

THE REAL MIRACLE

By Carol B. Eckel

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PUBLISHED BY
ELDRIDGE PUBLISHING COMPANY

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STORY OF THE PLAY

What is the Christmas miracle? The Angry Man feels the only miracle is that we are still alive. The Tired Woman feels the miracle is that we still bother with the holiday. The Greedy Boy believes the miracle is getting anything you want. The Sad Woman has stopped believing in the miracle. The Girl-in-White enters and the characters find a different miracle of Christmas, they light their candles and stand beside her. Is the miracle friendship, laughter, giving, or hope? The most important miracle is love from which all the candles are lit. A short, beautiful pageant with few lines to learn.

TIME: The present.

SETTING: Four stools in front of a curtained backdrop; a rocking chair SL front.

PLAYING TIME: 15 minutes.

PROPERTIES: Five candles; newspaper; several packages and shopping bags; sheet of paper and pencil; small Christmas tree with ornaments; large book; perfume bottle; school books; baby doll wrapped in blanket.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(5 m, 10 f)

THE GIRL
RACHEL: Age 12.
THE ANGRY MAN
MAUREEN: Age 12.
THE TIRED WOMAN
JIM: Age 16.
THE GREEDY BOY
TINA: Age 16.
THE SAD WOMAN
MOTHER
ANNIE: Age 6.
SMALL BOY
BILLY: Age 8.
SMALL GIRL
GIRL IN WHITE

Scene 1

(AT RISE: On the stools, L to R, sit the ANGRY MAN reading a newspaper; the TIRED WOMAN surrounded by packages and bundles; the GREEDY BOY, studying a list and adding items to it; and the SAD WOMAN, slowly putting small ornaments on a tiny Christmas tree. THE GIRL sits in rocking chair reading from a large book.)

GIRL: *(Reading.)* "Once upon a time in a faraway land, in a little town called Bethlehem, a baby was born. When He grew to be a man, He set out on a mission, to teach people to love one another. He taught them that each of us, rich or poor, humble or powerful, has worth and dignity and a purpose for living. And His birthday - Christmas Day - became a day of rejoicing, a time of miracles, when flowers bloomed in winter, when animals spoke and the lame walked and blind men could see." *(Closes book.)* Christmas miracles. But are they only beautiful stories? Isn't there a Christmas miracle now, today? I think there is. I can feel it. Something in the air that makes you want to be good, and kind, and happy. It's different from birthdays, or Saturdays, or any other time. Is it magic? I wonder -

ANGRY MAN: A Christmas miracle, you say?

GIRL: *(Rises, crosses to HIM.)* Excuse me, sir, I didn't see you. Do you know what it is?

ANGRY MAN: Hah! The miracle of Christmas is that another year has passed and we're still alive! *(Waves paper.)* Look at the newspapers! War in the Middle East! Peace talks unsuccessful! Thousands killed by rebel forces! Riots, murder, robbery, violence! Peace on earth, good will to men. What a laugh!

TIRED WOMAN: The miracle of Christmas? If you ask me, it's a miracle that we still bother with Christmas! It's the same old story, year after year. No sooner are the Halloween pumpkins out of the stores, than the Christmas wreaths go up. And off we go again, buying things we don't need and can't afford, cleaning the house, cooking the dinner, rushing and pushing and shoving. Why do we do it? I wish I knew!

GREEDY BOY: *(Checking list.)* Let's see, now. Slot car racer, tape player, pool table. What else do I want? Hey, kid! I know what the miracle of Christmas is! It's when you can ask your folks for anything you want, and they have to try and get it for you! Hmm! What else should I hit 'em for this year?

SAD WOMAN: It was different when I was a child. The miracle of Christmas? There is no miracle any more. It was lost somewhere in the bright lights and the rush and the fuss and the bustle. You can't put a miracle in a store window with a price tag on it. You can't keep a miracle alive when you surround it with fake Santas and expensive toys and jangling cash registers. No, it's gone, all gone. It'll never be the same again. *(Sets tree aside, sorrowfully.)*

GIRL: No Christmas miracle? But I can feel it! You get a kind of tingling in your fingers and toes - and a sort of funny feeling in your middle -

ANGRY MAN: Sounds like you ought to see a doctor, kid!

GREEDY BOY: *(Nastily.)* Maybe Santy Claus gave her too much candy!

SAD WOMAN: No, it's because she's a child. She'll find out, all too soon.

GIRL: No! You're wrong! There is a Christmas miracle! I know there is!

(GIRL IN WHITE enters SL, carrying a tall lighted candle. She stands at CS, just in front of the row of stools.)

ANGRY MAN: Look!

TIRED WOMAN: Who's that?

SAD WOMAN: I've seen that light before. A long time ago -

GREEDY BOY: That's funny. I feel all tingly inside - like the kid was saying. It's kinda nice.

(ANNIE and BILLY skip in SL.)

ANNIE: *(Singing.)* Christmas! Christmas! Only a week till Christmas!

BILLY: Hey, did you see the turkey? He's in the freezer now, and boy! Is he big!

ANNIE: He better be big! Everybody's coming for dinner! Grandma and Grandpa, and all the cousins -

BILLY: And Uncle Jack said he's going to take us skating!

ANNIE: And you know what? Mom said we could help this year. We can make cookies, and put up decorations -

BILLY: Hey! Promise you won't tell?

ANNIE: What?

BILLY: I just got Mom's present. *(Takes bottle of perfume from pocket, holds it under ANNIE'S nose.)* It's perfume - smell it?

ANNIE: Mmmm!

BILLY: Come on and let's go wrap it.

ANNIE: Oh, Billy, isn't Christmas great?

(THEY run off SR.)

TIRED WOMAN: The presents, the tree, the dinner - with the family all together, and everyone so happy - maybe it is worth all the work and worry. Maybe there is a Christmas miracle. The miracle of fun and laughter!

(Takes candle concealed among her bundles, lights it at GIRL IN WHITE'S candle flame, and stands beside her at SR. MAUREEN and RACHEL enter SR.)

MAUREEN: So we have the twelve days of Christmas - and you have eight days for Hanukkah.

End of Freeview

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