

The Heart of Christmas

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Optional Narrative and Dramatic Scripts
By John Plastow

Narrative Script

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The Heart of Christmas

Narrative Script By John Plastow

Three narrators are needed for this script.

SONG: “Come, Celebrate Christmas!”

- 1:** Glory, glory, glory in the highest! God has come to earth, and we sing “Gloria in excelsis Deo!” Once again, we are gathered to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the promised King sent to earth by God the Father for the single purpose of restoring the relationship between God and His children.
- 2:** On that night in Bethlehem, God gave mankind the very first Christmas gift...a gift that had been promised generations before, but at the time seemed to arrive so unexpectedly.
- 3:** We invite you to come with us on a musical journey to discover the heart of Christmas—a heart which, at its very core, is the gift of heaven.
- 1:** Join us as we sing of this gift of heaven, of God’s love, and, most of all, God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

(Music for “Ring the Bells” begins.)

- 2:** It’s Christmas—a time to sing and rejoice.
- 3:** It’s Christmas—a time for family and friends.
- 1:** It’s Christmas—a time to draw near to God.

ALL: Ring the bells. Sing “Joy to the World.” It’s Christmas!

SONG: “Ring the Bells”

- 1:** Today, gifts are a big part of our Christmas celebration, and some may wonder if the heart of Christmas and the original gift of heaven have been lost in all that Christmas has become.
- 3:** After all, it’s pretty hard to see the simplicity of a baby born in a manger when you’re trying to find a parking place at the mall on December 15th!
- 1:** So, how did we get from “Joy to the World” to this gift-giving frenzy?
- 2:** Where did all this come from?
- 1:** Some might say it’s all a big marketing scheme by the stores and trace it right back to Macy’s in New York City.
- 3:** But the giving of gifts on Christmas has been around a long time, and only in recent years has the term Black Friday meant a sale on a 60-inch flat screen!
- 2:** In the fourth century in the country of Turkey, there was a Christian bishop known for his generosity to those less fortunate than himself. His name was St. Nicholas, and he would give homemade foods and sweets, oranges, and even socks and other useful things to the people of his town. Sometimes he would give his gifts in the middle of the night by dropping shoes and other items down the chimneys of his neighbors. Talk about a secret Santa!
- 1:** Even though this tradition had very humble beginnings, by the 10th century, nearly every known country was participating in a Christmas gift exchange.
- 3:** Still, good old St. Nick wasn’t where it all started. The tradition of giving gifts began even earlier. It was started in response to another example of Christmas giving.
- 2:** The custom of giving and receiving gifts at Christmas is to remind us of the ones given directly to Jesus by the magi, better known as the wise men or the three kings.
- 1:** Scripture tells us that magi from the east followed a star that rose and “went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.”

- 3:** “When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him.” *(Music for “Star of Wonder” begins.)* “Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh” *(Matthew 2:9-12).*

SONG: “Star of Wonder”

- 2:** The heart of Christmas...God’s heart...was first shown through the giving of a gift. It was the gift of heaven and came in the form of Jesus. *(Music for “When Love Came Down” begins.)*
- 1:** *(at meas. 10)* It wasn’t given because we deserved it, but because God loved us that much. It started on the first Christmas Eve—the night that love came down from God Himself.

SONG: “When Love Came Down”

- 3:** Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts...
- 1:** Frankincense was a perfume used in Jewish worship. As a gift, it showed that people would worship Jesus.
- 2:** Gold was associated with kings, and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of kings. Gold is a gift of honor.
- 3:** Myrrh was a perfume used to anoint bodies after death. It foretold that Jesus would suffer and die.
- 1:** Although the tradition is that the magi visited Baby Jesus in the Bethlehem manger, their journey actually took place during the first two years after Jesus’ birth...but we’re getting ahead of ourselves.
- 2:** Let’s go back to the beginning of the story, when the first Christmas gift was given by God Himself.

- 3:** “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. Everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them” (*Luke 2:1,3-7*).
- 2:** “And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger’ ” (*Luke 2:8-12*).

(Music for “Gotta Tell” begins.)

SONG: “Gotta Tell”

- 1:** *(Music for “Jesus, Messiah” begins.)* Who was this child born in Bethlehem? What was it about Him that caused the angels of heaven to descend upon the earth and rejoice in His coming? What was so special about this particular baby? And why did God give us such a gift? Who was Jesus? Why should we worship Him?

SONG: “Jesus, Messiah”

- 3:** “Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests’” (*Luke 2:13-14*).

(Music for “For unto Us” begins.)

SONG: “For unto Us”

- 2: Heaven’s gift...Love was born on that night in Bethlehem, and through it, the earth and all of heaven will never be the same. For through this birth, this gift of heaven, God provided a way for mankind to fall into the arms of the holy and loving God. Scripture tells us that *we all have fallen short (paraphrased from Romans 3:23)*, but through the birth of Jesus, God offers us His greatest gift: forgiveness.

(Music for “Jesus, Holy Savior” begins.)

- 1: We cannot buy this gift for ourselves, nor can we earn it. The price we cannot pay. It is, in its purest form, a gift...something we can only accept. And when we do, we receive the right to be called a friend of God.
- 3: Come to the manger. Come...look into the eyes of the gift of heaven.

SONG: “Jesus, Holy Savior” with “My Jesus, I Love Thee”

- 1: “When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about’” *(Luke 2:15)*.
- 2: “So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed” *(Luke 2:16-18)*.

(Music for “Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child” begins.)

- 3: “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told” *(Luke 2:20)*.

SONG: “Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child” with “What Did You Say Was the Baby’s Name?”

- 2:** The heart of Christmas is really about the greatest gift God could ever have given us—Jesus. Scripture tells us that *God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that whoever believes in Him may not be lost but have eternal life. (paraphrased from John 3:16)* Jesus willingly left His royal throne in heaven to live with us, and sacrifice Himself on our behalf so we could live with God forever. It is only fitting for us to thank Him and fall at His feet in worship.
- 1:** Scripture says, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God” (*Revelation 21:3*).
- 2:** “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (*Revelation 21:4*).
- 3:** Jesus said, “I am making everything new! Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life” (*Revelation 21:5; 22:17*).
- 1:** God’s heart is that the gift of heaven be offered to all who will place their lives in the hands of Jesus. Have you done so? Have you accepted God’s perfect gift and allowed Jesus to enter your heart and be a part of your life?
- 3:** You may not be proud of some of the things you’ve done in your life. You may not feel that you are worthy to be loved by God. That’s why it’s a gift, and He offers it to you. You can change your eternity tonight, right now.
- 2:** By accepting the gift, He promises to walk with you every minute of every day. He promises that He will never leave you nor forsake you. You will never be alone again.
- 3:** Will life still have its struggles? Yes. But from here on out, you won’t face them by yourself.
- 1:** If you’ve never asked Jesus into your life, you can do so during the next song by silently saying a simple prayer that goes like this. (*Prayer is on the screen.*) Jesus, I admit that I have not lived the way I should, and I’m sorry. Please forgive me. I want You to come into my life and be my Savior. Help me know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I’m a Christian.
- 2:** You can pray that at any time during the song. If you’re not sure about it yet, think about it as we sing.

(Music for "Prince of Peace" begins.)

3: Just as the magi gave their gifts and their worship to Jesus, might you consider doing the same? Might this Christmas be the time for you to kneel at the manger and accept the gift of heaven?

1: Think about it: the magi will forever be known as wise men. You can be too.

SONG: "Prince of Peace" with "Shine on Us"

3: We have one more song to sing tonight. We hope you have found yourself drawn to the true heart of Christmas, God's heart, and to His Son, Jesus.

ALL: Merry Christmas!

SONG: "What We Believe"

The Heart of Christmas

**Dramatic Script
By John Plastow**

The World of White

SETTING

The opening setting is a leveled open stage with many snowy trees.

The story takes place in an old ice plant on the outside of a small, declining mountain town. The plant is home to the World of White Ice Company, where they “make snow and ship it all over the world.” Most of the settings are in the form of props and moveable set pieces. There is an area for Clara’s cluttered office, which shows the age of the plant and the decline of the business.

The finale of the show returns to an open stage.

TIME PERIOD

It’s Christmas Eve in modern-day times.

THEME

The small mountain town has lost most of its industry, making the ice plant the last major employer. Many have left to find work, but those who have stayed hope for a miracle. Clara, like the rest of the town, feels left behind, and is searching for someone, or something, to call upon and hold onto. Her greatest fear is being alone. As Christmas dawns, she discovers that “all things are possible,” and that she is not alone.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

“The LORD Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (*Deuteronomy 31:8*).

SOUND EFFECTS

There are various sound effects scattered throughout the story. One, though, is connected to the flickering of the lights and is the same every time it occurs.

CHARACTERS

Clara White (CW) Owner and supervisor of the old World of White Ice Company, where they “make snow and ship it all over the world.” The plant is extremely out of date, and the business long since profitable, but she can’t bring herself to close it, because her late husband poured his heart and soul into it, and because of what it would do to the lives of the employees who count on her. She’s grumpy, but has a hidden soft side. She lives in a little apartment connected to her office at the plant. Few things in the apartment or office seem to work anymore. Christmas isn’t the same since her husband died, as she used to go to church with him when he was alive, but hasn’t since. She says, “I haven’t prayed in years...don’t think God is listening.” She talks to her husband as she tries to figure out if she should sell the plant.

She is separated from her son and grandchildren, who are far away, and she calls them repeatedly, which shows how lonely she is. She has given up on life, as it has been very hard and painful for her, so she stays buried in her work, even though the business is in deep decline.

Tom Young, optimistic crew lead who wants to go to college to be a podiatrist

Sandi-Lee (SL) Sweet, yet not-so-bright girl in her late teens or early 20s. She is in love with Tom and can’t wait to be a podiatrist’s wife, though she can’t pronounce it and doesn’t really know what it is. She also wants to host a cooking show.

Bob Doom-and-gloom accountant who was Clara’s late husband’s best friend

**Plant workers (3)
(PW 1-3)** Employees with a few lines each

Plant employees Nonspeaking, but responsive

Bus driver (BD) Bus driver with a few lines

Children (4) (C1-4)	Boys or girls who are part of the choir from the elementary boarding school. Character names will be assigned at casting.
Ashley (A)	Older child from the boarding school who is wise beyond her years; must have a soloist-quality voice
Teacher (T)	Choir director of the children from the boarding school
Danny (D)	Real estate salesman
Bill	Clara's grown son
Bill's family	Nonspeaking roles: Chrissy, Jordan, Harry

The World of White

SONG: “Come, Celebrate Christmas!”

(This song is used to get the audience’s attention and get the program started. It should be done fully staged.)

SCENE ONE

8:00 a.m. Christmas Eve

SFX: Loud shift whistle

(As the scene opens, the song “Ice Ice Baby” [as in the song] is heard in the background, as well as sporadically throughout the story, underscoring the hustle and bustle of the ice plant, which is in full production mode. The activity is choreographed, which aids in introducing the time, location, and circumstance of the scene. The plant is frantically getting ready to shut down for its one day off on Christmas.)

TOM: Day shift, punch in! We’ve got a big day ahead of us at the World of White Ice Company!

GROUP: *(in rhythm)* “Ice ice baby”! *(as in the song)*

TOM: Night shift, great job. You’re off for Christmas!

(Group cheers.)

TOM: Day shift, let’s get those Christmas orders filled. There are Christmas parties all over the state counting on us. *(People and props move around to illustrate the working of the factory.)* Remember who we are: the World of White Ice Company!

GROUP: *(in rhythm)* “Ice ice baby”! *(as in the song)*

TOM: Where we make snow and ship it all over the world!

(Group cheers.)

TOM: As soon as we’re done, we’ve got a great Christmas party to enjoy before we take Christmas Day off!

(Group cheers and continues activity.)

BOB: Tom, I don't mean to burst your Christmas bubble, but we really can't afford to take tomorrow off. We need the revenue from a full day of production.

TOM: Are you kidding? Tomorrow is Christmas.

BOB: I understand your emotional attachment to Christmas, but I'm trying to keep the plant open. *(pulling out a large stack of papers from his briefcase)* I've been going over the figures, and I'm going to have to let Clara know that this plant is in real trouble.

TOM: Bob, you worry too much. There's no way the boss is going to make her crews work on Christmas Day. We'll just have to work faster today to make up for it.

BOB: All the better. We can get ahead of the production schedule.

TOM: Relax, Bob! *(to the group)* Hey everyone, when the boss comes down here, I want her to see us at full speed. *(Activity speeds up, but then the lights flicker.)*

(There is a group reaction, and all activity comes to a halt.)

TOM: We'd better hurry before the wind knocks out the power again! And smile! It's Christmas Eve!

SONG: "Ring the Bells"

(During this song, the choreography shows the plant operating at full speed. Plant workers are looking forward to having Christmas Day off, so they are joyful and show it. Clara enters.)

CW: *(gruffly)* What's all this racket down here?

PW1: Good morning, Mrs. White.

PW2: Good morning, Mrs. White.

PW3: Merry Christmas Eve, Mrs. White.

SL: It's a beautiful day, Mrs. White.

GROUP: Good morning, Mrs. White!

CW: Yeah, yeah, yeah—Good morning, good morning.

TOM: Good morning, boss. I just sent the night shift home, and the day shift is in full swing to fill all of our Christmas orders.

CW: Oh snickers, is it Christmas already?

TOM: Christmas Eve, ma'am. We're working extra hard so everyone can take tomorrow off.

BOB: Clara, I've been meaning to talk to you about that...

CW: Good morning, Bob. How is the gloomy world of accounting today?

BOB: Well, since you asked...it's...pretty gloomy. In fact, I need to go over these numbers with you.

CW: That's what I love about you, Bob, you're always so upbeat.

BOB: I'd be more so if we weren't shutting the plant down tomorrow. We really need the production revenue.

CW: Out of the question. My dear late husband, Harold, may he rest in peace, always gave the crew Christmas off. (*crosses to her office; Bob and Tom follow*)

BOB: But, Clara, that was when the plant was thriving. Today, it's hardly...

CW: (*interrupting*) No, Bob. Harold would not have made the crew work on Christmas Day in a million years, and I'm not going to change that.

BOB: If you would just look at these numbers, you'll see that the World of White Ice Company...

GROUP: (*in rhythm*) "Ice ice baby"! (*as in the song*)

CW: I love it when they do that!

BOB: Clara, the company is in trouble. We can't afford to shut down for Christmas.

TOM: But, Bob, it's Christmas.

CW: I agree with Tom. I may not do much for Christmas myself, but everyone else seems to think it's a big deal, and so did Harold. If for no other reason than to honor his memory, we shut down. It's just one day.

BOB: Let's hope it's not for good.

CW: Oh snickers, Bob, you worry too much. I'm going to get you a bottle of chill pills for Christmas. This plant is going to be just fine. My dear late husband, Harold, poured his heart and soul into this place...

BOB: Yes, and I've been with the plant since it opened, but it's been a long time since we made much profit.

CW: I understand your concern, Bob, but I promised Harold that I'd keep this place going, not for me—I'm taken care of—but for the people who depend on this plant. A lot of the businesses in this little town have cashed out and left the area, leaving us as the major employer. I can't let them down. This place may be out of date and starting to break down, but it's still providing for a lot of people. (*looking out to the production floor*) Just look at them! They counted on Harold, and now they're counting on me.

BOB: I know. But I don't know how long you can keep it going.

CW: I will as long as I need to. As long as it takes to get Tom off to that college he wants to attend. What is it you want to do again, Tom?

TOM: I want to be a podiatrist. I just need to work another couple of years to get my first year's tuition.

CW: See? That's what the world needs more of—podia... (*stumbling over the word*) What was that again?

TOM: Podiatrist

CW: Yeah, whatever that is.

BOB: All right, Clara, in honor of Harold.

CW: May he rest in peace.

BOB: Yes, may he rest in peace. Remember, though, as his best friend, I promised him that I would look after you.

CW: You look after me? It's been four years, and I'm doing just fine. I don't need you or anyone else looking after me.

(*Lights flicker.*)

CW: Tom, what was that?

TOM: It's the wind. Every time we get a gust, the lights do that.

CW: Can we do anything about it?

TOM: We need to replace the transformer.

CW: Bob, can we afford to do that?

(Bob shakes his head.)

CW: I guess we'll just have to live with it and hope it doesn't get any worse.

SFX: Intercom buzzes *(Note: Intercom sounds as if it is wearing out.)*

SL: Mrs. White?

CW: *(calling out)* Yes, Sandi-Lee?

SL: *(buzzes again)* Mrs. White?

CW: Yes?

SL: Mrs. White?

CW: Sandi-Lee, my intercom isn't working. Just come and talk to me.

SL: OK. Be right there. *(knock at door)*

CW: Yes?

SL: *(from behind door)* Mrs. White?

CW: Yes?

SL: It's Sandi-Lee. May I come in?

CW: Sandi-Lee! Come in! **(Sandi-Lee enters.)**

SL: Mrs. White?

CW: What is it?

SL: I just got a call from the front gate. They said the real estate agent is here to see you again.

CW: What for? I thought I scared him off last time.

SL: He says that he was asked to come, and that he has the answer to all your problems.

CW: Who asked him to...? *(slowly turns to look at Bob)* The answer to all my problems? Tell him that I have no problems and to go away.

SL: Yes, ma'am. *(starts to leave)*

CW: No, Sandi-Lee, wait a minute. Take a memo.

BOB: Clara, at least listen to him.

CW: I have listened to him, Bob. I know what he wants. He's trying to get me to sell him this property so he can put up a theme park.

TOM: A theme park?

CW: Can you imagine tearing down a historic local business just to...

BOB: *(interrupting and finishing the sentence sarcastically)* attract thousands of tourists, give everyone jobs, and pump cash into the local economy?

CW: Oh Bob, we're not going to do that to Harold's memory.

BOB: Clara, Harold would have taken this deal in a heartbeat.

CW: Not my Harold, he wouldn't. Sandi-Lee...

SL: Yes, Mrs. White?

CW: Take this down and give it to the guy at the gate...To whom it may concern...NO!

(Bob reacts.)

SL: Yes, Mrs. White. *(turning to Tom, romantically inclined)* Hi, Tom.

TOM: *(a little embarrassed, but gazing back)* Hi, Sandi-Lee.

SL: I'm looking forward to you coming over tomorrow for Christmas dinner with my parents.

TOM: I'll be there.

SL: They're so happy that we got engaged. I've never been engaged to someone who wants to be a psychiatrist before.

TOM: Not psychiatrist, Sandi-Lee—podiatrist.

SL: Yeah. I forgot. *(pauses, sighs, and gazes at Tom)*

CW: Sandi-Lee?

SL: *(still gazing)* Yeah?

CW: The letter...to the gate?

SL: *(giggles)* Oh yeah.

BOB: Wait, Sandi-Lee, I'll go talk to him. Clara, this isn't over. *(exits as Sandi-Lee continues to gaze at Tom)*

CW: *(clears throat)* Sandi-Lee **(Tom and Sandi-Lee continue to gaze at each other. Clara grabs a can of Raid® and sprays it in the air. Tom and Sandi-Lee cough.)**

TOM: What was that for?

CW: All this sweetness is attracting ants. Let's get back to work.

SL: *(giggles)* See you later. *(exits)*

TOM: Bye.

(Lights flicker.)

CW: So, you guys are really gonna tie the knot?

TOM: Yeah, but not until after I finish podiatrist school.

CW: How long will that be?

TOM: At least six years

CW: Well, then, all the more reason I'd better keep this plant open—so both of you have a job.

TOM: I'd appreciate that.

CW: So, how's the crew today?

TOM: Upbeat—excited that it's Christmas Eve. Don't forget we have the company Christmas party later this afternoon.

CW: Do I have to go to that?

TOM: Boss, everyone expects you to be there. You can't miss it!

CW: I guess you're right. But Christmas just isn't the same since my Harold passed on.

TOM: I know. Is it getting any easier?

CW: Maybe a little, year by year. But Christmas was such a special time for Harold, it's hard for me to get into it. It's like I know Christmas is out there, but I can't seem to find it anymore.

TOM: I bet. Maybe the party will help.

CW: OK, OK. I'll be there.

TOM: And don't forget that the children's choir from the boarding school in town is coming to sing for us, and that we promised them a tour of the ice plant beforehand.

CW: (*reluctantly*) That's right! I tried to forget. You go ahead and give them the tour, Tom.

TOM: No, boss. The kids have been looking forward to the tour from the CEO of World of White Ice Company.

GROUP: (*in rhythm*) "Ice ice baby"! (*as in the song*)

CW: Are you sure you can't do it? I'll give you a big Christmas bonus.

TOM: You can't afford a bonus. And besides, I thought you liked children.

CW: I like *my* children and *my* grandchildren. For the record, I'm not particularly fond of other people's children. But I'll do this for Harold, may he rest in peace. He was on the board of the school and loved this children's choir, though I've never understood why. You can let them know that the CEO of World of White Ice Company...

GROUP: (*in rhythm*) "Ice ice baby"! (*as in the song*)

CW: I love it when they do that! Tell the kids I'll be waiting for them.

(Lights flicker.)

CW: Let's hope we still have power!

TOM: Got it, boss. I'll be on the floor if you need me. *(exits)*

CW: *(settles at her desk and speaks, as if to her husband)* Harold? What have you gotten me into? A business that can barely meet its payroll...a plant so out of date that we can't get parts to replace the replacement parts which were already replaced...Christmas alone without you...and a group of children who want a tour! I thought that was your job! So, what am I to do? I know I promised to keep this place open, but even though I won't tell Bob, I'm just as worried as he is. I'm not sure how much longer we can keep it up.

There are these real estate developers who have been hounding me the past few months. They want to write me a big check so they can redevelop our land into, get this, a theme park. They want to call it the White Knuckles Ice Kingdom! I can just see this place filled with children doing loop-de-loops on a roller coaster that has cars that look like giant ice cubes. Crazy. *(Lights flicker.)* And the wind keeps knocking out our power. Do you think you could talk to someone up there about calming it down?

(picks up phone and dials her son)

SFX: Recorded message is heard.

Hello. You have reached the White family. Bill, Chrissy, Jordan, and little Harry aren't home right now. Please leave a message.

CW: *(sighs)* Bill, it's your mother. We haven't talked for a while, and tomorrow is Christmas. Please call.

(resumes talking to her husband) Harold, I've been trying to reach that son of yours. I haven't heard from them in a while, and I thought that since tomorrow is Christmas, I might say hello to my grandchildren. While you're working on the wind, could you do something about that too?
(dials again)

SFX: Same recorded message is heard.

CW: Anyway, it's Christmas Eve, Harold, and how I wish you were here. Do you remember that Christmas we spent in the islands?

(Clara is daydreaming and doing a hula as Sandie-Lee enters.)

SL: Ma'am?

CW: *(singing)* Mele Kalikimaka is Hawaii's way...

SL: Ma'am!

CW: *(startled)* Oh, Sandie-Lee, you startled me.

SL: Sorry. The children are here. They are at the gate. Should I have them brought in?

CW: Yes. I'll meet them downstairs.

SL: Yes ma'am. You know, Tom and I plan to go to Hawaii on our honeymoon, after he goes to school to be a physicist.

CW: Don't you mean podiatrist?

SL: Yeah, you're right. *(taking out an index card and sounding out the word)* PO-DI-I-TRIST. I sure wish I knew what that was. Oh well, I'm going to love being the wife of a PO-DI-I-TRIST. He can do that while I host my cooking show.

CW: Cooking show?

SL: Yeah. *(dramatically)* I'm going to be the next Rachael Ray!

CW: I didn't know that you can cook.

SL: I can't yet, but I'm sort of in cooking school.

CW: Sort of?

SL: I watch the food channel every night. *(giggles)* Aloha. *(exits)*

CW: Aloha... *(turning back to her husband)* You know, Harold? Hawaii was nice, but we always talked of going to Bethlehem. It's too bad we never made it. I wonder what it would have been like to be in the place Jesus was born.

SONG: "Star of Wonder"

SCENE TWO

Later that day

(The power goes off, but comes back on quickly. Clara is ending the tour with the children, their teacher, and the bus driver. Also on stage are Tom, Bob, and several plant workers.)

CW: So kids, that is how we make snow and ship it all over the world!

(Children respond positively.)

T: Do any of you have a question for Mrs. White? *(hands shoot up)*

C1: Is it harder to make ice in the summer?

CW: No, these big machines don't care how hot it is outside.

C2: Does it take a lot of people to make ice?

CW: Well, we have a lot of people who work here. *(calling to Tom)* Tom, can you come over here? *(Tom joins group.)* Kids, this is Tom. He's our crew leader.

TOM: Hi, kids.

KIDS: Hi, Tom.

CW: Tom, how many people does it take to make ice?

TOM: Well, we have at least 23 people on each shift, plus the shipping department and the office staff. *(figuring it out)* That's two shifts, plus you and me—67 people total.

KIDS: Ooooooh.

CW: That's 67 people who count on this plant for their jobs.

C4: *(pointing to Bob)* Who's that?

CW: That's Bob, our accountant—the one who tells me we don't have enough money. *(Bob smiles.)*

KIDS: Ohhhh.

CW: In fact, Bob wants to make our crew work on Christmas Day.

C2: Christmas Day? What is he, crazy?

CW: He just might be!

C1: Working on Christmas...that is crazy!

(Children laugh. Bob tries to ignore it.)

C3: Mrs. White, my dad says the ice plant is too old, and it is going to shut down and put a whole lot of people out of work. Is that true?

CW: Where did he hear such a thing?

C3: My dad works with Bob.

CW: *(glares at Bob)* He does, does he? Well, you can tell your daddy that as long as I'm in charge, I'm going to make sure that everyone keeps their jobs. Isn't that true, Bob? *(Bob shakes his head and looks away.)*

T: Children, let's all thank Mrs. White for our wonderful tour.

(Children say thank you or similar things.)

T: Thank you so much, Mrs. White. Now, I think we need to get ready to sing at your Christmas party. Do you have a room where we can warm up?

TOM: Yes. We're all set for you in the break room. Sandi-Lee is going to take you there.

SL: Hi, kids. I'm Sandi-Lee, and someday I'm going to be a paleontologist's wife!

KIDS: Ooooooh. *(Sandi-Lee and children exit.)*

CW: *(to Teacher, referring to Sandi-Lee)* Cute as a bug, dumb as a rock!

T: Thanks again. We'll see you at the party. *(exits)*

TOM: Boss, I was wondering, will it be OK if we put up some extra lights and decorations for the party?

CW: Sure, I'm fine with that.

BOB: Wait. Who authorized buying decorations?

CW: I just did, Bob.

BOB: But where's the money going to come from?

TOM: It'll come out of the crew celebrations budget.

BOB: Crew celebrations? This is hardly the time for us to be celebrating! And we can't afford the extra electricity it will take for the lights.

TOM: They hardly take any at all, Bob.

BOB: Still, we're watching every penny. I must insist...

CW: *(interrupting Bob due to her annoyance with him)* No, Bob, I must insist! Tom, go ahead and put up anything you want. I'll personally pay for it. And, Bob, what's this about telling people that the plant is shutting down? All that does is make the people who work here scared for their jobs. Bob, it's Christmastime! What are you thinking?

BOB: I am just trying to help you come out of this and be taken care of.

CW: I told you, Bob, I don't need taking care of! Not from you or anybody! *(Lights flicker.)* If you want to take care of something, figure out a way for us to keep our power on.

BOB: *(backing down)* I'm sorry. *(pauses)* I guess I'm going to head out. See you after Christmas. *(exits)*

CW: *(after a silence)* Tom, I'm going up to my office, and when I come down, I want to have a Christmas party. Tell everyone we are going to have a good time, or I *will* make them work on Christmas. *(exits to her office; Tom exits the same way the children did. Once upstairs, Clara calls her son again. During the next line, Tom goes to the door of Clara's office, hears her voice, and decides not to enter, then exits.)*

SFX: Recorded message *(same as earlier)*

CW: Harold? Are you there? Are you listening? I just yelled at your best friend. Yeah, I know. He's just trying to look out for me like you told him to, but he wants to shut the plant down, putting a whole lot of people out of work, and it would kill me to let that happen. But I don't know what to do, Harold. I have no one I can call on. And on top of all that, it's Christmas tomorrow, I can't get in touch with our son, and I think I'm going to spend the day by myself, alone. I sure wish you were here, Harold. I guess I do need someone to look after me after all.

(Lights change to Tom and Sandi-Lee decorating a Christmas tree. Bob enters.)

TOM: Bob? I thought you left.

BOB: I did, but there's a huge windstorm out there. Trees are blowing over, and power lines are dropping left and right. I came back to see about getting these kids back on the bus and home to their families before it's too dark to drive these roads.

TOM: So it's not our transformer?

BOB: No. It's a much bigger problem. *(pause)* How's Clara doing?

TOM: I'm really worried about her. I keep trying to cheer her up, but it being Christmas seems to make things worse. I heard her talking to herself, saying she's alone and has no one to call on. Doesn't she go to church or something?

BOB: Not anymore. Since Harold died, she tells me she doesn't think God is listening to her anymore. I'm worried too. We'll have to do something to help her. I can't let my best friend's wife think she's all alone, especially at Christmastime.

SONG: "When Love Came Down"

SFX: Shift whistle

TOM: Merry Christmas everyone! Come on down to the production floor for the party, then take Christmas Day off!

(Everyone gathers quickly with a lot of party-type noise. Tom runs to Clara's office.)

TOM: Hey, boss, it's time for the party. You comin'?

CW: Yeah. Let's get this over with. *(gets up to leave office)*

TOM: *(as they are going to the party)* You know, there's a big windstorm knocking down power lines. Bob thinks we need to get the kids back to town right away.

CW: Bob's here?

TOM: Yeah. He came back to warn us and get the kids on the bus.

CW: Maybe there's a heart in there after all. *(to the crowd)* Well, folks, it looks like there's a storm telling us to cut this party short, so, kids, we need to get you to the bus.

(Kids are disappointed.)

C3: Do we have to?

T: We'd better go, kids.

C2: But we came here to sing.

BD: It won't be safe after dark.

C1: Could we just sing one song?

(Kids chime in, "Please, one song, please," then the plant workers join in.)

T: I guess one song would be OK.

(Kids cheer.)

C2: Let's do the song that you sing with us!

BD: I'll go get the bus warmed up. I'll meet you out there.

(Lights flicker.)

CW: Kids, you'd better sing quickly!

SONG: "Gotta Tell"

(Note: Teacher is the soloist; children sing with the choir on the melody.)

T: *(as the crowd applauds)* Great job, kids, but now it's time to go. Say Merry Christmas!

KIDS: *(as they and Teacher exit)* Merry Christmas! Good-bye! Thank you!

TOM: All right everyone. Sorry we have to cut things short. Have a great day off. Merry Christmas!

(Crowd disperses, saying good-bye and Merry Christmas to each other, leaving Clara alone on the stage.)

SCENE THREE

Immediately following previous scene

(Clara looks around at the empty plant and speaks to her husband.)

CW: Well, Harold, it looks like it's just you and me. Just like I figured... *(notices someone in the corner)* Hey! Is someone back there? Come out here.

(Danny comes out into the open.)

CW: I thought I told you to go away.

D: I'm so sorry for the intrusion, but if I could just speak with you for a moment.

CW: No. I told you I wasn't interested in a theme park that would put all of my people out of work.

D: But that's what I need to talk...

CW: *(interrupting)* No. Go away.

(Lights flicker several times and then go out completely.)

CW: This is just great! *(calling out to Danny)* I'm going to go find a flashlight, and if you're still here when I turn it on, I'm calling the cops. *(finds a flashlight and begins to peer around; doesn't see Danny, but is startled when her light shines on one of the children from earlier)*

CW: Ehhh! What are you doing here?

C4: *(calling out)* She's in here everyone.

(Children, Bus Driver, and Teacher enter.)

T: I'm so glad you're still here.

CW: But why are *you* here? I thought all of you were on the bus, heading home.

BD: The bus won't start. I tried and tried, but I can't figure out how to fix it.

T: Then I decided that I needed to get the kids back inside. And now I'm hearing on the radio that power lines are down all over, and the sheriff closed the roads into town. The windstorm is pretty bad.

BD: So, even if I could get the bus started, we can't be on the roads.

T: I'm afraid we're stuck here.

CW: What? It's Christmas Eve. You can't all stay here on Christmas Eve.

C2: *(crying)* I don't want to be here on Christmas Eve.

C1: Are we going to miss Christmas?

(Children react.)

C3: What about Santa?

C1: I have to put up my stocking.

C2: And set out cookies for him.

C3: Who'll do that if I'm not there?

(Children react.)

CW: I'm sure Santa will still do what Santa always does.

C4: Could we ask Santa to fix the bus?

C1: No, silly. He drives a sleigh, not a bus. *And it's Christmas Eve—he's busy.*

C2: I don't want to miss Christmas!

C4: I want to go home!

(more reaction)

T: Children, calm down. I'm sure we'll figure all this out. Right now, I need to call the school and let them know you're all right and safe here in the plant. Mrs. White will take care of you, won't you, Mrs. White? *(trying to prompt Clara by nodding her head)*

CW: *(doesn't catch on at first, then nods her head)* Yes, of course. Everything is going to be all right, even if we have to stay here all night. **(Kids react.)**

BD: I've got some blankets in the bus. I'll go get them. **(Teacher and Bus Driver exit.)**

CW: Wait! Don't leave me alone with... *(looks at children, who are staring at her; smiles at them)* It's going to be OK. Everyone, take a deep breath. *(all do, and it is quiet for a moment)*

C1: But we were going to sing for our parents tonight at the Christmas Eve service! Now we're stuck here.

(Children erupt again.)

CW: *(gaining control again)* Everyone, children...calm down. It's going to be OK. You can sing for me here. In fact, all of us can sing together. We can have our own Christmas Eve service.

(Children cautiously agree.)

C1: Do you know how to lead a service, Mrs. White?

CW: Ahhhh, no, but you can help me. Children, who can tell me what we should do in our service?

C3: We should sing.

CW: All right, we can sing.

C2: We should read the Christmas story from the Bible.

CW: Hmm, don't know if I have a Bible anymore.

C1: That's OK. We know the story because it was going to be part of our service tonight.

CW: Good. You can tell the Christmas story. What else?

C4: We should pray.

CW: Pray? Pray for what?

C2: We can pray for a miracle and ask Jesus to fix the bus.

(Children respond positively.)

CW: I don't know about that.

C4: Miracles do happen, Mrs. White.

(Clara clears her throat nervously.)

C1: Could you pray for us?

CW: Well, I'm not really good at praying.

C1: Why not?

CW: I haven't prayed in a long time. I'm sure God isn't listening to me anymore.

C2: Please, Mrs. White? Please?

CW: OK. *(looks around at children, who have bowed their heads; she is at a loss; C3 looks up and gestures to Clara to clasp her hands and bow her head, then urges her to pray)* God, this is...Clara. I'm not quite sure You remember me, but I'm here with a bunch of kids who would really like to go home for Christmas. We'd really like for You to fix the bus. God...I could really use some help here...

(There is a moment of silence, then Tom, Sandi-Lee, Bob, Teacher, Bus Driver, and Plant Employees enter. Bob is using his iPhone® flashlight.)

TOM: In here, gang. I have flashlights over here.

CW: Amen. *(looks up and silently says thank You)* Hey, what's going on? Why are all of you still here? Bob, is that your phone?

BOB: Yeah, it has an app for this.

(Tom turns on a flashlight and hands several others to adults, who turn them on.)

PW1: The power lines are down all over the roads, so the roads are closed.

PW2: Looks like we're here for the night with the rest of you.

TOM: *(to Clara in disbelief)* Were you praying?

CW: Yes, and we were just about to have our own Christmas Eve service. How about all of you helping us out?

PW3: We can do that.

PW2: We're not going anywhere.

(General approval. Cast moves into position for the song during the following lines.)

PW1: You got any more flashlights?

CW: Yeah, and there should be some candles in a box somewhere.

TOM: Here they are.

(Tom finds the box of candles and passes them out.)

PW3: Got a radio?

PW2: Here you go.

PW1: Let's get this Christmas Eve started.

SONG: "Jesus, Messiah"

(The Nativity story is read by the children. Assign to characters or split between children.)

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone went to their own town to register.

"So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'

"Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.'

“When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’

“So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told” (*Luke 2:1,3-20*).

SONG: “For unto Us”

SCENE FOUR

C2: I'm hungry.

(The rest of the children respond in kind.)

C3: I'm cold.

C1: *(big yawn)* I'm tired.

C4: I'm kinda scared.

TOM: You know, we still have most of the food left from the party we didn't have earlier. Let's go to the break room and get something to eat. It's also the warmest room in the plant. We can all get some sleep.

(General activity occurs as everyone exits but Clara and Ashley, who Clara doesn't see.)

CW: Well, Harold, I guess I wasn't alone for Christmas Eve after all. And you even got me to go to church...sort of. I still don't know what to do with the plant, and I still can't get in touch with Bill. I'm kinda worried about them. I figured I would have reached them by now. I could use your help...but I don't even know if you're there. **(Clara sees Ashley.)** Hey, you're supposed to be with the rest of the children. You need to get down there. You shouldn't be listening in on someone else's conversation.

A: Who are you talking to?

CW: My husband.

A: *(looking around)* Where is he?

CW: He's... I guess it looks kinda silly, doesn't it?

A: Sort of, but that's OK.

CW: Really? It's OK for me to talk to my dead husband? Or, it's OK for you to see me doin' it?

A: *(shrugs)* What were you talking about, anyway?

CW: You wouldn't understand.

A: I might. You'd be surprised at what I understand.

CW: How? You don't talk to your dead husband.

A: No, but sometimes I talk to my parents.

CW: *(realizing)* Oh dear, I'm sorry. Did your parents die?

A: Yeah, when I was really little—in an accident. I go to the boarding school because my aunt doesn't really want me around all that much.

CW: Wow, now I feel really bad!

A: Don't. I'm OK. I really am.

CW: I wish I was. *(pause)* How rude of me, dear, I don't even know your name. What is it?

A: I'm Ashley.

CW: Well, hello, Ashley, my name's Clara. Nice to meet you. *(They shake hands.)* So, Ashley, what's your secret?

A: Secret?

CW: For being OK. Ever since my Harold died, I'm definitely not OK.

A: Well, I know you like to talk to your husband, but really you should be talking to God.

CW: I don't think God wants to hear from me. When my husband died, I said some pretty miserable things to God and about Him.

A: That doesn't matter. I'm sure He's still listening.

CW: How do you know?

A: Because He listens to me...even when I am lonely, afraid, or even angry at Him. Sometimes the world seems so dark around me, but then I start talking to Him, and it's like a candle lights up, and it's not so dark anymore. In that small little light I feel hope. Then it spreads to another light, and another, until the dark is gone and I feel peace. That's how I'm OK.

CW: My world seems pretty dark right now. I don't even know how to start.

A: I do. I'll help you.

SONG: “Jesus, Holy Savior”

(dialogue during intro of song)

A: When my parents died, I was really little, so I didn’t quite understand why they were gone. Then, over the years, I got really mad. I didn’t know who to be mad at, so I was mad at everyone. That’s when my aunt sent me off to the boarding school.

CW: That must have made you feel terrible.

A: It did, but then the most wonderful thing happened.

(dialogue beginning at meas. 17)

A: One night I was alone in my room, and all I had was a candle for light. Then somehow, I just barely remembered my mom singing to me about a light, the Light of the world. And at that moment, I could hear my mom telling me about Jesus, and that if I was ever afraid of the dark, He would be my light.

*(As the song continues, the lighting shifts to include the **children** singing in the break room. They join the choir singing at meas. 44-60. **Ashley** and **Clara** are only seen faintly, but continue to talk silently.)*

(dialogue beginning at meas. 70)

A: I know the world seems really dark right now, and I know how much you miss your husband. But talking to him isn’t going to bring light back into your life. There’s only one person who can do that, and Christmas is all about Him. Christmas is when the true Light of the world, Jesus, came to us to change our darkness into light, hope, and peace. He came for me, and He came for you too.

(As the song ends, they hug.)

CW: Ashley, you should be getting back to the rest of the class. I’m sure they are wondering where you are. Thank you.

A: You’re welcome. *(They hug again, and **Ashley** exits.)*

*(**Clara** makes another call to her son, but this time the message is not heard.)*

CW: *(worried)* Bill, where are you? *(speaking to her husband)* Harold... *(thinks for a moment)* Harold, I need you to excuse me for a minute, because I want to talk to God. Do you mind?

God, I don't really know how to do this, but Ashley tells me that You will be listening. I've got a few things I could really use Your help with. First, could You please help these kids get their Christmas back? Somehow, get them back to the school so they can go home to their families. Then, wherever my son and his family are, keep them safe. Next, could You help me know what to do about the plant? If we shut down, the people in this forgotten town will really need a miracle. Thanks. Oh, and if it's not too much trouble, could You help me to not be so lonely? Could You be that light in the darkness for me?

(She settles down to sleep.)

SONG: "Prince of Peace" with "Shine on Us"

SCENE FIVE

Christmas morning

(The scene begins with the morning light shining into the plant. Clara awakens, gets up, and sees Danny sleeping nearby. He is snoring loudly.)

CW: Oh snickers! *(She kicks him, and he awakens with a jolt.)*

D: What? What?

CW: I thought I told you to scram.

D: You did, but the storm was so bad I had to turn back. Believe me, I didn't want to spend the night here. This place gives me the creeps.

CW: Well, you give me the creeps. You can go now.

D: Merry Christmas to you too.

CW: *(sighs)* Merry Christmas, Danny.

D: Thank you, Clara. You know, we've known each other for 20 years. How about, just for old times' sake, and since it is Christmas, you give me, yourself, and your employees a present? Just hear me out on this deal.

CW: Fine. You have 15 seconds.

(Just as Clara says this and before Danny can speak, the sound effect occurs.)

SFX: The bus motor starts loudly and revs.

CW: What was that?

(Bus driver enters.)

BD: Woo-hoo, it's a miracle! The bus is healed!

CW: You fixed the bus?

BD: I didn't do anything to fix it, but it started right up just now.

(Lights flicker and come back on.)

CW: Well, I'll be.

(Tom, Sandie-Lee, and Bob enter, followed by the teacher and the children, then the plant workers.)

TOM: Hey, the power is back on!

BD: And the bus is ready to go! Kids, we can get you back for Christmas!

(Children cheer.)

PW3: And I just heard that all the roads are open. We can all go home for Christmas!

(plant workers and plant employees cheer; Clara starts to walk away.)

D: Clara?

CW: *(stops and turns)* OK. Fifteen seconds—go!

D: Clara, the developers of the theme park and I are prepared to not only write you a big check, but guarantee that every employee of the plant has a job of equal position. Your agreement won't put anyone out of work, you'll be set, and the local economy will boom.

CW: But Harold poured his—

D: *(interrupting)* Clara, Harry and I started working on this deal five years ago. He knew the plant needed to close. He did this for you and everyone here.

CW: *(thinking and then talking to husband)* Harold, why didn't you tell me?!
(to Danny) Is all this in writing?

D: *(holding up contract)* In writing

CW: What do you think, Bob?

BOB: *(startled by question)* Yes!

CW: Deal. *(signs contract)* You all have new jobs for the New Year!

(cheering)

CW: Except for you, Tom. I know that you want to get going with college. And since I just came into some funds, I'd like to give you a present and pay for your first year's tuition.

TOM: Really?

CW: Really.

TOM: Thank you! I can't believe it.

CW: Believe it.

SL: Finally, I'm going to be the wife of a philanthropist!

ALL: Podiatrist!

CW: Merry Christmas everyone.

*(Everyone exits, excited and talking. **Clara** is left alone on the stage. She goes to one side, faces away, and dials the phone one more time. Without her seeing them, **Bill, Chrissy, Jordan, and Harry** enter on the opposite side. **Bill's** phone begins to ring. **Clara** hears it and turns to see them.)*

BILL: Hey, Mom, you got any plans for Christmas?

CW: Oh snickers! *(They run to each other and hug as the lights go out.)*

SONG: "Jesus, Oh, What a Wonderful Child" with "What Did You Say Was the Baby's Name?"

Invitation by the Pastor

SONG: "What We Believe"