

A script from



"A Perfect Mess"

by
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What In this lighthearted play, a young girl pulls her family together on Christmas Eve to put on an impromptu play. When Olivia feels the play turned into a disaster, her dad reminds her of how messy the first Christmas was, but that God uses messes to do amazing things.

Themes: Christmas, Family, Trust, Faith, Gospel

Who	Olivia (Mary)	Aunt Suzie (Smart Lady)
	Mom (Star)	Liam (Sheep)
	Dad (Innkeeper)	Lucas (Joseph)
	Grandpa (Shepherd)	Aunt Sadie (Smart Lady)
	Grandma (Angel)	Aunt Sybil (Smart Lady)
	Uncle Mark (Narrator)	

When Present Day

**Wear
(Props)** *See prop list at the end of this script.

Why Micah 5:2, Luke 2, Matthew 2

How Ideally, Olivia would be played by a girl anywhere between the ages of 9-12. But if a younger actor can handle the lines...fabulous! Olivia is precocious and spirited. She's assertive but not disrespectful to her parents. Aunt Suzie, Sadie, and Sybil are all sisters, and their brother is Dad. Uncle Mark and Aunt Suzie are parents to Lucas and Liam. Grandma and Grandpa are Dad's parents.

*See more ideas on how to perform this script on the last page.

Time Approximately 15 minutes

Family mills about the living room at a Christmas Eve gathering. All are onstage except Olivia.

Sadie: Such a lovely Christmas Eve. Thank you for inviting us over!

Mom: Oh, we're so glad you're here. You know you're always welcome.

Olivia interrupts, entering grandiosely and dramatically. She's carrying a small laundry basket with a blanket bunched inside (to be used as a manger).

Olivia: Ladieees and gentlemen! Cousins of all ages! It is time for...THE PLAY.

Dad: The play? What play? What does she mean "the play?"

Mom: Oh, remember, sweetie? Remember what you told Olivia on Thanksgiving?

Olivia: I remember!

Realization begins to dawn on Dad.

Dad: That's right...

Mom: You made a bargain.

Olivia: A bargain!

Mom: It was Thanksgiving Day. Football day. Olivia wanted to put on a show during the 4th quarter, and you said—

Dad remembers and speaks.

Dad: —if you'll let Daddy finish this quarter— I'll let you put on a whole play at Christmas.

Olivia: *(simultaneously with Dad)*—I'll let you put on a WHOLE PLAY at Christmas!

Dad: I did say that didn't I? And you...did not forget. Did'ja?

Olivia: No, I did NOT, Daddy.

Mom: A whole play.

Olivia: And it's Christmas Eve. That's Christmas, Daddy. So it's time for...THE PLAY.

Dad: Alright. I promised. So where should we sit?

Olivia: Sit? Oh, no, no. That won't do. I need actors!

Mom: Actors? But none of us have practiced!

Olivia: That's okay. I'll be good enough to make up for all of you.

Dad: *(to Mom)* She gets this from your side of the family.

All look at each other nervously/reluctantly.

Grandma: Well, where do you want us, Madam Director?

Olivia: *(thinking intently)* Ummm...okay, how about you all just clear a spot in the middle, and I'll call you over when it's your cue.

Everyone but Olivia takes a place either stage right or stage left. Grandpa shuffles a little slower than everyone else, sits in a chair. Olivia sets her basket down center stage, throws "Mary" head covering on, and begins.

Olivia: Alright. *(Clears throat)* Ladieees and gentlemen! Cousins of all ages! Olivia Jenson Productions presents...THE CHRISTMAS STORY! Starring the Baby Jesus! *(Holds up swaddled doll)* Mary! *(aside)*—that's me—also Joseph! And a whole buncha other people!
(continuing) Okay, we need a narrator. Uncle Mark, you can read, right?

Mark: For the most part, yes.

Olivia: Great! Read that.

Olivia hands him the script.

Mark: *(reads)* "A long time ago, in a holy land far, far away—"

Olivia: Oh, wait! Joseph. Hey, Lucas! You be Joseph.

Lucas appears horrified.

Lucas: *(to his mom, Suzie)* Aw, no way, Ma, I can't! She's my cousin! Gross.

Suzie: Lucas, acting a part in one play does not make you married in real life. If that were the case, I'd have been married in the 10th grade to Michael Tomasino!

Mark: *(as if the name pains him)* Tomasino...alright, Lucas, it's just pretend. Help your cousin out.

Uncle Mark nudges Lucas toward Olivia. Lucas' brother Liam points and taunts him quietly. Lucas remains by Olivia's side scowling throughout the play.

Olivia: You may continue, Narrator.

Mark: "A long time ago, in a holy land far, far away, there was a young girl named Mary. And God chose her to give birth to the baby everyone had waited forever to see! An angel told her she would be pregnant even before she had a husband. This made Joseph... *(noting Lucas' scowl)* ...cranky, apparently."

Olivia: Grandma, you be the angel! Come tell me I'm gonna have a baby. And tell Joseph not to be all afraid about it.

Grandma: Well, alrighty. Mary, you're gonna have the most important baby ever! And Joseph, don't you get nervous. You should marry her, anyway. This is God's plan!

Mark: "And so he did. Just like the angel said. Then Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to pay taxes. Caesar wanted to count everybody. Because Caesar had trouble sleeping and he counted people instead of sheep. *(Scratches his head confusedly, but moves on)* Mary was also super pregnant!"

Olivia turns her back to the audience, grabs a small pillow and not-so-subtly stuffs it under her shirt. She and Lucas begin to walk a winding trail toward "Bethlehem" center stage.

Olivia: Ohhh! I'm so pregnant! If only I had a donkey to ride on, or something!

Olivia begins coughing and limping as she walks.

Sadie: Is...is she limping?

Sybil: I think so. And it looks like she might have a cough, too.

Mom: Sweetie, what are you doing? Mary is pregnant, not recovering from the plague.

Olivia: Dramatic license, Mom. Makes the character more interesting. The audience has to feel her struggle!

Grandpa: What audience?

Rest of the family shrugs. Olivia and Lucas stop walking center stage.

Mark: "When Mary and Joseph got to Bethlehem, there were seriously just a ton of people there. So it was hard to find a place to stay."

Olivia: Okay, Dad, you be the people who tell us there's no room.

Dad: Oh, alright, uh...Mary and Joseph. Hello. I'm terribly sorry, but I just don't know where we're gonna put you—

Olivia: No, Dad, you gotta say it like you MEAN it!!

Dad: *(in an out-of-nowhere old-timey mobster accent)* Alright, listen up, you two! There's not enough room in this here town for all of us! So you're just gonna have to hang around this manger thing until the census crowd moves along, see??

Olivia: Dad. *(Astonished pause)* That was PERFECT.

Dad: Oh, thank you.

Mark: "And while they stayed in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to her first son, Jesus."

Olivia turns her back to the audience, pulls out the pillow, and picks up swaddled doll.

Olivia: Hey, Jesus is here!

Amused YAYs from the family.

Mark: "She wrapped Him up snug in cloths, and made His bed in the manger, because there was no room anywhere else."

Olivia lays baby in basket.

Olivia: Okay, now we need shepherds. Grandpa, can you be a shepherd?

Grandpa: I'm allergic to wool...

Olivia: Aaaaand, Liam! You can be his sheep!

Liam: A SHEEP?? But Lucas got to be a person! I'll be Joseph! I'LL BE JOSEPH!!

Lucas' turn to point and laugh.

Lucas: No way! I'M Joseph. No take-backs!

Olivia: Shepherd and Sheep, you go over to the field and watch your flock by night. Now, Grandma? I mean, Angel? You're on with the Shepherd.

Mark: "Nearby there were shepherds with their sheep in a field. And God wanted to invite them to the most important birthday party ever! Except they weren't expecting company and it scared the lambchops out of 'em!"

Grandma: Hello, Shepherds!

Grandpa and Liam simultaneous SCREAMS while holding each other.

Grandma: Well, no need to be scared! I just wanted to tell you that the Messiah is being born in Bethlehem today. You should go there! You'll know Him when you see Him. He'll be the one swaddled in cloth and sleeping in a feeding trough.

Grandpa: Back in my day, entire FAMILIES would sleep in one feeding trough and we liked it! That's what's wrong with people today...

Mark: "So those shepherds looked at each other and thought, 'We should go check that out!' Off they went to Bethlehem. And when they got there, they found Mary and Joseph and the baby just as the angel told them!"

Grandpa and Liam walk a winding path toward center stage.

Grandpa: *(studies the manger)* Yep. That's a swaddled baby, alright.

Mark: "And everyone was so amazed to hear the story the shepherds were telling!"

Olivia: Everybody act like you're real excited to hear the shepherds!

Family responds with YAYs, YIPEEs, and WOWs, while Olivia remains seated and looking overly pensive.

Lucas: Uh-hh, Mary? Shouldn't YOU be more excited to hear the shepherds talk about the angels and your baby?

Olivia: Well, for cryin' out loud, Joseph! Haven't you ever seen a girl treasure things and ponder them in her heart before??

Mom: *(looks knowingly at Dad, gesturing toward Olivia)* This is from YOUR side of the family.

Mark: "So the shepherds returned to the field praising God for everything they had seen and heard."

Olivia: Alright, Shepherd and Sheep. You can go now.

Both walk stage right or left.

Sybil: Well, bravo, Olivia! That was a lovely play, and it really brought the story of Christmas to li—

Olivia: *(interrupts)* Ohhh, but it's not over yet!

Sybil: Of course not! Hehe. I was really...hoping—

Olivia: Hoping there was more, right?

Sybil: *(trying to remain upbeat)* You betcha.

Olivia: It's your lucky day, Auntie, because next we meet the...

Olivia pauses dramatically, hoping her family will fill in the blank, which she thinks is obvious. They stand there willing themselves to know what she intends.

Olivia: *(cont.)* ...the WISE MEN!

Dad: Oh, Wise Men! Of course!

Lucas: I knew that.

Liam: I knew that before YOU did!

Sadie: It was on the tip of my tongue!

Suzie: But...but who's gonna be the Wise Men?

Olivia: *(looking around)* Well...I guess there's no boys left, so...we'll just have to have Smart Ladies! Aunt Suzie, can you and your sisters be Smart Ladies?

Suzie: Well, two of us can, anyway, dear.

Sadie: *(taking offense)* HEY!

Olivia: I learned in Sunday School that the Wise Men didn't show up right away. They came a little later. Maybe even after Jesus started walking!

Dad: All those smarts and they still couldn't show up on time. Must've had their wives with them. Haha!

Men snicker, but it's short-lived. Every adult female snaps their head around to glare at Dad. He realizes his misstep and his laugh fades fast.

Mom: Oh no, sweetie. I'm sure it was all men. Men who still haven't figured out how to use their smartphone for directions.

Dad: Hey, that thing has more buttons than a Hobby Lobby! It's very confusing!

Olivia: Okay, so Jesus was maybe a little bit older now. So I guess you just have to imagine Him like this. But taller.

Olivia picks doll up into a standing position in the laundry basket.

Olivia: *(cont.)* Ooo, and we need a Bethlehem star! But I didn't make one of those. Mamma YOU should be the star! Cuz you're already sparkly like one!

Mom: *(flattered and ready for her debut)* Me?? Oh, well...you know, I DID take a few theater classes in college, so...what's my motivation here?

Olivia: To be SO shiny that everyone looks at you like, "WHAAAAA??" Come stand here behind us. Okay, now arms out. Legs apart. There! Perfect.

Grandpa: Star of the show!

Mark: Okay, so now we are...ah, yes. Right here. "The Wise Men—ahem—the Smart Ladies came from the east. Because of the star, they were searching for the King of...King of the Juice?" Oh. Oh, no. Olivia, I'm wondering if you meant "King of the JEWS" here?

Olivia: Uh. Yeah! Yeah, that sounds more right.

Mark: I thought so. "So the Smart Ladies finally came to the house where Jesus was living. And they brought Him presents!"

Olivia: Presents! Hello, Smart Ladies, what did you bring?

Olivia picks up the baby Jesus.

Sybil: Oh! Presents...um...okay, I don't have any...

Sadie: Well, we HAVE TO bring presents.

The Smart Ladies—Suzie, Sybil and Sadie—begin desperately scanning around to find something they might use as a gift.

Suzie: Okay...okay, let's see. I brought this...party mix! Here's a present!

Sybil: And I...I brought this...this candle!

Sadie: Oh, alright. Alright. Then I brought...this!

Aunt Sadie grabs the walking cane.

Liam: Hey, that's Grandpa's cane!

Sadie: Well, Grandpa can sit until the play's over.

Grandpa: I'll sit! But only because I want to.

Olivia: Is ANYBODY taking this seriously??

Lucas: Are we almost done yet? My feet are tired.

Grandma: Now, if I'm an angel, shouldn't I be there where baby Jesus is?

Liam: I hope nobody got ME party mix for Christmas...

Grandpa: When I was your age we got an orange for Christmas, and we split it with the whole family! Mark my words, party mix is making everyone soft!

Mom: Sweetie, will it ruin the play if the star puts her arms down now? Starting to hurt a little...

Grandpa: Back in my day, there were no toys. We held our arms up for fun!

Dad: Held your arms up for—what on earth does that mean??

Lucas: I could hold MY arms up for fun.

Lucas shoots his arms straight into the air.

Liam: Bet I could hold mine up for longer!

Liam throws his arms up while staring Lucas in the eyes defiantly.

Suzie: Alright, it's getting late. Mark, we should get the boys home. They're gonna be up early, and when they're tired they compete for ridiculous championships.

Mom: Oh, don't feel like you have to rush!

Grandma: Well, we should probably get going, too. Grandpa has trouble driving in the dark, and we've got a Christmas Eve date under the mistletoe every year.

Lucas and Liam: Ew!! Gross!!

Sybil: I think I might be parked behind you, Ma. I'm gonna head out, too.

Sadie: Yeah, and I'm not blocking anyone, but I need to spend some Christmas Eve time with Cat Benatar and Mr. Meowgi.

Exiting family gather their coats/hats and belongings.

Dad: *(to Mom)* Who are Cat Benatar and Mr. Meowgi?

Mom: Her cats, dear.

Dad: Ah. Right.

All but Mom, Dad, and Olivia exit with goodbyes, hugs, "thank you's" and "Merry Christmas!"

Dad: Drive safe, everyone!

Olivia: *(standing there still holding baby Jesus)* Well, THAT was a disaster.

Mom: No! Sweetie, that was great!

Dad: Disaster?? That was the best Christmas Eve we've had in a long time! Very interactive. I'll never see the nativity the same way again.

Olivia: I've been planning this play since Thanksgiving, and we had to stop early 'cause no one could stay in character! Amateurs.

Mom: It was a real plot twist when the Wise Men brought candles, party mix, and a walking cane to the home of the Messiah.

Dad: Oh, I don't know...He's the LIGHT of the world, the BREAD of life...He made the LAME WALK. I think it works.

Olivia: Dad, you don't have to try and make me smile. The play was a complete mess. We couldn't get it right. Not even if we tried.

Dad: Oh, kiddo. It doesn't have to be perfect to be worth it. *(Pause)* Let me ask you this: Was the first Christmas a disaster?

Olivia: Daaaad!

Dad: No, seriously! I want to know what you think. When Jesus—who always was, and always will be—THAT Jesus...when He limited Himself to a human body like ours, was that a disaster?

Olivia: Well...maybe a little? He slept in a barnyard dinner bowl! His first visitors were smelly and dirty! And the Wise Men were late to the party! That's a mess, Dad.

Dad: Well, sure. No doubt about it. It LOOKS like a mess to us. But let me ask you this: Right there in the middle of it...all that confusion and the stuff that seemed to go wrong...that very first Christmas, wasn't God also up to something really, really wonderful?

Olivia: Yeah. *(Looks down at baby Jesus)* Yeah, I guess He kinda was.

Dad: See sometimes, when we think things couldn't be any worse, the very moment it looks like everything has fallen apart...well, you can bet that's probably the exact moment when God is doing some of His best, most incredible work.

Olivia: You really think so?

Dad: Based on the Bible alone? I know so. On the very first Christmas Day, God sent His Son into the world. For those of us who would never get it right without Him. Not even if we tried.

Mom: Daddy's right. And when you think about it THAT way...maybe your Christmas play was the best one that's ever been. A beautifully perfect mess. Kinda like the first Christmas.

Olivia: Huh. Never thought of it that way. Boy, you guys are smart sometimes! *(Yawns)* I'm sleepy. I think I'll go to bed now, because we both know two things.

Mom: What's that, sweetheart?

Olivia: Number one? I'm waking up in the morning while it's still dark. And number two? These stockings of ours aren't gonna stuff themselves.

Mom: *(whispering with surprised urgency to Dad)* SHE KNOWS!

Mom and Dad both laugh nervously while moving to hug **Olivia**.

Mom: *(cont.)* Goodnight, my girl.

Dad: Sweet dreams to you.

Hug ends. Olivia turns and begins walking off stage right. Dad calls to her as she goes.

Dad: *(cont.)* And Olivia? Merry Christmas. It was a PERFECT mess.

Olivia: Merry Christmas, Daddy. You too, Momma.

Olivia exits.

Mom: *(waits until Olivia exits)* Speaking of disasters, I still have SO MANY presents to wrap! You gonna help me?

Mom walks hurriedly toward stage left as she speaks. Dad follows after her.

Dad: Help you?? I still haven't assembled the...oh, you know, that thing with all the pieces!

Mom: You haven't put that together yet??

Dad: Well, YOU'RE the star of Christmas! Don't you have a little magic or something you could sprinkle around to speed things up?

Mom: Magic, maybe, dear. But I'm not a miracle worker.

Mom and Dad exit. Lights out.

COSTUMES

Most characters can wear whatever might be appropriate for a Christmas Eve get-together.

Mom will need to wear a sparkly blouse or dress.

PROPS

Seating befitting a living room

Simple Christmas decorations/Christmas tree, as in a living room ready for the season

Simple shawl or head covering for Oliva, playing Mary

Small laundry basket

Blanket

Swaddled baby doll

Adult-sized portable chair

Child-sized portable chair

A walking cane

"Script" for Narrator to read

Small pillow

Small bowl with party mix

A candle

Accessible coats, hats, purses for guests who will leave the Jensen home

HOW

Interaction between characters should be easy and playful as loving families would be.

Some guests may have drinks or snack plates in their hands. When Olivia's play begins,

all characters should be on either stage right or stage left. The nativity scene

(Bethlehem) should be front and center stage. The laundry basket should have a blanket inside that fills it almost completely. The aim is to have the swaddled baby visible to the audience when it is in the basket. Characters who interact with the Baby Jesus should come forward as their cue arrives, and move back to the side as their turn is complete (ideally seated or standing at varying heights). Uncle Mark should be careful to read his "script" as though he's seeing it for the first time, remembering it was written by a child. Lucas and Liam can feel free to pick at each other, as brothers do.