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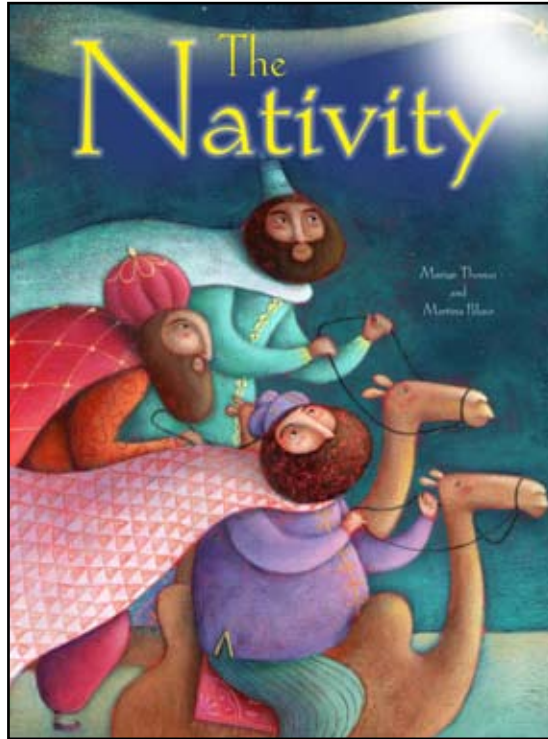
32 pages
280 x 210mm (P)
Cased

AUTHOR

Marion Thomas writes in a traditional story-teller style evoking the poetry of the Bible story while retaining biblical accuracy. Marion lives with her family in the south of England.

ILLUSTRATOR

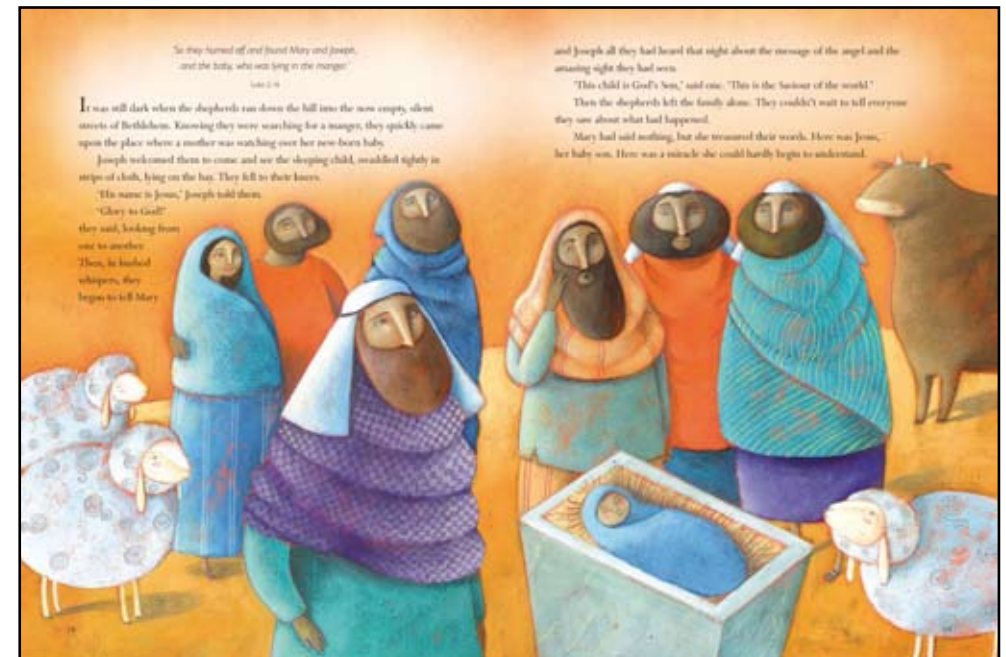
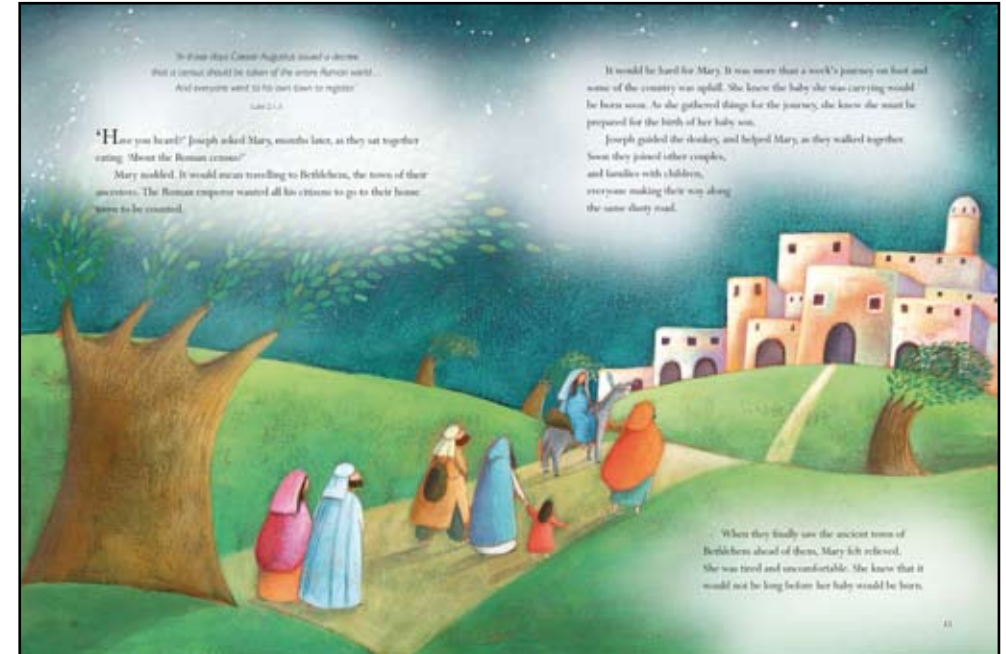
Martina Peluso was born in Naples, Italy, where she still lives and works. She studied at the Institute of Art in Naples and has illustrated almost 20 children's titles, working for publishers worldwide.



The Nativity

From the Annunciation in Nazareth,
to the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt,
here is the nativity,
the birth of Jesus, the Christmas story,
based on the Gospel events,
retold traditionally and sympathetically,
and stunningly illustrated by Martina Peluso.

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'As Joseph was a righteous man and did not want to expose Mary to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.'

Matthew 1:19

When the angel had gone, Mary stood in the doorway and looked out at the little village of Nazareth, her heart beating fast.

Suddenly, Mary clasped her hand to her mouth.

'Joseph!' she said aloud. 'I must tell Joseph!'

Joseph was working in his carpenter's shop when Mary appeared at the door. He looked up, surprised to see her. What could be wrong? But Mary looked happy, excited.

Joseph continued to work while Mary told him everything that had happened. He could see how excited she was. She clearly didn't understand how this would change all their plans.

Joseph was a quiet man. He watched thoughtfully as Mary walked back home. Something had happened to her, that was certain. But surely what she had told him was too amazing to be true.

Joseph sighed. He realised he would not be able to marry Mary after all.

'In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree
that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world...

And everyone went to his own town to register.'

Luke 2:1-3

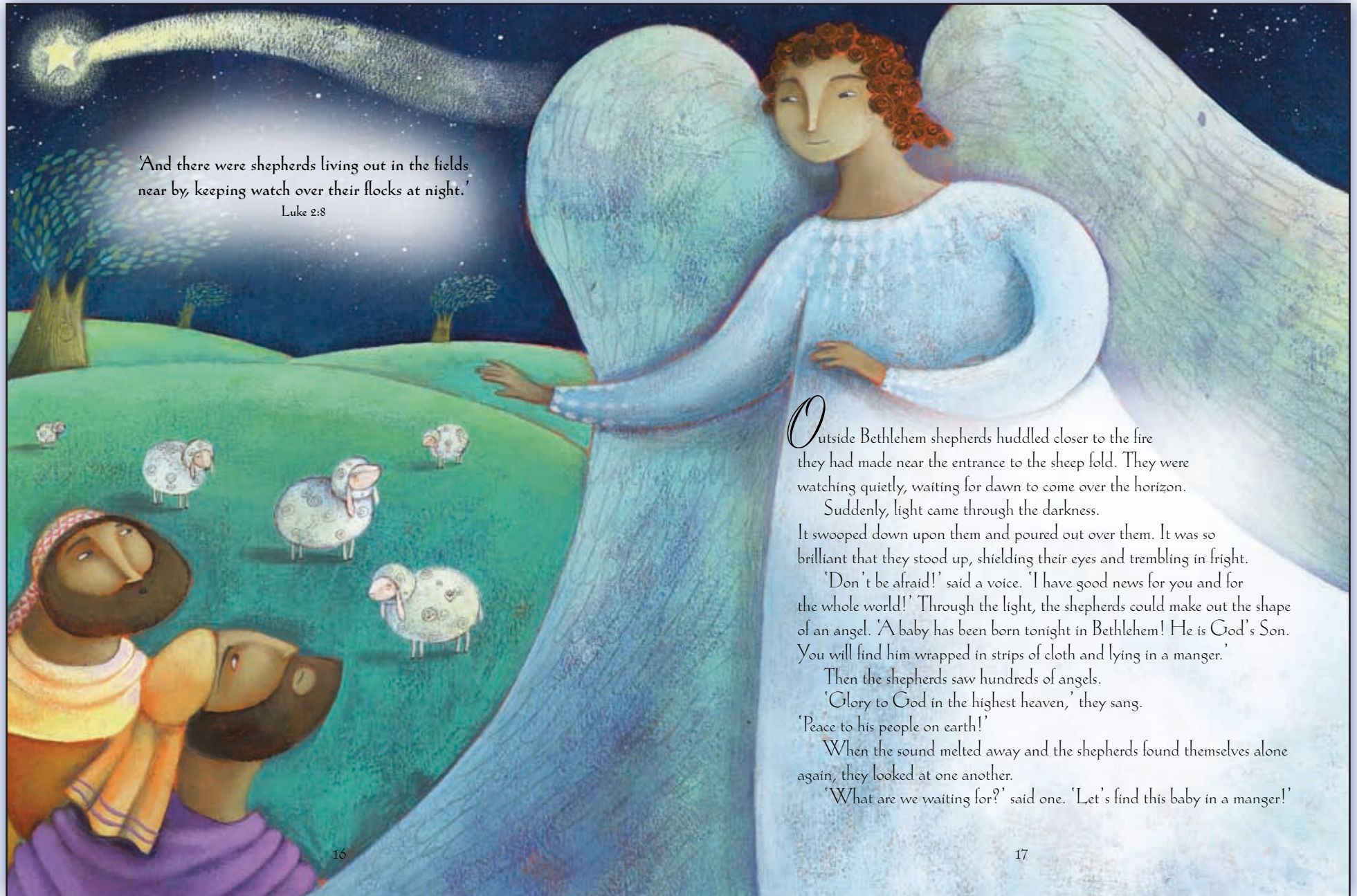
'Have you heard?' Joseph asked Mary, months later, as they sat together eating.
'About the Roman census?'

Mary nodded. It would mean travelling to Bethlehem, the town of
their ancestors. The Roman emperor wanted all his citizens to go to their
home town to be counted.

It would be hard for Mary. It was more than a week's journey on foot
and some of the country was uphill. She knew the baby she was carrying
would be born soon. As she gathered things for the journey, she knew she
must be prepared for the birth of her baby son.

Joseph guided the donkey, and helped Mary, as they walked together.
Soon they joined other couples,
and families with children,
everyone making their way along
the same dusty road.

When they finally saw the ancient town of
Bethlehem ahead of them, Mary felt relieved.
She was tired and uncomfortable. She knew that it
would not be long before her baby would be born.



'And there were shepherds living out in the fields
near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night.'

Luke 2:8

Outside Bethlehem shepherds huddled closer to the fire
they had made near the entrance to the sheep fold. They were
watching quietly, waiting for dawn to come over the horizon.

Suddenly, light came through the darkness.

It swooped down upon them and poured out over them. It was so
brilliant that they stood up, shielding their eyes and trembling in fright.

'Don't be afraid!' said a voice. 'I have good news for you and for
the whole world!' Through the light, the shepherds could make out the shape
of an angel. 'A baby has been born tonight in Bethlehem! He is God's Son.
You will find him wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.'

Then the shepherds saw hundreds of angels.

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,' they sang.

'Peace to his people on earth!'

When the sound melted away and the shepherds found themselves alone
again, they looked at one another.

'What are we waiting for?' said one. 'Let's find this baby in a manger!'

*'So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph,
and the baby, who was lying in the manger.'*

Luke 2:16

*I*t was still dark when the shepherds ran down the hill into the now empty, silent streets of Bethlehem. Knowing they were searching for a manger, they quickly came upon the place where a mother was watching over her new-born baby.

Joseph welcomed them to come and see the sleeping child. He was swaddled tightly in strips of cloth, lying on the hay. They fell to their knees.

'His name is Jesus,' Joseph told them.

'Glory to God!' they said, looking from one to another. Then, in hushed whispers, they began to tell Mary and Joseph all they had

heard that night about the message of the angel and the amazing sight they had seen.

'This child is God's Son,' said one. 'This is the Saviour of the world.'

Then the shepherds left the family alone. They couldn't wait to tell everyone they saw about what had happened.

Mary had said nothing, but she treasured their words. Here was Jesus, her baby son. Here was a miracle she could hardly begin to understand.



'The star they had seen in the east went ahead of them
until it stopped over the place where the child was.'

Matthew 2:9



*T*he wise men saw the bright star again in the sky and followed it until it seemed to rest over a house in Bethlehem.

They climbed down from their camels and felt in their saddle bags for the gifts they had brought with them. Quietly they approached the house and were welcomed inside.

They had eyes only for the young child. They fell to their knees.

'We have come to worship the new king,' said one.

'We saw his star in the sky,' said another.

'We have brought gifts,' said the third.

They offered Mary the gifts they had brought from the East: gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were royal gifts, gifts for a king.

Then they bowed low and worshipped Jesus.

Mary wondered at these strange men in such rich clothing. She treasured their costly gifts. She understood why they had come. Jesus, her child, was born to be king.

The wise men left Bethlehem but they went back to their country another way because they were warned in a dream not to return to King Herod.

'So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.'

Matthew 2:14-15

That night, Joseph had a terrible dream.

He sat up suddenly and shook Mary awake.

'We must leave this place,' he told her.

'It is no longer safe! Get the child and gather some things together.'

As she packed their few belongings and some food for the journey, Joseph told Mary of his dream. He knew she would understand when he spoke of an angel who came with a message.

'King Herod will not rest until he believes that Jesus is dead,' Joseph told her. 'The angel said we must go to Egypt and stay there until it is safe to return.'

Mary was afraid. She lifted her son and strapped him to her body. Then under cover of darkness they left the little house that had been their home.

Herod paced up and down, waiting for the return of the wise men. When he realised they were not coming back, he was furious. He sent his soldiers into Bethlehem with orders that would cause great wailing and weeping: they were to kill all the little boys under two years old.