

THE LOST CHOIR OF BETHLEHEM SPRINGS

By Margo Haas

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The Soda Springs Junior High School choir has almost completed their singing tour when their bus breaks down in a snowstorm on the back roads of Idaho a few days before Christmas. The students and the injured teacher find refuge in a closed-up lodge where the conflict is heightened when we learn that Treat, a bitter and troubled 14 year-old, knows how to fix the bus but won't. Because of a broken ankle, the choir leader is forced to allow the children to not only care for her but also to manage on their own. As the story unfolds, the children learn that Treat is not the evil character they once thought, nor are they the enemy Treat believed them to be. In the end, Treat does repair the bus in time for them to return home for Christmas. The story examines children's resourcefulness and their uncanny ability to forgive.

SETTING

A closed-up vacation lodge far from the road. The room has an old stuffed sofa, a coffee table, some chairs, a large stone fireplace and a door USR which leads to the kitchen. A stairway USC leads to an open balcony which overlooks the area. There is a bedroom off of it. Through the window heavy snow can be seen coming down.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1 - Just before dusk.

Scene 2 - Several hours later.

ACT II

Scene 1 - Later that night.

Scene 2 - The next morning.

PLAYING TIME: Approximately 90 minutes.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(The play is written with 20 students roles but can be adjusted to feature from 15 to 30 actors with flexible gender roles and age ranges. Except for Mrs. DeNardo, an adult, and Vinny, a pre-teen, all characters are young teenagers, between 13 and 15.)

VINNY: Sensitive and very bright. Early school promotions have put him in junior high but he is younger and physically smaller than the rest of the choir members.

MRS. DeNARDO: Choir director, bus driver and the only adult.

HOLLY: Reliable but a bit dramatic.

CHUCK: A wise guy at times.

ERIC: An even wiser guy.

DANNY: Bright, a leader.

TREAT: Bitter, from a troubled home.

BOBBY: A future cop, follows rules.

BILLY: Resident "doctor."

CHICO: Billy's right hand.

KIAH, LOTTIE, SAMANTHA: The next Supremes.

ADDITIONAL CHOIR MEMBERS: April, Derek, Jill, Andy, Brittany, Jason, Courtney, Clare.

*The roles of Bobby, Billy, and Chico can be played by either male or female.

TIME: The present, a few days before Christmas.

PLACE: A cabin off the back roads of Idaho, miles from the choir's hometown of Soda Springs.

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PROPS

Huge log covered with "snow"; coats, gloves, hats, backpacks and overnight bags; large pile of firewood, matches, ax and lantern; splints, gauze (ripped up T-shirt) and rope; plastic bag of snow for Billy and Chico; large pot filled with corn and a spoon; Walkman for Brittany; candy bars, gold penlight and manicure kit for Treat; plastic bag of "snow"; \$10 bill for Chuck; six tennis rackets; Christmas tree decorated with corn can labels; coffee can drum

SOUND EFFECTS

Loud thumping noises, door bursting open
Tapping at window
Crash of something breaking
Loud crash and banging from kitchen
Harsh winter winds
Thumping noises from the roof

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ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: A loud THUMPING is heard against the outside door.)

HOLLY: *(Offstage.)* Heave, ho!

CHUCK: *(Offstage.)* Heave, ho yourself!

DANNY: *(Offstage.)* Everybody ready?

CHUCK: *(Offstage.)* I've been ready.

DANNY: *(Offstage.)* Again, on the count of three. One - two- three - ugh.

(With a thrust the door opens and in fly HOLLY, DANNY and CHUCK. They are clutching a huge log covered with snow.)

CHUCK: All right! We are in!

DANNY: Pretty strong lock on that door. *(The BOYS take the log back outside, then return quickly.)*

HOLLY: I think my feet froze and fell off. Someone check, I can't bear to look.

DANNY: *(Looking around the room.)* Wow! This is great, just look at this place!

HOLLY: *(Not looking at feet.)* Are they still attached?

DANNY: *(To HOLLY.)* What?

HOLLY: My feet, are they still attached? *(The BOYS ignore HOLLY.)*

CHUCK: Hey, a fireplace and everything.

HOLLY: I can't feel them, so they must've fallen off.

DANNY: *(Turns on LIGHT.)* Good, the lights work. I wonder if there's a phone.

CHUCK: There's got to be one here some place.

DANNY: Yeah, but will it work? This place looks pretty dried up. *(CHUCK has run up the steps to a door.)*

CHUCK: Check it out, this is so cool!

DANNY: What's up there?

CHUCK: *(Peeks in room.)* A bedroom. This is so cool. Plenty of room for everybody ... *(HE trips on a loose board and almost falls.)* Whoa ... loose board.

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(Rummaging in the room offstage.) Let's see ... blankets, flashlight, checkers, books ... geek stuff.

HOLLY: I suppose I could learn to walk without feet.

DANNY: Wait till the others see this place!

CHUCK: *(Reappearing.)* The others! Vinny! I forgot about Vinny! He's waiting for the word. *(Comes back downstairs.)*

DANNY: Tell him to get everybody. And make sure they go easy with Mrs. DeNardo, her ankle might be broken.

HOLLY: What about my feet?

CHUCK: *(Looks at HER feet.)* You're right, Holly, they fell off. I'll try to find them on my way back. *(HE exits.)*

HOLLY: *(Looks at feet.)* Obviously he's kidding. Even Chuckie wouldn't lie about something like that.

DANNY: I don't see a phone. But at least we can get warm while we think of a plan of attack.

HOLLY: Danny, I'm a little nervous about all this.

DANNY: About all what? Our choir bus breaking down or Mrs. DeNardo getting hurt?

HOLLY: About sneaking into this place.

DANNY: Sneaking into ... Holly, are you crazy? It's called survival. I think God will understand.

HOLLY: *(Still doubtful.)* I don't know.

DANNY: Our bus breaks down in a snowstorm, in the middle of nowhere, in the dark, no stores, no lights, no phones. Mrs. D. falls getting off the bus ... what are we supposed to do? Stay there till someone discovers us?

HOLLY: Yes, someone would have come along ... eventually.

DANNY: Do you know what a night in the bus would be like?

HOLLY: How will anyone find us here?

DANNY: When we don't show up to sing in Danville tomorrow they'll figure it out.

HOLLY: I can see it now: "Search Called off for the Lost Choir of Bethlehem Springs. Last Seen Traveling in December." Oh-hh.

(There is a TAPPING at the window.)

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DANNY: What was that?

HOLLY: It's coming from the window.

DANNY: It sounds like groaning.

HOLLY: Maybe it's a deer.

DANNY: *(Starts for window.)* A groaning deer?

HOLLY: Or a burglar.

DANNY: Let's check it out.

HOLLY: *(Looking out window.)* It's so hard to see ... it looks like a tree or ... it's Vinny!

DANNY: Vinny?!

HOLLY: *(Yelling.)* Vinny!

(THEY rush to front door and pull in a snow-soaked VINNY. He's a short, nerdy kid younger than most of the other choir members.)

HOLLY: Vinny, is that you?

DANNY: Did you see Chuck? I thought he went to tell the others to follow.

VINNY: *(Frozen.)* I ... I ... I ... *(THEY lift VINNY like a frozen mummy and place him on the sofa, taking off his coat and covering him with a blanket left on the back of the sofa.)*

DANNY: Man, Vinny, you're like a frozen pop.

HOLLY: Hurry, cover him up.

VINNY: Chuck ... told me ... to wait ... but the snow ... kept ... coming ...

DANNY: Forget it. You okay?

VINNY: I ... think ... so.

HOLLY: His feet probably froze off.

VINNY: *(Alarmed.)* Did they?!

DANNY: No. Vinny, where's Chuck? Did you see him or the others?

VINNY: I saw Chuck ... he was calling me, but I was too far away to answer him. The snow kept blowing me farther and farther away.

HOLLY: He probably just went on to the bus.

VINNY: Are we almost to Danville?

End of Freeview

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