

"The Christmas Family" Sample Pages #01

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(Begin Track #1: "The Play Begins" Christmas music opens the play and the Narrator comes on the CD soundtrack shortly.)

CD NOTE: there is no need to begin each track after starting the CD; it will play through to each track. The track divisions are for convenience in jumping to certain points when rehearsing.)

(Fade the lights up on the Orphanage side of the stage slowly.)

Narrator: The imagination is a wonderful thing, a gift from God. It's not only for children, although they use it the most. With it, we can see things we have only heard about, but never actually seen with our eyes. It is through our imagination, or eyes of faith, that we see the things we read about in the Bible; both in the past, and in the future. I hope that as I tell my story, that your imagination will help you to see it as I did all those years ago. Let's go back in time now... and let the scene come alive as you picture in your mind's eye the memories I am relating.

(Actions during the next part of narrative: After the following narration gets under way, a group of young children comes into the room, followed by the staff caretaker, Miss Dickenson. She pushes in the boy, Daniel, in a wheelchair, and stops him by the tree. Miss Dickenson then brings out a box of decorations, and presents it, almost like opening a treasure, to the children. As they gather around and look at them, she tells them to take some and add them to the tree. Each one begins to add some to the tree as the narration tells the story.)

My name is Daniel. My story begins nearly 20 years ago, on a wintery Christmas Eve at the Midvale Children's Home orphanage in our small country town. I was approaching my 10th birthday, having been at the orphanage most of my young life. I had contracted a disease three years before, while in one of the homes, that had crippled me, and the Doctor's weren't sure if I would ever walk again. I had been in and out of foster homes for the past few years, but the strain of caring for a sick, wheelchair-bound child was too much for most families in our poor county, and I always ended back up here for some reason. I had almost given up on the hope of ever having a real family of my own. The joy of Christmas that I had known as a younger child was fading away, and this year I was not really looking forward to it, for the first time I could remember.

I was older than most of the other kids at the orphanage, and had few friends. Who wanted to be friends with someone that couldn't run and play with you?

I can still see the orphanage that had been my home for so long. I can picture the excitement on the faces of the other kids, as they all got ready for the annual Christmas party. Although the tree had been partly decorated earlier in the month, the final decorations were saved for us to put on that night. Miss Dickenson, our home's activity director and stand-in mother, said that when she was a little girl, they didn't put up the tree until Christmas Eve. She wanted us to know a little of the joy of decorating on that special night, so this was her compromise.

(Actions during the next part of narrative: The boy pushes himself up to the tree and adds a couple of decorations, then backs off and watches the other children finish. Miss Dickenson stands beside him, with her arm on his shoulders, and together they watch as the children finish decorating.)

Narrator: Now, you wouldn't think that such surroundings would lend themselves to wonderful Christmas memories. But it happens occasionally, that the best memories of our lives can be born out of the most bleak and unpromising of circumstances. And there, in the midst of loneliness and despair, I found hope, and love, and acceptance... all wrapped up in... a Christmas family.

(Music swells.)

(Actions during the next part of narrative: Miss Dickenson gets the attention of the children and motions for quiet. She mimes telling them about the surprise coming.)

Narrator: Miss Dickenson gathered the children together, got them to quiet down, which was no small feat considering their excitement; and she told us of a surprise visitor... a special guest that was coming a little

later. Of course, we all knew who it was... old Saint Nick... and most of the kids also knew who was behind the white beard... Mr. Clements, the gardener and janitor of the institution. But since they loved them both, it was all the same, and they knew he came bearing gifts. I was aware that the gifts were donated to the home by churches and kind people. But knowing that none of the gifts were bought just for me stole the happiness a little.

(Actions during the next part of narrative: Miss Dickenson again settles down the kids from their excitement over learning about the coming guest, and begins handing out song books to each one of them. After they all have one, she points out certain pages in it to them, and gives them some directions about their singing.)

Narrator: Miss Dickenson really believed in traditions, and passing them along to what she considered "her" children. So each year as the sun set on Christmas Eve, we would bundle up and go out into the surrounding neighborhood of our little town, singing carols. The people in the homes looked forward to it, knowing who we were and where we came from, and made special effort to greet us, to listen, and invite us in for cookies and hot apple cider. I had always enjoyed it when smaller, and in better health... but now I had to stay behind. The snow was too deep for my wheelchair, and I was easy to get sick.

(Actions during the next part of narrative: Mrs. Dickenson, having finished the final instructions to the children, points them to the other room to go get dressed. They form a single-file line and proceed out of the door. Mrs. Dickenson goes over to Daniel and pushes him to be next to the radio on the table. Tuning the radio, she finds a station playing music.)

As the other children left to get their coats and boots, Miss Dickenson wheeled me over to the radio, turning it on for me. She knew of my love for music, and wanted to make sure I would be entertained while they were gone. And really, the music of Christmas was about the only thing that could lift my spirits. Next to the radio on the table was an antique manger scene Miss Dickenson had set up for the children.

(Actions during the next part of narrative: Mrs. Dickenson bends over toward Daniel, her hands on her knees, and speaks to him before leaving. Before she heads out of the door she squeezes his shoulder in an affectionate gesture.)

She told me that they would all be back soon, and that then I'd have a wonderful surprise for Christmas.

A little wistfully I responded that I was too old for Santa to bring me presents.

"You're never too old for a gift from those that love you, or to be surprised," she said with a meaningful smile.

Then, with an affectionate parting squeeze of my shoulder, she left to lead the other kids on the caroling trip. I settled in to listen to the sounds of the season, as my eyes focused on the miniature manger scene laid out before me.