

“Some Kind of Message”

1)

Music: “Winter Wonderland”. A young boy in pyjamas walks up the aisle trailing a large piece of computer paper and carrying a large pencil. He climbs on to the stage and sits on a staircase SL. As he speaks he pauses whenever he gets another idea.

Joe Dear Santa, this year for Christmas I would like....lots of sweets....some fluffy slippers and Harry potter pyjamas.....football boots and a full set of kita play station.....loads of computer games DVD’s and videos a TV for my bedrooma mobile phone.....a bike.....

He goes on writing, lost in thought. Music: Frosty the Snowman. The scene now is a department store with a Santa’s Grotto. People are rushing about with shopping bags, dragging children after them. Santa is absent. Children peer into it, look disappointed. Next to the grotto stands a lady in white reading a card. She smiles at them and invites them in, but it doesn’t seem to make any difference. Two children enter and peer into the grotto. As we see the department store and people rushing about, we hear the following voice-over

Voice Good afternoon everyone and welcome to Foster’s, the premier department store in the Midlands. Shopping with style and in comfort is our watchword and we’re here to help you. With two more days to go to Christmas, Foster’s is the place for your last minute bargains and gifts; we have gifts and gifts galore in our menswear and ladieswear departments, and a special floor devoted to everything you could possibly want at this time of the year. In addition to our 3 for 2 mix and match offer, the management of Foster’s would like to invite all our customers to BOGOFF - that is to ‘buy one get one free’ just for today. All items will be specially labelled so don’t forget to take advantage of this wonderful once-for-all offer, and remember to be sure to take your children along to our Santa’s Grotto, where the great man himself is waiting eagerly to see them.

The children come up to the grotto, peer in, see nothing inside and walk away

Just in case you will be missing your unique Foster’s experience on Christmas Day when, regretfully, we have to be closed for the day, then remember we will be open first thing on Boxing Day morning for the beginning of our January sales. A very happy Foster’s Christmas to all our customers.

Joe watches the action of the play from his stool, pausing from time to time to consider what is happening beneath him. Two children enter SL and peer into the grotto.

Rory Don’t you think we’re a bit old for this now?

Sarah You’re never too old for Santa, especially if you can get a present out of him

Rory I suppose so; come on, then, let’s go and find him

They approach the grotto and the lady reads from the card.

Snow Queen Good morning, children and welcome to Santa's Grotto. We are very sorry that Santa cannot be here today, as he is slightly indisposed...

Rory *(aside)* Probably had too much sherry and mince pies

Snow Queen *(stiffly)* Actually, it's a chill. It's very cold out this time of year and when you are going into centrally heated houses you warm up quickly only to get cold again as soon as you leave..if you see what I mean *(she reads)* Welcome to Santa's Grotto...oh, I've read that already... I am the Snow Queen

Sarah But there isn't any snow

Snow Queen That's not my problem, is it? *(she reads again)* I am the Snow Queen and Santa has asked me to represent him while he is away ill. We hope that this will not cause you too much inconvenience or distress and that Santa will be able to resume his duties in this store within a few days.

Rory Bit of a lame excuse if you ask me

Snow Queen It might seem a 'bit lame' to you sonny, but it happens to be the truth...well, almost the truth

Sarah Almost the truth?

Snow Queen Look, promise you won't split on me to anybody and I'll tell you the truth

She gathers them into her

Promise?

Rory OK I promise

She looks inquisitively at Sarah

Sarah I promise too

Snow Queen Good. Well, as you might possibly have guessed, I am not actually the Snow Queen. My name's Alice and I clean this place

Cheering is heard from the background and the Snow queen bows

When Santa went AWOL, the manager was distraught. What was he going to do for all those children who came to see Santa with their little excited eyes? How could we let them down like this? He had no idea; he was quite bereft, quite bereft. Then he thought, I know, we'll have a Snow Queen instead, some dolly bird who can dress up and stand in for him till he's better - he is actually ill, you know, that is the truth. Anyway, at the staff meeting, the manager was looking for volunteers. The 'dolly birds' didn't want anything to do with it,

snotty-nosed cheeky kids sitting on their knees and tickling them - no way. They are rude, some of them you know, bored and spoiled little brats, that is the children, not the 'dolly birds'....well, perhaps some of the 'dolly birds' too...anyway, never mind that. I hope you're not rude are you?

Rory No, certainly not

Sarah Not at all

Snow Queen Good. Well, he thought that nobody would offer until I put my hand up. I said I'd had a little theatrical experience - the fourth shepherd in my school nativity play, actually, and that was too long ago - and he reluctantly gave me the job. I've always wanted to dress up and pretend to be someone else, and I'm loving it. Alice Smith, the Snow Queen, think of that. I hope he doesn't get better for at least a week as I'm enjoying it so much; it's quite made my Christmas

Rory I think you're very good at it

Snow Queen Do you, really?

Sarah Oh yes, very good

Snow Queen Ooh, thank you very much, I'm sure....Well, better do what I'm supposed to do and ask you what you want for Christmas

They sit down on the bench next to her

Rory I don't know, really; we seem to have got most things

Sarah Maybe a bit too much if we were to tell you the truth

Snow Queen So, isn't there anything you want?

Rory I suppose I'd like to be really happy, you know excited about it all

Sarah I'd like to know if it's true

Snow Queen True?

Sarah You know, the story of Christmas...baby Jesus, the shepherds, angels, kings and all that

Snow Queen Well, of course it's true; didn't your parents tell you? Didn't your teachers show you?

Rory Our parents always seem to be too busy, and this time of the year they go mad, haring around shopping and going to lots of parties; they don't seem to have a

lot of time for us, and if you ask them what Christmas is about, they say it's about having a good time

Snow Queen That's a shame

Sarah Our teachers don't talk about Christmas any more; it's not correct in a multi-cultural society, they say, so they tell us about multi-cultural winter festivals instead

Snow Queen Oh dear

Rory It's a pity, 'cos I always liked the story, you know, it seemed really special and warm and loving

Snow Queen So it is...and it's true. Never you mind what anyone else tells you, it's absolutely true

Sarah But how do you know?

Snow Queen It's in the good book isn't it? That's what we've always been told since the very beginning. Don't you listen to any of those silly people; you read your good book and then you'll see it is true

Rory My Dad says the bible's just a load of fairy stories

Snow Queen No disrespect to your Dad, but he doesn't know what he's talking about. You listen to me. This is my Christmas present to you both. The secret ingredient for a happy Christmas and a happy life. *(she gives them a bible)*. Take it home and read it tonight before you go to sleep, and then you'll dream the most beautiful dream. When you wake up, you'll know

Sarah Is that your speciality, then, dreams?

Snow Queen Oh yes...and floors, and windows...here take it, and have a very Happy Christmas

Rory Thanks, we'll try, and you too

Sarah Happy Christmas

They take the book, look at her and leave. As they are walking away they talk to each other, and the Snow Queen keeps looking at them

Rory We'd better find Mum, get home, read this and get to bed

Sarah For sweet dreams...do you think we will?

Rory Will what?

Sarah You know, dream?

Rory Course we will; everybody dreams...trouble is we can never remember what we were dreaming about when we wake up

Sarah Well, perhaps we will this time...yeah, perhaps we will

They exit. The Snow Queen looks after them lovingly.

Snow Queen Multi-cultural winter festival? I ask you, what is the world coming to? Good God...I hope he is, with all this lot to put up with

She exits. Music: Celtic Dreams. Santa's Grotto and chairs are removed. The scene changes to heaven. There is a figure in white perched on a stool left of stage centre and a railed off area right of stage centre - this is the observatory. Two large railed gates separate the children from the stage, so they stand behind them. There is back light and smoke.

Rory Gosh, what's this place? Do you think we're dreaming?

Sarah Could be...I'm a bit scared....it's all white

Rory Don't worry; I'll look after you

We hear a voice-over

Voice Welcome to heaven! You have now arrived at the pearly gates. In order to make your entry to paradise swift and smooth, please obey the following instructions. Next to the gates you will see a panel. For the Boss, press one, for archangel Michael, press two, for Gabriel, press three, for St.Peter, press four, any other apostles, press five, and any enquiries which have not been covered already, press six. We hope your stay with us will be a long and happy one. Thank you!

Rory The boss, who's he?

Sarah You know!

Rory What, him? The top man...G-O-D?

Sarah Sssh! Yeah

Rory Blimey! We better not ring for him, then had we? Don't want to go right to the top straight away. Sounds a bit forward, doesn't it?

Sarah Yeah, let's try one of the others

Rory Which one?

Sarah What about archangel Michael, number two?

Rory OK, let's go for it

He rings the bell. A large bell sounds twice. The voice over returns

Voice Thank you for calling archangel Michael. Please push the gates and come into paradise, where he will attend you shortly

Sarah Oooh, very good; come on, let's go

Rory pushes the gates and as they open we hear music from the Hallelujah Chorus. The children are quite amused by this and open the gates a few times, and the music sounds on each occasion. Then we hear the voice again

Voice That's quite enough Hallelujah's for today thank you; do come in!

The children look a bit sheepish and stop playing with the gates. A woman with a brush is sweeping the floor silently. The figure on the platform has his head bowed in a very sad posture. The children creep around him but there is no response. They look puzzled. Michael enters SL all in a rush. He is dressed in white with coloured socks and a gold waistcoat.

Michael Ah, there you are. So sorry to keep you waiting

The children move away quickly and come to meet him

I'm Michael; you rang me I believe?

Rory Well yes, if you don't mind

Michael Not at all, that's what we're here for

Sarah I'm Sarah

Rory I'm Rory

Michael Pleased to meet you; always glad to welcome new friends. Have you met Gabe yet?

Sarah No, we've only just arrived

Michael You've just got to meet Gabe. Go back outside the gates and ring number three; that's the quickest way to find him

Rory opens the gate. Hallelujah music once again, and rings the bell. The bell sounds three times, and we hear the voice-over once again

Voice Thank you for calling archangel Gabriel. Please push the gates and come into paradise where he will attend you shortly

A lot of noise ensues and Gabriel, dressed in white with a reversed baseball cap, multi-coloured waist-coat, coloured socks and sunglasses enters SR on a skateboard

Gabriel Yo....right on....you called, man

Michael This is Gabriel

Gabriel I'm cool

Michael Gabe, this is Rory and Sarah

Gabriel Right on...lay five on me, man...and you, little lady

Gabriel performs hand greeting trick with both children

Far out

Sarah Far out?

Michael He's about as 'far out' as you can get, aren't you, Gabe?

Gabriel I'm cool

Rory *(whispers)* Is he on something?

Michael Oh yes, he's on cloud nine; it's over there *(points outwards)*. He lives on it all the time, don't you, Gabe

Gabriel Yo

Rory And who is this lady? *(he points at the figure sweeping)*

Michael Oh, that's only Martha. There's no need to sweep up here because nothing ever gets dirty, if you know what I mean. There's no dirt of any kind in heaven. But as they say.....old habits die hard. OK Martha, that's enough for today, off you go

The woman looks up, shrugs her shoulders and exits

Sarah We hope you didn't mind us ringing for you when we arrived. We didn't want to ring, you know number one..

Michael The boss? You should have done. Would have done him good to get down from his perch; he's been up there moping too long

Rory What him.... him..moping?

Michael Oh yes..he gets very depressed at this time of the year

The figure on the platform stirs, and lifts his head

The Boss I'm depressed

Michael Coming up to Christmas down there, he's absolutely inconsolable. He thinks nobody's ever listened to him, you see

The Boss Nobody ever listens to me

Michael He's been trying to tell them for centuries, but nobody seems interested

The Boss I've been trying to tell them for ages but nobody wants to know

Michael He can't understand why they won't listen

The Boss Why won't they listen? This isn't the way

Rory What isn't the way?

Michael Their way, that lot down there, where you've just come from. They don't think of anything but themselves, and it's gone on for centuries - rowing, fighting, all sorts of violence, greed, and lots of horrible things like that - it just chokes him up

The Boss Rowing, fighting and all sorts of violence....it chokes me up

Michael He's tried everything over the years, but it's not worked

The Boss I've tried everything

Michael Sent them people to help them, save them, warn them, but they never took any notice

The Boss Never took any notice

Michael They just carried on and on and on

The Boss They just carried on and on and on

Michael You see, he's full of love...

The Boss I'm full of love

Michael Shall I tell them?

The Boss Yes, you tell them

Michael beckons them away

- Michael** He's full of love, always has been, ever since the beginning, always will be. But it's no good being full of love if you haven't got anyone to give it to, to share it with, is it? He was looking for someone to love and someone to love him, that's why he did it
- The Boss** That's why I did it
- Rory** Did what?
- Michael** You know, made everything in the beginning
- Rory** Oh, of course
- Michael** Then everything went a bit pear-shaped, and they dumped him, just like that
- The Boss** Just like that
- Michael** And, well, it's been going on like that ever since; he keeps trying to be good to them and they don't want it
- The Boss** They don't want it
- Michael** Anyway, things got so bad that a few years ago, he decided to play his trump card - he sent the Lad down to them
- Sarah** The Lad?
- Michael** Yes, the Lad, his only Son
- The Boss** My lad
- Michael** He thought they're bound to listen to him. He sent Gabe down to find a nice couple to be his parents, and he came up with two smashers
- Sarah** Mary and Joseph?
- Michael** Absolutely
- Gabriel** Man, that Joe was one cool dude, and the princess, what a lady! I went down to lay it on her, you know, what the Boss Man wanted. I said, lady, you're gonna be the mother of the son of God. She said, right on, let's get it together. Then I kinda interrupted my man's dreaming. He said, "what's happening?". I said, Hey Joe, your chick's gonna have a baby and it ain't yours, but we want you to look after him anyway. You know what he said to that, you know what he said? OK, OK, that's what he said. Man, that's cool, real cool
- Rory** So that was the first Christmas?

- Michael** Right. And you know what happened next? They looked after the Lad so well, he grew up with them and then left them to tell everyone about the Boss, but they ignored him and strung him up. It was terrible
- The Boss** Terrible
- Gabriel** Just horrible, man
- Sarah** Good Friday, eh?
- Michael** Indeed
- Rory** But what about Easter?
- Michael** Well, that more than made up for it of course, and eventually the Lad came back up here to us; mind you, he's not the person he was these days either. He seems to be sad lots of the time as well
- Rory** We thought...you know, we've been told..that this was supposed to be a place of peace and light, where everybody is happy all the time
- Michael** You're right, of course, and it is...but you see, when you love someone very much, and they dump you, and it happens time and time again, you get, you know, hurt, and he's hurt, really hurt
- The Boss** I'm really hurt
- Michael** And the Boss feels kind of responsible, that makes it harder for him
- The Boss** I'm responsible
- Sarah** Responsible?
- Michael** Yes, because he made them, you see, in the first place
- The Boss** I made them
- Rory** But surely, things can't be that bad?
- Gabriel** Hell no....Gee, I musn't keep saying that word...Man it's great up here...far out
- Michael** But not down there. And it all gets a lot worse at this time.
- Sarah** Why?

Michael Well, down there, this is the time of the year when it's coming up to Christmas, and they all go mad trying to have a good time and forget what it is all about

The Boss They forget

Michael They forget about the Boss and the Lad and what it's meant to be for

Rory What all of them?

Michael Most of them

Sarah But can't he fix it if he made them all?

Michael Not this he can't

The Boss Not this I can't

Michael He can't control them, you see; this isn't a police state like some places down there

Rory But can't he help them, you know sort of encourage them to think of things his way?

The Boss No, I can't

Michael Look, you can't make someone love you, you know. They are free to choose to love him or not, and they don't...most of them....any more

The Boss They don't love me any more

Michael They just turned away from him

The Boss They turned away

Michael Maybe you don't believe us. Would you like to see?

Sarah Well, yes....yes

Rory Sure

Michael Allow me to demonstrate. Please come with me to the observatory where you can see everything that's going on down there.

Gabriel Yo

Michael Tonight is Christmas Eve.

They move to the observatory

All over the world tonight children will be trying to get to sleep and dreaming of what will happen tomorrow.

Music: Celtic Dreams. A group of children enter SR; two sit on coloured blocks

Child 1 I can't wait

Child 2 I can't wait

Child 3 I can't wait

Child 4 I can't wait - for what?

Child 1 Christmas, stupid

Child 4 Oh yeah, Christmas

The other three look at each other.

Child 1 You go to bed, sleep a bit and then there's presents

Child 2 You get up, have your breakfast, then there's more presents

Child 3 When you've opened them, someone else comes with more

Child 4 Presents?

Children 1-3 Yeah

Child 5 Yeah. So what've you bought your Mum, then?

Child 1 Bought my Mum? That's not the point; it's what she's bought me, that's what counts

Child 5 But I thought it was about giving

Child 2 Yeah, it's about them giving things to us

Child 4 So aren't we supposed to give them anything?

Child 1 Are you sad or what? Only little things

Child 3 I've got my Dad some socks

Child 1 Have you?

Child 3 Yeah; someone got them for me last year, but I didn't like them, so I saved them ; they'll do him; he's not fussy

Child 2 Well, that's all right then

Child 3 Yeah

Child 1 I want a computer and a TV for my bedroom

Child 2 You'll need games and videos as well

Child 1 Oh yeah; well I'll get them too, I expect

Child 3 And sweets, we'll have to have lots of sweets

Children 1-3 Yeah

Child 2 I can't wait

The lights fade and they exit. Music Celtic Dreams

Michael As you can see, the problem is fairly widespread

The Boss Widespread

Rory Gosh, yes

Sarah But it's not everywhere, is it?

Michael Look and see

Another group of children enter SL in pyjamas with duvets, and attempt to settle themselves down. Music: Celtic Dreams

Child 6 What I want is a big gun, with flashing lights, that makes a lot of noise, and fires things at people - yeah.

Child 7 Sega Mega-Drive and those games where you can chase little figures and zap people, just like this - kapow!

Child 8 A Manchester United shirt to wear with David Beckham on the back and look really cool.

Child 9 No, Liverpool and Michael Owen

Child 10 Arsenal and Thierry Henry

- Child 11** Derby County and Chris Riggott
- All** Who?
- Child 11** Derby County - come on you Rams!
- All** Ugh!
- Child 9** Barbie and Sindy dolls, to fuss and dress and cuddle.
- Child 10** Videos and DVD's
- Child 9** Barbie slippers
- Child 11** Sweets, chocolates, cakes, biscuits, turkey, stuffing, Christmas pudding and lot and lots of food.
- Child 9** Barbie pyjamas and pillow case
- All** Ugh, give over!
- Child 6** Tomorrow
- Child 7** Yes, tomorrow

The children slowly exit, and the light fades. Music: Celtic Dreams

- Michael** So you see what I mean...it's a disaster
- The Boss** A disaster
- Rory and Sarah go round to the Boss*
- Rory** Excuse me, you don't mind if we say something, do you?
- The Boss** Not at all, oh not at all
- Rory** Forgive us if you think we're speaking out of turn but we're not all like that you know
- The Boss** Pardon
- Sarah** Yeah, we're not all like those you've shown us down there
- Rory** We're not all horrible, and greedy and selfish; we do try to be good
- Sarah** And we have tried to talk to you in case you hadn't noticed

- The Boss** *(embarrassed)* Well, I.....
- Rory** Don't tell me you hadn't noticed
- The Boss** Well, yes, I had noticed...
- Sarah** Well don't go getting yourself depressed all the time; it's not so bad
- Rory** It just needs fixing, and you're the people to do it
- Michael** We've tried to, so often but we've got nowhere
- The Boss** We've got nowhere
- Sarah** Well try again
- Rory** What they need is some kind of message to convince them and show them
- Sarah** And you are supposed to be the messengers aren't you...aren't you?
- Michael** Well, yes....
- Gabriel** Sure thing
- Rory** Well, then get on with it and don't be giving up...shame on you *(he turns to the Boss)* and on you!

The Boss looks deflated

- Michael** OK, let's try then, since you are so convinced. Let's have a go at that last little scenario. I think there might be a case for a little intervention here. A job for you, Gabe; how're you fixed?
- Gabriel** I'm cool man
- Michael** And see if Joe and the princess will help you with at other lot
- Gabriel** Right on
- Michael** Now then, what about this little problem?

Two children enter from either side of the stage are speaking to each other through mobile phones

Now this one's a bit interesting. Ange has been down there working on it for a while, very quietly, and it might be time for me to give her a hand. So if you'll excuse us for a while; we'll not be long

Gabriel Far out, man...I'm on my way...hit me

He goes through the routine with Rory and Sarah again. The lights fade as he and Michael exit. "Hallelujah" music as they open the gates. Spot lights on the two children, talking to each other on the phones

Child 12 Are you coming?

Child 13 Dunno; depends on who's going to be there

Child 12 Everyone's going to be there, silly, you'll have to come. It's Christmas

Child 13 I'll see what my Mum and Dad say; they'll have to come and pick me up

Child 12 They'll do it; just make a fuss, tell them they don't really love you, they don't care if you're the only one left out, and all that rubbish; that always works, especially at this time of year when they're feeling guilty

Child 13 Oh, all right. Is Angela coming?

Child 12 Angela's got to go to church; then she said she might come afterwards

Child 13 Church? What's she want to go there for?

Child 12 Apparently, she's a regular; goes every week. A bit of a dark horse, if you ask me; nobody ever knew that

Child 13 Why? Nobody else goes

Child 12 She says it's really important, God and Jesus and all that bit; she said that's what Christmas is really about

Child 13 Don't be daft; Christmas is for getting things and having a good time

Child 12 Yeah. Ok, I'll see you at the party then

They exit. Music: Spinning Around (Kylie Minogue). Lots of children in party clothes run on to the sanctuary and start dancing to music. Angela enters in ordinary clothes afterwards and stands apart from the others. One or two of them come up to her and tease her.

Child 12 Good, isn't it?

Child 13 It's OK, yeah

Child 12 What're you getting?

Child 14 Oh, not much, a CD player for my room, some computer games, new boots, clothes, Pokemon stuff, and one of those scooters

Child 15 I'm getting one of those dogs, you know, a pet you don't have to feed

Child 13 What do you want one of them for?

Child 15 Everybody else's having one

Child 12 I wanted one of the new Play Stations; my Mum queued for hours and they said they ran out; I reckon she didn't go early enough. I'll look daft now 'cos I haven't got one

Child 14 What do you do with all the stuff you don't like?

Child 15 Take it back and get something else

Child 13 Angela came, then

Child 12 Yeah, eventually! She's really sad, she is

They look over their shoulders at Angela, who stands alone. Michael then enters in ordinary clothes with a large box wrapped in Christmas paper. He goes over to Angela, and is seen talking to her; she points him in the direction of the others. He approaches

Child 13 Who are you? What are you doing here?

Michael My name is Michael; I saw the door open and I came in

Child 14 What's that? (*points at the present*)

Michael It's a special delivery

Child 15 Are you a postman?

Michael Not exactly

Child 12 Some sort of messenger?

Michael You could say that

Child 13 Who sent you ? What is it? Who is it for?

Michael For all of you

Child 14 All of us? Don't be daft

Michael All of you, for everyone, to share, it's a present

Child 15 We can't share it

- Michael** Yes you can
- Child 12** Perhaps it's that Play Station; My Mum got it after all
- Michael** No, it's not; it's far more special than that
- Child 13** It's a present, OK; that's what you get at Christmas
- Michael** No, a present is what you give; it's a token of love, to make someone happy and remind them you love them
- Child 14** No, it's not; people give us presents to keep us quiet
- Michael** A present is what you give, and this is for all of you
- Child 15** You want to wake up, mate and live in the real world
- Child 12** Come on, let's open my Play Station
- Child 13** Our Play Station if you don't mind

While this is going on, Michael withdraws unnoticed. The children tear the box apart and eventually they find a crucifix in it

- Child 14** What's this? Hey, what's this? *(he turns round to look at the angel, who has disappeared)* He's gone! Where's he gone to?
- Child 15** What is this?
- Child 12** It's one of those cross things; and there's a card with it *(she takes out the card and reads it)* "Look at me"! That's a bit daft, isn't it?
- Child 13** What's it all about?
- Child 14** Dunno; Angela'll know. Angela! Come over here!

Angela approaches

- Child 15** Here, Angela, what's this all about?
- Angela** It's a crucifix
- Child 12** And?
- Angela** It's Our Lord on the cross, dying
- Child 13** Well, what's that got to do with Christmas?

Angela Christmas is about Jesus coming, the Son of God; God speaking to us through him. That's why he came, to die; look at his arms, stretched out, like a big hug for all the world; he loves everyone everywhere

Child 14 Looks as if it hurt him quite a bit

Child 15 Course it did, silly, look, he's got nails in his hands

All children Ugh!

Angela takes the cross from them and holds it reverently

Angela This is the most beautiful present there ever could be; this is pure love, pure giving, wanting nothing back for himself. This is what God wants to say to us at Christmas and every day - 'look at me, look at my love, listen to me, and live'.

Child 12 takes it from her

Child 12 Thanks for the sermon. So who was that bloke that gave it to us, then?

Child 13 I've never seen him in my life before, but he seemed to know you

They move slowly away from Angela, who quietly withdraws

Child 14 Do you think it was some kind of message; somebody trying to tell us something

Child 15 Like, maybe we got it all wrong; maybe we missed the point of it all, Christmas?

Child 12 He didn't deny it when I asked him was he a messenger, did he?

Child 13 Maybe he was one of those "angels", you know

Child 14 An "Angela", don't you mean?

They all laugh

Child 15 Yeah, an 'Angela' just like you..... hey, she's gone...she's gone

They turn round, and she has disappeared. They look intently at the crucifix, and then up to the sky, and slowly walk away. Music: Stolen Kiss. Angela enters heaven with Michael. "Hallelujah" music as they go through the gates. They take their coats off to reveal their white garments underneath

Michael What do you think of that then?

Rory Good, you did a great job. We told you not to give up

Sarah Yes, very impressive, and Ange. Fancy their never guessing who she was

The Boss Nice one, Ange; you're a star

She goes over to him for a hug

Angela Thank you, kind sir...thank you very much

Michael Ange, this is Rory and Sarah, our two new friends

Angela Pleased to meet you

They shake hands

Michael But will it make any lasting difference, that's the thing?

Rory Who knows? You tried anyway

Michael Yeah, we tried. I hope the boss is pleased. I hate it when he's depressed and sad

Sarah I'm sure it will have cheered him up a little bit

The Boss It's cheered me up a bit

Michael Well, let's wait and see, shall we, and have a look at how Gabe, Joe and the Princess are getting on

Lights up on the children SL. They are walking about and they see Mary entering, obviously pregnant. She stands alone to one side. Music: Away in a Manger

Child 4 That lady looks a bit lonely and worried

Child 1 Leave her alone; she's nothing to do with us

Child 5 No, let's go and see her

Child 4 & 5 go up to her. The other three remain behind

Child 4 Hello

Mary Hello

Child 5 Are you all right?

Mary Just a bit cold

Child 4 Here, have my coat

He puts his coat round her

Mary Thanks; you're very kind

Child 5 What are you having for Christmas, then?

Mary Me, oh, something really special; the most special thing you could possibly have

Child 4 What's that, then?

Mary I'm having a son

She pats her stomach

Child 5 Oh, that's nice

Mary Yes it is

The other children look agitated

Child 1 What are they doing?

Child 2 God knows; I've told them not to talk to strangers, but you know what they're like, trusting, simple.

Child 3 Oi, what are you doing?

Child 4 shouts back

Child 4 This lady's having a son for Christmas

Others A what?

Child 5 A baby. Isn't that wonderful?

Others Yeah

Child 1 Not as good as a telly, though

Child 2 Nor a computer

Child 3 With games of course

Child 2 Of course

Child 4 When's the baby going to be born?

- Mary** Soon now, Christmas Day
- Child 5** You'd better get yourself to hospital
- Mary** Well, I can't just yet. We've got to go on a long journey, and my husband's gone to pack.
- Child 4** How far?
- Mary** About 80 miles
- Child 5** Blimey! And all the buses and trains will be packed
- Mary** We'll have to walk I'm afraid; we've got no money
- Child 4** Look, keep my coat; you'll be back this way, after, won't you? You can let me have it then
- Child 5** Take my scarf; you'll need wrapping up if you've such a long way to go
- Mary** Thank you; you're very kind
- Child 4** Excuse me; I hope you don't mind our being personal, but how did you know it was going to be a boy?
- Child 5** Did you have one of those "scan" things?
- Mary** No, I was told
- Child 4 & 5** Told?
- Mary** A little voice inside my head
- Child 4** Like some kind of message?
- Mary** Something like that
- Child 5** Did it tell you what to call him too?
- Mary** Yes it did, actually
- Child 4** What's his name going to be, then?
- Mary** Guess
- Child 5** You ought to call him, Jesus, that's a good name for Christmas
- Mary** Yes it is, a very good name

Child 4 Well, goodbye then, and look after yourself

Mary Goodbye, and thank you for being so kind

Child 5 No, it was nothing, really

The children go back to the others; Mary stands alone as they look back at her.

Michael Now this looks as though it has real possibilities. She's really good, you know, the princess

Rory What about Gabe?

Michael Don't worry about him, he'll appear right on cue. He always does. You might not recognise him in his formal self, though

Sarah Formal?

Michael Yeah, when the Boss wants him to be all formal, he can do it, you know with all those proclamations and things. They probably wouldn't get it if he was all hip and cool like he normally is

Rory They might you know

Michael Might what?

Rory They might get the message if he was all hip

Michael Do you really think so?

Sarah Yeah

Joseph comes to collect her they stand behind the crib. The two children rejoin the others.

Child 1 What were you two doing?

Child 4 Just trying to help that lady

Child 5 She's going to have a baby and she's got a long way to go

Child 2 You shouldn't talk to strangers, you know;

Child 4 She wasn't strange; she was nice

Child 5 She was lovely; she'll be a good Mum

Child 3 Where's your coat

Child 4 I gave it to her

Child 5 I gave her my scarf

Child 1 What?

Child 4 She was cold

Child 1 But she was a stranger; she could be anybody

Child 2 What's your Mum going to say?

Child 3 Look you shouldn't be doing this sort of thing; we've got better things to be thinking about than the likes of her; it's Christmas you know.

They walk off

Michael Come on, Gabe, time to do the business; this is where he goes all formal

Gabriel appears SL and stands in the spotlight in front of the five children

Child 1 Blimey, what's that?

Child 2 It's not Santa, is it?

Child 3 No, silly

Gabriel Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy. Today a Saviour has been born for you; he is Christ the Lord. You will know him because he is lying in manger.

Child 4 A baby? You don't think it's that baby do you?

Child 1 What baby?

Child 5 You know the one that nice lady was going to have at Christmas

Child 2 Nah, it couldn't be

Child 4 Let's go and see

Child 3 Nah, let's stay here; I'm frightened

Child 5 No, look, he seems to be pointing us somewhere; let's follow

Gabriel beckons them . They move over to where Mary and Joseph are. Gabriel exits

Child 4 Blimey, it is her; she's done it. Look she's still got my coat

They peer into the “crib”

Child 5 And my scarf; he’s a bit special isn’t he, our Christmas boy

Child 1 Look, we shouldn’t be hanging around here; its’ Christmas you know

Child 2 Yeah, we’ve got to get back home for the presents

Child 4 No, no stay; this is the present

Child 3 That’s a baby not a teletubby, you know

Child 5 No, she’s right; he’s the present. This is Jesus, this baby. This is what Christmas is for, for him

Child 4 This is the message for us...now ...today...for always

They stand around the ‘crib’ and look up. Lights fade on them. Music: Away in a Manger. Lights come up on heaven

Michael Well, the penny seems to have dropped

Rory Looks as though they got the point all right

The Boss Do you really think so?

Sarah Sure

Michael You never can tell you know. They’re so fickle and can change their minds in an instant. Once they see something they want, they could forget about this all too easily

Sarah Well, I won’t forget it

Michael But you’re up here now aren’t you; you can see the truth of everything here. it’s much more difficult down there; too many distractions, too much going on. No time to think about what really matters

Rory We’re not all like that you know; I think you’re being a bit hard on us

Michael Am I? Well, I’m sorry if you think so. Let’s see how the others are getting on. Gabe’s gone over there now and taken a few friends with him. He’ll have to be at his best to pull this one off

The scene returns SL where the 6 children enter and are asleep under their duvets. Music: Suila Buin. Gabriel enters with a large decorated box in his hands. They all stir and take notice.

Child 8 What's that?

Child 9 I don't know (*getting up and peering*)

Child 10 Is it him?

Child 11 Who, Jesus?

Child 10 No, silly, Santa.

Child 6 I don't think so, it doesn't look like him

Child 7 No beard, or red cloak

Child 8 (*approaches Gabriel*) Who are you?

The other children gather round him.

Gabriel It doesn't matter. You'll find out, soon enough. I've brought you something (*holds out the box - children all make a grab for it*)

Child 9 It's for me!

Child 10 No, it's mine

Chorus of 'mine' from all.

Gabriel No, it's for all of you, to share

Chorus Share?

Gabriel Yes share - open it

They open the box and take out one gift at a time

Child 6 (*looks at box in surprise*) Peace, peace? You can't shoot people with that, you know, blast them away?

Gabriel No you can't. This is peace; the sort the world can't give

Child 6 But what am I supposed to do with it?

Another child enters, SR very simply dressed

Child 16 You can give it to me

Child 6 Who are you?

Child 16 I am from Sarajevo; I have lost my home; my mother and father are dead; there is no end to the violence, to our suffering. Please give us peace.

Child 6 looks puzzled and gives him the present

Child 7 *(takes out gift)* Com-*passion?* What's that?

Gabriel It's feeling for someone, wanting to understand them, and help them?

Child 7 You don't zap them, then?

Gabriel No, you don't.

Child 2 So, what do I do with it?

Another child enters SR

Child 17 May I have it, please? I am from Ethiopia, and I am starving; the world has forgotten us now; too many other things to think about. Three million of us will die before Easter if we don't get food. Please will you help us?

Gives him the present

Child 8 *(takes out gift)* Kindness - kindness? Can I wear it?

Gabriel Oh yes, you can

Child 8 Will it make me look good?

Gabriel Yes, but only on the inside

Child 8 Won't anyone else notice?

Gabriel It's better if they don't. The Father sees everything that is done in secret. He will notice and reward you.

Child 8 But what can I do with it?

Another child enters SR

Child 18 Please share it with me. I have no friends. Everyone calls me names, and avoids me. Please be my friend.

Gives her the gift

Child 9 *(takes out gift)* Love - what no doll to cuddle?

Gabriel No, only people; the good thing about them is that if you love them enough, they love you back.

Child 9 But who will love me back?

Child 16 I will

Child 17 I will

Child 18 I will

Child 10 *(takes out gift)* Warmth - not a video? Can I watch it?

Gabriel Yes - it can work wonders on a person?

Child 10 On who?

Another child approaches SR

Child 19 On me. I'm lonely and cold; I walk the streets at night. I have nowhere to lay my head; nowhere to call my own. I need warmth and comfort.

Holds out his hand, and Child 10 gives him the present

Child 11 *(takes out gift)* Joy - joy, what is that?

Gabriel It's the greatest happiness we can know.

Child 11 Can I eat it?

Gabriel Yes, but you will never be greedy. It will burst out of you; you will not be able to keep it for yourself.

Child 11 But who can I give it to?

Gabriel To your family, your friends, to everyone, always. It's a gift from me, for you to give to them. Don't forget to give it, will you, all of you.

All *(looking at the Gabriel)* No, we won't

Michael Nice one Gabe; now let's wait and see

They all settle down to sleep, and Gabriel disappears, leaving the box. Children 16-19 move back SR and stand just out of the light. After a while, the children stir, slowly arise and look at each other.

Child 6 I had the strangest dream last night; you wouldn't believe it.

- Child 7** So did I
- Child 8** So did I
- Child 9** Me too, but it was only a dream
- Child 10** Yes, a dream, couldn't be true
- Child 11** Of course not, only a dream

They notice the box

- Child 6** A present?
- Child 7** Yes
- Child 8** *(makes to grab it, then stops)* Oh, sorry. After you
- Child 9** No, after you

They slowly approach and take off the lid, and bring out the gift.

- Child 10** There is a message on it, look
- Child 11** Put me where I belong, not in a bed of straw, but in your heart, for ever

The children undo the gift and it is the baby Jesus. As they go towards the crib SC, they notice children 16-19

- Child 6** Don't I know you?
- Child 16** I don't think so
- Child 6** I'm sure I've met you somewhere.
- Child 16** Maybe - I don't have many friends
- Child 6** Be my friend - come and stay with me for Christmas.
- Child 16** OK - thank you
- Child 7** *(to child 17)* I know you
- Child 8** *(to child 18)* I know you
- Child 9** *(to child 19)* I know you
- Children 6-9** Stay with us, be our friends *(the other children come out to join them)*

Child 11 carries the baby and places it in a conveniently situated crib. As the children exit together SL, they notice Joe on his staircase. He notices them, looks at them, then at the large list in his hand. Presently he screws up the list, throws it away and exits with the others.

Music: Christmas Bells. The scene switches to heaven. The Boss stands up

The Boss Yesss!

Gabriel returns. He gives high fives to everyone, and they all congratulate each other during the music.

Rory Told you

Sarah See, we were right after all

Gabriel Right? Right on...

Michael Well, it would appear that all is not completely lost. Thank you for persuading us not to give up

Rory That's OK

Sarah It's a pleasure!

Michael And thank you for making the Boss happy again; he'll be all optimistic now

The Boss Thank you for making me happy; I'm all optimistic now

Music: 'Little Town' (Cliff Richard). Rory and Sarah gather with the Boss, Angela, Michael and Gabriel around the crib. They look into it and point to the Boss, indicating that the baby is his. As the music proceeds, they say farewell to the children, who remain on stage while the others wave and go back through the gates. Back light on and smoke. Presently Rory and Sarah exit SL. All the other children enter SR and SL and gather round the crib, looking down into it. Michael, Gabriel and Angela enter from the back and stand in the observatory. At the words, "the Christmas angels", the children all look up and the angels raise their hands. The music changes, the angels exit and the children start to greet each other around the crib, before leaving the stage and greeting the audience on their way to the back of the hall. The Santa's Grotto scene is re-assembled. A man in a suit enters SR and stands next to Santa's Grotto. Rory and Sarah enter SL after him. Music: Jingle Bells

Rory Do you think she'll be here? We've got to tell her

Sarah It's so strange...she said we'd have a dream and we did, we both had the same one, and it was so vivid...and we can remember it all

Rory Yeah, I didn't want to wake up, did you?

Sarah No, especially when it was all happy at the end. I love happy endings; you hope they'll go on for ever

They go over to the grotto and see the man

Rory Excuse me, is the Snow Queen here?

Man Snow queen? I have no idea what you are talking about young man. This, as you can see, is Santa's Grotto, only he's not here at the moment. Sadly, he is indisposed. I am the store manager. It is my painful duty to stand here and apologize on his behalf to all the children who come here, and to promise that Santa will definitely be here tomorrow, even if it kills him (*under his breath*) even if I kill him

Sarah We know that....we came yesterday and spoke to the Snow Queen instead

Man I beg your pardon?

Rory There was a lady here, dressed as a Snow Queen; she told us that Santa was ill and that she was taking his place, and asked us what we wanted for Christmas

Sarah Then she owned up and said that she wasn't really the Snow Queen, just pretend, you know

Man I fear I don't

Rory Yes, you do, come on, you can share your little secret with us; we know already

Man Know what?

Sarah That the Snow Queen is really a lady who cleans called Alice. She volunteered to be the Snow Queen after Santa got ill and you were looking for a replacement, only the 'dolly birds' didn't want to do it

Man Do what?

Rory You, know the 'dolly birds' you wanted to be the Snow Queen, only they wouldn't...couldn't be bothered, so Alice volunteered and she was loving it, she said

Sarah Yeah, she was really loving it, and she was so nice to us. She gave us a bible and told us to read it

Rory And then we'd have lovely dreams...so we did

Sarah And we both had the same dream..it was so lovely and happy and we wanted to come back to tell her, to thank her

Man Sir, madam, do forgive me but you must be mistaken. There is no Snow Queen here and there never has been, nor do we have a janitorial employee called

Alice. We do have Santa, when he is able (*under his breath*) and can be bothered to turn up. And I have it on good authority that his, eh, indisposition, will be cured tomorrow, so we can all look forward to seeing him then, just in time for Christmas .

Rory So there never was a Snow Queen?

Man No sir

Sarah And no Alice?

Man No madam...might I suggest that you dreamed a little longer than you first thought...good day to you

They walk away from him disappointed. He exits SR. They move to the centre

Rory I can't believe we dreamt all that, can you?

Sarah No, we didn't....she was here....we saw her...we did

Rory Yes, we really did....I know my own eyes...Well, let's go home

He puts his hand in his pockets

Hey, what's this?

He pulls out a crucifix

Where did that come from? I never put it there? Who put it there? Whatever does it mean?

Sarah I know what it means...we weren't dreaming at all...what it is is some kind of message

Rory Some kind of message?

Sarah Yes, some kind of message..... only it's for you and for me and for everyone

Rory Gosh, that's some kind of message all right. What do you think?

Sarah What do I think? You know what I think

She looks at him and gives him the high fives

Both Right on!

Music: 'Little Town', followed by 'Troika'

END

Impact
Theatre
Company

Some Kind of Message

by

Frank Daly

Some Kind of Message

A play in one Act

Copyright:

Frank Daly

December 2002

Characters

Joe

Shoppers

Rory

Sarah

Snow Queen

The Boss

Martha

Michael

Gabriel

Child 1

Child 2

Child 3

Child 4

Child 5

Child 6

Child 7

Child 8

Child 9

Child 10

Child 11

Child 12

Child 13

Child 14

Child 15

Dancers

Angela

Mary

Joseph

Child 16

Child 17

Child 18

Child 19

Store Manager