

The One-Page Christmas Epic

There are two speaking roles in this play and two non-speaking roles that happen very quickly at the end. The speaking roles are a movie producer (MP) and a screenwriter (SW).

The speaking roles are written according to the genders of the original actors, but can be played by either gender.

SCENE 1

A movie producer is pacing in his office, talking frantically on a cell phone.

Movie Producer: That's right, send me a screenwriter! I have an idea for the greatest movie epic of all time! What...? She's on her way? Then why isn't she—

A woman comes in, carrying a laptop computer.

MP: Never mind. Here she is. (He ends his phone call, then looks at the phone and says sarcastically) Lots of help you were.

Screenwriter: Hello, sir (reaching out her hand to shake) It's an honor. I'm --

MP: (Cutting the woman off) Sit down and take notes. (He motions to a chair on the other side of the desk from his chair.) I'm on no sleep, 10 cups of coffee, 2 cans of Redbull and a bag of Twizzlers for lunch, and I've come up with the greatest movie idea of all time. All time!

SW: OK...

The woman sits down and opens her laptop on the desk. Throughout the conversation, she will rotate back-and-forth between typing and talking.

MP: There's a man and a woman – and a baby – a *special* baby.

SW: A *special* baby? You mean, like a seed-of-the-devil baby?

MP: No, the opposite.

SW: OK...

MP: He's special, but in a good way. No, a *great* way!

SW: OK, that could be an interesting twist to work with. A family movie, maybe with a love story between the baby's parents.

MP: Oh yeah... the baby's parents. (Suddenly) Ooh! The baby's parents-to-be have to travel to the father's hometown, but when they get there, there's some kind of crisis and all the hotels are closed, so they end up in a warehouse, a shipping container...

SW: Nice! Like an art-house, bohemian kind of feel. Set design will love that.

MP: Then there's a crisis... let's see...

SW: I know! She goes into labor at the worst possible time.

MP: Yeah. I love it! They can't find a doctor, so they need some kind of makeshift crib, yada yada yada... Oh! Then some blue collar guys in town come by to help.

SW: Blue collar...

MP: Working stiffs. You know, welders, dock workers... I got it! Farmers!

SW: Farmers? Coming to a warehouse in the middle of a city?

MP: Yeah.

SW: Uh... why?

MP: (In a grandiose manner) Because only the common man knows that this baby is special!

SW: OK... I think I get where you're going now. Something the regular working person can relate to. And the farmers come to help out, somehow?

MP: Help out, hang out, I don't know. Something like that. You're the writer. You figure it out. (Excitedly) Oh, I've got it! The birth scene ends with a long, pullout camera shot of the father, mother, baby and the visitors in the warehouse, for an iconic final shot.

SW: Nice. That could work. So what does the baby do that's so special?

MP: Nothing.

SW: Nothing?

MP: Nothing... (with a big smile) yet.

SW: Oooh, I see a sequel coming!

MP: Can you do it?

SW: Sure, it's sparse, but I can make something of it. It's a great premise. A feel-good story. It sets up a sequel. I can make it into a full-length movie or book – maybe both.

MP: Actually, let's add a little more to punch it up.

SW: OK. But I don't need anything else. I've started with a lot less.

MP: I want the birth itself to be special.

SW: Like an Alien/Fringe thing where the kid comes exploding out of---

MP: No (thinking...) not the birth... the conception.

SW: Uh huh... You want the conception to be special? Like Boom-Chicka-Wow-Wow? That's an entirely different movie, sir. That could cause problems with the ratings board.

MP: Boom-Chicka-Wow-Wow? What's wrong with you? (With a nod to the audience) There are kids here.

SW: Kids? Where? We're in your...*office*...remember?

MP: There will be *children* watching this movie. I want this to be PG, PG13 at the most. So no Boom-Chicka-Wow-Wow. The opposite of that.

SW: What kind of special conception is the opposite of... that?

MP: You're the writer. You figure it out. (Suddenly, so it surprises the screenwriter) Taxes! I hate taxes! (Looking at the screenwriter, who's just staring at him, shocked) Why aren't your writing this down?

SW: Uh, well... So, it's political?

MP: (Suddenly, again) Animals! I love animals!

SW: Animals? You mean, like a dog or a cat? I know... a talking pet who rescues the baby.

MP: A talking animal? Please. Be realistic here.

SW: Yeah right. *That* would be the crazy part...

MP: No... just...you know...some place where there'd be livestock around... I know! We need exotic visitors from another land! With fancy gifts!

SW: So it's a huge costume drama now? You know this budget will be through the roof, right?

MP: A crazy king! And he does something so evil, people will gasp in horror.

SW: Now it's a horror movie? I don't know sir...

MP: An escape! To a foreign country! Now *that's* a huge epic, right?

SW: "Epic" isn't the word I'd use (under her breath) more like schizophrenic.

MP: What was that?

SW: Nothing sir. But you're talking Hunger Games size here. 3-4 books and movies. If I can get all of this to make sense in the same story. I don't know...

MP: A *star*!

SW: Yes! Now you're making sense. If we could get a big star to sign on, we might be able to get this greenlighted... I'm thinking Russell Crowe, Jennifer Lawrence...

MP: No. Not that kind of star. I mean a star in the sky. Like a comet!

SW: Hurling towards earth to destroy it? Like a disaster movie?

MP: The opposite of that.

SW: What's the opposite of th---?

MP: Ooh! And angels! Angels coming and going all over the place! And a musical number!

SW: You mean, like Broadway?

MP: Bigger!

SW: (Sarcastically, to herself) Maybe I'll just have the angels do the big musical number.

MP: That's perfect! (His eyes get big, like the greatest idea of all time has hit him, then he speaks softly and deliberately) Listen to this... It. Splits. History. In. Half.

SW: (Looks at him like he's crazy, then down at her screen like she's given up) So you want a feel-good, family, love story, arthouse, political, costume drama, horror, escape, disaster-that's-not-a-disaster, supernatural, musical, *historical* epic (searching through the laptop screen) ...with animals and angels... (sarcastically) Anything else?

MP: (Calmly) Peace.

SW: (Rolling her eyes) Uh, yeah. Peace, man.

MP: (Seriously) No. The story. It brings peace to the whole world.

SW: Of course it does.

MP: What would it take to do all that?

SW: (Sarcastically) You mean, aside from like, a billion dollar budget?

MP: (Not catching the sarcasm) Yeah. Aside from that.

SW: OK... This is Lord of the Rings territory now. We're talking 3-4 huge books, 5-7 movies, maybe a theme park... we're practically creating a new religion here.

MP: Oh no! We're not doing that. The last thing the world needs is a new religion.

SW: OK... it's nice to know you draw the line somewhere. But I gotta tell you, I don't see how any of it will make sense in the same story...

MP: Well, work on it and get back to me in a week.

The screenwriter leaves the stage.

SCENE 2: One Week Later

The Movie Producer is in his office, talking on his phone again. He is now behaving rationally.

MP: Thanks Doc. I'm feeling a lot better now. You've helped me so much this past week. This is my first day back in the office since my...episode. I'm waiting on a screenwriter to come in. I think I scared her a little last week and I need to apologize. Then I'll take that overdue vacation, like you recommended.

The screenwriter enters holding a sheet of paper. She's excited, but not in a crazy way.

MP: (Into the phone) Oh, here she is. Gotta go. Thanks Doc. (He ends the call and turns his attention to the screenwriter.) Hello, miss... You know I never did get your name (as he reaches out to shake her hand)

SW: (So excited she doesn't notice his outstretched hand) Never mind that. Here! (She hands him the piece of paper.)

MP: Uh, what's this?

SW: It's our screenplay! And I have to say, I think it's the best thing I've ever written!

MP: (Looking at the page, turning it over to see it has writing on both sides) You mean this... this... single piece of paper is a screenplay?

SW: Yep! And it's all there!

MP: What's all here?

SW: Everything we talked about! (She gets giddy as she says this) It's a feel-good, family, love story, arthouse, political, costume drama, horror, escape, disaster-that's-not-a-disaster, supernatural, musical, historical epic (pauses for a breath) with animals and angels!

MP: Uh huh... (Pulls out his phone, turns his back to her and speaks quietly into it) Security, I have a code red. (He turns back to her) Listen, last week when I had you in here, I wasn't exactly myself. And I may have said some things that were a little bit... I don't know...

SW: Crazy!

MP: Well, crazy is a little strong..

SW: Oh, no sir. You were crazy. Then I started thinking about it and, I don't know... something just came over me and I started writing it. Please sir, I know this sounds...

MP: Crazy?

SW: Fair enough. But just give it a read, please?

Two security guards show up. The producer points them to the screenwriter.

MP: (Condescendingly) Sure... sure I'll read it. But for now I have a couple friends here who are going to take you to see another friend of mine, OK?

The security guards take her by each arm and start to lead her out.

SW: Wait a minute! What's---? Oh, I get it. No sir, you don't understand! (As she's almost out the door) Just read it, sir! Please! Read it! (She's gone off stage)

MP: (Looks at the page as if to crumple it up, then pauses) I guess it couldn't hurt.

What's written on the page is the Christmas story blended from Matthew and Luke, plus a few verses from John 1. He starts to read it casually, then grows more interested and touched by the story as he reads it, pausing to smile as he recognizes each of the "crazy" parts they talked about.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And he gave him the name Jesus.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by

no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'" "

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.