, please?

[offstage] Someone call Mr Key. We're coming back from the commercials.

[Don enters]

Ah, Mr Key. Just in time.

Don: Thank you, luvvie. I was in make-up having my ears combed. Who's the second guest?

FM: I'll ask the director [presses earpiece and talks to director] Who's on next? [listening] Ummmhmm.

[to Don] It's someone from the yeast. Perhaps he's a baker?

[earpiece] What was that? Oh, *East*, not *yeast*.

Sorry, Mr Key. Not a baker, an astronomer. From the East.

Don: Oh! I like Great Yarmouth.

FM: No, not Great ... oh never mind. Places please, everyone. Coming back from commercials. Over to you, Mr Key, in 3, 2, (1). [mouth '1' and point]

[FM exits]

Don: Welcome back to 'From the Donkey's Mouth'. Let's give a round of applause for our second guest, all the way from the mystic East, Dr Wiseman.

[Applause] [Wiseman and Humptoo enter]

WM: Thank you. It's lovely to be here.

Don: Thanks for coming. I hope you had a good journey. Would you like to introduce your friend?

WM: Yes, this is Humptoo.

Don: Humptoo?

WM: Yes, like Humphrey, but more comfortable to ride. [to Humptoo] You're a great help, aren't you? Especially in the pudding.

Hump: [stage whisper] Dessert.

WM: Oh, yes, desert. That's what I meant. We came here via the Polyester Road.

Hump: [stage whisper] Silk Road.

WM: Of course, of course. And you're really good at finding the nearest Coldplay, aren't you?

Hump: [rolls eyes, sigh, stage whisper] Oasis.

WM: Yes, yes, silly me. Oasis.

Don: Now, Dr Wiseman, you are Professor of Astronomy at the University of Mesopotamia. Where exactly is that, please?

WM: Ur.

Don: Don't you know?

WM: Yes, it's Ur.

Don: Errr, what?

WM: Just Ur.

Don: Errr?

Hump: *[pulling out map, which can have the line written on it]* Ur is an important Sumerian city-state in ancient Mesopotamia, located at the site of modern Tell el-Muqayyar in south Iraq's Dhi Qar Governorate. *[to audience]* Good old Wikipedia.

Don: Oh, I see. Errrr, moving on. What brings you here?

WM: I'm here to investigate the star that everyone is talking about.

Don: Ed Sheeran? *[or insert name of other star]*

Hump: Not that kind of star. The flaming ball of Hydrogen type of star. *[to audience]* Although the exact chemical nature of stellar objects will not be determined for another couple of thousand years.

WM: We're not sure what the new star means, but we know it's important. I'm meeting up with two colleagues to discuss it, Doctors Ryan Box and Albert Einstein.

Don: Doctor Who?

Hump: No, she's still filming the Christmas special.

Don: Why is this so important to you?

WM: We want to understand *[gazing into middle distance]* the meaning of Life, the Universe and Everything. We believe it is found in a substance called Hope.

Don: Wow! That's quite a big thing to search for. Are you close?

WM: Yes, we think we will find it a nearby village.

Don: Really? The meaning of life is in Warkton? *[or insert name of nearby village]*

Hump: *[face palm]* Bethlehem.

Don: Oh, right. Well, don't let me keep you here any longer. Dr Wiseman and Humptoo, I wish you every success in your search for Hope, and thank you both for joining us today.
[to audience] We'll be back again after this break. See you in a minute.

[Applause] *[FM enters]*

FM: Cut! Wonderful! Five minutes while we reset, everyone.

[Don, Wiseman and Humptoo exit]

FM: *[talking to director]* Still no word from this mysterious fourth guest? Has anyone tried phoning him?

What's that? You *hope he's coming*? Yes, you said that before. It's all very well hoping, but it would be nice to know.

[FM exits]

Scene 3

[FM enters]

FM: [earpiece] Who have we got for guest number three? [listening] She's hairy? She's scary? She's a what? You're kidding me! The washing up liquid or The Sugar Plum? Or is she off the top of the Christmas tree?

[to self] We don't half have some strange guests on this show!

[off stage] Someone knock on Mr Key's door, please. Commercial break ends in a minute.

And does anyone know if we're still expecting another guest? [earpiece] Yes, yes, I know. You hope he's coming. What good is wishy-washy hope to me? I need to be sure.

[Don enters]

Don: Is it our last guest now, luvvie?

FM: I'm not sure, to be honest. I've got three people on my list (and they're all bringing pets with them), but the director keeps talking about someone else, who's not here yet, and all the director says is "hope he's coming"!

And worse than that, I've just heard that our third guest is a bloomin' fairy! I don't think we're insured for flight! [presses earpiece] Oh, what was that? Not a fairy? Oh, Mary! That makes so much more sense. [to self] I've got to get this headset fixed. Everything's all fuzzy.

Places, everyone. Back from commercials in 3, 2, (1). [mouth '1' and point]

Don: Welcome back to the final part of 'From the Donkey's Mouth'. Let's make some noise for our third guest, just arrived from sunny Nazareth, it's Mary!

[Applause] [Mary and Jack enter]

Don: Welcome Mary, do sit down. I'm so glad you could join us here. And welcome too, to your friend. Could you tell us his name?

Mary: Thank you Don. It's great to be here. This is my donkey, Jack.

Don: Jack? So, you mean he's [slowly and deliberately] Jack A...

Jack: [interrupting] Derriere. Jack Derriere, if you don't mind!

Don: That's what I was going to say. Hang on, I recognise that name!

Jack: Yeah, we was a school together, mate. Muleburrow Primary, remember?

Don: Gosh yes! We were on the same football team.

Jack: Yeah. Then you joined the drama club and got all show biz. You done well for yourself, mate.

Mary: [trying to butt in] Excuse me ...

Don: [ignoring Mary] Thanks. It's great to see you again, Jack. You're looking well. What are you doing these days?

Jack: I got my own taxi firm now. Nice little business. I mainly do the Jerusalem run, but tonight I'm taking this 'un [indicating Mary] to Bethlehem.

Mary: [trying to join the conversation] Yes. Hi, that's me.

Don: [ignoring Mary] Bethlehem you say? I've heard there's something special going on there tonight.

Jack: I dunno about that. She said she was visiting family here.

Mary: [*trying to get a word in edgeways*] Yes, we're here for the ...

Don: [*ignoring Mary*] Looks like the family is soon getting bigger!

Jack: Tell me about it! Getting 'er and 'er sprog-to-be [*patting Mary's 'bump'*] in the back seat was a bit of a squeeze.

Mary: Oy! I am here, you know!

Don: Oh, yes, sorry. Got a little carried away there.

Jack: Just like 'er and 'er sprog-to-be. Gettit? Riding on a donkey? Carried away? Eh? [*Don and Jack laugh*]

[*FM enters and makes 'wind it up' motions to Don*]

Mary: As I was saying, it's great to be here Don ...

Don: [*interrupting Mary*] Well, folks. That's all we have time for tonight. [*to Mary*] It's been great chatting with you.

Mary: But, but ...

Don: A huge thank you to all our guests and I'll see you next time, on 'From the Donkey's Mouth' with me, Dooooooooon KEY!

[*Applause*]

FM: And we're out. Roll titles. Thank you everyone. Cut the lights.

Don: I'm taking a little lie down, luvvies. Stardom is so exhausting. If anyone needs me, I'll be in my dressings room.

[*Don exits*]

Mary: But, but, I never ...

[*FM herds Mary and Jack off*]

FM: Thank you, you were wonderful. Truly wonderful. There's cake in the green room. Off you go.

[*earpiece*] What's that you say? Speak up, I can't hear you. You *hope he's coming*? Well he's a bit late now. We've finished the show! And it's all very well hoping for something that never happens, I need something a bit more real than some fuzzy wishful thinking. I need something I can rely on. You *hope he's coming*? What use is that?

[*Mary enters*]

Mary: 'Scuse me. Could you tell me where I can get a taxi please? My donkey's got a flat hoof and I need to get to Bethlehem quickly. My baby's on his way. *Hope is coming*!

FM: Sure, you can get a taxi from ... hang on. What did you say?

Mary: My donkey's got a flat hoof?

FM: No, the other bit. About Hope.

Mary: *Hope is coming*? Yes, my baby is going to be born tonight.

FM: But why do you say you *hope he's coming*? Don't you know?

Mary: Oh, it's not that kind of hope. Not *I hope he's coming* and maybe he will, maybe he won't. No, he's definitely coming! That's for sure! But Hope is what Joe and me call the baby.

FM: Why Hope?

Mary: There was this angel who told us that my baby would be special. We have to give him the name Jesus, which means 'God saves', and he is going to be all of God's promises to us. I don't mean just me and Joe, I mean everyone, *everywhere, everywhen*. This child will be Hope for us all. Hope is coming. And He **IS** Coming!

Anyway, gotta dash. Baby stuff to do. Bye.

[*Mary exits*]

FM: So *that's* what the director was saying to me! I get it now! Hope IS Coming. For sure. For ever. For us all.

I really need to get this headset fixed.

[*FM exits*]

[*Applause person takes a bow and exits*]