

# An Unlikely Christmas Shepherd

*By*  
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### **DEDICATION**

*To my mother and family for always encouraging me to "write the vision," and, especially, to my father for his life of adventure that has served to encourage and inspire me to give my all to the Lord in my writing, in drama, and in life.  
Thank you.*

### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

What do a robbery gone wrong, a case of mistaken identity, and a small church's Christmas program all have in common? For thief Collin Evans, the opportunity to change his life.

Collin and his brother-in-law Tim rob a toy store, and in desperation Collin has to hide the money in a nearby church—ironically in the manger for the upcoming play. The director mistakes Collin for a substitute actor and he must play along. But for this young father, angry since his wife's unexpected death, a change begins to happen as he talks with the Pastor and feels the warmth and care from others.

But will Collin be able to retrieve the money without being detected? Does he even still want the money? What will the church members think of this "good man" when they find out the truth? The message of Christmas is made real as Collin comes face-to-face with the love of the Christ at Christmas.

Approximately 40 minutes.

**Themes:** *Bitterness, Forgiveness, Reaching Out to Others, Salvation.*

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*5 m, 4 w, 2 flexible, 1 child, extras  
(or with doubling 5 m, 3 w, 2 flexible, 1 child, extras.)*

**JAKE CONWAY/ COLLIN EVANS:** An unsaved thief, widower, and father.

**TIM:** Collin's brother-in-law, an unsaved thief.

**EMILY:** Collin's five-year-old daughter.

**WILFRED BRENNAN:** An elderly Irishman whose toy store was robbed [Can double as Donovan Watkins].

**PASTOR RICHARDS:** Pastor of the church presenting the nativity program.

**LARISSA:** Larissa Watkins. She is directing the Christmas program at Pastor Richard's church.

**DONOVAN WATKINS:** (*Flexible*) Larissa's sibling and a police officer. (*Can be Donna if female.*)

**MRS. WATKINS:** Larissa and Donovan's mother. (*Can double as Mary. If so make her younger, Larissa and Donovan's cousin.*)

**MRS. MORRIS:** Collin's Christian neighbor.

**STAGE CREW:** (*Flexible*) A helper to Larissa, also doubles as shepherd.

**MARY:** Mother of Jesus in tableau.

**JOSEPH:** Father of Jesus in tableau.

**VOICE:** A narration voice in tableau. Can double as Brennan or Pastor.

**EXTRAS:** Shepherds, stage crew, church members and carolers.

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**TIME:** The present. (*Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.*)

**SETTING:** The church, the church stage area, and Jake's apartment.

**SCENE BREAKDOWN**

Scene 1: Alley (*Bare stage.*)

Scene 2: The Church Stage Area (*Two pews, the manger, a tree, box of props.*)

Scene 3: Jake's Apartment Interior (*Table and chairs, tree, presents, coat rack.*)

Scenes 4-5: The Church (*Two pews, podium, table with cookies, manger, park bench for outdoors.*)

Scene 6-7: Jake's Apartment Interior (*Table and chairs, Christmas tree, presents/opened presents, coat rack.*)

Scene 8: The Church Backstage Area (*Manger.*)

Scene 9: The Church Stage Area (*Two pews, manger, tree.*)

**PROPS**

Black bag w/money	Small Christmas tree
Box of props	Director's clipboard
Jake's script and fake beard	Manger with hay
Color gel samples	Table
Two chairs	Coffee pot, mugs
Santa hat	Gifts/toys
Bibles	Refreshments at church
Brennan's bag w/ presents	Emily's doll
Jake's scarf	Emily's bell
Wrapping paper, scissors, etc	Baby Jesus doll

### Scene 1

*(AT RISE: Dim blue light. Two thieves run half-way across the apron or in front of curtain and stop. SFX: whistles and voices in the distance.)*

**JAKE:** *(Carrying bag with money in it.)* We gotta split up.

*(TIM nods out of breath.)*

**JAKE:** *(Cont'd.)* Double back through the alleys. I'll meet you later.

**TIM:** What about the money?

**JAKE:** I'll ditch it somewhere safe. *(TIM starts to run off.)*  
Tim, if anything goes wrong, tell Emily...Tell her—

**TIM:** I'll tell her Daddy was run over by Santa Claus. *(JAKE smiles and laughs slightly.)* Nothing's gonna go wrong. I'll see you at home. *(Exits.)*

*(SFX: Whistles and voices get closer. JAKE exits; POLICE OFFICER DONOVAN walks briskly across the stage searching.)*

### Scene 2

**Song:** "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" or "Good Christians All Rejoice"

*(AT RISE: The church stage area with a few random set pieces such as the manger, table and chairs, box of props, etc. LARISSA, the director, is sitting in-house listening to opening number. After her comments STAGE CREW and EXTRAS rush around the stage getting things ready.)*

**LARISSA:** *(As song ends.)* Wonderful! That's going to be perfect for the Christmas program. But where were my actors?

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*(MARY, JOSEPH, and EXTRAS walk up to LARISSA. Meanwhile JAKE enters, trying to stay undetected and shoves the bag with the money under the manger's hay.)*

**LARISSA:** *(Cont'd.)* Mary and Joseph? Shepherds? Listen up. As soon as that number closes, you need to be in position.

**STAGE CREW:** *(Holding a small tree.)* Miss Watkins, where do you want this?

**LARISSA:** I want the tree over there. *(To EVERYONE.)* Now, when Jake arrives, we'll go ahead and run that scene again. Remember your cues! It's looking good. *(To STAGE CREW.)* I sure hope Mathias gave Jake his copy of the script. I hate using understudies at the last minute. Where's my manger?

**STAGE CREW:** I'll get it. *(Picks up a box of props and heads toward manger; to JAKE.)* Give me a hand with this, would ya?

**JAKE:** *(Near manger.)* Who, me?

**STAGE CREW:** Yeah. It's kinda heavy. *(As THEY move the manger.)* Do I know you?

**JAKE:** *(Hesitantly.)* I don't think so.

**STAGE CREW:** Oh. Oh! You must be Jake. *(To LARISSA.)* Miss Watkins, Jake's here.

**LARISSA:** *(Walking over.)* Oh, good. We were starting to get worried. It's not every day your lead shepherd comes down with laryngitis at the last minute. Honestly, you're a Godsend. I don't know if your uncle ever told you that, but you are a Godsend. Did you bring a copy of the script?

**JAKE:** *(Perplexed.)* No.

**LARISSA:** Well, that's alright. I always keep an extra copy on hand. You don't come in until scene...uh, let's see. *(Flipping pages.)* This scene here. Close to the end. *(Handing HIM a copy of the script.)* We're rehearsing the last scene now.

**JAKE:** *(Very perplexed.)* Who are you?

**LARISSA:** *(Enthusiastically shaking HIS hand which he didn't offer.)* Oh, I'm the director—

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**STAGE CREW:** Miss Watkins! *(Handing LARISSA something to proof; she approves it and hands it back.)*

**JAKE:** Oh. Miss...

**LARISSA:** Miss Watkins. I'm sorry. I feel like I know you. Your Uncle Mathias spoke so highly of you on the phone.

**JAKE:** *(Slowly, as if she's insane.)* Right ... *(Hesitating.)* 'Cause Mathias is my uncle.

**STAGE CREW:** Miss Watkins, do you want the blue or amber gels for this scene?

**LARISSA:** Night sky, blue light. Show me some samples. I don't want just any blue.

**STAGE CREW:** Yes, ma'am.

**LARISSA:** Everyone, attention everyone. This is Jake. He's filling in for Mathias Brewster. Let's give him a warm winter welcome. *(PEOPLE start greeting JAKE.)* No one ever expected Mathias to come down with laryngitis. I'm so glad you could fill in on such short notice.

**JAKE:** It just kinda happened.

**LARISSA:** You sounded much older on the phone. Oh, well, nothing a little makeup can't fix.

**JAKE:** Makeup?

**LARISSA:** Stage makeup of course. Half the men here refuse to wear it, but it won't be much, a few age lines here, and a beard. Oh, you're going to be a wonderful shepherd.

**STAGE CREW:** Miss Watkins, the color samples.

*(LARISSA and STAGE CREW look at color samples. JAKE attempts to leave just as DONOVAN enters with the PASTOR. Jake begins moving away and tries to hide himself. As he does this, he happens upon a beard and quickly puts it on, then moves to the manger.)*

**DONOVAN:** Is it alright if I take a look around?

**PASTOR:** You take as much time as you need.

*(DONOVAN begins looking around; as Donovan nears the manger, JAKE picks up a box of props and hides behind it.)*

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