

# **A Soldier's Christmas**

A Candle Star Christmas Production

by  
Shell Isenhoff

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## A Note to Directors:

Thank you for choosing to use a Candle Star Christmas Production in your church or school. My purpose in writing each play was to create a pageant that even small groups could produce simply. (They have all been produced in my own church of 200 people.) But stronger still was my desire to immerse viewers in a powerful story that left no question about the true meaning of Christmas. Christ's coming to dwell with man is only part of a whole gospel message, which is clearly presented in each script. My hope is that this play will help you spread that message in your community this holiday season.

Merry Christmas and break a leg! And to Jesus Christ be all the glory.

Shell Isenhoff

Find additional  
**Candle Star Christmas Productions**  
on my website:

[www.michelleisenhoff.com](http://www.michelleisenhoff.com)

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## **Plot Summary**

In the Shenandoah Valley, in the midst of the American Civil War, the meaning of Christ's birth and death are given greater significance to one rebel soldier after his life is spared by a friend who gave up his own.

## **Length**

Candle Star Christmas Productions are designed to run between 45 minutes to an hour when music is included at scene breaks.

## **Cast of Characters**

### Speaking parts

Emma—11-year-old girl

Julia—Emma's mother

Willa Jean—Julia's sister

Robert—Emma's father, Julia's husband

Tommy Lee—Robert's friend

Biddy Stevens—a church friend

Narrator to read Luke 2

### Nonspeaking parts

3 shepherds

Mary

Joseph

## **Stage Setup**

Place a table on one side of the stage to serve as the kitchen in Julia's home for scenes one and three. Scenes two and five require no stage setup. The Sunday school program in scene four needs a manger scene and will also use the front row of the auditorium.

## **Prop List**

Table

Tablecloth (long enough to hide props under table)

3 knives

Apples

Apple preserves

Bucket (of pretend walnuts) and hammer

Guns, blankets, pans, soldier paraphernalia

Bows, colored paper chains

Two letters

Bandage strips for Robert

Manger

3 shepherd's staffs

Doll wrapped in a blanket as Jesus

Sheep optional

## **Costuming**

All characters but the Bible characters should be dressed in Civil War-era attire. The poor nature of the characters leaves a lot of flexibility for the women to simply wear long dresses. The soldiers can be dressed in simple grays or tans. A couple forage-style caps and/or bonnets will help cobbled-together costumes look more authentic.

Bible characters within the children's pageant need simple Bible time costumes. Bathrobes suffice in a pinch.

## Music Recommendations

At the end of most scenes, an option break for music is inserted. This is left wide open on purpose, because the organizations that produce this play will have vastly different musical talents available. They may even choose to skip some or all of these opportunities. However, music offers a great distraction while switching scenes, and it provides a whole additional platform for worship. Here is a list of suggestions to fill these opportunities:

*Songs sung by children's Sunday school classes or school classrooms*

*Vocal solos or groups performed by children or adults*

*Instrumental solos performed by school children or adults*

*Brief piano interludes*

Traditional carols provide simple, recognizable tunes for instrumentals. Vocal arrangements might consist of carols as well, or be drawn from the variety of contemporary music available.

*Heirlooms*, written by Amy Grant, Brown Bannister and Bob Farrell, is available commercially sung by Amy Grant. The “canned” version may be played over the sound system, or it can be performed live by members of your organization.

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## Scene One

*Emma, Julia, and Willa Jean are chopping apples around a table.*

Julia: Emma, when we're done with these apples, I'd like you to check the orchard for any we might have missed. We're going to need every bit of food we can scrape up if we're going to survive this winter.

Emma: All right, Mama. Is it that bad?

Julia: With your daddy still gone, it's going to be another belt-tightener, I'm afraid.

Willa Jean: Oh, it just dills my pickle the way Bobby Lee can snatch our menfolk away like he done. Folk starvin' and dyin', all for the blessed Cause. It ain't right, I tell ya."

Julia: War is never right, Willa Jean.

Willa Jean: Well, you'd think the army could go on rotation or something. Send some of the men home to plant crops. Got all the men off playin' at war while the women are left to mourn and scrape a living best they can.

Julia: Willa Jean, nobody is playing at war! Robert is out there risking his life for us every day!

Willa Jean: Oh, I ain't jawin' on my brother, Julia. It's them uppities like Jeff Davis and Bobby Lee, and them high and up Yankee fellers. Why, if a handful of women took over Richmond and Washington, we could see this whole snarl set right in the time it takes a cat to spit.

Julia: (Chuckling) I reckon if anyone could do it, you could, Willa Jean.

Emma: Mama, is Daddy all right?

Julia: He's fine, sugar. We'd have heard if he wasn't. Jesus has his eye on him, sure enough, and I've a hunch He's aimin' to catch that lost sheep. You just keep on praying for him, ya hear?

Willa Jean: (Slapping a bucket and a hammer on the table) And while yer at it, here's a peck of walnuts need blisterin'.

*Optional break for music.*

## Scene Two

*Exhausted, Robert and Tommy Lee are just sitting down to set up camp after a long march.*

Tommy Lee: (Massaging foot with a groan) I think we've marched to Timbuktu this summer.

Robert: I thought we were done moving. Figured we'd hole up for winter in Virginia. It's nearly December, for Pete's sake! Why in thunderation is General Longstreet taking us to Tennessee now?

Tommy Lee: Reckon the Yankees will make that clear soon enough.

Robert: I was hoping to get home for Christmas this year. (With a faraway look) I ain't been home for a year and a half. I miss Julia more'n I'd miss my left arm. And my girl, Emma? I'm afraid she'll be run off and married 'fore this war is over.

Tommy Lee: (After a thoughtful pause) Robert, why are you fighting?

Robert: Well, that's easy enough. Fellas invade my homeland, I can't stand by and let it happen.

Tommy Lee: So it's a matter of honor. Would you say you're fightin' off a moral evil?

Robert: Aw, come off it, Tommy Lee. I see where you're goin' with this. I've heard enough of your Jesus talk.

Tommy Lee: But any day some bullet could have your name on it. What then?

Robert: I've told you, I just don't think some guy who died thousands of years ago can save anyone from hell. In fact, I can't even imagine a hell worse than the one you and I have lived through already.

Tommy Lee: Hell is far worse than any battle. That's why God sent his Son to take the punishment for your sin. He died in your place, so you wouldn't have to go there.

Robert: Enough already. I'm gunna go find some firewood. My stomach is starting to think some Billy Yank slit my throat!

*Optional break for music.*

## Scene Three

*The women are home preparing for Christmas.*

Julia: I can't believe Christmas is almost here! We need to finish these decorations and get them hung in the church before the Sunday school program next week.

Willa Jean: All in good time, Julia. You always let yerself get as frazzled as an old laying hen. Now look at me. I don't let things rattle me. I take them as they come.

Julia: (Snorts) Is that why you blessed Bidy Stevens out for giving the Christmas solo to her daughter this year?

Willa Jean: Oh, Bidy just needed some guidance. Everyone knows Allison Stevens sings like a bullfrog. And she's a few sandwiches shy of a picnic, if you know what I mean.

Julia: Willa Jean!

Willa Jean: Well, I'm just sayin' Emma sings it better, is all. And she wouldn't have got the part if I hadn't interf—ah-hem—helped. Why don't you sing it for us, Emma?

Julia: You do sing it beautifully, dear. Go ahead.

Emma: Oh, not now. We have so much do...(holding up a pathetic bow)

Willa Jean: Did the mule teach you how to tie bows? (She snatches it away.) I'll tie. You sing.

*(Singer performs Heirlooms, by Amy Grant.)*

Julia: (With a hug) That was real pretty, dear. Your daddy would be so proud.

Willa Jean: No bullfrogs in this house.

*There is a knock at the door. Postman delivers a letter to Julia who's too frightened to open it.*

Emma: Mama, what is it?

Julia: (Terrified) It's from Richmond.

Willa Jean: Oh no! (Opens letter and reads.) Dear Mrs. Norton, I am sorry to inform you that your husband, Robert Norton, of my command, was killed in battle on December 2, 1863. He was an excellent soldier and a good man. Please accept my sincere apologies. Signed, Sergeant Edward Cummings.

*Women hug and grieve*

*Optional break for music.*