



**Sample Pages from
Deck the Stage!**

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DECK THE STAGE!

DECK THE HALLS WITH POISON IVY
STILL AS STONE
THE CHOIR COMMITTEE
LEAPING KINGS
MS. MEYERMYER'S SHINING MOMENT
THE TREE MONOLOGUES (IN FOUR PARTS)

ALL BY
Lindsay Price



Deck the Stage!

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Author's Note

This is a very special collection for two reasons. Firstly, all the plays are based on or inspired by Christmas carols. The carols serve as wonderful jumping off points and the plays were great fun to write.

Secondly, the collection serves a dual function. The plays can be performed separately, or all together as a group. They have been specifically arranged so that they make up a complete evening of entertainment. Enjoy!

Deck the Halls with Poison Ivy

“Deck the Halls”

This play was inspired by those childhood attempts to change the lyrics to Christmas carols. We thought we were extremely funny at the time, sitting in the back of the choir, being oh-so-incredibly daring...

Characters

CAROL – Student

CANDY – Student

KRIS – Student

MRS. TANENBAUM – Principal

CAROL, KRIS and CANDY sit in the principal's office. CAROL is extremely tense, her knees bouncing wildly. KRIS is more relaxed and is casually slumped. CANDY is biting her fingernails.

The students and the principal should take the situation seriously. The principal should never foreshadow what's to come in the scene.

CAROL: I can't believe I'm here. I cannot believe I'm sitting here. I'm not supposed to be here!

KRIS: Well you are, so deal with it.

CAROL: I cannot believe you are so calm about this.

CANDY: Kristy Kelly told me Molly Clooney told her that she heard of a guy a couple of years ago and Mrs. Tanenbaum suspended him 'cause he tied some kid's shoelaces together.

CAROL: I can't believe this! They don't give scholarships to students with records.

KRIS: She must be in a really bad mood. I usually get the VP, a quick lecture, a stern warning, some detention, and I'm out. She's really making us sweat here. She must be pissed.

CAROL gives a huge groan.

CANDY: My dad'll kill me if I get suspended.

CAROL gives a small whimper.

KRIS: Right before Christmas too. That sucks.

CANDY: Maybe she'll go easy on us 'cause it's Christmas.

CAROL: Oh wake up! This is not a fairy tale. This is a crisis! She's going to eat us for breakfast.

MRS. TANENBAUM: Quite.

During the previous MRS. TANENBAUM has entered and stood behind them. When she speaks, the three students jump with surprise. MRS. TANENBAUM comes around to face them. She looks quite stern.

MRS. TANENBAUM: So. Ladies and Gentleman. Welcome to the Principal's Office.

CAROL leaps to her feet.

CAROL: Mrs. Tanenbaum we're really sorry. We'll never do anything like this again. Well I can only speak for myself really. I know that I'm never going to do anything like this again, especially as I'm up for several scholarships next year and it was a fluke! It was a spur-of-the-moment thing and I totally lost my head. You can be sure that...

MRS. TANENBAUM: Sit down Carol.

CAROL, stopped in mid-sentence, clamps her mouth shut and sits.

MRS. TANENBAUM: All three of you participate in the school choir do you not? (*the students do not answer*) Do you or do you not?

STUDENTS: Yes Mrs. Tanenbaum.

MRS. TANENBAUM: And your choir went to the Moverton Seniors' home this afternoon to sing some Christmas carols, did it not?

STUDENTS: Yes Mrs. Tanenbaum.

MRS. TANENBAUM: To sing some carols. Wasn't that right?

STUDENTS: Yes.

MRS. TANENBAUM: A lovely thing to do. You went to give them a little joy did you not? (*The students do not answer*) Were you not there to give them a little joy?

STUDENTS: Yes Mrs. Tanenbaum.

MRS. TANENBAUM: I see. And you three decided, let me get the precise wording here, you three decided to "spice up" the carols. Is that right? (*the students do not answer*) Candy, is that what you decided to do?

DECK THE STAGE!

CANDY: I guess so.

CAROL: It was Kris, Mrs. Tanenbaum.

KRIS: Hey!

CAROL: We were just innocent bystanders. He coerced us.

MRS. TANENBAUM: I see. So Kris here said “Make up funny words to the Christmas carols or else?” Is that what you said Kris?

KRIS: No.

MRS. TANENBAUM: I thought not.

CAROL: It doesn’t sound right when you say it like that.

MRS. TANENBAUM: I’m sure it doesn’t. Now as for what really happened, I have it right here. (*She holds up a piece of paper*) Right from the horse’s mouth. I just had a long, long talk with your music teacher, Ms. Wiseman. Ms. Wiseman is not so pleased with your decision to “spice up” the carols. Is she Kris?

KRIS: I don’t know.

MRS. TANENBAUM: And neither am I. I am extremely displeased. Because you didn’t really “spice up” the carols, did you? Did you?

CANDY: (*leaning over to KRIS*) She’s not going to go easy on us is she?

CAROL: We know it was a bad thing and it will never never happen again.

MRS. TANENBAUM: “While Shepherds Wash Their Socks By Night?” “Deck The Halls With Poison Ivy?” Honestly.

KRIS: We were just trying to have some fun.

MRS. TANENBAUM: Do I look like I’m laughing? Do I look like I’m having fun? Did the seniors seem to enjoy your little joke? Were they enjoying themselves? Furthermore...

CAROL: Oh boy.

MRS. TANENBAUM: Furthermore, if you’re going to change the words you should really change the words.

CANDY: Huh?

MRS. TANENBAUM: You seem content to fall back on these lame interpretations. It’s a disgrace. They were singing, “Joy To the World, The School Burned Down” when I was a child. And

“Jingle Bells, Batman Smells?” Come on! Haven’t you come up with anything new lately?

KRIS: Are we on camera here?

MRS. TANENBAUM: I know that you can do better than this. This is pathetic. Carol! You got an A in English last year didn’t you?

CAROL: Uh huh.

MRS. TANENBAUM: Aren’t you in the drama club?

CAROL: Yeah, but –

MRS. TANENBAUM: Do you have at least one creative bone in your body?

CAROL: Of course I do but –

MRS. TANENBAUM: All right, all right. Let’s see what you can do. I’ve got a little synthesizer right here. This will give us a bit of a beat to work with.

MRS. TANENBAUM turns on the machine.

MRS. TANENBAUM: Very good. That’s the right tempo I think. Who’ll go first?

The students stare at MRS. TANENBAUM dumbfounded.

MRS. TANENBAUM: No takers? Here, I’ll get you started. (She sings) “Deck the halls with cows and collies.” What’s next?

CAROL: Mrs. Tanenbaum, are you feeling all right? Should we go get the nurse?

MRS. TANENBAUM: Come on! “Deck the halls with cows and collies.” I know somewhere in those tiny brains, genius is at work. Show me what you got! (Singing) “Deck the halls with cows and collies.”

CANDY: (*blurting out*) That’s the way we get our jollies.

MRS. TANENBAUM: That’s the spirit!

CAROL: Candy!

CANDY: That’s what she wants. Isn’t that what you want Mrs. Tanenbaum?

MRS. TANENBAUM: Precisely!

KRIS: And there are no cameras? This isn't like a test? This isn't some psychology trap where we get burned if we do the wrong thing?

MRS. TANENBAUM: No cameras, no tests. Just unadulterated creativity. (*Full-throated singing*) Deck the halls with cows and collies. Fa-la-la-la-la, La-la-la-la. That's the way we get our jollies.

CANDY joins in.

CANDY: Fa-la-la-la-la, La-la-la-la.

KRIS: On Martha Stewart's show she'll prattle.

CANDY: Fa-La-La, La-La-La, La-La-La.

KRIS: On how to decorate with cattle.

CANDY, KRIS and MRS. TANENBAUM: Fa-la-la-la-la, La-la-la-la.

They look to CAROL.

CAROL: I am not participating. I want to go on record as not participating.

MRS. TANENBAUM: Well done Kris! Where did that keen rhythmic mind come from?

KRIS: I write songs for my band.

MRS. TANENBAUM: A band. And what is the moniker of this prolific ensemble?

KRIS: "The Dude and the Flaming Sheds." Well, that's what it is this week.

MRS. TANENBAUM: Are you the dude?

KRIS: I am the dude.

MRS. TANENBAUM: Then lets keep going! (*Singing*) See the Flaming Sheds before us!

MRS. TANENBAUM, CANDY and KRIS: Fa-la-la-la-la, La-la-la-la.

CANDY: Plug your ears and hope they're hor-us.

MRS. TANENBAUM, CANDY and KRIS: Fa-la-la-la-la, La-la-la-la.

MRS. TANENBAUM: I would rather hear the classics.

MRS. TANENBAUM, CANDY and KRIS: Fa-la-la, La-la-la, La-la-la.

KRIS: Dig that Mozart's crazy antics!

The Tree Monologues — Part I

“O Christmas Tree”

These four pieces are inspired by *O Christmas Tree*. They are placed separately throughout the collection to suggest where they may go if the collection is performed as a whole.

Characters

JOHAN and HANS – Brothers

Two brothers, JOHAN and HANS come downstage. During the piece they address the audience. Though they may refer to each other, they don't speak to each other or look at each other.

JOHAN & HANS: (*Lines continued with a ‘...’ should sound like one continuous sentence.*) Every year my brother and I...

JOHAN: Partake in a competition...

HANS: To choose the family Christmas tree.

JOHAN: It's been our job...

JOHAN & HANS: Since we were seven years old.

HANS: We go with our Papa to the tree farm.

JOHAN: We each pick out a tree and he chooses the winner.

HANS: It used to be...

JOHAN & HANS: In the beginning...

HANS: That we would decide on a tree together.

JOHAN & HANS: But that was impossible. (*each referring to the other*) He's so competitive.

JOHAN: It's horrible.

JOHAN & HANS: He always has to have his way.

HANS: So now we get Papa to choose.

JOHAN: I have five wins and Hans only has four.

HANS: Johan always says he has five and I only have four.

JOHAN: He is such a sore loser.

HANS: The year that we were twelve I had double pneumonia and Mama would not let me go to the tree farm, even though I said I could go.

JOHAN: I picked the tree, Papa cut it down. It counts.

HANS: It does not count.

JOHAN: It counts!

JOHAN & HANS: He always gets like this. He always has to have his way. He's impossible.

HANS: The morning of the trip is always bright and crisp and clean.

JOHAN: I arise extra early to make sure I have all of my equipment at hand.

HANS: Sturdy boots!

JOHAN: Strong gloves!

HANS: Binoculars for the scouting!

JOHAN: Tags to mark the trees.

JOHAN & HANS: One year, he tried to claim a tree that I had clearly sighted first!

HANS: Now a tree cannot be claimed until it has a tag on it.

JOHAN: It's all his fault.

JOHAN & HANS: He's so competitive.

They both take a deep breath in.

JOHAN: We stand at the entrance to the tree farm...

HANS: Breathing in the cool, crisp, morning air.

They both breathe in.

JOHAN & HANS: Our breath makes tiny clouds of mist which fogs up our glasses. (*They both wipe their glasses*)

JOHAN: Papa must set us off at exactly the same time.

JOHAN & HANS: He always tries to cheat.

HANS: Johan's foot is over the line!

JOHAN: Hans' body is too far forward!

Still as Stone*"In the Bleak Midwinter"*

In the Bleak Midwinter is one of my favourite carols. The music is so sorrowful, yet the words convey a glimmer of hope at the end of the tunnel. That is what I tried to capture with this play: a deep sorrow moving towards hope.

Characters

Ben

Shelley

The scene is a table and two chairs. It's the kitchen in the home of Shelley Langford.

SHELLEY and BEN enter. They throw their knapsacks on the table and throw their coats on the back of the chairs. It's obvious that BEN has been talking non-stop. He is in mid-sentence as they enter. He speaks through all of the above action.

BEN: ...and every year my Aunt Freida makes this fruitcake. This thing, you could use it as a doorstop. Hard as rock. And every year my mom puts it front and centre on the dining room table. Not off to the side where it could be accidentally missed, but dead centre. Smack! (*he hits the table for emphasis*) And every year, when no one voluntarily eats the doorstop, mom makes everyone at the table eat a slice – no matter how much we beg and plead beforehand. And every year, someone gets violently ill. We lay bets. (*using his hands as a megaphone*) Who will fall prey to Aunt Freida's fruitcake food poisoning. (*as an echo*) osining, osining, osining.

During BEN's speech, SHELLEY exits just offstage where she grabs two glasses. She places the glasses on the table and exits again. She enters with a pitcher of orange juice and fills the glasses.

BEN: Is that pulp or no pulp?

SHELLEY: No pulp.

BEN: Good. I don't like pulp. Makes me gag. (*he makes demonstrative choking noises*)

SHELLEY: I'm just going to check on my mom. Be right back. (*she exits with the pitcher*)

BEN: OK. Sure. No problem.

BEN watches her exit. As soon as she is out of sight, he springs into action. He grabs his knapsack and starts rummaging through it. He should half hum/half sing a Christmas carol as he works. He pulls out a small Christmas present, tastefully wrapped. There is a small bow on the package. BEN carefully arranges the present on the table, moving the juice and the present until the two look just right. He steps back and admires his handiwork. Suddenly he frowns. He tears off the small bow from the present. He ruffles through his knapsack again and brings out a bag of bows, tearing through them until he finds something more suitable.

At this moment, BEN realizes that SHELLEY is approaching. He slaps the bow on the present, cleans up his mess, and sits just in the nick of time, nonchalantly drinking his juice.

SHELLEY enters, stopping when she sees the present.

SHELLEY: What's that?

BEN: What?

SHELLEY: That.

BEN: Oh that. I believe it's called a Christmas present.

SHELLEY: I know what it is. What's it doing on the table?

BEN: OK, you caught me. I thought 'tis the season and we've been working on this project and after next week it'll be all over and I just wanted to give you a little something, a little present, a Christmas thing. Merry Christmas!

SHELLEY: I didn't get you anything.

BEN: I didn't expect anything.

SHELLEY continues to stare at the package.

BEN: Aren't you going to open it?

SHELLEY: No.

BEN: I understand. You're a traditionalist. A woman after my own heart. Christmas presents should be opened on Christmas day.

SHELLEY: No, that's not what I meant. (She takes the package to BEN, trying to return it) This was a very nice idea but I can't accept it.

BEN: What are you talking about?

SHELLEY: Take it back please.

BEN stands up and moves away. He does not take the present.

BEN: Take it back? You're rejecting a present? You haven't even seen it yet! Take it back? I've never heard of this. Sure I've done the ugly sweater return, but at least I opened the box and saw it was a sweater and went "gee what a neat sweater" a couple of times. Are you trying to pulverize my heart into tiny bits?

SHELLEY: It's your own fault. If you had asked, I would have told you not to. (*she puts the present on the table*)

BEN: And why is that?

SHELLEY: We don't celebrate Christmas.

BEN: Oh. (*a thought hits him*) Oh! (*he hits himself on the head*) I am such an idiot. Oh wow. I feel so stupid. What an idiot. I didn't know.

SHELLEY: Now you do.

BEN: I didn't clue in. Shelley Langford doesn't sound like a Jewish name. There I go making assumptions. I'm always doing that.

SHELLEY: Who's Jewish?

BEN: You are. That's why you don't celebrate Christmas right?

SHELLEY: I'm not Jewish.

BEN: Oh.

SHELLEY: (*a small pause*) Shall we get started? I did some more research on the economical –

BEN: (*a thought just hitting him*) Oh! Oh!! Oh!!!

SHELLEY: What?

BEN: I get it now.

SHELLEY: Get what?

BEN: That's what's missing here. There's no tree! There's no wreaths! There's no Christmas decorations of any kind. You'd never know it was December. You know, my uncle has a tree farm and I can probably get you a pretty good deal. Maybe I can get you one for

free, who knows. I kinda forgot his birthday this year so I'm not exactly in the good books...

SHELLEY: (*loudly*) Ben! (*a little more quietly*) If we wanted a tree we'd have one. We don't. OK?

BEN: Riiiiiight. It's the commercial thing isn't it?

SHELLEY gives a little groan of frustration and goes back to working on her notes.

BEN: You seem like the kind of girl, um, woman, who would really shun all that money jive. I totally agree, people spending too much money, once a year, going totally crazy on things they don't need instead of spending good decent quality time with their families and...

SHELLEY: Look will you shut up! Just shut up!

BEN: You don't have to shout.

SHELLEY: Then shut up about Christmas. OK? Just do your work and get out of here and leave me alone.

BEN: You are trying to pulverize my heart into tiny bits.

SHELLEY: I am not.

BEN: All I did was spend five minutes picking out something nice for you. I wrapped it myself. I thought I was doing a nice thing.

SHELLEY: You did.

BEN: Then open it, say "Gee what a neat sweater!" and I won't say another word.

SHELLEY: I can't.

BEN: Then give me a good reason why not. (*SHELLEY doesn't say anything, BEN gets up and starts putting his things on*) You know, I defend you a lot at school. I. Me. I have come to your defence. You've got a pretty messy reputation. "Cold fish" comes up a lot. So does "snob," "pretentious" and "stuck-up." "No, no," I say, "She's funny. She's OK. She's just new, she doesn't know many people. She's just shy." Obviously I've been the biggest fool 'cause obviously everyone is right about you and I just couldn't see it.

SHELLEY runs from the room. BEN takes a big breath.

BEN: Damn. Merry Christmas.

The Tree Monologues — Part 2

“O Christmas Tree”

ESTHER steps forward. She is wearing thick glasses and her clothes are not trendy. She seems somewhat sullen.

ESTHER: My name is Esther Ignatious Andracki. I am twelve years old. I am in the seventh grade, in Ms. Bingham's class. If it's any consolation, I come from a broken home...but it probably doesn't matter. I can feel your anger wafting toward me, waves of anger coming at me like a freight train. I'm not sure a twelve-year-old should have so much anger wafting towards them, but that is only my opinion.

She clears her throat and brings out a piece of paper that has been folded over many times.

I am here standing in front of you, my fellow classmates, my schoolmates, their families, the teachers, the school board, and selected members of the television and print media to apologize. (*she clears her throat and begins to read*) I apologize to my fellow classmates, schoolmates, their families, the teacher, the school board, and selected members of the television and print media. Christmas is a holiday and a tradition that is not to be toyed with, even though large parts of the world don't celebrate it or could care less about it... (*she clears her throat again*) Christmas trees are a part of that tradition and therefore I should not have expressed my opinion about the unnecessary slaughter of spruce and pine... I should not have expressed my opinion about Christmas trees in the manner in which I chose to express it. It was wrong. My father told me that I should always say what I think and not be afraid to express my opinion. I guess he was wrong, too. But he wishes I was a boy if that's any consolation. I live day-to-day never fully realizing the dreams he had as a young man; tossing a ball with his son, roughhousing with his son, watching the game with his son, fishing with his son, even though I am quite a competent fisher. If that's any consolation.

She clears her throat again and goes back to reading her paper.

I should not have tipped the school Christmas tree over. I should not have destroyed the handmade ornaments that were carefully crafted and chosen to be hung on the Christmas tree as a sign that they were the best Christmas tree ornaments in the school.

The Choir Committee

“Angels We Have Heard On High”

Angels We Have Heard On High. Sometimes it's not the lyrics of a carol that strikes us, but the way it is sung.

Characters

TARIEL – Angel. Member of the Choir Committee.

MARIEL – Angel. Member of the Choir Committee.

DARIEL – Angel. Head of the Choir Committee.

SARIEL – Angel. Beautiful voice, not so beautiful attitude.

ZARIEL – Misfit angel. Member of the Heavenly Choir.

Three angels, TARIEL, MARIEL, and DARIEL are eavesdropping on a choir practice that is happening offstage. TARIEL and MARIEL are intently looking and listening and trying not to be seen. DARIEL watches this with a look of skepticism.

DARIEL: Why are we doing this?

MARIEL: Shh!

DARIEL: I have work to do.

TARIEL: Shh! Shh!

DARIEL: We don't have to sneak around. We can go in and watch the practice.

TARIEL: She might sing differently.

DARIEL: Who?

TARIEL: Shh!

MARIEL: We need an unfiltered reading.

DARIEL: On what?

MARIEL: Shh!

DARIEL: I take one holiday. One. Now I'm playing hide and seek in a corridor. This feels sneaky.

MARIEL: It is.

DARIEL: Then we shouldn't be doing it. (turns to go)

TARIEL: They're starting, they're starting!

MARIEL: (*pulling TARIEL back*) Listen, listen.

TARIEL: To what?

MARIEL & TARIEL: Shh!

*The sounds of the choir singing are heard offstage.
They are singing “Angels We Have Heard On High.”
There is nothing out of the ordinary.*

TARIEL: That doesn't sound any different than usual.

MARIEL: Wait, just wait.

TARIEL: They haven't got to the right part yet.

The “right part” comes (the “Glorias”) and one voice stands out over the others. It is loud, off-key, and horrible. It should also sound full-throated and proud to be there. All three angels clap their hands over their ears.

TARIEL: What is that? Who is that?

MARIEL & TARIEL: Zariel.

The singing is mercifully cut off.

TARIEL: Who is Zariel and what is Zariel doing singing in my choir?

*TARIEL and MARIEL look nervously at each other.
They begin to laugh nervously.*

MARIEL: It's a funny story.

TARIEL: You'll laugh.

MARIEL: We laughed when we realized what we had done.

TARIEL: Tears streaming down our cheeks.

MARIEL: It's very funny.

They see that TARIEL is not laughing and their own laughter sputters to a stop. They plow forward. TARIEL and MARIEL are extremely nervous. They should always be in motion.

TARIEL: While you were away, we were planning to do just what you said, keep up the everyday running of the choir. We had every intention of doing just that.

MARIEL: Every intention.

TARIEL: And things were going along quite smoothly.

MARIEL: But then we heard this voice.

TARIEL: This beautiful voice.

MARIEL: This voice was made for the heavenly choir.

As they talk SARIEL enters and stands off to the side. She has a snooty air in the way that she walks and holds herself. She begins to sing and it is quite pretty.

TARIEL: We know that you're supposed to be involved with all new voices that are added to the choir...

MARIEL: But this voice.

TARIEL & MARIEL: This voice!

MARIEL: We were mesmerized...

TARIEL: ...Hypnotized...

MARIEL: ...Amazed-ized.

DARIEL: That's not a word.

MARIEL: But you see my point.

SARIEL finishes her song but continues to stand in her snotty manner. On the opposite side of the stage, ZARIEL enters. She is the opposite of everything that SARIEL is. She is unkempt at best. An offbeat angel who isn't aware that she is not in with the norm. She begins to sing and though her voice is filled with heart and exuberance, it is far from pretty.

TARIEL: And then we heard this other voice.

MARIEL: This awful voice.

TARIEL: High when it should be low...

MARIEL: And low when it should be high.

TARIEL: It penetrated into the atmosphere.

MARIEL: It sounded like three cats attached to a ceiling fan at high speed.

TARIEL: And we knew we did not want that voice anywhere near the choir.

ZARIEL stops singing but continues to stand.

MARIEL: So without thinking...

TARIEL: It's an honest mistake.

MARIEL: Without thinking we went straight to the scheduling committee.

TARIEL and MARIEL turn away in a flinch.

DARIEL: You did what?

MARIEL: We were in a state.

TARIEL: We didn't think.

MARIEL: We thought we were thinking.

TARIEL: But we weren't.

MARIEL: We knew without a shadow of a doubt who we wanted in the choir and who we didn't want in the choir and we didn't want there to be some...some...

TARIEL: Unforeseen error.

MARIEL: Right, some unforeseen error, some...some...

TARIEL: Glitch in the system.

MARIEL: Right, some glitch in the system, which would give us the voice we didn't want and keep away the voice we did want and the thing that we most wanted...

TARIEL: And the thing that we most wanted was to not get the names mixed up when we went to the scheduling committee.

DARIEL: Oh dear.

MARIEL: But they sound so much alike.

TARIEL: And we were in a state.

MARIEL: Sariel, Zariel. Zariel, Sariel.

TARIEL: And we made a mistake.

MARIEL: An honest one, though.

SARIEL and ZARIEL open up envelopes that they have in their hands. They each take out an identical looking letter and read.

ZARIEL: The heavenly choir? The heavenly choir! I'm going to be in the choir! Whoo-hoo Whoo-hoo! (she exits, dancing happily)

SARIEL: Cloud control? (she exits in sullen disbelief)

The focus shifts back to DARIEL, TARIEL, and MARIEL.

TARIEL: So you see? An honest mistake.

DARIEL: One holiday. I take one holiday.

MARIEL: It gets worse I'm afraid.

DARIEL: How could it possibly get worse?

TARIEL: There have been some...

MARIEL: Incidents.

DARIEL: What type of incidents?

MARIEL: Well, the choir went to a children's hospital and sang over the babies, but because of their...

TARIEL: ...new sound...

MARIEL: ...the babies wouldn't stop crying.

TARIEL: Then there was the highway incident.

DARIEL: Highway?

TARIEL: The choir was singing over a highway and there were three accidents.

MARIEL: People were taking their hands off the wheel and putting them over their ears.

DARIEL: What was the choir doing over a highway?

MARIEL: That was Tariel's idea.

TARIEL: I thought that soothing music would cut down the number of cases of road rage.

DARIEL: I see.

MARIEL: You do?

DARIEL: I do.

MARIEL: And you see how all of this was just an honest mistake.

TARIEL: A case of two angels trying to spread their wings so to speak.

MARIEL: Ha ha.

TARIEL: Ha ha.

MARIEL & TARIEL: Ha ha.

DARIEL: And what do you plan to do about this honest mistake?

MARIEL & TARIEL: Wellllllllll...

MARIEL: We thought...

TARIEL: After you heard Zariel sing...

MARIEL: And seeing as you're the senior member of the choir committee...

TARIEL: And that it's a delicate situation...

MARIEL: And seeing that no one has ever been kicked out of the choir before...

TARIEL: But knowing that Zariel can't stay in the choir...

MARIEL: And looking to your expertise...

TARIEL: And your experience...

MARIEL & TARIEL: We thought you could do it.

DARIEL: Do what?

MARIEL: Tell Zariel she can't be in the choir anymore.

DARIEL: (*she starts to laugh*) Oh no. Oh no. This is your doing. If you want her out, you'll have to do it yourselves.

SARIEL enters.

TARIEL: Sariel! (*runs over to drag SARIEL into the conversation*) You're late.

MARIEL: Dariel, this is Sariel.

TARIEL: The one with the voice.

DARIEL: Hello.

SARIEL: Charmed, I'm sure.

MARIEL: Ha, ha, how are you today Sariel.

SARIEL: (*with a pout*) I'm not doing very well at all.

TARIEL: Ohhhhh, how come.

SARIEL: Cloud control doesn't agree with me. Clouds don't want to be controlled and I don't want to control them. It's too hard. (*She pouts again and stamps her foot*)

DARIEL: I see.

MARIEL: Sariel, this is Dariel, the head of the choir committee.

SARIEL: Oh. Oh! You want to hear me sing don't you? (*She opens her mouth and starts to sing. DARIEL cuts her off.*)

DARIEL: Thank you, that won't be necessary.

SARIEL: But how are you going to put me in the choir if you haven't heard me sing?

MARIEL: Ha, ha, thank you for coming by Sariel.

TARIEL: We'll talk to you later.

SARIEL: But you said I would get to sing and I haven't done that yet!

At that moment ZARIEL enters. She enters singing, bouncing, and with great joy. She now wears a sash denoting her membership in the heavenly choir.

TARIEL & MARIEL: OH!

ZARIEL: Why Tariel, Dariel, and Mariel. Just the people I wanted to see. (*she sticks out her hand to DARIEL*) Hi, I know who you are but you don't know who I am. I'm Zariel and I'm super glad to finally meet you face to face like this.

DARIEL: Hello Zariel.

SARIEL: (*with a sneer*) "Super glad?"

ZARIEL: I wanted to talk to you about the choir.

MARIEL: Isn't that a coincidence, we would like to talk to you about the choir.

ZARIEL: Hey! That is a co-inky dink.

DARIEL: Quite.

ZARIEL *pulls out a notepad.*

ZARIEL: So what I was thinking... (*she sees something odd in the faces of the committee*) Y'all don't mind if I go first do you?

TARIEL: Why not.

ZARIEL: Great! So what I was thinking, I had me some real brainstorms. Easy-peasy ideas.

MARIEL: That really isn't necessary Zariel.

TARIEL: We do all the necessary thinking for the choir.

ZARIEL: Jam sessions.

DARIEL: I beg your pardon.

ZARIEL: That's what I want to introduce to the choir. Jam sessions.

TARIEL: What is it you wish to jam?

ZARIEL: Those accidents got me to thinking, and I think the reason those drivers didn't like the music is because of the type of music we were singing. We got us so many musicians and singers up here. I think the choir should be more open. Include some different types of music. Expand our horizons, so to speak, and our voices too.

MARIEL: Voices, yes, we did want to...

ZARIEL: I mean don't take this the wrong way or anything, don't be weird, but the choir's kind of stuffy, don't you think? And the music is so...

SARIEL: Perfect.

ZARIEL: Sterile.

DARIEL: There's a reason the heavenly choir is the way it is Zariel. It has been this way for thousands of years.

ZARIEL: I know, I know; if it ain't broke, don't fix it, I know. And here comes this greenhorn, this newbie, this up-and-comer trying to shake it up, trying to shake a little booty.

MARIEL & TARIEL: Zariel!

MARIEL: We do not shake things up...

TARIEL: And we have no booty.

MARIEL: The choir is not a shake and bake.

TARIEL: Have a little respect.

SARIEL snickers at ZARIEL, which is stifled when she is elbowed by MARIEL.

ZARIEL: Sorry. (*she closes her notebook*)

DARIEL: Is there something else you wanted to share with us?

ZARIEL: I...no. No, it can wait. What did you want to talk to me about?

TARIEL: Zariel, why don't you sit down?

ZARIEL: OK.

MARIEL: We do realize that you have the exuberance of youth about you. However...

ZARIEL: Listen. Before you go on, I just want to say I'm real grateful to you for letting me in the choir. No one's really ever let me into things my whole life. I'm so proud to be a part of something. I tell everyone, strangers even – I'm in the heavenly choir. "Hey, did you know I'm in the choir?" So, I guess I just wanted to say thank you. Go ahead.

MARIEL: Ah.

TARIEL: Go ahead Mariel.

MARIEL: Yes. Ah, Zariel....

ZARIEL: Yes?

MARIEL: Tariel has something to say to you.

TARIEL: I do?

MARIEL: Yes you do. Go ahead.

TARIEL: But – all right. Zariel. It's about you and the choir and your voice.

ZARIEL: What about it?

TARIEL: It's, it's, it's...

MARIEL: Tell her Tariel.

TARIEL: Don't rush me.

ZARIEL: Don't you like my voice?

TARIEL: Of course we – (*she gets bumped by MARIEL*) No. We don't.
We have to tell you the truth.

ZARIEL: Which is what?

MARIEL: Well...

TARIEL: Well...

SARIEL: It stinks.

ZARIEL: What?

SARIEL: It stinks, it's rotten, it's awful!

MARIEL: We can't stand it.

TARIEL: It's like three cats...

MARIEL: ...attached to a ceiling fan...

TARIEL: ...at full speed.

MARIEL: It stands out.

TARIEL: It doesn't mesh.

MARIEL: You're too high when everyone else is low.

TARIEL: And too low when everyone else is high.

MARIEL: We've had a lot of complaints.

TARIEL: A lot.

MARIEL: And we just don't think that your... your...

TARIEL: Unique style.

MARIEL: We don't think your unique style suits the melodic qualities
the choir is aiming for.

TARIEL: It just doesn't mesh.

MARIEL: So.

TARIEL: So.

ZARIEL: So what you're saying then is I'm out of the choir.

DARIEL: Well....

TARIEL & MARIEL: Yes.

TARIEL: We're so glad you understand.

MARIEL: We knew you would.

TARIEL: We hear there are some openings in cloud control. Maybe you can try that.

ZARIEL: Maybe. Thanks for the tip. (*she sighs*) I'll just turn in my sash then.

ZARIEL turns to go. She's extremely dejected.

DARIEL: Wait! Zariel come back here.

MARIEL: Dariel, what are you doing?

TARIEL: We've said all we have to say.

MARIEL: Let her turn in her sash.

SARIEL: She could give it to me.

DARIEL: I have been a member of this committee for a long time. I am ashamed to say that this is not one of our finest moments. Zariel, tell me this: do you love the choir? Do you love to sing?

MARIEL: Dariel...

ZARIEL: Oh yes, it's the one time I truly feel like an angel. You may have noticed I'm a wee bit clumsy and a little disorganized.

DARIEL: Just a little.

ZARIEL: But when I'm singing, none of that matters. It just takes me to another place and I am truly happy. I don't know what it is but I do know I use my whole soul to do it. (*she sighs*) Maybe they'll let me sing in cloud control.

SARIEL: I doubt it.

DARIEL: Sariel step forward. Do you love the choir? Do you love to sing?

SARIEL: I'm an excellent singer.

DARIEL: That's it?

SARIEL: Any choir would be mad not to have me.

The Tree Monologues — Part 3

“O Christmas Tree”

ASIA stands in a pose of great boredom and snobbery.

ASIA: Our Christmas tree is white. All white. Green would clash too horrendously with the decor. The tree is white. The lights are white. All the decorations are white. All the packages under the tree are wrapped in white paper. Mumsy wouldn't have it any other way and neither would I. She's an artiste. I plan to be an artiste after I make my 'mil' in the stock market. That's how she did it. What a role model. She buys Barbie dolls and spray paints them gold and sells them for five hundred bucks a pop. Can you believe it? (*In her excitement ASIA actually sounds like a normal teen for half a second. She coughs and reverts back to her pose of boredom and snobbery.*) What I mean to say is that she reflects on the illusion of female perfection in such a manner that it would be inconceivable to value her magnificent creations within a lower price range.

She shifts into another pose, one equally bored and snobby.

Our tree is artificial. One year Mumsy tried to spray paint a real tree. But for some unknown reason all the needles fell off. We now refer to that dismal year as Black Christmas. We hung black crepe paper throughout our abode and did not celebrate the traditions of the season in any way. We didn't even exchange the customary tokens of our affection. Sure, I really wanted a pair of roller blades that year but when Mumsy gets into a mood there's no stopping her. No stopping her at all. Not that I'd want to. Mumsy is a force. A force to be reckoned with. I want to be just like her. Once she sets her mind to something it's impossible to change it. She's a tour de force. Oh yes, occasionally one finds oneself on the other end of that force. But it's for one's good. Yes. Indeed. Yes indeedy.

(she becomes almost a normal teen again) Like in the fifth grade when I made a macaroni angel to go on top of the Christmas tree but she wouldn't let me put it on because she was at war with folk art. War with folk art. How do you war against folk art? I worked really hard on that stupid macaroni angel! I took great pains to paint each individual macaroni. I even did it white even though everyone in the class was painting theirs silver and gold, which is what I really wanted to do. But nooooooooooooo. It was all for her and did she appreciate it? Noooooooooo. We have to

Leaping Kings

“We Three Kings”

I found that there are three distinct personalities in the carol *We Three Kings*. This is further established by the gifts that the kings choose to bring. I also wanted to put the kings into some peril – not all trips are problem-free, and this one shouldn’t be either. We only hear about the beginning and the end of the journey, but what happened in the middle?

Characters

MELCHIOR – Gold

GASPAR – Frankincense

BALTHASAR – Myrrh

VOICE

Lights come up on the Three KINGS. They hold their gifts in front of them. The light is dreamy. The characters are traditionally costumed, but use modern speech.

A voiceover is heard. The voice is solemn and serious.

VOICE: The Magi from the east saw a star. And lo they traveled, searching for a child that was foretold to be the King of Kings. And lo they each had gifts for the child: gold, frankincense and myrrh. With complete confidence and steadfastness they traveled the distance with only a star to guide their way.

The lights change completely. The three KINGS stick out their thumbs. They are hitchhiking.

MELCHIOR: (*muttering to himself*) “Let the camels run free, Melchior. Don’t tie them up. They’ll never wander away. They’re the most loyal creatures in the world.”

GASPAR: They are.

MELCHIOR: Ha!

BALTHASAR: We’re going to be late.

GASPAR: Patience Balthasar.

MELCHIOR: “The most reliable form of transportation, Melchior.” (to GASPAR) That’s what you told me.

GASPAR: It’s true.

MELCHIOR: Ha!

BALTHASAR: It'll look really bad if we're late.

GASPAR: We're not going to be late.

MELCHIOR: If we had traveled with pages like I wanted to, they could have watched the camels and we wouldn't be in this mess.

GASPAR: Melchior, we're not going to have that conversation again.
What's done is done. We'll get there.

BALTHASAR: Not at this rate. At this rate, we'll all die from thirst. The vultures will come and hover over us as we gasp our last breaths.

MELCHIOR: That's what I like about you Balthasar, you have such a positive attitude.

BALTHASAR: I don't even see the star anymore.

GASPAR: It's right there. It's been there all along.

MELCHIOR: This is ridiculous. We're in the middle of the desert! No one is going to come by. We're never going to get out of here and we're never going to get there.

GASPAR: Melchior, you have to mellow out. We'll get there.

MELCHIOR: You truly believe that.

GASPAR: I truly do.

MELCHIOR: Fine. If you say so.

GASPAR: I do.

BALTHASAR: I don't.

MELCHIOR: Nobody asked you.

GASPAR: If it will make you feel better, why don't we find a way of attracting attention? We could build a bonfire.

MELCHIOR: Do you see any wood?

GASPAR: We haven't really looked yet have we?

BALTHASAR: I don't see any.

GASPAR: There's some dry brush over there. Why don't you go get it and see if it'll work?

BALTHASAR: OK. But it's not going to work.

During the following, BALTHASAR grabs some brush from the far side of the stage.

GASPAR: This would be a good spot for a fire. Melchior, help me move our things out of the way.

GASPAR and MELCHIOR continue to talk as they move their things.

MELCHIOR: I want to ask you something.

GASPAR: Of course.

MELCHIOR: You're so, you're so calm about this. You don't seem to have one shred of insecurity about what's going to happen. Don't you think, deep down inside, don't you believe this is crazy? That this is just a wild goose chase?

GASPAR: No.

MELCHIOR: Not even a teeny, tiny bit?

GASPAR: Sorry.

BALTHASAR: I do. But it doesn't matter. We'll die of thirst before we get there anyway.

GASPAR: That's perfect Balthasar. (to MELCHIOR) What does it matter if it is crazy?

The three set to work, pulling the brush apart and setting it in a teepee shape for a bonfire.

MELCHIOR: You just said that it wasn't.

GASPAR: I know. But even if it was, what does that matter? We all need to do crazy things in life. We need to step outside the box, look beyond the straight line. Sometimes we have to put all of our eggs in one basket instead of spreading them around.

MELCHIOR: Balthasar, you're making a mess. Move over there.

GASPAR: It's an exciting way to live; to not know where every step is going to lead you. If every step is planned, the step becomes ordinary. But if every step is a leap of faith, how thrilling the every day would be.

MELCHIOR: And what if every leap lands you in a snake pit?

BALTHASAR: Or a den of wolves, or a pack of thieves, or a pride of lions, or...

MELCHIOR: Balthasar!

BALTHASAR: Just trying to help.

MELCHIOR: You're not.

GASPAR: I think you've clearly defined the metaphor.

MELCHIOR: Well, "leap" man?

GASPAR: I never said each step would be a good one, but that's the price.

MELCHIOR: It's too high a price. I didn't get to where I am today by following crazy schemes.

BALTHASAR: You didn't do anything to get where you are today. Your father was king and his father was before that.

MELCHIOR: Technicality, schmectiality.

BALTHASAR: All you had to do was be born.

MELCHIOR: But it's up to me whether I'm a good king or a bad king. I had to do a lot more than be born Balthasar. You're just splitting hairs. And making a mess. Move away, move away.

BALTHASAR: I'm not going to do anything. So there. (*He moves away in a sulk*)

GASPAR: So why are you here? If you don't believe in doing crazy things, why come?

MELCHIOR: Why did you come?

GASPAR: I believe. You don't. You think it's crazy. So...

MELCHIOR: Do you have to over-analyze every little thing I do? Hm? Isn't it good enough that I am here? Who's got the matches? (*there is a silence*) Who was supposed to bring the matches?

BALTHASAR slowly raises his hand.

MELCHIOR: So where are they?

BALTHASAR: I... left them.

MELCHIOR: Left them where?

BALTHASAR: On Sparky.

MELCHIOR: Gaspar, did you take your supplies off your camel last night? Of course you did. So did I.

BALTHASAR: How was I to know they'd run off? How was I supposed to know?

MELCHIOR: Gaspar, Gaspar, help me. You have to help me so that I don't strangle this man.

GASPAR: Now, now. No need to exaggerate.

MELCHIOR: Who's exaggerating?

GASPAR: Now, now.

MELCHIOR: Although, I should have known. I should have expected no less from a guy who brings Myrrh as a gift for a baby. That's like driving a hearse to a wedding! It's not exactly happy tiding, happy joy, long life. You're going to bring the party down Balthasar, way down. What on earth put it into your head to bring funeral perfume?

BALTHASAR: I was told to.

MELCHIOR: By who?

BALTHASAR: I'd rather not say.

MELCHIOR: Who told you to bring a gift? I wasn't told to bring a gift. Gaspar wasn't told to bring a gift.

BALTHASAR: Ooooooh gold, how original.

MELCHIOR: Who told you?

BALTHASAR: I'd rather not say.

MELCHIOR: Are you kidding me? Why not?

BALTHASAR: You'll make fun.

GASPAR: I won't.

BALTHASAR: No you won't, will you?

MELCHIOR: When have I made fun of you?

BALTHASAR: Only every second of this journey!

GASPAR: If you don't mind talking to me, I'd like to know Balthasar.

BALTHASAR: All right. I'll tell you. (to MELCHIOR) But I'm not telling you.

MELCHIOR: What am I supposed to do, plug my ears?

BALTHASAR: That'll do fine.

GASPAR: Why don't we move over here?

They move downstage.

MELCHIOR: You have got to be kidding me.

BALTHASAR: (*almost in a whisper*) I had a dream.

GASPAR: Ahhh.

BALTHASAR: I had a dream about a man. It's a bit fuzzy, but the gist of it was, he died and then he rose from the dead three days later.

MELCHIOR: (*laughing out loud*) That's ridiculous!

BALTHASAR: Was I talking to you!?

GASPAR: Melchior, if you can't say anything nice...

MELCHIOR: All right, all right.

BALTHASAR: Besides it's no more ridiculous than traveling the desert, following a star, looking for a baby we don't even know for sure exists.

MELCHIOR: Fair enough.

GASPAR: Go on. What about the dream?

BALTHASAR: So I saw this happen, and it was like I was right there, only no one could see me. And I felt a hand on my shoulder. I thought it was a hand, only when I turned there was only light. And the light spoke... (*he breaks off to give MELCHIOR a dirty look*)

MELCHIOR: I didn't say anything.

BALTHASAR: I was anticipating.

GASPAR: What did the light say?

BALTHASAR: I don't quite remember. I had lamb for dinner and it didn't sit well with me. I had a restless night.

GASPAR: Do the best you can.

BALTHASAR: I think it said: This man is about to be born and the world will never be the same. "This deserves a celebration," I said, "This man can do great things." "No," said the light, "Others will celebrate. Never forget what you have seen Balthasar. This man has to know from day one what he's getting into. You can

help to do that." (*breaking out of the story*) That's why I chose Myrrh.

GASPAR: It's a good choice.

BALTHASAR: You think so? I've doubted it all along. Especially with mister gold fingers here.

MELCHIOR: What's wrong with bringing gold?

GASPAR: You know Melchior, you still haven't answered my question.
Why are you here?

MELCHIOR: I wasn't going to come.

GASPAR: I know.

MELCHIOR: I didn't have a dream. I... (*he runs his hands through his hair*)

GASPAR: Yes?

MELCHIOR: It's good for business that's all. If this baby is the King of Kings, he'll be a good fellow to know. Gold is a worthy gift from one king to another. I could do no less.

GASPAR: Is that the only reason? Business? Politics? Money? How disappointing.

MELCHIOR: I'm sorry you feel that way. I'm not like you Gaspar. I believe what I see in front of me. I do not apply to crazy schemes.

GASPAR: That makes no sense at all! This is without a doubt the craziest thing you have ever done. You must believe.

MELCHIOR: I don't! However, I do believe in my instincts. I trust my gut. I treat it well and when my gut tells me something I listen.

BALTHASAR: What does your gut tell you?

MELCHIOR: I... I'll tell you this. I agree with Balthasar in one regard...

BALTHASAR: You do?

MELCHIOR: The world is a changing place. Something is about to happen and maybe it's us. I don't know, it's hard to fathom right now, standing out here in the middle of nowhere.

GASPAR: I think you do believe. You do believe in this crazy journey and you do believe we're going to find something at the end of it.

MELCHIOR: My gut may believe, but that doesn't necessarily mean –

The Tree Monologues — Part 4

“O Christmas Tree”

IRIS: I have a cat. Her name is Snowball. She's beautiful, white, and fluffier than a puffball. She was a birthday present. She's the most lovely, caring, wonderful, beautiful cat in all the world! Except... My cat Snowball likes tinsel. She likes to eat tinsel. I don't know why. She won't touch garbage. She won't even look at mice. She has no yen for other Christmas tree decorations, not that I wish she would – tinsel's enough. The tinsel doesn't like her and often comes up as fast as it goes down. There's no sound quite like the ak ak ak of Snowball hacking up another mal-digested silver mess.

I like tinsel too. I love the way a tree looks covered in the silvery thin strips. You can crinkle them into wrinkles and they still look as good as when they're sleek and smooth. I love the way tinsel sparkles in the light. A perfect canvas for blue, now green, now red. A Christmas tree is not a Christmas tree without tinsel. A cake may be the best in the world but it's not a cake till you add the icing.

Christmas is big in our house. Specifically, Christmas decorations. There is a time-honoured tradition not only to the decorations on our tree, but the way our tree gets decorated, and who gets to decorate what and when. Everyone is in charge of one aspect or another. The older you are, the more important the charge. For years, my brother salivated over the prospect of being in charge of the lights. It starts in November: “Dad can I do the lights? Dad can I do the lights? Dad can I do the lights? Dad can I do the lights?” One Christmas, for some unknown reason, my dad handed over the box of lights to Adam. Without warning. Without a word. But it was too soon and the task too overwhelming. Adam blew two fuses and almost electrocuted himself. He was demoted back to glass balls for two years after that.

My sister followed a different path. Mom has her own tree, “Mom's tree,” that sits on the dining room table during the holidays. It's decorated with antique ornaments, some from Mom's childhood, some that arrive in layer after layer of bubble wrap. Wooden candy canes and real tin soldiers. All the ornaments are wrapped in tissue paper and kept in a velvet box away from the other decorations. Ellie worked up her own personal ladder year by year, inch by inch. First demonstrating her care and competence with the crappy items, those made by us kids; we were well-known as the most creatively challenged

family on the planet. Then on to the good ornaments on the big tree. Then she carried the velvet box, not opening, just carrying it to the table. At last she earned the right to unwrap these precious treasures and finally, finally, she crested the top of the mountain the day she was allowed to put that wooden candy cane delicately on its branch. Ellie still counts that day as one of the greatest moment of her life, which will tell you something about the excitement level of her life I guess.

Being the youngest, I got stuck with tinsel and it's been that way ever since. That's the way I like it. I connect with tinsel on so many levels. When I was five I favoured the clump and throw method. Grab a handful and toss it at the tree as hard as I could. Later I went to the other extreme. One strand at a time, standing back and surveying my work like a painter observes her canvas. It would take hours and hours till Adam and Ellie were screaming at me: "Throw it on! Throw it on! We can't turn on the lights till you're done you little idiot! It's just tinsel you little freak! You'd think the Queen was coming!" Maybe the Queen was coming. How was I to know? I was only eight.

Now we have a cat. Snowball. She's beautiful, white, and fluffier than a puffball. She was a birthday present. She's the most lovely, caring, wonderful, beautiful cat in all the world! Except for the tinsel thing. It's November 30th, and the tree goes up tomorrow. Last year Snowball created a tinsel massacre. Silver busted bits all over the living room. That drove mom into a frenzy. She's large into clean carpets. And then there was the sticky situation of suddenly coming across a pool of vomit wrapped in tinsel. That drove dad 'round the bend, who, after stepping in one, threw a fit and declared that either Snowball goes or the tinsel goes! Snowball or tinsel? Tinsel or Snowball? What kind of choice is that? It's totally unfair. And Adam and Ellie don't care as long as their sacred jobs are safe. No, it's up to me. Snowball or an unfinished cake. A shining example to the beauty of Christmas or a little puff to tell all my secrets to.

IRIS holds out both hands as if she is holding her choices. She looks from one hand to the other. Then out to the audience.

Which do I choose? Which do I choose?

– THE END –

Ms. Meyermeyer's Shining Moment

"The Twelve Days of Christmas"

Everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from, has performed in a school Christmas play. Did you ever have a teacher like Ms. Meyermeyer?

One thing to remember about "kid" acting: Make it honest and simple. Think in terms of impulsiveness, rather than being random and silly. Kids don't use baby voices or act like babies and neither should you.

Characters

Ms. Meyermeyer

Cameron

Ira

Winston

Pamela Lee

Renata

Marilo

Emily

The Rest Of Ms. Meyermeyer's Second Grade Class

A bare stage. MS. MEYERMYER enters, a second grade teacher with an odd sense of style and an even odder personality. There is a grandiose flair about her and she gives the impression that she could crack at any second. She walks centre stage, takes in a deep breath, turns and realizes that no one is behind her.

MS. MEYERMYER: Come on out children. There's no need to hide in the wings. We are here to perform and that must be done centre stage, with the bright lights and the audience adulation sailing towards you.

As she speaks, MS. MEYERMYER's class comes slowly and reluctantly out of the wings. They are an unhappy group. They sit on the floor centre stage. They all carry various props and costume pieces.

We've only a few days to perfect our little opus. As you all well know, my second grade class last year brought down the house with their original oratorio recitation: "Santa Claus – Fact, Fancy or Fiction?" Now. We've had our ups and downs this year but there's no reason we can't rise to the occasion. That's why I persuaded Mr. Herbert to let us use the stage tonight. Usually this kind of treatment makes a teacher persona non grata, but

this is an extra special case. Everyone wants to see what miracle Ms. Meyermeyer is going to perform.

CAMERON raises his hand.

Yes Cameron?

CAMERON: (*sullenly*) I'm supposed to be at cub scouts tonight. We're learning to build traps. Someone's bringing in a stuffed ferret that their dad caught and it's got glass eyes and one of them falls out all the time.

MS. MEYERMYER: I like your honesty Cameron. It will serve you well. Passion is not without pain, children. There is so much pain in the theatre. So much. Some of my old students have probably told you a tale or two about coming to grips with the beast that was their Christmas Pageant selection.

Every hand goes up.

MS. MEYERMYER: Pamela Lee?

PAMELA stands.

PAMELA LEE: Chantal Lessard said that you wouldn't let them go out at recess. They had to practice instead. (*sits*)

MS. MEYERMYER: True. (*the sea of hands go up again*) Ira?

IRA stands.

IRA: Trey Beane said that they had to write a test and if they didn't get an A they weren't allowed to perform. (*sits*)

MS. MEYERMYER: I will never shy away from the title of hard taskmaster children. (*The sea of hands goes up again*) Renata?

RENATA stands.

RENATA: Sandy Marcellino said that you threw lighted matches at him till he got his lines right.

MS. MEYERMYER gives a large guffawing nervous laugh.

MS. MEYERMYER: Oh that little devil. What a storyteller. What a story. But did you notice children, how well Sandy spoke his lines last year?

The class nods their heads at each other and all start chattering. MS. MEYERMYER claps her hands.

MS. MEYERMYER: Enough chatter children. We have work to do. We must invoke the theatre gods and get to work.

As she talks the kids all stand up and start getting themselves lined up and ready with their props and costumes.

MS. MEYERMYER: I think I've really outdone myself this year. The Twelve Days of Christmas, anyone can do that. There is something to be said for creativity and ingenuity, children. Repeat after me: Creativity!

CHILDREN: Creativity.

MS. MEYERMYER: Ingenuity!

All the children attempt to say this but get it wrong.

MS. MEYERMYER: Remember children, love the stage and it will love you back. Embrace the stage and you will always be embraced. Fear the stage and it will hunt you down like a wounded fox in the Gloucester countryside. All right now. *The Twelve Shames of Christmas.* (she takes a deep breath) Let us begin.

During this, there should be either a prop or a costume to help illustrate the specific “shame.”

CHILDREN: *The Twelve Shames of Christmas. By Ms. R. Maude Ann Meyermyer. Copyright in the year 2021. (replace this with the current year)*

All the children take a big breath in and start to sing. Don't worry if the words don't quite fit the music. It should not sound perfect.

CHILDREN: On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me,

IRA: One microfungus affected tree.

CHILDREN: On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me,

RENATA: Two most polluted cities,

CHILDREN: And one microfungus affected tree. On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me,

EMILY: Three stinking capitalists making money off the backs of others,

CHILDREN: Two polluted cities, and One microfungus affected tree.
On the fourth day of Christmas my true love gave to me,

PAMELA LEE: Four horsemen of the apocalypse signaling the end of the world,

CHILDREN: Three stinking capitalists, Two most polluted cities and One microfungus affected tree. On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me...

At this point MARILO (the “Fifth Day” child) does not speak. She stands quite still with a pouty look on her face and her arms crossed across her chest. The others look at each other, unsure as to what to do.

MS. MEYERMYER: (clapping her hands) Fifth day! Fifth day! Let's stay awake children. Try it again.

CHILDREN: On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me....

MARILO is silent.

MS. MEYERMYER: Marilo are you or are you not, the fifth day?

She does not respond.

MS. MEYERMYER: I know you are the fifth day because you're holding the toxic waste. Is that not toxic waste in your hand?

RENATA's hand shoots up.

MS. MEYERMYER: Yes, Renata?

RENATA: Ms. Meyermeyer, it is toxic waste.

MS. MEYERMYER: Thank you Renata. (to MARILO) I know you are the “fifth day” because I chose you myself. I chose you for your clear and crystalline vocal chords, which act as a perfect contrast to the hurt and destruction that is being reflected in the song. Don't you want to reflect on the hurt and destruction?

MARILO: No.

MS. MEYERMYER: You don't? I see. Pray tell Marilo, what behooves you to resist against reflecting upon the hurt and destruction?

MARILO: It's stupid.

The other students gasp and start to chatter. MS. MEYERMYER gives a loud nervous guffaw.

MS. MEYERMYER: Marilo, Marilo, you are such a funny child. You have such an interesting sense of humour. I don't think anyone has ever

called one of Ms. Meyermeyer's original works for the Christmas Pageant stupid before.

A sea of hands go up.

MS. MEYERMYER: Not now children, not now. We need to focus on Marilo. Please would everyone sit in a circle around Marilo so that we can focus on her?

The students comply. MARILO is still sullen, clutching her cardboard example of toxic waste.

MS. MEYERMYER: Marilo, can you explain to the class why it is that you have chosen this moment to rebel, a mere 48 hours before we are to stand on this stage in front of an audience? Why have you waited until now to share your feelings? Hmmmmm? What's troubling you dear?

MARILO: Nothing.

MS. MEYERMYER: It must be something, or else you would have said your part and we'd have moved on. Perhaps it would have gone so well that I would have let everyone go early and Cameron could have trundled off to cub scouts and the ferret with the loose eye.

MARILO: I just don't want to do it, that's all.

MS. MEYERMYER: There must be something burning away at you. Some deep dark secret that you're harbouring deep in your chest. Something that prevents you from being my "fifth day" child. (MARILO doesn't say anything) All right then. We're just going to have to sit here and wait. I can wait a long time, Marilo. I'm sure that your fellow classmates have nothing better to do than to sit here and wait for you to say what's on your mind.

PAMELA LEE: Say it, Marilo.

CAMERON: You better say it.

IRA: What's your problem?

EMILY: Tell us!

WINSTON: Hurry up!

MS. MEYERMYER: I can wait all day Marilo.

The class, looking murderously at MARILO, starts to chant, "Tell, tell, tell, tell."

MARILO: I DON'T HAVE A SECRET! I don't have anything! I wanted to be in Mr. Brownstein's class 'cause he plays soccer with the kids at recess and he doesn't care about the stupid, stupid Christmas Pageant!

MARILO buries her face in her hands and starts to cry. The kids are wide-eyed and wide-mouthed. There is a moment of silence filled only by MARILO's wailing.
RENATA raises her hand.

MS. MEYERMYER: Yes Renata?

RENATA: You made Marilo cry.

WINSTON: She never cries.

CAMERON: She's a tomboy.

PAMELA LEE: She fell off the jungle gym last summer and she didn't cry. Not even when she spit blood.

MS. MEYERMYER gives her nervous laugh.

MS. MEYERMYER: Oh she's not crying, she's just a little overwhelmed, that's all. A little overwhelmed. Here Marilo, take a tissue.

She hands a tissue to MARILO, who snatches at it.
MARILO continues to cry.

MS. MEYERMYER: All right. All right. All right. It's all right Marilo. Why don't we just forget this little episode eh? Let bygones be bygones? Why don't we take it from the top?

This causes MARILO to cry harder. EMILY starts to cry.

MS. MEYERMYER: Emily, what's the matter with you? Why are you crying?

EMILY: It's so sad. It's the saddest thing I ever saw! She never cries!

RENATA starts to cry.

MS. MEYERMYER: Now Renata, there's no need for this.

RENATA: I can't help it.

IRA starts to cry.

MS. MEYERMYER: Ira, why are you crying?

IRA: (*speaks while sobbing at the same time*) !! Don't! Know!

The whole class starts to cry.

MS. MEYERMYER: Children. Children? Children this really isn't –
NOW CUT THAT OUT.

They all stop crying immediately.

MS. MEYERMYER: That's better. Now. Marilo. Let's see if we can work this out. You Marilo are the focal point of this entire opus. Five tons of toxic waste is the top of the mountain as it were. Legions will weep for you as you lay down your pearls of wisdom. The grade eights will bawl their eyes out. Marilo, don't you want to see that? Wouldn't that be fun to see?

MARILO: No.

WINSTON raises his hand.

WINSTON: Ms. Meyermyer?

MS. MEYERMYER: Yes Winston?

WINSTON: You told me I was the top of the mountain 'cause I'm "Twelve harmful consequences of gentrification."

MS. MEYERMYER: Yes, well –

CAMERON's hand goes up.

CAMERON: Ms. Meyermyer you told me I was the top of the mountain cause I'm the eighth day.

RENATA: I'm more important than that. I'm the second day, which is way better than eight.

CAMERON: You take that back.

RENATA: Make me.

CAMERON: The eighth day is best.

RENATA: Second day!

CAMERON: Eight!

RENATA: Two!

PAMELA LEE: The four horsemen of the apocalypse are pretty darn important.

EMILY: Not as important as the stinking capitalists!

IRA: Uh uh. I'm the Microfungus tree! I'm the top!

The children all speak at once.

WINSTON: Twelve!

CAMERON: Eight!

EMILY: Three!

RENATA: Two!

PAMELA LEE: Four!

IRA: One!

The children all fall to arguing. MS. MEYERMYER holds her head for a moment as if it is going to burst.

MS. MEYERMYER: DON'T ANY OF YOU UNDERSTAND? (*the children fall silent*) This is my crowning glory, this is my shining moment. No, of course you don't, you don't understand anything. What do you understand about lost dreams, forgotten hopes, dashed desires? What do you understand about anything? What do you know? Tell me you rotten pipsqueaks, what do you know! Every year my class is expected, nay, demanded upon to present the most original, the most creative spot in the program. In September Mr. Herbert comes up to me, rubbing his hands with glee, "So Ms. Meyermeyer, what are we going to see this year?" Students run up to me in the halls tugging insistently at my sleeve, "Is it lasers, Ms. Meyermeyer? Are you going to do the confetti cannon again?" And the teachers, the covetous, envious, desirous, jealous, jealous teachers: "Oh isn't it interesting, how you taught thirty eight-year-olds to roller skate. How fascinating." They don't understand. They don't understand at all. I can never repeat an idea or concept. Oh, if ever I dared to repeat something like they do: year after year with "Twas the Night Before Christmas" and "Oh, aren't they cute?" If I did that they'd attack me like the pack of wolves I know they are! I have spent an entire year on this! I can't back out now. My whole life is determined by a stupid, stupid pageant and you're going to do this Marilo. You are going to sing your heart out and you are going to hold up that toxic waste with pride. You're all going to do it. And you're going to like it, too. (she gives her laugh) Oh yes you are.

RENATA's hand goes up tentatively.

MS. MEYERMYER: Yes Renata?

RENATA: Are you losing your marbles Ms. Meyermeyer?

MS. MEYERMYER: Renata, why would you suggest such a thing?



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