

**“Redemption In the Wings” Preview Pages #2**  
**written and copyrighted by Fred Passmore**

**Narrator:** Do you see that poor old fellow over there in the shadows, wanting to approach? He's easy to overlook, as many have done so for so long. His name is Jonathan Ayers, but to the few that know him at the shelter he is simply "Old Johnny." Life has been one failure and disappointment after another for him, and a series of self-destructive choices and patterns in his life led to the loss of a family, career and self-respect. He recently came to the shelter for help, and soon after he began pitching in to lend a hand. When the parts for the Christmas play were being cast, he wanted to be involved, as acting had been a secret dream he had harbored all his life. Not one to deny a chance to live out a dream, Charlotte gave him the part of Simeon in the story. During the rehearsals he had done fine, but now, looking out at the crowd, he recognized some faces of people that knew him and the life he had lived. Feelings of unworthiness and guilt had overcome him, and he was ashamed to go out in front of them and act spiritual in the Biblical part of a Godly man.

**Actions during the next part of the narration:** *You can tell from Charlotte's expression that her heart is nearly broken as she listens to the old man's fears and shame. Her pity for him is evident as she puts a hand on his shoulder and leads him over to the edge of the stage to look out at the crowd from behind the "curtain." She talks to him gently as his eyes rove the audience, her hand still on his shoulder. Her words seem to make him feel better, as he smiles a little and nods to himself. He expresses to her that he understands with a look.*

**Narrator:** Leading him to the edge of the stage, Charlotte pulled back the curtain a little so that they could peek out at the crowd. "Do you see those people?" she asked. "Seeing you serving the Lord and blessing others, overcoming your past, is inspiring to them. If the Lord can save and use someone that has been in the same situation they have, and worse, then it gives them hope."

**Actions during the next part of the narration:** *Moving away from the curtain, Charlotte leads the old man to the chairs and they sit down to continue the conversation.*

**Narrator:** Since most of the preparations for the play had been done now, it was only a matter of waiting till it was time for the next act. So, Charlotte took the time to learn more about Old Johnny, asking him about his background and where he came from. He explained that this was actually his hometown, to which he recently returned. His wandering had taken him to many cities over the decades, but his excesses had caused a disease that was now taking his life, and he had wanted to come home before dying. Saddened by this news, Charlotte wondered if he had any family, and he told her that he did, but left them many years ago. She asked about children who might be able to take him in and take care of him, and he told her that he had a daughter... but he doubted she wanted anything to do with him. Charlotte told Old Johnny that he should contact his daughter and let her know he is alive, and leave that decision up to her. Charlotte's advice was not to let doubt and fears keep him from a possible reconciliation.

**Actions during the next part of the narration:** *Seeing the director's interest in him, the old man opens up to her. Taking out his wallet, he goes through the photos in it and pulls out one, which he regards affectionately as he tells her about his daughter. She listens attentively, but as Johnny relates about the dolls, Charlotte gets a strange look in her eyes and seems to be remembering something.*

**Narrator:** Taking out a beaten-up old wallet, he flipped through several old photos until he came to one that made his eyes light up. Taking it out and looking at it, he began to tell her about his daughter, whom he had last seen when she was five. She was a caring child, and one of the oddest things she did was to bring home worn-out and broken dolls from the neighborhood garage sales, and bandage them up, and give them a home in her playhouse in the back yard.

**Actions during the next part of the narration:** *Charlotte, who has gotten a faraway look in her eyes, seems to no longer be listening as he talks. When he hands her the photo, she takes it as though still distracted, holding it but not quite looking at it. Noticing her distraction, he repeats his question, indicating the picture, at which she is still staring. Finally looking at the photo, her eyes show recognition and shock. She then stands, handing the photo back to him, and walking off in a daze.*

**Narrator:** Proudly, he handed her the photo and asked her if she had ever seen such a beautiful child. Holding the picture in nerveless fingers, hardly seeing it, Charlotte seemed a million miles away. When she finally allowed herself to look at the photo, she realized she **had** seen such a child before. **That** child, in fact. Standing to leave, she quietly said that she had just remembered something and he would have to excuse her.

**Actions during the next part of the narration:** *Johnny puts the photo back in his wallet, and uncertainly leaves the stage. Charlotte has walked off a short distance, and seems in shock. Noticing this, Nate leaves off with his*

*helping the costume seamstress, and walks over to her. Taking her by the elbow, he takes her over to the table and pours her a cup of hot chocolate. They sit down, and she sips it as she tell him the story.*

**Narrator:** I asked her what was wrong, commenting that she looked as if she had just seen a ghost. In a voice shaking with emotion, she replied that she had... a ghost from the past that had come back to haunt her. Leading her to the refreshment table, I poured her a cup of calming hot chocolate and encouraged her to tell me what had happened. Her eyes looking back through the years, she explained that she just found out that their guest, "Old Johnny," as he was known to all, was her father, who left when she was just a small child. I replied that this should be a happy occasion, but that only made her upset as she revealed that she had always resented him for not being there. With bitterness, she said she can't allow him to be part of the play now, and they'll have to find someone else for the part.

**Actions during the next part of the narration:** *Nate stands in front of Charlotte to confront her with her own words, but she turns away as she snaps back at him, holding her arms across her. She dismisses him curtly and they leave the stage as the next act begins.*

**Narrator:** I told her that I had overheard some wise words given in advice once... to the effect that we should not let doubt and fears keep him from a possible reconciliation. Unreceptive to having her own words quoted back to her, she stood angrily and said that whoever said that must have been really foolish, to offer such trite advice. Besides, it was time to begin the next act, and there was no time to deal with it now.

### **Christmas Play Scene Two Begins**

**Second part: The angels tell the shepherds.**

**Narrator:** *(Now back to the Biblical Story narrator's voice, not Nate's.)* And so, as word spread about the imminent birth of the Messiah, the people of Jerusalem, especially the wise High Priest and learned scholars, rejoiced and prepared to receive Jesus with open hearts and arms. Yes, trumpets sounded and joy filled the entire city as the long-awaited Jesus was born and laid in the best golden cradle money could afford. *(Music and cheers on record slows down and stops.)* Um... well... we know that's not quite how it all went down, no... sorry to say. But, that's how it would have happened if the story was written by men. In reality, the actual events were quite different.

**Actions during the next part of the narration:** *The shepherds come onto the stage, walking with their staffs and talking as they go. They decide to sit down awhile, and they gather in a semi-circle, sitting the ground and reclining back. One of them points to the sky and rest look at the spot with interest, as they talk amongst themselves as to what the new star might mean. One of them, the youngest, has a couple of sticks which he drums lightly on his knees or any available surface, as a habit. This is a visual reference to the "Little Drummer Boy" song.*

**Narrator:** The Lord seems to take great delight in doing things completely differently than we might expect, anticipate or even think he should. But, as He has said, His ways are as far above ours as heaven is above the earth. And so, quite contrary to expectation, the announcement of the Messiah's birth was made to some of the most obscure and uninfluential men you could imagine... shepherds. You heard right. Shepherds, out in the fields, not far away from Bethlehem, watching over their flock by night. They weren't out there just because they enjoyed camping out under the night skies with the brilliant stars as a canopy; even though they were wondering about the bright new star that had just appeared. No, they were on the watch for predators that might endanger their flock. Wolves, jackals and lions were always on the hunt for a tender sheep. But, all was quiet except for the occasional howl as the jackals kept their distance, frustrated by their fear to come any closer.

**Actions during the next part of the narration:** *One of the shepherds rises, straining his eyes in the darkness, as if listening closely to something. The others look at him and wonder what he is doing.*

**Narrator:** One of the men, named Ruben, seemed to sense something in the air of that peaceful night, as all was calm. Listen, he told them... do you hear what I hear? Now, it was safe to say that the shepherds were more than a little taken aback by the sudden appearance of a man who glowed with his own light. Terrified is more like it!

**Actions during the next part of the narration:** *The angel comes upon them from the opposite direction they had been looking, and one of them sees him first, with his eyes wide in fear. The others are looking around to find the source of the light shining all around them. The one spying the angel shakes the shoulder of the one nearest him, turning him in the direction he is looking and pointing, getting the attention of the others who then also look, spinning and staring, then all drop to their knees in awe. Several of them cover their faces on the ground, until the angel speaks.*