

Why the Bells Chimed

*Inspired by short story "Why the Chimes Rang"
by Raymond MacDonald Alden*

By Will Ledesma

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DEDICATION

*With thanks to Jeannette and Lee and the A. D. Players
for giving this little script a shot.*

STORY OF THE PLAY

Raymond MacDonald Alden's short story, *Why the Chimes Rang*, tells the legend of long ago when, on Christmas Eve, it was the custom for all the people to bring to the church their offerings to the Christ Child. And there had been a time when an unusual offering brought magnificent music from the chimes which were rung, everyone believed, by the angels. But lately, no offering had been great enough ... that is until young, poor boy makes his first pilgrimage through the snow to give his simple gift.

Now this classic tale of faith, family, and sacrifice is woven into the life of a current-day Christian family spending its first Christmas apart. With Mother as a narrator, the present resolves into the past as Father, Angela, and her older brother Peter enact the age-old legend. The play reminds us all that Christmas is first and foremost about love, and that the best gift we can give to the Christ-child is the gift of ourselves.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

This play was originally produced by the A. D. Players National Touring Company in Houston, TX in December, 2007. The production was directed by Will Ledesma.

ANGELA.....Debra Duderstadt
MOTHER.....Andrea Lynn Tackett
FATHER.....Kevin Dean
PETER.....Jesse J. Vinyard

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

FATHER: A church minister in his early 40s. Also plays Papa and King.

MOTHER: A woman in her early 40s.

ANGELA: Their daughter, 9 years old.

PETER: Their son, 20 years old.

SETTING

Scene 1: Christmas Eve. Angela's bedroom and a faraway land in her imagination.

Scene 2: The family's living room, later that evening.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: ANGELA enters dressed for Christmas Eve at church, but clearly her heart is not in to it this year. She hits play on her CD player and, appropriately enough, "I'll Be Home for Christmas" plays. She sighs and flings herself on the floor, staring up at the ceiling.)

ANGELA: *(Singing along.)*...Please have snow and mistletoe and presents on the tree

FATHER: *(Off.)* Angela! We're almost ready to go ... are you ready?

ANGELA: Christmas Eve will find me ...

MOTHER: *(Off.)* Angela?

ANGELA: *(As MOTHER enters.)* ...where the lovelight ... um ... cleans *(gleams?)*

(MOTHER enters and switches off the CD player.)

MOTHER: Sweetie, why are you lying there? Get up, we have to leave soon!

ANGELA: Why do we have to go to church tonight anyway?

MOTHER: Well, for starters, your father is the pastor.

ANGELA: That's not what I mean! Why do we have to go tonight? Why do we absolutely have to go for Christmas Eve?

MOTHER: Because everybody else is going to be there, and they'll all talk about us if we're not there.

ANGELA: *(Sighs heavily, perhaps a bit melodramatically.)*
Never mind!

(FATHER enters.)

FATHER: All right, girls, we all set to go? Hmm ... I'll take that as a no. Is something wrong, Angela?

ANGELA: Daddy, I don't want to do Christmas this year!

FATHER: Well, that's not something you hear coming out of a nine-year-old mouth very often!

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ANGELA: Every year everybody asks what I want for Christmas. Well, this year all I want is for my brother to come back home!

FATHER: Oh. I see.

MOTHER: Angela, sweetie, we all wish Peter could be here for Christmas. I'll bet that he wants to be here just as much as we want him here.

ANGELA: But he's off with the stupid army for Christmas. In Afghanistan! I mean come on! Who spends Christmas in Afghanistan?

FATHER: What Peter's doing is very important to him. That doesn't mean he loves you any less.

ANGELA: That's not the point! It's not fair! If we want Petey home for Christmas and he wants to be here ... I mean, why can't God make it happen? He's God, right?

MOTHER: I'm sorry this is so hard on you, Angel.

FATHER: I promise you it's hard on all of us. I want Peter to be with us, too. But Christmas isn't about what we want. It's about what God wants.

ANGELA: What? He's God! Doesn't he already have everything?

FATHER: What He wants is us. See, God loves the whole world so much that He wanted to give every single person a chance to be with Him forever. That's why He sent Jesus to Earth, because God wanted all of us. You, me, your mother, and Peter. That, in a nutshell, is Christmas. And that's why we have to go to church tonight. Okay?

ANGELA: ...Okay.

FATHER: That's my girl! Now, I gotta go call Brother Bill at the church. See if he got the church bells fixed.

MOTHER: Church bells? What church bells?

FATHER: You know. The CD player that plays the church bells CD, of course. Can you be ready in fifteen minutes, Angel?

ANGELA: I can if Mommy helps me.

MOTHER: Well, that's what mommies are for, isn't it?

FATHER: All right, then. Here I go to save the day! Oh, and I've got to hunt down my Christmas tie

MOTHER: Oh, dear, no, not the Christmas tie!

FATHER: (*On his way out.*) It's a Christmas tradition!

MOTHER: That is the ugliest tie worn by any minister in recorded history. How are you, baby?

ANGELA: I don't wanna have Christmas without Petey. We're supposed to play in the snow, and have snowball fights, and make snow angels and paper snowflakes, and see who can name the Christmas song the bells at church play before the other one can—even if it is just a CD—and he always said I was his favorite Christmas angel! And one night every year we sneak out of bed when you and Daddy are asleep and—oops. Better not tell you about that one.

MOTHER: That's probably a good idea. How about I tell you a story while we get you ready for church?

ANGELA: Okay. I like your stories. Can I be in it?

MOTHER: Well now, I think there are parts for both you and your big brother, if you're willing to put your imagination to it.

ANGELA: Awesome!

MOTHER: All right, you know the drill! Close your eyes and make your bedroom and this house and this city and even this entire country go as far away from you as today is from yesterday.

ANGELA: Where are we going?

MOTHER: To a little village in a country all the way across the ocean, covered in almost two whole feet of snow!

ANGELA: Whoa!

MOTHER: You're right, whoa! Go backwards in time four-hundred years, before electricity and before cars and before TV and cell phones and video games. Now, we're going to a very small cottage in a very small village that is not far away from a very, very large town. It's cold, so there's one fire in the fireplace to keep the room warm and one fire under the sink to keep the dishwater from freezing solid. A poor man lives there with his two children—a girl and a boy. Do you see it all? The cottage, the fire, the snow?

End of Freeview

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