

a script from  
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## **“Stolen Christmas”**

by  
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## SYNOPSIS

Too often Christmas is stolen from our lives without us even recognizing that it's gone. This play highlights 8 distractions that can take our focus away from the true meaning of Christmas and cause us to miss the joy of the season.

Perform the scenes individually as illustrations for a sermon series or as a full play.

**Themes:** Christmas, Jesus' Birth, Truth, Love, Distractions

8 Distractions highlighted:

Busyness

Weight of the World

Materialism

Unbelief

Selfishness

Religious Tradition

Loss

Perfectionism

## CAST

Luke- A high school senior, Tara and Zac's son

Jane- A busy mother in her late 30s/early 40s

Sam- A busy father in his late 30s/early 40s

Ruth- A young dancer

Nate- A young basketball player

Rose- An elderly woman in her late 70s or early 80s

Bert- A lawyer in his late 50s

Cindy- Bert's wife

Liv- (Olivia) A girl in her mid to late 20s

Max- Liv's husband, in his mid to late 20s

Tara- A mother in her late 30s

Zac- Tara's husband, in his late 30s

Tim- An aspiring actor in his late 20s

Lea- Tim's sister, in her early 30s

Sara- A girl in her early 30s

Joe- Sara's grandfather, in his late 70s or early 80s

John- A pastor in his late 50s

Nancy- John's wife, in her late 50s

\*Characters that DO NOT appear in Scene 10

The following characters do not appear in scene 10 and therefore can be doublecast if needed. For example, with a slight costume change the characters playing Lea and Sara can also portray Grace and Lynn.

Gus- An older gentleman in his late 60s or early 70s

Beth- A Homecare Aid for Rose

Grace- Bert's paralegal  
Lynn- Bert's receptionist  
Cecile- An aspiring actress  
Director- Director of commercial

Optional Non-Speaking Roles for Scene 10

\*If you have more actors that you would like to use.

Charlotte- Tara and Zac's daughter

Sara's Family- Rick and kids

Lea's family- Although not mentioned, it would make sense to add a husband and children to Lea's character.

### Family Tree

The following is simply for the actor's knowledge. It is not important that the audience knows the nuances of how everyone is connected. The only important detail is that during the last scene the audience discovers that all the actors ARE related.

Joe is Rose's brother.

Joe has one son, John. John has three children, Jane, Sara, and Liv. Jane is married to Sam and has two children, Ruth and Nate. Sara is married to Rick and they have small children. Liv is married to Max.

Rose has one son, Bert. Bert has three children, Tara, Lea, and Tim. Tara is married to Zac and has two children, Luke and Charlotte. The script does not state that Lea is married, however if you want to add more actors to the final scene, it would make sense to give her a husband and some children.

Joe

John (+Nancy)

Jane (+Sam)

Ruth, Nate

Sara (+Rick)

Kids

Liv (+Max)

Rose

Bert (+Cindy)

Tara (+Zac)

Luke, Charlotte

Lea (+Family?)

Tim

**PROPS**

Boxes  
4 Chairs  
Fast Food  
TV Remote  
Table  
Chairs  
Wheelchair  
Mail  
Newspaper  
Pill Holder  
Book  
Homemade Christmas Card  
Egg White Breakfast Sandwich Bag  
Coat Rack  
Papers  
Phones  
Two To-Go Coffee Cups  
Bench  
Table  
Tape  
Wrapping Paper  
Gifts  
How the Grinch Stole Christmas Book  
Ring Box  
Ring  
Cookies  
Small Tree  
Presents  
Picture (wrapped)  
Manger Scene  
Briefcase  
Folder  
Purse  
Lamp  
Small Ornaments  
Reading Glasses

**WHY**

John 10-10, Isaiah 7-14, Matthew 1-18-25

## HOW

Stage Directions

SR = Stage Right

SL = Stage Left

CS = Center Stage

DSR = Downstage Right

DSL = Downstage Left

DSC = Downstage Center

### Scene 6

The Offstage Voice can be done by the actor playing the Director, or it can be a recording.

### Scene 10

This is the same set as in the first scene. However, the nativity scene should be completely set and the boxes should be gone. If possible, add Christmas lights and a few Christmas trees.

As characters enter, they should greet each other like family. Even if their scripted dialogue has finished, the characters should continue acting like a family trying to take a big family photo. Quiet unscripted dialogue would be appropriate as long as it doesn't take away from the main script. If you choose to add young children (Sara's kids) to this scene, it would make sense to have cousins greeting cousins, aunts and uncles picking kids up, etc.

It would be best if Zac's camera was not onstage. However, it shouldn't be so far offstage that it takes too long for him to check it and return to his pose. Ideally, it should be in line with the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> row of the audience.

This is the first time that the audience realizes the family connection between the various scenes. It's not important for the audience to know exactly how everyone is related (who's a sister/a cousin/an aunt), however, the characters should know exactly how they're related and their silent improvisation, while staging for the family photo, should reflect that.

John and Max's conversation is a crucial point in this scene. Make sure to keep this dialogue loud and clear. John and Max should end up DSC when John says his final line, "Christ can be found..." Because there is controlled chaos happening CS during this conversation, it might be a good idea to slightly lower the lights on stage and have a spotlight follow John and Max down the aisle as they have this conversation. Lights can return to their normal capacity once this part of the skit is complete.

## **COSTUMES**

Keep it simple. There is no need for elaborate costumes. However, make sure to take note of when the actors are outside. Throughout the script there are references to cold weather. Therefore, when actors are outside, they should be dressed in winter attire. (Coats, Hats, Gloves, Scarfs, etc.)

Since scene 10 takes place after a Christmas Eve service, it would make sense for the characters to be dressed in church attire. However, it would be advised to keep costumes either the same or very similar to the previous scenes so that the audience can recognize the characters. The two exceptions would be Ruth and Nate who previously appear in a dance costume and a basketball uniform.

Scene 4 has some necessary costumes. Cecile should be in some type of long nightgown, so as to mimic an older version of "Cindy Lou Who." Tim should be dressed in black with a ski mask. A tux would be nice, but not necessary.

## **SET**

This script has the capacity for a large and detailed set. However, none of the scenes, except for the final nativity scene, are reliant on the set pieces. Therefore, work with what you have and do not feel the need to get too elaborate. Also, because there are many moving pieces be sure that the props and set pieces that you do choose are quickly mobile. The set can easily be taken on and off by the actors themselves rather than a stage crew. However, if you have access to a stage crew, use them!! It's a great way to get non-actors involved.

Nativity– This MUST contain a manger, a baby Jesus, and at least one plastic animal.

Video Option (Not needed for the production to work)

If you have video capability and really want to drive home the ideas highlighted in each scene, use a graphic to name the temptation being described in each skit. For example, before Scene 2, have a graphic with the word, BUSYNESS.

## **HOW**

These skits can be performed a couple of different way.

- As one large Christmas performance, totaling around 40 minutes.
- As a weekly series leading up to Christmas.

## **TIME**

Each scene is 2-5 minutes in length for a total time of 40–45 minutes.

Scene 1

*CS there is the beginning of a nativity scene. Boxes are scattered throughout the stage. Gus is CS in a heavy winter coat, unloading the boxes.*

*Luke enters from SR, wearing a winter coat and carrying a large box.*

**Luke:** Mr. Franklin, where do you want these?

**Gus:** Please, call me Gus.

*Gus gestures to SL.*

**Gus:** Put them over there.

*Luke puts the boxes down SL.*

**Luke:** Here you go.

**Gus:** Thanks for helping me unload these boxes.

**Luke:** Sure thing.

*Throughout the remainder of the scene, Gus and Luke begin to unpack the boxes and set up the nativity scene.*

**Luke:** Do you do this every year?

**Gus:** I've been helping the church set up their nativity scene every year since the church was founded.

**Luke:** Wow. That's a long time.

**Gus:** My back just isn't what it used to be. I really appreciate your help.

**Luke:** No problem. I was just sitting around watching TV anyways. There's nothing good on, just old Christmas movies.

**Gus:** You don't like Christmas movies?

**Luke:** I don't mind some of the new ones, but the ones they play over and over on TV like "It's A Wonderful Life," or "A Christmas Carol"—

**Gus:** *(interrupting)* Those are classics.

**Luke:** I just prefer realistic movies.

**Gus:** You don't think they're realistic?

**Luke:** The Ghost of Christmas Past, a Guardian Angel that can show you what life is like without you in it, that Green monster who steals Christmas from the Whos—

**Gus:** *(admittedly)* They're fictional, but their messages are timeless.

**Luke:** I guess.

**Gus:** They're about people who have lost Christmas.

**Luke:** Yeah. They just don't seem relevant to today.

**Gus:** I wish that were true. But I think Christmas is harder to find today than it ever has been. In fact, Christmas is stolen from people every day without them even knowing it.

*Luke shrugs.*

**Gus:** You don't believe me?

**Luke:** I don't think Christmas is easy lose.

**Gus:** Oh, on the contrary. It's not easy to hold on to.

*Lights Down.*

## Scene 2 - Busyness

*There are four chairs CS, two in front of the other two, set to resemble a car.*

*Jane, Sam, are sitting in the front two chairs, while Ruth is sitting, dressed in a dance costume, in the back. Sam is miming holding onto a steering wheel. They are all eating hamburgers as fast as they can.*

*Nate quickly enters, mimes opening a car door, and sits down.*

**Jane:** *(to Nate in between bites)* Get in. Get in.

**Nate:** Sorry. Had to talk to Coach about the party tomorrow. *(Seeing the hamburgers)* I'm starving.

**Jane:** That's tomorrow?

**Nate:** Yeah. I need a gift for the white elephant game.

**Jane:** By tomorrow?

**Nate:** Yeah.



**Jane:** You couldn't tell me this earlier? I don't have a car tomorrow, Nate. It's in the shop.

**Nate:** I forgot.

**Jane:** (to **Sam**) Let's go. We've only got a few minutes.

**Sam** starts to drive.

**Nate:** What's the rush?

**Jane:** Your sister has dance in 10 minutes.

**Ruth:** I knew it! We're going to be late.

**Nate:** She doesn't dance on Mondays. Where's my hamburger?

**Jane** hands him a hamburger from a fast food bag in her lap.

**Jane:** She does this week. The Christmas recital is Saturday.

**Nate:** Ahhh I don't want to go to that.

**Ruth:** (with a full mouth) I sit through all of your games.

**Nate:** What?

**Ruth:** (with a full mouth) I sit through all of your games.

**Nate:** My games are interesting. We're actually doing something. Are there fries?

**Ruth:** I'm doing something.

**Jane** hands **Nate** some French fries.

**Nate:** (to **Jane**) Thanks. (To **Ruth**) You're not making baskets.

**Ruth:** Cause I'm not playing basketball.

**Nate:** Exactly. You're just dancing.

**Jane:** Enough you two. Eat.

**Ruth** and **Nate** both continue to stuff food in their mouths.

**Jane:** (to **Sam**) You too. Hurry up. Once you drop Ruth and I off at the dress rehearsal, you and Nate will have just enough time to get to that fundraising meeting.

**Nate:** *(with food in his mouth)* Can't you drop me off at home first?

**Sam:** No. I'll only be a few minutes.

**Jane:** Don't forget, my car's in the shop. You need to pick us up at 9.

**Nate:** We're not going to be home till 9? I have homework.

**Sam:** You can do it while I'm at my meeting. Then we'll try and get you a gift for your party tomorrow before we have to pick up the girls.

**Nate:** Ok.

**Sam:** *(to Jane)* What do we have going on this weekend?

**Jane:** Which day?

**Sam:** I was thinking we could have a nice family dinner. You know, a quiet night, just our family.

**Jane:** We can't on Friday.

**Sam:** Why not?

**Jane:** The kids' band concert.

**Sam:** Ok. Saturday?

**Jane:** The dance recital.

**Sam:** Sunday?

**Jane:** Basketball tournament in the morning, chorus concert in the evening.

**Sam:** Aren't we going to church on Sunday?

**Jane:** I just don't think we have time.

**Sam:** I guess there's always Monday for a family—

**Jane:** I promised the Fergusons we'd stop by their party on Monday night.

**Ruth:** Monday's my piano recital.

**Jane:** That's right.

**Nate:** I have to sit through that too?

**Ruth:** At least it's something different. Your games are always the same.

**Nate:** No, they're not. You just don't understand basketball.

**Ruth:** What I don't understand is why no one ever gets the ball *in* the basket.

**Sam:** Enough.

*Nate points to Ruth's dance costume.*

**Nate:** Nice ketchup stain.

**Ruth:** Oh no! Mom!

**Jane:** We'll take care of it when we get there.

*Sam motions to the road.*

**Sam:** (to **Jane**) Turn here?

**Jane:** Yes. Drop us off at the door.

*Sam parks. Ruth quickly gets out of the car and exits. Jane gathers her purse and begins to exit the car.*

**Sam:** Ok. So, Tuesday—

**Jane:** Tuesday's your work get-together. Wednesday's the potluck.

**Sam:** Thursday's Christmas Eve. We really don't have any spare time until Christmas Eve?

**Jane:** (realizing they can go to church) Christmas Eve! We always meet your family at the Christmas Eve service. We'll squeeze church in then.

**Sam:** Squeeze it in?

**Jane:** Yup. Unless you wanted to go—

**Sam:** The neighborhood party is on Christmas Eve.

**Jane:** Right. We could just meet your family after the service.

**Sam:** This is exhausting. Remember when we use to like Christmas?

**Jane:** Did we ever like Christmas?

**Sam:** I hate this time of year.

**Jane:** Just one more week and the whole season will be over.

**Sam:** Thank God!

*Lights Down.*

### Scene 3 – Weight of the World

*CS there is a chair next to a table. On the table is a lamp, a pill holder, and a pair of glasses.*

*Rose is sitting in a wheelchair, reading a book.*

*Beth enters wearing a winter coat and scarf. She is carrying the morning paper, the mail, and a small carry out bag with breakfast for Rose.*

**Beth:** Morning, Rose.

*Beth hands Rose the newspaper. Rose puts her book on the table and starts browsing the paper, without looking up at Beth.*

**Rose:** You're late.

**Beth:** I got stuck behind a truck.

*Beth picks up the pill holder.*

**Beth:** You haven't taken your medicine yet.

**Rose:** I hate taking pills.

*Beth notices the glasses on the table.*

**Beth:** Why are you reading without your glasses?

**Rose:** I can't find them.

*Beth hands Rose her glasses.*

**Rose:** Where were they?

**Beth:** On the table.

**Rose:** Well, they weren't a minute ago.

*Beth begins to take off her coat and scarf. She places them on the chair.*

**Beth:** *(changing topics)* It's a beautiful day outside.

**Rose:** It's supposed to snow again later.

**Beth:** How are you feeling?

**Rose:** *(gloomily)* As good as can be expected.

*Rose looks up from the paper.*

**Rose:** What did you do to your hair?

**Beth:** Do you like it?

**Rose:** It looks terrible.

**Beth:** I got it cut.

**Rose:** Don't go back to that stylist.

**Beth:** Ok.

**Rose:** I hope you didn't tip her.

*Pause.*

*Rose goes back to reading her paper.*

*Beth grabs the bag with Rose's breakfast in it.*

**Beth:** Have you eaten?

**Rose:** I'm not hungry.

**Beth:** I brought you an egg sandwich.

**Rose:** It's not a real egg.

**Beth:** *(admittedly)* It's egg whites, but it smells delicious.

**Rose:** *(referring to the paper)* There was another bombing in the middle east.

*Beth puts the breakfast food on the table.*

**Beth:** I saw that.

**Rose:** And there was an earthquake in South America.

**Beth:** Yup.

**Rose:** This year flu season has started early—

**Beth:** *(trying to be positive)* A panda was born at the zoo last week.

*Pause.*

**Rose:** A panda?

**Beth:** Yeah. It's the cutest thing. Want to see a picture of it?

**Rose:** Why would I want to see a picture of it?

**Beth:** I don't know. It's just something *nice* that happened. It's on page 3—

**Rose:** Pandas are going extinct.

*Rose looks up from her paper.*

**Rose:** You're not wearing makeup today.

**Beth:** Nope.

**Rose:** You should wear makeup. How are you ever going to get a date?

*Pause.*

**Beth:** We could go for a walk. We could play cards. What would you like to do?

**Rose:** I should read the obituaries.

**Beth:** Why would you do that?

**Rose:** See if any of my friends have died.

*Rose begins to go thru her mail, opening Christmas cards.*

**Rose:** I hate Christmas. It's noisy and busy and my mailbox is overflowing with Christmas cards.

*Beth picks up a homemade Christmas card.*

**Beth:** This one looks homemade. How sweet.

**Rose:** It's from my niece, Sara. She thinks she's good at crafty things. As you can see, she isn't.

**Beth:** *(changing topics)* There's a nice music program on PBS. Want me to turn it on?

**Rose:** No, they'll probably be playing something I don't like.

*Beth grabs the remote, points it DS, and mimes turning on the TV.*

**Beth:** They're playing Christmas carols.

*Beth sits.*

*Both Ruth and Beth look directly DS as if they are watching a TV program.*

**Beth:** I love this version of, "Joy to the W—

**Rose:** Did you know that suicides increase directly after the holidays?

**Beth:** I did, actually.

**Rose:** I think it's because there are so many Christmas carols played in minor keys.

**Beth:** Well, this one isn't in a minor key. It's about being filled with joy—

**Rose:** I know what it's about.

**Beth:** *(sarcastically)* You are just a ray of sunshine today.

**Rose:** I'm like this every day.

**Beth:** Even Scrooge found a change of heart at Christmas time.

**Rose:** *(matter of fact)* I know. That's why the Savior came, to change our hearts, bring us joy.

*Beth looks at Rose, surprised, almost as if she's not sure she heard her right.*

*Beth looks away as Rose looks at her.*

*Rose looks back at the TV, DS, as Beth looks back at her.*

**Rose:** What?

**Beth:** I'm just surprised to hear you talk about joy.

**Rose:** Well, it's not my favorite fruit of the spirit, but it's still one of 'em.

**Beth:** *(amused)* You have a favorite fruit of the spirit?

**Rose:** Longsuffering.

*Slight pause.*

**Rose:** I *was* married to the same man for 65 years, you know.

**Beth:** Well, joy is a good one for Christmas time. It lightens the weight of the world.

*The mood changes quickly and should catch Beth by surprise.*

**Rose:** *(contemplatively)* I know. Sometimes life just gets so heavy.

*Slight pause. Beth is unsure how to respond to Rose suddenly opening up.*

**Beth:** *(gently)* That's why we have to choose joy, even when we don't feel like it.

*Slight pause.*

**Rose:** *(purposefully grumpy, to lighten the mood)* Well, can't you tell I've been working on being more positive?

*Beth smiles, slightly nods at Rose, then looks away.*

**Beth:** *(aside)* Keep working on it.

*Lights down.*

#### Scene 4 – Materialism

*CS there is a table strewn with presents, wrapping paper, tape, etc. Tara stands over the table with a few pieces of paper and a pen in her hand.*

*There are two chairs behind the table.*

**Tara:** *(reading off a piece of paper)* Video game, Barbie doll, Soccer Ball—

**Zac:** What are you doing?

**Tara:** It's the kids' Christmas lists. I'm seeing if I missed anything.

*Zac takes one of the papers from Tara.*

**Zac:** Please tell me you didn't get them all this stuff.

**Tara:** No.

**Zac:** Good.

**Tara:** Not yet.

**Zac:** I thought you already went Christmas shopping?

**Tara:** That was the first trip.

**Zac:** The first trip?

**Tara:** Yeah.

**Zac:** How many more do you need?



Tara: Just a few.

Zac: So, our budget is officially out the window.

Tara: Not yet.

Zac: But it will be.

Tara: Yup. iPhone, Bluetooth, MacBook Pro—

Zac: Whoa. Who's getting a MacBook Pro?

Tara: Not you.

Zac: That's a bit expensive.

Tara: There's a sale. Luke really wants one.

*Pause.*

Zac: And—

Tara: And?

Zac: And he's going to college—

Tara: And he probably needs a computer.

*Pause.*

Zac: No amount of money you spend on him is going to make him stop growing up.

Tara: I just want to make sure that this Christmas is memorable. It's the last one with all of us living at home.

Zac: You don't know that—

Tara: You know what I mean. It's our last year to...to really instill in him a love for family. A love for Christmas. To make sure he—

Zac: He knows what Christmas is all about.

Tara: Right.

Zac: So, presents are what we're going with? Christmas is all about expensive presents. *(Sarcastically)* And all this time I thought we were teaching our kids that the Savior's birth was the reason for Christmas.

**Tara:** *(teasingly)* If you're going to keep distracting me, you might as well grab some wrapping paper and help.

*Zac picks up How the Grinch Stole Christmas.*

**Zac:** Who's this for?

**Tara:** Charlotte.

**Zac:** How appropriate. A book on how Christmas isn't about things. I'm going to buy this for you.

**Tara:** Very funny.

*Zac opens the book and pretends to start reading it.*

**Zac:** It came without Barbie, it came without snow. It came without presents, or a MacBook Pro.

**Tara:** *(smirking)* And while she was wrapping, she had a deep thought. I could use some help, perhaps my husband can be taught.

*Tara hands Zac wrapping paper and tape.*

**Zac:** It came without wrapping paper, ribbons or bows,

**Tara:** No, it came with freezing temperatures...though,

**Zac:** *(playfully challenging her)* His wife thought she was clever and could match his rhyme.

**Tara:** And she was, and she did, every single time.

**Zac:** *(continues to pretend to read the book)* Christmas didn't need presents to come, no, no, it did not. Cause it isn't found in a store, Christmas, you see, can't be bought.

*Tara claps.*

**Tara:** Well done, Dr. Seuss.

*She sits.*

**Tara:** I just want this one to be special.

**Zac:** It will be. But *(referring to all the Christmas presents on the table)* things aren't what make Christmas special.

*Zac moves towards Tara and puts his hand on her shoulder.*

**Zac:** They're going to remember time spent, not money spent.

*Tara looks at the table and takes a deep sigh.*

**Tara:** Point taken. I can cancel the rest of my shopping trips.

**Zac:** Don't do that.

*Tara looks at him curiously.*

**Zac:** This stuff needs to be returned.

*Tara smirks at him and rolls her eyes. They both stand looking over the presents as the lights go down.*

*Lights down.*

### Scene 5 – Unbelief

*Max and Liv enter dressed in warm outdoor clothing. They are taking an evening walk on a winter's evening. Liv holds a disposable cup of hot chocolate, while Max is checking his phone.*

*CS there is a wooden bench.*

**Liv:** I love it all.

**Max:** What?

**Liv:** The snow.

**Max:** Is it snowing?

**Liv:** It's been snowing our whole walk.

**Max:** I didn't notice.

**Liv:** The lights.

**Max:** You have to admit, they're a little tacky this year.

**Liv:** The music.

**Max:** Those carolers are little under pitch.

**Liv:** Can you at least put your phone away and try and enjoy this with me?

*Max puts his phone in his pocket.*

*They walk a little farther. The phone rings, as if it has received a txt message.*

*Max quickly pulls the phone out of his pocket and checks it.*

**Liv:** What's gotten into you?

**Max:** Sorry.

*He puts the phone away once again.*

**Liv:** You use to love Christmas.

**Max:** I don't think I ever liked Christmas.

**Liv:** That's not true.

**Max:** I mean, I liked the materialism, the busyness, the forced family get-togethers – Ok I never pretended to like those.

**Liv:** That's not what Christmas is about.

*Pause.*

**Liv:** (tentatively) It's about—

**Max:** I know. I don't think I ever really liked the "let's-all-believe-in-a-baby-born-in-a-manger" story either.

**Liv:** You mean, the birth of the Messiah.

**Max:** The Savior, the Messiah, the Rescuer has finally come. It's a fairytale.

**Liv:** I don't believe that.

**Max:** Well, that's the other thing I don't like. It makes grown adults believe unreasonable things that they otherwise wouldn't.

**Liv:** You use to believe this.

**Max:** When I was younger.

**Liv:** And ignorant?

**Max:** I was. I had never experienced the real world—other faiths, other religions, other thoughts.

**Liv:** What did you want your parents to do, bring you to a mosque? A Buddhist temple?

**Max:** Maybe.

**Liv:** Your parents didn't want to confuse you. They taught you truth.

**Max:** What's truth?

*Frustrated, Liv stops walking and sits on the bench.*

**Liv:** Here we go.

**Max:** Knowledge, new ideas, new religions are evolving at exponential rates.

**Liv:** I don't even know what that means.

**Max:** Things are moving faster. What our parents believed doesn't have to be our beliefs. We're evolving.

*Max sits next to Liv on the bench.*

**Liv:** I'm not evolving.

*Pause.*

**Liv:** Max, how did we get here? We held the same values and beliefs when we got married.

**Max:** We were babies. What did we know about the world?

**Liv:** We've only been married 3 years.

**Max:** The first year after college might as well be a decade. Starting my master's in philosophy has opened my eyes to so much.

**Liv:** We use to love Christmas the same way.

**Max:** I'm—

**Liv:** I know. You're evolving.

*Silence.*

**Max:** Take a look around. What do you see?

**Liv:** *(taking in her surroundings)* Lights. Carolers. Families walking in the park.

*He shakes his head.*

**Max:** I see hurt. I see lonely. I see cold.

**Liv:** That's pretty cynical.

**Max:** I see people who are desperate to celebrate something. No one really believes any of this manger stuff. They just want *something* to believe. Try it.

**Liv:** Try what?

**Max:** Try it again. Look deeper. What do you really see?

*Max looks out into the audience. Liv stays looking at Max.*

**Liv:** I see a man who's lost Christmas.

*Lights down.*

## Scene 6 – Selfishness

*Music– this is an optional addition to the scene. However, any music played softly in a minor key would add an ominous tone to the beginning of the skit.*

*Music begins.*

*Lights remain low.*

*The beginning part of this scene should mirror the scene in How the Grinch Stole Christmas, where Cindy Lou talks to the Grinch.*

*Tim enters in a tux and a ski mask. He slinks around the stage, as if a burglar. Cecile enters in a nightgown.*

**Cecile:** Mr. Grinch, why are you stealing our Christmas, why?

*Lights up.*

*Tim takes off the ski mask.*

*Music ends.*

**Tim:** I don't want to take Christmas, Cecile. Your heart is the only thing I want to steal.

*He takes out a diamond ring, kneels to the ground, then smiles directly at the audience.*

*Cecile dramatically gasps and then puts on the diamond.*

*They strike a pose.*

**OS Voice:** And with Cupid's princess cut solitaire *you* can steal a heart this holiday season too. Stop in at one of our convenient locations.

*Director enters from behind the audience and makes his way CS.*

**Director:** Cut. Good work. Let's take five and then get another few takes.

*Cecile and Director exit.*

*Phone rings. Tim pulls out a cellphone from his pocket and moves DSR.*

*Lights up DSL on Lea.*

**Tim:** Hey, sis.

**Lea:** I can't believe you picked up!

**Tim:** Well, this is my phone.

**Lea:** *(sarcastically)* Is that my baby brother's voice? Tim, I didn't know you knew how to use a phone. I mean I've only left 10 voicemails.

**Tim:** Funny. Funny.

**Lea:** *(teasing)* When you said that you'd call soon, I thought that meant sometime this decade.

**Tim:** You're hilarious.

**Lea:** It's good to hear your voice. I'm glad I caught you.

**Tim:** I only have a 5-minute break. What's up?

**Lea:** I wanted to see how it was going. You're filming this week, right?

**Tim:** It's going great. I mean the pay isn't really good, but it's definitely a resume builder.

**Lea:** What's it about?

**Tim:** It's a spoof on the Grinch stealing Christmas. It should be airing next week. I'm sure you'll see it sometime over Christmas.

**Lea:** I'm going to set my TV to record every channel every day for the next few weeks.

**Tim:** *(quickly, without thinking)* Then you can replay it for Mom and Dad, and it'll be like I'm really there celebrating Christmas with everyone.

*Tim immediately regrets saying this last line.*

*Pause.*

**Lea:** I thought you were taking the time to come home this year?

**Tim:** About that. *(Hesitantly)* The director invited me to a Christmas get-together at his house on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Lea:** Tell him you promised your family that *this* year—

**Tim:** Lea, if I can just make a few more connections—

**Lea:** You'll be in the next Oscar winning film.

*Pause.*

**Lea:** Why do you even bother telling Mom you're coming home?

**Tim:** I really thought I was com—

**Lea:** You have no idea how disappointed she gets.

*Pause.*

**Lea:** When are you going to call and tell her?

**Tim:** I was hoping you could mention it...

**Lea:** Really? You're going to pull that *again*.

**Tim:** I can't believe we're having this conversation *again*.

**Lea:** What—

**Tim:** You've always hated my job, resented it even.

**Lea:** Who's been at every film festival, every community theater, every regional premier sitting in the front row. Me. I'm proud of what you do. I just—

**Tim:** Just what?

**Lea:** I'm not sure I'm proud of who you're becoming.

**Tim:** What is that supposed to mean?

**Lea:** Your career is becoming an obsession.

**Tim:** So, working hard is now defined as an obsession.



**Lea:** When work comes before your family, your friends, your (She pauses briefly as if almost unsure if she should say the next word) faith.

**Tim:** Here we go.

*The argument should increase in speed and intensity.*

**Lea:** When was the last time you went to church?

**Tim:** Going to church doesn't make me a Christian.

**Lea:** I know.

**Tim:** I work on Sundays, Lea.

**Lea:** I know.

**Tim:** I have to—

**Lea:** Get back to stealing hearts.

**Tim:** My job.

**Lea:** Right. Right. The career that's kidnapped my brother—

**Tim:** That's not fair.

**Lea:** Just once a year, think of someone other than yourself. Stop being so selfish.

**Tim:** Selfish! I don't have time for this.

**Lea:** Time to talk to your sister? Of course you don't. Go back to stealing hearts, Mr. Grinch, you've already managed to ruin Christmas.

**Tim:** I'm not ruining anyone's Christmas.

*Pause. The dialogue softens and slows down.*

**Lea:** You're right. Christmas is bigger than that. You couldn't ruin it if you tried.

*Pause.*

**Lea:** You're robbing yourself, you know. Christmas is about more than a job opportunity.

**Tim:** Here's the part where you tell me about the Messiah being born in a manger. Sometimes it feels like our conversations are scripted.

**Lea:** Well, sometimes it feels like you've forgotten what Christmas is all about.

**Tim:** Why? Because I can't come home?

**Lea:** Because you can't think of anyone else but yourself. Not even at Christmas time.

*Pause.*

**Tim:** Listen, I'll make it up to you. I promise. Next year...for sure...I'll be there.

*Pause.*

**Tim:** I'll call soon.

**Lea:** Merry Christmas.

**Tim:** I gotta go. Bye.

*Lights down.*

## Scene 7 – Religious Tradition

*Lynn is seated CS at a desk, glancing thru papers. Grace is standing near the desk, discussing some of the papers with Lynn. SR there is a coat rack holding three coats.*

*Bert enters with his briefcase from SL.*

**Bert:** It's December 23<sup>rd</sup>, Ladies. Let's call it a day and take off a bit early.

*During the following dialogue, Grace places the papers down on the table. Lynn arranges the papers in a folder and hands that folder to Bert. Bert then places the folder in his briefcase. All three characters put on their coats.*

**Lynn:** Thank you, sir.

**Grace:** Thank you.

**Bert:** Have a wonderful Christmas.

**Grace:** You too.

**Lynn:** Are you and Mrs. Johnson headed to the Christmas Cantata tonight?

**Bert:** Every year at 7pm on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December. We've been going for 25 years.

**Lynn:** How romantic.

**Bert:** Cindy wears her red dress, and I wear my tux.

**Grace:** A tux? You really go all out for this.

**Bert:** We go out to eat with her sisters and their husbands at Monico's.

**Lynn:** It takes months to get reservations there.

**Bert:** We make reservations in January.

**Lynn:** Really?

**Bert:** I order the prime rib; she gets the seafood.

**Grace:** Sounds delicious.

**Bert:** It's not. The meat is overcooked, and the seafood is rubbery.

**Grace:** Oh.

**Bert:** The tux is the most uncomfortable thing I own.

**Lynn:** Everyone looks great in a tux.

**Bert:** I look like a penguin.

**Grace:** At least the music's going to be good.

**Bert:** How many times can you hear, "Sleigh Ride" in one lifetime? I've hit my limit.

**Grace:** I thought you were excited about going?

**Bert:** I dread it for 364 days out of the year.

**Lynn:** Then, sir, *why* are you going?

**Bert:** Tradition. It's just what we do.

**Grace:** Maybe it's time to start a new tradition.

**Bert:** Like what?

**Grace:** I don't know. One that involves comfortable clothes, good food—

**Lynn:** —and something you enjoy doing.

**Bert:** That doesn't sound like Christmas.

**Grace:** *(lighthearted)* Christmas should be fun not an obligation.

**Bert:** Christmas at my house is tradition. I'm obligated to celebrate it whether I want to or not.

*Slight pause.*

**Bert:** The worst part is, I don't have another night free till this weekend. Tonight's the cantata and then tomorrow's the Christmas Eve service. I mean, how many times can I sit through the same sermon. There's never a new twist to the Christmas story. I'm pretty sure there's still no room at the inn and the Messiah's born in the manger.

*Silence.*

**Bert:** I don't mean to be irreverent. I know how important this holiday is. I'm all about celebrating the Savior's birth. It's just...

*The mood has shifted. Grace and Lynn realize that Bert is missing Christmas.*

**Grace:** *(almost sad)* It's just what you do.

**Bert:** *(agreeing)* It's tradition.

*With coats on, all characters exit SR.*

*Lights down.*

## **Scene 8 – Loss**

*Joe sits in a recliner next to a table.*

*Sara enters in a heavy overcoat, with a large bag, and a plate of Christmas cookies.*

**Sara:** Christmas cookies.

*She places the cookies down on the table and takes off her coat.*

**Joe:** You know I can't eat those.

**Sara:** Oh, but you can. These are gluten-free, sugar-less cookies.

**Joe:** You should have brought me cardboard to chew on.

**Sara:** They don't call you the Grinch for nothing.

**Joe:** Who calls me that?

Sara: *(Ignoring him)* Where's your tree?

Joe: I don't do plants.

Sara: Lucky for you, I brought one.

*Sara pulls a small, plastic tree out of her bag. She places it on the table. She then continues to pull simple decorations from her bag and decorates the tree.*

Joe: Or anything green.

Sara: Or anything that looks somewhat alive.

Joe: I mean it.

Sara: Don't worry; it's a fake one. You don't need to water it.

Joe: I wouldn't water it anyways.

Sara: This way you can't kill it.

Joe: It's already dead.

Sara: Well, technically it was never alive.

*She pulls out some small presents from her bag and places them under the tree.*

Sara: Presents.

Joe: Who are those from?

Sara: The kids.

Joe: They're pictures, aren't they? More unidentifiable pictures.

Sara: They're supposed to be drawings of you and Santa.

Joe: Give me that.

*Joe grabs one of the presents and starts to unwrap it.*

Sara: You can't open that till Christmas.

Joe: I can open it whenever I want.

*Joe opens the present. It's a picture drawn by a young child.*

Joe: *(looking at the picture)* Who's that?

Sara: That's you.

Joe: Then who's that?

Sara: That's Santa.

Joe: Why am I bigger than Santa?

Sara: You're larger than life really.

Joe: Funny.

*Pause.*

Sara: *(pointing to the picture)* And that's Grandma Lou—

Joe: I know who that is. I don't need your kids reminding me.

Sara: Reminding you of what?

*Pause.*

Joe: She's not here this year. I'm alone.

*Pause.*

Sara: You don't have to be.

Joe: *(facetiously)* You're right. I should go on the Bachelor.

Sara: That's not what I meant.

Joe: *(facetiously)* I should get a pet.

Sara: *(referring back to the tree)* You'd have to feed and water it.

Joe: *(sarcastically)* Then maybe you should get me a plastic dog too.

Sara: Rick and I are staying in town, and we're going to take you to the Christmas Eve service.

Joe: I'm not going anywhere.

Sara: You know what happened to the Grinch on Christmas?

Joe: He had a heart attack.

Sara: His heart grew three sizes.

Joe: His blood pressure was probably thru the roof.

Sara: Christmas has a way of healing hearts.

*Sara lovingly kisses Joe on top of his head.*

**Sara:** That's why Christ came, to bring hope to a hurting world.

**Joe:** *(grinchy)* Christmas.

**Sara:** It's just once a year.

**Joe:** *Every* year.

**Sara:** Love you, Grandpa. I'll see you on Christmas Eve.

*Sara exits.*

*Lights down.*

## Scene 9 – Perfectionism

*John stands CS in a nice suit and tie. Next to him is a small table that has a handful of papers on it. He looks directly at the audience.*

**John:** What's stealing your Christmas? The presents...all the stuff? The schedule? Our schedules seemed to be packed full this time of year.

*Slight pause.*

**John:** Tradition? Maybe Christmas has lost its joy, because it's just something that we do...because it's something that we've always done.

*Slight pause.*

**John:** Is selfishness stealing your Christmas? Maybe the weight of the world that you insist on carrying? How about loss? Holding on so tight to the past that we can't embrace the future. Some of us won't participate in things we use to love, events that brought us joy, because of what they remind us of. Or who they remind us of. Christ came to bring us freedom. Abundant life. Christmastime is the celebration of the start of that freedom, yet this time of year still holds so many captives. Joy has been taken from so many. Why? What's stealing Christmas? Unbelief? Idolatry?

*Slight pause.*

**John:** Without Christmas, we have no hope. Without the birth of the Savior, we have no peace, joy, ...purpose. This holiday isn't just a time of celebration, although *it is* a celebration. It's a cornerstone belief of our faith. A virgin giving birth to a baby in Bethlehem. Christmas is about

Christ. And because it's about Christ, the Messiah, our Savior, because this is the time of year we celebrate our great rescuer's arrival, because the belief that our God has dwelled among us is imperative to our Christian faith...we have to guard it. We can't allow it to be taken. Now that might sound ridiculous to you. Christmas can't be stolen. December 25<sup>th</sup> comes whether we're ready for it or not. It comes whether we want it to or not. Whether we get all the presents wrapped or not. But do we miss the joy of Christmas? Do we come to dread the craziness that often comes this time of year rather than embrace all that Christmas is, the way we used to as children? Is the true meaning of what Christ came to do forgotten amidst the noise and the materialism that Christmas has become? Do we have time to pause and remember? Decide tonight to change that. Let go of anything that is hindering you from experiencing the joy that this season should bring.

*Slight pause.*

**John:** What is stealing your Christmas?

*Nancy enters from SL in a nice dress.*

**Nancy:** Perfectionism. The need to please everyone. Refusing to take a break or relax because you have to make sure you don't leave any room to make a mistake.

**John:** *(startled)* I didn't see you there. I didn't realize you were listening.

**Nancy:** You use to love the Christmas Eve sermon.

**John:** I still— *(pause, admittedly)* I don't. I dread it. This sermon is going to strike a wrong chord with someone. I should've rewritten it. *(Pause; John takes off his glasses and rubs his eyes.)*

The Browns are going to find that typo in the bulletin. Maybe I should reprint them, but then who's got time to fold them all. I finalized the worship set, but on the 26th you-know-who is going to call me to complain about the music.

**Nancy:** I thought we were just singing Christmas carols.

**John:** We are.

**Nancy:** You can't please everyone.

*The following dialogue is playful.*

*Throughout the following, John looks downstage as if looking into a mirror and adjusts his hair, his tie, his coat jacket, etc. John and Nancy should be clearly getting ready to attend the Christmas Eve service.*



**John:** *(teasing)* This coming from the woman who spends months—*months*—planning Christmas dinner. The woman who whips the mashed potatoes for exactly 32 seconds—

**Nancy:** I don't want them too runny or too lumpy—

**John:** You want them just right. Like the silverware.

**Nancy:** Here we go.

**John:** We use those forks once a year. Those silver forks, that you spend hours polishing.

**Nancy:** It's the Christmas china. We have to use them on Christmas.

**John:** I vote we get pizza, use paper plates and plastic forks.

**Nancy:** Absolutely not!

**John:** You'd rather be polishing silverware for a week before Christmas and cleaning the kitchen till New Year's. But dinner's going to be—

**Nancy:** Perfect.

**John:** *(playfully)* I was going to say good. Let's not over aim. I'm sure something will be undercooked or overdone or too cold or too hot.  
*(Teasing)* So, we should probably continue to worry about it.

**Nancy:** You're not the one with a critical mother-in-law, are you?

*Pause.*

**John:** I plead the 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Nancy:** Good.

**John:** We've been married 35 years; I think my mother is over the fact that you're not Italian.

**Nancy:** Doubtful. She still doesn't like my potatoes, and that's all I'm going to hear about as we unwrap our presents after dinner.

**John:** Can't please everyone.

**Nancy:** Good words to live by.

*Nancy picks up the sermon notes on the table and hands them to John.*

**Nancy:** Is this what God wants you to say?

**John:** Yeah. I think so.

*She stands behind John and faces him towards the audience, as if looking in a mirror.*

**Nancy:** You've looked into that mirror and given this sermon at least a dozen times.

*Nancy slightly adjusts John's tie.*

**John:** I just want it to be—

**Nancy:** Perfect. I know.

**John:** What's wrong with that?

**Nancy:** *(shrugging)* Is it stealing your Christmas?

*Lights down.*

## Scene 10

*CS there is a nativity scene. Zac is offstage center, if possible, in the center aisle of the audience. He has a camera on a tripod and is adjusting it, focusing it on the nativity scene.*

*Tara, Jane and Sam enter from behind the audience, down the center aisle.*

**Tara:** *(to Jane and Sam)* It's so good to see you guys. I'm glad you found the time to be here.

**Jane:** Well, our schedule officially went off the rails. We just didn't want to hate Christmas time anymore, you know. So, we made some changes, and the Christmas Eve service was one thing that we felt needed to be a priority.

*Tara and Jane continue walking all the way on stage. Sam stops and talks with Zac in the aisle.*

*Tara and Jane rearrange the manger scene as the boys talk.*

**Zac:** *(to Sam)* This year, I got a new camera with a remote control.

**Sam:** So, you actually get to be in the picture. Early Christmas present?

**Zac:** Yup.

**Sam:** That's a nice gift.

**Zac:** Well, we decided to exchange *one* gift each this year.

**Jane:** Really? Your tree has always been overflowing with gifts.

*Luke, Lea, and Rose enter from SR.*

*Lea pushes Rose out in her wheelchair.*

**Tara:** And that was fun too, but this year, we're trying to pull our attention away from the presents.

**Zac:** So, one nice gift each and not as much shopping.

**Luke:** I'm getting a MacBook.

**Tara:** Wha—who told you that?

**Luke:** *(smirking)* You just did.

*Lea goes to help Jane and Tara.*

**Jane:** Why do we always have to get the family picture around the nativity scene? There's never enough room. *(To Lea)* Here, move that Wiseman...let me just move this back here.

*Jane takes the manger and moves it to DSL.*

*Ruth, Nate, and Sara (and her family) enter from the center aisle. As they approach the stage, Tara and Jane help arrange them in a family-photo-pose.*

*Joe enters SR and stands next to Rose.*

**Joe:** Well, look who made it.

**Rose:** I'd rather have stayed home.

**Joe:** Me too.

**Rose:** It's freezing.

**Joe:** And this family picture always takes too long.

**Rose:** And you never look good in it either.

*Joe looks over at her.*

**Joe:** *(teasing)* You should talk.

*Rose smirks, teasingly annoyed.*

Joe: Well, if you just took that scowl off your face once in a while.

Rose: Grinch.

Joe: Scrooge.

Rose: *(teasingly)* Bah Hum bug.

Joe: Good to see you, sis.

*Joe wheels Rose closer to CS to allow her to be in the picture.*

*Bert and Cindy enter from SR. Bert is wearing a mistletoe hat. As they enter Lea and Tara make their way over to them.*

Cindy: Take that off.

Bert: No.

Cindy: You're not taking the picture with that on.

Bert: Why not?

Cindy: Because.

Tara: Dad, you can't wear that.

Lea: Mom, seriously, make him take it off.

Bert: Maybe this year it's time to switch things up a bit. Start a new tradition.

Rose: You looking ridiculous in the family photo is not a *new* tradition.

Bert: *(to Rose)* Thanks, mom.

Cindy: Just take it off. Please.

Bert: Fine.

*Bert takes off the hat. Cindy and Bert take their place in the family photo.*

Ruth: *(to Nate)* You can't stand there.

Nate: Why not?

Ruth: You're right in my way. No one can see my face.

Nate: Good. It's the perfect spot.

Ruth: Mom—

**Nate:** Fine.

*Nate moves behind Ruth.*

**Ruth:** You can't stand there either.

**Nate:** Why not?

**Ruth:** You're going to give me bunny ears.

**Nate:** So?

**Ruth:** Mom.

*Jane walks over to Nate and Ruth and makes them stand next to each other.*

*John, Liv, and Max enter from the center aisle.*

**Liv:** Great sermon, Pop.

*Liv gives her father a squeeze, then walks ahead to greet family and get in the family photo.*

*John and Max slowly walk up the center aisle as they talk.*

**John:** What did you think, Max?

**Max:** About the sermon?

**John:** Yeah.

**Max:** It got me thinking.

**John:** Good. Thinking's good.

**Max:** I know my change in philosophy disappoints you, sir.

**John:** I'd love to talk to you more about that sometime.

**Max:** Olivia thinks I've lost Christmas.

**John:** What do you think?

**Max:** I don't know. Is Christmas something that can be lost?

**John:** Hmm you *are* a philosophy student.

**Max:** *(smirking)* Sorry.

**John:** No, it's a good question. Is Christmas something that can be lost?

**Max:** Questions don't always have answers.

**John:** *(agreeing)* Some don't.

**Max:** If Christmas can't be lost, then it can't really be found.

*John and Max stop walking DSC.*

**John:** Christ can be found. And once you find Him, you'll find Christmas.

*John and Max look as if they continue to talk as they make their way onstage.*

**Zac:** Are we all in? Luke, squeeze in a bit more. Ok.

*Zac looks into the camera, adjusts it one more time, then joins the pose, holding his remote.*

**Zac:** Merry Christmas on three. One. Two—

**Sara:** I'm gonna sneeze. Hang on.

*Pause.*

**Sara:** Hang on.

*Pause.*

**Sara:** False alarm.

**Liv:** Didn't you sneeze in the picture last year?

**Sara:** My allergies. It's all these animals.

**Liv:** They're plastic.

*Sara switches places with Liv to get away from the plastic animals.*

**Zac:** *(referring to Sara)* Don't—you moved. Hang on.

*Zac goes back to the camera and adjusts it.*

**Zac:** *(looking thru the camera lens)* Wait a minute.

**Tara:** What?

**Zac:** There's no manger.

**Nancy:** What are you taking about?

*All characters realize that the manger is no longer part of the nativity scene.*

**Ruth:** The baby Jesus is lost.

**Luke:** Who steals the baby Jesus?

*Nate sees the manger DSL and starts moving towards it.*

**Nate:** I found him.

**Ruth:** Where was he?

**Nate:** *(sarcastically)* Asleep on the hay.

**Jane:** I moved him because I didn't think we were all going to fit in the shot.

**Rose:** Why do we have to get the picture around the manger every year?

**Tara:** If we didn't have to include the baby Jesus, we might all fit.

**Joe:** Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Seeing as how it is his birthday that we're celebrating, maybe we should keep him in the picture.

**John:** I agree. It might be uncomfortable. We might have to squeeze some other things out. We might have to fight to keep him in, but let's not forget that Jesus—

**Jane, Sara, Liv:** *(as if they've heard this saying a hundred times)* Is the reason for the season.

**Sara:** We know, Dad.

**John:** Without Christ, there is no Christmas.

*Luke goes to the manger and helps Nate pick it up. Together they place the manger back in the center of the stage and in the center of the photograph.*

**Luke:** Let's put him back where he belongs.

**Nate:** Center stage.

**John:** Good.

**Zac:** Ok. Places.

*Zac double checks the camera, then joins the pose, remote in hand.*

**Zac:** Merry Christmas on three. One. Two—

*Tim enters from SL.*

**Tim:** Hang on.

**Cindy:** What now?

**Tim:** I was hoping I'd make it in time for the annual family Christmas photo.

**Lea:** Tim!

*Cindy, Bert, Tara, and Lea run to embrace him.*

**Cindy:** I'm so glad you were able to make it home.

**Tim:** Me too. *(To Lea)* You look surprised.

**Lea:** I am.

**Tim:** An old friend gave me some advice.

**Lea:** What was that?

**Tim:** Christmas is about more than a good career move.

**Lea:** You have some wise friends.

**Tim:** I do. And a pretty good sister too.

*They all move back to the family photo pose.*

**Zac:** Are we ready?

**Sara:** Hang on.

*She acts like she's going to sneeze, then regains her composure.*

**Sara:** Ok.

**Zac:** Merry Christmas on three. One. Two—

*Bert puts on the mistletoe hat.*

*Nate gives Ruth bunny ears.*

**Zac:** Three.

**All:** Merry Christmas!

*Sara sneezes.*

*Lights Flash.*

*Lights Down. The End.*