

THE UNWRAPPED GIFT

by Greg Moore



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The Unwrapped Gift

**A Christmas pageant
in rap and rhyme**

by Greg Moore

CAST OF CHARACTERS

KIA

Brash, fun, crazy older child or teenager

BRIT

Pleasant but also cynical older child or teenager

KATE

Straightforward, thoughtful older child or teenager

SHEPHERD 1

Older child or teenager who is a good storyteller with dramatic flair

SHEPHERDS 2, 3, 4, 5

Simple, plain, rural accent. Young children may handle these parts, as they are mostly one-liners. Lines may be distributed between three Shepherds for smaller groups.

SHEEP

Various children (no lines)

SHEEP DOGS

Various children (no lines)

ANGEL

Child with a loud voice

ANGEL HOST

May be the choir, other children, or both (no lines)

JOSEPH

Friendly (older child or adult)

MARY

Sweet (older child or adult)

JESUS 1

Baby doll or real baby

WISE MAN 1, 2, 3

Gentle, dignified (young children)

JESUS 2

Toddler, preferably around two or if older, small-sized (no lines)

PRODUCTION NOTES

Synopsis

The Unwrapped Gift begins with two sisters wrapping presents, bored and jaded with the whole Christmas scene. They begin to rap the “Christmas Wrap” when they are surprised by their sister, who came downstairs for some hot chocolate and saw her gift in the process. This launches a lively discussion on surprises and the Unwrapped Gift of Christmas, which is told through flashbacks to the Christmas story itself. In this story, we find the unexpected treasure of Jesus Christ — the mystery of God unwrapped, so the entire world can see his glory.

The Unwrapped Gift may be staged with or without music. You may enjoy finding or making your own interludes between scenes for the choir, worship team, or soloists. A children’s choir would be an ideal way to have total participation, plus sound effects (sheep) and a host of angels! This is a very flexible program — there are a hundred ways it could be presented. It’s even possible to stage it all in the living room with the three girls looking on as amazed spectators as Wise Men appear at their door, or an Angel appears in front of the Christmas tree.

Costumes

Kia, Brit, and Kate may wear PJs or casual clothing. The Shepherds, Wise Men, Joseph, and Mary may all wear biblical robes, headpieces, and sandals. The Wise Men’s robes should be made of a finer fabric in a rich color. The others should be simple earth-toned robes. The Shepherds should also carry staffs. Children may wear white fluffy sheep costumes and shaggy sheep dog costumes if desired, or they may play the parts without special costumes. The Angels may wear white robes, cardboard wings, and tinsel haloes.

Set

Living room (Scenes 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9) should have a Christmas tree, sofa or chairs, piles of boxes, ribbons, wrapping paper — whatever looks like a chaotic scene of desperately trying to get the job of wrapping gifts done. The field (Scene 3) doesn’t need anything special. The children

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playing the parts of animals will depict a field setting. Bethlehem (Scene 4) should have a simple manger filled with straw and a stable if desired. Nazareth (Scene 7) is the interior of a simple Jesus-era home. If staging is limited, Nazareth and Bethlehem can be the same set with props changed. Pantomime may be sufficient for Joseph greeting the Wise Men at the door (or a short extension of the wall may suggest a door without having to make something that actually opens and shuts).

Props

Scissors, tape (Scene 1), foil-wrapped rocket-shaped present, package of batteries, wrapped gifts including puzzle, candy, rectangular box (smoked salmon), ball, paperback book (Scene 2), fake campfire — either one as is used at Halloween or logs arranged with red, yellow, and orange tissue paper “flames” (Scene 3), baby doll for infant Jesus, unless you are fortunate to have a real baby and parents who are willing to play this very simple role (Scene 4), fancy bottles and/or boxes for the Wise Men’s gifts (Scene 7), and three mugs (Scene 9).

Sound Effects

For Scenes 1 and 9, you will need a CD player or iPod to play rap background music, either On-stage or through the sound system. The author has a recording custom-made for the original performance with sound effects that fit the text. This is available free upon request from the playwright at ohh4four@hotmail.com. You may prefer to use your own rap or hip-hop background music. A good rapper or beat boxer can often provide enough rhythm a cappella! The only rule is, the cooler, the better. Additional sound effects needed: jackals (may be someone making an animal cry Off-stage), and twelve chiming sounds, which may be recorded from someone’s clock.

Author's Note

I hope you, your friends and neighbors, and your church will enjoy *The Unwrapped Gift*, and may it help us grow in the spirit of Christ, so that each Christmas will be richer in the things that show us the way to eternal life.

In Christ's love and service,

Greg Moore

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Scene 1

Christmas Wrap

(The setting is the living room. KIA and BRIT wrap presents while sixteen beats of the rap background music plays. When they rap, they should emphasize the dashed or hyphenated words.)

KIA: It's December twenty-fourth, and I'm caught in the trap;
I've got to do the "Christmas wrap."

BRIT: One for my brother and one for my sis,
One for every-body on my Christmas list!
(Four beats of background music)

KIA: Everyone else is snug in their beds,
Sugar plums dan-cin' in their heads,

BRIT: But here I am with ribbons and tape —
A great big job I can't escape.
(Four beats of background music)

KIA: I'm wrappin' a rocket for my sister Kate,
The dumbest dame in the lower forty-eight.

BRIT: Who'd want a rock-et? What a joke!
Fly a few times, and then it's broke.

KIA: I'd rather get a gift that'll last a while —
A year from now, it'll make me smile!

BRIT: A black street bike or a video game;
A BB gun to improve — my — aim!
(Four beats of background music)

KIA: But somebody told me, "You'd better be-lieve
It's better to give than to re-ceive."

BRIT: Hey! Givin' these gifts really ain't so bad —
They're all paid for by Mom and Dad!
(Four beats of background music)

KIA: But I'll tell you straight — won't try to hide,
I got an emp-ty feelin' in-side:
Supposed to be the happiest time of the year —
But I don't have that Christmas cheer!

(Four beats of background music)

BRIT: In Sunday school, I heard a story

1 Of angels from the realms of glory,
 2 Who told some shepherds and three wise men
 3 ’bout a baby boy born in Beth-le-hem.
 4 They gave him gifts of myrrh and gold
 5 And frank-in-cense, or so I’m told.
 6 *(Background music stops, but KIA continues.)*
 7 **KIA:** But I can’t fig-ure — tell me, boss —
 8 How does this fit with Santa Claus?
 9 *(Background music resumes, and after four beats, KIA resumes*
 10 *and concludes the rap.)*
 11 It’s December twenty-fourth, and I’m caught in the trap;
 12 I’ve got to do the “Christmas wrap.”
 13 *(Repeat this line four more times.)*

14
 15
 16 Scene 2
 17 Gift Guessing

18
 19 *(KATE enters the living room.)*
 20 **KIA:** Kate, what’re *you* doing here?
 21 **KATE:** *(Yawning)* Couldn’t sleep ... thought I’d make a cup of
 22 hot chocolate. By the way, that was a pretty good rap!
 23 **BRIT:** You heard it? Now you know what your present is.
 24 **KATE:** Hey, I don’t have to hear to figure this one out! *(Holds*
 25 *up a foil-wrapped, rocket-shaped package.)* I went out and
 26 bought some batteries in case *somebody* forgot to
 27 include them. *(Tosses package of batteries at KIA.)*
 28 **KATE:** Where’s the surprise in Christmas anymore? I know
 29 everything we’re going to get already. Look — that one’s
 30 a video game, that’s a shirt, and ... *(Shakes package.)*
 31 that’s a five-hundred-piece puzzle.
 32 **KIA:** Oooo! Let’s try to guess *all* of our presents! *(KIA and*
 33 *BRIT excitedly pick up packages.)*
 34 **BRIT:** *(Holds a package up to her nose.)* Yeah! This one’s candy
 35 for sure. I can smell it through the gift wrap!
 36 **KIA:** *(Holding up another package to her nose)* This ... is either
 37 smoked salmon or a bad-smelling necktie.
 38 **BRIT:** *(Holds up a small wrapped ball.)* A softball!

KIA: (*Holds up a wrapped paperback book.*) **A big, wide paperback book — I hope it's Dilbert!** (*Use currently popular characters.*)

BRIT: Not Dilbert — I want it to be Get Fuzzy.

KATE: Stop!

KIA: What's the matter, Kate? Were you hoping for Calvin and Hobbes again?

KATE: I have a serious question.

BRIT: On Christmas Eve, the night of fun and excitement, a question of serious import from Little Miss Deadbolt.

KIA: Fire away.

KATE: Why do gifts have to be surprises?

KIA: Are you crazy? Christmas gifts are *always* a surprise. Duh. That's why you wrap them!

KATE: I'm just thinking about the first Christmas in Bethlehem. It was full of surprises! Some of the most surprised people in the history of the world were shepherds who were out there that night, watching their sheep ...

SONG: Any shepherd-themed number, such as "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night."

Scene 3 Field Report

(*SHEPHERD 1 stands near the front. He will tell the story in a very natural fashion, relaxed at the start but getting very dramatic when the ANGEL appears. His part is most effective if he moves into the scene and interacts with the other SHEPHERDS at various points. His monologue is very descriptive, and it may be used for staging this scene. His description of the angel lasts almost a minute, providing plenty of time for movement, the appearance of the ANGEL HOST, or whatever is desired.*)

SHEPHERD 1: There were five of us shepherds around the

1 fire as we waited for nightfall. Some of us were
 2 relaxing, some almost asleep, a few talking about what
 3 we know best — sheep. Sounds dull to you, but sheep
 4 are everything to us. (*SHEEP baa softly in background as a*
 5 *very slow-paced conversation begins in heavy drawls.*)

6 SHEPHERD 2: Ah heerd thet wun of yore sheep wuz sick.

7 SHEPHERD 3: Yup.

8 SHEPHERD 4: Is he still sick?

9 SHEPHERD 3: Nope. Got better today.

10 SHEPHERD 5: Better, huh?

11 SHEPHERD 3: Yup.

12 SHEPHERD 1: It came my turn to stand watch, which meant
 13 getting up from that nice warm fire and going for a
 14 walk in the clear, crisp, cold night air. The stars were
 15 big and bright; there was no wind at all. It was so quiet
 16 that it felt like God was about to ... whisper something
 17 in my ear. (*Moves away from campfire.*)

18 It was getting chilly. I pulled my coat around me and
 19 kept walking, stopping only if I heard the sheep stir or
 20 the jackals crying in the distance. (*Off-stage cry of jackals.*)
 21 Midnight was slow in coming, but it finally got there. I
 22 turned back toward the fire to wake up Ben, who was
 23 next on watch.

24 But I stopped. There was a light breaking, first soft
 25 and white like moonlight, then brighter and brighter
 26 until I could see the whole field clearly, and everything
 27 in it. I was getting scared. I turned around and looked
 28 up. The stars were gone — and light was pouring down
 29 like there was a window in the sky! My knees started
 30 shaking. I felt cold all over! I was afraid, and I yelled
 31 out, “Wake up! Wake up!” (*SHEPHERDS awaken.*)

32 The dogs sprang up and ran away, whimpering.
 33 (*SHEEP DOGS jump up and run, making whining noises.*)
 34 The sheep rushed together, all confused. (*SHEEP gather*
 35 *together and make “baa” sounds.*) The men jumped up and
 36 grabbed their weapons. (*SHEPHERDS grab staves.*)

37 SHEPHERDS 2-5: (*Ad lib*) What is it? What’s goin’ on?

38 SHEPHERD 1: Look! The sky is on fire! (*SHEPHERD 1 faces*

1 *audience directly and resumes storytelling voice.*) Suddenly
2 the light became so bright we couldn't stand it — we fell
3 down on our knees, (*ALL do so*) and we would have died,
4 except we heard a voice say:

5 ANGEL: (*Entering*) Don't be afraid!

6 SHEPHERD 1: And we listened. Boy, did we listen!

7 ANGEL: (*With outstretched arms*) Don't be afraid. I've got good
8 news for you and for everybody in the world! Today,
9 right over there in Bethlehem, the city of David, a
10 Savior has been born for you. Here's what you should
11 look for: a baby wrapped up in cloths and lying in a
12 manger.

13 SHEPHERD 1: The voice was strong, but it didn't scare me
14 anymore. We got up to our knees and looked at the most
15 beautiful sight we had ever seen. In the middle of that
16 shining light, there was a man dressed in a perfectly
17 white robe. His hands were stretched out toward us,
18 like a blessing. His face was beautiful! He didn't say
19 anything more, but in a moment he spread his arms,
20 and as he did, the light spread from horizon to horizon.
21 (*ANGEL HOST enters.*) The sky was filled with angels,
22 and they were all singing!

23
24 SONG: "Glory to God" from Handel's *Messiah*, or any song that
25 expresses the idea "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth,
26 goodwill to all."

27
28 SHEPHERD 2: Let's go to Bethlehem and see the Savior!
29 Come on! Let's go! (*SHEPHERDS 1-5 run Off-stage.*)

30
31 SONG: Joyful song, such as "Go, Tell it on the Mountain." (*Toward*
32 *the end of the song, MARY, JOSEPH, and baby or doll JESUS*
33 *position themselves at the manger. ANGEL HOST exits after*
34 *song.*)

35
36
37
38

Scene 4

What Shall We Bring?

3

4 *(SHEPHERDS 1-5 are On-stage, outside the manger area.)*5 **SHEPHERD 1:** What shall we bring to the newborn King?6 **SHEPHERD 2:** I'll bring him a lamb from my flock!7 **SHEPHERD 3:** I'll bring him the staff I carved today!8 **SHEPHERD 4:** I'll bring him a toy so he can play!9 **SHEPHERD 1:** We'll *all* have an offering!10 **SHEPHERD 5:** But what about me?

11 I'm a poor shepherd boy.

12 I have no lamb, no staff, no toy.

13 But I *do* have a voice that's clear and strong.

14 I know what I'll bring — I'll bring him a song!

15 *(Sings chorus to "Angels We Have Heard on High")*

16 Glo - - - - -ria!

17 **SHEPHERD 2:** *(As they arrive at the manger)* Is this the place?18 **SHEPHERD 4:** *(Looking at JESUS)* Look at him — he's19 beautiful! *(JOSEPH puts his finger to his lips to say "Hush!")*

20 Oh — I'm sorry. We'll be very quiet.

21

22 **SONG:** Carol such as "Away in a Manger" or "What Can I Give
23 Him?"

24

25 **SHEPHERD 3:** Good night, Jesus!

26

27 **SONG:** "Silent Night" *(As SHEPHERDS 1-5 exit)*

28

29

30

Scene 5

31

Wrapped and Unwrapped

32

33 *(KIA and KATE enter and walk to the manger, pausing to look*
34 *inside before continuing to the living room.)*35 **KATE:** Isn't he beautiful?36 **KIA:** Yes, but he's just a baby! What's the big deal about a
37 baby being born?38 **KATE:** Come on — give him time to grow up! He'll become

- 1 Jesus, the Savior of the world!
- 2 KIA: Jesus. I've heard of him! He walked on water and fed
3 five thousand people ... all kinds of stuff.
- 4 KATE: He let people see God with their own eyes!
- 5 KIA: I thought you can't see God.
- 6 KATE: Sure, you can see God. Jesus went around showing
7 everybody what God is like. So when you act the way
8 Jesus acted, God's not a mystery anymore, like a
9 wrapped present.
- 10 KIA: Jesus was wrapped!
- 11 KATE: Yes, he was — wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger. A
12 manger is a feed box for animals. (*Picking up some shiny*
13 *gift wrap*) It wasn't beautiful shiny stuff like these
14 Christmas wrappings. Jesus came to us wrapped in a
15 very plain package.
- 16 KIA: Like a disguise!
- 17 KATE: Well, sort of like a disguise. If you really need to see
18 God, you can always find him; but if you like shiny
19 packages, you might miss the one with Jesus in it.
- 20 KIA: If Jesus was wrapped like a gift, he must have gotten
21 unwrapped!
- 22 KATE: Jesus' whole life was like unwrapping God's most
23 beautiful gift. Once somebody asked of Jesus, "Show us
24 the Father — we want to see God!" Jesus told him, "If
25 you see me, you *have* seen God." Everything Jesus did
26 showed people how wonderful God really is. That's why
27 we celebrate — because Jesus was born! (*KIA and KATE*
28 *may stay in the living room during the song.*)
- 29
- 30 SONG: Very joyful, celebratory Christmas song, such as "Joy to the
31 World."
32
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38



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