

Christmas Cover Story (2008)

Prologue: Thanksgiving Day, Front of Curtain

(During overture, lights out on front of stage. As overture comes to a close, Ben and Ed move toward centerstage where a lone bench is located. Both men sit on the bench. Ben has a duffle bag with him. As orchestra swells, spotlight comes on men in mid-conversation)

Ed: Let's go over this one more time.

Ben: Eddie, I got it.

Ed: You get there, find George...

Ben: Your old boss at the paper. I got it.

Ed: I lined you up a hotel. Interview some people, get some pictures...

Ben: A town's going under, people laid off before the holidays...write the story. Ed...I got it. I've done this plenty of times.

Ed: I know – I wouldn't be sending you if you weren't my best writer. Don't worry. Everything will be here when you get back.

Ben: *(grabbing his bag and standing to leave)* I'm going to be back in three days.

Ed: *(nervously)* Right. Here's your ticket. *(shakes hand, gives ticket)*

Ben: See ya Monday, boss. *(starts to exit SL)*

Ed: Bennie...I owe you one.

Ben: *(waves it off, upbeat)* Happy Thanksgiving. *(exits)*

Ed: *(to himself)* I owe you one.

Scene 1: Town Square – Centerstage

(Curtain opens, lights up on Townspeople)

Song: It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year

(Following song, Townspeople go back to mingling with each other. Ben enters from SL. Liz and Opie start to walk past)

Ben: *(to Liz)* Hey, kid...do you know where I could find...

Liz: *(interrupting)* Excuse me? I am *not* a kid.

Ben: Of course. How rude of me. I'm very sorry. Excuse me *young lady*...

Liz: That's better.

Ben: I'm trying to find my way around. Are you familiar with this town?

Liz: Kentbee? Um...yeah...I've only lived here my entire life!

Ben: What's that? Like, five years?

Liz: I'm 10.

Ben: Right. Sorry. Listen, do you know a...*(checking notes)* Mr. Bluth, the editor of the Kentbee Times?

Liz: Uncle George?

Ben: Oh, is he your uncle?

Liz: No.

Ben: Let's start over. I'm Ben Halpert. *(holds out hand to shake)*

Liz: Liz Lemon *(shake hands)*.

Ben: I'm a newspaper reporter from the city and my boss sent me down here to do a little story on your town. He told me George was the guy to see. Can you help me out?

Liz: Yeah, yeah. I guess so. Hold on. *(emphatically)* Don't move. *(walks off to find George)*

Ben: *(looking around and spotting Opie behind him)* Let me guess...Opie? **(Opie remains expressionless)**

George: *(walking up to Ben)* Hi, I'm George Bluth. Can I help you with something?

Ben: George? Ben Halpert.

George: Oh, yeah! You're the guy Ed sent down to help us out.

Ben: I don't know if I would call it "helping out". Just writing a little story on you guys. I'm here to observe mostly. Ask a couple of questions. I'll try not to get in the way and I'll be out of your hair in a day or two.

George: (*knowingly*) Right. Well, you come highly recommended. Ed says great things about you.

Ben: I appreciate that. He says the same about you. Says you taught him everything he knows about journalism and running a paper. I'm looking forward to spending some time with you.

George: Have you spoken to Ed yet? You know, let him know you made it in?

Ben: Not yet. I was going to wait until I checked into the hotel.

George: (*mildly relieved*) Glad to hear it.

Ben: Hey, you know where I could get a bite to eat? I feel like I'm about to die.

George: Oh, do I. (*calling over*) Millie! Come here for a second. I want to introduce you to someone. (*Millie comes over*) Millie, this is Ben. Ben, Millie. (*they shake hands*) Ben is in from the city to...spend some time with us.

Millie: Oh yeah?

Ben: My editor at the city paper is a good friend of George's. He sent me down to do a profile on Kentbee. We know the economy has been pretty rough on you all...just thought it would be good to see how real people are dealing with it.

Millie: You've certainly come to the right place. Glad to have you here.

George: Ben was just asking me if I knew any good places to eat. (*To Ben*) And there ain't no place better than Millie's Diner.

Millie: Best pie you will *ever* have, I guarantee it. In fact, swing by the Diner in about an hour. We're having a town meeting to discuss the very topic you're looking into. It'll give you a chance to meet and hear from the people of Kentbee and I'll set you up with the House Special.

Ben: That sounds perfect.

George: Why don't you get checked into your room. (*hands key*) Your hotel is two blocks down on the corner. Room 9. Get situated and I'll swing by in a bit and we can head over to the diner together.

Ben: Great. Thanks, guys. See ya then. (*begins to exit*)

George: And Ben...be sure to call Ed.

(**Ben gestures and exits. Curtain closes**)

Scene 2: Ben's Hotel Room – Piano Side

(Lights up on side stage. Larry is working in the room when Ben enters).

Ben: (entering, confused when he sees Larry) Oh, I'm sorry. I must have the wrong room.

Larry: No, no...just getting her fixed up for ya. The bed wasn't level so I just took the old chainsaw, cut it in half and rebuilt it.

Ben: What was the problem?

Larry: The mattress. I don't mean to get too personal, but when you sleep, do you move around a lot?

Ben: I..have no...

Larry: Well, you probably don't want to.

Ben: Noted.

Larry: Hi. I'm Larry. I'm the maintenance guy around here. Anything you need fixing...try doing it yourself first and if that don't work...I'll swing by. You the city boy?

Ben: I guess you could call me that. Ben Halpert. Nice to meet ya. I don't mean to be rude...but there's kind of an interesting smell going on in here.

Larry: You like it, do ya? We put new (*emphasizing each syllable*) aer-o-ma-tic candles in every room. Course, we also had the sewage back up a few days ago...that might be it, too.

Ben: That's more what I was thinking. I may just give the manager a call real quick and see about another room.

Larry: Sorry, City. Manager ain't answering right now.

Ben: Any idea when he'll be in?

Larry: (*sticking out hand to shake*) Hi, I'm Larry. I'm the manager of this fine establishment: Larry's Luxurious Suites.

Ben: That's kind of a deceiving name.

Larry: I appreciate you saying that. You're welcome to look at the other rooms, but this one right here is our finest. Don't worry, we'll take real good care of ya. I went ahead and brought up the rest of the luggage you sent ahead.

Ben: I didn't send any luggage ahead. I brought everything I need.

Larry: Well, let me see. It came with this note here...*(unfolds letter)*. "Dear Larry, this luggage is for Ben Halpert", that's you. "He'll need it for his stay with you. If Ben is still standing in front of you, please tell him I'm sorry and that I owe him one. Sincerely, Ed Truck". Listen, I don't know what's going on, but Ed says he's sorry.

Ben: This is a three day assignment...at the most. How long is this room reserved for me?

Larry: Until Christmas. But you're welcome to stay as long as you'd like.

Ben: *(incredulous)* As long as I...I need a phone. Phone. Phone please. Would you excuse me a minute, Larry? *(Larry backs off, but clearly listening. Ben punches in numbers furiously)* Hey Ed!...yep...I made it in. The trip? Good. Just checked in to the hotel...*(whispering)* you don't want to know...*(normal voice)* crazy thing happened though...I was talking to the owner/manager/maintenance/bellhop guy who received two suitcases, remarkably resembling mine...with my clothes in it...a month? Ed! You said, "three days at the most"...well of course I wouldn't have come if you told me a month!...this story won't take me a week to write let alone a month!...what do you suggest I do then?...no, I'm coming home...yes, I like my job...Ed this is wrong on so many levels...yeah, fine...oh no, you owe me a whole lot more than one, buddy...yeah, ok. Bye. *(back to Larry who is pretending not to have overheard)* Well, Lar, looks like I'm here for awhile.

Larry: What did your boss say?

Ben: He told me to get my story, get to know the people and spend some time with George.

Larry: That's good. George is a real good guy. We're brothers. Except, we aren't. Know what I mean?

Ben: I think I do. If you don't mind, I'm going to freshen up a bit. George will be back soon to take me to Millie's for the town meeting.

Larry: I'm heading there, too. I'll go with you guys. *(starts to exit)* Hey, City, I know this isn't all glamorous and exciting, but I think you'll really like it here. Welcome to Kentbee.

Ben: Thanks, Larry. See you in a bit.

(Lights out)

Scene 3: Millie's Diner – Main Stage

(Curtains open and light up. Townspeople are milling around, engaged in conversation with each other. George, Ben and Larry enter from SR. Opie follows Ben throughout the scene)

George: This is a great turnout. Ben, you'll be able to get some good stuff for your article.

Ben: Oh, I'm sure. *(looking around)* If we get the chance, I'd like to speak to some of the *(notices Opie)*...oh, hi there, Opie. *(to Larry and George)* He belong to one of you?

Larry: He's been following us since the hotel. I thought he was with you.

Millie: *(enters from SR with Liz)* Hey Ben...you made it. Welcome to my diner. I hear you've already met my daughter, Liz.

Ben: Hello again.

Liz: Hello, Reporter Man. How's your hotel room?

Ben: Pretty terrible...thank you for asking.

Millie: Well, make yourself at home. We're about to get started. *(walks off)*

(Larry and George notice Ms. Nicely across the stage. They whisper and laugh to themselves, indicating what they are about to do)

Larry: Say, Ben. We think it would be a good idea for you to meet some of the people of Kentbee. Give you a real feel for the town.

George: We want to introduce you to Lucille Nicely. She's the school's music teacher, lived here all her life...she'll be a big help to you. *(walking over with Ben, Larry and Opie)* Ms. Nicely...there's someone here I'd like you to meet. This is Ben – he's a reporter from the city and he's in town writing a story on Kentbee.

Ms. Nicely: Hi, Ben, it's nice to *(notices Ben and jumps back, in a husky voice)*...hello.

Ben: *(unsure)* Hello, Ms. Nicely.

Ms. Nicely: *(moving closer, continuing in low voice)* Please...call me KiKi.

Ben: *(backing up)* Oh...ok...is that what your friends call you?

Ms. Nicely: Nobody calls me KiKi. How long are you in town, Bennnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn?

(Throughout exchange, George and Larry are laughing to themselves)

Ben: A month? (*trying to change the subject*) So, they tell me that you teach music?

Ms. Nicely: Oh yes. I love children. Don't have any of my own, though. Not married...(*intense*) yet.

Ben: Well, those are all the questions for now. I'm going to go stand somewhere not so...here. (*starts to walk back*)

Ms. Nicely: If you have *anything* else to ask, you find me.

Ben: Oh, I'm going to keep an eye out for you, I promise. (*whispers to Larry and George*) That wasn't funny.

Larry/George: (*overlapping agreement, together*) Yeah...it was a little funny...

Mayor Jackson: (*offstage*) Ladies and gentlemen...Mayor and Mrs. Jackson.

(*Some people clap...sporadic and weak*)

Mayor: (*walking in from SL, greeting people*) Hello, good to see you. Hi, there.

Ben: That's the mayor?

Larry: No.

Ben: But he said...

George: His first name is 'Mayor'. He used to go by his middle name, 'Tom', but then realized 'Mayor' sounds more official. He just sorta assumed the *role* of mayor. Nobody said anything 'cause they don't want to do it.

Larry: And there's his wife.

Melva: (*entering in slowly, dramatically*) Greetings. Salutations. Bon Voyage.

Mayor: I'd like to call this Kentbee town meeting to order.

Melva: Second!

Mayor: (*sarcastic*) Thank you, dear. To begin, a few items of important business.

Melva: (*enthusiastic, trying to get everyone involved*) Hooray!

Mayor: First, I would like to remind each of you of Kentbee's policy on domestic animals. It is STILL illegal to own and keep raccoons as household pets.

Ben: (to George/Larry) Has this really been a problem?

Melva: I said I was sorry.

Mayor: Second. There is still time to sign up for the Kentbee Christmas Olympics. It is a triathlon consisting of four events. We will begin with an egg nog chug followed by a Christmas Carol Karaoke contest. We have purchased 1,500 candy canes for our third event in which we will see who can eat the most candy canes in one-half hour. The winner will ultimately be determined by the fourth event in which all contestants will stand in Kentbee Lake for as long as they can. The person who can go the longest without complaining, quitting or frostbite will be crowned Kentbee's Christmas King!

Melva: (enthusiastic) Or Queen!

Mayor: (to Melva) You stand no chance. (To all) So far, only Melva and I have signed up.

Melva: (energetic, a la cheerleader, fast) First and second place, whoo!

Mayor: (visibly annoyed) I instituted these Christmas Olympics to get out of the house and get away from (looks at Melva, chooses words carefully)...the everyday routine. (Pleading) So please sign up! And now, with as much ado as possible, I turn the floor over to the Chairperson and only member of the Kentbee Home Owner's Association, Melva Jackson.

Melva: (reading off of notes, trying to sound political, almost robotic) Thank you, one and all. It is a priv-i-lege to address this body. I have only words to speak to you today. Words, only. As the Queen of Kentbee's Home Owner (fumbling over word "association") Snow-snow-sea-a-shun...I feel it is my duty, nay, my responsibility, nay...my duty to confront a growing problem in our town. (less robotic, more free) We are all aware of Kentbee's policy on pink flamingoes as lawn decorations. I have gone to great lengths to promote this vital piece of legislation and yet some are ignoring the limit on pink flamingoes that I have imposed. Please remember, it is a town requirement that each home have a minimum of two flamingoes in their yard at all times. Citizens are welcome to have more than two flamingoes, but two flamingoes is the minimum. Many of you, nay, all of you, have ignored this. Please stop ignoring this. Pink flamingoes add color and life to our fair town and they are a true mark of class and status. Please abide by this. If you don't, you will go to jail. Thank you. World Peace.

Mayor: Now, it has been brought to my attention that our fine town has been disrupted by the arrival of a big city intruder. My sources tell me that this degenerate is here to dig up as much dirt as he can find on our town in an effort to launch a massive, nationwide smear campaign on Kentbee. If you see this man, do *not* speak to him and run away as quickly as possible.

Ben: Sir, I'm right here.

Mayor: Don't make eye contact! *(both Mayor and Melva snap to attention in fear, moving only their eyes. Both shuffle sideways back to SL)*

Ben: Hello, everyone. Thank you for that warm welcome. My name is Ben and I'm here to get to know you all and just share some of the struggles that real towns are facing with the folks back home.

Millie: *(stepping forward, taking control of the meeting)* We're *all* glad to have you here, Ben. Now, folks, we've brought everyone together because we've heard that many of you are upset and concerned over the closing down of the paper mill.

Townspople: That's right! Here, here, etc.

Millie: I understand your frustration. We want to hear from you what some of your concerns are.

Townie #1: In the past month, three of our local businesses have gone belly up and families are moving out of town.

Townie #2: And with the mill closed, where are we supposed to find new work?

Townie #3: We'll have no choice to move either if this keeps up.

Townspople: *(echoing statements in agreement)*

George: I'm concerned, too. We all know that Kentbee has been feeling the squeeze lately. But, you know what? This isn't the first time. I've dealt with this living here all my life. And you know what's kept me going?

Melva: Selling newspapers?

Mayor: Metamucil?

George: The Lord.

Mayor/Melva: Ohhhh.

George: He's never let me down, no matter what I'm going through – and the fact that you are all still here tells me you could say the same thing. This is not a time to panic – this is a time to pray.

Millie: George is right. We all know what George has had to go through this year and we've seen how God has been faithful, even in the tough times. I know it's difficult right now, but we are just going to have to trust the Lord to work things out again. At the same time, the Lord has given us brains. So...brainstorm. What can we do to get us over this hill?

Larry: Here's the way I see it. Some of us have been laid off. Businesses are closing. People are moving away. Right?

Townies: Right.

Larry: So, not only are we losing money, but the new money from the tourists, specialty shops...gone. We gotta find a way to get people coming *to* Kentbee.

George: Good point, Larry. Ok, guys. What could we do to attract people back to Kentbee?

Mayor: What if...we promise the first 100 tourists an acre of land. Only, they can't build on the land or take it with them. That way, when the next tourist comes, we "give" them that same acre!

Larry: That's insane.

George: Not to mention incredibly illegal. What else?

Melva: What if we do something no one else is doing? Forget the paper mill. We start a new mill.

Liz: What kind of mill?

Melva: A WOOD mill!

Liz: What would it make?

Melva: Wood!

Mayor: You're right. No one's *ever* thought of producing wood before. (*under breath*) I'm afraid to ask...and what would we do with this wood?

Melva: We whittle the wood down and make surfboards!

Liz: For Christmas?

Melva: Yes! Because...we'll paint Christmas pictures on them!

Larry: She has a point...*no one* else is doing that.

George: Hand-carving Christmas surfboards might be a stretch, at least for now. But very creative.

Millie: No, I think Larry is right. People like the feel of a small town. Let's give it to them!

Townie #1: We could decorate the town for an old fashioned Christmas.

Liz: And give carriage rides!

Millie: And in the evening, we could put on some Christmas entertainment right here in the diner!

Mayor/Melva: Second!

George: That sounds like a great idea, Millie. All those in favor?

Townies: Aye!

George: Alright, everyone. Let's take two days to get our ideas together and we'll meet back here following church on Sunday to pull this together. Ms. Nicely, would you be willing to take charge of the diner entertainment?

Ms. Nicely: I would love to. Everyone bring your best talent to display and we'll begin the audition process on *(operatic)* Sundayyyyyyyyyy!

(Everyone starts discussing things with one another as the curtain closes. Orchestra plays brief upbeat interlude)

Scene 4 – Millie's Diner, the next evening

(Curtain reopens with dim lights on centerstage. Everyone has left the Diner except for Millie and Liz who are busy cleaning up. Liz is wiping down tables)

Millie: Hey, honey, when you finish with that would you put away the silverware please?

Liz: Sure, mom. So, I think I've decided on what I'm going to do for my audition on Sunday.

Millie: Just...no knife juggling again.

Liz: Please, mom. I'm so much more mature now. I was thinking...CHRISTMAS FIREWORKS!

Millie: What?! You're not setting off fireworks. Why can't you do something less fatal? Like, dance or sing a song or...*(tossing her a rag to continue work)* wipe tables!

Liz: No one wants to see me do that.

Millie: I do! Come up with something else. You're not going anywhere near fireworks.

Liz: I just want people to show up, Mom. (*sad*) I don't want to move.

Millie: Honey, come here. (*sits down in booth with Liz*). Are you worried about money, Liz?

Liz: Yeah.

Millie: Well, you're too young to worry about that. You let *me* worry about that. And you know what?

Liz: What?

Millie: (*encouraging*) I'm *not* worried about it. It's true things are tough for everybody right now. But God has always been good to us, right?

Liz: I know.

Millie: Then don't worry, kiddo. We're gonna get through this together.

Song: A Little More Christmas

(*Lights out/Curtain closes at song's end*)

Scene 5: News Station – Organ Side

(*Lights up on News Station. Ben is at the desk working on a typewriter. George enters*)

George: Hey, buddy. Keeping yourself busy?

Ben: Yeah. Just putting down some early notes for the article. It's taking longer than usual. (*indicating typewriter*) I haven't used one of these things in...ever.

George: That's a piece of history right there, my friend.

Ben: No wonder I feel so old when I use it. How do you do anything without a delete button?

George: Easy. Don't make mistakes. (*pause*) Be honest. How long did it take you to load the paper in? An hour?

Ben: (*sarcastic*) No.

George: How long?

Ben: *(embarrassed)* Forty-five minutes.

George: *(laughing)* Whoo-whee, City Boy. You are a quick one, aren't you? Gotta send Ed a 'thank-you' note.

Ben: That makes two of us. Sorry, I didn't mean that the way it sounded.

George: Hey, I'd be a little upset, too, if Ed pulled that on me.

Ben: I'm not upset...I just don't know what I'm supposed to be doing. This article isn't going to take any time at all. I don't know why Ed wanted me to hang around for a month.

George: I spoke to him before you got here. He thinks I can't run this place by myself these days. I think he was hoping you might be able to help me keep up with the day to day – at least until I can find some more help.

Ben: Oh, sure, George. Anything you need me to do, just let me know. What are you doing in here today?

George: Church just let out. I figured I'd stop by and we could head over to the Diner for the auditions. *(pause)* You go to church, Ben?

Ben: Me? No. It's not really my thing.

George: It's not, huh?

Ben: Don't get me wrong, I think it's great that you've got religion and all. That works for you.

George: But not for you?

Ben: I don't really have that many questions or really need anything at this point. I guess I just haven't really had a need for it. Maybe someday I will.

George: You know, God offers more than just some answers to check off your list. You may think you don't need God, but in my experiences, it's always the people who think they have it together who need God the most. You look at the people of Kentbee and all they're going through – these people don't have it nearly as "together" as you do. But they all have faith in God and because of that, they have a peace about everything that's going on. You don't see that kind of faith too often. Pay attention. You may learn something around here.

Ben: When I have kids I plan on taking them to church.

George: So your kids will need God but you won't?

Ben: I don't know. I guess I haven't really thought too much about it. (*nervous*) Why do I feel like I'm the one being interviewed?

George: Sorry. Ready to go?

Ben: Yeah. (*feigning confusion at the typewriter*) How do you save this?

George: What?!

Ben: Kidding! Let me grab my camera (*standing to leave*).

George: Do me a favor. No cameras. (*Ben looks at him confused*) I don't want what's about to happen to be documented.

(*Both exit. Lights out*)

Scene 6: Auditions at Millie's Diner

(*Curtain opens on Diner. Townspeople are scattered across the stage in various costumed groups, a Chorus is assembled at center stage. Ms. Nicely is holding a clipboard and working around the room*)

Ms. Nicely: (*applauding*) Thank you, Mrs. Edwards. That truly was a memorable performance – so very unique. The way you took all of those notes and sang them so differently, I've never heard anyone else sing "Silent Night" that way before.

Larry: Yeah, nobody.

Ms. Nicely: Now, Larry, let's be nice.

Larry: I *am* being nice.

Liz: (*running in from SL*) Ms. Nicely! I have some of the fireworks here. Should I light them up now?

Ms. Nicely: I have a GREAT idea! What if you bring them out during our "Fa La La" Grand Finale!

Liz: Perfect! (*runs off*)

(*Ben, George and Opie enter SR. Opie and George continue to counter where Larry is seated*)

Ms. Nicely: (*Running up to Ben, giddy*) Hi, Ben.

Ben: Hi, Ms. Nicely. How are you today?

Ms. Nicely: I'm wonderful. (*Pause*) I bought a dress yesterday.

Ben: Oh, good for you.

Ms. Nicely: It's white.

Ben: *(to himself)* Oh, no.

Ms. Nicely: I also made this for you. I took the liberty of morphing our pictures so you could see what our children might look like.

Ben: When did you take my picture?

Ms. Nicely: Don't worry about that. Take a look.

Ben: *(takes paper and turns his back to Ms. Nicely. Reacts with shock and disgust)*

Ms. Nicely: Do you like it?

Ben: Like is *not* the word.

Ms. Nicely: Great! I'll talk to you soon.

(Ben moves to counter to join George and Larry. Continues to study the picture. When he gets to the counter, he sets the picture down and George picks it up)

George: What is that...a monkey?

Ben: It's a picture of me and Ms. Nicely's "child".

Larry: *(Takes photo. Looks at photo, then Ben. Looks back at photo and then back to Ben)* Yeah, I can see that.

Ms. Nicely: Gather 'round everyone. We're going to continue with the auditions. We have just a few more to go and I think we've saved the best for last. Next up, bringing Christmas joy to the masses, our very own Mayor Jackson.

Mayor: *(enters in a tux with tails and an American-flag top hat)* Thank you, thank you. We've seen some singing and heard some dancing today, but it is time for that time-honored tradition of the spoken word. As you are all well aware, I am quite skilled at public speaking. Some might call me "overskilled". I know I have. I do not have gold, frankincense and that other thing – but what I have is something much more valuable. My gift is my poetry. And what better way to honor our fair town than through my original poem, "Kentbee, O Kentbee". *(blows on pitch pipe)*

"Kentbee, O Kentbee; Kentbee, O Kentbee; Kentbee, O Kentbee; You are my home.
Where the people are friendly, occasionally nosy,

Where the skies are not cloudy and the buffalo roam.

Playing or working or lying about,
 Kentbee's the greatest, beyond any doubt.
 Whether shopping or hunting or fishing for trout,
 Or singing along with "Who Let the Dogs Out?"

My Kentbee, tis of thee,
 How do I love (luh-of) thee,
 Let me count the ways:
 Four stop signs,
 Three restaurants,
 Two middle schools,
 And a partridge in a pear tree."

Larry: GONG!

Mayor: "Oh, I wish I was a Kentbee town mayor,
 'Cause that is what I really want to be.
 'Cause if I were a Kentbee town mayor,
 Everyone would be in love with me."

In closing,
 "Roses are red, violets are blue,
 Kentbee, O Kentbee; I love you."

Townies: *(Cheering, applauding)*

Mayor: Reporter Man, did you get all that?

Ben: Not a word.

Ms. Nicely: Thank you, Mayor. That was very original.

Mayor: I was thinking of doing that with some Greek columns behind me. I've seen it done before. It's effective.

Ms. Nicely: We'll have to look into that. Thank you. *(Looking over clipboard)* Oh! This is so exciting. Ladies and gentlemen, many of you may remember our next act.

George: Oh, no.

Ms. Nicely: It's been years since we have seen this icon of Kentbee's Christmas tradition...

Larry: Oh, no.

Ms. Nicely: Bringing color and cheer, a symbol of glad tidings...

George/Larry: Oh, no.

Ms. Nicely: Please welcome Melva Jackson as...the Christmas Peacock!

Melva: *(entering from SL, dressed as a peacock)* Caw. Caw. Merry Christmas. Caw. I am the Christmas Peacock. Caw. And I come to grant each of you three wishes. You may wish for anything at all...it just can't cost money. But, like, a hug or a smile...you can wish for those. Caw!

Ms. Nicely: It's so good to see you again. What have you been up to?

Melva: *(out of character, back into "Melva" mode)* I just got my nails done over at Betty's. She's a genius at French Tips.

Ms. Nicely: *(whispering to Melva)* I meant the peacock.

Melva: *(back in "Peacock" mode)* Caw! I've been flying to and fro and back and forth over this great country of ours, spreading Christmas cheer and Peacockiness to everyone. Caw! But it's so great to be back home to the place of my birth.

Ms. Nicely: Oh, Christmas Peacock, you were born in Kentbee?

Melva: *(confused)* What? Where are we?

Mayor: Show them the routine you've been working on, kitten.

Ms. Nicely: Are you going to do the flaming batons again?

Melva: *(energetic)* Am I?! Well, no...I'm not. But I'm going to spread cheer *through* cheer. *(In "Cheerleader" mode)* Gimme a "M" *(crowd responds each time)*...gimme an "E"...gimme an "R"...gimme an "R"...gimme a "Y"...gimme a "C"...gimme an...

Larry: *(interrupting)* Whoa...how much more you got?

Melva: We're going to spell out, "Merry Christmas and a very happy and joyous New Year to all". *(starting over)* Gimme an "M"....

Ms. Nicely: That is so much fun. I can't wait to do that! Do you have anything else for us, Christmas Peacock?

Melva: Yes! I have prepared a song. *(to Pops)* Maestro.

Song: The Christmas Peacock

Melva: *(at end of song)* Caw!

Ms. Nicely: I love it! Love it, love it, love it! That will lead perfectly into our Grand Finale. The Peacock will come out, lead us in some Christmas Cheers and then we will end with a rousing smorgasbord of classical holiday music goodness! Let's do that now. Everyone, places!

Song: Fa La La

*(During the last portion – 1812 Overture – the **Melva** will begin doing the Peacock “dance” with “Caw!” thrown in, **Mayor** will read his poem overlapping the music and **Liz** will come out with sparklers for the big finish)*

Curtain closes

Scene 7: News Station – December 1st

*(Lights up. **Ben** is seated at desk, working. **Millie** enters carrying a pie)*

Ben: *(whistling “1812 Overture”)*

Millie: Can't get that song out of your head, can you?

Ben: *(laughing)* It will be a long, long time before I forget yesterday.

Millie: Where's George?

Ben: He had some appointment or something. I'm holding things down for awhile.

Millie: Well, I brought you one of my famous pumpkin pies. I know Kentbee isn't as exciting as the big city, but I hope you feel welcome here.

Ben: Oh, Millie, you didn't have to do this. I'm glad you did, but you didn't have to.

Millie: What did you think of the auditions?

Ben: They were definitely creative. I thought there were some strong moments. A few things could use some work...

Millie: *(interrupting)* It was bad.

Ben: It was terrible. I mean, wow.

Millie: You're not going to put that in your article, are you? That would embarrass our town so much.

Ben: Nah, I wouldn't do that. What happens in Kentbee, stays in Kentbee. While I have you here, I need to interview some folks for my story and you seem to be one of the leaders around here...would you mind if I ask you a couple of questions?

Millie: Sure, fire away.

Ben: (*offers Millie a chair*) Ok. First, your name.

Millie: Millie Lemon.

Ben: And how long have you lived in Kentbee?

Millie: All my life.

Ben: How many years? (*Gets a look from Millie*) 29. What's your relationship with the town?

Millie: Born in Kentbee, grew up in Kentbee. My parents owned the Diner and when they died, it was passed on to me. I've been running it ever since.

Ben: So, since you've been a part of this town for awhile, how has Kentbee been affected by the recent economic problems?

Millie: Where do I start? The mill's shut down, so a lot of our boys are out of work. Without a job, most of them are forced to move away to find work. With so many moving away, it affects our local businesses, including mine. Everything has an impact on everything.

Ben: That's a shame...so close to Christmas.

Millie: Are you kidding me? I'm glad this is happening at Christmas and not another time of the year.

Ben: I'd love to hear why. (*At this point, Ben starts actively listening, not taking notes*)

Millie: At Christmas, we're remembering the fact that Jesus came to earth to help us out. We were hopeless in our sin and God sent His son to offer us a way out of our struggles. If God is able and willing to help us with our sin problems, then a little thing like money shouldn't worry us. What we need right now is hope. Peace. At Christmas, I see hope. I see peace.

Ben: Have you ever thought about leaving Kentbee?

Millie: Oh, sure. When Liz's father left us because Kentbee was *too* "small town", I thought about it. But, you know, next to Liz, the greatest blessing I've had in my life is to live in Kentbee. Not because of the people, even though they're wonderful. Not because of the Diner – I could open a diner anywhere. It's because every time something like this comes up, God once

again shows how faithful He is to me. And Liz sees it as well. Yeah, times are tough, but I'm thankful for it because it gives me another opportunity to put my faith in God and rely on Him.

Ben: That seems to be a recurring theme in this town.

Millie: (*Realizing Ben hasn't been writing*) Aren't you going to write this down?

Ben: Yeah, thanks.

Millie: Anyway. That's why I'm glad it's Christmas. It means so much to these people to be reminded of the hope we have.

Song: A Little More Christmas

Ben: Millie, this has been *by far* the best interview I've gotten so far. Thank you.

Millie: Well, you can repay me then. We're having rehearsals Friday evening. Would you include an ad reminding everyone in tomorrow and Friday's edition?

Ben: Be glad to. And thanks again for the pie.

Millie: You make sure to share that with George when he gets back.

Ben: I can promise you that's not going to happen.

Millie: (*exiting*) See ya, Ben.

Ben: See ya, Millie.

(*Lights out*)

Scene 8: Millie's Diner, Dec. 5th

(*Following Scene 7, Orchestra plays a "Fa La La" reprise. Curtain opens towards end and scene picks up with the "1812 Overture". Millie and Liz are standing together, working on a costume. Mayor and Melva are working on their own acts. Larry is working with a rope and pulley. George, Ben and Opie are observing from the side, sharing pie*)

(*Following end of song*)

Ms. Nicely: (*effusive with praise*) Wonderful! Everyone...that was perfect! Absolutely perfect! Now, let's try it one more time, only this time, without all the wrong notes.

(*Chorus groans*)

- Mayor:** (*yelling out, working on a poem*) What rhymes with architecture?
- Melva:** Buildings.
- Mayor:** That's a synonym, genius.
- Larry:** (*walking to George*) Hey, buddy, gimme a hand with this.
- George:** What is this for?
- Larry:** It's for Melva's Christmas peacock. Mayor wants to have her fly across stage for the finale.
- George:** Do peacocks fly?
- Larry:** (*pause to think*) This one's going to.
- Ben:** (*taking over, moving to Ms. Nicely*) Ok, time out. Could I say something?
- Ms. Nicely:** (*sweetly*) Sure you can. (*screaming to crowd*) ZIP IT!
- (*Crowd quiets*)
- Ben:** Wow. Ok. Could I offer an outsider's perspective? Ms. Nicely, you are doing a fine job with the choir.
- Ms. Nicely:** I love you, too.
- Ben:** And the fireworks, peacocks, all very good.
- Melva:** (*enthusiastic, quick*) I love peacocks!
- Ben:** Who doesn't? But, all these things are not "small town". You want to give people a small town experience? Just be yourselves. Do what comes naturally.
- Larry:** What're you talking about, City?
- Ben:** Over this past week, I've seen small town. You're welcoming, honest...God and faith is everything to you, right?
- Crowd:** Yeah, that's right, etc.
- Ben:** Show them that. That's what they want to see.

George: Ben's right. This isn't us. (*Notices Melva and the "Peacock"*) Well, it's kind of us. But still. We're going through a tough time right now and everyone knows it. What better way to honor the Lord and His faithfulness to us than to present the true message of Christmas.

Ben: Exactly.

Mayor: Listen, Big Time, not all of us are scholarly and educated. We don't all have "brains" (*realizes what he said*). What do you suggest?

Ben: (*pauses, looking around*) Have you all heard Millie sing?

Millie: What!?

Liz: Yeah!

Millie: No!

Liz: Come on, mom!

Ben: Yeah, come on, mom. Listen, you guys can do this. Millie and Ms. Nicely can handle the music, Larry can sort of build a set and Liz can direct the drama.

Crowd: What?! Huh? Etc.

Ben: What do you say, kid? You up for it?

Liz: Absolutely!

Millie: Ben, we appreciate what you're doing, but I really don't think this is something we can do.

Ben: Well, you better figure out how to do it pretty quick. I sent a full page ad promoting Kentbee's Christmas Celebration to my editor in the city. He's going to run it front page every day for the next week. The show opens next Monday.

Ms. Nicely: That's barely a week away!

George: Then we better get going.

Mayor: (*to Ben*) Reporter Man, what is my role?

Ben: You're the Kentbee government representative, right?

Mayor: Yeah.

Ben: You sell tickets. *(to everyone)* I can't believe I'm the one saying this...where's your faith?

Song: With a Little Bit of Faith

(Lights out. Curtain closes at end of song)

Orchestra: With a Little Bit of Faith Reprise

Scene 9: Ben's Hotel Room

(Lights up on Ben who is finishing up shaving, using towel to dry face. George knocks on door)

Ben: Come in!

George: Hey, Ben. Got some good news for you. Larry told me he solved the sewage problem.

Ben: Oh yeah? Great.

George: Yeah, he just swapped the toilet and the sink lines. *(Realizes Ben is toweling off face, long pause)* Oh. That's a shame. *(Changing subject)* Anyway. I wanted to stop by and thank you for today. I haven't seen the town fired up like that in a long time.

Ben: That really was something else, wasn't it?

George: Yeah. *(Picking up paper on table/bed)* What's this?

Ben: Oh, that's the ad I have to send over to Ed.

George: You told us you already sent it.

Ben: I may have exaggerated the details a bit. *(George gives a look)* Look, I had to say something. The town wouldn't go for the idea if they had a choice.

George: But we're depending on that publicity.

Ben: Don't worry about that. It'll run front page for the whole week...and the rest of the year if we want. Ed owes me one.

George: Well, I may not agree with your method, but it worked. Why are you so eager to help us out?

Ben: I like Kentbee. There are a lot of really good people in this town and they deserve better than what they're getting. It's Christmas and I just want them to feel good, even if it's only for a few days.

George: What does that mean?

Ben: George, come on. You're a smart guy. You know how things work. This ad won't do much. The town's not going to get saved by this. People will still lose their jobs. Families are going to move away.

George: I have to tell you, you had me fooled.

Ben: I really didn't mean to fool anyone. I only wanted to take their mind off of the problems, at least during Christmas.

George: Pretending a problem doesn't exist or running away from one doesn't help anything. So you've taken their mind off of the problem for a few days. What happens after Christmas when you've gone back to the city and things get bad around here again? Will any of this have mattered or would you have just gotten everyone's hopes up? Ben, the measure of a person is determined by how they confront and handle difficult situations. Do you ignore it or run away? Or do you, as this entire town has, put it in God's hands and move forward?

Ben: George, I'm really sorry.

George: (*brushing it off*) Don't beat yourself up over it. You've just underestimated the faith these people have. Even more, I think you're underestimating what God is going to do through this experience. Whatever your expectations are about this Christmas Celebration, I trust God is going to bring the masses. You wait and see.

Ben: I really admire your faith. I truly hope you're right.

George: (*smiling*) Eh, I know I am. Listen, I need to go out of town for a few days. Would you mind holding down the paper until I get back.

Ben: Sure. Will you be back for "Opening Night"?

George: I hope so. (*standing to exit*) Remember what I've said. God is going to do something big with this Christmas Celebration. Your story is about to get a lot better.

(*Lights out*).

Scene 10: Christmas Celebration, Millie's Diner, Dec. 22

(Townspeople are positioned centerstage, performing as Choir as curtain opens. Following song, Mayor steps forward)

Mayor: Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the entire town of Kentbee, we'd like to thank you for joining us for our Christmas Celebration – especially those of you who came in from the city and other parts. When we first starting planning this, we had no idea how it would be received. But I'm happy to report that the first week we had a capacity crowd. And tonight, for our final performance, you all have done it again – Standing room only! *(Mayor and Choir applaud)* It's been our privilege this evening having you celebrate with us and we pray that this presentation enhances your Christmas season. Even though this is the final presentation of our Christmas Celebration, we'd like to invite you all back for our special Christmas Eve service, two days from now, right outside in the town square. As we end our time together tonight, the choir is going to lead us in celebrating one more time. Thank you and good night!

Song: A King is Coming to Town

(Following song, Ben, Opie and Larry walk on stage, applauding)

Ben: Great job once again, everybody.

Larry: You all get better every night.

Millie: *(to the Choir)* Don't forget – tomorrow night we are going caroling in the community. Meet back here at 5:30 sharp! *(Choir is mingling, talking amongst themselves. Some exit. Millie turns to Ben and Larry)* This Celebration has been so good for this town. I can't thank you enough, Ben *(turns to walk off)*.

Ben: *(stopping her and Larry)* Hey, Millie, Larry...can I talk to you guys for a second.

Millie: Sure.

Ben: *(Pulls Larry and Millie off to the side)* I don't want to alarm anybody but something needs to be said. As a reporter, it's my job to look around and investigate.

Larry: *(concerned)* What's going on, City?

Ben: *(Cautiously)* I think there's something wrong with George. *(Larry and Millie shoot each other looks)* I know I haven't known him very long, but he's been acting strange. He's always running off to meetings, he can't seem to handle the paper alone...and he left two weeks ago and hasn't been back. He calls every few days and says he hopes to be in soon...something doesn't add up. Am I missing something here?

Millie: *(realizing)* You don't know.

Ben: Know what?

Larry: (*hesitantly*) I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this, City. George...George has cancer. His "meetings" have been his doctor visits and treatments.

Ben: Cancer? That's it? He could've said something.

Millie: He's dying, Ben.

Ben: What?

Millie: Doctors have given him days. Weeks, maybe. (*Pause*) I'm sorry...I assumed George would've already told you.

Ben: He didn't say a word about it. This is terrible. (*Indicating towards **Choir***) I suppose someone should tell the others?

Larry: We've all known...for awhile.

Ben: (*starting to get angry*) And no one said anything?

Millie: That's the way George wanted it. He didn't want us to focus on it.

Ben: Not focus on it? The man is dying! I don't understand this town. I gotta go (*exit*).

Millie: (*calling after*) Ben, wait!

Larry: It's alright, Millie. I know where he's going...and I've got the keys (*exits after **Ben***).

(*Lights out, curtain closes*)

Scene 11: Ben's Hotel Room

(*Lights up on **Ben** as he is in the process of repacking his bag to leave. **Larry** enters*)

Larry: Ah, taking a trip, huh?

Ben: (*gives Larry an annoyed look*) I'm going home.

Larry: You still got a week left on this room. Your boss paid in advance.

Ben: Keep it. You need it more than Ed does.

Larry: Well, alright. (*turning to leave*) Good luck to you, City.

Ben: That's it?

Larry: (*opening arms*) Oh, I'm sorry. Did you want a hug?

Ben: An explanation would be nice.

Larry: Ok. George has cancer. He's dying. You just found out. Now you're running away. (*more upbeat*) Hey, this reporter thing isn't so hard.

Ben: That's because you don't have to write *this* story. I mean, Kentbee is going through major financial problems and, because you all have religion and God or whatever, everyone acts like nothing's wrong – everything's going to be ok. I get that. It's nice. But since the first day I've stepped foot in this town, everyone has been going on and on about how much George means to them. You especially. And you all have known, for I don't know how long, that he's dying and you're singing and acting like it's a holly, jolly Christmas. Pass me the happy pills! (*Pause*) I don't understand this town.

Larry: That's because you don't understand faith.

Ben: Larry, faith is a crutch for the weak.

Larry: (*pleased*) You're starting to get it. I couldn't agree with you more.

Ben: What in the world are you talking about. That's not a good thing, Larry.

Larry: Says who? Says the guy packing up and running away? (*Pause*) Let me explain something to you, City. Everyone is weak. Everyone. If it's not finances, it's an illness. If it's not an illness, it's something else. We all have those things that prove how weak we are. (*Pause*) What's a crutch? A crutch is something people use to hold themselves up when they can't stand on their own. Is my faith in God a crutch? Absolutely it is. I'll be the first to tell you that there is no way I could make it through anything if God isn't carrying me through it. My faith allows me to stand and face of these problems with a hope and peace about the situation. That doesn't mean everything is going to work out the way I want it to – it usually doesn't – but it means that I can stand with the knowledge that God is in control and trusting Him is way better than trying to stand on my own. (*Pause*) Want proof? George is my best friend – has been all my life – and he's dying. You've known him three weeks. (*Pause*) Which one of us is dealing with it better? (*Pause to let it sink it*) You want some crutches?

Ben: I've never thought of it that way.

Larry: Most people don't.

Ben: I'm sorry, Larry, I need to be by myself for awhile.

Larry: Alright. (*Turns to leave*)

Ben: One question.

Larry: Shoot.

Ben: Why didn't George tell me about this?

Larry: That falls under the category of "Things that are George's business".

Ben: Right.

Larry: But you could always ask him. He'll be back in town tomorrow afternoon.

Ben: I don't know if I will be.

Larry: Suit yourself. Either way, I hope you get a good end to your story. *(exits)*

(Lights out)

Scene 11: Ben's Hotel Room

(Lights up on Ben as he is in the process of repacking his bag to leave. Larry enters)

Larry: Ah, taking a trip, huh?

Ben: *(gives Larry an annoyed look)* I'm going home.

Larry: You still got a week left on this room. Your boss paid in advance.

Ben: Keep it. You need it more than Ed does.

Larry: Well, alright. *(turning to leave)* Good luck to you, City.

Ben: That's it?

Larry: *(opening arms)* Oh, I'm sorry. Did you want a hug?

Ben: An explanation would be nice.

Larry: Ok. George has cancer. He's dying. You just found out. Now you're running away. *(more upbeat)* Hey, this reporter thing isn't so hard.

Ben: That's because you don't have to write *this* story. I mean, Kentbee is going through major financial problems and, because you all have religion and God or whatever, everyone acts like nothing's wrong – everything's going to be ok. I get that. It's nice. But since the first day I've stepped foot in this town, everyone has been going on and on about how much George means to them. You especially. And you all have known, for I don't know how long,

that he's dying and you're singing and acting like it's a holly, jolly Christmas. Pass me the happy pills! *(Pause)* I don't understand this town.

Larry: That's because you don't understand faith.

Ben: Larry, faith is a crutch for the weak.

Larry: *(pleased)* You're starting to get it. I couldn't agree with you more.

Ben: What in the world are you talking about. That's not a good thing, Larry.

Larry: Says who? Says the guy packing up and running away? *(Pause)* Let me explain something to you, City. Everyone is weak. Everyone. If it's not finances, it's an illness. If it's not an illness, it's something else. We all have those things that prove how weak we are. *(Pause)* What's a crutch? A crutch is something people use to hold themselves up when they can't stand on their own. Is my faith in God a crutch? Absolutely it is. I'll be the first to tell you that there is no way I could make it through anything if God isn't carrying me through it. My faith allows me to stand and face of these problems with a hope and peace about the situation. That doesn't mean everything is going to work out the way I want it to – it usually doesn't – but it means that I can stand with the knowledge that God is in control and trusting Him is way better than trying to stand on my own. *(Pause)* Want proof? George is my best friend – has been all my life – and he's dying. You've known him three weeks. *(Pause)* Which one of us is dealing with it better? *(Pause to let it sink it)* You want some crutches?

Ben: I've never thought of it that way.

Larry: Most people don't.

Ben: I'm sorry, Larry, I need to be by myself for awhile.

Larry: Alright. *(Turns to leave)*

Ben: One question.

Larry: Shoot.

Ben: Why didn't George tell me about this?

Larry: That falls under the category of "Things that are George's business".

Ben: Right.

Larry: But you could always ask him. He'll be back in town tomorrow afternoon.

Ben: I don't know if I will be.

Larry: Suit yourself. Either way, I hope you get a good end to your story. *(exits)*

(Lights out)

Scene 12: Millie's Diner, December 23rd

(Curtain opens on Diner. George is seated and Millie serves him some pie. George has a cane and is noticeably weaker throughout scene.)

George: Oh, thanks, Millie. I have missed this. Two weeks is a long time to go without some of your pie.

Millie: We've missed you, too, George. How're you feeling?

George: I can't complain...at least I'm not going to. God's been too good to me for that.

Millie: Thattaboy. What are the doctors saying?

George: Same thing. It won't be too long now.

Millie: Well, you look good.

George: You know, people have been telling me that all my life. I couldn't agree more.

(Both laugh)

Millie: I wish you could've seen the Christmas Celebration. Packed house every night. This really put the spotlight on Kentbee. Even Larry got some business!

George: Uh-oh. Those people...probably won't be back.

Millie: Oh, no! People love it! One family said it was "authentically rustic".

George: That's one way to put it. *(Pause)* Have you seen Ben?

Millie: Not since yesterday. Still won't return your phone calls?

George: No. Ed hasn't heard from either.

Millie: Give it time, George. This really took him by surprise. Are you going to go caroling with us?

(Ben enters SR, unnoticed by George)

George: I don't think so, Millie. Might be too much for me tonight.

Millie: (*noticing Ben, motions towards him*) George?

George: (*turning around*) Hey buddy.

Liz: (*running in*) Mom! (*noticing Ben*) Oh, hey there, Reporter Man.

Ben: Hey, kiddo.

Liz: Mom, all the carolers are here.

Millie: Oh, ok.

Liz: Uncle George, are you guys coming?

Millie: (*to Liz*) Uncle George and Ben are going to stay here, honey. (*to George and Ben*) We'll see you when we get back. (*Exits*)

George: How long you been standing there?

Ben: I heard everything.

George: You still mad at me?

Ben: I was...kinda. But, I had a good talk with Larry. He helped me see things a little better.

George: He's a lot smarter than most realize.

Ben: You'd never know it.

George: (*Chuckling*) Yeah. I have to be honest, I'm surprised you're still here.

Ben: My story isn't finished.

George: Which story is that? You article...or *your* story.

Ben: I guess a little of both. Although, I don't usually put myself in my articles. I may have to make an exception on this one. (*Pause*) George, why didn't you tell me?

George: The timing wasn't right.

Ben: You were cutting it awfully close, don't you think?

George: I didn't want any decision you might make to be influenced by my circumstances. If you knew about my condition, you might've done something out of guilt or emotion – and that's not real. Plus, if I didn't get the opportunity to talk to you about it, God would've given

that blessing to someone else. Ben, God loves you so much that He is chasing after you... and He wasn't going to end the chase with me.

Ben: I've been thinking about this a lot lately – and I was hoping for the chance to tell you - you amaze George. Watching you, hearing you...you're going through all of this and you never seem all that concerned or bothered by it. You don't really act like a guy who's dying.

George: Thanks, Ben. But that's not me. (**Ben gives a confused look. Explaining**) It's *God*. Was I scared when I found out I had cancer? Absolutely. But through it all, God has given me the strength to walk through this knowing that He's waiting for me on the other end. The peace that you've seen is from God.

Ben: You're being modest.

George: I've never been more serious about anything in my entire life. Look around you. If you take God and faith out of the equation, what's the difference between you and this whole town? (*Pause to let him think*) Nothing. We face the same problems you might face. We have the same fears you would have. The difference is that we've realized we can't do this on our own. We need help.

Ben: (*Getting it*) Jesus.

George: Jesus. Most people remember that Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birth, but it's easy to forget just how incredible Christmas is. The Bible tells us that one of the names of Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Jesus' birth is more than just a nice story we tell at Christmas – it's the perfect picture of God's love for us showing us that, because of Jesus, for the first time we can have peace with each other, peace in the middle of our circumstances and peace with God.

Ben: Peace. George, I don't have that.

George: (*smiling*) Would you like me to introduce to the One who can give it to you?

Ben: More than anything. (*Chuckles to himself*) Hmm.

George: What's that?

Ben: I think I just got the ending to my story.

George: I think you're right. Come on. Let's pray.

(*Curtain closes*)

Epilogue (*Following song, curtain closes. A bench is brought out and placed centerstage, in front of curtain, identical to Prologue. Ben and Ed are seated on the bench. Lights up*)

Ed: (*picking up mid-conversation*) So, I never told you. Your article...

Ben: Yeah?

Ed: Huge hit. I ran it front page Christmas Eve and we sold every copy. I'm running it again this weekend.

Ben: That's great, Ed. More people need to read it.

Ed: Oh, they're going to. I really owe you one this time.

Ben: I say we're about even. (*pause*) Why'd you send me? Anyone could've gotten you that story.

Ed: It would've been a completely different story if I had someone else write it...and I knew George needed a hand. But even more than that, God has used George and Kentbee to change my life. I knew that with all that is going on, the same thing would happen to you.

Ben: You were right. I don't think I've ever thanked you for it.

Ed: Glad I could do it. (*Pause*) Everyone misses you.

Ben: I miss them, too. I really miss George.

Ed: Yeah, but you'll see him again. (*Pause*) Have you decided if you're going to go back?

Ben: I'm not going back. This is my home and I really feel like this is where the Lord wants me.

Ed: (*standing to leave*) I'm heading over to the station. You coming?

Ben: Yeah. I'll be by in a little bit.

Ed: Alright. (*turns as he walks off*) Bennie...good to see you again.

Ben: You, too, Eddie. (*Ed walks off. Ben turns to pray*) Lord, I want to thank You for all you've taught me and done in my life these past couple of weeks. You went through a lot to get to me and I really appreciate it. I owe you so much more than one. (*Pause*) Please tell George I said 'hi'. In Jesus name, Amen. (*Long pause then yells to offstage*) Opie! (*Opie runs on*) Millie's got some fresh pumpkin pie. You want some? (*Opie nods*) Me, too. Come on. (*Exits with Opie*).