

The Christmas Story

by

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The play begins in a typical suburban living/dining room. Upstage is a dining table, which has a few bowls of snack food and some poinsettias on it.

Downstage of the table is a small sofa. Stage left there is a chair with a side table and light. The side table has a newspaper on it. Downstage there is a large rug for the children to sit on.

The FATHER enters, grabbing a handful of chips, and sits down on one of the chairs in the Living Room.

FATHER

Ah, Christmas Eve. I can just leave the office behind, not have to worry about work until after Christmas is over.

He opens the newspaper, leaning back in the chair. He reads for a moment, and then closes it.

FATHER

Maybe I should check my e-mail just one last time. You never know if an emergency has come up. Aw man, low battery. I've got to remember to charge this thing.

He heads off upstage right. The GRANDFATHER enters from the same direction, stopping him.

GRANDFATHER

Oh, can you feel the Christmas spirit? Maybe we should do a puzzle? Play a game as a family, since everyone is going to be home tonight?

FATHER

I've got to go check my email on the computer because my phone is almost out of battery. I'll be right back.

Father exits. Grandfather sits down on one of the chairs, and relaxes. The MOTHER enters stage right, carrying several shopping bags.

GRANDFATHER

Ah, welcome home. Can I help you with those?

MOTHER

No, your present might be in here.

(Looks at the bags)

I don't remember. I've been to a hundred stores today. It's crazy.

GRANDFATHER

Sit down, relax.

MOTHER

No, I've got to make sure the food is perfect. I have to make sure the presents look nice.

The SON pokes his head in from upstage left. He runs in, and begins to poke around the bags.

SON

Did you say presents? Is there something for me? Did you get me the scooter already? Or is it hidden out in the garage like you usual do?

MOTHER

I don't hide stuff in the garage. Now, leave me alone. I've got to wrap all of these and make sure everything is set for dinner tomorrow.

Mother exits upstage left. Son walks over to Grandfather.

SON

She hides stuff behind the old couch in the garage. Everyone knows that, but we don't look. It would ruin the surprise.

GRANDFATHER

Really?

The son nods.

GRANDFATHER

You know, Christmas is a time for us to remember Jesus, who was born for us. Do you want to hear-

SON

Oh, remember! I need to remember to make sure that I have my list all ready.

GRANDFATHER

Wouldn't everyone have already bought their presents. Besides, the real gift of Christmas is Jesus.

SON

Well, I have to make sure I have it all organized and set for tomorrow. I need to check off everything I get, so when I get my gift card from Aunt Michelle, I know what to spend it on.

Son exits upstage left. Father and DAUGHTER shout from upstage right.

FATHER

I need to use it for work.

DAUGHTER

I am gone all the time to school. This is my holiday too. I need to check my Facebook page. And Claire was going to Skype me tonight from her grandma's house.

FATHER

You can use the computer in just a few minutes, I just need to check my e-mail.

All of the lights go out. All of the family members complain from around. They head in to the living room, bumping in to stuff. Grandfather walks over to the dining room table, lights a few candles, and sets them up around the room.

DAUGHTER

What did you do?

SON

What's going on? I can't see to make my list.

MOTHER

Another list?

SON

I update it daily. I was just going to go online and see what the hot new toys were. They were supposed to release one last list this morning.

DAUGHTER

I was using the computer. And no one else can use it.

FATHER

Well, I can't use it now. What if there was an emergency at work?

SON

Don't you work for a bank? And aren't the banks closed tomorrow?

MOTHER

None of it matters. Christmas is ruined. I can't wrap the presents, and all the food I prepared is going to spoil.

GRANDFATHER

Now, I wouldn't worry about it.

MOTHER

And the furnace won't work, so we are all going to freeze to death in our sleep.

SON

Cool! It will be like on that show, "Arctic Explorers of the North." We will hide from the walrus in our tents.

DAUGHTER

I have to tell Claire about this. Has anyone seen my cell phone?

FATHER

What if someone breaks in to the bank?

MOTHER

We're all going to starve!

GRANDFATHER

Quiet, everyone!

They all stare at him. He leans back in the chair and sighs.

GRANDFATHER

You are all forgetting about what Christmas is about. It isn't about presents, or vacation. It isn't about not having to work, or having to work too much. It is about giving thanks that Jesus came to Earth as an infant to save us.

They are all silent.

SON

An infant?

DAUGHTER

Don't you pay attention in Sunday School?

SON

Sometimes. Can you tell us the story?

GRANDFATHER

Yes. Everyone, come forward and have a seat.

Children are invited to sit in front of the stage. What Child is This plays while they all come forward.

GRANDFATHER

It all started over two thousand years ago. We start in the town of Nazareth, with a young woman named Mary.

The pantomimes enter. They wear all black, and add a simple element (a hat or prop) to symbolize each of the different characters.

GRANDFATHER

She was young, not much older than yourself, actually. She was by herself one day when an angel appeared to her.

DAUGHTER

Did it surprise her?

GRANDFATHER

Of course. She knelt before the angel asking what God wanted from her.

SON

What about the presents?

GRANDFATHER

We aren't there yet.

DAUGHTER

I'll bet the angel was real creepy. Hovering in the air and glowing like a ghost.

GRANDFATHER

Actually, the angel made Mary feel calm and peaceful. The angel told her that she was going to have a child. Mary said that she would do as God willed.

DAUGHTER

Did Mary tell all of her friends, then?

GRANDFATHER

Actually, many people were angry at Mary. They thought that God would come as a full grown man and conquer the world. They didn't think that he would come in such a humble way. So, none of Mary's friends wanted to talk to her.

DAUGHTER

So she was all alone?

GRANDFATHER

No, she had her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth believed in God and Mary. She even said that Mary was the mother of the Lord.

DAUGHTER

It must have been hard, no one liking her.

GRANDFATHER

God sustains us when we feel alone, and gives us comfort. We simply need to trust in him, like Mary, and we are protected.

MOTHER

And then she had Jesus.

GRANDFATHER

Not quite yet. A powerful man named Emperor Augustus was ruler of most of the civilized western world. He declared that there should be a census taken of the world.

MOTHER

We just had a census last year. It wasn't that hard, just a simple form.

SON

What about the presents?

GRANDFATHER

Not time for that yet. They had not done a census for a long time, and the Emperor wanted to know who he was ruling. Everyone had to go back to their hometown to be counted.

DAUGHTER

So I'd have to come back to Minnetonka, even if I moved to New York?

MOTHER

I would have to go back to Iowa.

GRANDFATHER

At that time, Mary and Joseph were going to be married. So, they had to travel to Joseph's hometown, which was Bethlehem. It was a hard journey, because Mary was almost ready to have Jesus.

MOTHER

And I thought it was hard getting in the car at nine months. Imagine traveling cross country. Couldn't she just wait in Nazareth?

GRANDFATHER

No, she needed to go with Joseph. So they traveled to Bethlehem, where thousands of other travelers were also headed.

SON

What about the presents?

GRANDFATHER

Very well. Meanwhile, off across the desert to the east, three wise Magi were studying the stars.

SON

Did they have ninja guards?

GRANDFATHER

No, why would they?

SON

Everyone in the east has ninja guards.

GRANDFATHER

No, they were scholars, not warriors. The Magi saw a new star, moving off towards the horizon. It was like nothing they had ever seen before.

SON

I want to see a moving star. That would be cool!

GRANDFATHER

They all looked through their books, and found out that the star meant there was king that was going to be born. So they packed up everything they had/ Then they went out and bought one present each.

SON

Just one? What were they?

GRANDFATHER

I will tell you when the presents are opened. Meanwhile, Mary and Joseph were looking for a place to stay. But Bethlehem was packed. There was really nowhere for them to stay. Luckily, they found a kind innkeeper.

DAUGHTER

At least they found a place where they were welcome.

GRANDFATHER

No, they weren't welcome. The inn was full. The innkeeper let them stay in his stable, though.

MOTHER

Oh man, that place must have been filthy. Couldn't he have found a nicer place? I mean, this was Jesus, right? At least he should have swept up a little.

GRANDFATHER

No one knew what was going to happen that night. That's why it was so special. Jesus was born off in a stable, in a small town. There was no parades or confetti, no special feast or party, because he wanted to be one of us. Just a regular person.

MOTHER

But what's Christmas with the beautiful lights? And then there's the turkey, and the pudding, and the wreaths, and the tree. And we can forget the ornaments.

GRANDFATHER

We put them up to honor Jesus' birth. But the important part is not what we eat, what we get, or what decorations are hung. What matters is that we remember he came to us.

FATHER

So it was just Mary and Joseph in a little stable?

GRANDFATHER

No, there were people who came to see Jesus.

SON

The guys with presents. And the ninjas.

GRANDFATHER

They are still traveling, without ninjas. No, these were shepherds. They were out in the fields outside of Bethlehem, watching their sheep.

FATHER

Were they tired, so they were counting sheep?

GRANDFATHER

No, that was their job. They stayed awake all night, making sure that the sheep were safe from other animals or people looking to steal them.

DAUGHTER

Doesn't sound like a fun job.

GRANDFATHER

It was a dull, boring job. You were tired and smelly all the time. You were awake at night, rarely seeing the sun.

FATHER

They were not high up the corporate ladder.

GRANDFATHER

No, they were the lowest workers in Bethlehem. No body wanted to be a shepherd. It was a lot of work, and you didn't really get much pay. But that is who the angel decided to appear to. They were everyday people who believed in God. What matters is the work we do for God, not how much we are paid.

FATHER

So, the shepherds were told about Jesus. What did they do?

GRANDFATHER

They went off right away, following the angel's directions. They went in to Bethlehem in the middle of the night, and found Jesus in the stable. They all knelt down and praised him, telling Mary and Joseph about what they had seen.

SON

What about the presents?

GRANDFATHER

Very well, the presents. After a long journey, the Magi arrived. They were tired from their journey, but they each gave their presents to Jesus. The first was a gift of gold.

SON

Wow! I should have thought of that for my list. I bet Jesus was happy. He could buy everything he needed then.

GRANDFATHER

He was just born, remember. Besides, the gold symbolized that everything we have is really his. He could have anything he wanted, but he did not. He wanted to be an everyday person. The second gift was frankincense.

SON

Frankenstein? They gave Jesus a monster?

DAUGHTER:

No, Frank's insects. Like little ants. Aren't you listening?

SON:

Oh, that's much cooler.

GRANDFATHER

Frankincense is a perfume used in prayer. That showed that everything we do should be to honor Jesus and give him praise. The third gift was myrrh.

SON

Like the stuff that makes mermaids and mermen?

GRANDFATHER

Myrrh is an oil used in death.

SON

And they gave it to a baby? I'll bet Mary was angry.

GRANDFATHER

She knew what would happen. Jesus was born to teach us how to live. The reason that he came to earth was to teach us and show us the way. The gifts from the Magi were simply their way to acknowledge what Jesus was going to do for us. We give gifts at Christmas to show that we care for each other, but we also get a gift from Jesus: a life here and beyond.

DAUGHTER

Then what?

GRANDFATHER

With everyone gathered around in the little stable in Bethlehem, Mary took Jesus from the manger. This tiny baby would grow up to save the entire world. Everyone else had offered their gifts and praise. So Mary did as well, singing a simple lullaby to her baby boy.

Sing Silent Night.

GRANDFATHER

So the shepherds left, and went back to their flocks. But along the way, they told everyone they met about Jesus. The Wise Men went back to their home country-

SON

With their ninjas.

GRANDFATHER

-with their ninjas. Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth and began to raise Jesus to be a wise man. It started-

The lights come back on. The pantomimes run off stage in all directions. The family all look around, squinting at the light.

MOTHER

We have power! We can go start wrapping presents and making dinner for tomorrow.

DAUGHTER

You can go use the computer, dad.

FATHER

I'm sure work will be fine without me.

SON

I like the story so far. Keep telling it.

Mother stands up, walks over to stage left.

A beat.

She switches the lights off again and sits back down.

MOTHER

What happens next?

GRANDFATHER

At the age of eight days, Jesus inspired a man of great age and wisdom named Simeon...

The candle goes out, along with the lights.

End.