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**“We Four Kings: A Christmas Whodunit”**

by

Rachel Benjamin and Suzanne Davis

















































**Aaron:** *(correcting)* Joseph.

**Will:** We can't have a Joseph without a Mary!

**Aaron:** Well, I'm still waiting for you to find one.

**Will:** I've been a little busy.

**Aaron:** How about Mariah?

**Will:** You keep suggesting Mariah. Why Mariah?

**Aaron:** Mary should be played by someone who's single, that's all.

*All characters look at Aaron.*

**Aaron:** I'm just saying.

*Awkward pause.*

**Aaron:** Mariah is single. Mary was single.

**Jade:** No. She was married to Joseph.

**Aaron:** Right. That's what I meant. If you wanted me to play Joseph it might be good to get a single Mary so...so that we could both be single.

**Jade:** For real? You wanted to be in the pageant to meet girls?

**Aaron:** No! Just Mariah. I mean, Mariah IS a girl— I mean, a lady—

*Mariah looks like a deer caught in headlights. The others try to keep from laughing.*

**Frank:** Now it all makes sense.

**Aaron:** *(hurriedly)* But more importantly, I wanted to be part of the pageant so that I could...so that I could—

**Will:** Honor God with your gift of acting?

**Aaron:** Exactly.

**Will:** Have you ever acted before?

**Aaron:** No.

**Will:** Here's a question. If Mariah plays Mary, will the gifts miraculously re-appear?

**Aaron:** *(confused)* I don't think so.



**Will:** Let's think about this. The presents disappeared after YOU said Joshy was missing. Did you possibly stage his disappearance?

**Aaron:** What??

**Will:** Did you attempt to use your nephew in hopes of winning Mariah?

**Aaron:** What are you talking about? No way.

**Will:** Well, it seems we're at an impasse. No one is coming forward with the gifts.

**Jade:** We can just use other boxes.

**Will:** *(angrily)* And those could "mysteriously disappear" right before the performance too. *(Calming down)* Listen, I'm not going to force anyone to be part of this pageant. If you don't want to be in the performance, raise your hand.

*All actors raise their hand, except Aaron.*

**Aaron:** I'll still do it. I mean...if you have a Mary.

*Aaron looks at Mariah.*

**Mariah:** My hand is up.

**Will:** This production may not be perfect. But there is a large audience on its way, and we have a God-ordained obligation to present a Biblically accurate Christmas--er--Epiphany pageant.

*Will looks out into the audience, shielding his eyes as the lights brighten.*

**Will:** Look, a few are here already. *(To the audience)* Do you want to see this show?

**Audience member:** YES!

**Will:** Then I'm going to need your help. Our gifts for Jesus are still missing. Who has a question to help further our investigation? You may ask any of these actors here, and they will answer honestly...as they fully understand that God is their witness.

*Will facilitates 5-6 questions from the audience; characters improvise their responses.*

**Will:** *(to audience)* Thank you. *(To suspects)* Is anyone ready to confess now?

*Silence.*

**Will:** *(throwing his hands up)* Fine. Fine. I'll call the church office and let them know that the performance will be canceled. Then I can come back here and collect the costumes and props from everyone.

*Pause.*

**Goldie:** Pastor Will, you don't have to collect the costumes... just let me tweak them.

**Jade:** Let me fix some of the dialogue.

**Cameron:** Maybe the wise men don't really need a camel.

**Frank:** Or a reprise.

**Mariah:** Could you just let me carry the gold?

**Aaron:** Or just have her play Mary?

**Will:** No! No, no, and no! *(Shakes his head)* I see we need a sermon series on Biblical submission to authority. I'm going to seek additional counsel from my congregation— and you six are dismissed until further notice.

#### ACT IV: Jade is the Culprit

*Jade is alone on stage. Enter Aliyah.*

**Aliyah:** *(singsong voice)* Knock-kno-ock!

**Jade:** Oh my goodness. You came!

**Aliyah:** Of course I came. An hour and a half drive is nothing when we've got a *(drifts into dramatic sing-song again)* musical theatre CRI-sis on our hands...

**Jade:** *(sings back)* Best roommate e-ver!

*Aliyah sits down and takes out her laptop.*

**Aliyah:** So, I made some talk-to-text notes during the drive, and I know how to fix this show. One condition. When it goes to the publisher, my name comes first.

**Jade:** We've totally gone through this before. Music always comes before lyrics—

**Aliyah:** *(singing)* Not this time!

**Jade:** *(with a sigh)* Okay. Fine.

**Aliyah:** So, you got the director to postpone it? Cause I think we can get this hammered out in a couple weeks.

**Jade:** Well, twelve days, anyway. I'm not sure, but I know he liked the Epiphany idea.

**Aliyah:** Hmm. Well, that'll be tight, but I think we can do it. First, we need to redefine these characters. Each wise man needs to have a separate search in his heart, all of which culminate in finding Jesus.

**Jade:** Yes.

**Aliyah:** I think we need an opening number. I'm calling it... *(dramatic flourish)* "A King is Out There Somewhere".

**Jade:** That's good.

**Aliyah:** Another thing that's clearly missing, a song where the hero expresses his dream, so we know what he's moving toward. I'm calling it... *(another dramatic flourish)* "I Must Go West."

**Jade:** Brilliant.

**Aliyah:** And we need a charm song for the Camel, don't you think?

**Jade:** Abso-bloomin'-lutely.

**Aliyah:** Great, let's get to work. You got anything to eat? I'm starved.

**Jade:** Yeah, I grabbed you something. I know how you run on snacks.

*Jade hands her a cup. Just then, Will enters, clapping his hands.*

**Will:** All right, everyone back in. I think we have a plan for going forward.

*The other actors return to the stage, followed by the Nursery Director.*

**Carrie:** Excuse me, Pastor. Sorry to interrupt, but I'm afraid we have a situation.

**Will:** A situation? What kind of situation?

**Carrie:** That child you have in the nursery is crying inconsolably.

**Aaron:** Aw, Joshy's had a hard day.

**Carrie:** We were getting him some Goldfish crackers, and when we opened the cabinet, he found three presents he said were for him...

**Will:** Three presents? We've been looking for them all over the church!

**Carrie:** *(to Will)* He told me you said the presents were for him. But when they turned out to be empty, he was crushed, poor little guy. You have to be careful what you tell a toddler.

**Will:** I'm starting to think including a toddler may have been more of a challenge than we anticipated.

**Carrie:** You're starting to think this?

*Nursery Director exits.*

**Will:** At least our gifts have been found.

**Jade:** What on earth were they doing in the snack cabinet?

**Aliyah:** *(suddenly looking up from her computer)* Okay. So, this year, Epiphany falls on a Monday. Does that mean you're going to run the show the weekend before, or the weekend after?

*Aliyah casually takes a handful of the snack in the cup and brings it to her mouth. She is stopped before she can eat it.*

**Will:** What?

**Frank:** Who are you?

**Aliyah:** *(singsong)* The answer to your pageant's pa-rayers!

*Everyone but Jade looks at each other, confused.*

**Will:** You helped locate the missing gifts?

**Aliyah:** What? No. I'm Jade's lyricist. You asked us to rewrite the show...didn't you?

**Will:** What?

**Aliyah:** You wanted it postponed so we could fix the show's issues. I have a note here saying the original "shows lack of cohesion and demonstrates the writer's incompetence with dialogue and lyrics".

*Aliyah breaks off suddenly.*

**Aliyah:** Annnnnnd...I'm talking to the writer, aren't I? *(To Jade)* Girl. *(In singsong)* You could've warned me!

*Aliyah puts the handful of snacks into her mouth.*

**Mariah:** *(suspiciously)* What are you eating?

**Cameron:** Is that...goldfish?

**Aliyah:** Yeah. Jade grabbed me some earlier. Sorry, are the kids' snacks off limits?

*All eyes turn to Jade.*

**Goldie:** JADE!

**Will:** It was YOU?

*Jade opens her mouth but is speechless. Aliyah shuts her laptop and stands up to leave.*

**Aliyah:** So yeah, I'm gonna go now...maybe start a new project. I'm actually thinking the camel deserves a show of its own, maybe a kids' musical. Hmm, maybe "The Rambling Camel?"

**Jade:** *(finding her voice)* That's pretty good!

**Aliyah:** Uh-uh. This one isn't gonna have your name on it *(in singsong)* AT ALLLL!

*Exit Aliyah.*

**Will:** Jade. You took the gifts and lied about it. Why would you do something like that?

**Jade:** I...I don't know. I'm sorry. I guess I thought maybe...

**Will:** Maybe what?

**Jade:** Well honestly, I thought the concept for the show was pretty good. But it wasn't very well executed, and I should have found a way to tell you that before today. But I thought maybe if I could convince you to postpone the show, we could fix it...

**Will:** And you thought stashing the gifts in the nursery might accomplish that?

**Jade:** *(hanging her head)* Yeah, it sounds pretty stupid. I wasn't thinking. I hope you can forgive me...and you can decide if you still want me in the show.

*Pause.*

**Frank:** Well, since we're cleansing the camp and all...I could've handled things better too.

**Aaron:** Me too. Now that I think about it, I came in with an agenda...and that's never good.

**Cameron:** I never really gave this show a chance. I'm sorry.

**Goldie:** I suppose I could have taken direction a little better...a lot better, actually.

**Mariah:** I'm sorry too. At least I'm only carrying the myrrh and not wearing the camel costume.

*Cameron looks at Mariah.*

**Will:** You have all finally demonstrated soft and repentant hearts, and therefore I will forgive you. There is still time, albeit very short, for us to turn this show around and have a worshipful opening night.

*Pause.*

**Will:** I suppose I should make a confession as well.

*The others look at him, surprised.*

**Will:** I have a PhD in pastoral theological studies. I passed each theology course with a 4.0. I also took a handful of writing courses...and I failed all of them.

*Each character reacts silently; Mariah starts to giggle and throws her hand over her mouth.*

**Will:** All that to say, perhaps I've not been giving God my best offering, by refusing help from those who are much more gifted in that area. I'm sorry, and I'm going to start seeking your input.

**Jade:** Well, if we start now, next year's production will be amazing.

**Frank:** And in the meantime, let's all give tonight our best.

**Will:** Our best isn't enough.

**Goldie:** What?

**Will:** Our best isn't enough. The gifts of our time or our talents—even the best of our talent—isn't enough. The only gift Jesus really wants this Christmas is our heart.

**Goldie:** Then let's give our whole heart. Everything we got.

**Cameron:** I'm in.

**Mariah:** Me too.

**Aaron:** So am I.

**Will:** Good. Let's give God the glory, even if we only have three Wise Men. Mariah, can you fill in for Mary? And Frank, you can hold the myrrh.

**Frank:** Great.

**Aaron:** Perfect.

*Mariah goes to stand next to Aaron.*

*Aaron reaches one arm to the side and, very visibly but pretending to be discreet, starts to slip it around Mariah.*

**Mariah:** *(shrinking away from Aaron's arm)* I don't think so.

**Aaron:** Just trying to make it look real.

**Will:** The musicians should be here any minute. Let's take five and then start from the top. We have time for one final run before the doors open.

*All actors exit.*

*As Aaron and Mariah exit...*

**Aaron:** Maybe we could discuss our characters' motivations over dinner.

**Mariah:** *(asking an offstage Will)* Can Goldie be Mary? I'll hold the myrrh. Or sing Frank's solo. Or be the camel?

*Lights down.*

*Lights up.*

*Actors reenter, standing in a line and bow.*

Epilogue:

**Jade:** Now we have a little secret,  
**Cameron:** On which we'll shed some light.  
**Will:** In this, our Christmas pageant,

**Frank:** Your vote is always right.

**Mariah:** So if tomorrow you should think

**Goldie:** The ending needs a change,

**Aaron:** Please come back and vote again,

**Carrie:** And we will rearrange.

**Aliyah:** We hope our time together

**Jade:** This one truth did impart

**Cameron:** The only present Jesus wants

**Will:** is the gift of your heart.

**All:** Merry Christmas!



**ACT IV: Mariah is the Culprit**

*The stage is empty. Enter Sadie, carrying a large shopping bag.*

**Sadie:** Hello? Anyone here?

**Mariah:** Sadie! Yay, I love when my baby sister shows up with a shopping bag. Did you find something?

**Sadie:** Are you kidding? I found lots of things. Bath and Body Bliss was having a huge sale!

**Mariah:** Oh good. I'll feel so much better if my gift isn't the fragrance of death.

**Sadie:** Okay, let's see.

*She rummages through her bag.*

**Sadie:** So the Magi arrive, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and... *(holding up a red squeeze or spray bottle)* Strawberry Shortcake?

**Mariah:** I don't know...it seems kind of summery. I'd have to carry a picnic basket.

**Sadie:** It's always summer in the Middle East, right? But okay.

*She pulls out another bottle.*

**Sadie:** Gold, frankincense, and Wintergreen Wonder!

**Mariah:** Mmmm. Jesus would be minty-fresh.

**Sadie:** Yes! Very Christmas-y.

**Mariah:** But it would be kind of like giving Him toothpaste.

**Sadie:** Yeah, that's more of a stocking stuffer.

**Mariah:** And not even a good one.

**Sadie:** Hmm. Well, they had some in the men's section that might work better. Like this one. *(Sadie pulls out another bottle)* Gold, frankincense, and... Maple-Spiced Bacon! What do you think?

**Mariah:** Perfect! *(Pause)* Wait. Is bacon kosher?

**Sadie:** Maybe just don't say the bacon part.

**Mariah:** I can't lie to Jesus!

*Just then, Will enters, clapping his hands.*

**Will:** All right, everyone back in. I think we have a plan for going forward.

*The other actors return to the stage, followed by Pam, the Nursery Director.*

**Carrie:** Excuse me, Pastor. Sorry to interrupt, but I'm afraid we have a situation.

**Will:** A situation? What kind of situation?

**Carrie:** That child you have in the nursery is crying inconsolably.

**Aaron:** Aw, Joshy's had a hard day.

**Carrie:** We were getting him some Goldfish crackers, and when we opened the cabinet, he found three presents he said were for him...

**Will:** Three presents? We've been looking for them all over the church!

**Carrie:** *(to Will)* He told me you said the presents were for him. But when they turned out to be empty, he was crushed, poor little guy. You have to be careful what you tell a toddler.

**Will:** I'm starting to think including a toddler may have been more of a challenge than we anticipated.

**Carrie:** You're starting to think this?

*Pam exits.*

**Will:** At least our gifts have been found.

**Mariah:** What on earth were they doing in the snack cabinet?

*Pam re-enters.*

**Carrie:** One more thing, Pastor... two of the gift boxes are intact, but the third is crumpled and smells like it's been sprayed to death with air freshener. *(Brightly, laughing at her own joke)* This Christmas, the baby Jesus is getting gold, frankincense, and Febreze!

*Pam exits. All eyes turn to Mariah.*

**Goldie:** MARIAH!

**Will:** It was YOU?

*Mariah opens her mouth but is speechless. Sadie picks up the shopping bag and starts to exit.*

**Sadie:** I don't know what you did but sounds like you don't need these after all.

**Mariah:** Umm...except maybe for a peace offering.

**Sadie:** Cool. Stocking stuffers all around!

*She tosses a bottle to Cameron.*

**Cameron:** *(reading the label)* Shampoo that smells like BACON? Score!

*Sadie hands out the rest of the items to the other cast members.*

**Sadie:** Mariah, you owe me seventy-eight dollars.

**Mariah:** What?!

**Sadie:** *(shrugging)* You wanted options.

*Sadie exits.*

**Will:** Mariah. You took the gifts and lied about it. Why would you do something like that?

**Mariah:** I—I don't know. I'm sorry. I guess I thought maybe...

**Will:** Maybe what?

**Mariah:** I thought maybe you might let me carry a different gift. *(Speaking quickly)* I don't want to bring Jesus something morbid. I want to be the nice wise man who brings Him...I don't know, something he'd actually want. Like a train set. Or if it had to be perfume, at least something that smelled good.

**Will:** And you thought stashing the gifts in the nursery might accomplish that?

**Mariah:** *(justifying)* Just until Sadie got here with more options. *(Regretfully)* I'm sorry. I should have just come and talked to you. I hope you can forgive me. I'll carry the myrrh if you still want me to.

*Pause.*

**Jade:** Well, since we're, you know, "cleansing the camp", I hope you can forgive me, too. I haven't listened to anyone or anything today, except my own ideas.

**Frank:** Yeah, I could've handled things better too.

**Aaron:** Me too. Now that I think about it, I came in with an agenda...and that's never good.

**Cameron:** I never really gave this show a chance. I'm sorry.

**Goldie:** I suppose I could have taken direction a little better...a lot better, actually.

**Will:** You have all finally demonstrated soft and repentant hearts, and therefore I will forgive you. There is still time, albeit very short, for us to turn this show around and have a worshipful opening night.

*Pause.*

**Will:** I suppose I should make a confession as well.

*The others look at him, surprised.*

**Will:** I have a PhD in pastoral theological studies. I passed each theology course with a 4.0. I also took a handful of writing courses... and I failed all of them.

*Each character reacts silently; Mariah starts to giggle and throws her hand over her mouth.*

**Will:** All that to say, perhaps I've not been giving God my best offering by refusing help from those who are much more gifted in that area. I'm sorry, and I'm going to start seeking your input.

**Jade:** Well, if we start now, next year's production will be amazing.

**Frank:** And in the meantime, let's all give tonight our best.

**Will:** Our best isn't enough.

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**Aaron:** So am I.

**Will:** Good. Let's give God the glory, even if we only have three wise men. Mariah, can you fill in for Mary? And Frank, you can hold the myrrh.

**Frank:** Great.

**Aaron:** Perfect.

*Mariah goes to stand next to Aaron.*

*Aaron reaches one arm to the side and, very visibly but pretending to be discreet, starts to slip it around Mariah.*

**Mariah:** *(shrinking away from Aaron's arm)* I don't think so.

**Aaron:** Just trying to make it look real.

**Will:** The musicians should be here any minute. Let's take five and then start from the top. We have time for one final run before the doors open.

*All actors exit.*

*As Aaron and Mariah exit.*

**Aaron:** Maybe we could discuss our characters' motivations over dinner.

**Mariah:** *(asking an offstage Will)* Can Goldie be Mary? I'll hold the myrrh. Or sing Frank's solo. Or be the camel...

*Lights down.*

*Lights up.*

*Actors reenter, standing in a line and bow.*

Epilogue:

**Jade:** Now we have a little secret,

**Cameron:** On which we'll shed some light.

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**Frank:** Your vote is always right.

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**Goldie:** The ending needs a change,

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**Carrie:** And we will rearrange.  
**Sadie:** We hope our time together  
**Jade:** This one truth did impart  
**Cameron:** The only present Jesus wants  
**Will:** is the gift of your heart.  
**All:** Merry Christmas!

#### ACT IV: Aaron is the Culprit

*Aaron is alone on center stage, pacing. Sasha enters carrying some candles.*

**Sasha:** It's all set.

**Aaron:** Perfect. What time is the reservation?

**Sasha:** I had a better idea.

**Aaron:** Oh no.

**Sasha:** I got two Thursday night specials from that new romantic Italian place, Mama Manicotti's. I found some charming music and took the liberty of making you a 'first-date' kind of playlist.

**Aaron:** Playlist? I thought you were setting up reservations at the new restaurant in town.

**Sasha:** One romantic dinner for you and the soon to-be-love of your life, but not at the restaurant.

**Aaron:** Where?

**Sasha:** I ordered take out and set it up here.

**Aaron:** In the church?

**Sasha:** Of course not.

**Aaron:** Good. Where?

**Sasha:** Under the big oak tree, on the picnic table.

**Aaron:** In the church parking lot?

**Sasha:** It's not technically in the parking lot. It's closer to the youth group volleyball pit.

**Aaron:** It's freezing outside.

**Sasha:** It's not snowing.

**Aaron:** Yet.

**Sasha:** You worry too much. After Pastor Will cancels the pageant, just ask Mariah if she's hungry and—

**Aaron:** And what? Ask her if she wants some cold take out in the middle of the parking lot?

**Sasha:** Ungrateful—

**Aaron:** Why didn't you just make us a reservation?

*The rest of the actors enter.*

*Just then, **Will** enters, clapping his hands.*

**Will:** All right, everyone back in. I think we have a plan for going forward.

*The other actors return to the stage, followed by **Pam**, the Nursery Director.*

**Carrie:** Excuse me, Pastor. Sorry to interrupt, but I'm afraid we have a situation.

**Will:** A situation? What kind of situation?

**Carrie:** That child you have in the nursery is crying inconsolably.

**Aaron:** Aw, Joshy's had a hard day.

**Carrie:** We were getting him some Goldfish crackers, and when we opened the cabinet, he found three presents he said were for him...

**Will:** Three presents? We've been looking for them all over the church!

**Carrie:** *(to Will)* He told me you said the presents were for him. But when they turned out to be empty, he was crushed, poor little guy. You have to be careful what you tell a toddler.

**Will:** I'm starting to think including a toddler may have been more of a challenge than we anticipated.

**Carrie:** You're starting to think this?

*Pam exits.*

**Will:** At least our gifts have been found.

**Aaron:** What on earth were they doing in the snack cabinet?

**Sasha:** *(to Aaron)* Isn't that where you told me to put them?

*Aaron shoots a glance at Sasha as everyone gasps.*

**Sasha:** I'm guessing you didn't want everyone to know that.

**Goldie:** AARON!

**Will:** It was YOU?

**Sasha:** I'm...gonna go now. I'll just pack up the food.

**Cameron:** Food? Hey, I'm great at packing up fo—

**Sasha:** That food cost me fifty bucks. So unless you're paying in cash, you're not helping pack anything.

*Sasha exits.*

**Will:** Aaron. You took the gifts and lied about it. Why would you do something like that?

**Aaron:** I-- I don't know. I'm sorry. I guess I thought maybe...

**Will:** Maybe what?

**Aaron:** I agreed to bring Josh today thinking I could be Mariah's Joseph. I mean we really clicked on the single's retreat last month.

**Mariah:** We did?

**Aaron:** And I thought we could, you know, rekindle the flame being onstage together. And also...well...I've always wanted to be in the Christmas pageant. I thought maybe if I could hide the gifts and then "find them" at the last minute, I'd be the hero of the production.

**Will:** And you thought stashing the gifts in the nursery might accomplish that?

**Aaron:** Well, it was worth a shot. I'm sorry, guys. I hope you can forgive me. And if by chance you decide you need a Joseph...

*Pause.*



**Jade:** Well, since we're, you know, "cleansing the camp", I hope you can forgive me, too. I haven't listened to anyone or anything today, except my own ideas.

**Frank:** Yeah, I could've handled things better too.

**Cameron:** I never really gave this show a chance. I'm sorry.

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*Cameron looks at Mariah.*

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**Cameron:** The only present Jesus wants

**Will:** is the gift of your heart.

**ALL:** Merry Christmas!

#### ACT IV: Cameron is the Culprit

*Cameron is standing center stage in his camel costume. Jill enters, carrying a folded pair of jeans and a men's shirt.*

**Jill:** Hello? (*Noticing Cameron*) What are you wearing?

**Cameron:** Did you bring me a change of clothes or not?

**Jill:** Here.

**Cameron:** I can't wait to get out of this ridiculous outfit.

**Jill:** I thought the show was tonight.

**Cameron:** It was. But now it's probably going to be canceled.

**Jill:** Canceled? The church Christmas pageant? So many people are going to be disappointed.

**Cameron:** Well, I won't be one of them.

**Jill:** Why are they canceling it? (*The next line should only be said if you're performing this as a sequel to Away from A Manger*) Didn't this almost happen last year?

**Cameron:** I may have pulled a few strings.

**Jill:** WHAT? Mr. National Honor Society himself?

**Cameron:** Everyone needs to stop with the National Honor Society thing.

**Jill:** I don't get it. Wasn't this supposed to be an easy way to get your service hours? They needed an actor to carry the wise men's scene. Done.  
*(Pause. Jill realizes what has happened)* Wait. They didn't mean, an actor to carry the wise men's scene...

**Cameron:** No.

**Jill:** *(louder)* They needed an actor to carry the Wise Men.

**Cameron:** Are you finished?

**Jill:** This is hilarious.

**Cameron:** Humiliating.

**Jill:** Just wait till I tell Uncle Bob...you'll never hear the end of it!

**Cameron:** Leave my dad out of this. And give me those clothes.

*Just then, Will enters, clapping his hands.*

**Will:** All right, everyone back in. I think we have a plan for going forward.

*The other actors return to the stage, followed by Pam, the Nursery Director.*

**Carrie:** Excuse me, Pastor. Sorry to interrupt, but I'm afraid we have a situation.

**Will:** A situation? What kind of situation?

**Carrie:** That child you have in the nursery is crying inconsolably.

**Aaron:** Aw, Joshy's had a hard day.

**Carrie:** We were getting him some Goldfish crackers, and when we opened the cabinet, he found three presents he said were for him.

**Will:** Three presents? We've been looking for them all over the church!

**Carrie:** *(to Will)* He told me you said the presents were for him. But when they turned out to be empty, he was crushed, poor little guy. You have to be careful what you tell a toddler.

**Will:** I'm starting to think including a toddler may have been more of a challenge than we anticipated.

**Carrie:** You're starting to think this?

*Pam exits.*

**Will:** At least our gifts have been found.

**Cameron:** What on earth were they doing in the snack cabinet?

*Jill re-enters.*

**Jill:** I just have to ask. Where did your other clothes go?

**Cameron:** What?

**Jill:** No way did you come to church in that ridiculous outfit. You must have changed here. I mean if you knew they were going to make you be the camel, you wouldn't have shown up at all.

**Cameron:** Can we talk about this later?

**Jill:** I'm just really curious where your clothes went.

**Cameron:** Short answer, something on them was making my allergies act up. *(with significance)* Bye, Jill.

**Jill:** Allergies? Come on. The only thing you're allergic to is that funky essential oil your mom has...it's like, frankincense, right?

**Cameron:** JILL...!

**Jill:** What did you do, spill a bottle on yourself? *(Laughs)* Ha! That's a good one.

**Cameron:** *(angrily, completely missing the sarcasm)* Well, there wasn't supposed to be actual frankincense in that stupid box!

*Silence as everyone (except Jill) realizes what Cameron said. After a moment, Cameron realizes it and does a "facepalm".*

**Goldie:** CAM-er-on!

**Will:** It was YOU?

*Cameron is speechless.*

**Jill:** But don't worry. Remember what they said at your mom's Essential Oil Extravaganza? There are oils you can substitute for frankincense, like sandalwood or...cedarwood...what's that other one that comes from tree sap?

**Mariah:** *(as if pronouncing a terrible verdict)* Myrrh.

**Jill:** Yeah, that's the one! Anyway. Is the pageant still on, then, or...?

**Will:** It's still on.

**Jill:** Cool. Break a leg, Cam! Or, you know...a hump.

*Jill exits, laughing at her own joke.*

**Will:** Cameron. You took the gifts and lied about it. Why would you do something like that?

**Cameron:** I—I don't know. I'm sorry. I guess I thought maybe...

**Will:** Maybe what?

**Cameron:** I was just thinking I needed to get out of this ridiculous costume.

**Will:** And you thought stashing the gifts in the nursery might accomplish that?

**Cameron:** I guess I was just being pretty selfish. I wasn't thinking about everyone else. I hope you can forgive me...and you can decide if you still want me in the show.

*Pause.*

**Jade:** Well, since we're, you know, "cleansing the camp", I hope you can forgive me, too. I haven't listened to anyone or anything today, except my own ideas.

**Frank:** Yeah, I could've handled things better too.

**Cameron:** I never really gave this show a chance. I'm sorry.

**Goldie:** I suppose I could have taken direction a little better... a lot better, actually.

**Mariah:** I'm sorry too. At least I'm only carrying the myrrh and not wearing the camel costume.

*Cameron looks at Mariah.*

**Will:** You have all finally demonstrated soft and repentant hearts, and therefore I will forgive you. There is still time, albeit very short, for us to turn this show around and have a worshipful opening night.

*Pause.*

**Will:** I suppose I should make a confession as well.

*The others look at him, surprised.*

**Will:** I have a PhD in pastoral theological studies. I passed each theology course with a 4.0. I also took a handful of writing courses...and I failed all of them.

*Each character reacts silently; **Mariah** starts to giggle and throws her hand over her mouth.*

**Will:** All that to say, perhaps I've not been giving God my best offering, by refusing help from those who are much more gifted in that area. I'm sorry, all of you, and I'm going to start seeking your input.

**Jade:** Well, if we start now, next year's production will be amazing.

**Frank:** And in the meantime, let's all give tonight our best.

**Will:** Our best isn't enough.

**Goldie:** What?

**Will:** Our best isn't enough. The gifts of our time or our talents—even the best of our talent—isn't enough. The only gift Jesus really wants this Christmas is our heart.

**Goldie:** Then let's give our whole heart. Everything we got.

**Cameron:** I'm in.

**Mariah:** Me too.

**Aaron:** So am I.

**Will:** Good. Let's give God the glory, even if we only have three Wise Men. Mariah, can you fill in for Mary? And Frank, you can hold the myrrh.

**Frank:** Great.

**Aaron:** Perfect.

***Mariah** goes to stand next to **Aaron**.*

***Aaron** reaches one arm to the side and, very visibly but pretending to be discreet, starts to slip it around **Mariah**.*

**Mariah:** *(shrinking away from **Aaron's** arm)* I don't think so.

**Aaron:** Just trying to make it look real.

**Will:** The musicians should be here any minute. Let's take five and then start from the top. We have time for one final run before the doors open.

*All actors exit.*

*As Aaron and Mariah exit.*

**Aaron:** Maybe we could discuss our characters' motivations over dinner.

**Mariah:** *(asking an offstage Will)* Can Goldie be Mary? I'll hold the myrrh. Or sing Frank's solo. Or be the camel...

*Lights down.*

*Lights up.*

*Actors reenter, standing in a line and bow.*

Epilogue:

**Jade:** Now we have a little secret,

**Cameron:** On which we'll shed some light.

**Will:** In this, our Christmas pageant,

**Frank:** Your vote is always right.

**Mariah:** So if tomorrow you should think

**Goldie:** The ending needs a change,

**Aaron:** Please come back and vote again,

**Carrie:** And we will rearrange.

**Jill:** We hope our time together

**Jade:** This one truth did impart

**Cameron:** The only present Jesus wants

**Will:** is the gift of your heart.

**All:** Merry Christmas!



**ACT IV: Goldie is the Culprit**

*Tilly enters with a sewing kit in one hand, a spool of thread in the other and a sewing needle between her teeth.*

**Tilly:** *(said with needle in mouth)* I'mmm herrrrre.

**Goldie:** Tilly, be quiet. It took you long enough to get here.

*Tilly puts down the sewing kit, center stage, takes the needle out of her mouth and immediately begins to thread it with the thread on the spool.*

**Tilly:** Caitie's dance recital... Adam's award ceremony—I'm basically running a taxi outfit. *(Slight pause)* So how bad is it?

**Goldie:** Atrocity on top of atrocity. Absolutely blasphemous!

**Tilly:** I mean we worry about making our joyful noises in key, when are we going to start paying more attention to color schemes?

**Goldie:** From your lips to God's ears.

**Tilly:** Where's the fabric? I can re-work these boxes in no time.

**Goldie:** I thought you were bringing new boxes?

**Tilly:** There wasn't any time. Where's the fabric?

**Goldie:** In my office.

**Tilly:** Where are the boxes?

**Goldie:** Hidden.

**Tilly:** Perfect. Tell me where they are, and I'll have them re-covered in no time.

*Goldie whispers in her ear.*

**Goldie:** Hurry.

**Tilly:** Consider it done. *(Turning back to Goldie)* And once this is done, you're going to convince the Pastors that those chairs in the sanctuary need some attention, right?

**Goldie:** Solving one problem at a time here.

*Tilly exits.*

*Just then, Will enters, clapping his hands.*

**Will:** All right, everyone back in. I think we have a plan for going forward.  
*The other actors return to the stage, followed by Pam, the Nursery Director.*

**Carrie:** Excuse me, Pastor. Sorry to interrupt, but I'm afraid we have a situation.

**Will:** A situation? What kind of situation?

**Carrie:** That child you have in the nursery is crying inconsolably.

**Aaron:** Aw, Joshy's had a hard day.

**Carrie:** We were getting him some Goldfish crackers, and when we opened the cabinet, he found three presents he said were for him...

**Will:** Three presents? We've been looking for them all over the church!

**Carrie:** *(to Will)* He told me you said the presents were for him. But when they turned out to be empty, he was crushed, poor little guy. You have to be careful what you tell a toddler.

**Will:** I'm starting to think including a toddler may have been more of a challenge than we anticipated.

**Carrie:** You're starting to think this?

*Pam exits.*

**Will:** At least our gifts have been found.

**Goldie:** What on earth were they doing in the snack cabinet?

*Tilly enters.*

**Tilly:** Goldie... *(to Goldie)* I thought you said the boxes were in the nursery? With the Goldfish? I can't find them.

**Mariah:** GOLDIEEE?

**Will:** It was YOU?

**Tilly:** Well, who else has the good sense to fix this atrocity of atrocities?

*Pause.*

**Tilly:** *(to Goldie)* I let the cat out of the bag, didn't I?

**Goldie:** You think?

*Pause.*

**Tilly:** I'm going to go... but while we're on the subject of BAGS, those sanctuary chairs really do look like—

**Goldie:** I've got it from here, Tilly.

*Tilly exits.*

**Will:** Goldie. You took the gifts and lied about it. Why would you do something like that?

**Goldie:** I—I don't know. I'm sorry. I guess I thought maybe...

**Will:** Maybe what?

**Goldie:** I think we need to pay some attention to how we look. I mean I know that God looks at the heart...not the outside. But do our churches really need to be metaphors of this concept? I thought a little bit of class would make this production better.

**Will:** And you thought stashing the gifts in the nursery might accomplish that?

**Goldie:** I'm sorry. (*To Will*) I should have just come and talked to you. I hope you can forgive me. I'll still be a wise man if you want me to be.

*Pause.*

**Jade:** Well, since we're, you know, "cleansing the camp", I hope you can forgive me, too. I haven't listened to anyone or anything today, except my own ideas.

**Frank:** Yeah, I could've handled things better too.

**Cameron:** I never really gave this show a chance. I'm sorry.

**Goldie:** I suppose I could have taken direction a little better...a lot better, actually.

**Mariah:** I'm sorry too. At least I'm only carrying the myrrh and not wearing the camel costume.

*Cameron looks at Mariah.*

**Will:** You have all finally demonstrated soft and repentant hearts, and therefore I will forgive you. There is still time, albeit very short, for us to turn this show around and have a worshipful opening night.

*Pause.*

**Will:** I suppose I should make a confession as well.

*The others look at him, surprised.*

**Will:** I have a PhD in pastoral theological studies. I passed each theology course with a 4.0. I also took a handful of writing courses...and I failed all of them.

*Each character reacts silently; **Mariah** starts to giggle and throws her hand over her mouth.*

**Will:** All that to say, perhaps I've not been giving God my best offering, by refusing help from those who are much more gifted in that area. I'm sorry, all of you, and I'm going to start seeking your input.

**Jade:** Well, if we start now, next year's production will be amazing.

**Frank:** And in the meantime, let's all give tonight our best.

**Will:** Our best isn't enough.

**Goldie:** What?

**Will:** Our best isn't enough. The gifts of our time or our talents—even the best of our talent—isn't enough. The only gift Jesus really wants this Christmas is our heart.

**Goldie:** Then let's give our whole heart. Everything we got.

**Cameron:** I'm in.

**Mariah:** Me too.

**Aaron:** So am I.

**Will:** Good. Let's give God the glory, even if we only have three Wise Men. Mariah, can you fill in for Mary? And Frank, you can hold the myrrh.

**Frank:** Great.

**Aaron:** Perfect.

*Mariah goes to stand next to Aaron.*

*Aaron reaches one arm to the side and, very visibly but pretending to be discreet, starts to slip it around Mariah.*

**Mariah:** *(shrinking away from Aaron's arm)* I don't think so.

**Aaron:** Just trying to make it look real.

**Will:** The musicians should be here any minute. Let's take five and then start from the top. We have time for one final run before the doors open.

*All actors exit.*

*As Aaron and Mariah exit.*

**Aaron:** Maybe we could discuss our characters' motivations over dinner.

**Mariah:** *(asking an offstage Will)* Can Goldie be Mary? I'll hold the myrrh. Or sing Frank's solo. Or be the camel...

*Lights down.*

*Lights up.*

*Actors reenter, standing in a line and bow.*

Epilogue:

**Jade:** Now we have a little secret,

**Cameron:** On which we'll shed some light.

**Will:** In this, our Christmas pageant,

**Frank:** Your vote is always right.

**Mariah:** So if tomorrow you should think

**Goldie:** The ending needs a change,

**Aaron:** Please come back and vote again,

**Carrie:** And we will rearrange.

**Tilly:** We hope our time together

**Jade:** This one truth did impart

**Cameron:** The only present Jesus wants

**Will:** is the gift of your heart.

**All:** Merry Christmas!

ACT IV: Frank is the Culprit

*Frank is standing center stage. Lynnette storms in, clearly outraged.*

**Lynnette:** Where are they?

**Frank:** Hey, you're early. But thanks for picking me up.

**Lynnette:** This is ridiculous!

**Frank:** I know, they promised my car would be out of the shop by now.

**Lynnette:** I mean the nerve!

**Frank:** But sharing a car hasn't been that bad.

**Lynnette:** Where are they?

**Frank:** *(just realizing how angry she is)* Who? The car repair guys?

**Lynnette:** Whoever it was that canceled this show! Not on my watch, I tell you! Not on my watch!

**Frank:** Sweetheart—

**Lynnette:** *(getting louder)* You deserve this audition. Who else goes to voice lessons every Monday, Wednesday, and alternate Fridays during their lunch break?

**Frank:** Um, if you could just bring it down a bit—

**Lynnette:** Who else stays in the shower till they've done arpeggios TWICE around the circle of fifths?

**Frank:** *(glancing around, worried that someone may hear her)* I get it, Lyn, but—

**Lynnette:** And finally you get a solo in one of the big productions, and they cancel it at the last minute! Unreal!

*Just then, Will enters, clapping his hands.*

**Will:** All right, everyone back in. I think we have a plan for going forward.

*The other actors return to the stage, followed by the Pam, the Nursery Director.*

**Carrie:** Excuse me, Pastor. Sorry to interrupt, but I'm afraid we have a situation.

**Will:** A situation? What kind of situation?

**Carrie:** That child you have in the nursery is crying inconsolably.

**Aaron:** Aw, Joshy's had a hard day.

**Carrie:** We were getting him some Goldfish crackers, and when we opened the cabinet, he found three presents he said were for him...

**Will:** Three presents? We've been looking for them all over the church!

**Carrie:** *(to Will)* He told me you said the presents were for him. But when they turned out to be empty, he was crushed, poor little guy. You have to be careful what you tell a toddler.

**Will:** I'm starting to think including a toddler may have been more of a challenge than we anticipated.

**Carrie:** You're starting to think this?

*Pam exits.*

**Will:** At least our gifts have been found.

**Frank:** What on earth were they doing in the snack cabinet?

**Lynnette:** Oh, I think I know exactly what they were doing in the snack cabinet.

**Frank:** You do?

**Will:** Lynnette! What are you doing here?

**Lynnette:** *(ignoring Will)* I bet some moron stashed them in there in a pathetic attempt to get this show cancelled.

**Frank:** *(embarrassed)* Lynnette...

**Lynnette:** Well, it's not going to work. Do you have any idea how many YEARS my husband has been practicing for a solo in one of these pageants?

**Frank:** Um, Lyn, I need you to—

**Lynnette:** Years!!

**Frank:** *(to the others)* Not really that long.

**Lynnette:** And he finally—FINALLY—after years and years of disappointment—

**Frank:** It really hasn't been years.

**Lynnette:** He lands a solo, an original piece written especially for him, and this is what you do to him? I'd like to throttle whoever thought smuggling those presents would—

**Frank:** Lynnette, STOP...

**Lynnette:** And everyone knows the Christmas pageant is really just the audition for the Easter production. This was his big chance. I am ORDERING whoever is responsible for this to step forward.

**Will:** *(wearily)* Good luck with that.

**Lynnette:** Whichever one of you was selfish enough to pull such a low, childish stunt like this, ought to be thoroughly ashamed. Who did it? Who is responsible for sabotaging this good man's career?

**Frank:** Me, all right? It was me.

**Goldie:** FRANK!

**Will:** It was YOU?

**Lynnette:** *(flabbergasted)* WHAT?

**Frank:** Turned out it wasn't an original piece, it was a short reprise and the lyrics... *(glancing at Will)* left much to be desired. I panicked.

**Lynnette:** Well, stop panicking and sing it anyways.

*The others look at her, clearly surprised at her tone.*

**Lynnette:** You HAVE to get that Easter part. If I have to go one more year of hearing you practice "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth", I'm going to go insane. It's been years of that song!

**Frank:** It hasn't been years. *(Pause)* Okay, maybe it has.

**Lynnette:** I could sing it in my sleep.

**Jade:** Um... "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth"? From "the Messiah"? Sorry, but that's an aria for a Soprano.

**Frank and Lynnette:** What?

**Jade:** I don't think you'll be singing it for the Easter production either way.

**Frank:** We can adapt it for tenor.



**Jade:** I don't think so. You know how the cantata director wants everything musically accurate.  
*Pause.*

**Lynnette:** (*glaring at Frank*) Just—just sing the song and be done with it.

*Lynnette exits.*

**Will:** Frank. You took the gifts and lied about it. Why would you do something like that?

**Frank:** I—I don't know. I'm sorry. I guess I thought maybe...

**Will:** Maybe what?

**Frank:** Maybe I would have some bargaining power to get you to change the song. Or get the show postponed until we could write another one.

**Will:** And you thought stashing the gifts in the nursery might accomplish that?

**Frank:** I'm sorry, I should have just come and talked to you about it. I hope you can forgive me, and you can decide if you still want me in the show.

*Pause.*

**Jade:** Well, since we're, you know, "cleansing the camp", I hope you can forgive me, too. I haven't listened to anyone or anything today, except my own ideas.

**Aaron:** Me too. Now that I think about it, I came in with an agenda...and that's never good.

**Cameron:** I never really gave this show a chance. I'm sorry.

**Goldie:** I suppose I could have taken direction a little better... a lot better, actually.

**Mariah:** I'm sorry too. At least I'm only carrying the myrrh and not wearing the camel costume.

*Cameron looks at Mariah.*

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*Each character reacts silently; Mariah starts to giggle and throws her hand over her mouth.*

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**Jade:** Well, if we start now, next year's production will be amazing.

**Frank:** And in the meantime, let's all give tonight our best.

**Will:** Our best isn't enough.

**Goldie:** What?

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**Will:** Good. Let's give God the glory, even if we only have three Wise Men. Mariah, can you fill in for Mary? And Frank, you can hold the myrrh.

**Frank:** Great.

**Aaron:** Perfect.

*Mariah goes to stand next to Aaron.*

*Aaron reaches one arm to the side and, very visibly but pretending to be discreet, starts to slip it around Mariah.*

**Mariah:** *(shrinking away from Aaron's arm)* I don't think so.

**Aaron:** Just trying to make it look real.

**Will:** The musicians should be here any minute. Let's take five and then start from the top. We have time for one final run before the doors open.

*All actors exit.*

*As Aaron and Mariah exit...*

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Epilogue:

**Jade:** Now we have a little secret,

**Cameron:** On which we'll shed some light.

**Will:** In this, our Christmas pageant,

**Frank:** Your vote is always right.

**Mariah:** So if tomorrow you should think

**Goldie:** The ending needs a change,

**Aaron:** Please come back and vote again,

**Carrie:** And we will rearrange.

**Lynnette:** We hope our time together

**Jade:** This one truth did impart

**Cameron:** The only present Jesus wants

**Will:** is the gift of your heart.

**All:** Merry Christmas!

Epilogue for the Last Performance:

**Jade:** Now we have a little secret,

**Cameron:** On which we'll shed some light.

**Will:** In this, our Christmas pageant,

**Frank:** Your vote is always right.

**Mariah:** So if perhaps you're thinking

**Goldie:** That this ending wasn't strong,

**Aaron:** Please don't blame the actors

**Carrie:** Your neighbor must've voted wrong.

**Lynnette:** But we hope our time together

**Jade:** This one truth did impart

**Cameron:** The only present Jesus wants

**Will:** Is the gift of your heart.

**All:** Merry Christmas!

*Lights out.*