

“A BABY CHANGES EVERYTHING”

Audition Excerpts.

Storyteller	8, 109
Marium	26, 27, 123
Cassius	26, 27, 131
Hannah	50
Sarah	51, 147
Aaron	147 (read Sarah)
Seth	68, 131
Nathan	68, 131
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NARRATIONS

STORYTELLER: pg 8 (*MUS. 5*)

Christmas Eve, 2009 A.D. Our world seems especially lost tonight. Nations continue their bitter warfare. Disease and poverty are epidemic. The night is dark, the wind is cold, and people long for salvation. How many will fall asleep tonight, never realizing their Savior has come? How many will celebrate tomorrow without the Hope of eternity? How many are still waiting for the promise of Christmas to come true? Christmas Eve, 1 A.D. A small town in Judea, Bethlehem Ephrathah. Their world seems especially lost tonight. Nations continue their bitter warfare. Disease and poverty are epidemic. The night is dark the wind is cold and the people long for salvation. How many will fall asleep tonight, never realizing their Savior is about to come? How many will awake tomorrow and recognize the Hope of eternity? ("*Prologue*" ends) How many are still waiting for the promise of Christmas to come true? How many are waiting-for a star, for hope, for their messiah? How many?

STORYTELLER: PG 109

Angels had sung. The heavens rejoiced. And a star ignited the dark, midnight sky. The Savior had come to the world – but the world took no notice. Who would believe that a kingdom would be built on the foundation of a stable? What sovereign would choose a manger for a throne and swaddling for royal raiments? What messiah would save his people by becoming one of them? And so this holy night remained a silent night.

STORYTELLER: It was an unpredictable night in Bethlehem, two thousand and nine years ago. This sleepy country hamlet had been inundated by a boisterous rabble of travelers, all clamoring for an evening's rest. They had been ordered to journey to their ancestral homes by Roman decree. And now, every inn and shelter was filled with the noise of those wanting one more quiet night. Especially an inn on the outskirts of town, in the shadow of the Bethlehem hills. ("*Underscore I*" ends) It was run by an affable, if somewhat stubborn, proprietress named Miriam.

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Pg 26 (music begins to "Underscore I")

STORYTELLER: It was an unpredictable night in Bethlehem, two thousand and nine years ago. This sleepy country hamlet had been inundated by a boisterous rabble of travelers, all clamoring for an evening's rest. They had been ordered to journey to their ancestral homes by Roman decree. And now, every inn and shelter was filled with the noise of those wanting one more quiet night. Especially an inn on the outskirts of town, in the shadow of the Bethlehem hills. (*"Underscore I" ends*) It was run by an affable, if somewhat stubborn, proprietress named Miriam.

MIRIAM (*in the distance, as she enters*)

Sunset has come! We're closing! The kitchen's provisions have come to an end and so has this day, may Jehovah be praised.

STORYTELLER: A godly woman, but one who speaks her mind...

MIRIAM: (*center stage, loudly*) We've closed!

STORYTELLER: ... and loudly.

MIRIAM: Good night, everyone. Thank you for your patronage and your haste in vacating the premises, (*to the children*) Aaron, Sarah...help me clean up quickly, children.

SARAH & AARON: Yes, mother.

MIRIAM: You should have been in bed hours ago. (*seeing Cassius, she smiles, shakes her head, and moves to him*) I said we're closing Cassius. You are the only one left. Surely you can call it a night.

CASSIUS: (*not looking up from his work*) I still have a great many tabulations to finish. You can retire. I'll extinguish the lamps.

MIRIAM: And so it has been for the last five evenings in a row.

CASSIUS: (*bitterly*) You can thank Caesar Augustus. He orders a census of his personal dominion, then dispatches a mere handful of his paid chattel to count his subjects.

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MIRIAM: I trust Rome will compensate you for your labor.

CASSIUS: Rome has given me nothing but grief and wretched servitude. I am no better off than the hordes of Judean commoners I register each day.

(Miriam stops working and looks at Cassius closely for a moment, she moves to sit by him.)

MIRIAM: Cassius, listen to me, *(he finally looks up at her)* I...I wish you could talk with these...hordes, as you call them...rather than merely count them.

CASSIUS: Why? They are more lost than I am...

MIRIAM: No. You're wrong. They have...we have...hope. The thousands that pour into Bethlehem every day are of the lineage of David. We are a people who have been promised a Messiah-one who will end all oppression. Even Rome's.

CASSIUS: Promised? By whom?

MIRIAM: The promises are Jehovah's, but they have been inscribed by ancient, godly men-Micah, Daniel, Isaiah-prophets chosen by the Lord Himself. I have said their words to myself a hundred times over. The promises have kept each generation alive, waiting for the light that will surely come. *(Miriam hand Cassius a parchment)* Here, take this. I have written their words down from memory...so my children will remember, and their children after them.

CASSIUS: Did you get this from the temple?

MIRIAM: No this is merely an innkeeper's scrawl on a torn parchment. I'll leave it with you tonight, Cassius. Perhaps you will find time to glance at it between your calculations. May it bring you...some well-deserved rest, *(gently)* Good night, *(calling to her children)* Sarah...Aaron...come now.

SARAH: Yes, Mother.

(Miriam and Sarah exit; Aaron hold back, watching Cassius.)

CASSIUS: *(reading)* "Arise...shine. For your light *(looking closely)*...your light..."

Pg 123(MUSIC BEGINS TO" a Baby Changes Everything[Reprise]")

(Miriam stands and welcomes Cassius, Hannah and Seth to the manger; Aaron, Sarah and Rebekah kneel by the manger.)

MIRIAM: *(warmly)* Come in, come in, all of you. There is more than enough room in the stable. It's almost dawn. I'm so glad you were awakened so you wouldn't miss this It's all right; come closer. That's right, hold Him close. He's God's promise, come true. "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. For unto us, a Child is born, unto us, a Son is given."

(The nativity scene "freezes" as lights dim on the scene. Cassius, Hannah and Seth slowly "back out" of the scene, into their own individual pools of soft light. Each one turn forward and speaks directly to the audience.)

CASSIUS: *(MS. 1)* How could I have been so arrogant...so self-absorbed, so sightless? I swore once I would only follow those in power; but my allegiance was to a barbaric imposter. The further I got from Rome, the closer I got to truth, Imagine-finding such authority among such simplicity, *(remembering)* "Though you are small, Bethlehem, out of you will come a ruler whose greatness will reach the ends of the earth." *(with new conviction)* From this day forward, I will serve but one King.

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Pg 50 (AFTER STORYTELLER ENDS)

HANNAH: (*frantically calling, as she enters*) Mistress? Mistress Miriam?! I must see you immediately!

STORYTELLER: Hannah had been employed at the inn for many years. She was an orphan; her parents had been killed by the Romans when she was still young. Miriam had taken her in, virtually raising her as her own. Hannah had always labored faithfully, but without joy. Until tonight. Tonight she seemed overwhelmed by an unusual excitement. (*exits to the side*)

HANNAH: (*now on stage*) Miriam?! Where are you?

MIRIAM: (*ENTERING QUICKLY; Sarah is with her*) I'm here, my girl, I'm here. I can't believe you're still up, Hannah. I've just closed the inn. What's happened...?

HANNAH: (*highly agitated*) We have a terrible situation at hand...the inn is full...

MIRIAM: ...of Course, as if I didn't know that...

HANNAH: ...and there is the couple who has arrived...a kind man from Nazareth and his wife...so young, in such pain...

MIRIAM: ...in pain?! What do you mean...

HANNAH: She is expecting! She is going to have a child!

MIRIAM: (*stunned*) A child!

HANNAH: Perhaps this very night. Oh, Mistress, you can't turn them away. There is nothing more important than the miracle of new life.

MIRIAM: No, don't worry. We will take care of them. Sarah? Sarah, where are you?

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SARAH: I'm here, Mother.

MIRIAM: Ah, Sarah, help Hannah gather some provisions, and some blankets... oh, and some swaddling cloths. Look in the large box by the window. It's where I've kept everything from the time you and Aaron were infants.

SARAH: I will. Right away.

MIRIAM: Good girl. *(directly to Hannah in an attempt to calm her)* Now, Hannah, everything will be all right, you'll see. We know how to take care of a young family. *(as she exits)* I'll return in a moment.

HANNAH: Yes ma'am, Sarah? Quickly, help me fold these cloths.
(During the next exchange of dialogue, the box is brought forward and materials are taken out to fold; they work for a moment before Sarah speaks.)

SARAH: Hannah?

HANNAH: *(working)* Yes?

SARAH: Are you scared?

HANNAH: Scared? No. I just know how hard life can be for young families. That's all.

SARAH: But there's going to be a baby born tonight. I thought that would make you happy.

HANNAH: I'M SURE IT WILL. It's just...a night like this...I miss my own family. You know I lost my parents when I wasn't much older than you.

SARAH: I know. But, Mother always says God led you to us.

HANNAH: *(as gently as she can)*No, The Bethlehem road led me to you-and I'm glad of it. But God? I think He abandoned me a long time ago. *(Miriam re-enters, fairly frantic)*

MIRIAM: May Jehovah preserve us. What more can happen tonight?! This dear, sweet couple. I've put them in the stable...

Pg 147 SCENE 1

(The lights dim on the stage, as the cast slowly backs up several steps. Sarah walks forward into a single pool of light. She speaks directly to the audience.)

SARAH: Please pray with me. *(music begins to "Underscore 6")* Dear God, thank You for the promise of Christmas. Thank You that it came true when You gave us Your Son. Thank You for loving us this much. We pray in the precious name of Jesus.

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Pg 67 SCENE D

REBEKAH: *(scanning the sky, wick she will do for most of the scene)* We can't stop! I know I hear something...in those hills, right over Bethlehem

Pg 68

SETH: Oh, it's just the howl of this bitter wind. All the more reason to bed down for what's left of this night. *(calling into the inn)* Is there anyone here who can provide us lodging? Hello, hello?!

(Hannah lights her lamp and moves toward the group)

NATHAN: For goodness sake, Seth, we're already returning tow days later than we planned. If we don't get these provisions to our companions tonight, we might as well not show up at all.

SETH: Now that's the best idea you've had all night. *(turning to his niece)* Rdbekah, what are you looking at?

REBEKAH: I keep haring something. it's like...singing...a beautiful voice singing...

SETH: I think you're a little old to believe in things you can't see *(scoffing)* Distant stars...songs in the wind...

REBEKAH: But I can hear singing.

SETH: We can only believe in what we can touch-what we can hold in our hands. Everything else is futile dreaming.

REBEKAH: I didn't dream this. Don't you hear it?

SETH: *(quietly)* No. *(beat)* I wish I could.

HANNAH: *(entering)* Good evening. Can I help you?

SETH: Oh, yes. Hello. I'm sorry to disturb you at this late hour. My name is Seth; this is my brother and niece. Our families tend sheep on the hill just behind your inn. We've been traveling for many days and desire accommodation for...

HANNAH: *(interrupting him)* Oh, no. There is not a single room available in this inn.

NATHAN: *(quickly)* I thought as much. I'm so sorry; we'll be on our way. We're sorry to have bothered you, miss...

HANNAH: I'm so sorry sir. There are so many people in Bethlehem for the census. I'm afraid the only space left in the inn is the kitchen

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Pg 131 SCENE 11 (*MUSIC BEGINS TO "UNDERSCORE 5"*)

(The nativity scene "freezes" as lights dim on the scene. Cassius, Hannah and Seth slowly "back out" of the scene, into their own individual pools of soft light. Each one turns forward and speaks directly to the audience.)

CASSIUS: (*MS. 1*) How could I have been so arrogant.....From this day forward, I will serve but one King.

HANNAH: (*ms. 12*) Bethlehem was a prison to me. But it was a confinement of my own making. Grief imposes such a lonely exile. I was so certain God had abandoned me-but I was the one who had fled. Who could imagine that I would be rescued by an infant's cry? That I would find my way back home by the light of a solitary star? This Child brings new life-for me... for my world...for all the world.

SETH: (*ms 22*) And to think I almost missed His coming. That's the trouble when you spend your life close to the earth-you only focus on what is right in front of you. It's so easy to forget to...look up. I used to say that I would only believe in what I could touch, what I could hold in my hands.

("Underscore 5" ends)

Then I stood at a manger. And I held Him. Time stopped.

(music begins to " My Heart Is Bethlehem") And I looked into the face of God.