

Christmas Corral

Scene 1: Town Scene Opening; Friday, Dec. 12, 2000

(Curtain Opens; City folk are moving onto stage, some decorating stores, street, etc.)

Edna: *(as she approaches Earl coming from other direction, carrying a bag of feed)*
Howdy, Earl! That's a lot of feed. Is that for your cattle or for that 200-pound football player you've got at home?

Earl: I tell you what, Edna, Earl Jr. could eat this much for breakfast, then top it off with a side of beef. If he doesn't git that scholarship to A&M next year, we'll hafta rent him out as a John Deer tractor. *(They exit)*

Miss Smoot *(school teacher):* Good evening, George.

George: *(working hard, not looking up)* It is if you say so, Miss Smoot.

Miss Smoot: Now what kind of attitude is that, George Williams! *(gently whacking him on the head with her cane)*. Look at you...a healthy body, honest job, a good family. You need to appreciate what God has given you...especially at this time of year! *(smiling as she walks away)* Merry Christmas, George.

George: *(rubbing his head)* Merry Christmas, Miss Smoot...and thanks! *(back to work)*

1. It's A Time For Singing

(During the last part of the song, "Charlie's Angels" noticed Charlie coming on stage. They fall over themselves trying to get to him, offering cookies, holding mistletoe, etc.; They continue in pantomime as Gary & Gail speak)

Gary: *(singing)* I'm dreamin' of a quiet Christmas...

Gail: *(interrupting)* It's not "a quiet" Christmas, it's "a white" Christmas

Gary: What?

Gail: *(louder)* It's not quiet Christmas, it's white Christmas. Besides, it never snows in West Texas.

Gary: I know that...and I meant to say quiet Christmas. With this new hearing aid, I can turn it down and have peace and quiet any time I want.

Gail: It's supposed to make you hear better.

Gary: What?

Gail: *(louder)* Hear better!

Gary: I hear fine. Anyway, why would I dream about a white Christmas? It never snows in West Texas!

(they move on; “Charlie’s Angels rush to over Charlie)

Betty Sue: Charlie, would you please sit by me on the hayride! *(The other two begin to plead as well)*

Charlie: Now, hold on. I’m sure there are a lot of fellers who would like to sit with you ladies. *(They look at each other in bewilderment)* Besides, Jimmie Jo and I were planning to head on back to the ranch.

Jimmie Jo: *(laughing)* I can’t think of a thing that couldn’t wait until you got back from the hayride. Why don’t you go.

(The ladies let out a shriek and drag Charlie off stage right; They reappear, still dragging him, after the wagon is pulled onto stage. They board and fight for a spot next to him)

2. Sleigh Ride Medley *(during the song, the wagon is pulled on stag and people board. The wagon “departs” on the last notes of the song.)*

(Curtain closes)

Scene 2: Corral

(Lights up on side stage as JJ and Charlie enter.)

Charlie: Town sure does look good, all done up nice for Christmas. Kinda reminds me of the old days with Billy.

Jimmie Jo: Sure do. I reckon Christmas will be a might different without him. Least this time around he’s in better company.

Charlie: I can’t imagine a sweeter thing then singing, “Joy to the World”, alongside a couple of angels.

JJ: Amen to that. *(teasing)* Speaking of something sweet....

Charlie: Now, don’t go and get all started in on that again.

JJ: Looked to me like a certain ranch-hand’s catching the eye of a few of the ladies in town.

Charlie: Well, if I'm catching their eye, I wish the good Lord would show me how to toss it back.

JJ: Now, Charlie... Betty Sue and Suzy Ann and Mary Lou are all quite attractive.

Charlie: Maybe. I just got trouble keeping up with their names is all.

JJ: You're awful. You know the good Lord has blessed you being single....

Charlie: *(interrupting, feigning prayer)* "Oh Lord, continue to bless your single servant". *(pause)*. You're right Jimmie. Almighty God has blessed us both quite a lot. I feel especially blest to have a sister who is so concerned about hunting me down a wife.

Annie enters with Dusty behind her. Annie is bubbly, Dusty is closed off.

Annie: Hey J.J., hey Charlie! How was town?

J.J.: Beautiful as ever, Annie.

Charlie: Howdy, Dusty

Dusty: Evenin' *(tips hat and begins to work around the corral and in front of the stage, tying bundles of hay, raking, etc.)*.

Annie: Charlie, I went out to the pen to take Red for a ride and I couldn't find him. You know where he might've run off to?

(J.J. and Charlie look nervously at each other. Dusty looks up from his work)

Charlie: Well Annie, things have been tight around the ranch since Uncle Bill passed. Jimmie Jo and I are trying to keep the ranch up and running until we can get some solid ground underneath us again.

J.J.: I'm sorry, Annie, we had to sell Red to help with some payments around here. We know how much he meant to you...

(Dusty resumes work, disgusted)

Annie: Just don't seem right. I've known Red since he was a colt.

Charlie: Annie, it's been a real blessing watching you grow up with these animals. You got a real good heart and God's gonna use you around here just as He has been doing all these years.

Annie: Thanks Charlie. It'll just take some getting used to, I reckon.

Charlie: Well, don't you worry about being lonely. We've got some good news, too!

J.J.: That's right! Guess who's getting into town tomorrow?

Annie: Who?

J.J.: Your cousin, Kelly!

Dusty: Well, it's about time.

Annie: Kelly? Well, I'll be... I haven't seen her since she left the ranch to go to college. That's been over 4 years now. It's a shame she couldn't make it to Uncle Bill's funeral.

Charlie: But she's graduated now and I'm sure she can't wait to get back.

Dusty: (*joining the group*) You'd think that a funeral for one of your only living kin would be enough to get you back here. I don't know why she's even bothering to come back now. (*exits*)

Annie: Why didn't she come to the funeral?

J.J.: After her folks died, I think Kelly just might've been a little too weary of death to deal with Uncle Bill passing.

Charlie: I reckon the reason Uncle Bill left the ranch to Kelly in his will was to get her back here. Back home with her family and friends. Why don't you run on and help Dusty round up the cattle. Jimmie Jo and I will finish cleaning this place up.

Annie: Alright, goodnight (*exits*)

J.J.: 'Night Annie. (to Charlie) She took that well. I'm hopin' Kelly's getting here might liven this place up a little. Will Dusty be ok?

Charlie: I'm sure Dusty will be fine. It's just hard seeing something you've been a part of your whole life in a heap of trouble. We just gotta remember that God's gotta plan, even when we can't see it.

J.J.: He's never let us down so far.

3. My Whole World (*duet*)

(Curtain closes)

Scene 3: Ranch House, Great Room, Dec. 13

Curtains open as J.J., Charlie, Dusty and Ranch Hands are milling around the stage. Dusty is towards the back of the group, Charlie is standing SR looking offstage, J.J. is center stage with RH scattered. One RH holds a "Welkome Celly" sign.

J.J.: Gather 'round ya'll. Kelly should be getting here any minute now.

RH1: It's been so long, you reckon Kelly will look about the same?

RH2: College don't change somebody that much.

RH1: How would you know?

RH2: T.V.

Charlie: *(suddenly)* Ok folks, gather round... looks like Kelly hitched a ride in a pickup! Let's make her feel right at home.

(Charlie begins to conduct the cast singing, "We Wish You a Merry Christmas")

Cast: We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas

(enter Possum carrying a trashbag (luggage), shocked and overcome with emotion)

We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

Possum: Hoooooowwwdyyyyyyy!!

(J.J. and Charlie stare, stunned)

RH1: *(to Ranch Hand 2)* You was wrong. Kelly don't look the same at all!

J.J.: Possum... what are you doing here?

Possum: *(yelling offstage as Aunt Esther enters carrying lots of bags of luggage)* You was right, momma! You said they'd be surprised!

Aunt Esther: Possum, help your momma with these bags.

Possum: Oh right. Sorry momma! *(runs past AE right offstage)*

AE: You'd think that boy would have gotten smarter over the years. ... J.J. and Charlie, as I live and breathe. *(hugs both)*

J.J.: Hey Esther, good to see you.

Charlie: Welcome back. To what do we owe this visit?

AE: Well, remember at Billy's funeral when you offered us to come back anytime? This is one of them "anytimes". We couldn't stand being away from family around Christmas and with the Wild West show so slow this time of year, well, you know, ticket sales just ain't quite what they used to be.

J.J.: Oh, I know how you love travelin' with them.

AE: Well, you know, Possum's growing up and it's time we settle down a bit, so here we are!

Charlie: Well, you all are always welcome to stay here.

(Possum runs in, right past the luggage)

Possum: Momma, there weren't no bags out in the truck!

AE: *(condescending, sarcastic)* Thank you, Possum.

RH3: *(moves over towards Possum)* Hey, how'd you end up with a name like "Possum".

(Kelly enters from the side, unnoticed during the story and listens in. She's in a business suit attire, carrying a briefcase, etc.)

Possum: Funny story, actually. When I was 12 years old, some buddies of mine wanted to see who could hang upside down the longest. I hung upside down for 4 hours and 13 minutes.

RH3: That's amazing.

Possum: Not really. I actually fell asleep after the first 10 minutes. The nickname sorta stuck.

AE: *(beaming with pride)* Doctor said he ain't never seen nobody do anything like that before.

Possum: That's right, I'm a regular e-nigma. Doc said so himself.

Kelly: That's a great story.

Charlie: Kelly?

Kelly: Charlie! J.J.! *(hugs Charlie, kisses J.J. on both cheeks.)*

RH1: (to RH2) Is that her?

RH2: I don't know, I'm so confused.

J.J.: Kelly, you remember your Aunt Esther?

Kelly: Aunt Esther! So wonderful to see you again!

AE: It's good to see you, too, Kelly. This is your cousin "Possum".

Kelly: A pleasure, Possum. Why haven't we met before?

AE: Possum spent the good portion of your childhood ridin' the open range.

Kelly: Oh, a regular cowboy, huh?

Possum: I prefer to think of myself as a bovine relocater.

Kelly: (*looking around, quasi-condescending*) Oh, and look at all of the wonderful cowpeople here. I can't wait to get started fixing this place up. I just want you all to know how excited I am to be here and work alongside all of you. I'm certain that with my business insight, thanks to my strenuous college career, and with your hard work, we can make this ranch a wonderful place to visit. I believe that this ranch, just like any other business, should run like a well-oiled machine. Please think of me as your Jiffy Lube!

(*Dusty begins to leave*)

Possum: Jiffy what?

RH2: I have no idea.

Charlie: (*stopping Dusty*) Dusty, don't you want to say hello to Kelly.

Dusty: (*reluctantly turns and approaches Kelly, tips hat*) Ma'am.

Charlie: Kelly, you remember Dusty.

Kelly: How could I forget. Uncle Bill's always said that you were his best friend. I'm always glad to have solid workers on my team. I'd love to talk with you and get your vision and input on what you think I can help make this ranch become.

Dusty: (*forced politeness*) Lookin' forward to it. (*Exits*)

Kelly: Oh, this is so exciting! All of my years at school have finally paid off. I'm expecting great things from this place, Charlie. Where should I start?

J.J.: Kelly, why don't we get you settled in first, let you freshen up and then you can get ready for our weekly campfire roundup.

Kelly: Oh, that sounds like a fantastic idea. *(to RH)* Excuse me sir, why don't you come along and help me with my trunks and suitcases. *(Kelly and AE exit)*

(Ranch hands begin to exit)

RH1: I think I liked her better when she was the big guy.

RH2: This is the weirdest day of my life.

Charlie: Possum, do you mind moving your truck?

Possum: Don't mind a bit, Chuck.

Charlie: Is that new? I don't remember you having it back at the funeral.

Possum: That's right – got it for a steal, too. It's a vintage 1974 pickup – all the parts are original. Even the oil ain't never been changed.

Charlie: Lucky you.

Possum: But don't get too attached to her, Chuck. We're taking her with us when we leave at the end of next month. *(Possum exits)*

(J.J. and Charlie look at each other and shake their heads)

Charlie: Well... she looks...good.

J.J.: We just have to have patience. She's gone through a lot with the death of her parents and now Uncle Bill. It's gotta be a confusing time for her. She's gonna need all the help she can get.

Charlie: I need to go get the campfire set up. Let's make sure we keep praying for her.

(instrumental interlude begins; Curtain closes)

Scene 4: Corral

(Lights up on Corral as Annie is working. Dusty enters, visibly frustrated.)

Annie: Hey Dusty. Everything ok?

Dusty: No, everything's not ok.

Annie: What's wrong? *(standing up, excited)* Hey, is Kelly here?

Dusty: Oh yeah, she's here all right - in all of her high falutin' majesty.

Annie: Uh oh, that doesn't sound good.

Dusty: Good? If you was walking down the street, you wouldn't even be able to recognize your own cousin. She forgets that we know who she is. I'm not impressed by her uppity talk and fancy dress.

Annie: Well, different is good.

Dusty: Not this different. Annie, I don't like sayin' this anymore than you might like hearin' it, but when your Uncle Bill died, this ranch died with him. It's like his cancer – this ranch has been losing energy and life every day. You know the old saying, “You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink”?

Annie: I guess so.

Dusty: Kelly can't even tell the difference between a horse and a bull, much less lead either of them to anything!

Annie: Dusty, I'm sure with some help she'll be able to get the ranch back to normal.

Dusty: In order for that to happen, she'd have to get herself back to normal. And I'm sorry Annie, but I don't think that's gonna happen anytime soon. *(exits)*

Annie: *(pause)* Dear God, as You can see, the ranch is in a heap of trouble. We're selling things off left and right to keep us going and that doesn't seem to be working too well. I'm glad You've sent Kelly here and I know that if You work through her, anything can happen. Maybe if You put some people around her to help pull off Your plan. Thanks for listening, God. And thanks for helping us out.

(Lights out)

Scene 5: Campfire (main stage) Dec.13, night

Curtain opens on night scene around the campfire. Entire cast and choir (except for Kelly and Mr. Grogan) are onstage.

4. Light Of The Stable - during the song, people move around (eg. come to the fire, move onto stage, etc.)

Charlie: (Following the song) We want to welcome everybody to the Path Light Ranch “Friday Night Campfire”! (cheers, hollers) It’s good to have some new faces and voices tonight.

Voice From The Crowd; What’s wrong with the old ones! (crowd response... “Watch It!” “Who?” “Yeah”...etc.)

Charlie: (trying to ignore the crowd) Whether you’ve come home to stay or just visitin’ for the holidays, we want you to know that you’re around friends (crowd responds again)

We’ve got a couple of guys who sit around the bunkhouse at night scarin’ coyotes by makin’ music. They’re just about good enough to try singin’ in front of some actual people. Don’t worry, they’re not as scary as they look. Why don’t you give a hand to the “Coyote Quartet!” (applause)

5. Tumblin Tumbleweed (Quartet)

Lloyd: Thank ya kindly! If you can stand listinin’ to one more, we’re going to give Charlie a chance to come out here and show you what he can do with a lasso. Try to remember that he needs all the encouragement he can git! Alright, hit it fellows!

6. Ragtime Cowboy Joe (Quartet)

(Kelly has come on stage during the songs)

J.J.: There’s somethin’ about singin’ around a campfire that makes all of us see things a little different. Life can get awfully busy – especially this time of year. Getting’ together like this makes us slow down and think about the things that really matter – things like family... and friends... and faith. It’s what keeps our feet on the ground and our eyes on heaven. Let’s all sing some

6. Unclouded Day

7. Down To The River

8. Precious Memories

(Kelly listens intently to the last song)

Charlie: Well, cowboys and cowgirls, that’s about it. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank each of ya’ll for coming out and having a good ol’ time with us. Before we close,

I'd like to introduce to you the new owner and manager of "Path Light Ranch", Uncle Bill's niece, Kelly.
(cast applauds and Kelly takes center stage; crowd looks confused as speech progresses).

Kelly: (fake politeness, "talking down") Good evening! Thank you so much for that warm reception. Let me begin by sharing my admiration for your wonderful musical talents and entertaining cowboy antics. I look forward to sharing in these times with you each week. (pause) Words cannot express how truly honored I am to have this responsibility laid out before me. I may look young, but with my extensive knowledge, particularly in the area of Business Management, I know that I am the right person for this position. Expertise knows no age, and I promise to each of you that under my careful guidance, "Path Light Ranch" will become bigger and better than ever before.

(Some cast/choir applaud insincerely)

(Mr. Grogan enters)

Mr. Grogan: Good evenin', Miss Kelly. I'm Mr. Grogan, from the bank. I've worked with your uncle for a good long time dealing with the finances of the ranch. I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I was wondering if I could have just a few minutes of your time.

Kelly: Anything for a fellow business associate.

Mr. Grogan: Well, I was wondering if I might speak to you in private.

Charlie: (taking his cue) Alright folks, thanks again for coming out and we'll see all ya'll next Saturday night.

(choir exits)

(Dusty, Annie, J.J. and Charlie stay off to the side, listening to the conversation and reacting accordingly)

Kelly: Now, Mr. Grogan, what can I help you with? *(throughout exchange, Kelly reacts with insincere, fake emotions)*

Grogan: Let me begin, Miss Kelly, by letting you know how much your Uncle Bill meant to me and my family. I'm deeply sorry to hear about your loss. This ranch has been a blessing to this town and I'm trying to do everything in my power to keep it that way.

Kelly: Mr. Grogan, I appreciate your help. Rest assured, as long as I'm here this ranch will always be a blessing. I have great plans for this ranch. My dream is to expand the potential of this ranch to be a staple, not only in this town, but in this region, complete with bed and breakfast...

Grogan: Now, hang on Miss Kelly. I don't mean to spoil your plans, but I'm here on urgent business that you especially need to know about.

Kelly: Certainly. Please continue.

Grogan: When your Uncle Bill passed, he left this ranch to you. Unfortunately, as owner of Path Light, you have to deal with the unpleasant situations as well.

Kelly: That's fine. I took a semester of Crisis in Business.

Grogan: I certainly hope that it helps. Visitors to the ranch were becoming scarce as your Uncle Bill's health dwindled to the point now, where as you see, the only time people show up is for the Saturday night campfire...

Kelly: Well, Mr. Grogan, I appreciate your concern but with these new ideas that I plan to implement...

Grogan: Kelly, there's no money.

Kelly: No money? How can a business run without money?

Grogan: J.J. and Charlie have been doing all they can to rustle up some money to pay the bills, but it's not enough. Kelly, it hurts me to report that if money doesn't come in soon, the bank will be forced to foreclose on the ranch. I can only hold off the trustees of the bank for so long.

Kelly: Mr. Grogan, thank you for coming to see me. The money will be there. I'll find a way. Four years of college will not be wasted. Give me a few days and I'll figure out how to pay these bills off.

Grogan: Goodnight, Miss Kelly. I'll speak with you soon. *(Exits)*

Annie: *(leaving group and meeting Kelly center stage)* Hey Kelly, I just wanted to say...

Kelly: *(interrupting)* Yes, Annie, I know. It's good to see you, too. Hopefully we can catch up soon but right now, there are more important issues that need to be addressed.

Annie: Yeah, we heard. We're all really sorry that you're in the middle of this...

Kelly: That's fine. Thank you. I need to get to work in figuring out how to save this place.

Annie: Well I have some ideas on some things we could do to...

Kelly: Annie, I don't need your help. I can figure this out on my own. Now, if you'll excuse me.

Annie: (*hurt*) Sure, Kelly. (*exits*)

(*J.J. and Charlie exit, Dusty begins to follow and then turns to confront Kelly*)

Dusty: (*to Kelly*) What right you think you got talking to her like that?

Kelly: (*surprised, caught off guard*) Excuse me?

Dusty: (*To Annie*) All she was trying to do was help. You brushed her off like she didn't matter none at all.

Kelly: Dusty, I realize that I often come off as hard, but in the business world...

Dusty: Look around! This ain't the business world. And Annie's your family.

Kelly: Family or no family, in school they taught us that...

Dusty: (*interrupting*) ...in school? For crying out loud. You think we don't remember you? You think we don't see right through Miss College-girl-gonna-single-handedly-save-the-ranch? You used to be just like your cousin Annie and now look at you. You leave home for the big city and then show back up thinking we're gonna buy this college graduate routine?

Kelly: Dusty, I don't need you to "buy" anything. And I certainly do not need anyone's help.

Dusty: You're wrong. Your uncle knew how to depend on people. Even, more he knew how to depend on God. He knew he couldn't manage this ranch by himself and he never tried to. When he turned his life over to Christ, the deed of the ranch went with it. Everything you see here he gave to God. Right now, this ranch is in big trouble and unless you stop pretendin' to be The Lone Ranger, there won't be a ranch!
(*Dusty exits leaving Kelly on stage as curtain closes*)

Scene 6: Corral

(*Annie steps onto stage SL in front of the curtain; "Annie light" comes on; during her prayer, a light comes up on JJ working at the corral. JJ overhears the last part of Annie's prayer.*)

Annie: Dear God, it's me again. I might as well be honest with You, since You already know the truth anyway. I'm kinda hurt by what Kelly said. She's really turned out a lot different than I expected her to, but I know she's gone through a lot of pain. I don't see how she can do this on her own, even though she seems pretty certain she can. She needs help, God. Most of all, she needs you. (*"Annie's light" off; Annie exits SL*)

JJ: *(music begins)* Lord, we all need your gentle guidance right now. Some of us are afraid...others are hurting. Kelly, most of all, needs to open her heart to You. She seems so alone...*(singing...)*

10. Bring Her Heart Back Home

(Lights down after solo)

Scene 7: Great Room, Sunday, Dec. 14

(Curtain opens; lights up with Kelly alone on stage looking around the room; JJ enters carrying the egg bucket)

Kelly: Good morning, Jimmie Jo.

J.J.: Hey there, Kelly. You look a might tired.

Kelly: Yeah, I forgot how loud old Chester crows at 5 a.m., especially when he's right outside my window.

J.J.: Yeah, he's still going strong. Did you sleep well last night?

Kelly: Bed was comfortable. But with all that's going on, I had trouble getting to sleep.

J.J.: We've all be there... This last year, all of us have had some tough days.

Kelly: How have you all handled it this long?

J.J.: We just keep our eyes on Jesus. He's given us a peace about Uncle Bill's death and the future of the ranch. We know God will provide.

Kelly: Yeah, He's obviously done a real good job providing so far. *(pause)* I'm sorry, J.J., I don't mean to sound disrespectful. Faith in God is a nice thing to have, but sometimes God needs a little help in getting things done.

J.J.: Learn that in school, did ya?

Kelly: No, personal motto I guess. Since mom and dad died, I pretty much believe that God is too uninvolved to really offer us any kind of help. He doesn't seem willing or able to come up with very good solutions to problems. Look at Uncle Bill. He spent his entire life managing this ranch, hosting youth camps and trying to tell people about Jesus... and look what it got him.

J.J.: It's true that he didn't realize all of the dream that God had given him. Maybe that dream was meant to be passed on to someone else. God never promised us that we would be what most people call a "success." Instead, He said that when we follow Christ, we may have some hard times, but we never face them alone. If Uncle Bill were here today, he would tell you that. Even in his toughest days, God gave your uncle a peace and a joy that could only have come from Jesus, The Prince of Peace.

11. Peace On Earth (*duet between Kelly and JJ*)

following the song (during applause), Kelly gives JJ a quick hug

Kelly: Thanks, JJ. I know what you believe works for you. I appreciate your concern.

J.J.: I do care, Kelly. All of us do.

Kelly: Speaking of everyone else, where are they?

J.J.: Church, but they should be home any minute now.

Kelly: Why didn't you go?

J.J.: Someone needed to stay here in case you got up. Didn't want you to think we all flew the coop on ya.

Kelly: Well...since you're the only one around, do you mind if I share my plan with you about how to get visitors back to this place?

J.J.: I'd love to hear what you've got.

Kelly: I spent a good portion of the night thinking about this, but it hit once Chester started letting loose early this morning. I may have been going about this all wrong. Instead of turning everything modern, what if we made it more... countrified!

J.J.: Countrified?

Kelly: Yes! Everything these days seems to be going in the direction of technology. But, I bet we could fill this place up with tourists if we offered them a real, down-to-earth, old fashioned cowboy experience! Complete with Chester waking everyone up at 5 a.m.!

J.J.: Ya know what, that's not a bad idea. We wouldn't have to change much...

(cast enters)

Kelly: Very little change! Dusty could really go for that.

Dusty: (*overhearing*) Dusty could what?

J.J.: *(excited)* Everyone get over here. Kelly's just whipped up a new plan to help the ranch attract some more folks.

Charlie: This I gotta hear.

(crowd gathers around)

J.J.: Go on, Kelly.

Kelly: Well, last night I was really impressed with the talents of everyone at the campfire and I realized that there is a large market for some authentic, Old West experiences. People want to take vacations to get away from the busyness of everyday life, visit a down-home ranch and pretend to be cowboys for awhile. And so, that's what we turn Path Light into!

Aunt Esther: Maybe my hearing ain't 20/20. Are you telling us that you plan to turn Path Light into... a cowboy ranch?

Kelly: Yes!

Dusty: Maybe you haven't noticed, but Path Light IS a cowboy ranch.

(cast enthusiasm increases as Kelly talks)

Kelly: Right, but we build on that. We'll have rodeos and teach horseback riding. Saturday nights we continue our campfires, but we do more. We'll put on a show. More singing. Charlie and the other Ranch Hands can do some lasso tricks. And every night we have chuck wagon dinners!

Possum: Chuck, you gotta a wagon? What year is it?

Charlie: *(ignoring Possum)* Kelly, that's a wonderful plan. Dusty?

Dusty: *(skeptical)* I dunno. It might work.

J.J.: Well, I like it!

Annie: This just might be the answer we've been praying for.

Charlie: *(to Kelly)* What's next, boss?

Kelly: We're going to start these shows the first Saturday of the new year and host campers each week. Charlie and Dusty, you guys work with the ranch hands to pull together a top notch rodeo. *(Dusty, Charlie and RH exit)* J.J. and Annie, you both work on preparing the meals for the chuck wagon dinners. *(J.J. and Annie exit)*.

Aunt Esther: *(coughing to get Kelly's attention. Kelly's looking at her clipboard and doesn't notice).* Ahem. *(pause)* Ahem. *(pause)* AHEM.

Possum: *(worried)* MOMMA, ARE YOU ALRIGHT!?

Kelly: Oh! Aunt Esther, Possum. I'm so glad you're still here. There's one more thing I need help on that is of vital importance to pulling all this together.

Possum: Well, alright, but I ain't never pulled anything together before.

Aunt Esther: Don't mind him. He's got that Inefficient Attention Disorder. What do you want us to do?

Kelly: Spread the word. We need volunteers to act, sing, dance... whatever talents the people in this town have, we need. Get out into town and tell people to be here this Thursday, one week from Christmas, with the best display of their talents!

Aunt Esther: We'll leave right now.

Possum: SHOTGUN! *(runs offstage)*

Aunt Esther: *(exiting behind him, yelling)* YOU'RE THE DRIVER, POSSUM.

Close curtain on Kelly

Musical interlude to allow for time passing and scene change

Scene 8: Tryouts, Great Room; Thursday, Dec.18

The stage has choir members standing, mingling; Kelly enters, amazed at the turnout, followed by Possum and Aunt Esther

Kelly: Possum, Aunt Esther, I can't believe how good of a turnout we have. This is better than I expected. How'd you get so many people to show up?

Possum: There ain't nothing to it, Cousin Kelly. I just told them that whoever shows up gets a free dinner from Chuck's wagon.

Kelly: What?! *(regains composure and addresses the crowd)* Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for showing an interest in helping out the ranch. I'm sorry to inform you, however, that there will NOT be a free dinner given to those who try out.

(A handful of choir members exit)

Kelly: Now that we have that sorted out, let's begin with the tryouts. (Checks clipboard) Ok, and it looks like our first audition is... Possum. Well, I guess so, considering the turnout. Ok, Possum. Show us what you've got.

(choir moves to side, giving Possum a large stage)

Possum: (as formal as Jethro can be) I will be trying out for one of the lead cowboy speaking parts. For my audition, I will be reciting a passage from Mr. Billy Shakespeare's "Hamlet". *(Takes the stage and is OVER dramatic)*

"Tobe.... Or not tobe? That's a good question. Whether 'tis a good idea to suffer from slingshots or arrows of contagious proportions or to take my arms to see your troubles..."

Kelly: *(interrupting)* Thank you, Possum. That will be all.

Possum: I have more! "Romeo, O Romeo...where you at, boy?"

Kelly: That'll be all!

(Possum joins Aunt Esther as she applauds wildly)

Kelly: Now, who's next (*"Charlie's Angels" try to get her attention*) A comic team called The Struthers Brothers! *(George and Lloyd come forward)*

Kelly: *(as they arrive center stage)* Don't you mean "the Smothers Brothers."

George: No, I don't know them.

Lloyd: You probably don't know the Struthers Brothers over in Sweetwater. They're real funny.

Kelly: Why don't you go ahead.

George: Alright. Hey, Lloyd.

Lloyd: Yeah, George.

George: What do you call a boomerang that doesn't work?

Lloyd: I don't know.

George: A stick.

(turns to crowd) A stick...git it?

Lloyd: Hey, George.

George: Yeah, Lloyd.

Lloyd: Why didn't the skeleton cross the road?

George: I don't know.

Lloyd: Because he didn't have the guts.

George: What lies on the bottom of the ocean and twitches?

Lloyd: I don't know.

George: A nervous wreck.

Kelly: *(interrupting)* Thank you, fellows. I think we had better move on. We have others who would like to tryout. *(“Charlie’s Angels” begin to raise their hands again; George and Lloyd move back, totally confident)*

Kelly: Let's see, our next audition is a trio of women who will sing for us today. Let's see, Betty Sue, Elizabeth Ann and Mary Lou.

Betty Sue: Here we is!

Possum: Look mamma, it's the Dixie Chicks.

Suzy Ann: We prefer to be called, “Charlie’s Angels”.

(Mary Lou winks, waves and giggles at Charlie; J.J. ribs Charlie while he rolls his eyes)

“Charlie’s Angels” sing a not-so-in tune rendition of “You Are My Sunshine” while vying for Charlie’s attention)

Kelly: *(dumbfounded)* Thank you... I think. We'll be in touch. *(“Angels” respond proudly)*

(Possum enters in Indian costume)

Kelly: Next on the list... *(frustrated)* Possum you can't audition twice

Possum: *(Leans over and stage whispers)* It's Momma.

Kelly: *(facial gestures of disbelief)* Oh...great.

Possum: Ladies and Gentlemen! I'd like to introduce you to the world renowned sharp-shooter direct from Buffalo Bob's Wild West Show, Esther Cody Beaufont (*leans forward and says in a stage whisper*)...also known as my Momma.

12. Introduction Music

AE: Could I please have your full attention as I begin this breath-taking but extremely dangerous feat. I will need complete silence as I proceed to shoot a ceegar from the lips of my suave assistant. **DRUM ROLL** (*She walks and with shaking hand puts the cigar in Possum's mouth, then goes back to center stage where she turns her back. Using a mirror she takes aim, etc. A shot rings out and a lamp hits the floor. Possum, with a fearful face, looks over his shoulder in the direction of the lamp.*)

Possum: (*as AE blows the pistol barrel with pride, Possum looks forward and spits out the cigar*) YOU GOT IT MOMMA!

(*Kelly throws up her hands in despair: Charlie steps forward and addresses the group*)

Charlie: I'd like to say something. First, thank you all for being here today. All of the acts so far have been ...really interesting. But this may take awhile. Why don't we all take a little breather.

(*choir exits, leaving only Kelly, J.J. and Charlie*)

J.J.: Everything ok, Kelly?

Kelly: Are you kidding? This is horrible! The only person I would think about putting in the show, in a NON SPEAKING role, is Possum, and that's only because he's family!

Charlie: Do we really hafta put on a show?

Kelly: I don't see any other way around it.

J.J.: Kelly, I don't mean to add more problems in the stew, but it's going to take \$600 to feed the amount of people we're expecting... and we just don't have that kind of money.

(*Mr. Grogan enters*)

Grogan: That's not all.

Kelly: Mr. Grogan!

Grogan: Kelly, I'm sorry you have to see me like this again, but I've got some bad news.

Kelly: I know the payment is late, but if you just give us a little more time, I know that this new venture...

Grogan: Kelly, I've heard about the plans. They really do sound good. I wanted you to succeed as much as anybody did. But I'm sorry, it's too late. The trustees are forcing me to personally notify you that as of January 1st, the bank will own the deed to the ranch.

J.J.: Oh no, Charlie do something.

Charlie: I can't. Kelly's the boss now.

Kelly: But, Mr. Grogan...

Grogan: I'm so sorry, Kelly. I couldn't hold them off any longer. But I wanted to bring you the news in person, along with my apologies. I'm not sure what God's plan is in all of this, but I want to commend you on your efforts. What you've done these past few weeks has been remarkable. Again, I'm sorry.

Charlie: Thank you, Mr. Grogan.

(Grogan exits)

(J.J., Kelly and Charlie remain in a stunned silence for a few beats)

J.J.: Kelly, we're...

Kelly: No, it's ok, Jimmie Jo. I can't thank you enough for your help. Please get word to all of the ranch hands and those who were helping out. Let them know I appreciate it, but I'm sorry...There's nothing more that I can do...

*(**curtain closes** on J.J. and Charlie. **Follow Spot** remains on Kelly as she moves to the corral. She is deep in thought as music begins to play, transitioning into her solo)*

Scene 9: Corral

13. We All Need Jesus

Kelly: *(slowly, thoughtfully as music continues softly)*

Dear God... I haven't talked to You for a long time. When I was a child, I believed that You would protect me from anything...just like my parents. When they died, I felt that You had left me, too... I know now I was the one who left.

I'm sorry for being so stubborn...Jesus, I'm tired of running from You...If it's not too late, I want to feel close to You again...

Kelly: *(singing)*...when it comes down to the heart, I need You, Jesus *(song ends)*

Dusty: *(overhearing the last line of the song, enters the corral)* Now that's a good thing to hear.

Kelly: *(surprised)* Dusty!

Dusty: Hey Kelly. I hope you don't mind my overhearin'...I came lookin' for you....Thought you might need a friend

Kelly: Thanks, Dusty. I haven't been much of a friend to you...to anyone for that matter.

Dusty: *(pause)* Listen, I think I misjudged you a lot. I had a rock in my boot towards you before you ever showed up here. I figured, since you didn't come to your Uncle Bill's funeral, you didn't care about this ranch - made it even worse when he left it all to you. But now I see that he knew what he was doin'. God has given you a lot of savvy about how to lead a herd of people. You've been good for the ranch.

Kelly: Thanks to me, there's not even going to be a ranch.

Dusty: Well, we'll see. That's in God's hands...it has been ever since your Uncle Bill gave it to Him. Besides, God has a way of showin' up right when things look their worst. As I see it, that's what Christmas is all about. Human bein's had messed things up so good, the only thing that could help was a "God-sized fixin'."

Kelly: *(laughing)* We sure could use a "God-sized fixin'" right now!

Dusty: *(smiling)* Right about now wouldn't hurt. *(pause)* By the way, Kelly, *(pulls out letter)* before your uncle died, he wrote you a letter. He told me to give it to you when you were ready. You're ready now. *(hands her the letter and exits)*

Uncle Bill *(voice on tape; Kelly responds as she reads)*

Dear Kelly – It's been a long time since we've seen each other. Too long. But I understand why. As a child, you grew up in a loving, Godly home only to have your Mom and Dad taken suddenly from you. There were questions that had no answers, so you became angry at God. This is why you didn't come back to the ranch – the place where you grew up loving the Lord. But I know that you still love Jesus. Once He places His brand on your heart, you are His forever.

Some might question why I would leave the ranch to you. It's simple: I've prayed that bringing you back here, back home, would help you get right with God. Just remember, He loves you...even more than the life of His only Son.

I know God is going to use you, and whatever comes of the ranch, as long as you look to Him for the answer, everything will work out fine. I love you and I'm proud of you – Uncle Bill

Annie: *(entering)* Hey Kelly, I'm sorry if I'm interrupting.

Kelly: No no, Annie, everything's...OK.

Annie: Are you alright?

Kelly: Aside from the ranch closing, my plans failing and everyone I love being out of a job and a home... *(smiling)*...yeah, I'm really good. God is faithful and I have a peace about what's going to happen with all of us... Annie, I owe you an apology. I'm sorry for treating you so badly when I arrived. I should've listened to your ideas to begin with.

Annie: It's ok. I'm just glad you're back.

Kelly: Me too. *(pause)* So... got any ideas on how we can save the ranch? *(laughs)*

Annie: Well, we DO have the ranch until the end of December, right?

Kelly: Yeah

Annie: And we've got the people.

Kelly: Including all of the campfire attendees.

Annie: And 6 days until Christmas Eve.

Kelly: What are you thinking?

Annie: We pull off your show, Christmas Eve.

Kelly: That's crazy. *(beat)* I love it! But we do it right this time. We're even going to present the nativity!

Annie: Couldn't think of a better way to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Kelly: Tell the ranch hands, Charlie and Dusty to start working on a nativity scene. You and J.J. rustle us up some singing folks from the campfire. And tell Possum and Aunt Esther to go back into town, they're our only hope for getting people here.

Annie: This is a great idea. I'll get right on this stuff! (*exits*)

Kelly: God, thank you. I'm sorry that I couldn't see the answer, even though I was surrounded by it all this time. Your faithfulness amazes me. (*Kelly exits*)

14. Peace On Earth Reprise (m.58-end)

CURTAIN CLOSES

Scene 10: Ranch, Christmas Eve (in front of curtain)

Aunt Esther walks in front of curtain looking out into the audience

AE: POSSUM!!! POSSUM!!!! Hurry up! We've got to go!!

Possum: (*running down the center aisle*) Momma! Momma! I got bad news.

AE: What's wrong now?

Possum: I've looked in the barn and the chicken shed and the corrals...except the one with the 2 bulls... and there's NOBODY ON THE RANCH!! How could they have forgotten the Christmas Eve service?!

AE: Calm down, Possum. Everybody's already gone to town. They're waiting for us.

Possum: (*joining her onstage*) They's a waitin' for us?

AE: Yes, boy. Now we best hurry up!

Possum: I can't carry you, Momma, so I hope you brought your running shoes. (*begins to walk towards the side of the stage*)

AE: Possum.

Possum: Yes, Momma.

AE: Go get the truck.

Possum: (*turns back and runs off stage and down the aisle*) Oh right..... SHOTGUN!

AE: (*following Possum down the aisle*) YOU'RE DRIVING, POSSUM!!

Scene 11: Town Center; Christmas Eve

(Music begins; after AE and Possum exit stage front, Curtain opens)

15. Go Tell *(solo w/choir)*

Mr. Grogan: Tonight we are gathered to celebrate the birth of a baby, born on this night over 2000 years ago. That one event in history spanned the distance between heaven and earth, when God became man. The miracles of that first Christmas still move us to sing with the angels, to follow the light, and to bow our hearts before the Savior of the World.

For as long as any of us can remember, the story of the birth of Christ written in Luke chapter 2 was read to us by Uncle Bill Harris, from Path Light Ranch. This year, it seems only right that his niece, Kelly, read in his place. *(holding the Bible out to Kelly)*

Kelly, would you do us the honor?

(Kelly looks surprised and embarrassed, but comes forward and takes the Bible. She looks around to JJ and Annie for assurance)

Kelly: *(beginning softly, then getting stronger)* READ LUKE 2:4-14 “Joseph went up from Nazareth in Galilee to Judea... and on earth peace, good will to men”

16. Listen To The Angels Singin’

Kelly: *(continuing to read)* READ LUKE 2:15-20 “When the angels had left them... ..for all the things they had seen and heard.”

17. Joy, Joy

Kelly: I would just like to thank “ya’ll” *(ranch hands laugh at her attempt)* for letting those of us from Path Light Ranch lead the Christmas Eve Service again this year. I know it’s not the same without Uncle Bill, but this is a night I will never forget. I’m sorry to report, however, that this will be the final Christmas....

Mr. Grogan: *(entering, interrupting)* Ahem

Kelly: Mr. Grogan!

Grogan: Kelly, mind if I have a word with you.

Kelly: Sure. Charlie, would you take over?

Grogan: Actually, Kelly, I’d like to address the whole group if I could. *(Pause)* For those of you who don’t know, I’m Mr. Grogan, from the bank. I had the unfortunate responsibility of informing Miss Kelly about the bank’s foreclosure on the ranch.

(Choir/townpeople respond shocked)

Grogan: However, a very large representative from the ranch cornered...well, approached...me yesterday and invited me to this Christmas celebration. (*Possum waves*)

Grogan: Yeah, that would be him. Honestly, Kelly, I was a little surprised that you would have the courage and the ability to pull something of this magnitude and quality off on such short notice. And you're right. God has been honored here tonight. I would hate to see that be the last time something like this happens.

J.J.: What are you saying, Mr. Grogan?

Grogan: I'm saying that it doesn't take someone of much schooling to see the ministry potential of a place like this. And with someone like Kelly in charge, it's clear to see that this ranch would be creative, organized and well-managed. Kelly, I've purchased the deed to this ranch. I know a lot about finance and quite a bit about this ranch, but I need someone with some real expertise in running this place. If you'd like the job, I'm willing to hold onto the mortgage myself until you can pay it off.

(The crowd cheers as Kelly hugs Mr. Grogan and takes the deed)

Dusty: (*to Kelly*) Looks like your plan will work out after all.

Kelly: Hey, it's not my plan. We both know I don't have the answers. (Hugs Dusty)

Charlie: The Lord's faithfulness once again is evident. (*shaking Possum's hand*) And He STILL works in mysterious ways.

Possum: I'm just glad the Lord could use me. I can't wait to see what He's gonna do next. That's why we're moving in! YEEHHHAAAAWWWW

Charlie: You're moving in?!

Aunt Esther: That's right. Possum, help me grab the rest of the bags out of the truck and we'll get settled in our rooms...again.

Possum: (*running offstage*) SHOTGUN!

AE: (*walking after him*) WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE, POSSUM!

Kelly: (*to Annie*) Annie, thank you so much. I couldn't have done it without you. (*Annie and Kelly hug*)

J.J.: We're glad you're here to stay, Kelly. May God use you in a mighty way as you continue the work that Uncle Bill started.. Now, it's Christmas! Let's celebrate!

18. That's The Good News (*Kelly sings solo parts*)