## PLAY NINETEEN- The Massacre of the Innocents

## (The Girdlers and Nailers)

**HEROD**   Poor \*bewcheris about, (\*dear ones- used sarcastically)
Pain of limb and land,
Stint of your \*stevenes stout, (\*shouting)
And still as stone ye stand,
And my carping record.
Ye ought to dare and doubt,
And \*lere you low to \*\*lowte (\*learn) (\*\*bow, praise)
To me, your lovely lord.

Ye ought in field and town
To bow at my bidding
With reverence and renown,
As falls for \*swilk a king, (\*such)
The lordliest on live
Who hereto is not \*bowne, (\*bowed, bent)
By almighty Mahound,
To dead I shall him drive.

So bold look no man be,
For to ask help nor \*hold (\*support)
But of Mahound and me
That has this world in wield
To maintain us \*emell; (\*together, among)
For well of wealth are we,
And my chief help is he;
Hereto what can ye tell?

**I CONSOLATOR**   Lord, what you likes to do
All folk will be full \*fayne, (\*happy)
To take intent thereto,
And none grudge there again.
That full well \*wit shall ye, (\*know)
And if they would not so,
We should soon work them woe.

**HERODES**   Ya, fair sirs, so should it be.

**II CONSOLATOR**   Lord, the \*sooth to say, (\*truth)
Full well we understand,
Mahounde is god \*verray, (\*truly)
And ye are lord of \*ilke a land. (\*each, every)
Therefore so have I \*seell, (\*happiness)
I \*rede we wait always(s), (\*advise)
What mirth most mend you may.

**HERODES**   \*Sertis, ye say right well. (\*certainly, surely)

But I am (an)noyed of new(s),
That blithe may I not be,
For three kings, as ye know,
That come through this country,
And said they sought a \*swain. (\*squire)

**I CONSOLATOR**   That \*rewlle I hope them rue, (\*action)
For had their tales been true
They had come this way again.

**II CONSOLATOR**   We heard how they you \*hight (\*called, promised)
If they might find that child,
For to have told you right,
But \*certis they are beguiled. (\*certainly, surely)
\*Swilke tales are not to trust, (\*such) (\*\*trust)
Full well \*wot \*\*ilke a \*\*\*wight, (\*knows) (\*\*every) (\*\*\*person, soul)
There shall never man have might
Nor mastery unto you.

**I CONSOLATOR**   Them shames so, for certain,
That they dare meet you no more.

**HERODES**   Wherefore should they be \*fayne (\*happy)
To make \*swilke fare before, (\*such)
To say a boy was born
That should be most of \*main? (\*power)
This \*gadling shall again (\*bastard)
If that the devil had sworn.

For be well never they \*wot, (\*think)
Whether they work well or wrong,
To \*frain got them thus got, (\*ask, enquire)
To seek that \*gadlng \*gaine, (\*bastard) (\*\*to go)
And \*swilke carping to \*\*kith. (\*such) (\*\*friends, relations)

**II CONSOLATOR**   Nay, lord, they \*lered over late (\*learned)
Your bliss shall never abate,
And therefore, lord, be blithe.

**NUNCIUS**   Mahounde without peer,
My lord, you save, and see.

**HERODES**   Messenger, come near,
And, \*bewcher, well thee be. (\*dear sir)
What tidings, tells thou, any?

**NUNCIUS**   Ya, lord, since I was here,
I have sought sides \*seere (\*diverse)
And seen marvels full many.

**HERODES**   And of marvels to move,
That were most mirth to me.

**NUNCIUS**   Lord, even as I have seen,
The \*sooth soon shall ye see, (\*truth)
If ye will, here in hie.
I met two towns between
Three kings with crowns clean,
Riding full royally.

**HERODES**   Ah, my bliss; boy, thou \*burdis too broad. (\*jokes)

**NUNCIUS**   Sir, there may no \*botment be. (\*remedy, cure)

**HERODES**   Ow, by sun and moon,
Then tides us tales tonight. (i.e. we are promised news tonight)
Hopes thou they will come soon
Hither, as they have \*hight, (\*said, promised)
For to tell me tidings?

**NUNCIUS**   Nay, lord, that dance is done.

**HERODES**   Why, whither are they gone?

**NUNCIUS**   \*Ilkone into their own land. (\*each one)

**HERODES**   How says thou, lad? Let be.

**NUNCIUS**   I say, for they are past.

**HERODES**   What, forth away from me?

**NUNCIUS**   Ya, lord, in faith full fast,
For I heard and took heed
How that they went, all three,
Into their own country.

**HERODES**   Ah, dogs, the devil you speed.

**NUNCIUS**   Sir, more of their meaning
Yet well I understood,
How they had made offering
Unto that \*frely food (\*noble)
That now of new is born.
They say he should be king,
And wield all earthly thing.

**HERODES**   Alas, than am I \*lorne. (\*lost)

Fie on them, \*faytours, fie! (\*beggars, frauds)
Will they beguile me thus?

**NUNCIUS**   Lord, by their prophecy
They named his name Jesus.

**HERODES**   Fie on thee, lad, thou lies.

**II CONSOLATOR**   Hence \*tyte, \*\*but thou thee hie, (\*quickly) (\*\*unless)
With \*dole here shall thou die (\*dolour, sadness)
That \*wreyes him in this wise. (\*reveals, makes known)

**NUNCIUS**   Ye \*wyte me all with wrong, (\*accuse)
It is thus and well \*warre. (\*worse)

**HERODES**   Thou lies! false traitor strange,
Look never thou nigh me near. (\*i.e. never come near me)
Upon life and limb
May I that \*faitour fange, (\*fraud) (\*grasp, seize)
Full high I shall get him hang,
Both thee, harlot, and him.

**NUNCIUS**   I am not worthy to \*wyte, (\*be blamed)
But fare-well, all the \*heppe. (\*crowd)

**I CONSOLATOR**   Go, in the devil’s \*dispite, (\*dis-pity, i.e. malice)
Or I shall get thee leap,
And dear a-buy this \*brew. (i.e. unsavoury business)

**HERODES**   \*Als for sorrow and sight, (\*alas? As?)
My woe no \*wight may write. (\*soul, person)
What devil is best to do?

**II CONSOLATOR**   Lord, amend your cheer,
And takes no needless \*noy, (\*annoyance, pain)
We shall you loyally \*lere (\*teach, learn)
That lad for to destroy
By counsel if we can.

**HERODES**   That may ye not come near,
For it is past two year
Since that this \*bale began. (\*torment)

**I CONSOLATOR**   Lord, therefore have no doubt
If it were four or five.
\*Gars gather in great \*rowte (\*get) (\*rout, group, riot)
Your knights keen \*belyve, (\*lively, quickly)
And bids them \*ding to dead (\*strike, hit)
All knave childer kept in \*clout (\*i.e. baby clothes)
In Bedlem and all about,
To \*layte in \*\*ilke a \*\*\*stead. (\*seek, find) (\*\*each) (\*\*\*place)

**II CONSOLATOR**   Lord, save none, for your \*seell, (\*health, happiness)
That are of two year age within,
Then shall that \*foundling fell (\*i.e. bastard)
\*Belyve his bliss shall \*\*blynne, (\*swiftly, lively) (\*\*end)
With \*bale when he shall bleed. (\*torment)

**HERODES**   \*Sertis, ye say right well (\*certainly, surely)
And as ye deem \*ilke \*\*dele, (\*each) (\*\*thing)
Shall I \*garre do indeed. (\*get, have done)

Sir knights, courteous and \*hende, (\*skilful, noble)
Thou ne not be now all new, (i.e. although nothing has changed)
Ye shall find me your friend,
\*And ye this time be true. (\*if)

**I MILES**   What say ye, lord, let see.

**HERODES**   To Bedlehem \*bus ye wend, (\*must)
That \*shrew with shame to \*\*shend (\*unruly child) (\*\*destroy)
That means to master me.

And about Bedlehem \*boght (\*? Both?)
\*Bus you well \*\*spere and spy, (\*must) (\*\*enquire)
For else it will be \*wathe (\*dangerous)
That he loses this Jewry.
And \*certis that were great shame. (\*certainly, surely)

**II MILES**   My lord, that were us loath,
And he escaped it were \*skathe, (\*dangerous- cf. unscathed)
And we well worthy blame.

**I MILES**   Full soon he shall be sought,
That make I mine avow.

**I CONSOLATOR**   I bid for him you \*loghte, (\*seize, capture)
And let me tell you how
To work when ye come there,
Because ye \*ken him not, (\*know)
To dead they must be brought,
Knave children, less and more.

**HERODES**   Ya, all within two year,
That none for speech be spared.

**II MILES**   Lord, how ye us \*lere (\*teach, learn)
Full well we take reward,
And \*certis we shall not rest. (\*certainly, surely)

**I MILES**   Comes forth, fellows, in \*feere, (\*fellowship, together)
Loo(k), \*foundlings find we here (\*bastards)
[LINE MISSING]

**I MULIER**   Out on you thieves, I cry!
Ye slay my \*seemly son. (\*worthy, handsome)

**II MILES**   Their brawls shall dear a-buy
This \*bale that is begun; (\*torment, struggle)
Therefore lay fro(m) thee fast.

**II MULIER**   Alas, for \*dole I die. (\*dolour, sadness)
To save my son shall I,
Aye whilst my life may last.

**I MILES**   Ah, dame, the devil thee speed,
And me, but it be quit.

**I MULIER**   To die I have no dread,
I do thee well to \*wit, (\*know)
To save my son so dear.

**I MILES**   As arms! for now is need,
But if we do yon deed,
The \*queans will quell us here. (\*lowborn woman, harlot)

**II MULIER**   Alas, this loathly strife.
No bliss may be my \*bette, (\*cure, comfort)
The knight upon his knife
Has slain my son so sweet;
And I had but him alone.

**I MULIER**   Alas, I lose my life;
Was never so woeful a wife
Nor half so \*will of \*\*wone. (\*wilsome, wild) (\*\*living)

And \*certis, me were full loathed (\*certainly, surely)
That they thus harmless \*yede. (\*leave, go)

**I MILES**   The devil might speed you both,
False witches, are ye \*woode? (\*mad)

**I MULIER**   Nay, false \*lurdans, ye lie. (\*sinners, cowards)

**I MILES**   If ye be \*woode or wroth, (\*mad)
Ye shall not (e)scape from \*skathe; (\*harm)
Wend we us hence in hie.

**I MULIER**   Alas, that we were wrought
In world women to be,
The bairn that we dear bought
Thus in our sight to see
Dis-piteously spill.

**II MULIER**   And \*certis, their \*\*nott is nought, (\*certainly, surely) (\*\*work)
The \*same that they have sought (\*i.e. Jesus)
Shall they never come till.

**I MILES**   Go we to the king;
Of all this \*contek keen (\*conflict, strife)
I shall not let for nothing
To say as we have seen.

**II MILES**   And \*certis, no more shall I. (\*certainly, surely)
We have done his bidding;
How so they \*wrast or wring, (\*wrestle, twist)
We shall say \*sothfastly. (\*truthfully, steadfastly)

**I MILES**   Mahounde, our god of might,
Save thee, sir Herod the king!

**I CONSOLATOR**   Lord, take keep to your knight;
He will tell you now tidings
Of \*bordis where they have been. (\*tricks, works)

**HERODES**   Ya, and they have gone right,
And hold that they us \*hight; (\*promised)
Then shall solace be seen.

**II MILES**   Lord, as ye \*demed us to done, (\*doomed, ordered)
In countries where we come . . . [line obscured]

**HERODES**   Sir, by sun and moon,
Ye are welcome home
And worthy to have reward.
Have ye gotten us this \*gome? (\*baby boy)

**I MILES**   Where we found \*fell or \*fone, (i.e. many or few)
Witness we will that there was none.

**II MILES**   Lord, they are dead \*ilkone, (\*each one)
What would ye we \*ded more? (\*did? Dead/kill?)

**HERODES**   I ask but after one
The kings told of before
That should make great mastery.
Tell us if he be ta’en.

**I MILES**   Lord, tokening had we none
To know that \*brothell by. (\*scoundrel, rascal)

**II MILES**   In \*bale we have them brought (\*torment)
About all Bedleham town.

**HERODES**   Ye lie, your \*note is nought, (\*speech? Work?)
The devils of hell you drown!
So may that boy be fled,
For in waste have ye wrought.
Ere that same lad be sought,
Shall I never bide in bed.

**I CONSOLATOR**   We will wend with you then
To \*ding that \*\*dastard down. (\*strike) (\*\*rascal)

**HERODES**   As arm, ever \*ilke man (\*each)
That holds of Mahounde.
Were they a thousand score,
This \*bargain shall they \*\*banne (\*i.e. fate) (\*\*summon)
Come after as ye can,
For we will wend before.