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Sample Scenes from

A GIFT FOR MELISSA

by

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Act 1/Scene 1

Setting: *Living/dining room of the Marshall family (The room should be cluttered with toys, etc. A newspaper is on top of the dining room table. Brent enters, descending the stairs, stage right, as if coming from the second story. He is drinking "beer." (An IBC root beer bottle with water in it works well.) He picks up the newspaper as he half walks, half staggers, by the table, then sits in a chair and turns on the TV. After watching a little of the weather, (can be taped on video or DVD from a TV weather report and played on a VCR or DVD player to give the effect of a real TV program) he reads the paper for awhile, sets down his bottle beside the chair, falls asleep, and begins to snore. The front door opens, stage left, and Sarah enters. She notices the bottle, smells it, and then sets it down with a thud on the end table next to Brent's chair. Startled by the noise, he wakes up. Sarah hangs her coat on a coat rack, then picks up toys and places them in a toy box as they talk.)*

Brent: Well, it's about time you got home. Joyce's friend must have been kind of long-winded, huh?

Sarah: Actually, he was a rather good speaker. You should have been there.

Brent: Huh! That will be the day when I go listen to some do-good evangelist! Wouldn't my old man be shocked to think of such a thing! *(laughs)* Why, he'd roll over in his drunken grave!

Sarah: Brent, that's not funny.

Brent: Aw, come on, Sarah. Lighten up! Pop would have thought it was funny if he were here. He lived life to the fullest. *(takes another drink)* Yes, sir, he lived for every drop of this stuff.

Sarah: Yes, and he also died for every drop he ever drank.

Brent: Sarah, quit soundin' so sober. You're beginning to sound like Joyce. You ain't got religious in one night, have ya?

Sarah: No, Brent, I ain't got—religious.

Brent: Good! Now maybe Joyce won't keep runnin' over here every day fillin' your head full of that born-again lingo.

Sarah: *(deep in thought, absently stroking the back of a chair)* Yeah.

Brent: Well, *(stretches, yawns)* I'm beat. I'm goin' to bed.

Sarah: Is Melissa sleeping?

Brent: Yeh, I put her to bed about eight o'clock. Man, was I ever glad! Goldilocks and the Seven Dwarfs and Snow White and the Three Bears just ain't my cup o' tea. Good night.

Sarah: Good night, Brent. I'll be up in a few minutes. *(begins to get herself a cup of coffee from a small coffee maker and a doughnut from a doughnut box on a buffet in the dining room)* I'm going to have a cup of coffee and a doughnut. You want some?

Brent: I ain't so drunk that I need soberin' up. Besides, coffee keeps me awake at night. *(exits, stage right)*

Sarah: *(sitting down at the table, prays)* Lord, this is all new to me. Please help me break the news to Brent gently, and please help him accept it. And, Lord, please help him accept You.

(lights down)

End Scene

Act 1/Scene 4

Setting: Office where Brent Marshall works

(Brent is seated at his desk, whistling, “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.” Millie, the secretary, is typing on a computer. She prints a page every now and then, checks it over, then crumples it and throws it in the trash. She should use the “hunt and peck” method of typing. Al walks in, stage right. He crosses to Millie and motions toward Brent, as if to say, “What’s gotten into him?” She shrugs her shoulders, but says nothing.)

Al: Hey, you feelin’ okay, man? *(hangs up his coat and hat)*

Brent: Oh, yeah, great.

Al: That’s good. You’ve sure changed your tune since last Friday night at that poker game. You’ve been a mighty sober fellow all week. In fact, you’ve been downright unbearable to be around until today.

Brent: Yeah, sorry about that Al. Guess I was feelin’ kind of sorry for myself after I lost that game. I’ve got a lot of bills due. I—robbed the Christmas Fund this year, and—well, I guess the thing that was botherin’ me most was I can’t afford to buy my little girl a nice present this year. Sarah and I cut up our credit cards a few months ago ‘cause we were spending too much, so...

Al: Well, look, I’ve got a \$20 bill I could loan you. *(starts to take the money out of his wallet)*

Brent: No. No, thanks. You keep it. I’ll manage somehow. Besides, I’ve got a couple of bucks in my pocket and I plan on winning back every cent I lost to you and Gilbert, and then some!

Al: *(laughs)*

Brent: But I'm not takin' any charity. Besides, I talked with Melissa about it last night and she was real understanding. She knows her daddy will win the money back eventually. And when I do, I'll buy her a present worth waiting for!

Al: Suit yourself, but if you change your mind, the offer still stands.

Brent: Thanks. *(He starts whistling again. Gilbert walks in, crosses to the secretary, then motions toward Brent as if to say, "What's got into him?" Millie shrugs her shoulders. Gilbert walks over to Brent.)*

Gilbert: You sure have changed your tune, haven't you?

Al: Gilbert, I just came up with that line. You'll have to find another one.

Gilbert: Getting into the Christmas spirit, are you, Brent? *(Millie begins whistling, "We Wish You A Merry Christmas." Gilbert hangs up his coat and hat and begins perusing a newspaper he has brought with him.)*

Brent: *(answering Gilbert's question)* Kid's been singin' it for days. Kind of catching.

Gilbert: *(looking at Millie)* Guess so.

Brent: Yeah, Melissa's been practicin' a bunch of Christmas songs.

Gilbert: Is she gonna be in some sort of school play or something?

Brent: *(keeping his eyes on the papers on his desk)* No—church.

Gilbert: Church, huh? You going?

Brent: *(softly, not wanting to admit it to his friends)* Um, yeah.

Al: *(teasingly)* Since when do you attend church functions, Brent?

Brent: Since never, Al. Listen, the kid's singing a solo and she wants her old man to be there. I figure that's the least I can do. Besides, there can't

be
much harm in a kid's song.

Gilbert: Too bad for Sarah.

Brent: What do you mean?

Gilbert: Well, it's no secret that she's got religion now. Me and Al have just been wonderin' how long it was going to be before she snared you.

Al: *(laughing)* We've even got a bet goin' on it.

Brent: *(getting upset)* You've got to be kidding!

Gilbert: No, he's serious. I figure it's going to take till Christmas. Al, here, ain't got as much "faith" as I do. He says it's going to take another year.

Brent: *(getting up from his chair)* Well, I've got news for both of you! You better plan on losing your money to me 'cause I ain't never fallin' for that trap! You understand! And if you know what's good for you, you'll quit ribbin' me about it, too! *(storms angrily out of the office)*

Al: Hey, was that a threat?

Gilbert: *(sarcastically)* Sounds to me like old Brent's gettin' "under conviction."

Al: *(laughs)*

Gilbert: *(to secretary)* What do you think, Millie? *(Millie just shrugs her shoulders.)*

(lights down)

End Scene

INTERMISSION

Act II/Scene 1

Setting: Church (*Remove furniture, pictures, etc. from office during intermission. Use the plain white walls of the house as a backdrop for the choir. Wreaths or other Christmas decorations could be added where pictures had been hanging. House lights should come down slightly as intermission ends, but should not be completely turned off. The audience must be able to see the Marshalls clearly when they enter. The Overture begins; the choir proceeds onto the stage area shortly thereafter. As soon as the choir is in place, Brent and Sarah walk into the auditorium from the church entrance. Brent tries to take a seat near the back but Sarah gently pulls him forward. They talk in a stage whisper as they walk down the aisle toward the front.*)

Brent: Do we have to sit so close to the front?

Sarah: You want Melissa to see us, don't you?

Brent: Yeah. It's gettin' late, though, and everyone's already sitting down. This is kind of embarrassing!

Sarah: Shh. The program's about to begin. (*They take a seat in the front row. This should have a "reserved" sign placed on it before the program.*)

(House lights dim; stage lights are on the choir.)

Choir Program

(after the Overture has ended and Brent and Sarah are seated)

Choir: Christmas!

Reader 1: The word brings a twinkle of excitement to the young and gives joy to the young at heart!

Choir: Christmas!

Reader 2: It's a time of singing and laughter, of friendship and peace.

Reader 3: To the world, Christmas is a time of sleigh bells and Santa,

Reader 4: reindeer, and elves.

Reader 5: It's a mad rushing of shoppers,

Reader 6: a frosty winter's morn,

Reader 7: the glimmer of tree lights,

Reader 8: and the beauty of holly.

Reader 9: In the midst of all this bustle, God calls the people of today to come away and remember the true meaning of this holiday season.

SONG: COME YE PEOPLE

Reader 10: It all began a long time ago in a little stable in Bethlehem. A Child was born, a Child who would change the course of human events.

Reader 11: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

SONG: THE VILLAGE OF BETHLEHEM
(There are a couple extra pages in here.)

CHILDREN'S SONG: CHRISTMAS IS A HAPPY TIME!

Choir Director: If you have Christ in your heart, we hope that you will share the message of His salvation with others.

(All the children have made their exit except Melissa. She tugs at the director's coat, then whispers something in his ear.)

Choir Director: *(to audience)* It seems that we have a rather unusual request. One of our little girls, Melissa Marshall, has asked to sing a song she made up for her daddy to tell him how much she loves him this Christmas.

(to Melissa) Go ahead, sweetheart.

SONG: MELISSA'S SONG

(During the song, Brent should slouch down in his seat as if he is embarrassed and would like to get away. When the song is completed, Melissa walks over to her daddy and gives him a kiss before leaving the room. The choir returns to the platform.)

SONG: CHRISTMAS MEANS, "I LOVE YOU"

(The pianist plays the chorus of "Christmas Means, 'I Love You'" while the choir goes offstage. As soon as the music ends, Brent quickly gets up, takes Sarah by the hand, and starts down the middle aisle.)

Brent: *(in an angry stage whisper)* Come on! Let's get out of here! You knew about this, didn't you?!

Sarah: No, Brent. Honest. I had no idea.

Mike: *(Mike enters from the auditorium entrance, in a hurry and very upset. He meets Brent and Sarah halfway up the center aisle.)* Sarah! Sarah! I don't know how to tell you this, or where to begin. I wasn't feeling well. I thought I'd leave the program early. I didn't think there would be any kids playing in the parking lot...

Sarah: Melissa...

Mike: I tried to stop! I'm sorry! I've already called for an ambulance.

Sarah: Ambulance! *(looks frantically at her husband)* Brent!

Brent: Come on! *(They all exit through the auditorium doors as an ambulance siren is heard in the distance.)*

(lights down)

End Scene

(At this time, the hospital room and downtown store fronts should be set up.)

Act II/Scene 2

Setting: Hospital *(Brent paces back and forth across the room while a nurse tapes an IV onto Melissa's hand. Melissa's head should be wrapped in a bandage. She should be lying still in a bed with her eyes closed. She remains motionless during the entire scene. The nurse checks her heart and breathing and whispers a few words of encouragement to Sarah, who is sitting beside the bed. Nurse exits.)*

Sarah: *(visibly shaken, holding back tears)* I don't know how many times I've tried to tell her not to play in the parking lot, to wait for me before she goes outside.

Brent: *(angrily)* You know, if we had stayed at home where we belong, none of this would have happened!

Sarah: Brent, how can you say that? It was an accident. Accidents can happen anywhere!

Brent: *(sarcastically)* Yeah.

(Mike and Ann Bennett knock on the door, then enter. Sarah gets up. Brent stops pacing. He looks away from Mike. It should be obvious to the audience that Brent is trying to contain his anger toward the man he feels is responsible for his daughter's accident.)

Ann: *(sympathetically)* Sarah... *(the two friends embrace)* Sarah, I'm so sorry.

Sarah: Thank you for coming, Ann.

Mike: *(apologizing)* I did all I could to stop. When I hit the brake, the car skidded on a patch of ice and started to slide toward her, and... *(stops, overcome with emotion)*

Sarah: *(with difficulty)* God has a purpose for it, Mike, or He wouldn't have allowed it to happen. *(sits down beside the bed and takes Melissa's limp hand in hers)* Sometimes, it's hard to understand, to accept, but we know that God's way is best.

Mike: *(to Brent)* Mr. Marshall, I've got very good insurance. I want to be responsible for all of the hospital bills. If there's anything else I can do...

Brent: *(cutting him off, speaking angrily)* Sure, Mr. Bennett, there's something else you can do. You can give me back my little girl! *(walks past him and out the door)*

Sarah: Brent, where are you going? Brent, please don't leave! *(desperately)* I need you!

(lights down)

End Scene

Act II/Scene 4

Setting: Hospital (*Melissa is the only one in the room, quietly lying in the bed, as Brent walks in. She turns slightly toward him.*)

Melissa: (*weakly*) Daddy.

Brent: Hi, baby. Where did Mommy go?

Melissa: She went to look for you.

Brent: (*hangs his head*) Oh. (*He walks over to her and takes her hand.*)
Melissa—I—I love you.

Melissa: I love you, too, Daddy.

Brent: (*holding back tears*) I brought you—I brought you a Christmas present, honey. It's just—just what you wanted.

Melissa: (*brightening*) Daddy, did you?

Brent: Yes, honey. I asked Jesus into my heart!

Melissa: (*tries to sit up and hug him*) Oh, Daddy! (*She falls back in his arms, unconscious.*)

Brent: Melissa? Melissa! Nurse!

(*lights out quickly*)

End Scene

(*Don't worry; it has a happy ending! ☺*)