

a script from



WORSHIP

“How Miss Finch Stole... Then Saved Christmas”

By
Tracy Wells

What

This two act play combines both Miss Finch plays into one complete story celebrating the magic of Christmas and wonder of Jesus's love. Share the joy as Gabby Gazoo and the other Newvillians teach the grinch-like Miss Elvira Finch what Christmas is all about. And when her father, Frances F. Finch, turns the Christmas pageant into a flashy festival the next year, it's up to Miss Finch and Gabby to save the day and remind the town of Newville that Christmas is a celebration of Jesus's lasting love and peace on earth.

With the help of a friendly narrator who speaks entirely in familiar rhyme this entertaining holiday comedy is fun for actors of all ages and will delight audiences, while reminding them what Christmas is all about.

Themes: Christmas, Pageant, Nativity, Comedy, True Meaning of Christmas, Birth of Jesus, Seuss, Rhyme

Who

20+ Actors (1 male, 1 female, 17+ flexible, optional extras) With the exception of Mary and Joseph, all roles are flexible and can be played by a male or a female, by choosing a version of the character name and adjusting pronouns.

Kirby: Town handyperson and narrator of the story; speaks in rhyme; adult

Ms. Elvira/Mr. Elvin Finch**: cranky, solitary resident of Newville; adult

Tobias/Trudy P. Edgewater: mayor of Newville; adult

Betty/Bernie Bunch: director of the nativity play; adult

Melody/Melvin McDoogle: leader of a group of Christmas Carolers; adult

Hattie/Harry Hiccup: owner of the Christmas Tree farm who sneezes; adult

Sally/Sammy Sneeze: soda shop owner who hiccups a lot; adult

Wally/Wanda Whizzbang: energetic toy shop owner; adult

Gabby/Gabe Gazoo: angel in the church nativity play; child, age 6-12

Frances F. Finch: Miss Finch's parent; adult

Zelda/Zeke Zizzer: Frances's assistant; adult

Mary: actor in the Christmas pageant; child or adult; limited lines; female

Joseph: actor in the Christmas pageant; child or adult; limited lines; male

Shepherd: actor in the Christmas pageant; limited lines; child or adult

Angel: actor in the Christmas pageant; limited lines; child or adult

Carolers: 4+, all but 1 can be singing only if desired

Angels/Magi/Sheep/Animals: optional non-speaking nativity roles for children

Townpeople: optional non-speaking extras

**Note that if the title role is being played as male, you may change the title of the play to "How Mr. Finch Saved Christmas".

When Modern Day

Costumes Aside from the nativity roles, all costumes should reflect modern day and should be dressed for a cold winter's day outdoors. They should be bright and colorful, evoking the tone and feel of well-known Christmas television specials and movies, with the exception of Frances Finch and Zelda, who should be dressed in muted tones of black, grey and brown. Feel free to have fun with this, incorporating fun hats, trims, and accessories. All nativity characters should wear biblical attire. In Scene Three nativity characters should have sparkly pieces added to their costumes.

Set This play takes place in the small-town square of Newville, which is decorated for Christmas. A decorated Christmas tree is center, though the rear should be plain and able to be turned. Next to the tree is the setup for a nativity play, which can be a small stable with manger, or just a manger. Additional shop fronts, foliage and decor can be present. You can choose to design and decorate your town in a Seuss style if you'd like. Additional scenery to create a nativity scene can be added at your discretion.

Props Wreath
Tissues
Bottles of soda
Teddy bear
2 Baby dolls
Plush sheep
Crutches
Clipboard
Snow Shovel
Tool box with tools
Cane or wheelchair
Large book
Pad of paper and pen
Satchel (optional)
Greenery garland
Tray of cookies
Large cutout star
Lights and decorations
Tinsel trees and/or garland
Large wrapped gift box

Why Luke 2

How

This play evokes all things Seuss, so really play up the fun and whimsy. However, this play also has a ton of heart, so take your time with the quieter, more meaningful moments to let the message of the play sink in for your audience. Note that this play does not require blackouts for scene changes. Rather, if you would prefer, all scene changes can occur during Kirby's rhyming monologues, either with Kirby in a spotlight and the rest of the scene dimmed, or any minor changes can occur behind Kirby while he addresses the audience. This play can be performed by actors of all ages, whether it's a youth production, or with actors aged 4 to 104! If using younger actors, I recommend casting them in the smaller nativity roles and having them come to one or two rehearsals just before your performance.

Time

Approximately 70-75 minutes

ACT ONE

Scene One

At start of scene, various Townspeople, including named characters, enter happily, full of Christmas cheer. They carry shopping bags and packages, Christmas wreaths and wrapping paper, travel cups of hot cocoa and candy canes...basically all things Christmas fun.

Kirby enters, pushing a snow shovel, which he uses to "shovel snow" and "throw it off to one side." He does this a few times before he turns to the audience. Townspeople continue to enter and exit throughout Kirby's monologue.

Kirby: *(in sing-song rhyme)* Welcome, dear friends—friends one and all, to a town that's not big—no, it's so very small. This town here's called Newville, but new it is not. It's really quite old, *(smiles)* but we like it a lot. See, the people in Newville, they're a bright, cheery crew. They'll laugh and they'll smile 'till their faces turn blue! But there's one time of year, yes there's one holiday, when they'll be in the brightest, the cheeriest way! And that time is Christmas! That great time of year when we all gather 'round with those we hold near. We celebrate peace and we celebrate love and we give thanks for gifts given us from above. *(leans in)* But there's one gal in Newville who just doesn't get it—no this grump hates Christmas, wishes she could forget it. She dislikes decorations, hates thrilled girls and boys, she abhors all the presents and despises the noise. The name of this miser? Why, it's Miss Elvira Finch. And when it comes to Christmas, well, *(looks around, then leans in, aside)* she's really a grinch!

*The following townspeople are present in the scene (along with others): **Hattie Hiccup**, holding a wreath, **Sally Sneeze**, holding a soda bottle and **Wally Whizzbang**, holding a stuffed bear. **Kirby** starts shoveling again as **Finch** enters angrily, swatting gifts out of people's arms, throwing down wrapping paper, etc. She stomps and huffs and is obviously displeased. She crosses to **Hattie**. **Kirby** watches the action unfold, a part of the story, but not, as he shovels.*

Hattie: *(nervously)* Oh, hey, there, Elvira. How are you today?

Finch: How dare you address me by my first name? We are *not* friends.

Hattie: *(looking down)* Sorry, Miss Finch. *(sneezes)*

Finch: And for your information, I'm doing terrible.

Hattie: Sorry to hear that. *(sneezes)*

Finch: *(taking a step back)* What's the matter with you?

Hattie: *(about to sneeze)* Wha.... *(sneeze doesn't come)* Wha... *(sneeze doesn't come)* What do you mean? *(sneezes loudly)*

Finch: That incessant sneezing! Are you sick or something?

Hattie: *(chuckles)* Goodness, no! *(wipes her nose on the sleeve of her shirt)* I'm just allergic to pine. *(holds up the wreath)*

Finch: Then why in heavens are you holding that wretched thing?

Hattie: *(about to sneeze)* Be... *(sneeze doesn't come)* Be... *(sneeze doesn't come)* Be... *(sneeze doesn't come)*

Sensing **Hattie** needs rescue, **Sally** comes running over.

Sally: *(putting her arm around Hattie)* Because she sells them.

Hattie: *(sneezing loudly)* Achoooo!

Hattie starts to wipe her nose on her sleeve, but **Sally** holds out a tissue, which **Hattie** accepts.

Hattie: Thanks.

Sally: You're welcome. *(hiccups)*

Hattie blows her nose loudly into the tissue.

Finch: *(disgusted)* Why would you sell Christmas wreaths if you're allergic to pine?

Hattie: Oh, I don't just sell Christmas wreaths...I sell Christmas trees too.

Hattie sneezes.

Sally holds out her hand for the wreath.

Sally: Why don't I hold on to that wreath for a few minutes?

Hattie: Thanks. *(hands Sally the wreath)*

Sally: Hattie sells the best Christmas trees in the whole town! *(hiccups)*
You've seen her tree lot... *(looking up, as if reading the sign)* Hattie
Hiccup's Christmas Trees! *(hiccups)*

Finch: I've seen it alright! It's a terrible eyesore, is what it is! Way too many
lights strung up on poles surrounding a giant clump of spray painted
dead trees.

Hattie: They're not spray painted. I just touch them up a little bit when they
need it. *(sneezes)*

Finch: It's deplorable, if you ask me.

Sally: I take it you're more of a faux Christmas tree kind of person.

Finch: *(offended)* I most certainly am not!

Sally: *(hiccups)* Oh, sorry, I just thought—

Finch: I would never put such a garish display in my home. No way, no
how. There are no Christmas trees in *my* house.

Hattie: No Christmas tree? That's so...sad! *(sneezes)*

Finch: Maybe for you, but not for me. *(steps toward Hattie)* Your unsolicited
opinion displeases me almost as much as the smell of that wreath and
your endless sneezing!

Hattie: Sorry. *(sneezes)*

Sally: We didn't mean to offend you, Miss Finch. Why don't you come down
to my soda shop and I'll whip you up a tasty treat, on the house. *(holds
up soda bottle)* You can even try my newest soda flavor, Christmas
Cranberry, if you'd like. *(hiccups)*

Finch: I would *not* like! I would not like that at all!

Sally: It's really very tasty, I assure you. *(looks at the bottle)* I use real
cranberries and only the finest cane sugar.

Hattie: It's super yummy, *(giggles)* even though the bubbles get up my nose
and make me sneeze. *(sneezes)*

Finch: How revolting!

Sally: Yeah, the bubbles make me hiccup. *(hiccups)* But not to worry—if it's the bubbles you don't like, I also have a festive peppermint hot cocoa and a delicious eggnog that I can serve hot or cold. Just come on down to my soda shop—Sally Sneeze's. *(hiccups)*

Finch: I have absolutely no interest in a beverage concocted solely to capitalize on the holiday cheer spewed about by the citizens of this town! *(looks around)* Does no one around here have anything better to do than hang tinsel, eat candy canes, and shop for gifts until they've emptied their entire bank accounts?

Wally crosses to **Finch**.

Wally: Did I hear you're looking for a gift, Miss Finch?

Finch: You most certainly did not! *(crosses her arms and turns away from Wally)*

Wally: Having a bad day, are you? My toy shop, Wally Whizzbangs Excitement Emporium has everything you need to turn that frown upside down! *(wiggles teddy bear in her face and talks in baby talk)* In fact, I just so happen to have brought with me the cutest wittle guy who gives the greatest wittle hugs!

Finch: *(turns sharply and speaks slowly and with the fiercest anger)* Get that lump of fur out of my face right now before I tear that stupid smile right off its face!

Wally: *(jumping back quickly)* Got it. Not into cute and cuddly teddy bears.

Melody McDoogle enters, perhaps with the **Carolers** following her. They cross slowly toward **Finch** and others during the next line. **Finch** crosses from one person to the next, knocking items out of their hands as she says them.

Finch: That's right. I'm not into teddy bears. I'm not into wreaths. I'm not into presents. I'm not into trees. I dislike candy canes. I despise soda pop. I hate everything Christmas! I just wish it would stop!

Wally: *(leans in to Sally)* Not gonna lie...that was a pretty good rhyme.

Finch: And the noise! It's beyond detestable. I swear, if one more nitwit in this town approaches me with even the smallest ounce of Christmas joy, I'm going to scream.

Melody is now right behind **Miss Finch**. If **Carolers** are with her, she turns to them. If not, she encourages everyone around her to join in.

Melody: Alright everyone, let's fill these streets with song!

Melody blows pitch pipe as **Wally**, **Sally**, and **Hattie** try to signal her to stop.

Melody: (singing with **Carolers**) Joy to the World, the Lord is—

Finch: (yells) Enough!

All stop, surprised.

Melody: Well, actually, the lyric is, the Lord is come. (holds out a lyric sheet) I have an extra lyric sheet if you'd like to join in.

Finch: (takes the sheet) Here's what I think of your song, Melody McDoogle.

Finch tears the sheet in half and throws it on the ground.

Melody: (sadly) You could've just said no. (picks up the two halves of the lyric sheet) You didn't have to tear up my song. (tries in vain to put it back together)

Finch: I most certainly did because you can't take a hint. (looks around) None of you can...not when you have Christmas on the brain.

Wally: But it's just such a wonderful time of year!

Hattie: There's so much to celebrate. (sneezes)

Sally: So much to be grateful for. (hiccups)

Melody: So much joy in the world.

Finch: Maybe in your world, but not in mine.

Tobias P. Edgewater enters with **Betty Bunch**. They stop a few steps away from the group.

Melody: I think if you took a moment to look around, you'd find plenty of joy, Miss Finch.

Finch: *(looking around)* When I look around this time of year, all I see is corporate greed, excessive waste and people trying to one up each other with outlandish decorations and expensive gifts. It's disgusting and deplorable and I want no part of it.

Tobias and Betty cross to group.

Betty: Christmas is about a lot more than decorations and presents. Take the annual Nativity Pageant, for example. There's nothing more beautiful than sharing the story of Jesus's birth this time of year.

Melody: And it's directed by our very own, Betty Bunch, the greatest director in the world!

Betty: Aw, thanks, Melody!

Finch: A sticky, noisy group of kids playing cows and sheep? *(scoffs)* No thank you.

Betty: It's much more than that, let me tell you. *(getting an idea)* In fact, I'm sure I could find a role for you in the pageant if you'd like.

Finch: I don't think so. I'd rather pay Hattie to sneeze on me for an hour.

Hattie: *(sneezes)* That one's free.

Finch: I can't stand the Christmas season. I want no part of it!

Tobias: Then that's your choice, Miss Finch. If you don't want lights and songs and cookies and presents and pageants, then don't have them.

Finch: But I have to see them, hear them, smell them! Don't you see, Mayor Edgewater? Everywhere I turn, it's Christmas, Christmas, Christmas! I can't escape it.

Tobias: What do you want me to do about it?

Finch: *(matter-of-factly)* I want you to cancel Christmas.

Tobias: *(aghast)* Cancel Christmas?

Wally: That's the wackiest thing I've ever heard!

Finch: I want it all gone! I want every hint of Christmas removed from Newville!

Hattie: No trees?

Wally: No presents?

Melody: No carols?

Sally: No cocoa?

Betty: No pageants?

Finch: That's right.

Tobias: I'm sorry, Miss Finch, but I can't cancel Christmas.

Finch: Fine. *(turns to exit)*

All: *(except **Miss Finch**; surprised)* Fine?

Finch: That's right. *(stops and turns back)* But if you won't cancel Christmas, Mayor Edgewater...then I will!

Finch exits in a huff. All stand watching her exit for a moment.

Betty: *(to **Tobias**)* Can she do that, Tobias? Can Miss Finch really cancel Christmas?

Tobias: *(chuckles nervously)* Of course not! *(thinks)* At least, I don't think so...

All talk, think, etc. worriedly as **Kirby** turns to the audience.

During the next line they exit or move to other parts of the scene, ready to begin scene two.

Perhaps lights dim on others and a spotlight comes up on **Kirby**.

Kirby: Could she really do it? Could Finch hatch a scheme? Would Christmas be cancelled? Was this just a dream? *(chuckles)* Of course she won't do it! The Newville-ians said. Miss Finch can't stop Christmas, it's all in her head. The trees will be trimmed and the lights will still blink. The carols they'll sing and the cocoa they'll drink. Christmas is coming, whether Finch likes it or not...but there's one little thing the Newville-ians forgot. You see, many years ago, when the town of Newville began, the town charter was written by a foolhardy man. Oh, he wrote in the rules and he drafted the laws. He composed the whole charter, but added a clause. See this man was a Finch, the first Finch Newville had. He was Elvira Finch's great great great grand dad. So this loophole great great great grand dad Finchy added, it gave Finches power they never had had-ed. It gave them the power to add holidays... *(leaning in)* but it also meant Finches could take them away!

If using a spotlight, it dims and lights come up on the scene. Or lights can fade to black.

ACT ONE
Scene Two

At start of scene, Kirby is performing another handyman task while Betty is rehearsing the nativity pageant with Mary, Joseph, Shepherd, Angels, Animals and Magi. Wally is nearby, showing Betty a couple of baby dolls. Betty holds a clipboard.

Wally: So which one is it going to be? The doll who can wet itself and comes with its own potty and diapers? Or the doll who can talk and comes programmed with five realistic phrases?

Wally turns a doll upside down. Suddenly we hear...

Doll Voice: *(offstage, perhaps loud and gruff)* Feed me now!

Betty: *(pointing to the doll)* I'm not sure that doll is very Christ-like.

Wally: Good point. *(holds out other doll)* Baby Pees-A-Lot it is!

Betty: *(chuckles)* Thanks. *(takes doll and crosses to the manger scene.)* Alright, everyone, let's get this rehearsal started. *(holds out doll to Mary)* Mary, your baby Jesus.

Mary: Thank you. *(cradles doll in her arms)*

Betty: *(looks around)* Now we just need a tiny little lamb for our shepherd...

Wally: I just got a new shipment of barnyard plushies. I'll head over to the shop and see what I can find. *(starts to exit)*

Betty: Thanks, Wally. *(looking around nativity scene)* That should be just about it, which is great since Christmas Eve is tomorrow.

Betty looks down at her clipboard. **Shepherd** starts holding his stomach, looking as if he's ill and might vomit.

Joseph: Um, Mrs. Bunch?

Betty: *(without looking up)* What is it, Joseph?

Joseph: The shepherd doesn't look so good.

Betty: He'll look better when he has his costume on, I promise.

Shepherd looks even more ill.

Joseph: No, I mean, he really doesn't look good at all.

Betty: *(sighs and looks up)* Now, Joseph, what did I say about keeping unkind thoughts to yourself?

Joseph: I mean, I think he's going to be sick!

Joseph points at **Shepherd** who runs to the edge of the scene, holding his stomach and covering his mouth.

Betty: Oh dear!

Betty shoves her clipboard into **Joseph's** hands and runs toward **Shepherd**. **Shepherd** turns from the audience and makes vomit sounds, while **Betty** rubs his back and **Kirby** looks on.

Betty: There, there. Everything is going to be alright.

Shepherd: *(looking up at Betty)* I don't feel so good.

Betty: I know, dear. Trust me.... *(turn away from **Shepherd** with a disgusted look on her face)* everyone here knows.

Shepherd: I think I'd better go lie down.

Betty: I agree. Mary, Joseph, will you help guide our shepherd back home to his family? He needs to rest up for our big performance tomorrow night.

***Mary** puts doll in the manger, then she and **Joseph** each take one of **Shepherd's** arms and help him exit offstage.*

Kirby: *(to **Betty**)* I'm sorry to hear that your Shepherd's been sick. But I'll clean it all up, and I'll clean it up quick!

Betty: Thanks, Kirby. I appreciate it.

***Kirby** cleans up as **Wally** enters with a plush sheep. When **Kirby** is done, he attends to other tasks, looking up from time to time to watch the action.*

Wally: How is this for a baby lamb?

Betty: *(taking the sheep)* That's perfect, Wally. Thank you!

Wally: *(looking around)* Where did Mary and Joseph go? *(with a smirk)* Don't tell me they're off looking for a room at the inn?

Betty: *(chuckles)* No. They're helping our Shepherd find his way home.

Wally: Just like the bright star that appeared the night Jesus was born!

Betty: That's right!

***Tobias** enters with **Finch**, who holds a dusty old town ledger.*

Tobias: *(sighing)* Is any of this really necessary, Elvira?

Elvira: I assure you, Mayor Edgewater, it is all quite necessary. And I'll remind you, it's Miss Finch to you. We are *not* friends.

Tobias: That is abundantly clear, Miss Finch.

Miss Finch consults the ledger and walks around the scene, touching various decorations and objects as she mentions them. **Betty** turns to listen.

Finch: *(touching decoration)* So this will need to go. *(touches another)* And this. *(touches another)* And this one as well.

Tobias: *(resigned)* Fine.

Finch: *(touching the tree)* And of course the tree will have to go.

Tobias: It's planted in the ground.

Finch: That is inconvenient. *(thinks)* I suppose it can stay then, but the decorations will need to be removed.

Tobias: *(tense)* Fine.

Finch crosses to **Betty** and the manger scene.

Finch: And obviously this must be taken down.

Betty: What are you talking about?

Finch: *(indicating manger scene)* This...the little wooden bed and the hay and all of it...get rid of it.

Wally: You mean the manger scene for the nativity play?

Finch: Yes, of course. This is a *Christmas* play, is it not?

Betty: The nativity story is the entire reason we have Christmas!

Finch: Right. Then it has to go.

Wally: Go where?

Finch: Where it ends up is none of my concern. It just can't stay here.

Betty: Alright. I'll just move it to the other side of the tree. *(picks up the manger)*

Finch: *(agitated)* I don't think so! It must be removed from the town square immediately!

Betty: Fine. I'll put it in the front yard of my home, then.

Finch: Is your home within the boundaries of Newville?

Betty: You know it is, Miss Finch. My family has lived in Newville for generations.

Finch: Then I'm afraid this manger scene cannot be displayed in your front yard.

Betty: *(agitated, taking a step toward **Miss Finch**)* You can't tell me what to do, Miss Finch.

Finch: *(smugly)* Actually, in this matter, I do believe I can.

Wally: *(turning to **Tobias**)* What is she talking about, Tobias?

Tobias: *(with a sigh)* It appears Miss Finch found herself a loophole in the town charter.

Finch: A clause, to be exact. *(opens up ledger to find the clause)*

Tobias: And a rather unfortunate one, at that.

Betty: *(trying to look over **Finch's** shoulder)* What does it say?

Finch: It says here that as long as a Finch resides within the boundaries of Newville, then that Finch has the right to add a holiday to the town calendar at any time.

Tobias: Hence why we have Finch-Giving every twenty-fourth of August.

Finch: *(smiles)* Great-Aunt Tilly's birthday. My, how she loved celebrating Finch-Giving with the annual feast of wild boar and pheasant pudding.

Wally: That explains Finch-o-Ween as well, then.

Finch: The day all New-villians dress up as their favorite member of the Finch family and leave an offering of candy on a Finch's doorstep. *(leans in with a smile)* That one's my favorite.

Wally: But that clause only allows Miss Finch to *add* holidays.

Finch: And right here, at the end in small print, addendum six thirty two... *(turns the book to **Betty**)* Why don't you read that, Mrs. Bunch?

Finch hands **Betty** a magnifying glass. **Betty** puts it to her eye and leans over the book, reading.

Betty: Holiday clause, addendum six thirty-two...*(reciting)* "any holiday deemed unnecessary by a member of the Finch family may be stricken from the Newville calendar. If enacted, all displays, demonstrations and decorations of such holiday shall immediately and forevermore be removed from the boundaries of Newville." *(looks up, aghast)* So that means....

Tobias: Miss Finch stole Christmas.

Finch: I didn't *steal* it. *(shuts book abruptly)* I merely stopped it...once and for all.

Wally: But it's Christmas! She can't do that!

Finch: I think we've proven that I can. *(looks around)* Now, where was I? *(remembers)* Oh, yes. *(pointing around town)* The wreaths will have to come off the doors and the lights off the buildings and houses.

Tobias: All the houses?

Finch: As long as the houses reside inside the borders of Newville they are subject to the clause.

Tobias: *(agitated)* Fine. *(crosses his arms and turns away)* But I'm not going to be the one to tell them. You'll have to spread that particularly bad news yourself.

Finch: I'd be delighted to. *(pulls out a bright piece of paper)* In fact, I've already sent around notices to the citizens of Newville.

Sally and **Hattie** enter waving brightly colored pieces of paper. **Sally's** is soggy.

Sally: Mayor Edgewater, what is the meaning of this? *(hiccups)*

Hattie: Yeah, this was attached to one of my Christmas trees. *(sneezes)*

Sally: And mine was rolled up in a cup of peppermint hot cocoa. *(shakes it a little)* It's still a bit drippy.

Finch: I placed them where I was sure you would find them. After all, this entire town sees fit to throw Christmas in my face every chance they get. I've only taken the opportunity to do the same.

Melody and possibly **Carolers** enter.

Melody: *(cheerfully)* Why, look, it's a little gathering of friends. What a perfect time for a song.

Perhaps **Melody** turns to **Carolers** and/or blows into pitch pipe as **Miss Finch** takes a piece of tape, attaches it to a flyer.

Melody: And a one-a, and a two-a, and—

Miss Finch tapes the flyer over **Melody's** mouth.

Melody: *(with the flyer still over her mouth)* So, not the best time for a song, then?

Finch: Not now, not ever!

Melody takes the flyer off her face and reads.

Melody: *(reading)* No Christmas decorations or treats or presents or programs of any kind? *(looks up, distraught)* Not even music?

Finch: Especially not music.

Hattie: Mayor Edgewater, what is going on here?

Tobias: *(turning to Finch, pointedly)* Miss Finch, would you care to explain?

Finch: Gladly. *(opens ledger and shows it to Betty, Hattie and Melody)* Take a look at the holiday clause, addendum six thirty-two.

Hattie and **Sally** read.

Sally: *(trailing off as she reads)* Any holiday deemed unnecessary....
(shocked) What! *(hiccups)*

Melody: *(in a sing-song way, reaching a crescendo at the end of her line)* All displays, demonstrations and decorations... *(claps a hand over her mouth, shocked)*

Hattie: *(aghast)* Shall immediately and forevermore be removed from the boundaries of New... *(about to sneeze)* New... *(sneeze doesn't come)* New... *(sneeze doesn't come)*

Sensing **Hattie** needs rescue, **Wally** comes running over.

Wally: From the boundaries of Newville.

Hattie: *(sneezing loudly)* Achoooo!

Hattie starts to wipe her nose on her sleeve, but **Wally** holds out a tissue, which **Hattie** accepts.

Hattie: Thanks.

Wally: You're welcome.

Hattie blows her nose loudly into the tissue.

Hattie: So that's it? Christmas is just—

Finch: Canceled. Yes, yes it is. *(holds up the flyer)*

Sally: And what happens if we just ignore Miss Finch and keep our decorations and treats and wreaths?

Tobias: *(sighs)* The punishment for ignoring laws in the town charter are really quite severe. I hate to say it, Sally, but we really are better off just taking it all down.

Betty: But tomorrow is Christmas Eve!

Finch: All the more reason to be done with it as quickly as possible. *(hands Betty a flyer)* Do note the deadline for holiday removal.

Betty: *(looking at a flyer)* It all has to be taken down by midnight tonight?

Finch: *(looks at her watch)* That gives you roughly six hours, which, if you ask me, is quite generous.

Sally: *(sighs)* I guess I'd better get back to my soda shop, then. *(hiccups, then turns to exit)*

Wally: And I might as well close up the Excitement Emporium. No one is going to want to shop for gifts now. *(turns to exit)*

Hattie: Yeah, it's going to take me forever to get rid of those trees. *(sneezes)*

Melody: I'll help you, Hattie. *(if present, turns to **Carolers** and shoos them away)* It's not like I have any more songs to sing.

Hattie: Thanks. *(starts to exit, then stops)* Hey, you don't happen to have any tissues handy, do you? I have a feeling I'm going to need them.

Melody: Sorry, I don't.

Tobias: I do. *(takes a hanky out of his pocket and hands it to **Hattie**)*

Hattie: Thanks, Tobias. *(blows her nose then holds it out to him.)* Here you go.

Tobias: *(taking a step back)* That's alright. You can keep it.

Tobias, Hattie, Melody, Carolers, Sally, and Wally all exit or have exited by now. **Betty** turns to nativity scene and starts taking it down as **Finch** looks at ledger.

Betty: Well, Miss Finch, it looks like you did it...you stole Christmas.

Finch: I didn't *steal* it. I merely removed it from the town of Newville.

Betty: Either way, because of you, the citizens of Newville won't be allowed to share in the peace and love and wonder that is Christmas. I hope you're happy.

Finch: Oh, I am. I'm very happy...very happy indeed.

Betty shakes her head and carries off the manger, with the baby doll inside. As she exits, the baby doll falls out. **Finch** notices and walks towards the doll. She picks it up and holds it out toward where **Betty** exited.

Finch: You forgot your— *(looks down at doll)* doll.

*As **Finch** looks at doll, **Kirby** crosses to center and addresses audience. Perhaps additional actors can act out the scene as described by **Kirby** in a sort of "flashback."*

Kirby: So you might all be wondering what makes Finch so cross? Were her parents unkind? Did she have a mean boss? What is it that makes Finch hate Christmas so much? Why does she loathe presents and carols and such? The truth is, her dislike began so long ago, when Finch was quite small, before she started to grow. See, Finch was a child, and a curious one. She enjoyed all the holidays and loved to have fun. Until one day, when taking a walk with her dad, down the bright streets of Newville, a play was to be had. And this play that was playing, why it looked very fun! It had shepherds and wise men, and a cute newborn son. And this son in the play, well he was quite special. Much more than a child, he was God's holy vessel—God's very own son, sent down here to earth. And that play, the nativity, celebrated his birth. The kids in the play, why their hearts filled with joy as they proclaimed news of the newborn baby boy. And in that very moment, on that very day, Miss Finch wanted so much to be in that play. But her dad was too busy, no he didn't have time, for his child to wear costumes, to pretend and to mime. So he pulled her along, past the nativity, and when she started to cry he bent down on one knee. He said, "stop all your crying, don't you dare make a fuss. The Finches know which is important to discuss. And this silly play? Don't you give it a thought. If it's Christmas you want, then a Christmas I've bought. I've got Christmas all wrapped up and under the tree, right back in our home, just you wait and see." But little Miss Finch, well she wouldn't be deterred. She said, "Daddy, what about the good news we just heard?" "What good news?" her dad asked. "Why the news of the reason for celebrating Christmas! The reason for the season!" But her dad shook his head and he led Finch away, saying "Sorry, little Finch, you can't be in this play." And from that day forward, yes, from that morning on, Miss Finch hated Christmas...and wanted it gone.

***Kirby** resumes task as **Gabby Gazoo** enters, dressed as an angel. She walks slowly toward **Finch** as **Finch** looks at the doll.*

Finch: This doll...this must be—

Gabby: Baby Jesus.

Finch: *(looks up quickly)* What's that, now?

Gabby: The baby Jesus. *(points at doll)* You've got him right there.

Finch: *(dismissively)* Oh, this old thing? This is just a stupid doll.

Gabby: To some people it might be just a doll. But in the nativity play, that doll is very important.

Finch: *(looks at the doll)* It is?

Gabby: *(walking slowly toward Finch)* Oh, yes.

Finch: And how would you know?

Gabby: I'm in the play.

Finch: Are you now? *(bends down)* What's your name?

Gabby: Gabby Gazoo. *(proudly)* I'm playing one of the angels.

Finch: *(indicating **Gabby's** costume)* That explains the silly getup.

Gabby: It's not silly. *(twirls)* I think it's beautiful.

Finch: And I suppose being an angel in the nativity play makes you some kind of expert about the baby Jesus?

Gabby: No.

Finch: *(smugly)* I didn't think so.

Gabby: But being an angel in the nativity play means I've learned a little something about delivering the good news of the birth of Jesus.

Finch: Oh really? And what did you learn?

Gabby: I learned that long ago an angel appeared to a group of shepherds who were tending their sheep in a field.

Finch: An angel appearing out of nowhere? *(scoffs)* Well, that's scary.

Gabby: The shepherds were frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people. Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord."

Finch: Okay. And what exactly were these poor, frightened shepherds supposed to do with that information?

Gabby: Go to him. The angel told the shepherds they would find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. That's where they would find Jesus, the Savior.

Finch: *(holds up the doll)* And I suppose this old doll is supposed to be that Savior?

Gabby: That's right.

Finch: *(looking at the doll scornfully)* How can a little baby be a savior?

Gabby: Because he was sent to earth from God to bring peace and joy and to forgive us all our sins.

Finch: *(looking at doll with wonder)* A baby could do all that?

Gabby: Jesus could. *(holds out her hands for the doll)* He still can, if you let Him.

Finch: *(turns away, still clutching the doll)* Yeah, well, this is just a doll, and without it you can't put on your play. Correct?

Gabby: That's correct.

Finch: Good. Then I'm just going to make sure to lose this doll so you'll never find it.

Gabby: But the play is tomorrow!

The next couple of lines are delivered in sing-song rhyme.

Finch: Sorry to tell you, Miss Gabby Gazoo, but this baby is lost. Now go away, *(waving her away)* shoo!

Gabby: But it's Christmas Miss Finch. Please, have a heart!

Finch: Christmas is over. I've torn it apart. *(starts to exit)* Just go home, stop crying. No need to boo-hoo. *(exits)*

Gabby: *(watching Finch exit)* Christmas is still coming. *(turns to audience, with a smile)* I know just what to do!

Gabby runs offstage as excitedly as **Kirby** watches, with a smile. Lights fade to black on scene.

ACT ONE

Scene Three

The next day, Christmas Eve. The tree is now turned to show the undecorated side and all other decorations have been removed.

At start of scene, Kirby is performing another handyman task. During Kirby's monologue, Tobias, Sally, Hattie, and Wally enter, wearing drab clothing and looking sad.

Kirby: *(stops task and turns to audience)* Hello there, dear friends, a new day is here, the twenty-fourth of December—a day usually filled with cheer. But there's no joy this morning, no there's none to be had. All the wonder has wandered, all the gladness now sad. Cause Miss Finch, well, she'd done it, yes, she triumphed at last. No more Christmas in Newville, their last Christmas was past. No more merry decorations, no more thrilled girls and boys, she got rid of the presents and removed all the noise. The trees are all bare, no more holiday glee, but the thing we'd miss most...the play....no more nativity.

Kirby returns to his work as **Tobias, Sally, Hattie** and **Wally** congregate in the center.

Tobias: I can't believe she actually did it!

Wally: I had to close up the Emporium. No one wanted any gifts.

Hattie: I got rid of all my trees. *(sneezes)*

Sally: And there's no more cocoa or Christmas Cranberry soda on my menu. *(hiccups)*

Tobias: The Christmas cheer has all but disappeared from Newville.

Melody enters, perhaps with the **Carolers**. They all look sad. **Melody** carries a stack of papers and half-heartedly blows into a pitch pipe.

Melody: (singing with **Carolers**, half-heartedly) Twinkle Twinkle little star. How I wonder what you are.

Wally: Why are you singing that?

Melody: What else am I going to sing? Now that Finch has outlawed Christmas, all my usual carols are illegal.

Tobias: I'd be careful with any songs about stars. Finch might think you're talking about the star over Bethlehem and then you'd be in trouble.

Finch enters, at first unseen, carrying a bag with the baby doll inside and holding the ledger.

Melody: (sighs) Fine. (shuffles papers, finds the one she wants and blows into pitch pipe) Old MacDonald had a farm. (sighs, dejectedly) E-I-E-I- (drawn out, dejectedly) Oooooooooo.

Wally: (leans in to **Sally**) Not gonna lie...that was the saddest song I've ever heard.

Finch crosses to group.

Finch: You're not singing Christmas carols, are you, Melody?

Melody: (sadly) Does this look like the face of someone spreading Christmas joy through the gift of music?

Finch: No, it doesn't. (smiles) And thank goodness for that. (turns to **Hattie**) And how about your trees?

Hattie: (about to sneeze) All go.... (sneeze doesn't come) go... (sneeze doesn't come) gone! (sneezes loudly)

Finch: If the trees are gone, then why are you still sneezing?

Hattie: From the (about to sneeze) sa.... (sneeze doesn't come) sa... (sneeze doesn't come) sap! (sneezes loudly)

Hattie starts to wipe her nose on her sleeve, but **Sally** holds out a tissue, which **Hattie** gratefully accepts.

Hattie: Thanks.

Sally: You're welcome. *(hiccups)*

Hattie blows her nose loudly into the tissue.

Finch: Very well. *(turns to Sally)* And your Christmas drinks?

Hattie: Stricken from the menu. *(hiccups)*

Finch: *(smiles)* Excellent.

Wally: And you'll be glad to know I haven't sold a gift all day, Miss Finch.

Finch: Wonderful, Mr. Whizzbang. *(turns to Tobias)* Mayor Edgewater, it appears you are in compliance with the new law. All Christmas decorations have been removed from Newville.

Tobias: That's right. If anyone were to come to Newville, they wouldn't know it's Christmas at all.

Finch: Just the way I like it. *(closes the ledger with a bang)* That should conclude our business, then. Have a nice, quiet, normal, non-hol-i-day, everyone.

Finch walks a few steps away, gleefully surveying the town.

Hattie: I guess we might as well go home. *(sneezes)*

Sally: Yeah, I've got some bills to pay. *(hiccups)*

Wally: And I've got chores to do. Those windows aren't going to wash themselves.

Hattie, Sally, and Wally turn to exit.

Melody: Have a good day, Tobias.

Tobias: You too, Melody.

Melody and **Tobias** also turn to exit. All walk dejectedly in various directions as **Betty** enters from the opposite direction, followed by **Gabby Gazoo**, **Mary**, **Joseph**, **Shepherd** and any additional nativity actors. They are all joyful. **Betty** carries a Bible and a shepherd's hook.

Betty: Why the sad faces?

Sally, **Hattie**, **Wally**, **Tobias** and **Melody** all stop and turn. **Kirby** stops his work and watches.

Tobias: Betty, what are you doing here?

Betty: It's Christmas Eve, Tobias. *(turns to the nativity actors)* My friends and I have come to share the story of Jesus's birth.

Finch turns.

Sally: But what about Miss Finch? *(hiccups)*

Hattie: She'll never let you put on a Christmas pageant. *(sneezes)*

Finch: That's right. *(crosses to Betty)* There is no more Christmas in Newville. *(opens the ledger)* It says so right here.

Betty: With all due respect, Miss Finch, Christmas comes to Newville whether you like it or not.

Finch: *(closes the book)* What is that supposed to mean?

Joseph: Christmas is much more than presents and carols and decorations.

Shepherd: It's the celebration of the most wonderful moment the world has ever known.

Mary: The day our Savior, Jesus was born.

Gabby: *(stepping closer to Miss Finch)* So you can get rid of all the Christmas trees...you can unstring the lights and garlands...you can put away the song books and unwrap the gifts. You can even take away our stage and our manger so that we can't put on our play. But you can never take away the true meaning of Christmas. That gift was given to us by God, and it is our gift to share.

Betty: And for those who want to hear it, we're going to share it right here and now.

Sally: I'd like to hear it! (*hiccup*)

Hattie: Me too! (*sneezes*)

Betty: Then gather around.

Betty opens the Bible as all except **Kirby** and **Miss Finch** gather around.

Kirby stands back, watching **Miss Finch**, who turns away, upset.

Betty: (*reading*) Now there were shepherds nearby living out in the field, keeping guard over their flock at night.

Betty passes Bible to **Shepherd**.

Shepherd: An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone all around them and they were absolutely terrified.

Shepherd passes Bible to **Gabby** or another **Angel**. Feel free to assign either of the following of Gabby's lines to different Angels if you'd like.

Gabby: But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid."

Miss Finch turns to listen.

Gabby: Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people. Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord.

Gabby or **Angel** hands the Bible to **Tobias**.

Tobias: This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

Finch takes doll out of bag and looks at it. **Tobias** hands the Bible to **Melody**.

Melody: Suddenly, a vast, heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

All: *(joyfully without **Finch**)* Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among people with whom he is pleased.

Gabby: Merry Christmas, everyone!

***All** except **Miss Finch** are now smiling, hugging one another, wishing each other "Merry Christmas" etc. They are joyful as they remember the true meaning of Christmas. **Miss Finch** looks from the doll to the assembled group as **Kirby** steps forward and addresses the audience.*

Kirby: Now Miss Finch was puzzled. How could this be? She'd removed all the presents, gotten rid of the trees. There'd be no more presents, no more songs to be sung. She'd stopped Christmas from coming, and yet it had come! And just then, in Newville, on that very day, the twenty-fourth of December, Finch's barriers gave way. As the story of Jesus's birth reached her ears, Finch felt something special she hadn't in years. A change in her heart, which before was much hardened; it started to open, no longer so guarded. And just like the shepherds so long ago, when Finch learned of Jesus, her heart, it did grow. It grew and it grew and still grew a bit more until Finch realized something she hadn't before. She hadn't stolen Christmas, hadn't stopped anything—because Christmas was Jesus...*(smiles)* our own newborn king.

Finch: *(looks up)* Wait!

***All** turn to **Finch**.*

Tobias: What is it now, Miss Finch?

Betty: We're not doing anything to break your new law. We're just telling the story of Jesus's birth.

Finch: I know.

Wally: Then what is it?

Finch: I... *(looks down at doll)* I have something you might need.

***Finch** crosses to **Gabby** and holds out the doll.*

Gabby: The baby Jesus. He's not lost anymore. You found him.

Finch: *(smiles)* Actually, He found me. *(stands)* Now, I don't know about the rest of you, but Newville is looking a little drab. *(crosses her arms and looks around)* It is Christmas you know.

Tobias: But the town charter....?

Finch: Christmas means more than any silly old town charter. This is the birth of the Savior we're talking about, Mayor Edgewater.

Tobias: Does that mean...

Finch: *(rips a page out of the ledger and throws it to the ground)* Merry Christmas Newville!

All cheer.

Finch: We'd better get going. There's so much to do.

Mary, Joseph, and Shepherd exit to retrieve the manger.

Hattie: I'll trim the tree! *(crosses to the tree and turns it around during the next few lines, sneezing)*

Tobias: I've got some garland back at the mayor's office!

Tobias exits and returns shortly after with garlands and other décor, which he strings up.

Sally: I'll bring the refreshments!

Sally hiccups and exits, returning shortly after with a tray full of drinks.

Melody: And I've got just the song to sing.

Perhaps Melody turns to Carolers or Townspeople and passes out music sheets.

Finch: Great! *(turns to Betty, Gabby, and the nativity actors)* How about you guys? Are you ready to put on the nativity play?

Betty and Gabby look at one another.

Betty: Not quite.

Gabby: We were thinking that the play is missing something.

Finch: What's that?

Betty: When an angel appeared and told you about the good news of the birth of Jesus, you were frightened at first, but you listened, and as a result your heart became open.

Gabby: Just like the shepherds so long ago.

Betty: What do you say, Miss Finch? Do you want to be in the nativity play?

Betty holds out the shepherd's hook to **Finch**.

Finch: Me? A shepherd?

Gabby: I think it's the perfect role for you, Miss Finch.

Finch: *(pulling the shepherd's hook close)* I couldn't agree more.

All should have returned and the set redecorated. The manger is center.

Tobias: The town of Newville is ready for Christmas.

Wally: And ready for the Christmas play too!

Betty: Then everyone, please take your places.

Gabby hands **Mary** the doll and **Mary** and **Joseph** take their places behind the manger. **Shepherd** stands on one side. **Finch** stands off to one side, unsure.

Finch: I'm not sure where to go.

Betty: Just let your heart guide you.

Miss Finch crosses tentatively into manger scene and kneels next to the manger.

Kirby, Wally, Sally, Hattie, Tobias, Melody and **Carolers/Townpeople** gather around to watch the play. **Gabby** steps forward.

Gabby: 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.'

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

Joseph: When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told to them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

Mary: But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Betty hands the Bible to **Finch** and points for her to read.

Finch: The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

All watching play applaud. **Miss Finch** stands.

Sally: What a wonderful way to celebrate Christmas.

Hattie: And what a great performance from Miss Finch!

Finch: *(feigning anger)* How dare you call me that?

Hattie: Sorry.

Finch: *(smiles)* My friends address me by my first name. *(takes Hattie's hand)* Call me Elvira.

Hattie: Alright. *(about to sneeze)* El.... *(sneeze doesn't come)* El... *(sneeze doesn't come)* Elvira! *(sneezes loudly)*

Hattie starts to wipe her nose on her sleeve, but **Elvira** holds out a tissue, which **Hattie** gratefully accepts.

Hattie: Thanks.

Elvira: You're welcome.

Hattie blows her nose loudly into the tissue as **Kirby** steps to center and addresses audience.

Kirby: And now you might think our story's at its end. Who started as enemies have now become friends. And Newville is now filled with smiles once more since Christmas in Newville has finally been restored. Returned are decorations and thrilled girls and boys. They've brought back the presents and especially the noise. Now gone is the miser, there is no more grinch. When it comes to loving Christmas, no one loves it more than Finch. But I promise you this, our story's not through. *(leans forward and winks)* Come see Christmas get stolen again in Act Two!

Lights fade to black.

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

Scene One

*At start of scene, various **Townspeople** enter happily, full of Christmas cheer. They carry shopping bags and packages, Christmas wreaths and wrapping paper, travel cups of hot cocoa and candy canes... basically all things Christmas fun. **Kirby** enters, pushing a snow shovel, which he uses to "shovel snow" and "throw it off to one side." He does this a few times before he turns to the audience. **Townspeople** continue to enter and exit throughout **Kirby's** monologue.*

Kirby: *(in sing song rhyme)* Welcome, again, dear friends one and all, to that town that's not big—no, it's so very small. This town here's called Newville, but new it is not. It's really quite old, *(smiles)* but we like it a lot. And Newvillains love Christmas, as you already know when Jesus's love made Miss Finch's heart grow. She finally learned what this day was about, and stopped shouting and sulking and stomping about. She celebrated peace and she celebrated love and she gave thanks for gifts given her from above. But our story's not over, a year has just past, and it's time for a new Newvillle Christmas at last. *(leans in)* So what does this year's Newville Christmas have in store? Well it begins like the way it all started before...

*The following townspeople are present in the scene (along with others): **Hattie Hiccup**, holding a wreath, **Sally Sneeze**, holding a soda bottle and **Wally Whizzbang**, holding a baby doll. **Kirby** starts shoveling again as Finch enters cheerfully, waving and smiling and interacting pleasantly with the **Townspeople**. She crosses to **Hattie**. **Kirby** watches the action unfold, a part of the story, but not, as he shovels.*

Hattie: *(nervously)* Oh, hey, there, Miss Finch. How are you today?

Finch: *(feigning anger)* How dare you address me by my first name? We are friends. *(smiles)* Call me Elvira.

Hattie: *(smiles)* Sorry, Elvira. *(sneezes)*

Finch: Hattie, why are you holding that wreath? You know you're allergic to pine.

Hattie: *(about to sneeze)* Be... *(sneeze doesn't come)* Be... *(sneeze doesn't come)*
Be... *(sneeze doesn't come)*

Sensing **Hattie** needs rescue, **Sally** comes running over.

Sally: *(putting her arm around Hattie)* Because it's not pine. *(hiccups)*

Finch: What is it then?

Hattie: *(sneezing loudly)* Ahhhhh...spruce!

Finch: I'm guessing you're allergic to spruce as well. *(holds out a tissue)*

Hattie: Thanks. *(blows her nose then holds it out to Finch)* Here you go.

Finch: That's alright. You can keep it. *(smiles)*

Sally: Why don't I hold onto that wreath for a few minutes?

Hattie: Sure. *(hands Sally the wreath)* I'm trying something new this year down at Hattie Hiccup's Christmas Trees.

Sally: She's selling a variety of trees, not just pines. There's spruce and fir and silver tips and lodge poles. *(hiccups)*

Hattie: I figure there's gotta be one type of tree I'm not allergic to!

Sally: Unfortunately she hasn't found it yet.

Finch: You might need to switch to tinsel trees, Hattie. I'd buy one!

Sally: I thought you said those were garish and that you'd never put a Christmas tree in your house.

Finch: That was the old Elvira Finch. The new Elvira loves all things Christmas— the lights, the decorations, the presents, the singing and yes— even the noise!

Hattie: There's no way you can like the noise. *(sneezes)*

Sally: Even I don't like the noise. *(hiccups)*

Finch: Well I do.

Melody McDoogle enters, with **Carolers** following.

Melody: If you like noise, you're gonna love what we've been working on!

1ST Caroler: Sing your hearts out, everyone!

Melody blows pitch pipe.

Carolers: *(singing)* Joy to the world, the Lord is come!—

Melody signals for the **Carolers** to stop and turns to **Finch**.

Melody: Aren't you going to stop us?

Finch: Why would I stop you?

Melody: Because you hate Christmas?

Finch: Not anymore. Keep going.

Melody: *(nervously)* Um, we can't.

Finch: Why not?

2ND Caroler: Because we haven't learned the rest of the song!

Melody: I figured we wouldn't get past the first line so I didn't teach them the rest of it.

Finch: Well I can't wait to hear what you've got.

Melody: You heard her, folks! *(blows pitch pipe)* And a one and a two and a—

Finch: *(stops her)* I meant later. Right now I've got Christmas gifts to buy and I'm a bit parched. *(turns to Sally)* Say, Sally, do you have any festive new drinks down at Sally Sneeze's Soda Shop?

Sally: I sure do! *(holds up a soda bottle)* I call it Fruitcake Fizz! It's a mix of cherries, pineapple, and raisins with hints of orange and lemon peel.

Melody: Lemon peel? I hope it's not too sour. *(rubs her neck)* Terrible for the vocal cords.

Sally: Trust me, this soda's got plenty of sugar in it.

Hattie: It's super yummy, *(giggles)* even though the bubbles get up my nose and make me sneeze. *(sneezes)*

Sally: The bubbles make me hiccup. *(hiccups, then smiles)* But it's worth it.

Finch: I'll stop in for some after I find the perfect gift for my father.

Wally crosses to **Finch**.

Wally: Did I hear you're looking for a gift, Miss Finch?

Finch: Elvira, please. And yes I am! But my father already has so much and can be awfully hard to buy for.

Wally: My toy shop, Wally Whizzbangs Excitement Emporium has gifts that'll make any dad super glad!* *(*If **Frances** is cast as a female, use "make any mom super calm")* How about a doll who can talk and comes programmed with five realistic phrases? *(holds out baby doll)*

Wally turns the doll upside down. Suddenly we hear...

Doll Voice: *(offstage, perhaps loud and gruff)* I've got a boo boo!

Finch: *(chuckling)* Thanks, Wally, but I think I'll keep looking.

Wally: Suit yourself. *(to doll)* Who's the cutest wittle baby ever?

Doll Voice: *(offstage, perhaps loud and gruff)* I want my mommy!

Wally hugs the doll as **Tobias P. Edgewater** and **Betty Bunch** enter. **Betty** is on crutches and has a foot injury.

Betty: And I want that doll for this year's Christmas pageant.

Wally: What happened to the Baby Pees A Lot I gave you last year?

Finch: Who cares about Baby Pees a Lot! What happened to your foot, Betty?!

Tobias: She had a little accident.

Betty: I was carrying the manger to the town square and dropped it on my foot.

Melody: Oh no!

Betty: Oh, yes! My foot's broken in three places.

Sally: That's one heavy manger.

Betty: You're telling me.

Tobias: The doctor said Betty needs lots of rest and to keep her foot elevated.

Wally: Isn't that going to be a little difficult since Betty's in charge of putting on the big Christmas pageant?

Betty: That's actually why Mayor Edgewater and I are here.

Tobias: We need you to save the Christmas pageant, Elvira.

Finch: Me? But how?

Betty: I can't direct the pageant anymore, but we were hoping you could.

Finch: Isn't the pageant in three days?

Betty: Yes, it is. But we have the manger from last year and the cast is set.

Finch: I... I don't know the first thing about Christmas pageants.

Gabby Gazoo enters.

Gabby: But I do!

All: Gabby Gazoo!

Gabby: I've been in the Newville Christmas pageant every year since I was four years old. I'd be happy to help you, Miss Finch.

Hattie: We all would! *(sneezes)*

Finch: In that case... I'd love to be in charge of the Christmas pageant!

All cheer.

Gabby: I think this pageant is going to be great!

Finch: I hope so. *(in sing-song rhyme)* In all the years past I wish Christmas would end, until one special girl became a new friend. *(smiles at Gabby)* Now I understand Christmas is a gift from above, and celebrate Jesus's birth, peace and love.

Wally: *(leans in to Sally)* Not gonna lie... that was a pretty good rhyme.

Gabby: Let's make this the best Christmas pageant Newville has ever seen!

Betty: Ahem. Pageant director with a broken foot standing right here.

Gabby: Let's make it *one of* the best pageants Newville has ever seen!

Betty: That's better.

Finch: I have so many ideas! Hattie could you donate garlands and trees?

Hattie: Of course!

Finch: Sally, do you think you could provide the refreshments?

Sally: Absolutely!

Finch: And Melody, do you think you can teach your Carolers the rest of that song in time to sing it at the pageant?

Melody: I know I can!

Finch: Great!

Wally: And I'll provide the baby Jesus! (*holds up the baby*)

Doll Voice: (*offstage, perhaps loud and gruff*) Change me!

Finch: Sure thing, Wally, only let's pick a different baby doll... something a little more Christ-like.

Wally: Why does everyone hate Baby Talkington?

Gabby: What about me? How can I help?

Finch: You have the biggest job of all, Gabby. You'll be my assistant director!

Gabby: Sounds spectacularly splendiferous!

Tobias: The Newville Christmas Pageant is saved, thanks to Miss Finch!

Finch: I won't let you or the town of Newville down, Mayor Edgewater.

Tobias: I have faith in you, Miss Finch.

*All exit as **Kirby** turns to the audience. Perhaps lights dim on scene and spotlight on **Kirby**.*

Kirby: Could she really do it? Could Finch save the day? Would the pageant be pulled off? Would Finch stage the play? *(chuckles)* "Of course she can do it!" the Newvillians said. "And she's not alone, she's got help from her friends." The trees will be trimmed and the lights will all blink. The carols they'll sing and the cocoa they'll drink. The pageant would happen, there would be a show... but there's one thing the town of Newville didn't know. See over in Oldeville, the senior village next door, was a Finch these Newvillians hadn't quite met before. It was Frances F. Finch, and if it's not apparent, you'd know Frances better as Elvira's parent. Yes, Frances was rich, and always wanted more, thought Christmas is better when bought at the store. Francis knew the Newville charter, every rule and all the laws, he had found every loophole, was aware of each clause. To stop Newville's Christmas, Frances would have to attack, and the only way to do that... *(leaning in)* was for old Mr. Finch to come back!

If using spotlight, it dims and lights come up on the scene. Or lights can fade to black.

ACT TWO

Scene Two

*At start of scene, **Kirby** is performing another handyman task while **Gabby** is rehearsing the nativity pageant with **Mary, Joseph, Angel,** and **Shepherd**. **Gabby** has a clipboard. They are gathered around a wooden manger. **Shepherd** is not paying attention.*

Angel: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another—

*There is a beat as **All** wait for **Shepherd**.*

Angel: *(annoyed)* Ahem. The shepherds said to one another—

There is a beat as **All** wait for **Shepherd**.

Gabby: Shepherd!

Shepherd: *(startles)* What?

Gabby: It's your line.

Shepherd: Oh, right. *(getting into character)* Glory to God in the highest.

Angel: That's my line.

Shepherd: Oh, right. *(tries again)* Isn't he beautiful, Joseph?

Mary: That's my line.

Shepherd: Makes sense.

Gabby: Do you know your line, Shepherd?

Shepherd: Of course. It's— *(thinks, doesn't know)* Line?

Joseph: Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

Gabby: See? Even Joseph knows it.

Shepherd: Then maybe he should be the one to say it. I'm sure we could find a way to make it work.

Gabby: Why don't we take a break and give *some* people *(looks pointedly at Shepherd)* a chance to look over their scripts...again. We'll pick up here in ten minutes.

Shepherd, Joseph, Mary and Angel cross off to one side and look at a script as **Finch** enters, with **Betty**, who is still on crutches.

Finch: As you can see we've got the nativity set in place and Hattie will be stopping by in a little bit with the greenery.

Betty: It looks wonderful.

Finch: There's just a few last minute touches, but otherwise I think we're ready for tomorrow.

Betty: You've obviously got everything under control, Elvira. I knew you were the right person to take over the Christmas pageant.

Finch: I couldn't do it without Gabby, here. She's a great assistant director.

Gabby: I had no idea it was so much fun on this side of the stage. *(leans in)* I kind of like bossing people around.

Betty: *(leans in)* I agree!

Gabby and Betty laugh as **Frances F. Finch** enters, using a cane or in a wheelchair. He is followed by **Zelda Zizzer**, who walks next to him, holding a large book, a pad and pen and or pushes the wheelchair, in which case, she should wear a satchel containing the book as well as the pad and pen which she removes and takes notes with once **Frances** is in place.

Frances: So do I.

Elvira: *(surprised)* Father! What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be at the Oldeville Retirement Community?

Frances: Zelda sprung me out. You remember my assistant, Zelda Zizzer.

Elvira: Of course. Hello Zelda.

Zelda: Good day, Miss Finch.

Betty: Who has an assistant in a retirement home?

Zelda: Mr. Finch does, of course. Who else is going to make his appointments and manage his schedule?

Betty: I would assume the staff that work there, but what do I know?

Finch: It's nice to see you, Father, but I'm pretty sure our visit was scheduled for next week.

Zelda: *(consulting her pad or phone)* That is correct. The twenty-ninth at two o'clock sharp.

Gabby: You're not seeing your father on Christmas?

Finch: My dad doesn't do Christmas.

Frances: That's not true.

Finch: We haven't celebrated Christmas since I was a child.

Frances: But we've celebrated plenty of other holidays in other months.

Zelda: *(consulting her pad or phone)* There's Finch-en-tine's day on the thirteenth of February.

Finch: Ah yes. The day all Newvillains send cards to the Finch family letting them know how much they're adored.

Frances: And don't forget about Saint Finch's Day.

Zelda: The twenty-first of March

Gabby: There was a saint in the Finch family?

Frances: *(chuckles)* Heavens, no. Saint was our beloved family dog.

Gabby: Ah, so that's why we leave dog bones on the steps of Finch Manor on that day!

Frances: Old Saint would've loved those bones, wouldn't he, Elvira?

Finch: Yeah, sure. But you still haven't said what you're doing here in Newville, Dad.

Frances: Can't a father visit his daughter?

Finch: Of course, but—

Frances: And haven't you been telling me I shouldn't stay cooped up in Oldeville? That I should get outside in the fresh air more?

Finch: Absolutely, but—

Frances: Well, here I am—visiting my daughter, outside in the fresh air.

Finch: (*admonishingly*) Dad.

Frances: (*sighs, coming clean*) Alright. I heard you were in charge of the Christmas pageant and I wanted to see if you needed any help.

Finch: How did you hear that?

Frances: From Tobias of course.

Finch: Tobias?

Zelda: Tobias P. Edgewater, mayor of Newville.

Finch: I know who Tobias is. What I don't know is why he's talking to my father.

Zelda: (*consulting her pad or phone*) Mayor Edgewater and your father have a standing appointment, every Wednesday at one p.m.

Finch: A standing appointment? What for?

Frances: Oh, you know...a little of this, a little of that. He keeps me abreast of the goings on in Newville and I make regular contributions to the city beautification fund.

Finch: I see. And you expect me to believe you want to help with the Christmas pageant? You've never expressed interest in Christmas before.

Frances: Nor have you, until very recently if I'm not correct.

Gabby: That's true. Miss Finch stole Christmas last year. But she gave it back.

Betty: Well, she didn't steal Christmas exactly, just the baby Jesus—

Gabby: Which was a Baby Pees-A-Lot from Wally Whizzbang's Excitement Emporium.

Frances: So what do you say? Will you let old Papa Finch help?

Finch looks to **Gabby** and **Betty**.

Gabby: I think it would be really nice.

Betty: So do I.

All look to **Zelda**.

Zelda: I have no opinion whatsoever. I'm just here in my capacity as Mr. Finch's assistant.

Finch: Then I say yes!

Frances: Great! *(looks around)* I can see that I've arrived just in time. There's so much to do.

Mary, Joseph, Shepherd and **Angel** take notice and cross to the group.

Finch: Actually, we're almost done.

Frances: Almost done? How can this be? This is a stage show, right?

Betty: That's right.

Frances: But it's so...plain. Where are the lights? The pizzaz? The wow factor?

Betty: This pageant is about the birth of Jesus.

Frances: Yeah, so?

Gabby: So it doesn't need any pizzaz.

Joseph: Jesus was born in humble surroundings.

Mary: There was no room at the inn, so Mary gave birth in the stables out back.

Angel: He was wrapped in cloth and laid in a manger.

Shepherd: And shepherds came from the fields to worship him.

Gabby: The birth of Jesus *was* the wow factor. God sending his only son to bring peace and joy to the earth is the most amazing thing this world has ever known.

Betty: Gabby's right. In this case, less is more.

Frances: That may be true, but this is a play celebrating his birth, right?

Gabby: Right.

Frances: Might I suggest we make a few minor adjustments?

Finch: Like what?

Frances: Well in my experience, when it comes to celebrations, more is more.
(crosses to **Finch**) Can't you see it now? A thousand twinkling lights illuminating the stage like a sky full of stars?

Finch: (warming to the idea) That sounds lovely.

Frances: (pointing) And over here glittering trees in every color of the rainbow, covered from top to bottom in ornaments?

Finch: (getting excited) I like it. Very modern chic.

Frances crosses to **Mary** and **Joseph**.

Frances: And our actors—these costumes are a bit drab, wouldn't you say?

Betty: Hey! I made those myself.

Frances: And a little outdated.

Gabby: They're period costumes! They're supposed to be outdated!

Frances: I think we can jazz them up a bit.

Finch: So do I!

Betty: (to **Gabby**) I don't like where this is headed.

Gabby: Me either.

Mary, Joseph, Shepherd and **Angel** cross away from the group or exit as **Hattie** enters, carrying a plain green garland, followed by **Sally**, who carries a tray of cookies, **Wally**, who carries a baby doll, and **Melody**, followed by **Carolers**.

Hattie: Here's that garland you wanted, Elvira, and I have two trees in my truck that are ready to unload. (sneezes)

Finch: Thanks Hattie, but I don't think we need them anymore. We're going in a different direction for the pageant this year.

Frances: What do you think about brightly colored tinsel trees instead of plain old boring green ones?

Hattie: They *could* be better for my allergies! *(sneezes)*

Sally: How about my sugar cookies? Will they work for the refreshments?

Sally holds out the plate. Gabby takes one and takes a bite as Frances looks at them in disdain.

Frances: Sugar cookies? Aren't they a little overdone?

Sally: They're perfectly done! Crispy on the outside and soft on the inside!

Gabby: They're great, Sally.

Frances: I only meant that everyone makes sugar cookies at Christmas. *(to Finch)* I know this bakery in New York City that can ship the finest French pastries you've ever tasted. They can be here by morning.

Finch: That sounds amazing! Don't you think, Sally?

Sally: I do love a good macaron!

Melody: You don't need to worry about the music. We've got that covered.

Caroler 3: We finally learned the rest of the song!

Melody: Give it a listen! *(blows into pitch pipe)* And a one, and a two, and a—

Frances: *(stops Melody)* Actually, I have the most fabulous choir in mind. You've never heard voices more angelic.

Finch: That sounds fantastic! *(to Melody)* Maybe you and your carolers could sing with them.

Melody: That could be fun!

Wally: Well I finally found the perfect doll for baby Jesus. He's an ultra realistic doll with an air pouch that makes it look like he's breathing!

Frances: You know what makes the most realistic baby?

Finch: What?

Frances: A real live baby! I've got a friend who manages child actors. I'm sure I could get him to send down a few infants for you to choose from.

Finch: That would be incredible. *(to All)* Isn't that incredible?

All except Gabby look at one another and nod and say things like, "it sure is", "yes", "wow" etc. as Tobias enters. He crosses to stand with Kirby and they both listen, unseen by others.

Gabby: Mr. Finch, it's nice of you to take an interest, and your ideas are... well... interesting.

Frances: Thanks, little girl.

Finch: This is Gabby Gazoo. She's my assistant director.

Gabby: And as the assistant director I have to ask—do we have the budget for any of this?

Frances: No need to worry about silly things like budgets. Now that I'm helping with the pageant, no expense will be spared! Zelda, take this down.

Zelda: Yes, Mr. Finch. *(pen at the ready over the pad)*

Frances: Call the folks down at Pete's Party Palace and get twenty trees in every color and make sure they are covered in lights and decorations. Have them shipped to Hattie Hiccup's Christmas Trees.

Zelda: *(writing)* Got it.

Frances: Then call Carla's Costume Cottage and order all new costumes for Mary, Joseph, and the rest of the bunch in the latest fashion.

Finch: *(excitedly)* And cover them in glitter!

Frances: That's right. The more glitter, the better!

Betty: Says the guy who's clearly never worked with glitter.

Frances: Then call Larry's Lighting Laboratory and have him bring a thousand twinkling lights.

Finch: *(disappointed)* Only a thousand?

Frances: Right. Make it two thousand.

Finch: *(excitedly)* Make it *ten* thousand!

Frances: That's the spirit! Have him deliver ten thousand of the most twinkle-tastic lights in his shop.

Zelda: Right away, Mr. Finch.

Tobias and Kirby *cross to the group.*

Tobias: Ten thousand lights?

Gabby: Mayor Edgewater! Thank goodness you're here.

Betty: The Christmas pageant is starting to be filled with, well, pageantry.

Gabby: It's getting out of control.

Frances: Elvira and I have it all perfectly under control, I assure you. Isn't that right, Elvira?

Finch: That's right, Dad!

Hattie: There's gonna be colorful trees! *(sneezes)*

Sally: And French pastries! *(hiccups)*

Melody: And a huge choir! *(blows into her pitch pipe)*

Wally: And a real live baby Jesus! *(holds up the doll)*

Doll Voice: *(offstage, perhaps loud and gruff)* Feed me!

Wally tucks the babydoll behind his back sheepishly.

Gabby: You've got to stop them, Mayor Edgewater!

Frances: Stop us? *(laughs)* Why would you want to do a thing like that?

Finch: We're only trying to make this the best Christmas pageant Newville has ever seen!

Frances: And it won't cost Newville a dime. I've offered to pay for everything myself.

Finch: The Finch fortune will finance the festivities!

Tobias: Well if it's not going to cost us any money and it's going to be bigger and better than before, then who am I to say no?

Gabby: Who says bigger is better?

Frances: I say it is! Bigger is always better. More is more!

Gabby: Don't you see? All the lights and fancy treats and excessive decorations—

Betty: And the glitter!

Gabby: Right—and the glitter—has taken away what Christmas is all about.

Betty: It wouldn't even feel like Christmas anymore.

Gabby: It would be an entirely different holiday altogether!

Frances: An entirely different holiday, eh? Zelda, the town charter, please.

Zelda: Right here, Mr. Finch. *(hands **Frances** the book)*

Betty: I don't like where this is going.

Frances thumbs through it as **Kirby** turns to the audience.

Kirby: Many years ago, when the town of Newville began, the town charter was written by a foolhardy man. Oh, he wrote in the rules and he drafted the laws. He composed the whole charter, but added a clause. See this man was a Finch, the first Finch Newville had. He was Elvira Finch's great great great grand dad. So this loophole great great great grand dad Finchy added, it gave Finches power they never had had-ed. It gave them the power to add holidays... *(leans over the book and points to a spot)* And that clause, it remains there to this very day.

Frances: Ah, yes, here it is. The holiday clause.

Gabby: Not again! Elvira stole Christmas last year but it came just the same.

Frances: I'm not taking Christmas away. However, as the town charter states, as long as a Finch resides within the boundaries of Newville, then that Finch has the right to add a holiday to the calendar.

Betty: So?

Frances: So I propose we add a new holiday—a holiday filled with more decorations, more music, more treats, more presents—more of everything a Newvillian could ever want!

Finch: *(wrapped up in the excitement)* And we can call it Finchmas!

Hattie: Finchmas sounds ahh... *(about to sneeze)* ahh... *(sneeze doesn't come)*
ahh... *(sneeze doesn't come)*

Hattie: *(sneezing loudly)* Ahhhhh... mazing!

Hattie starts to wipe her nose on her sleeve, but **Kirby** holds out a tissue, which **Hattie** accepts.

Hattie: Thanks.

Frances: That's right! It *will* be awesome. Trust me, Newvillians will love Finchmas. There'll be no need for Christmas anymore.

Gabby: They'll always be a need for Christmas.

Frances: Not once Finchmas comes to Newville.

Betty: But you can't just add a holiday!

Tobias: Wally is right. You don't reside in Newville anymore, Mr. Finch. You reside in the Oldeville Retirement Village.

Frances: I might not reside in Newville... but Elvira does. *(turns to **Finch**)* What do you say, Elvira? Want to bring Finchmas to Newville with me?

Finch: *(thinks, then excitedly)* I do!

Betty: Elvira, no!

Finch: It'll be great, just you wait and see.

Frances: Perfect! Elvira and I will go over the rest of the details at Finch Manor.

Finch: Gabby, you can handle the rest of rehearsal on your own, can't you?

Gabby: I... I guess so.

Finch: Great. There's so much to do and so little time!

Finch exits with **Frances** and **Zelda**.

Hattie: I'll head to the Christmas tree lot to make room for the new trees!

Sally: And I'll make room in my cooler for the macarons!

Sally and **Hattie** exit.

Melody: And I'll contact the choir so we can start learning their songs.

Caroler 4: Aw man! We finally finished learning this one!

Melody and **Carolers** exit.

Wally: I guess it doesn't matter which doll is the baby Jesus now. Here.

Wally hands the doll to **Gabby** and exits.

Tobias: And I'm sure it's time you rested that foot, Betty.

Betty: Probably.

Tobias and **Betty** turn to exit.

Gabby: Wait! What are we going to do? We can't let the Finches steal Christmas again!

Betty: I'm afraid there's nothing we can do, Gabby. The town charter is clear. The Finches can add a holiday any time they like.

Betty and **Tobias** exit as **Gabby** looks at the baby doll.

Gabby: But Miss Finch knows the true meaning of Christmas! She celebrated the birth of Jesus and let his love fill her heart. How could she forget about that now? And why would her father want to replace it with Finchmas?

As **Gabby** looks at the doll, **Kirby** crosses to **Gabby**. Perhaps additional actors can act out the scene as described by **Kirby** in a sort of "flashback."

Kirby: So I hear that you're wondering what makes Finches so fickle. What makes them change Christmas so shockingly quick, well, you just might remember that when Finch was small, Christmas was her favorite holiday of them all. She longed to be in the nativity show, but her dad was too busy, he took Miss Finch home.

He bought many presents on that Christmas day, hoping gifts would make Miss Finch forget about the play. But Miss Finch fought forgetting, no she quite remembered, and from that day on, she was known as ill-tempered. As for celebrating Christmas? Miss Finch just said no. And each year at Christmas her resentment did grow. As for old Frances Finch, well this made him quite sad.

Believe it or not he was not a bad dad. He forgot that Christmas was about much more than trinkets and doodads you buy at the store. That Christmas was about the birth of God's Son, who was sent here to earth to love everyone. Frances loved his Elvira, he wanted to connect, and yet this time each year, Elvira continued to reject. So now Frances is making up for every past Christmas.

Gabby holds up the doll.

Gabby: Which is why he's added the flashy fake Finchmas!

Kirby: That's right, but the question is what can you do?

Gabby: Just leave it to Jesus... *(holds up the doll)* And Gabby Gazoo!

If using spotlight, it dims and lights come up on the scene.

Or lights can fade to black.

ACT TWO

Scene Three

The next day, Christmas Eve. The town of Newville is covered in lights and brightly colored decorations. It is gaudy and garish. The manger is gone.

*At start of scene, **Kirby** is performing another handyman task. During **Kirby's** monologue, **Tobias, Melody, Sally, Hattie, and Wally** enter, putting the final touches on the décor. They are hopeful, but something doesn't seem right.*

Kirby: *(stops task and turns to audience)* Hello there, dear friends, a new day is here. What was once Christmas Eve is now Finchmas this year! The trees are all tinsel, the lights are so bright, and all eagerly await the pageant tonight. This year's show is going to be something new, full of zing and pizzaz, flair, zip and verve too. The Newvillians have gotten swept up in the glitz, and Frances spent money to put on the ritz. But there's one thing to wonder on this special day... what would become of Newville's own nativity play?

***Kirby** returns to his work as **Tobias, Sally, Hattie and Wally** gather in the center.*

Tobias: Wow! Would you look at all of this!

Wally: Finchmas has officially arrived in Newville!

***Finch** enters with **Frances** and **Zelda**. **Finch** carries a large cut out star.*

Finch: *(excitedly)* Isn't it wonderful?

Sally: It's something. *(hiccups)*

Hattie: I was practically blinded when I saw Main Street covered in ten thousand twinkle lights. *(sneezes)*

Zelda: It's actually twenty thousand.

Frances: Like I always say... more is more.

Tobias: So is everything all set for today?

Sally: The finest French foods are fit to be feasted on. *(hiccups)*

Frances: I told you they were amazing. Best pastries money can buy.

Melody: And the splendiferous singers are set to serenade!

Frances: Isn't the choir incredible? Worth every penny.

Finch: And how about the decorations?

Hattie: Twenty tinsel trees are twinkling as we tal... *(sneeze doesn't come)* tal...
(sneeze doesn't come) talk! *(sneezes loudly)*.

Finch: If the pine and spruce trees are gone, then why are you still sneezing?

Hattie: From the *(about to sneeze)* tin.... *(sneeze doesn't come)* tin... *(sneeze doesn't come)* tinsel! *(sneezes loudly)*

Sally: Hattie's allergic to tinsel too.

Hattie starts to wipe her nose on her sleeve, but **Sally** holds out a tissue, which **Hattie** gratefully accepts.

Hattie: Thanks.

Sally: You're welcome. *(hiccups)*

Hattie blows her nose loudly into the tissue.

Tobias: And is the Christmas pageant ready?

Frances: You mean the Finchmas pageant.

Tobias: I mean the nativity play—the one that celebrates the birth of our savior, Jesus? Is it ready?

Finch: Oh it’s ready, and I promise you, it’s gonna knock your socks off!

Wally enters, carrying the manger. It is covered in lights and décor. Maybe there is a flashing sign with an arrow that says “Son of God” or “Messiah”.

Following **Wally** are **Mary, Joseph, Shepherd** and **Angel** wearing bright, glittering costumes that are quite different than the traditional nativity look.

All except **Frances** and **Finch** are concerned. **Wally** places the manger in the center of the stage area or where the nativity pageant is taking place.

Melody: Consider my socks officially knocked off.

Tobias: What is that?

Wally: This is the manger. Elvira asked me to whoosh it up a bit.

Elvira: Zhuzh it up.

Wally: That’s what I said—whoosh it up.

Tobias: And it looks like Mary and Joseph and the rest of the gang got whooshed up as well?

Mary: This is a *lot* of glitter.

Joseph: I’m pretty sure Joseph did *not* wear sequins.

Shepherd: I don’t know. I kind of like being shiny. (*wiggles around and gets distracted*)

Angel: (*rolling her eyes*) Of course you would.

Tobias: This is a big change from last year.

Frances: Like I always say, bigger is better.

Wally: I thought you said more is more.

Frances: That too. And now Newville is shinier and glitzier, and well, new-er! And it's all thanks to my Elvira.

Finch: Thanks, Dad. *(in sing song rhyme)* My love for Christmas could not be contained, but with Finchmas my ideas need not be restrained! Now forever in Newville this holiday can be an extravagant display—that's the Finch guarantee!

Frances: That's right. And speaking of extravagant displays, it should be just about time for the pageant. Isn't that right, Zelda?

Zelda: The pageant is scheduled to begin in exactly two minutes.

Finch: Everyone to their places!

Mary, Joseph, Shepherd, and Angel take their places.

Finch: *(looks around, worried)* I wonder where Gabby is. She's our assistant director. She should really be here for the show.

Gabby enters, carrying a large wrapped gift. Betty enters behind her on crutches.

Gabby: I'm right here.

Finch: Oh, good. You made it just in time. The play's about to begin.

Gabby: No, it's not.

Zelda: Yes it is. It's right here on the schedule, see? *(shows Gabby her note pad or phone)*

Gabby: Well it's going to have to wait a few minutes. *(holds out the gift)* Miss Finch needs to open her gift first.

Finch: *(taking the gift)* A gift? For me?

Gabby: Of course.

Frances: Gifts are amazing. And the more a gift costs, the better it is. Open it!

Finch: Alright.

Finch opens the box. Inside is the baby doll.

Wally: It's Baby Talkington!

Doll Voice: *(offstage, this time sweet)* I love you.

Mary: No. *(smiles)* It's baby Jesus.

Finch: Why did you give me this doll, Gabby? You know we hired a real baby for the pageant.

Gabby: I thought you needed a reminder of what this holiday is all about.

Finch: Finchmas?

Gabby: No, Christmas.

Frances: We don't need Christmas anymore.

Betty: We always need Christmas.

Frances: But Finchmas is bigger and brighter than any holiday.

Gabby: Christmas isn't about being bigger and brighter.

Betty: It's actually a quiet, humble story.

Mary: Of a young mother...

Joseph: Traveling afar with her husband.

Shepherd: Putting their faith in God to guide them.

Angel: And knowing that the most precious gift in the world was God's own newborn son.

Finch: *(quietly, looking at the doll in wonder)* In all the excitement of Finchmas I'd almost forgotten.

Hattie: Me too. *(sneezes)*

Sally: Me three. *(hiccups)*

Wally: Not gonna lie... I kind of miss our old pageant.

Melody: Our *Christmas* pageant.

Tobias: It's not too late to bring back Christmas.

Frances: *(angrily, in sing-song rhyme)* Of course it's too late! Finchmas is here. You can't change your mind, Christmas won't reappear. The money's been spent and the damage is done. Finchmas is here to stay! The Finches have won!

Betty: That's not up to you, Frances.

Zelda: Miss Bunch is correct. You're not a citizen of Newville anymore, Mr. Finch.

Frances: Need I remind you you're my assistant, Zelda? Who's side are you on?

Zelda crosses to stand next to Tobias.

Zelda: I'm on their side—the side that remembers the true meaning of Christmas.

Tobias: And if she wants to, as a citizen of Newville, Miss Finch can save Christmas, once and for all.

Frances: *(angrily, to Elvira)* So what's it gonna be, Elvira? Are you going to tear down everything we've built together? Now that we've finally found a holiday that we can celebrate this time of year, are you going to just throw it all away because a little girl gave you a baby doll?

Finch: I...

All: *(except Finch, lean in)* Yes...

Finch: I...

All: *(except Finch, lean in further)* Yes...

Finch: *(hands Gabby the doll)* I need to think!

Finch paces back and forth, a finger on her chin, thinking. All **Others** follow behind her and lean in, eaves dropping.

Kirby: *(turning to audience)* And right there in town, on that Christmas Eve day, Miss Finch must decide what becomes of the play.

Finch turns to audience and holds up a finger, as if getting an idea.

Others stop.

Finch: It's not about presents.

Finch resumes pacing, finger on chin.

Others follow.

Finch turns to audience and holds up a finger, as if getting an idea.

Others stop.

Finch: It's not about trees.

Finch resumes pacing, finger on chin.

Others follow.

Finch turns to audience and holds up a finger, as if getting an idea.

Others stop.

Finch: Not carols or cookies or any of these.

Finch resumes pacing, finger on chin.

Others follow.

Finch turns to audience and holds up a finger, as if getting an idea.

Others stop.

Finch: It's about a Father's love given to us on earth, through the gift of his Son's miraculous birth.

Kirby: She saw then and there what she hadn't before—that Christmas couldn't be bought, didn't come from a store. So Miss Finch knew right then that Finchmas was through!

Finch: Come on Gabby! (takes **Gabby's** hand)

Kirby: She said.

Finch: I know just what to do! (crosses to **Zelda**) Zelda, do you still have the town charter?

Zelda: (holds out a book) Right here. (hands it to **Finch**)

Finch flips through the charter during the next line.

Kirby: Now remember Elvira Finch's great great great grand dad, he gave Finches a power they never had had. It didn't just give power to add holidays—

Finch: *(finds the page)* This charter allows me to take them away. On this, the twenty-fourth of December, I officially take away the holiday of...

All lean forward in anticipation.

All: *(except Finch)* Yes...

Finch: Finchmas! *(tears a page out of the charter then slams it shut)*

All except Frances cheer. Finch crosses to Frances.

Finch: Why do you look so glum, Dad?

Frances: I... I'm going to miss Finchmas. I created it for you and me, so we could celebrate it together.

Finch: You never needed to create an extravagant holiday.

Frances: But you've never celebrated Christmas with me—not since you were a child... not since the day I wouldn't let you be in the play.

Finch: I was wrong about all that. I let too many years go by, hating Christmas and wanting it gone. But all that changed the day I let Jesus into my heart. *(takes Frances's hand)* And now I'd like nothing more than to celebrate the gift from our heavenly father—the birth of our lord and savior—with my own father. What do you say, Dad?

Frances: I say...

All: *(except Frances, leaning in)* Yes...

Frances: There's no better way to celebrate Christmas than with the annual Newville Christmas pageant!

Finch: *(smiles)* I couldn't agree more.

Wally: Might I suggest we make a few minor adjustments?

Finch: *(smiles)* Be my guest.

During Kirby's monologue, All take down the lights and gaudy decorations. Sally gets her cookies. Melody exits and comes back with the Carolers. Gabby hands Mary the doll.

Kirby: Thanks to Miss Finch, Christmas finally was saved, and now it was time to head to the stage. A humble celebration of the most important thing—God's heavenly love and our own newborn king.

Frances: Then I guess it's time for the pageant to begin. Or is it too late, Zelda?

Zelda: *(looks at the notebook)* Actually— *(smiles and slams the notebook shut)* It's perfect timing.

Finch: Great! *(to Gabby)* Assistant director, why don't you start things off?

Gabby: *(smiles)* Everyone to their places!

Mary, Joseph, Shepherd and Angel take their places. Finch hands Zelda a Bible.

Frances: *(to Finch)* You know, I can see why you wanted to be in this pageant all those years ago. It looks like a lot of fun.

Finch: I'm glad you said that. *(picks up the star and hands it to Frances)* Because we have one last role we need to fill.

Frances: *(unsure)* I'm not sure where to go.

Betty crosses to Frances. Finch hands Zelda a Bible.

Betty: *(smiles)* Just let your heart guide you.

Frances crosses tentatively into manger scene and stands behind the manger, holding the star. **Zelda** crosses with him and holds the open Bible. **Finch, Kirby, Wally, Sally, Hattie, Tobias, Melody** and **Carolers/Townspeople** gather around to watch the play. **Gabby** steps forward.

Gabby: And, scene!

Joseph: So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David.

Mary: He went to be registered with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him, and who was expecting a child.

Angel: While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

*All look at **Shepherd**, who looks around sheepishly.*

Shepherd: Um... line?

Frances: I've got it. *(reading)* And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

All applaud.

Finch: A humble celebration of a miraculous moment.

Frances: I can't think of anything better.

Hattie: Me *(about to sneeze)* Ne.... *(sneeze doesn't come)* Ne... *(sneeze doesn't come)* Neither! *(sneezes loudly)*

***Hattie** starts to wipe her nose on her sleeve. Finch holds out a tissue, which **Hattie** accepts.*

Hattie: Thanks.

Finch: *(laughs)* You're welcome.

Hattie blows her nose loudly into the tissue as **Kirby** steps to center and addresses audience.

Kirby: And so the time comes for our story to end. All is right in the small town of Newville again. And Newville is now filled with smiles once more since Christmas in Newville has finally been restored. So on every Christmas we'll honor our king. *(stops and thinks)* Now the only thing left is for everyone to sing!!

Melody: Alright everyone, let's fill these streets with song! *(blows into her pitch pipe)* Joy to the World!

All characters can sing or you can encourage your audience to sing as well.

All: *(singing)* Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

You can sing additional verses or end the singing here.

Finch/Frances: Merry Christmas everyone!

Lights fade to black.

End of play