

## Christmas Love is the Best Part to Play

There were enough flash bulbs going off to blind a Sahara sand lizard sporting welding goggles. My wife Angie was right there in the fray, elbowing her way out into the aisle, determined to snap a roll or two before the kindergarteners could even bellow out their first Christmas classic.

Our son Joshua wasn't hard to spot. He was the one in the bright red pants. You see, he'd been picked by his music teacher to play Santa in the skit that was to follow.

To my chagrin, Joshua hadn't scanned the crowd like the other kids when they first filed out. He just marched along watching the music director. I appreciate him trying to be obedient and all, but we weren't out there waving like we hadn't seen him in months for nothing. He's got to learn to recognize his peeps. It had me concerned. Something wasn't right. Josh seemed too serious. I started to think, "What if he's eaten up with the stage fright?" That wouldn't do. There were two or three hundred people here. I'd already warned him how one little mistake might ruin our whole family name. Surely he wouldn't be knuckling under pressure after that great pep talk? I'd bitten my nails down to the quick by the time Angie got back.

"He's barely singing," I protested, "What if he freezes up?"

She whirled on me like a hormonal she-bear protecting her cub, "Hush up Grinch!"

Several parents gave me the eye.

After the last song, Joshua and a handful of other kids got into costume and took their places. Most were working animal puppets. Josh stood alone out front. His sagging little white beard was slung low. Every eye in the cafeteria was on him. I began to panic.

"Does he know his lines Angie? Did you study with him? I'll bet he doesn't remember his lines!" I was coming unglued. Angie growled. I flinched, thinking I'd heard her razor sharp claws sliding out. Thankfully it was just her film advancing, and she slid off down the isle with her paparazzi buddies; snapping more pictures than a Japanese tour group at Graceland. By then I was sweating bullets and experiencing shortness of breath.

Turns out, however, Joshua didn't have any lines. His job was to act out a series of activities while his teacher narrated. He drank some hot chocolate. No problem, I'd seen him do it at home. He feed some animals, and did well, considering he won't do it at home. Finally he decorated the Christmas tree, calmly arranging the ornaments and placing a bag full of colorfully wrapped presents beneath. He didn't try to open a single one of them like he would've at home! Before you know it, "Ho ho ho" and the play was over. The crowd went wild! Well, maybe not wild, but they clapped. I know I did. My boy had been a hit; a real pro. Was there ever any doubt? I'm sure I saw him wink at me.

"You did great son!" I said ruffling his head afterwards, "How'd you snag the best part in the whole play?"

Josh looked up humbly, "Cause I'm nice to Randy."

As he ran off I shot a queried look toward Angie. She pulled me aside. "His teacher told me Randy is a little autistic boy who's really taken up with Joshua."

I was floored. I guess I'd been expecting to hear he'd gotten the part because of the superior acting genes passed down through his good ole' dad. Now I was left trying to swallow this big lump in my throat. Joshua had gotten the part because of the superior Love shed abroad in his little heart by his Heavenly Father. *(By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. John 13:35 KJV)*

But anyway- What do you say to a kid that just blows past your wildest expectations? Little Joshua may have been wearing a Santa suit that day, but deep down its obvious he was clothed with the true meaning of Christmas.

-Guy Sheffield 12-20-06