

PERUSAL SCRIPT

An Elder's
Christmas
Miracle

by
Anita Christine



Newport, Maine

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AN ELDER'S CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

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CHARACTERS

ELDER ALLRED, a 19 year-old missionary

ELDER STUART, a 21 year-old missionary

BROTHER BARLOW, a father in his late 40's

SISTER BARLOW, a mother in her mid 40's

GRANDDAD, a grandfather

MATT BARLOW, 17

ERIC BARLOW, 16

JENNY BARLOW, 14

MORGAN BARLOW, 13

ANNE BARLOW, 11

SPENCER BARLOW, 10

JAKE BARLOW, 9

LIZZY BARLOW, 7

KELLY BARLOW, 5

ROMAN, dressed in rich apparel

RICH ALLRED, same person as ELDER ALLRED but is a rich man in Bethlehem

BODYGUARDS, four large men - two are Jewish and two are Romans

HEAD SERVANT

JOSEPH

MARY

CHILD, a baby portraying Jesus Christ (or a doll)

MAN OF WISDOM, an elderly poor man

BETHLEHEM CROWD EXTRAS

About the Author:

ANITA CHRISTINE -- is from Indiana. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Education from Purdue University and is currently in her last year at Indiana University, where she will receive a Bachelor's Degree in English. She served an LDS mission in Bolivia, South America and was a participant in the Japanese Exchange Teacher's program.

AN ELDER'S CHRISTMAS MIRACLE by Anita Christine.

10M 2W 3TB 1TG 2B 2G + extras.

1int 1ext. Simple Settings.

This is a humorous and delightful play is about a missionary's first Christmas away from home. Elder Allred is from an affluent family and is sent to a small Indiana town. He learns the true spirit of Christmas through his companion and an unusual family -- one with humble parents, dear children, sly teenagers and a cantankerous grandfather. About 45 minutes.

This play was first performed by the youth of the Third Ward in the Indianapolis, Indiana Stake in December 1997.

For Patrick and Martha

Scene One -- *It is Christmas Eve. ELDER ALLRED and ELDER STUART enter the stage walking down an unlit street. They are walking in the snow, after dark, to an appointment. ELDER ALLRED is impeccably dressed; wearing a new overcoat, muffler, ear muffs, leather gloves, new suit, and shiney shoes. ELDER STUART wears a worn, stained overcoat, a suit that has been mended, and an oversized pair of cheap, rubber boots.*

ELDER ALLRED: I don't know why you didn't tell me about this last appointment.

ELDER STUART: I did.

ELDER ALLRED: Yeah, well yelling at me while I'm in the shower doesn't count.

ELDER STUART: Trust me, you'll love the Barlow family.

ELDER ALLRED: Sure, okay. I'm more worried that we get home before we're stranded out here in the middle of nowhere.

ELDER STUART: Don't worry, we won't get stranded. The Barlows always give us a ride home.

ELDER ALLRED: My point is, I have to be in our apartment in the morning. I'm expecting some important calls, you know.

ELDER STUART: Calls?

ELDER ALLRED: Yes. Well, it is Christmas. Don't worry, it's legal.

ELDER STUART: On Christmas you get to make one call to your family. One. That means no girlfriends.

ELDER ALLRED: Relax, Elder Stuart. I know the rules. Both calls are from family.

(Beat.)

In a sense.

ELDER STUART: Uh-huh. How many families do you belong to?

ELDER ALLRED: Very funny. She's my future family. It's just a technicality.

ELDER STUART: It's still wrong, but let me tell you about the Bagorgeous?

ELDER ALLRED: You're just bitter because your girlfriend didn't wait for you. Have I shown you Tiffany's picture?

ELDER STUART: *(Mumbles.)* Just thirty times in three days!

ELDER ALLRED: *(Holds out a wallet-sized picture.)* See, isn't she gorgeous?

ELDER STUART: *(Ignores the picture.)* They have twelve kids, but only nine are at home. The oldest daughter is at college and they have two sons on missions. The grandfather lives with them and you have to remember he isn't a member. He hates the church, so don't talk to him about it.

ELDER ALLRED: *(Puts the picture away.)* Yeah, right. Just like Brother Jennings was a Baptist Preacher.

ELDER STUART: *(Laughs loudly.)* You have to admit, that was pretty funny.

(ELDER ALLRED Grunts.)

ELDER STUART: Now, the Barlows don't have very much but ---

ELDER ALLRED: You don't think we're really going to have freezing rain do you?

ELDER STUART: Elder Allred!

ELDER ALLRED: Don't you understand? This is really important to me.

ELDER STUART: You've only been gone for four months!

ELDER ALLRED: *(Sighs.)* I know, and I didn't realize how good I had it on the north side either. It was so sweet! We had everything all set for tomorrow. We had DA's all day, the members had already started giving us tons of presents, but the best ones were being saved for Christmas day, of course, and now I won't get any of them!

ELDER STUART: There's something else you should know about the Barlow family.

ELDER ALLRED: Did I tell you Carmel reminds me of my hometown?

ELDER STUART: Do you want to hear about the Barlow family or not?

ELDER ALLRED: Everyone in Carmel drives real cars: Beamers or Mercedes. And people have some sense of fashion. Why, I'll bet they've even got snow plows out righhhows out righlows out right now instead of, instead of ---

(Waves his arm aimlessly.)

ELDER STUART: Do you know who you remind me of?

ELDER ALLRED: I know you don't like me Elder, but you need to remember that --

ELDER STUART: If you were an innkeeper in Bethlehem, you wouldn't give a room to Joseph and Mary. You wouldn't even let them use your stable or your chariot garage or whatever!

ELDER ALLRED: Elder, you really have to deal with this jealousy issue!

ELDER STUART: Come on. You'll learn.

ELDER ALLRED: *(Stops and innnspects his shoes.)* Hey, my feet are wet. Are yours wet too?

ELDER STUART: *(Continues walking.)* No! If you'd buy some boots your feet wouldn't get wet.

(ELDER STUART exits.)

ELDER ALLRED: I wouldn't be caught dead in those ugly things. If they'd plow that dead in those ugly things. If they'd plow the streets around here, this wouldn't happen. Man, I would have to get transferred to some Hoosier hickville three days before Christmas. Hey, Elder Stuart wait up! We aren't supposed to be separated! Elder Stuart!

(ELDER ALLRED exits.)

Scene Two -- *ELDER BARLOW and ELDER STUART enter the living room of the Barlow House. It consists of well-worn furniture and a meager Christmas Tree with two presents under it. GRANDDAD and all of the BARLOW CHILDREN are in the living room. ELDER ALLRED and ELDER STUART enter the room. ELDER ALLRED immediately begins unbuttoning his coat and shaking off the snow.*

ELDER STUART: Ho, ho, ho! Merry Christmas everyone!

BARLOW CHILDREN: *(Younger children shout in unison.)* Elder Stuart!

(All the children rush over to greet him enthusiastically.)

ELDER STUART: *(Gives hugs and handshakes to the CHILDREN.)* Are you ready for Santa Claus?

KELLY: *(Tugs on ELDER STUART's coat.)* Yes, we even made his favorite snack.

ELDER STUART: What's Santa's favorite snack?

KELLY: Pound cake and apple juice.

ELDER ALLRED: *(With dismay.)* Pound cake and apple juice? Sugar cookies and milk are--

(Stops as ELDER STUART discreetly jabs him and older BARLOW CHILDREN glare at him.)

are my favorite, but Santa's favorite is ... uh ... uh ... pound cake and apple juice?

SISTER BARLOW: *(Enters from kitchen door and approaches the ELDERS.)* Elders! We're so glad you made it tonight. We were afraid with the bad weather you might not be able to come since we live so far out. The children have been praying that you'd be able to get here safely.

(ELDER STUART glances at ELDER ALLRED, but he begins taking off his accessories and ignores SISTER BARLOW's comment.)

ELDER STUART: If the snow were six feet high, we'd still make it. We'd never miss a chance to come over here. You haven't met my new companion, have you?

SISTER BARLOW: Why no, I haven't.

ELDER STUART: This is Elder Allred.

ELDER ALLRED: *(Shaking her hand.)* Hello. It's nice to meet you. I've heard a lot of wonderful things about you and your family.

(ELDER STUART looks on with disbelief.)

SISTER BARLOW: Where are you from, Elder Allred?

ELDER ALLRED: Brighton, Utah.

GRANDDAD: *(Still sitting and shouting)* Where's he from?

ANNE: *(To GRANDDAD)* Somewhere in Utah, Granddad.

ELDER ALLRED: Actually, Brighton is well-known in Utah.

JENNY: It is? Is that close to you Elder Stuart?

ELDER STUART: *(Laughs.)* Not really. West Valley is on the opposite side of town.

ELDER ALLRED: Yes. Brighton has some of the most beautiful houses in the entire valley. It's sweet.

(ELDER STUART takes off his coat. MATT gestures to take his coat and exits with it. ELDER ALLRED looks disgruntled at being ignored and follows MATT, dropping some of his accessories, then picking them up angrily.)

SISTER BARLOW: Elder Stuart, please make yourself comfortable.

(ELDER STUART sits down with SISTER BARLOW and CHILDREN. ELDER ALLRED and MATT reenter and pause in doorway.)

MATT: *(In a low voice.)* Did anyone warn you about Granddad?

ELDER ALLRED: It's too late. Elder Stuart has already played that joke on me. Nice try though.

(Begins to walk away.)

MATT: *(Grabs ELDER ALLRED's arm.)* What are you talking about?

ELDER ALLRED: You don't have to play dumb. Ask Elder Stuart if you don't believe me.

MATT: Well, I don't know what you're talking about, but maybe Elder Stuart already told you this. Granddad doesn't like the church, so try not to talk to him about it. But, you should remember that he likes to be called Brother Barlow, even though he isn't a member. He thinks members who call him Mr. Barlow are

(Imitates GRANDDAD)

high and mighty.

ELDER ALLRED: Okay!

(Gestures with a thumbs up and winks at MATT, condescendingly.)

MATT: *(Looks irritated.)* One other thing.

ELDER ALLRED: Let me guess, he used to be a Baptist preacher.

MATT: What's wrong with you? Listen, he's deaf in his left ear and he has bad hearing in his right ear, so you have to talk really loud so he can hear you.

(ELDER ALLRED looks doubtful.)

Hey, I'm serious. If you don't speak up, he'll have to read your lips. Granddad doesn't like to stare at a strange man's lips. If you know what I mean!

ELDER ALLRED: Deaf?

(They look at ERIC who is talking loudly in front of GRANDDAD.)

ERIC: Granddad, do you want a blanket?

GRANDDAD: Boy, do I look like a sissy?

ERIC: No, sir.

MATT: See what I mean?

ELDER ALLRED: Hey, thanks man.

(MATT and ELDER ALLRED join group. MATT sits on the floor, joining some of the children, and ELDER ALLRED stands.)

ELDER STUART: Where is Brother Barlow?

LIZZY: He had to work, but he promised to be here before we have to go to bed.

ELDER ALLRED: Work? On Christmas Eve? Sweet, is he a doctor or lawyer or something?

(Looks at GRANDDAD and shouts.)

Is he a doctor or lawyer or something?

(GRANDDAD looks angry and older CHILDREN glance at each other as ELDER STUART rolls his eyes.)

SISTER BARLOW: No, my husband works in a factory. They offered him triple time if he'd work tonight.

ELDER ALLRED: *(With condescension.)* Oh, a factory.

SISTER BARLOW: I have to finish a few things in the kitchen. Who wants to help me?

JENNY: I will, Mom.

ELDER STUART: I'm not sure what you're making Sister Barlow, but it smells wonderful.

SISTER BARLOW: Thank you, Elder.

(SISTER BARLOW and JENNY exit through kitchen door.)

SPENCER: Daddy makes cars. He works in the machine shop and he ---

MATT: Spencer, he doesn't know about making cars. People from Brighton don't work in factories.

ELDER ALLRED: *(Sits on GRANDDAD's left side, then ge's right side and shouts up and sits on GRANDDAD's right side and shouts.)* So-o-o, Brother Barlow, where are you ---

GRANDDAD: *(Angrily.)* Brother! I'm not your brother. What are you calling me your brother for? I'm not a Mormon, boy. Don't be calling me your brother.

ELDER ALLRED: *(Shouts.)* I thought you wanted to be called Brother Barlow.

GRANDDAD: *(Shouts.)* I don't know why you keep shouting at me either, but I ain't deaf. And don't call me your brother!

(Sound of front door opening.)

Why in the ---

BROTHER BARLOW: I'm home!

(Younger CHILDREN run to hug BROTHER BARLOW. MORGAN sits beside ELDER ALLRED and speaks in a low tone.)

MORGAN: Hey, this might be a great time for you to go help out in the kitchen. Come on, I'll help you, then Mom and Jenny can have a break.

ELDER ALLRED: Yeah, okay. Thanks.

MORGAN: But, I have to warn you.

ELDER ALLRED: Oh no!

MORGAN: Well, it's not that big of a deal. Mom's just really picky about people in her kitchen. She wants to make sure things don't get contaminated, you know, the flesh-eating virus and that kind of stuff. We just have to be sanitary in Mom's kitchen.

ELDER ALLRED: *(Shrugs shoulders.)* Well, that doesn't sound too bad.

MORGAN: Come on.

(ELDER ALLRED follows MORGAN through the kitchen door as they exit.)

BROTHER BARLOW: Elder Stuart!

(ELDER STUART stands up as BROTHER BARLOW walks over and they shake hands.)

You made it though this bad weather, huh?

ELDER STUART: We wouldn't miss it.

SPENCER: Daddy, Elder Bingham got transferred so we've got a new one.

BROTHER BARLOW: *(Taking off coat.)* Is that right?

ERIC: Yeah, and he's from Brighton, Utah!

BROTHER BARLOW: Brighton? Where's Brighton?

ELDER STUART: It's by Salt Lake.

(As MATT takes BROTHER BARLOW's coat and exits, SISTER BARLOW and JENNY return through the kitchen door.)

SISTER BARLOW: Honey, you're home early!

BROTHER BARLOW: Yep, did anyone make Santa's treat today?

KELLY: I made the apple juice, Daddy.

(MATT enters again.)

BROTHER BARLOW: Good girl.

ANNE: And I made the pound cake.

(Beat.)

Well, Jenny helped me a little.

JAKE: We put out the stockings too.

BROTHER BARLOW: *(Turning to ELDER STUART.)* Don't I have the greatest family?

ELDER STUART: You sure do, Brother Barlow.

BROTHER BARLOW: *(Sits down.)* I'm not sure if you've heard, but we've got freezing rain coming down out there.

SISTER BARLOW: Oh, no. Already?

ERIC: Guess that means Santa won't make it this year!

KELLY and LIZZY: What?

BROTHER BARLOW: Eric! Now Santa has a special sleigh so he'll make it, but I'm afraid the missionaries might have to spend the night with us.

MATT: I'll go tell Elder Richey Rich.

(Exits through kitchen door.)

ANNE: They can stay in our room.

BROTHER BARLOW: Well, honey, I think we'll put them up in Granddad's room, since it's the warmest in the house.

JENNY: I'll go find the sleeping bags.

(Exits.)

SISTER BARLOW: Elder Stuart, do you need to make any phone calls or anything?

ELDER STUART: I think--

(ELDER ALLRED enters through kitchen door with MATT and MORGAN following him. ELDER ALLRED has taken off his jacket and is wearing an old apron and brightly-colored hair-net. He is holding a wet dish towel in one hand and a dripping bottle brush in the other.)

SISTER BARLOW: Elder Allred? What happened to you?

ELDER ALLRED: What's going on?

GRANDDAD: That one's not staying in my room!

ELDER STUART: Freezing rain is coming down out there, so they're going to let us spend the night here.

ELDER ALLRED: Well, we have to find a way to get home.

ERIC: *(Turns to ELDER STUART.)* Don't you guys get freezing rain out there?

(ELDER STUART nods his head with disgust.)

GRANDDAD: *(Turns to BROTHER BARLOW.)* I'm telling you, he's

(Pointing to ELDER ALLRED)

not staying in my room. I won't have a --

SISTER BARLOW: *(Drowns out GRANDDAD.)* How does hot apple cider sound? Would everyone like some?

EVERYONE: *(except GRANDDAD)* Yeah!

(GRANDDAD Mumbles. SISTER BARLOW exits through kitchen door.)

GRANDDAD: You're always trying to shut me up. It's against the law to deprive an old man of his free speech.

ELDER ALLRED: Elder Stuart?

ELDER STUART: Why don't Elder Allred and I sleep in this room, then we can make sure Santa finds his treat?

BROTHER BARLOW: *(Nods head at ELDER STUART as he turns toward MATT and MORGAN.)* You boys get him out of that, now!

(MATT, MORGAN, and ELDER ALLRED exit through kitchen door.)

BROTHER BARLOW: It's almost bedtime. Has anyone set out Santa's snack?

KELLY and LIZZY: I will!

BROTHER BARLOW: Okay, both of you go get it ready.

(KELLY and LIZZY exit through kitchen door.)

ANNE: But Daddy, we haven't given the missionaries their presents yet.

(JENNY reenters, setting two worn sleeping bags by the door.)

BROTHER BARLOW: Well, I was going to wait 'til in the morning, but since your brothers have been giving the new Elder a hard time, I guess we should probably do it now. Eric, round everyone up.

(ERIC exits through the kitchen door.)

BROTHER BARLOW: Where are their presents anyway?

SPENCER: I'll get them, Daddy.

(Runs to the Christmas tree and retrieves the two presents.)

JAKE: I wish Sarah, Jason, and Andy could be here!

ANNE: They can't Jake. Jason and Andy are missionaries and Sarah's at college.

BROTHER BARLOW: That's right Anne. Jason and Andy are doing very important work. We didn't have enough money to bring Sarah home for Christmas, but at least she gets to stay with Aunt Nora and Uncle Sam.

(SISTER BARLOW, MATT, MORGAN, and ELDER ALLRED re-enter through the kitchen door. SISTER BARLOW is carrying a tray of small glasses, filled with hot apple cider. KELLY and LIZZY follow them carrying a plate of pound cake and a glass of apple juice.)

ELDER ALLRED: I love the smell of hot apple cider, it reminds me of Homecoming.

MATT, ERIC, and JENNY: *(With surprise.)* Cider?

(SISTER BARLOW begins handing out the glasses of hot apple cider slowly, but doesn't get to the ELDERS. ELDER ALLRED sits next to GRANDDAD. GRANDDAD scowls at him, then ELDER ALLRED quickly finds a new seat.)

ELDER ALLRED: Sure. Oh, our Homecomings are sweet. It's not like the Homecomings out here. I've heard about Indiana Homecomings. The Homecoming king and queen coming out in a Chevy or something. What a joke! In Brighton, we do it right. Our king and queen come out in a Mercedes convertible or a Viper. Oh, you should see it. It's sweet!

(JENNY pulls ANNE aside and whispers in her ear. ANNE shakes her head in agreement.)

SISTER BARLOW: Well, that's great Elder, but I don't think Homecoming is only about one car. Around here...

JENNY: Mom, we'll do that.

SISTER BARLOW: Thanks, honey.

(Hands tray out and ANNE takes it as JENNY hands out drinks. SISTER BARLOW sits down.)

ELDER ALLRED: Oh no. The car is very important. Who wants to be a homecoming king or queen riding around in some loser car?

JENNY: Here Elder, have some apple cider.

(JENNY offers ELDER ALLRED the last glass and intentionally spills it all over him.)

ELDER ALLRED: *(Jumps up.)* Ow-w-w!

SISTER BARLOW: Oh no.

(Exits)

GRANDDAD: Humph! Serves 'em right!

(SISTER BARLOW returns with a towel and tries to clean up ELDER ALLRED. He takes the towel from her and finishes cleaning up.)

BROTHER BARLOW: Well, why don't we give the missionaries ths th give the missionaries their Christmas presents so everyone can go to bed.

SISTER BARLOW: We have to go to bed early tonight!

(SPENCER gives the two presents to BROTHER BARLOW and he hands them to the ELDERS.)

ELDER STUART: Oh, you shouldn't have gotten us a present.

(ELDER ALLRED sits down and immediately begins opening his present.)

SISTER BARLOW: We insist Elder. I hope that someone is doing the same for my sons.

ELDER STUART: Well, we could send this out to them.

ANNE: Heavenly Father won't bless us if you don't open your present.

BROTHER BARLOW: *(Laughs.)* That's right. You'll deny us blessings.

(ELDER STUART begins opening his present and ELDER ALLRED holds up a multi-colored hand-made scarf and a scowl covers his face.)

ELDER ALLRED: A scarf?

ANNE: I made it, do you like it?

ELDER ALLRED: Uh, yeah. It's great, thanks.

(Tosses the scarf carelessly in the box.)

ELDER STUART: A scarf!

(Holds up a blue scarf)

I need one of these. This is wonderful! Thank you.

JAKE: Jenny made yours.

ELDER STUART: Jenny, I love it.

(Puts the scarf on.)

This will keep me so warm this winter. Thank you.

BROTHER BARLOW: Okay, everyone go get their scriptures so we can read the Christmas story, have family prayer and go to bed so Santa can come.

(All BARLOW children exit. SISTER BARLOW begins gathering glasses and BROTHER BARLOW takes the wrapping paper from the presents and exits.)

GRANDDAD: Say, is there any more of that cider?

SISTER BARLOW: Sure.

(SISTER BARLOW and GRANDDAD exit.)

ELDER STUART: *(In a low voice.)* I can't believe you!

ELDER ALLRED: Oh, can it. I don't want to hear any chastisement from Paul Perfect.

(Tosses the scarf and box on the floor next to the couch.)

I hate this place! First I insult a grandfather who looks like he trained Marines in the Second World War, then they turn me into Molly Maid, now I've got second degree burns from Santa's favorite snack! This is the worst Christmas ever!

(Fade out.)

TWO more scenes make up FOUR more pages