

A Way...in a Manger

A one-act play

By Tracy Wells

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DEDICATION

*To Scott and Emily,
Thank you for opening this door...
and walking through it with me.
Your friendship means so much.*

STORY OF THE PLAY

The Thompsons like to celebrate Christmas and the birth of Jesus by displaying a nativity scene on their front lawn, much to the dismay of their homeowners' association president, Mrs. Matthews. Citing "rule 763" she wants the display taken down – immediately! Mrs. Matthews gets her wish when she discovers that the Thompsons' nativity figures have been stolen by local troublemakers. As Mrs. Thompson's oldest son Joey sets out to find the figures, he meets Maria, a troubled young girl who has wandered onto his yard looking for shelter. With the help of three wise friends, a stressed-out Sunday school teacher, and the family's good-natured pastor, Joey finds the missing figures and a whole lot more. He and everyone else discover the meaning behind the figures which is God's enduring and encompassing love for us.

This is a large cast, gender-flexible play with humor in a modern setting. With very few props, this a play is easy to produce on any budget.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

*The show premiered on December 11, 2016
at King of Kings Lutheran Church in Shelby Township, MI.*

Joey Thompson: Jonathon Klotz
Maria Lucas: Ava Williamson
Pastor Dave: Nicholas Klotz
Miss Shepherd: Becca Witkowski
Mrs. Matthews: Emmersyn LaPrise
Mrs. Thompson: Olivia LaPrise
Petunia Brown: Madison Nacker
Mrs. Klein: Natalie VanHeusden
Patty: Jazyln Wooten
Anna: Skyler Swanson
Gertie: Hayley Giardina
Eugene: Caden Taubitz
Barry: Ryan Asuncion
Zeke: Connor Wells
Jessie: Heather Hayes
Dolores: Emily Mackintosh
Mr. Lucas: Brian Mackintosh

Sunday School Kids: Brady Taubitz,
Natalie Wells, Peyton Witkowski,
Naomi Wooten, Brooke Kupke, Olivia
Kupke, Olivia Giardina,
Choir Kids: Jenna Giardina, Aubrey
Sauer, Ella Simon, Kenley Simon,
Gabiella Wooten, Daniel Kelly, Brysen
Bourdage, Colton Bourdage

Crew

Director: Eric Wells
Stage Manager: Emily Taubitz
Set Architect: Scott Taubitz
Set Team: Rayna Asuncian, Joel
Asuncion, Cheryl Asuncion
Choir Director: Lindsay Colby
Piano: Kelsey Parker

CAST OF CHARACTERS

*4 m, 6 w, 5 flexible, 2 youngsters,
small children's choir, and extra adults*

MARIA LUCAS: A teenage girl who has run away from home because she feels misunderstood.

JOEY THOMPSON: A Christian teen boy who befriends her.

EUGENE/EUGENIA: One of three smart friends who are neighbors of Joey.

BARRY: Another.

GERTIE: Another.

MRS. THOMPSON: Joey's mother.

ANNA: Joey's sister, 10 or 11 years old.

PETE/PATTY: (*Flexible*) Joey's annoying little sibling, about 7 or 8 years old.

ZEKE/ZARA: (*Flexible*) Neighborhood troublemaker.

JEFFREY/JACKIE: (*Flexible*) Another.

DOLORES: Another.

PASTOR DAVE: Pastor at Joey's church, friendly and an enthusiastic hand-shaker.

MISS SHEPHERD: Sunday school teacher, frazzled from dealing with little kids all day.

PETUNIA BROWN: Neighborhood gossip.

MR./MRS. MATTHEWS: (*Flexible*) Upset neighbor and president of the homeowners' association.

MR./MRS. KLEIN: (*Flexible*) Sympathetic neighbor.

MR. LUCAS: Maria's father.

CHILDREN: (2-10) Sunday school kids.

NEIGHBORS: (*Flexible*) Optional extras.

SETTING

The Thompson family's front yard where a nativity has been placed.

RUNTIME

Approximately 45 minutes with songs.

TIME

Modern day.

SET

The set is simple, but could be as elaborate as the director chooses. A large stable at least 4 feet high sits front and center. Snow dusts the top of the stable and is on any other outdoor surface, including, if possible, the exterior of the Thompson home.

LIGHTING/SOUND

Lights dim just before Maria enters for the first time. A spotlight should highlight all characters when in the stable for the tableau of the nativity.

Music for song "Away in a Manger" is played while Sunday School Kids sing. Optional music (or a cappella songs) are indicated in the script for the kids to sing when entering and exiting as if they are caroling.

COSTUMES

Costumes should reflect modern times, and should also include outerwear. Maria may wear a heavy sweater but lacks a hat, scarf, or gloves. Bright and varied colors work best for visual interest. Zeke, Jeffrey, and Dolores should wear dark colors. Sunday School Kids are dressed as farm animals.

PROPS

Large lawn figures of Mary, Joseph and other nativity characters, toolbox, hammer, notepad, pencil, math book in backpack, large book and pen, two mugs of cocoa, wrapped package with or without a hot dog inside, blanket, bible.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Several days before Christmas. JOEY enters carrying a hammer followed closely by PETE who carries a toolbox.)

PETE: *(Talking quickly.)* So then I told everyone that I just know Santa's going to bring me that new bike I've been asking for, but Scotty said that Santa would never bring me something so big and Jimmy said that all I'd get is a lump of coal.

JOEY: *(Annoyed.)* I'm sure you're not going to get a lump of coal for Christmas, Pete.

PETE: But how do you know, Joey? Do you know Santa personally?

JOEY: *(With a smile.)* Of course not. *(Ruffles PETE'S hair.)* But I do know you, and you're a great kid, so there's no way you're getting a lump of coal this year. *(Turns toward nativity.)* Now come on. We need to put the finishing touches on the manger before Mom and Anna bring out the nativity figures.

PETE: *(Whining, moves slowly toward nativity.)* But I want to plaaaayyyyy!

JOEY: Come on, Pete. You can play anytime. We need to get the manger finished. *(Looking down, sadly.)* You know how important it was to Dad.

PETE: *(Crossing to manger and running his fingers along the frame.)* Dad really loved this manger, didn't he?

JOEY: He sure did. He and I had a great time building it. *(Looking at Pete and using his hand to measure his height.)* In fact, I think I was about your age when he and I built it.

PETE: I wish I could have helped build it too.

JOEY: *(With a chuckle.)* That would have been pretty difficult. I don't think there was a place for a tool belt on your diaper!

PETE: Hey! *(Playfully runs at JOEY, who catches him in an embrace.)* I really miss Dad.

JOEY: So do I. *(Turning back to the manger.)* That's why it's important that we get it back in tiptop shape for Christmas this year. I replaced all the loose boards, but there's still a couple of nails that need to be hammered in. *(Hands PETE the hammer.)* Do you want to do the honors?

PETE: *(Surprised.)* Really? *(Takes hammer and looks at it.)* But I don't know how. Dad never got a chance to teach me before he died.

JOEY: Well, then I guess it's my job now to teach you. *(Guides PETE to manger and shows him how to use hammer.)* You just hold the hammer like this and bring it down on the nail. But watch out for your fingers. When Dad was teaching me, I smashed my thumb pretty good.

PETE: I bet that hurt! *(Starts to hammer.)*

JOEY: It sure did. But Dad was there to bandage it up.

PETE: And now you're here.

JOEY: *(Ruffling PETE'S hair.)* That's right, buddy. I am.

(ANNA and MRS. THOMPSON enter, carrying Mary and Joseph and other nativity figures.)

MRS. THOMPSON: How's it coming, kids?

JOEY: Pete's just putting in the last nail and then I think it should be all set.

PETE: I did it all by myself, Mom!

MRS. THOMPSON: It looks great, honey.

ANNA: Where do you want Mary and Joseph?

JOEY: Why don't you put them just inside. That's where Dad liked to put them.

MRS. THOMPSON: He sure did. *(Puts figures inside and steps back, putting her arm around JOEY.)* I think he would have been proud. It looks as good as the day you guys first made it.

(The FAMILY arranges the figures in the nativity as PETUNIA BROWN enters from stage left, followed by MRS. MATTHEWS and MRS. KLEIN who carries a book and pen.)

MRS. KLEIN: Well, look at that. The Thompson family is putting up their nativity set again this year.

PETUNIA: Did you hear that Mr. Thompson died this past year? If I remember correctly, he and Joey made that nativity set. Let me consult my notes. *(Pulls out notepad and leafs through it.)*

MRS. KLEIN: I'm sure the nativity set is even more important to them this year.

MRS. MATTHEWS: So what if it is? Those Thompsons have broken the rules of the homeowners' association for the fourth year in a row! I've told them time and time again to take that nativity set down. The entire neighborhood should not have to look at a giant nativity set every time they go for a walk. That's so ostentatious! *(Holds out her hand to MRS. KLEIN who gives her the book.)*

MRS. KLEIN: Don't you have a giant inflatable Santa Claus on your front lawn, Mrs. Matthew?

MRS. MATTHEWS: I have three actually. And they're quite tasteful.

MRS. KLEIN: I see.

MRS. MATTHEWS: Now if I have my way, this nativity set is coming down

PETUNIA: *(Getting in close.)* Ooooooh, I smell some good neighborhood gossip! Go on, Mrs. Matthews.

MRS. MATTHEWS: *(Opening book.)* For the past four years, the Thompsons have *insisted* on putting that monstrosity of a nativity scene in their front yard. Rule number 763 of the homeowners' association guidelines strictly prohibits the decoration of one's lawn with tools of religious persuasion.

MRS. KLEIN: Who says the Thompsons are trying to persuade anyone by placing the nativity on their lawn?

MRS. MATTHEWS: I do, Mrs. Klein. And I am the home-owners' association president, so basically anything I say is law around this neighborhood.

PETUNIA: So what is your plan, Mrs. Matthews? And can I tell everyone else in the neighborhood about it?

MRS. MATTHEWS: I'll tell you my plan, Petunia. I'm going to march right over there and tell the Thompsons that they have to take the nativity down.

PETUNIA: *(Taking notes.)* And what if they refuse to take it down?

MRS. MATTHEWS: Well...you see...I...

PETUNIA: No worries. I'm sure they will be too afraid to stand up to the homeowners' association president.

MRS. MATTHEWS: That's right!

(PETUNIA starts to cross to THOMPSONS, followed by MRS. KLEIN and MRS. MATTHEWS.)

PETUNIA: *(Raises her hand and waves.)* Yoo-hoo! Thompsons! Petunia Brown and company over here. We have something we need to tell you.

MRS. KLEIN: *(Embarrassed, as they walk.)* Please don't include me in that "we."

MRS. THOMPSON: Hi, Petunia. What brings you by on this lovely day?

PETUNIA: There's always something interesting going on in the neighborhood, and I simply must know what it is!

ANNA: There's nothing interesting going on here.

MRS. MATTHEWS: Oh, but I think there is. You see, we have come here—

MRS. KLEIN: *(Interrupting.)* Not "we."

MRS. MATTHEWS: Alright, I, as your homeowners' association president, have come here today to inform you that you must remove your nativity scene from your lawn.

JOEY: You can't make us do that!

MRS. MATTHEWS: I most certainly can. You have broken rule number 763 of the homeowners' association guidelines, and I, as your homeowners' association president—

MRS. THOMPSON: *(Interrupting.)* Trust me, Mrs. Matthews, everyone here knows you are the homeowners' association president.

MRS. MATTHEWS: Then you know not to cross me, Mrs. Thompson. Remove the nativity by tomorrow morning—or else.

(Starts to exit followed by PETUNIA and MRS. KLEIN.)

MRS. KLEIN: *(Turning back, in a stage whisper.)* Sorry! *(Scurries after MRS. MATTHEWS.)*

PETUNIA: *(Walking backward and writing on notepad.)* If you have any quotes regarding this situation that you'd like the rest of the neighborhood to know, I'd be glad to spread the word for you!

MRS. MATTHEWS: *(Grabbing PETUNIA's arm and pulling her offstage.)* Petunia! Let's go!

(PETUNIA waves as she exits with MATTHEWS and KLEIN.)

PETE: *(Mimicking, humorously.)* "Remove the nativity—or else!"

JOEY: Not now, Pete.

ANNA: *(Turning to MRS. THOMPSON.)* What are we going to do, Mom?

MRS. THOMPSON: *(Putting her arm around ANNA.)* I don't know. But I know someone who does. *(Looking up at the sky.)* Let's give this problem to God. I know he'll show a way to handle Mrs. Matthews and keep our nativity set right here where it belongs. *(Rubbing her arms as if she is cold.)* But we don't have to wait for his answer out here! It's freezing!

(Exits with PETE and ANNA.)

JOEY: *(Looking up.)* I hope you have a plan, God. Because if I have anything to say about it, our nativity set isn't going anywhere! *(Exits.)*

End of Freeview

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