

CALLING ALL CHRISTMASES

gifts, and Santa Claus . . . they change from time to time and place to place, but underneath it all, the same light shines, the light of lights that came into the world that winter night in Bethlehem.

And now, my friends, our time is up, I fear. So Merry Christmas, in a score of languages! Whoever you are, wherever you live, we of the Globeview Network, U.S.A., send you our Christmas greetings . . . send you our wishes that, throughout the year, the light of Christmas will stay close and clear.

THE END

Teacher's copy

*On Such a Night*

*Characters*

OLD WOMAN  
OLD MAN  
CHILDREN'S CHORUS  
SHEPHERDS  
THREE WISE MEN

TIME: *A few nights before Christmas.*

SETTING: *A farmhouse kitchen.*

AT RISE: *The OLD WOMAN is sitting in a rocker near the stove, knitting. The OLD MAN sits with his pipe, occasionally poking the fire, putting a rug in front of the door to keep out the wind, or looking out the window into the night.*

OLD WOMAN: Still snowing, you say?

OLD MAN: Still snowing.

OLD WOMAN: And cold?

OLD MAN: And cold. With a bitter wind.

OLD WOMAN (*Sighing*): Without the wind we might have gone.

OLD MAN: No. I told you, the car will not start. The engine won't turn over. Besides, how could we make the hill with the snow drifting? And four miles to the school-house.

OLD WOMAN: It is the first time we have missed in nineteen years.

OLD MAN: Eighteen. The first time in eighteen years.

OLD WOMAN: Nineteen! We missed the year Elma-Hendriksen finished eighth grade. We missed hearing her sing "Silent Night" for the last time. And they say she never sang better. But you remember what a night it was.

OLD MAN: The year of the big snow. Eighteen years ago.

OLD WOMAN (*Shrugging*): All the same, all the same. Eighteen or nineteen—at our age it makes little difference. (*Dreamily*) What a voice Elma had! Head and shoulders above the others, I always said. (*Looks up from knitting*) Listen!

OLD MAN: Listen to what? The wind blowing? Is that it?

OLD WOMAN: Can't you hear? (*In the background CHILDREN'S CHORUS slowly crosses the stage singing "Silent Night." One voice is loud and clear above the others.*)

OLD MAN: Hear what? (*Cocks his head*) My ears are not what they once were.

OLD WOMAN: Head and shoulders above the others, I always said. (*The OLD MAN shrugs, puffs his pipe. OLD WOMAN listens intently. The CHORUS sings several stanzas, moving slowly offstage.*) Beautiful! Like old times.

OLD MAN: What are you talking about?

OLD WOMAN: The song, "Silent Night." (*Pause*) Perhaps . . . we could walk.

OLD MAN: On such a night? With the road covered with snow and the wind blowing? And four miles to the schoolhouse? Not for me.

OLD WOMAN: I could do it.

OLD MAN: You! If you got as far as Hendriksens, you would do well.

OLD WOMAN: There would still be time to walk. The

program does not start so early this year. Now the school is so small, children from town will come out to help, after their own program.

OLD MAN: So you have said. They will come out from town to help.

OLD WOMAN: I remember years there were eighteen, even twenty children in the school.

OLD MAN: Twenty-one even. I remember twenty-one, the year Carl finished.

OLD WOMAN: So many? (*Pause*) I remember Carl was always one of the shepherds. ✕

OLD MAN (*Chuckling*): So he could follow the Star silently. So he would not have to speak. Afraid of his own voice, he was. (*In the background several boys dressed as SHEPHERDS come in. They see the Star, point at it in wonder, follow it offstage.*)

OLD WOMAN: I can see Carl still, following the Star. (*Sighs*) And now only five children in the school. Let me see, that would be . . . Mary . . . Joseph . . . and three shepherds.

OLD MAN: Why not three Wise Men instead of three shepherds?

OLD WOMAN: The Wise Men were later. You remember. They came after the shepherds, seeking the Christ Child.

OLD MAN (*Shrugging*): Well, no matter. There are still only five. It is no wonder they need help from town.

OLD WOMAN (*After a pause*): Still snowing?

OLD MAN (*Going to look*): Still snowing.

OLD WOMAN: And the wind?

OLD MAN: Still drifting the snow.

OLD WOMAN: It is just like *that other night*.

OLD MAN: What other night?

OLD WOMAN: The night of the play they had on the program, ten years ago.

OLD MAN: What play did they have?

OLD WOMAN: You don't remember? It was the story about the Wise Men who came knocking at the old woman's door, asking the way. In ~~Russia~~.

OLD MAN: Not ~~Russia~~. Surely not ~~Russia~~. ~~Italy~~!

OLD WOMAN: I remember, ~~Russia~~. Just such a winter night as this, when the three Wise Men knocked on the door. The woman's name . . . I forget it now. But it began with "B" . . . (*Shrug*) "Ba . . . Ba . . ." She had a bright fire on the hearth and she had just cleaned the house, I remember.

OLD MAN: Yes, you would remember she had cleaned the house.

OLD WOMAN: Inside, warmth and comfort. Outside, cold and wind and snow.

OLD MAN: Like tonight.

OLD WOMAN: Just as I said.

OLD MAN: No. Wait a minute. How would there be so much cold and snow in ~~Italy~~?

OLD WOMAN: in ~~Russia~~, I tell you. And the woman—why do I forget her name? It began with "B"

OLD MAN: Now I too remember it began with "B" . . . but in ~~Italy~~.

OLD WOMAN: She heard the knock at the door, and opened it. And there were the three Wise Men standing in the cold. They entered, carrying their gifts for the Christ Child. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

OLD MAN: In ~~Russia~~?

OLD WOMAN: They were lost, you see. They were seeking their way through the storm to Bethlehem. The Star they followed was buried in the snowy sky. They asked the old woman to show them the way, but she would not leave the warmth and comfort of her house to guide them!

OLD MAN: Are you saying we should leave the warmth and comfort of our house and walk to the school? Is that it?

OLD WOMAN: She would not leave her warm fireside to guide them, and they went on alone through the night. Ever after she was filled with great regret.

OLD MAN: Only a story. Who would come, or go, on such a night?

OLD WOMAN: And ever after at Christmas time she went searching, searching all over ~~Russia~~, looking for the Christ Child. She looked in all the children's faces, and left them little gifts. But she never found Him, the One she sought.

OLD MAN: Just a story, I say.

OLD WOMAN: A story of regret. (*There is stomping at the door, then loud knocking.*)

OLD MAN: What! On such a night, who can it be? (*Goes toward door*) Come in! (*Opens door. THREE BOYS enter. They are dressed as WISE MEN, under snowy jackets*)

OLD WOMAN (*Staring*): Can I believe my eyes? (*Goes to BOYS, peers at costumes*) The Wise Men. The three Wise Men.

OLD MAN: You think so?

1ST BOY: Yes, that's right.

2ND BOY: Can you show us a way? The road is so drifted the driver can't make the hill.

3RD BOY: Is there a way around?

OLD WOMAN: On such a night, as I said, the Wise Men came!

1ST BOY: The road is not too bad, if we could only get around the hill.

3RD BOY: There must be a way. . . .

OLD WOMAN (*Excited*): Around. Yes, yes. (*To OLD MAN*) The Wise Men have come, and I will show them the

way. I will not be like the one in the story. I will not stay home in warmth and comfort. Where are my over-shoes? (*Goes into other room, mumbling*)

OLD MAN (*Following her*): What are you thinking of?

1ST BOY: They can't put on the program if we don't get there. Only five in the school. You can't have much of a Christmas program with only five.

2ND BOY (*Nodding toward other room*): The old lady seems to have an idea. Maybe there's a way around, all right.

OLD WOMAN (*Coming back, bundled up*): I will show you.

OLD MAN (*Tagging after*): And what star do you intend to follow?

OLD WOMAN (*Suddenly, turning to OLD MAN*): I have thought of it! I knew it began with "B." Babouscka! That is it—Babouscka.

OLD MAN: I have thought of it too. Befana! With "B." In Italy.

OLD WOMAN: Babouscka, I say . . .

1ST BOY: Did you think of a way? We don't want to be late.

OLD WOMAN: I will show you. The car can go roundabout—across our field to Hendriksens'. The snow does not drift there, and it misses the hill.

OLD MAN (*Excited*): Yes, of course. I know the way even in the dark. (*Begins to put on wraps*) We swing around Hendriksens' hayfield to the creek, then follow the fence back to the road. There is even a gate. We will show you.

OLD WOMAN: We?

OLD MAN: We will take you right to the schoolhouse. (*There is a sound of singing offstage.*)

OLD WOMAN: Listen! (*Opens door a crack*) All of you, listen. On such a night, music! Is it out of heaven itself?

1ST BOY (*Laughing*): Oh, it's just the angels, practicing their song.

2ND BOY: Singing to keep warm.

OLD WOMAN: Wise Men at the door, angels in the yard. That is even more than came to Babouscka. (*They start out.*)

OLD MAN: To Befana.

OLD WOMAN: Every year we go to the Christmas program.

OLD MAN (*Pulling down ear-flaps*): Every year. We have not missed in eighteen years.

OLD WOMAN: Nineteen! But no matter. Come, Wise Men. We will show you the way.

(*Curtain*)

THE END