

What ever happened to the Baby Jesus?

by [Brett Foster](#) in the [December 26, 2006](#) issue

Near chamomile and rosebud potpourri
a pair of porcelain camels rest, bit players
glazed and unaware of this faux Nativity.
Peasant extras lift their silent, pleasing prayers
with seasonal adoration. None harbors
signs of panic: no goats or stable maids,
no wise trio, those dazzled star readers
bearing gifts of frankincense and myrrh.
Not the puzzled carpenter from Galilee.
Not the curious shepherds, nor the virgin
exhausted still from her spotless labor.

These figures encircle a barren trough.
Where have you gone, O lost Christ child?
In truth, the Messiah's size is the stuff
of legend: he's been abducted. (No Ascension-
Come-Early before the ministry begins)
Not much bigger than a packing peanut,
the babe's become an object of devotion,
begotten for those tenacious paws' wild
swatting or mouth that totes the Savior in haste.
We spy the vacancy and know the culprit:
fat Larry, golden pear and roly-poly cat,

that ring-tailed and recidivist felon.
Regular brigand of the infant Son,
he mocks this fragile coffee-table cast.
We joke that his is a holy commission,
converting birthplace to an empty tomb,
Bethlehem yoking the born and risen.

Each time He's someplace new: laundry room
or water dish. Under chair, in basement,
unknown manger now. And still His grace
and tiny lacquered limbs feel ever present,
embodying their reliquaried space.