

Born to Take my Place

A Candle Star Christmas Production

by
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A Note to Directors:

Thank you for choosing to use a Candle Star Christmas Production in your church or school. My purpose in writing each play was to create a pageant that even small groups could produce simply. (They have all been produced in my own church of 200 people.) But stronger still was my desire to immerse viewers in a powerful story that left no question about the true meaning of Christmas. Christ's coming to dwell with man is only part of a whole gospel message, which is clearly presented in each script. My hope is that this play will help you spread that message in your community this holiday season.

Merry Christmas and break a leg! And to Jesus Christ be all the glory.

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Find additional
Candle Star Christmas Productions
on my website:

www.michelleisenhoff.com

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Summary

After being freed from prison, Barabas takes upon himself the task of learning who it was that took his place on the felon's cross. His search leads him all the way back to the manger.

Length

Candle Star Christmas Productions are designed to run between 45 minutes to an hour when music is included at scene breaks.

Cast of Characters

Barabas

Jesse—friend of Barabas

Tobias—friend of Barabas

Peter

John

Nicodemus

Mary

Stage Setup

Stage is set with a kitchen table and chairs that will host the Passover meal in scene one and furnish the upper room in scene two. Set Nicodemus's chair off to one side for scene three. And leave an empty area on stage (near an altar?) to represent the temple where Mary prays in scene four.

Prop List

A table decorated for Passover

Table cloth

Bread

Grape juice

3 Place settings

3 chairs

Chair for Nicodemus

Music Recommendations

At the end of most scenes, an option break for music is inserted. This is left wide open on purpose, because the organizations that produce this play will have vastly different musical talents available. They may even choose to skip some or all of these opportunities. However, music offers a great distraction while switching scenes, and it provides a whole additional platform for worship. Here is a list of suggestions to fill these opportunities:

Songs sung by children's Sunday school classes or school classrooms

Vocal solos or groups performed by children or adults

Instrumental solos performed by school children or adults

Brief piano interludes

Traditional carols provide simple, recognizable tunes for instrumentals. Vocal arrangements might consist of carols as well, or be drawn from the variety of contemporary music available. Congregational singing provides an opportunity for the audience to become involved.

The Rose of Bethlehem, by Lowell Alexander, makes a very fitting conclusion to this play. It is sung by Selah and available commercially. The “canned” version may be played over the sound system, or it can be performed live by members of your organization.

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Scene One

Barabas slinks through the auditorium onto the stage where several of his rough-looking friends lounge at the Passover table. Barabas has a hunted look.

Jesse: Barabas! You rascal! I thought we lost you this time!

Tobias: We thought you were dead for sure!

Barabas: As you can see, I'm still among the living, but whether for good fortune or ill remains to be seen.

Jesse: The only ones suffering ill fortune will be these blasted Romans. The next time we revolt we won't fail!

Barabas: *(With a grim smile)* Well, this time didn't go so well, did it?

Tobias: *(Laughing)* It's your own fault you got caught. Next time, run faster!

Jesse: *(Seriously)* You're very lucky the crowd turned against that Jesus fellow. If they hadn't, it would be your ugly carcass hanging dead on that cross. But forget about all that. It's Passover, Barabas! Join us for some good food!

Tobias: *(Scoffing laughter)* You can take Elijah's place. The old fellow didn't show up again this year.

Barabas: (*Too intense to sit down*) Who is he? This Jesus. What do you know about him?

Tobias: He's just some peasant who deemed himself a rabbi. A nobody.

Barabas: But what was he like? What did he do? Why did everyone want him dead?

Tobias: Aw, he was calling himself God. A real wacko. What does it matter?

Barabas: Because I saw him. He wasn't crazy. He was—I don't know.

Tobias: What do you care? The Romans execute folks by the dozen. You never shed a tear before.

Barabas: This is different. This one took my place. I have to find out who he was.

Jesse: You might find some of his friends hiding out at old Ebenezer's place. I heard they've been hanging out there. But stay out of trouble. We're going to need you again, Barabas, and I doubt you'd get so lucky twice.

Optional break for music.

Scene Two

Peter and John are sitting at a table in the upper room, dejected. At Barabas's knock, they jump up, frightened.

John: Who is it?

Barabas: Barabas. Can I talk to you?

Peter: Barabas?! (*Wrenching the door open*) What are you doing here? You stinking, rotten street scum! You deserved that cross! He didn't!

John: Peter, relax. This man couldn't have changed anything. (*Turning to Barabas*) I'm sorry. Come in. It's been a difficult twenty-four hours.

Barabas: (*Looking uncomfortable*) I—I shouldn't have come. I didn't consider your loss... I'll come back another time.

Peter: (*Slamming the door and crossing his arms threateningly*) You're here now, you leprous dog. State your business.

Barabas: I—I want to know about your teacher. (*Turning to John, pleading*) I need to know! What was he like? How did he live? Why did you choose to follow him?

John: (*Spoken slowly and thoughtfully*) Jesus was holy, tender, righteous, compassionate, wise, and strong. He had authority to heal sickness, forgive sin, cast out demons, even raise the dead. But I followed him because he was the Son of God.

Peter: *We thought* he was the Son of God, John. But how in thunder can God die?

John: (*Quietly*) I don't know.

Peter: (*NOT quietly*) I don't know either! I don't understand anything anymore! Not the crucifixion, not the trial, not even how the blasted Sanhedrin could turn over one of their own people to the Romans, and a rabbi at that! Nicodemus was about the only one not calling for his head!

John: I'm sorry we're not much help, Barabas. As you can see, we have plenty of questions ourselves. But Nicodemus is well-educated, and he's a man of much wisdom. Maybe he will have the answers you seek.

Optional break for music.

Scene Three

Nicodemus is reclining in a chair. Barabas knocks.

Nicodemus: Come in. (*Barabas enters*) I'm sorry, lad. These old bones are too tired to get up. First Passover and Sabbath duties back-to-back, and then this whole terrible execution in the middle of it. I'm plumb exhausted.

Barabas: Actually, sir, it's the execution I've come to see you about.

Nicodemus: A tragedy. A most regrettable tragedy.

Barabas: I want to know more about the man who died.

Nicodemus: Jesus? Why he was brilliant! I've never met a more learned man, even at his young age. He had a remarkable understanding of the law. I remember the first time I heard him speak. I was much younger then, and he must have been, oh, about twelve years old, perhaps. He spent a few days teaching us priests in the temple, and even the wisest among us were asking him questions. It was astonishing! And he only grew in his understanding. Yes, Jesus has made many things clear to me.

Barabas: But do you believe he was the Son of God?

Nicodemus: I most certainly do. He fulfilled many prophecies. Why, I could give you a score of them right off the top of my head. And I recall John the Baptizer calling him the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. (*Leaning forward*) Did you know, when he died two days ago, it was in the very hour in which we sacrificed the Passover lambs? (*Leaning back*) That gives some veracity to his claims, doesn't it?

Barabas: But how can God die?

Nicodemus: (*Shrugging*) How can God be born? Who are we to understand the mind of Jehovah? All he asks us to do is believe, and if I haven't convinced you, perhaps you should talk to someone who was there in the beginning. She has a story to tell. She is there, in the temple praying.

Optional break for music.

Scene Four

Mary is bowed on stage. Barabas approaches hesitantly, and Mary looks up. (Mary's long lines can be discretely read.)

Barabas: Are you Mary, the mother of the one who was crucified?

Mary: (*Serene and sad*) I am, and no mother was ever more blessed...or more cursed.

Barabas: Nicodemus tells me your son was the Son of God.

Mary: It is as you say.

Barabas: But how do you know?

Mary: (*Shifting to sit more comfortably*) Because the angel told me before he was ever born.

Barabas: Angel?

Mary: (*Smiling*) I've given birth to several children, but this one was...unusual.

Barabas: (*Settling down beside her*) How do you mean?

Mary: Because God was his *only* father.

Barabas: But your husband...

Mary: (*Smiles and shakes her head*) We were engaged, and the same angel had to convince him that God really was the father of my child. But that wasn't all. Another astonishing thing happened after his birth.