

The Fourth Wise Man

Cast in Appearance:

1. Narrator/Story Teller
2. Artaban
3. Jewish Woman
4. Artaban's Thoughts No.1
5. Artaban's Thoughts No.2
6. Trader
7. Young Jewish Woman
8. Captain of Herod's Soldiers
9. Jesus
10. Excited Woman
11. Slave Girl

There are 4 short scenes with the story teller linking the action.

Narrator: Tradition tells us that there were 3 Wise Men or Magi who came to present gifts to the infant Jesus. However the figure 3 is not mentioned in Matthew's Gospel Chapter 2. We know that 3 gifts were presented to Jesus – Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. Has tradition got it right? Were there only 3 Magi or could there have been more? I think there was at least a 4th Magi, and I want to tell you the story about him, so are you sitting comfortably. – This Magi's name was Artaban.

(Artaban appears & moves to the centre)

Like the other Magi he came from the East.

(Artaban looks up at the sky)

Artaban followed the stars, and the appearance of a new star told him a great king was to be born in Israel.

(Artaban consults a big book)

Artaban knew the other Magi and they arranged to meet near Babylon and go together to see this new King. Artaban sold his house and all his possessions and bought 3 costly jewels to present to the new King. He bought a large Sapphire – a large Ruby – a large Pearl plus many smaller gems. Then he set off to meet the others.

(Artaban leaves the stage)

PAUSE

(Jewish woman enters & lays down ill – Artaban enters & moves towards the woman)

Narrator: Nearing the meeting place Artaban sees a poor Jewish woman, dying from a fever and suddenly his thoughts take over.

(Artaban's Thoughts appear at each side of stage)

No.1: Dilemma

No.2: What am I to do? *(Artaban looks puzzled)*

No.1: Yes, what must I do?

No.2: I must join my friends and go see this new and great King

(Artaban looks away from the woman)

No.1: But, this poor woman. *(Artaban looks at her)*

No.2: Yes, but, if I don't go now they will leave me behind

(Artaban looks away from the woman)

No.1: But this poor woman will die if I don't help her *(Artaban looks at her)*

No.2: O what am I to do? *(Artaban puts his head in his hands)*

No.1: O great King I will come *(Artaban looks away then turns back)*

No.2: But I must stay to help this dying woman

(Artaban kneels besides her, puts her head on his knee, gives her a drink of water and places a blanket over her. Then he gives her something to eat)

Narrator: For several hours he cared for her, and after that time the woman started to feel better and she sat up, supped the water and ate the food. She then thanked him for his kindness.

Jewish W: Where are you going, sir?

Artaban: To see the great King who is to be born in Israel.

Jewish W: So at last he is coming

Artaban: Yes, in fact I'm on my way to Jerusalem to see him.

Jewish W: But the prophets said he would be born in Bethlehem – Sir, go straight there.

Narrator: Artaban said goodbye to the woman and continued his journey. He hurried to the meeting place but alas he was too late, his friends had left without him. They left a message telling him to follow them across the desert. Dejected Artaban returned to Babylon to get the necessary provisions to make the long journey across the desert. Because of the long journey he needed a caravan to accompany him.

(Enter Trader from one side and Artaban from the other)

Artaban: I want to hire a caravan to get me to Israel.

Trader: Yes sir, well we've got a 4 berth one here, or you can have our new super 10 berth caravan with six horse power drive, gold fillings & self-disposing WC.

Narrator: Artaban haggled with the Trader over prices

(They wag their fingers at each other and nod and shake their heads)

Artaban realised that to make the journey successfully he would have to spend a lot of money, but he had no money so he had to give the Trader his costly Sapphire.

(Artaban reluctantly hands over the jewel)

Though he was reluctant to part with the jewel, he still had the other two gems to give to the great King. *(Both leave the stage)*

PAUSE

Narrator: Artaban sets off for Bethlehem and in fact on arrival finds he is only 3 days behind the other Magi.

(Enter Artaban & young woman with a baby in her arms)

Artaban met a woman with a young child, she told him that the child, Jesus, had been taken by his parents towards Egypt only 2 days ago. The young woman listened to his story and then invited him to have a meal with her before he continued on his journey. As they talked there was a great commotion outside in the street.

(Screaming is heard)

The soldiers of Herod were killing all the baby boys. The young Jewish woman grasps her baby son and runs to hide. Artaban gets up and goes to the doorway.

(Artaban's Thoughts appear at each side)

No.1: I must do something

No.2: I must help

No.1: But what can I do against so many

No.2: I cannot fight them

No.1: I cannot run away

No.2: What am I to do?

No.1: I cannot let them slaughter all these children

No.2: O great King I wanted to give everything to you

(Artaban opens his arms wide)

No.1: But please understand

No.2: I must help these children

Narrator: At this point Artaban saw the Captain of the Guard . *(Captain enters)*

He ran towards him and taking the Ruby from his coat he offered it to the Captain on condition that he and his soldiers would leave the town and not come back.

Captain: Thank you, kind sir, *(eyes gleaming & rubbing his hands)* you won't be bothered by us again, I'll see to that. *(wink – then exit Captain)*

No.1: Now you have only one
No.2: Well what could I do
No.1: I know
No.2: I could not see all those innocent children suffer
No.1: No, you are right
No.2: I am sure the King will be happy with this gem
No.1: I'm sure he will understand
No.2: that I had no choice
No.1: but to give them away

(At this point the young woman runs towards Artaban kneels at his feet, clasping her hands in grateful thanks to him)

Narrator: The young woman thanked Artaban and offered him food for his journey to Egypt. *(Exit Artaban and woman)*

Artaban went to Egypt but found no trace of this great King. Everywhere he went he tried to help people who were in need giving away all the little gems. He travelled to many lands in search of this King, keeping his last precious gift safe with him, hoping that one day he would be able to give it to this great King.

PAUSE

(Jesus enters at the back of the stage and stands on a chair with his arms outstretched as if on a Cross – Artaban enters to one side)

Narrator: Some 33 years after Artaban's visit to Bethlehem he came again and met the Jewish woman who had the child. She told him he would find this person, Jesus, who had been born here, now in Jerusalem. He hurried to the city. He found a great many people hurrying out through the city gates as he was trying to get in. He stopped a woman and asked her what all the excitement was about. *(Woman runs in and is grabbed by Artaban)*

Artaban: What's going on?

Woman: We are all going to see the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, who claims to be the Son of God and King of the Jews. *(She laughs & exits)*

No.1: What is this strange sensation I have in my whole being?

No.2: when that woman mentioned

No.1: the name of Jesus.

No.2: I went over all queer

No.1: Could this be the one I have sought all these long years

No.2: Yes, I'm sure it is.

No.1: Maybe I am not too late to help him

No.2: Yes, maybe

No.1: I can offer this precious pearl *(Artaban gets out the Pearl)*

No.2: as a ransom for his life

No.1: Come on shake yourself, man

No.2: You must hurry to help him

Narrator: As Artaban sets off to run a girl spread-eagles herself before him and clutches his feet. She pleads with Artaban to help her. She tells him that she is about to be sold as a slave because her father has died and left huge debts. Artaban looks into her eyes and feels real compassion for her.

No.1: Dilemma

No.2: What am I to do?

No.1: If I help this girl

No.2: I cannot help Jesus

No.1: Oh no

No.2: Problem
No.1: But if I refuse to help her, she will become like refuse
No.2: I have only one pearl
No.1: I want to give it for Jesus' life
No.2: For the King
No.1: But I cannot let them take this girl away,
No.2: to be beaten
No.1; and mistreated
No.2: What am I to do?
No.1: O King (*Artaban looks at Jesus*)
No.2: I have travelled all this way
No.1: I'm nearly there
No.2: but I cannot let this girl suffer and ignore her plea
No.1: I cannot let this cause go by
No.2: O King
No.1: I meant this jewel for you (*Artaban shows it to Jesus*)
No.2: But my brothers and sisters needs were too much for me to pass them by.
Narrator: Then Artaban thrusts the Pearl into the hands of the Girl.
Artaban: This is your ransom, it is the last of my treasures which I kept for the King
(*Artaban picks her up and leads her to the centre and then cries on her shoulder*)

Narrator: Artaban felt the long search was over. He had parted with the last of his 3 large gifts and his hope of ever finding the King was gone.
Suddenly there was a great earthquake and thunder, people screamed & shouted. A brick falls and hits Artaban on the head, he staggers and falls, dying. The girl bends over him and hears him whisper

No.1: Not so my Lord (*Pause*)

No.2: When did I see you hungry and thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison
No.1: I have never seen your face, Lord, or been able to help you.
Jesus: Truly I say to you, as you have done these things for the least of my children, you have done it for me.
Narrator: The girl saw Artaban's face light up with a radiance and joy. His journey was over. His treasures were accepted. He had found and met with the King.