

## 2001 CHRISTMAS PLAY

By Peter Clarke

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### CHARACTERS

Angel Darren – typical teenager

Angel Gemma – Darren’s friend and rather more studious

Angel Rupert – Darren’s dad

Angel Gabriel – Big, important, but kindly

(Angel Darren is chilling out in his bedroom. A ghetto blaster is playing “Hark the herald angels sing” and Darren is wearing headphones. There is a knock on the door. Darren doesn’t hear. The knock is repeated, then angel Gemma enters)

GEMMA Hey, Darren, don’t you ever answer the door? Darren! (Plucks the headphones off his head) Hello, heaven to Darren.

DARREN Oh, it’s Gemma! (Stops ghetto blaster) Hi, sorry about that, I was just totally chilled into this mint new track. It rocks. Just listen to –

GEMMA Just hold it right there. Mint? Chilled? Are we talking music, or cookery? I can’t be doing with this weird new language. What’s wrong with the “tongues of angels”, like the Bible says we should use?

DARREN Where does it say that, then? I don’t remember that bit in Bible class.

GEMMA That’s because you never listen.

DARREN I just can’t concentrate. Old uncle Methuselah just sends me to sleep. Anyhow, I do so. Sometimes. Like last Tuesday, for example.

GEMMA Yeah, once. So, clever clogs, what did you find out?

DARREN We were doing a passage from Eyes Are Ear. It goes like this: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. And the government...”

GEMMA Just a minute, just a minute. Eyes Are Ear? No way is that one of the books of the Bible. (counts them off on fingers) There’s Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus...

DARREN And Eyes Are Ear. Sure there is. Methuselah said: “Open up your scrolls to Eyes Are Ear, chapter 9.”

GEMMA (after a pause) You mean Isaiah, don’t you?

DARREN (sulky) Same thing.

- GEMMA Sure, if you're so dumb your wings are still stuck together. But it's funny you should mention that passage: I've been thinking about it a lot recently, too. How does it go again? "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called..."
- DARREN "And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end."
- GEMMA "He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,"
- DARREN AND GEMMA "Establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."
- GEMMA Wow!
- DARREN Cool!
- GEMMA So, why do you think that particular passage stuck in your mind? Not that there's much else to occupy it, I guess.
- DARREN Hey, back off! I'm doing all right. I got a Greeb in cookery last month.
- GEMMA What's a Greeb?
- DARREN A "B". It's the second letter of the new angelic alphabet.
- GEMMA Oh. We still use the old one, you know, the one that's named after the books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus...
- DARREN Yeah, OK, OK.
- GEMMA Anyway, you only got a B because of your angel food cake.
- DARREN Better than your Euphrates Mud Pie.
- GEMMA (ignores that) You never answered my question. What's so special about that passage from Isaiah?
- DARREN I dunno. I guess it's just, well, my dad keeps on saying there's talk in heaven of something big about to happen. The Son has been acting strangely recently, like spending lots of time in secret discussions with The Father and The Holy Spirit.
- GEMMA The Son? Do you mean... Jesus?
- (Darren's dad, Rupert, bursts in)
- RUPERT Shh shh shh! That name must not be spoken... not yet.

- DARREN Dad, don't you ever knock?
- RUPERT Darren, I've been calling you for time, times and half a time. Gabriel is here. He's got a job for you. I just hope you do it better than the last one.
- DARREN Aw, dad, it was just a little thunderbolt. And it only demolished one small house.
- RUPERT And guess who had to rebuild it? And rescue the family from inside?
- GEMMA Excuse me, Darren's dad, why did you...
- DARREN He's got a name, you know. (Sniggering) Rupert.
- RUPERT (testily) Thank you, Darren.
- GEMMA Er, Rupert, why did you say the name of Je.. I mean, that name must not be spoken yet?
- RUPERT It's not time yet, Gemma. Right now, he's still the Son of God; Emmanuel. That means, God with us.
- GEMMA When will it be time?
- RUPERT Very soon. Funny you should ask that: it's got a great deal to do with the job that Gabriel wants doing.
- DARREN So, what is this job?
- RUPERT I think Gabriel had better explain it to you himself. Let's get him in here.
- DARREN Aw, Dad, not here! It's a tip!
- RUPERT Well, that's your problem. I'm forever asking you to keep your cloud tidy.
- GEMMA Seems funny to call it a cloud, since it's really more like, well, a huge mansion with golden streets outside.
- RUPERT You wouldn't think so, the way he treats it. I'll go and fetch Gabriel. (exit)
- DARREN This is it. I bet I've done something really bad this time. Gabriel's probably going to have me polishing the golden trumpets every day for a month.
- GEMMA Pardon me for gate-crashing your pity party.
- (Gabriel sweeps in majestically, followed by Rupert)
- GABRIEL Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.

GEMMA AND DARREN What kind of greeting is *that*?

GABRIEL Funny, that's exactly what Mary said nine months ago. Darren, I have a task for you. And you're gonna love it. I'm sending you to earth.

DARREN What, grounded *again*? I didn't do that thing with the hailstorm. Not this time. It was Angel Ryan.

GABRIEL Not that kind of earth! You're going on a mission to *the* Earth. Here's your instructions. (Hands over a CD) Now, pay attention while I...

DARREN (tilting it to catch the light) Ooh, that's pretty!

GABRIEL Pay attention, I said! I need to explain your task. You're to go to some shepherds and announce the coming of Jesus.

GEMMA (shocked) J.. Jesus? You mean... it's time?

GABRIEL Yes. Tomorrow he's going to be born, on earth, as a human baby.

RUPERT But... why?

GABRIEL To be honest, I don't fully understand it myself. What I do know is that God the Father is not happy with only being able to make friends with a few special people, like Abraham, Jacob, Moses...

GEMMA (winking at Darren) And Eyes Are Ear.

RUPERT What?

DARREN Oh, never mind her. Come on, Mr Gabriel, tell us the rest of the crack.

GABRIEL Right. God wants to be able to have loads of people who he can love, and pour out loads of blessings on; people who want to be with him and do what he says. (Consulting notebook) He says he wants "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, so that they can declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light." In fact, I think he even wants them to come here when they die.

RUPERT What, people here? In heaven?

GABRIEL Sure, that's what he intended all along. That's why he made them.

DARREN I thought they were going to live in... what's it called... the New Jerusalem.

RUPERT Darren, you'd better not have been reading bits of the Bible that haven't even been written yet. I've warned you about that before.

- DARREN But Dad, it's fun taking little trips into the future. I wanna know what God's going to do next. He's such a cool guy, his plans always come out so good. And it doesn't do anybody any harm.
- RUPERT Maybe not. But you'll be taking a little trip into next week on the end of my wing if I catch you at it again.
- GEMMA OK, so Jesus is going to earth so that people can be, like, really close to God; be in his family. What's so great about that?
- GABRIEL Sin.
- DARREN Pardon?
- RUPERT Sin. That's the problem. All the people are trapped. Because of their disobedience to God, they're under Satan's control. And you know what that means.
- GABRIEL Disease, poverty, misfortune. And finally death. With no hope of rescue.
- DARREN (after a pause) Merry Christmas to you, too.
- GEMMA So what's Jesus going to do about that?
- GABRIEL (Strolls across to the wall, where a crucifix is hanging. Takes it down and strokes it pensively.) I'm not quite sure. But I know it's going to be big. And, I know that only Jesus could do it.
- DARREN Because... he's the only one without sin, right?
- GEMMA So, you *do* listen in class!
- RUPERT Darren, I'm impressed! You do understand, after all.
- DARREN Sure, Dad. (sheepish) You know, I really do love God and... well... I just wanna serve him. He's so smart.
- GEMMA But I still don't get it. Why does he have to go as a baby? It seems, well, kind of demeaning for the Lord of Glory to have to wear nappies.
- GABRIEL That's the way God likes it to be. If we humble ourselves, and take a modest attitude, he will raise us up in good time. Jesus is setting an example for all of us.
- RUPERT (to Darren) An example you could do well to learn from, my lad.
- DARREN I'm humble. In fact I'm one of the humblest angels I know.
- GEMMA Yeah, so humble you're proud of it.
- RUPERT Cut it out, you two!

- DARREN But why does Jesus have to go through all this? Why not just go down there in all his glory, with twelve legions of angels and just blow Satan away once and for all?
- GABRIEL Leviticus.
- RUPERT Bless you. (offers box of tissues)
- GABRIEL Thanks, but I wasn't sneezing. I meant the Bible book, Leviticus. God's written a law in there about how sin is to be dealt with. What does it say? "There can be no forgiveness..."
- RUPERT "...without the shedding of blood." So there has to be a sacrifice...
- GABRIEL ...a perfect one...
- RUPERT ...because God said, "In bringing many sons to glory, it is fitting that God should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering."
- DARREN Meaning... Jesus?
- EVERYONE ELSE Exactly!
- DARREN Wow, heavy stuff.
- GABRIEL Besides that, if Jesus doesn't come as a baby, they won't be able to sing "Away in a manger" until the end of time.
- RUPERT Might not be such a bad thing.
- GABRIEL Enough! It's time to get going. Darren, get your things together. You need to be in front of the shepherds in two hours' time. (starts to exit)
- DARREN Oh, this is going to be so cool! Let's see now... (starts reading from the CD) "An angel of the Lord appears to them" – hee hee, that's me! – "the glory of the Lord shines around them, and they are terrified." Ha ha, what a laugh! (suddenly notices Gemma looking very glum) Hey, who's stolen your joy?
- GEMMA (sad) I'm really pleased for you. It's a great job. It's just... well, I never get swell jobs like that.
- GABRIEL (turning suddenly) Oh, I nearly forgot. Gemma, There's a job for you too.
- RUPERT Not the Magi job, is it?
- GABRIEL Got it in one. There's three strange guys bringing presents from the east. They need someone to guide them. And you, Gemma, are to be their star.

(Everyone is thrilled and run round, pushing each other excitedly.)

GEMMA Cool! Me, a star?

DARREN Gemma, you lucky thing!

RUPERT Brilliant! This is such great news, everyone, let's celebrate!

GEMMA Shall we sing one of our special praising God songs?

GABRIEL Definitely. And there's a whole bunch of people out there, too.  
(indicates audience) Shall we ask them to join in?

RUPERT (doubtfully) Could be a bit hard for them. They don't look too bright to me.

GABRIEL Nonsense! After all, they're made in the image of God! (to the audience) Hey, people! Stand up and join in our song!

EVERYONE (sings *Joy to the World*)