

Amahl and the Night Visitors

Synopsis

It is evening.

Amahl, a disabled boy who can walk only with a crutch, is sitting outside his hut playing his shepherd's pipe when his destitute, widowed Mother calls for him. After much persuasion, he enters the hut. When Amahl starts to tell his Mother that there is an amazing star "as big as a window" over their roof, she does not believe him as she knows her son has a problem with telling tall tales.

Later that night, Amahl's Mother weeps, praying that her son does not have to become a beggar.

After bedtime, there is a knock at the door and the Mother tells Amahl to go see who it is. He is amazed when he sees three splendidly dressed Kings and a Page. At first the Mother does not believe Amahl, but when she goes to the door to see for herself, she is stunned. The three Kings tell the Mother and Amahl that they are on a long journey to give gifts to a wondrous Child and they would like to rest a while in the hut. The Mother happily agrees but says that all she can offer is "a cold fireplace and a bed of straw".

When his Mother goes to fetch some firewood Amahl seizes the opportunity to speak with the Kings.

King Balthazar answers Amahl's questions about his life as a king and asks what Amahl he does. Amahl responds that he was once a shepherd, but his Mother has had to sell all their sheep, so now they will have to go begging.

Amahl then talks with King Kaspar, who is childlike, eccentric, and a bit deaf. Kaspar shows Amahl his box of magic stones, beads, and liquorice, and offers Amahl some of the sweets.

The Mother returns and Amahl is told to go fetch the neighbours so the Kings may be fed and entertained properly.

The neighbours arrive with food and they entertain the Kings. The neighbours then leave and everyone in the hut settles down to sleep.

While the Kings are asleep the Mother enviously eyes the gold for the Christ Child and attempts to steal some of it for her son. She is caught stealing the gold by the Page and when Amahl awakes to find the Page grabbing his Mother, he attacks him.

Seeing Amahl's defence of his Mother and understanding the motives for the attempted theft, King Melchior says the Mother may keep the gold as the Holy Child will not need earthly power or wealth to build His kingdom.

The Mother says she has waited all her life for such a King and asks the Kings to take back the gold. She wishes to send a gift to the Child herself but she has nothing to send. Amahl says he, too, has nothing to give except his crutch. When he offers the crutch to the Kings his crippled leg is miraculously healed.

Dawn breaks and Amahl, with permission from his Mother, leaves with the Kings to see the Child and to give Him his crutch in thanks for being healed.