

THE KING AND THE MAIDEN

by Linda Buff



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The King and the Maiden

Based on a parable
by Søren Kierkegaard

by Linda Buff

“Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of
God ... made himself of no reputation,
taking the form of a bondservant.”

— Philippians 2:5-7, NKJV

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MAIN STORY:

Grandpa
Grandma

Grandchildren:

Tyler
Emily
Sasha
Josh
Nels
Jeff
Monique
Katie

Adults (Two or three; Grandma and Grandpa's grown children and parents of the Grandchildren — these are non-speaking parts)

TABLEAU: (Non-speaking parts)

King
Maiden
Ambassadors (Two)
Courtiers (Two)

NATIVITY SCENE: (Non-speaking parts)

Mary
Joseph
Angel
Shepherd(s) (One or two)
Sheep (One to three, optional)
Wise Men (Three)

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PRODUCTION NOTES

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a Danish philosopher and founder of existentialism, wrote many books about what it means to be a Christian. Kierkegaard believed that Christianity cannot be rationally explained, but that belief requires a "leap of faith." He emphasized that God desires for us to obey him, even when we don't completely understand him. The parable "The King and the Maiden" is found in *Parables of Kierkegaard*, edited by Thomas C. Oden (Princeton University Press, 1978).

Props

Christmas decorations (for Grandma to hang)
 Lightweight vacuum cleaner
 Book for Grandpa to read
 Two to three suitcases/backpacks
 Bible for Grandma
 Embroidery work for the Maiden
 Nativity set in a box
 Doll wrapped in blanket for Mary
 Bible for Grandma
 Crooks for Shepherds
 Gifts for Wise Men

Costumes

All of the characters in the Main Story wear ordinary contemporary clothing. Characters in the Tableau wear medieval-era clothing. The King wears a royal robe and crown when the performance begins. He then changes to ragged, beggar-type clothing that signals a dramatic change in status. The Maiden wears a simple dress and a wreath of flowers in her hair. The foreign Ambassadors and the Courtiers wear belted tunics. The characters in the Nativity Scene wear appropriate Biblical costumes. The Sheep wear all white with perhaps some cotton balls attached and crawl (a good role for younger children).

Set Specifications

The Main Story is set in the living room of Grandpa and Grandma's house. If desired, a backdrop may depict a window overlooking a snow-covered front yard. There are two easy chairs at Center Stage with a table between them. An

ottoman is next to one of the easy chairs. This is where Grandpa and the Grandchildren gather while he tells them the story. Another end table is at Stage Left. When Grandma and the Grandchildren set up the Nativity set, they place the pieces on this end table.

The Tableau takes place at Stage Left, on a small platform that allows the characters to be easily seen by the audience. There is a simple wooden chair where the Maiden will sit.

The Nativity Scene takes place at Stage Right, on another platform that allows the characters to be easily seen by the audience. There is a manger where the baby will be placed.

Music

"Deck the Halls" may be found in most secular Christmas music compilations. "What Child Is This?" may be found in most church hymnals. "Love Came Down at Christmas," by Christina G. Rossetti, may be found in many though not all hymnals. An online source for it is www.cyberhymnal.org. Go to "topics" and pick "Christmas," then scroll down to the title (arranged alphabetically). Although it is optional, an effective way to conclude the play is by singing "Here I Am to Worship (Light of the World)" by Tim Hughes, copyright © 2000 Thank You Music; CCLI #3266032.

Casting Options

If you are using a smaller group, you could eliminate the Sheep, Ambassadors, and Courtiers, or only have one of each. Fewer children could also be used if the lines were reassigned.

1 *(The scene opens with GRANDPA seated in an easy chair,*
 2 *reading his book. As the GRANDCHILDREN, ADULTS, and*
 3 *NATIVITY SCENE CHARACTERS stand as a choir and sing,*
 4 *GRANDMA enters and hangs Christmas decorations. She then*
 5 *quickly vacuums. GRANDPA lifts his feet without taking his*
 6 *eyes from his book as GRANDMA vacuums under him.)*

7 **SONG: "Deck the Halls"**

8 Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
 9 Fa la la la la, la la la la.
 10 'Tis the season to be jolly,
 11 Fa la la la la, la la la la.
 12 Don we now our gay apparel,
 13 Fa la la, la la la, la la la.
 14 Troll the ancient Yuletide carol,
 15 Fa la la la la, la la la la.

16
 17 See the blazing Yule before us,
 18 Fa la la la la, la la la la.
 19 Strike the harp and join the chorus,
 20 Fa la la la la, la la la la.
 21 Follow me in merry measure,
 22 Fa la la, la la la, la la la.
 23 While I tell of Yuletide treasure,
 24 Fa la la la la, la la la la.

25 *(As song ends, GRANDMA sinks into her easy chair and singers*
 26 *exit. The doorbell rings.)*

27 **GRANDMA:** That must be the kids! *(GRANDMA and GRANDPA*
 28 *open door and greet the GRANDCHILDREN and ADULTS, who*
 29 *carry suitcases. There are lots of happy greetings and hugs.*
 30 *GRANDPA returns to his chair as GRANDCHILDREN sit in the*
 31 *other chair, on the ottoman, and around his feet. GRANDMA and*
 32 *ADULTS take suitcases Off-stage.)*

33 **GRANDPA:** I'm so happy to see you!

34 **TYLER:** What have you been doing, Grandpa?

35 **GRANDPA:** Reading, as usual. You know that's what I love best.

- 1 KATIE: What are you reading?
- 2 GRANDPA: This is a book called *Parables of Kierkegaard*. Søren
- 3 Kierkegaard was a Danish philosopher. He was also a
- 4 Christian. This is a book of his parables. Do you know
- 5 what a parable is?
- 6 MONIQUE: It's a story that someone makes up to teach you
- 7 something. Jesus told lots of parables to teach us about
- 8 God and God's kingdom.
- 9 GRANDPA: That's exactly right. Kierkegaard wrote some
- 10 parables to help us understand what God is like.
- 11 SASHA: Read us one, Grandpa!
- 12 GRANDPA: Well, they are kind of complicated. But one of my
- 13 favorite ones is a really good story for Christmas. Would
- 14 you like to hear the story?
- 15 ALL: (*Ad-lib*) Yes! Yeah! Sure! (*Etc.*)
- 16 GRANDPA: It's called "The King and the Maiden." It starts out
- 17 with a king who is very, very great and powerful. (*Tableau:*
- 18 *The KING enters and stands regally. He is dressed in fine robes*
- 19 *and a crown.*)
- 20 NELS: Does he live in a castle?
- 21 GRANDPA: A castle? Why, sure, we could say he lives in a
- 22 castle.
- 23 JOSH: Does it have a moat?
- 24 GRANDPA: All right.
- 25 JOSH: Are there piranha fish in the moat?
- 26 NELS: And alligators?
- 27 JOSH: There can't be any alligators. They will eat the piranha
- 28 fish.
- 29 NELS: Maybe they are trained not to.
- 30 GRANDPA: (*Grandly*) The castle is built of gleaming white
- 31 stones, and it sits atop towering cliffs. It is the most
- 32 glorious sight for miles and miles. The castle has over a
- 33 hundred rooms, full of the most beautiful things a king
- 34 could ever want.
- 35 JEFF: Does he have a big-screen TV?

- 1 **GRANDPA:** (*Thinks for a moment.*) No, the King does not have
2 a big-screen TV. He doesn't much care for TV. But he has
3 an enormous library with a million books!
- 4 **ALL:** (*Ad-lib*) Wow! Amazing! Man! (*Etc.*)
- 5 **MONIQUE:** Does he have a pony?
- 6 **GRANDPA:** The King has a stable with two hundred pure
7 white horses! And he has acres and acres of gardens that
8 grow delicious fruits and vegetables and beautiful flowers
9 and trees. (*KIDS react.*) He is the most powerful king in all
10 the land. When ambassadors from other countries come to
11 see him, they tremble because they are afraid they might
12 say the wrong thing and cause him displeasure. (*Tableau:*
13 *Two foreign AMBASSADORS come and bow down before the*
14 *KING.*) His courtiers fear his wrath and are ever alert to
15 meet his every whim. (*Tableau: COURTIERS come and kneel*
16 *before the KING.*)
- 17 **EMILY:** He sounds like the principal at my school. He's really
18 mean.
- 19 **GRANDPA:** The King is not mean. Not at all. He is very noble
20 and kind. (*Tableau: The KING shakes hands with*
21 *AMBASSADORS. He motions to courtiers to stand. He puts his*
22 *hand on their shoulders. AMBASSADORS and COURTIERS*
23 *exit.*) And then something happens to the King. He falls in
24 love. He falls in love with a lovely maiden. She is a humble
25 young woman, kind and good. She lives in a small cottage
26 in the village. (*Tableau: The MAIDEN enters across from*
27 *KING. KING watches her as she sits down and begins*
28 *embroidery work.*)
- 29 **SASHA:** Does she love him too?
- 30 **GRANDPA:** Well, that is where he has a big problem. He
31 cannot tell her that he loves her!
- 32 **JEFF:** Is he kind of shy around girls?
- 33 **GRANDPA:** Not exactly ...
- 34 **TYLER:** It's hard to tell a girl you like her. She might not like
35 you back.

- 1 **EMILY:** But he's the King! Of course she'll like him!
- 2 **MONIQUE:** He's got all those horses! How could she not like
- 3 him?
- 4 **GRANDPA:** What do you think the King should do?
- 5 **SASHA:** Go ask the maiden to marry him!
- 6 **GRANDPA:** What would happen if he did?
- 7 **JEFF:** The maiden would be scared. Remember how all the
- 8 people are scared of the King because he's so powerful?
- 9 The maiden would say yes just because she's afraid to
- 10 make him mad.
- 11 **NELS:** What's wrong with that? She'd still marry him.
- 12 **EMILY:** But the King would be sad. He'd never know if she
- 13 really *loved* him, or if she was just *scared* of him.
- 14 **MONIQUE:** Maybe the maiden would be really happy! She'd get
- 15 to go live in the castle and have all those servants and
- 16 horses and everything! I think she'd be really excited!
- 17 **SASHA:** But that would make the King sad, too. Because he
- 18 wouldn't know if the maiden really loved *him* or if she just
- 19 loved all his *stuff*.
- 20 **GRANDPA:** Exactly. If the King goes to the maiden and
- 21 declares his love for her, how could she refuse him? She
- 22 might be afraid to say no, or she might only love him for
- 23 all his riches and power. So he has a problem.
- 24 **TYLER:** *I* should have such a problem!
- 25 **EMILY:** I know! He can dress in regular clothes and pretend to
- 26 be a normal person! Then he can go and tell the maiden
- 27 that he loves her!
- 28 **JOSH:** Yeah! Then if she loves him back, he can say, "Guess
- 29 what? I'm the King!"
- 30 **TYLER:** That doesn't sound good to me. My mom always tells
- 31 me, "Be yourself." The maiden might not appreciate being
- 32 fooled.
- 33 **MONIQUE:** She'd get over it. I mean, he has the horses.
- 34 **GRANDPA:** But the King's heart was troubled. Would they be
- 35 able to understand one another? She had lived all her life

1 in the village — so very different from his royal life in the
 2 shining white castle!

3 NELS: They don't really have very much in common, do they?

4 SASHA: I'll bet she'd get homesick living in the castle, away
 5 from all her friends in the village. He'd be talking about
 6 kingly stuff all the time. She might even wish she had
 7 never married the King.

8 JEFF: Wow. I guess he really does have a problem. They are
 9 just too different to be able to love each other.

10 GRANDPA: (*Sadly*) There is *no way* for the King to love the
 11 maiden without destroying her freedom ... or her identity.
 12 It is impossible. (*Tableau: The KING sadly goes Off-stage.*)

13 KATIE: Grandpa! That's a terrible Christmas story!

14 JOSH: Christmas stories are supposed to have happy endings!

15 GRANDPA: Why do you think it doesn't have a happy ending?

16 TYLER: Because you said it is impossible for the King to love
 17 the maiden.

18 GRANDPA: Ah. It is impossible for the King. But there is still
 19 a way. And it is the way he chooses. He gives up his
 20 throne ... and he takes off his crown ... and he takes off
 21 his robes ... and he puts on the garments of a servant ...
 22 and he goes to live in the village. (*Tableau: The KING enters,*
 23 *now wearing beggar's clothing.*)

24 JEFF: But we decided it wouldn't be a good idea for the King
 25 to disguise himself.

26 GRANDPA: This is no disguise. He gives up being a king. For
 27 real. (*KIDS gasp.*)

28 KATIE: You mean he really becomes a servant? And waits on
 29 people and stuff?

30 GRANDPA: He becomes a servant in reality. He lives in the
 31 village. He sleeps on the hard ground. He goes hungry and
 32 thirsty. He shivers in the cold. But now he can go to the
 33 maiden, earnestly and truthfully, and tell her of his love.
 34 (*Tableau: KING moves close to MAIDEN. She looks up at him.*)

35 MONIQUE: What does she say?

1 TYLER: Oh, no! What if she doesn't love him? Now he's lost
2 everything!

3 EMILY: What happens, Grandpa? Does she love him? Or does
4 she send him away?

5 JOSH: How does it end? (*GRANDMA enters with box and her*
6 *Bible.*)

7 GRANDMA: It's time to take out the Nativity set. I've been
8 waiting until you all got here. I know you children love to
9 help me unpack all the pieces. (*Each GRANDCHILD*
10 *unpacks a piece, reads the Bible passage from GRANDMA's*
11 *Bible, and sets the piece on the table. As this happens,*
12 *corresponding NATIVITY SCENE CHARACTERS enter and*
13 *take their places around the manger in a tableau.)*

14 JEFF: (*Unpacks Joseph figurine as JOSEPH enters Stage Right and*
15 *stands by manger.*) An angel of the Lord appeared to
16 [Joseph] in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do
17 not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because
18 what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will
19 give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name
20 Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins"
21 (*Matthew 1:20-21*).

22 MONIQUE: (*Unpacks Mary figurine as MARY enters Stage Right*
23 *and stands by JOSEPH.*) The angel said to [Mary], "Do not
24 be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will
25 be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give
26 him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called
27 the Son of the Most High" (*Luke 1:30-32*).

28 TYLER: (*Unpacks baby Jesus figurine as MARY picks up blanket-*
29 *wrapped doll which was hidden beforehand.*) While they were
30 [in Bethlehem], the time came for the baby to be born, and
31 she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in
32 cloths and placed him in a manger, (*MARY places doll in*
33 *manger*) because there was no room for them in the inn
34 (*Luke 2:6-7*).

35 NELS: (*Unpacks shepherd figurines as SHEPHERDS and SHEEP*

1 *enter Stage Right and arrange themselves beside MARY.) And*
 2 *there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby,*
 3 *keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the*
 4 *Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone*
 5 *around them, and they were terrified (Luke 2:8-9).*

6 **EMILY:** *(Unpacks angel figurine as ANGEL enters Stage Right and*
 7 *stands beside JOSEPH.) But the angel said to them, "Do not*
 8 *be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be*
 9 *for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has*
 10 *been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).*

11 **SASHA:** *(Unpacks Wise Men figurines as WISE MEN enter Stage*
 12 *Right and kneel at the manger on JOSEPH's side.) [The magi]*
 13 *went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east*
 14 *went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where*
 15 *the child was. When they saw the star, they were*
 16 *overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child*
 17 *with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and*
 18 *worshiped him (Matt. 2:9-11). (GRANDCHILDREN,*
 19 *GRANDPA, GRANDMA, and ADULTS gather behind Nativity*
 20 *Scene and sing.)*

21 **SONG: "What Child Is This?"**
 22 **What Child is this, who, laid to rest on Mary's lap is**
 23 **sleeping?**
 24 **Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds**
 25 **watch are keeping?**
 26 **This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and**
 27 **angels sing:**
 28 **Haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!**
 29
 30 **Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are**
 31 **feeding?**
 32 **Good Christian, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is**
 33 **pleading.**
 34 **This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and**
 35 **angels sing:**

1 Haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!
 2 (*GRANDMA, GRANDPA, GRANDCHILDREN, and ADULTS*
 3 *return to the living room and sit down.*)

4 NELS: Grandpa, finish the story! How does it end?

5 SASHA: Does the maiden love the King? Or does she send him
 6 away?

7 GRANDPA: Yes, how does the story end? That is the question
 8 that we each must answer for ourselves. (*CHILDREN look*
 9 *puzzled.*)

10 GRANDPA: Kierkegaard wrote the parable "The King and the
 11 Maiden" to teach us about Christmas. The King in the
 12 story is really someone in the Christmas story. Do you
 13 know who it is? (*JOSH nods and goes to the Nativity set on*
 14 *the table, picks up baby Jesus, and brings it to GRANDPA.*) Yes,
 15 Josh. The King is Jesus.

16 TYLER: Jesus gave up being God so he could come down here
 17 and live with us.

18 GRANDMA: (*Reading from Bible*) Philippians 2:5-7 says, "Christ
 19 Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it
 20 robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no
 21 reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" (NKJV).

22 SASHA: Jesus did that so he could tell us that he loves us.

23 JEFF: And we can understand him.

24 EMILY: And we can love him back.

25 GRANDPA: We can love him, or we can reject him. It is our
 26 choice. (*All CHARACTERS from the Main Story, Tableau, and*
 27 *Nativity Scene gather together and sing.*)

28 SONG: "Love Came Down at Christmas"

29 Love came down at Christmas,
 30 Love all lovely, Love divine;
 31 Love was born at Christmas,
 32 Star and angels gave the sign.

33

34 Worship we the Godhead,
 35 Love incarnate, Love divine;



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