

The Christmas Wreath (2016)

Scene 1

Outdoor and Church

(Curtain Opens)

Song: Celebrate The Wonder

(Choir is miming conversation as curtain opens on “Outdoor Scene”. (Spot Light) During song, George, dressed in a black suit, slowly begins to walk across from SR, oblivious to everything going on around him. As he reaches CS, he turns and faces the audience, saddened. As the song reaches climax, the rest of the family and Pastor Sam move to CS, as chairs appear in a row, facing the audience. Lights immediately change to “Church interior”, with blackout all around. Stained-glass window effect (turn on the Stained Glass window) and lighting on the family only. They are at a funeral.)

Sam: ...and so, in the midst of our grieving and loss, we remember Jackie and the gift that she was to all of us. We have lost a dear friend, an aunt, a sister, a mother, ...(awkwardly) a grandmother...and a wife. We don't know why God allowed this tragedy to happen, but may you find encouragement in the words of Job: “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord”. Now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

(As Sam concludes, the family stands and begins to exit. (Spot light on George only be sure Stained Glass window off now (spot light George again)) George remains standing, staring out at the audience as the scene changes to “House interior” around him)

Scene 2

House – main stage

*(Stage is transformed into living room as George continues to stare out at audience. **Once stage is set, full lights on stage.** George moves to his chair. The whole family – except for Abby, Leah and Baby Eve - is scattered around the living room. Everyone is silent for awhile)*

Ellie: Who's hungry, huh? It's been a long day for everyone. I'll go fix something up.

George: Sorry, sis. With all of the details, arrangements...I haven't been to the store in awhile.

Ellie: I know. I threw out practically everything in the fridge – it was starting to smell. Fortunately, the Wingers, from church, brought some lasagna to the funeral for us. *(exits SR)*

Freddie: Oh, that's nice.

Dave: Yeah, it is. *(everyone sits in silence for awhile again, until "Doorbell" rings)* I'll get that. *(exits SL)*

Freddie: *(to George)* That sure was a beautiful service. Just the way Jackie would've wanted it. You did well, Georgie.

George: Thanks. She always said, "When I go, I want lots of music at my funeral." *(pause)* I just didn't think it would be so soon.

Freddie: Yeah, she loved singing. I gotta be honest – when you two first met, I didn't see how it was going to work...her being a singer and you...well, you know. But she picked a good man.

George: *(chuckles)* There wasn't a day I deserved her.

(Dave and Sam enter. Sam is carrying a dish)

Dave: Look who decided to stop by.

George: (*standing, shaking hands*) Hey, Pastor. Good to see you. Thanks again for all that you did today. We were just talking about how beautiful the whole service was. God really spoke through you.

Sam: It was a blessing to be a part of it. I just wanted to swing by and see how everyone is holding up. With all of the people at the Church, I didn't get a chance to talk much with you all and meet everyone.

George: Well, here. Let me introduce to my sister-in-law. Freda, this is Pastor Sam.

Freddie: Uh, Freddie. Nice to meet you, officially, Pastor.

Sam: Sam. We were all so sorry to hear about Jackie. She will be very missed. Are you in town long? Just here for the funeral?

Freddie: Well...we haven't really...I mean, George and I...

Ellie: (*entering, interrupting*) She'll be staying here through Christmas. I thought it would be best to have the family together this week. Hello, Sam.

Sam: Hey, Ellie.

Ellie: Sorry, we didn't tell you sooner, George. But, you know how you said you might need some help going through Jackie's things? Freddie thought she might like to be a part of that. I told her she could stay here for the week.

Freddie: But, only if that's ok with you, George.

George: Sure. No problem.

(*Abby comes running in, laughing*)

Abby: Hey, Dave. You should've just seen Eve. Leah was trying to change her diaper and Eve just...

All: Woah, ok, stop right there, etc.

Abby: I'm just sayin' ...I didn't know babies could do that. I feel like I've seen war. (*realizing Sam is there*) Oh, hi, Pastor. Wanna come see the new baby?

Sam: You know what? I'll give it a minute or two.

Abby: Cool.

Sam: Can I still count on you for your part in the Christmas Eve worship?

Abby: Definitely. And the World's Best Narrator will be right up there with me, right, Uncle George?

George: Oh, Abby, I don't...I don't know about that right now.

Abby: What? Why not?

Ellie: We'll work it all out, sweetie. Anyway, George. Abby and I will be moving in, too.

George: What? Why? You guys live 5 minutes away.

Ellie: It's not good for you to be all alone.

George: I won't be!

Abby: It's Christmas, Uncle George. We should be together. Laughing, celebrating.

George: And we *will* do all of that again. I'm just not ready right now.

Ellie: Well, plus, we've seen your refrigerator. Someone has to take care of this place. Poor Freddie will starve if left here all alone.

Sam: Oh, speaking of which, Leslie made this lasagna for you guys.

Abby: Lasagna? (*stars laughing*) We were just about to...(gets bumped by **Ellie**) go put this in the kitchen. (**Ellie and Abby exit SR**)

Sam: *(Calling after them)* Preheat to 400. Bake for 30 minutes! Hey George, no worries about narrating the Christmas Eve Worship. I understand if you just need some time to step away for awhile. We can make other arrangements this year.

George: Thanks, Pastor. I'll let you know in a few days.

Sam: Take your time.

George: If you'll excuse me, Pastor, I'm gonna show Freddie up to her room. Let her get settled in.

Sam: Certainly. Freddie, it was very nice to meet you.

Freddie: You, too, Sam. *(George and Freddie exit SR)*

(Dave and Sam are left alone. During a period of silence, they smile at each other)

Sam: So, Dave. It's been a busy couple of weeks for you and Leah. How are you holding up?

Dave: We're just trying to keep our head down and survive right now. Leah's got the baby to keep her busy, so that's good. I'm trying to help out, but it's just...weird right now, you know?

Sam: Sure. The birth of a child is a huge change. Losing your mom on top of that...I'm surprised you're doing as well as you are.

Dave: The fact that both of those events happened on the same day doesn't help. For the rest of my life, whenever we celebrate Eve's birthday, I'll always be reminded of what we lost that day, too. That'll never change. Ever.

Sam: I can't even begin to imagine what that's like. For now, though, try not to focus on that. Just remember what you had *and* what God has given to you now. Have you talked to your dad about this?

Dave: Uh, no. We haven't spoken much at all since that day. He's been pretty distant from me, Leah...the baby. I don't really know what's going on right now.

Sam: Well, your father is a good man and I know he loves you all. Hang in there. Everything has changed for him. For all of you. But I really believe God can work in this mess right now.

(Leah enters with the baby)

Dave: Yeah. I hope so. Hey, here are my girls now.

Leah: Hey, Pastor. Meet Eve.

Sam: Oh, wow. She's beautiful. And I hear she's quite the little firecracker already.

Leah: Oh, yeah. That was...exciting. *(to Dave)* We owe your dad some money.

Dave: Yeah?

Leah: In fact, you may just want to plan on repainting that room.

Dave: Fantastic.

Sam: Well, before I get volunteered for that job, I'm gonna head on out. *(motioning towards Eve)* She's beautiful, Dave. Your mom would be so proud of you both. Let me know if your family needs anything at all.

Dave: Thanks, Sam. We will.

Sam: *(begins to exit SL, then turns back)* Wow, that lasagna smells delicious. *(exit)*

*(Lights dim, curtains close as Dave and Leah are CS, looking down at Eve)
(work lights on)*

Scene 3

Attic – Side Stage #2 (organ side)

(Lights up on “Attic” as Ellie, Freddie and Abby enter. During the scene, they are looking through boxes, photo albums, etc.)

Ellie: (to **Freddie**) Are you ready to do this?

Freddie: I’m not sure.

Ellie: You don’t have to.

Freddie: No, I want to. I just miss her so much. Seeing all of her things just helps me remember. That’s good, right?

Ellie: We’ll do this together.

Abby: There is so much stinkin’ stuff in this attic. Photo albums, Christmas decorations...*(picks up ugly baby clothes)* oh man...I’m glad baby clothes got better looking by the time I came around. *(Looks at tag)* These were Cousin Dave’s clothes? Why did she keep them? I’m pretty sure he won’t be wearing them again.

Freddie: That was your Aunt Jackie. She kept everything. Every moment, every experience was precious to her and she wanted to keep all of this as memories. And she was really big on family traditions.

Abby: Like what?

Freddie: For instance, every time my birthday rolled around...every year...my phone would ring exactly at midnight. She wanted to make sure that she was the first person to wish me “Happy Birthday” as soon as it was official. Woke me up every time.

Ellie: And George told me that every year on their anniversary, she would get up early, cook a wonderful breakfast...and then climb back into bed, wake George up and make him bring it to her.

Freddie: But Christmas was her favorite season and those traditions were the best. Every year, she would get the family together to drink hot chocolate and watch “It’s a Wonderful Life”. On Christmas Eve, she and George would be a part of the worship. She would sing in the choir and George would narrate. Then, just before bed, she would get everyone together and we would share our favorite gift God had given to us that year. It was perfect.

Ellie: Christmas won’t be the same without her. This only makes the loss that much harder for him. I’ve never seen him like this.

Abby: Is that why he might not do the Christmas Eve narration this year?

Ellie: Oh, I’m sure.

Abby: Well, I think we could get him to.

Freddie: If anyone could, it’s you.

Abby: (*digs through a Christmas box and finds the advent wreath*) What’s this?

Ellie: That, my dear, is the world famous Grogan advent wreath.

Freddie: Their first Christmas together, your aunt and uncle didn’t have the money for a tree. Jackie didn’t care about that – but she was *insistent* that they get this wreath to make sure they stayed focused on what Christmas is really about.

Abby: How does a wreath do that?

Ellie: Well, what you do is you take four candles and place them around the wreath. As you get closer to Christmas, you light a candle. Each candle represents an aspect of why Jesus was born. The candles stand for joy, hope, peace and love. And then there’s one big candle that goes right in the center. We call it the “Christ Candle” and it represents Christ coming into our world to bring us all of these things.

Freddie: It was your Aunt Jackie’s favorite.

Abby: Let’s put it out. Where does it go?

Ellie: I think that's a question for your Uncle George. Let him decide this year.

Abby: I'll go ask him. *(stands to leave, with wreath)*

Ellie: Better yet, why don't you have Dave ask him. I feel like they need to talk.

Abby: Why?

Ellie: Sisterly intuition.

Abby: Ok. *(exits)*

Ellie: *(to Freddie)* How are you holding up?

Freddie: There are just so many memories. It's overwhelming. I don't even know where to start. *(begins to cry. Ellie comforts her)* I'm sorry. When I look at this stuff, I hear her voice, I see her face...and it hurts. And I feel so sorry for George. He'll be all alone in this big house...no one to talk to about this...and at Christmas, too. I've watched him these past few days and it's not the same George.

Ellie: I know. We all see it. We just have to keep praying that God will speak to him now. That's the only thing that can heal him.

Freddie: Believe me, I've been praying. *(collecting herself, standing to leave)* Thanks, Ellie. I need to take a break for awhile, if that's ok.

Ellie: Of course. *(they hug)* I'll be down in a minute.

(Freddie exits)

Song: Bring His Heart Back Home (sung by Ellie)

(Lights out at song end)

Scene 4

Side Stage #1 (Study)(piano side) and Main Stage (in middle of scene)

(Lights up on SS#1. George is seated at the desk, looking over papers. Dave enters carrying the wreath)

Dave: Hey, Pop. Wanted to check in on you and...well...wondered if you wanted to come play with Eve. She's really alert right now.

George: Not right now, thanks. I have a lot going on at the moment. With the full house, I just need some quiet time for awhile. But we'll have plenty of time together soon.

Dave: Right. Anyway, Aunt Freddie and Ellie were going through mom's stuff in the attic and the found the wreath. Hey wanted to know where you want to set it up. The usual spot?

George: No, not this year.

Dave: Ok. Where do you want it?

George: I don't want to put it out this year.

Dave: What? Why not?

George: I just don't, ok? I feel like changing things up this year.

Dave: We've had plenty of change already.

George: I understand. But it's my house and this is how I want it this year.

Dave: Fine. Whatever you want. I'm gonna go play with your granddaughter. I hope you'll join us.

George: Maybe later.

(Dave exits. George takes the wreath, looks it over, sets it aside, begins to pray)

George: Lord, I don't know what's going on. I just...I just need you. Please speak to me. I need some help here. (*Continues with head bowed as he sits in chair*)

(Lights up on Main stage)

(Main Stage curtain opens. Norm and Cliff enter from SL)

Norm: Alright, now before we go and get into trouble again, let's figure out how we are going to do this.

Cliff: What do mean, "trouble again"?

Norm: I just don't want a repeat of the last job.

Cliff: You gotta let that go.

Norm: Just saying, I don't want another 80 year old grandma firing a sawed-off shotgun at us. Last thing you expect when you walk into a nursing home is, "Anyone home?" KABOOM!

George: (*aware of someone in the house*) Hello?

Cliff: That old bird still had some fire. Come on, you weren't hurt. There was no way you could've been hurt.

George: Hello?

Cliff: Newton's Second Law of Physics dictates that an object hurtling through the air will not stop until it hits something.

Norm: I feel like you're making that up.

Cliff: It's true. Think about it.

George: (*starting to exit Study, moving towards Main Stage*) Is someone there?

Norm: Oh, great. Um...hide! (*both hide behind furniture*) How do you want to do this? You wanna take the lead?

Cliff: Remember the Panama job?

Norm: Great idea.

Cliff: Ok, on three. One...two...three...DO NOT FEAR!

Norm: *(at the same time, jumping up and running towards George to hug)*
GEORGE!!

George: *(swinging a golf club)* AHHH!! GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!!

Norm/Cliff: *(running around frantically)* DO NOT FEAR! DO NOT FEAR! DO NOT FEAR!

Cliff: George, wait. Stop! Hang on...*(to Norm)* What was that?! I said “Panama”.

Norm: I thought you said “Panera”. My bad.

Cliff: George, we’re not going to hurt you. We’re here to help!

George: You’re not burglars?

Cliff: Burglars? No! Don’t be ridiculous.

Norm: We’re angels!

George: *(resumes swinging golf club and chasing)* GET OUT!

Norm/Cliff: DO NOT FEAR! DO NOT FEAR!

Cliff: *(rapidly)* Your name is George Grogan, you’re the owner of a paint company, you were married to your wife Jackie for 36 years, she died two weeks ago in a car crash on the way to the hospital where your granddaughter was being born!

George: You could’ve read all of that in the obituary.

Cliff: Are you kidding? Nobody reads newspapers anymore.

George: You really expect me to believe you're angels?

Norm: That's kind of a weird thing to lie about. When you pray, do you think God is listening?

George: Of course.

Cliff: What did you pray for not 10 seconds ago?

George: I asked God for help.

Cliff: Here we are!

George: You two? You two are the help I get?

Norm: Not what you were expecting? Sorry, buddy. If Moses only got to peek at God's back...you get us. But don't worry! We are so excited to be here. You have no idea.

George: You guys don't look like angels.

Norm: Have you ever seen one before?

George: No. But in the Bible, you have, like, six wings and you would be flying around.

Cliff: Here's the thing, Georgie. Human beings, with your tiny brains and underdeveloped cerebellums, no offense, don't possess the mental capacity to behold the awesome glory of God. If we showed you what we *really* look like back home, either your brain would explode or your heart would stop out of fear. And then your brain would explode. So, when we're on assignment, we have to tone it down. It's for your own good. Think about it.

Norm: Plus, it gives us a chance to try out some fun things to blend in. (*Pointing to Mohawk*) What do you think?

George: Looks ridiculous.

Norm: Yes! Thank you.

George: So, assuming I believed you – which I can't say I do – what do I call you?

Cliff: Thanks for asking. I'm Cliff and this is Norm.

Norm: NORM!

George: Cliff and Norm?

Norm/Cliff: NORM!

George: Like from the TV show "Cheers".

Norm: I told you he'd get it! Those aren't our real names, obviously, but unless you have three tongues and are proficient in speaking in Enochian, you don't stand a chance. Again, this is for your benefit.

Cliff: Think about it.

George: Right. I must be dreaming.

Cliff: Hey Georgie, I don't think you're appreciating the level of effort we went to to come up with these names. We had to go through a lot before we landed on these.

THE NAMES GAG

George: Ok. I get it. Thank you. What I don't understand, though- among many, many other things right now – why two of you?

Cliff: As you are probably well aware, being a scholarly man of the Word, there are different types of angels. I'm a Messenger angel. I bring messages.

Norm: I'm a singing angel. Guess what I do?

George: Why do I need a singing angel?

Norm: Because this is a musical.

Cliff: Don't worry, George. If we were both sent here, the Boss has His reasons. Rest assured, we have worked many assignments together and are a great team. Norm here trained me well.

George: He trained you?

Cliff: Well, he's a little older than I am.

Norm: Only by a couple hundred thousand years.

Cliff: We're practically twins! I know this is all very sudden and confusing, but we're here to help.

Norm: And we couldn't be more thrilled!

Song: George (sung by the Angels)

(Following song, scene continues)

Norm: Whattya say, George? Are you as excited as we are?

George: Yeah, sure, fine. So what happens next? I've seen "It's a Wonderful Life". Are you going to take me around and show me how terrible life would be without me?

Norm: *(after hearing "It's a Wonderful Life", he goes into a rage, running at George. Cliff holds him back)* Hold me back!

Cliff: Calm down, Norm! He didn't know!

George: Know what? What's his problem?

Cliff: You see George, that little film is quite popular down here. Up there, though? Not so much. It's not what you would call "theologically sound".

Norm: *(in little girl voice)* "Every time a bell rings an angel gets its wings".
GARBAGE!

Cliff: You'll have to excuse him. You know artists. A little emotional.

Norm: That movie has done more damage to our reputation than anything else you guys have come up with. Every assignment we've been on in the last 50 years, somebody walks behind us ringing bells. And if I hear, "Clarence, I want to live again" one more time...(*changing back to upbeat normal self*) but hey! Super excited to be here. Can't wait to work with you.

Cliff: Normally, we would lay out the ground rules now, but we trust you, Georgie and want to have a good working relationship. So, ask any question you'd like about what we'll do together.

George: Ok...do you guys grant wishes?

Norm: We're not genies.

George: Just making sure you are what you say you are. Can you bring m wife back?

Cliff: We're not God.

George: Will you go everywhere with me?

Norm: Mostly. You have bathroom privileges.

George: What are you going to make me do?

Cliff: We can't *make* you do anything. We're more prompters. We encourage things to happen, but we have zero control over you.

George: Honestly, guys, I could just use some answers to my questions, I guess.

Norm: That we *can* do.

George: Ok, go ahead.

Norm: Come on, George, you know how God works. It's almost never that easy. Don't worry. We'll help you get all the answers you need.

George: You won't just give me the answers?

Cliff: It's not so much a issue of "won't", but "can't". We don't unlimited knowledge and we aren't often privy to God's mind or working. So, we follow His leading, point you in the right direction and work through any issues with you.

Norm: We're not the substitutes, we're the help. First things first. We'd love to see your family. See what we're working with. I've heard a lot about your niece, Abby. Sparkplug!

Cliff: Come on, George. Show us around.

George: This is going to be a hard one to explain. *(Exit SR)*

Norm/Cliff: You have no idea.

(Curtain closes (Just leave full lights up curtain only closes for 30 seconds)

Scene 5

Main Stage

(Curtain opens on Main Stage. George, Cliff and Norm are CS, looking around at the house)(Full lights up)

Cliff: I didn't notice this before, George...

Norm: Probably because we were being chased with a golf club...

Cliff: ...but the layout of your house is modeled after the groundbreaking work of Gustavo Armentrout in the middle 1800's. He was a German-born Frenchman who migrated from Spain to the United States to design houses for the newly poor. I'd say this puts the construction of your house...oh, 1904.

George: 1982.

Cliff: His work sure holds up.

(Doorbell rings)

Abby: *(running across from SR to SL)* I'll get it.

Norm: There she is!

George: Ok, so, how should we handle this.

Norm: It's usually best to tell all of them at once. It's tough to explain so it's better if they hear it together.

Cliff: They'll think you're crazy, but it's ok.

Abby: *(reentering from SL, carrying a dish)* More lasagna. Preheat to 450, bake for 25.

George: *(stops her)* Oh, Abby – would you please ask everyone to come in here.

Abby: Sure. *(yelling offstage)* Everybody in the living room!! *(exits SR)*

(All enter)

All: What's going on? Everything ok?

George: *(Moves toward SR with angels as cast is seated on furniture SL)*
Please come sit down. I just wanted to have a chat with you guys about something that just happened upstairs.

Ellie: We already know, George. Dave told us.

George: What? How? *(to Dave)* Were you still up there.

Dave: For the whole conversation, yeah.

George: So you heard everything?

Dave: Yes. No wreath this year.

George: This is something different. After Dave left, I prayed and I was asking God for help. No sooner than I finish asking, it arrives.

Freddie: What did?

George: The answer to my prayer, supposedly.

Freddie: You were praying for more lasagna?

George: What? No! These two *(motioning towards Cliff and Norm)* They just came in like they owned the place. I thought we were being robbed.

Dave: We were robbed?

George: No, I just thought that. Turns out, they're just here to help.

Ellie: *(concerned)* George...what in the world are you talking about?

George: *(Pauses, realizes)* Excuse me just a minute. *(Stands up, walks past Cliff and Norm, motions for them to come over. The whole family thinks they're being motioned and start to walk over).* Oh, no, you guys sit. I just...hang on.

(Pulls Cliff and Norm far SR, whispers to them, trying not to speak directly to them) Can they see you?

Norm: Nope.

George: Why didn't you say so?!

Cliff: You didn't ask.

George: Can they hear you?

Norm: Not really. We can prompt, but that's it.

George: *(returning to family)* Sorry guys. I'm tired. I'm not thinking straight.

(Family mimes conversation with each other while George, Cliff and Norm talk on opposite side of the stage. Norm and Cliff move towards family to "prompt")

Norm: George, what's going on? A few days before Christmas and there are no decorations up. This place needs some joy, man. *(To Abby)* I bet we have something in the attic to liven this place up.

Abby: Hey Uncle George, we've been up in the attic and found all of these decorations. Can we put some up, please?

Norm: *(prompting Abby repeatedly with "Please")* Please, please, please...

Cliff: *(to George)* You know, Harvard scientists in 1987 discovered it's not mentally healthy to turn down a child's request for seasonal decorations at Christmas. It increases stress and the potential for ulcers. Think about it. Is that what you want?

George: No, that's not what I want.

Abby: Why not?

Norm: *(prompting)* Don't be a Grinch!

Abby: Don't be a Grinch!

Cliff: Look at that face. How can you say “no” to that face?

George: I can’t.

Ellie: You can’t, but we can. We’ll do all the work!

George: *(realizing what’s going on)* Yes, of course. Go.

Ellie: That was easy. *(exits with Abby and Freddie)*

Norm: Photo albums, too!

Freddie: We can bring down some of those photo albums, too!

Dave: Pop, you feeling ok?

George: I have no clue what’s going on.

Cliff: *(prompting Dave)* He’s not busy right now, DAD.

Dave: You want to come see Eve? I swear she’s been smiling already.

George: Now’s not a good time, son. Later.

(Dave exits)

George: What are you guys doing?

Cliff: We’re helping out, George.

Norm: It’s a time for celebration!

George: My wife just died!

Norm: Yeah, but you knew where she is and you know that this is not the end.

Cliff: Grieve, mourn, absolutely. That’s ok. But you have to allow for joy to start coming back in here. Laugh a little. Go kiss your granddaughter!

(Ellie, Freddie and Abby reenter, carrying boxes)

Abby: Look at all the stuff we found, Uncle George!

George: (*giving a passing glance*) Hmm. Lots of good memories.

Ellie: Can we put them up?

George: Knock yourself out.

Norm: (*prompting*) Oh, look, “A Christmas Carol”. Nobody narrates like George.

Abby: So, Uncle George, I’m thinking...you should probably narrate for Christmas Eve Worship.

George: You do, huh?

Cliff: (*prompting*) It *is* tradition.

Abby: It *is* tradition.

Norm: I love that kid.

Abby: Just like hot chocolate and “It’s a Wonderful Life”.

Norm: (*being held back by Cliff*) Let me at her!

Cliff: Calm. Caaaaaallm.

Norm: Thanks. I love that kid.

Cliff: (*prompting*) You know that’s what your wife would want.

Abby: You know that’s what Aunt Jackie would want.

George: You’re gonna play that card, huh?

Norm/Cliff: (*prompting “please” repeatedly again*) Please, please, please.

Abby: Please, please...

George: Ok, ok...all of you just stop. I’ll do it.

Abby: (*looks confused, then cheers*) Yay!

Ellie: I’ll let Pastor Sam know. Freddie, since you’re here and I know how you love to sing, why don’t you join us? Rehearsal is tomorrow.

Freddie: That sounds great, Thanks!! Look at what I found going through all these old boxes.....George's 1970's Christmas sweater (giggles) I had no clue you liked snowmen and jingle bells (walks to George and holds in front of him --giggles more – along with cast) and wow – even glitter !! (returning to box). I also found David's first Christmas costume – the one Jackie made for him. I took her months to sew –she was so proud of it. Remember, George?

George: I do. She made me take 30 pictures of it. And that was before digital cameras. The pictures cost four times as much as the outfit did.

Freddie: All of those pictures are right here, too.

Dave: The things we do for our kids. (*digging through a box, grabbing a stack of letters*) Hey look at what I found – letters you sent to mom when you were off at college. She kept all of them, looks like. (*hands stack to George*)

George; She sure did. I'm going to go to the study for awhile. Please make sure this all gets put away.

Dave: Yeah. We're gonna go through all of this stuff first.

George: Dave, just make sure it goes back in the attic.

(**George** walks off SR as cast huddles around pictures, laughing and smiling)

Curtain closes. (*Lights off – work lights on*)

Scene 6

Attic

*(Lights up as Ellie and Dave enter carrying boxes)***Ellie:** Lots of good memories in these boxes.**Dave:** I forgot about most of the stuff in here.**Ellie:** Aunt Freddie really found some healing going through this stuff. Maybe you should try going through it all, when you're up for it.**Dave:** I just might. Might be good to find my embarrassing photos before Leah does. I don't need those ending up on Facebook.**Ellie:** Things have been so crazy, I've been meaning to ask – how are you adjusting to fatherhood? How's the baby?**Dave:** Fatherhood...is weird. I'm not sure how it should feel. Alone, I guess. I'll help with the baby as much as I can, but Leah's doing such a great job...I'm just trying to figure out where I fit. I think just...everything is so out of place right now. Mom was already documenting everything. She already had two scrapbooks for Eve. Now, the baby's here, but she isn't. It doesn't seem right.**Ellie:** No, it doesn't.**Dave:** But Eve? She's perfect. She's like this tiny baby person. All wrinkled and weird and perfect. Mom would've loved her.**Ellie:** Oh, she did. And she loved you, too.**Dave:** You know what's weird? Pop hasn't held even Eve yet. At first I thought I was imagining things, but then Leah noticed. And she so worn out, she didn't even realize she was about to wear her nightgown to Eve's check-up. I've tried to get Pop to hold her. But it's always "later".**Ellie:** I've noticed that, too. I think he's just grieving right now.**Dave:** Yeah, he is. But it's more than that. I think he blames Eve for mom's death.**Ellie:** No.

Dave: Why not? She was on the way to the hospital to be there for the birth. It's only natural to want to blame something.

Ellie: Do you?

Dave: The thought crossed my mind at first. But I realized how irrational that is. Especially when I see how perfect and innocent she is. I don't know why it happened, but it's not Eve's fault. I'm just praying God helps him realize that, too.

Ellie: He will.

Song: **Speak to Me** sung by Dave

(Lights down at song end)

Scene 7

Church

(**George and Cliff** are walking down center aisle, mid-conversation. *Curtain is closed.*)

Cliff: ...and as you walk, you're not only employing over 200 muscles just to take one step, but 75% of the chemical energy used in muscle contraction is turned into heat. Add that to your internal metabolic reactions and the 90% wool/10% polyester coat you're wearing, and you got yourself a personal heat source the likes of which your car heater cannot compete. Think about it.

George: Really? That's what you're going with? Walking, in 20 degree weather, is warmer than riding in a car?

Cliff: That, and it's tough to explain angels riding in cars.

Norm: (*running from back of house, through George and Cliff*) Plus, it builds anticipation for the big moment when you walk through the doors of the church and hear the beautiful songs of praise and celebration rising up from the people of God, filling the room and lifting you to Heaven!

George: Wow. Someone's excited.

Norm: You have no idea! (*All onstage, in front of curtain*)

Cliff: See Georgie, you humans aren't what we call "singers". Sure, you might sing for fifteen minutes on Sunday morning, but in Heaven, that's mostly all we do. Norm – a singer – really misses it when we're on assignment. So, any chance he can get to spend it with "his people" is pretty special.

Norm: Especially at Christmas. Singing with a choir brings back so many memories.

George: Like what?

Norm: Like, the night Jesus was born.

George: You were there?

Norm: *(Choir begins to sing behind curtain, not into it at all)* Duh. And that's what I love about it so much! There is nothing sweeter than the voices of saints and angels lifting their worship to God, **(Full lights up)** *(Curtain opens, revealing Choir singing, appearing very bored, not participating, etc.)* humbly using their beautiful instruments to communicate their love, Heaven and Earth coming together to make joyous melodies, remembering the night Jesus was born...*(looks around, observes the Choir)* WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?! **(Cliff mimes calming Norm)**

George: Welcome to choir.

Ellie: *(has been leading the choir)* Well, ok. We'll come back to that. Britta, Annie...I noticed you weren't singing.

Britta: Yeah, we don't really like that song. It's kinda boring.

Norm: BORING? **(Cliff continues to pull his attention away)**

Annie: We're just waiting to audition for the solos. I think this is my year.

Rick James: Get in line.

Al Green: I call dibs on "O Holy Night".

Choir: Hey, what about me, blah, blah, blah, etc.

Norm: Let me at them!

Ellie: Ok, why don't we take a break? We'll begin auditioning for the solos in a few minutes. Oh, don't forget – our annual Choir party at George's house is still on. Meet up on Saturday before our Christmas Eve Worship. Ok, everyone. Take five.

Dean: *(moving from choir position to George)* Hey, George. It's so good to see you. Will you be home this evening?

George: Yeah, I'm planning on it.

Dean: Great. Shirley and I would like to swing by with some dinner for you all. She's made her famous lasagna. *(walks off)*

George: *(sarcastic)* Can't wait.

Cliff: Hey, George, a word? Norm and I have been quietly observing this little musical collective and we can't help but notice that their hearts really aren't into this.

Norm: *(increases in energy/speed)* What's going on, George? Because it sure seems like these people are having a tough time getting excited over the fact that the Creator of the world decided to give up his throne in glory to enter into their world to save them from their sins by dying on a cross to they wouldn't have to and then three days later this God-man was walking around because he wasn't dead anymore. I feel like that's kind of a big deal and they should be making some noise about that!

George: You wouldn't be wrong. But here's what you don't know. Our Christmas Eve service is pretty popular around here. We have a good reputation for it and everyone really wants a solo for the big night. To them, it's their time to shine in front of everyone. They all want the spotlight.

Norm: At Christmas, somebody already has it.

George: I know. I'm sorry, guys. I know it's not what you were hoping for, but it is what it is. What are you going to do? *(turns back to the Choir)*

Ellie: *(calling everyone together)* Ok, everyone. If you would like to audition for a solo, please line up on this side of the room. *(Most Choir members move)*

(Choir members begin shoving, trying to get position)

CM#1: Me first!

CM2: Please, nobody wants to hear you sing.

CM3: I have family coming in this year!

CM4: You sang a solo last year – MOVE!

Choir: *(all arguing)*

Cliff: *(pulls Norm aside)* We gotta do something.

Norm: I'm way ahead of you. Remember the _____ job?

Cliff: You think we can pull that off?

Norm: *(Looks around)* They have a “Soul Brother”, this will work. You take care of George, I’ll handle the rest.

Cliff: How?

Norm: I’ll get the Penguin to help me.

Cliff: *(walks to George)* Sorry, George.

George: What?

Cliff: *(Prompting George)* ENOUGH!

George: ENOUGH! *(Choir freezes, surprised at George’s outburst. He turns back to Cliff, realizing he was prompted)* I thought you weren’t going to do that.

Cliff: Absolutely had to.

George: *(looks at Choir staring at him. To Cliff, whispering out of the side of his mouth)* Now what?

Cliff: Talk to them. We’ll help you.

Ellie: What’s wrong, George?

Cliff: *(helping George)* All of it.

George: This. All of this.

Cliff: What are we doing here?

George: What are we doing here?

CM5: What do you mean?

George: Look! Fighting over who gets to be the *big star* at the celebration of Jesus’ birth? Isn’t that kind of ridiculous? Have we totally forgotten what it is we’re celebrating here? I mean, it’s not about us! It’s NEVER about us!

Norm: Good work, Cliffy.

Cliff: I’m not doing anything!

Norm: Go, George!

George: We're not a big deal. Maybe we should just be thankful that He's given us the talent, the opportunity and the reason to sing His praise.

Cliff: And to remind everyone of the joy of Christmas.

George: And to remind everyone of the joy of Christmas.

CM6: How do we do that?

Cliff: Tell the story.

George: Just tell the story.

(Norm has walked off of the stage to the Conductor –The “Penguin” – and has prompted him to give the downbeat to the Jazz Organ)

Song: A King Is Coming To Town

(Song begins as Cliff is miming whispering Verse 1 lyrics to George, who repeats them. As he does this, Norm makes his way to “Soul Brother” and prompts him to enthusiastically sing the 2nd half of the 1st verse. Choir members are prompted by Cliff and Norm to join in throughout the song. Song picks up tempo throughout 1st chorus. In full by 2nd verse. As the song builds, the Choir is energetic/joyful. Norm and Cliff sing and dance around)

(Curtain closes at end of song) (Lights out – work lights on)

Shepherds were out on a hillside
 Watching their flocks by night
 when an angel of the Lord stood before them
 and their hearts were all filled with fright
 But the angel said Don't be afraid of me
 there's a reason that God sent me down
 God tidings of joy
 I bring to you
 A King is coming to town

Scene 8

Study

(Lights up on Study. George is behind desk. Cliff is standing/sitting near shelving. Norm is sitting on the ground)

Norm: *(singing)* A king is coming to town....a king is coming to town...

Cliff: *(noticing a copy of "It's a Wonderful Life" on the shelf)* Hey, Normy – take a look. "It's a Wonderful Life". Ol' Georgie is keeping that candle burning.

Norm: THE LORD IS TESTING ME!!

Cliff: Keep your cool. Interesting little tidbit about "It's A Wonderful Life". Not only is it the most popular Christmas movie of all time...

Norm: GARBAGE!

Cliff: It's also the first American made movie to introduce the concept of the Deus Ex Machina.

Norm: What's that?

Cliff: It's an old latin phrase meaning, "God from a machine". It was used by writers to make something supernatural happen that wouldn't have happened otherwise. It was their way of resolving a problem that they couldn't resolve through good storytelling. So, like in "It's a Wonderful Life", Capra uses the angel to accomplish something that they couldn't do naturally.

Norm: So the angel was just a storytelling gimmick?

Cliff: Indeed.

Norm: That's lazy writing. The writers should be ashamed of themselves.

George: Why are you two still here?

Cliff: Here in this room or in general?

George: The room, my house, my life...you name it.

Cliff: Before we can move on, we have to finish this job.

George: Well, when are you going to do something?

Norm: We had a roomful of Baptists swaying together. I consider that a miracle. George, we're waiting on you.

George: Me? Waiting on me? I'm waiting on you two.

Cliff: Why? We can't make you do anything. We go with you. And until you're ready to stop avoiding and deal with your issues, we're going to sit around with you.

George: I'm not avoiding anything.

Norm: Oh yeah? You keep coming to your study to do what? Shuffle papers? What's on the paper, Cliffy?

Cliff: Nada.

Norm: The defense rests.

George: What do you want me to say?

Norm: We just want you to express what's really going on in your head – what you're feeling. We can't tell you what that is. We can't convince you of what it is. You have to be the one to discover it. You cannot heal hurt you don't acknowledge.

Cliff: And we don't want to push you. You need to be ready for it because it's going to be messy. You're just not ready yet...and that's ok.

George: Ok. You want it? Here goes. My wife has died and everyone is walking around like nothing happened. Singing, celebrating...I understand it's Christmas, but does it have to be in my face? I just want to grieve for awhile. And you two are supposed to be helping me, but instead you're helping everyone else. It's like you're trying to make me angry.

Norm: We love you, George. We're not trying to make you angry. But, you do need to get to a place of tension so you'll deal with your hurt. If others find healing in the process, maybe that's His plan.

George: But I just told you what my problem is!

Cliff: It's a good start, George, but it's not the issue. When you asked God for help, this wasn't what you needed help with. You were struggling with something else. Listen, why don't we give you the night off. You're frustrated and could use a break.

Norm: We'll catch up with you in the morning. Goodnight, buddy.

(Norm and Cliff *exit*. *Lights down* on George).

Scene 9**Main Stage**

(Lights up on Main Stage/Curtain opens. Freddie is sitting on SL furniture, facing SR, with a photo album on her lap and albums around her – many other items as well. Norm and Cliff are standing towards SR)

Cliff: Where's George?

Norm: Bathroom break.

Freddie: Will he be back soon?

(Norm and Cliff looked totally stunned, look back at Freddie, who is now looking up and towards their direction)

Norm: What?

Freddie: I just asked a question.

Cliff: Ma'am, can you hear us?

Freddie: Of course.

Norm: She's looking right at us.

Cliff: This has never happened before.

Freddie: I understand. I think I see what's going on here.

Norm: You do?

Freddie: May I speak to your boss please?

Cliff: Anytime, lady. Anytime.

Freddie: Well, then, I will just call back later. Thank you. *(removes Bluetooth)*

Cliff: Ah, Bluetooth *(holds Norm back)*.

Norm: Let me at her! I hate those things! *(calm)* It's ok, I'm fine.

George: *(enters)*

Cliff/Norm: Good morning, George.

George: Good morning.

Freddie: Oh, hey George.

George: Good morning to you, too, Freddie. What is all of this doing out?

Freddie: Just going through more of Jackie's things. I really appreciate you letting me go through this.

Cliff: *(Prompting)* Show him this one.

Freddie: Look! I found the wedding album. Look at all of us back then. Ugh...maybe we shouldn't.

George: That's ok, thanks.

Norm: *(prompting)* And this one.

Freddie: And here's the scrapbook from when Jackie was pregnant with Dave and all of the hospital pictures. God has really been good to you guys. Take a look.

George: No, I'm fine right now. Thank you.

Freddie: Come on, for old time's sake.

George: I said no, Freddie. I've asked that these be taken back to the attic. I don't want them out here.

Freddie: As soon as I finish, I'll get them out of here. It'll be all cleaned up for the get-together tomorrow.

George: Freddie, I want them out of here now.

Freddie: Woah, what's going on, George?

George: I'm tired of seeing how richly blessed I am. My wife is dead.

Freddie: And my sister is dead. Do you think you're the only one hurting here? My heart breaks for you, George, it really does. I know how much she loved you and you loved her. I hurt for you. But did you know that the last time I

spoke to Jackie on the phone, just a few days before the accident, we had a fight. The last thing she heard from me was a phone being slammed down. I have to live with that. Being here, with you and the family, going through her things has been my comfort - being reassured of all the life we had together and how much she loved all of us. I'll clean this up. *(pause)* You're not the only one in pain, George.

George: *(turns to exit, walks past Norm and Cliff)* Don't.

Song: **All is Calm** (sung by Freddie)

(Curtain Closes) **(Blackout -- work lights up)**

Scene 10

Study

(George is seated at desk, clearly frustrated. Ellie enters. Cliff and Norm are CS, in front of curtain, watching)(lights up on study)

Ellie: Hey, George. I just wanted to let you know that the choir members have started arriving. Everyone has been asking about you.

George: Thanks. I'll be right down.

Ellie: I've noticed you've been spending a lot of time in here lately. We haven't seen you since yesterday afternoon. Freddie told me about your fight. Want to talk about it?

George: Not really, no.

Ellie: Ok. How are you and God doing these days?

George: What? Why are you asking about that?

Ellie: I'm just concerned for you, George. I see you hurting...you're not acting like yourself...I just want to believe that everything will be ok. That's all.

George: God and I are fine. Anything else?

Ellie: *(pauses, as if not going to bring it up)* Yes. Yes there is, actually. What is going on with you and Dave? All he wants is for you to spend some time with Eve.

George: I've had a lot of things going on. What do you expect?

Ellie: What things?

George: I'm...just not ready.

Ellie: It's your granddaughter! You can't hold her? And Dave – your *son*. He's going through a lot of huge changes and experiences right now and you've

left him out there all alone. He doesn't feel like you even love him – or his family – anymore. And he thinks you blame Eve for Jackie's death.

George: Maybe I do.

Ellie: You don't mean that.

George: Why not? Jackie was on her way to the hospital to be with her family. If Eve hadn't been born then, Jackie would be here right now.

Ellie: George!

George: Excuse me, I have to go see the guests. (*begins to exit, walks past the angels, as he passes by*) Is that better?

Cliff: It would be if it were true.

Norm: But it isn't.

(*George exits, visibly angry*)

(*Lights dim on angels*)

Song: Bring His Heart Back Home (Reprise) (sung by Ellie)

(*Lights out on Study at end of song*)

Scene 11

Living Room – Main Stage

(Curtain opens on living room as Cast and Choir are miming conversation. Cliff and Norm are standing side-by-side towards SL. George enters SR and Choir members applaud, engage with him, shake hands, etc. George is trying to put on a good face, but clearly uncomfortable)

CM1: Buddy, we're so thankful for you. Seeing you faithful in a time like this, fills all of us with joy. Love you, brother!

CM2: Thanks for all you did for us, George. We're so excited for tonight. I know Jackie will be singing with us.

CM3: *(carrying a dish)* IF know when tragedy strikes, you forget to take care of yourself. We brought you some lasagna. Preheat to 500 and bake for 45 minutes! I'll put this in the kitchen. *(exits)*

George: That will taste terrible.

Sam: *(getting attention, coming to CS)* Hey everybody. Thank you for coming. Everyone seems so excited this year and we can't wait to worship our Lord together. I want to say "Thank you" to George and his family for hosting us tonight. They've had some really tough weeks, but God is faithful and we are all encouraged by your family, George. This get together was started many years ago by Jackie Grogan and has been a Christmas Eve tradition ever since. It's so great to be here where we can still see her influences. All of us singing together, her famous sugar cookies, the decorations – especially the old advent wreath *(Cliff and Norm separate and reveal the wreath behind them)* George, you are a blessed man.

George: *(moving to wreath)* Who put this wreath out? *(more emphatically)* Who put this wreath out?!

Abby: I did, Uncle George. I'm sorry.

Cliff: Go easy on her.

Norm: We got her help on this one.

George: *(staring at the angels, mad. Then, addressing the crowd)* Out. Everyone, please just get out. Head on to church. But, please just go now.

*(All exit except for **George, Cliff and Norm**. Once they are alone...)*

Scene 12

Living Room

*(Only George, Cliff and Norm remain in the living room)***George:** I want you two gone, now. Stop helping. Leave me alone.**Norm:** We can see you're upset...**George:** I'm not upset. I'm angry!**Norm:** Finally! You're being honest.**Cliff:** We're sorry, Georgie, but we had to let you get here.**Norm:** And now...you're ready.**George:** Ready for what? Just go!**Cliff:** Who are you mad at?**George:** You two!**Norm:** No, you're not. That's not why you asked God for help.**Cliff:** You're tried being mad at everyone else in your family, but you've gotten no resolution. So, *who* are you mad at?**George:** I don't know what you're talking about it.**Norm:** Just say it. Say what's *really* bothering you.**George:** *(lets loose)* Why did God let this happen?! He could've stopped this from happening, but He didn't. All our lives, we have served and loved God...and then He allows this?! She loved her family and was on the way to see her first grandchild. Why couldn't He have let her see her grandchild, just once?**Cliff:** Would that have made it better for you?

George: It's not fair!

Cliff/Norm: Yes, bingo, good, etc.

George: Why is this good?

Norm: Because, as painful as it is, you need to be here so you can get healing.

George: Ok, so what's the answer then? Why did God let this happen?

Norm: We don't know.

George: What?! How can you not know?

Cliff: We're not God. We don't have His knowledge.

George: But that's what you're here for. I finally asked the right question.

Cliff: Yes, but remember, we said we're here to help you find the answer you *need*. God has been speaking directly to you this whole time. The answer has been right in front of you. You just couldn't hear it until you acknowledged what your real hurt was.

George: What's the answer, then? What's been right in front of me this whole time?

Norm: (*points to the wreath*)

George: The wreath. Great. And here I thought I was dealing with deep issues. Maybe we have some extra Christmas lights upstairs and we can end world hunger.

Norm: Do you think it's a coincidence *this* wreath, among all of the other stuff in that attic, was what your family embraced this year? Everyone's world was turned upside down this year. All of you – lost, hurting – and God stooped down to speak to you.

George: (*calming*) I don't understand.

Cliff: *(at the wreath, lights the candles as George identifies them)* So, this wreath symbolizes Christ being born into your world. And we've got some candles here. Tell me, Georgie...your niece, Abby. What was Abby looking for in all of this mess?

George: *(Starting to realize)* Joy.

Cliff: Your sister, Ellie?

George: Hope.

Cliff: Freddie?

George: Peace.

Cliff: And Dave. What is Dave needing to know Christ has brought to him?

George: Love.

Norm: But George, there's a fifth candle. The Christ candle. That one's for you. It represents not just the gifts of joy, hope, peace and love, but the One who brings it to you (**Cliff lights it**). Remember the story of Job? God allows everything Job has to be taken from him. Everything. And Job and his buddies spend some 30 chapters or so trying to figure out why it all happened. Finally, God shows up – and let me tell you, it was incredible to see – and God starts reminding Job of how big and awesome He is. And Job has no answer for God – he is simply overwhelmed by the presence and the glory of God that he forgets the questions he was even asking. George, God will probably not ever answer your questions, but...what He will do is show Himself to you. He will give you His presence – and that is better than any answer you could ever want.

Cliff: At Christmas, we're reminded that God Himself came into this world so that you would know in these times of darkness, of pain, grief and tragedy...that God is not distant. He is not far from you. He is here. With you. Right now. So, even in death, we can see life.

Norm: And in times of grief, there can still be joy.

George: *(to himself, and getting louder)* Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Jesus. *(to angels)* Thank you. Thank you for helping me see more clearly.

Cliff: Hey, we're just the messengers.

Norm: Welcome back, buddy. *(Nods towards Dave who has entered from SR, carrying Eve)*

Dave: Leah and I have decided that after tonight's worship, we're going to drive through the night to her parents for Christmas. They haven't met Eve yet and, well, maybe we just all need some space right now.

George: David, please don't. I don't need space from any of you. I've realized that everything I'm going through is my own issue that I've had to work out with God – no one else. And we're better. I am so sorry that I haven't been the father to you – or grandfather to Eve – that I should. That changes right now. Please, stay. Let me get to know my grandbaby.

Dave: Are you sure?

George: Absolutely. May I? *(motioning to hold Eve. Talking sweetly to her)* Hello, babygirl. It's nice to meet you. Oh, I think you need a little change.

Dave: Oh, I can...

George: *(interrupting)* No...I got it. I can handle this while you finish getting ready.

Dave: Ok. It'll be just a few more minutes.

George: *(starts to exit)* Oh, Dave? Why don't you bring the wreath? *(exits)*

Song: Everything Changed

(During song, Dave grabs wreath and moves out front as curtain closes behind him. (Work lights on stage) Dave sings Verse 1 and then exits SR. Ellie enters Attic, grabbing some candles. George enters Study, miming getting ready. Ellie sings Verse 2, then exits. As Verse 3 starts, George walks off SS#1 and walks in front of curtain. He sings the start of Verse 3 while moving to CS. As the music

*builds to climax following 2nd phrase, the curtain opens to reveal Church scene. Choir and Cast are all onstage, joining the singing of “Gloria, our God is with us”. **Norm and Cliff** are on George’s sides, singing, hands raised)*

Scene 13

Church

Song: Everything Changed

(As George ends the third verse, the Curtain opens revealing Church scene with manger/Nativity. Choir and Cast join the final choruses of the song. At song end, George moves into “Narrator” role and addresses the audience as the Church congregation)(Stained Glass window light on)

George: During Christmas, many of you have special traditions you observe as a family. My family is the same way. Sometimes, though, we don’t fully understand the significance of these traditions until something gives us a new perspective on them. Each year, my wife Jackie would gather the family together every Christmas Eve and we would read the account of Jesus’ birth and the prophecies about it: how a virgin would give birth to a son and he would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace – and Emmanuel. Emmanuel means “God with us”. You know, I’ve heard that many times, but this year it has new meaning for me and my family.

Most of you know, this year my family suffered a terrible tragedy. But we’re not alone in this – all of us, at some point in our lives, have or will experience times of sorrow, hurt and suffering. Every one of us. And we ask the inevitable questions of “Why?”, “Why did God let this happen?”, “Why didn’t He stop it?”, “How could a loving God let this happen?” And we wonder: where is God? At Christmas, we look at the manger and we hear God say to us, “I’m right here with you. You are not alone and I will not leave you.” Even in our darkest times, in our worst pain, God gives Himself – His presence – to us. Our questions may not ever be answered – and that’s ok. We don’t get God’s knowledge...we get God. And *that’s* what we need. So, tonight, we worship Emmanuel – God with us. Our God has come to us.

Song: God Has Come

(Following song, George continues to narrate and moves to the advent wreath, lighting each candle at the appropriate time)

George: We light these candles at Christmas to remind us that because Christ has come, we now can experience the deep love of God (*lights candle*), joy in our sorrow (*lights candle*), peace in our trials (*lights candle*), hope in our tragedy (*lights candle*) and the presence of God in our lives (*lights center candle. He looks up and sees Cliff and Norm waving ‘goodbye’, about to exit. George speaks to the congregation*) Because of this, let’s each go to God in prayer and quietly thank Him for what He’s done for us. Let’s bow together. (*turns to stop Cliff and Norm. Maintains stage whisper*) Guys, wait – where are you going? You’re not leaving, are you?

Cliff: Well, you see Georgie...

Norm: (*interrupting*) Nope. We don’t have time.

Cliff: Right. Our work is done. We're going home.

Norm: Each Christmas Eve, God lets us reenact the first Christmas night. We can't miss it! It's amazing.

Cliff: You're gonna love it.

George: I'm sure I will. Guys, thank you.

Cliff: It was a real pleasure, Georgie. (*shakes hand*)

Norm: You're gonna be ok, buddy.

George: (*thinking about it*) I am. (**George and Norm hug**)

Norm: You better get back. Baptists start peeking after 20 seconds.

George: Right. (*turns to walk away*)

Cliff: (*begins to walk off*) Take care, Georgie. We'll see you soon.

George: (*turns back*) Wait...what?!

Cliff: I'm just messing with you. We don't know.

Norm: We're not God!

Cliff: Think about it.

(**Cliff and Norm exit**)

George: (*moving back to Centerstage. Reads from Bible*) "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned". "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it". We come tonight with heavy hearts...with hurts and burden. But, our God has come into our darkness. He has come into our world and He has overcome it. He is here with us. And because Christ came, because He is here, we have peace. We have hope. This is not the end. Thank You, Jesus.

Song: Look To The Light

(*Curtain closes at end of song*) (*Blackout – stage working lights on*)

Scene 14 – Epilogue

Study

(Lights up on George, asleep in his chair. The story is jumping back to Scene 4, revealing that this had been a dream. Dave enters. During the scene, George should appear confused initially)

Dave: Pop? *(waking George)* Pop?

George: *(waking, disoriented)* Hey son. Is everything ok?

Dave: What? No. I just came to tell you that we're leaving. I wanted to ask...would you let us have the wreath? I know it is yours and mom's, but it's important to me, too. But seeing as how you're not going to be using it, could we have it?

George: What? Of course we're going to put it up.

Dave: *(Confused)* Ok, because two hours ago, when I left you up here, it was hands-off.

George: *(starts to realize he was dreaming. Looks at his watch, moves paper to look at calendar, then stands, picks up DVD of "It's a Wonderful Life" and mutters to himself)* I was dreaming. It was a dream. *(puts DVD back. To Dave)* Oh, son...a lot has happened in two hours. Right after you left, I prayed and asked God to speak. And He did. Boy, did he ever. And in the *weirdest* way.

Dave: *(still unhappy)* Well, I'm happy for you. Now, about the wreath?

George: No, Dave, you don't understand. God *spoke* to me. He showed Himself to me. And He helped me see how wrong I've been towards you – all of you - since mom's death. I am so sorry. Son, I love you so much. And things are going to be ok. We're all going to be ok.

Dave: *(taken off guard)* Wow. When God speaks, He *speaks*.

George: I'll tell you all about it. We've got a lot to talk about. Question. When you dream, do you ever dream in musicals?

Dave: Never. That would be awful.

George: You have no idea. I need to go talk to your aunts, too – and kiss that sweet grandbaby of mine. Here, (*hands Dave the wreath*) we're putting this up right now. We're putting it all up. Every decoration in the attic your mom has stored away.

Dave: So...full-on Grogan Family Christmas?

George: Full-on Grogan Family Christmas.

Dave: Thank You, Lord. So, what do you say? Time for some hot chocolate and "It's A Wonderful Life"?

George: (*pauses, looks at DVD*) You know what? Maybe some traditions *can* change. How about "A Charlie Brown Christmas"?

(Both exit. As music swells, spotlight focuses in on "It's A Wonderful Life" DVD. Just before the cut-off, the DVD falls off the shelf. Blackout)