

**Donkey Ollie's**

# **CHRISTMAS** **in** **HEAVEN**



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Directed by  
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**Chapter 1:**

**The Gathering**

**What is Heaven?**

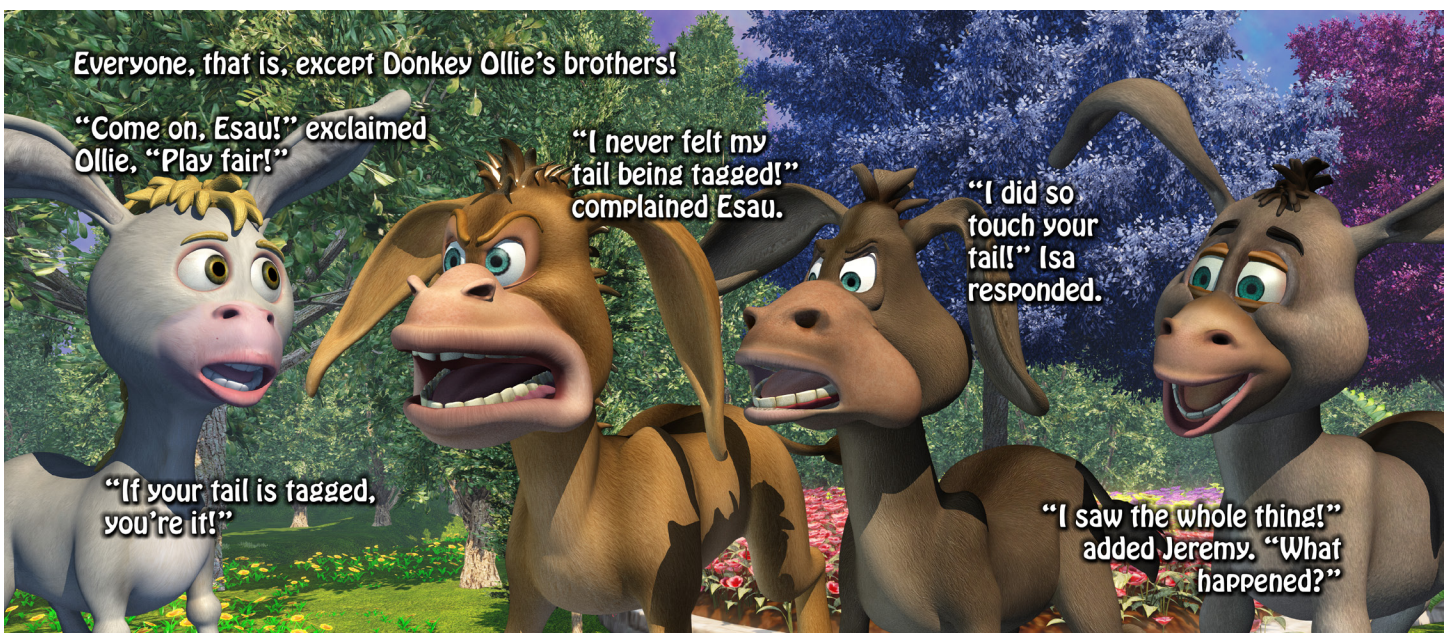
**Is it full of light with  
big fluffy clouds?**

**Maybe it's where the  
angels play!**

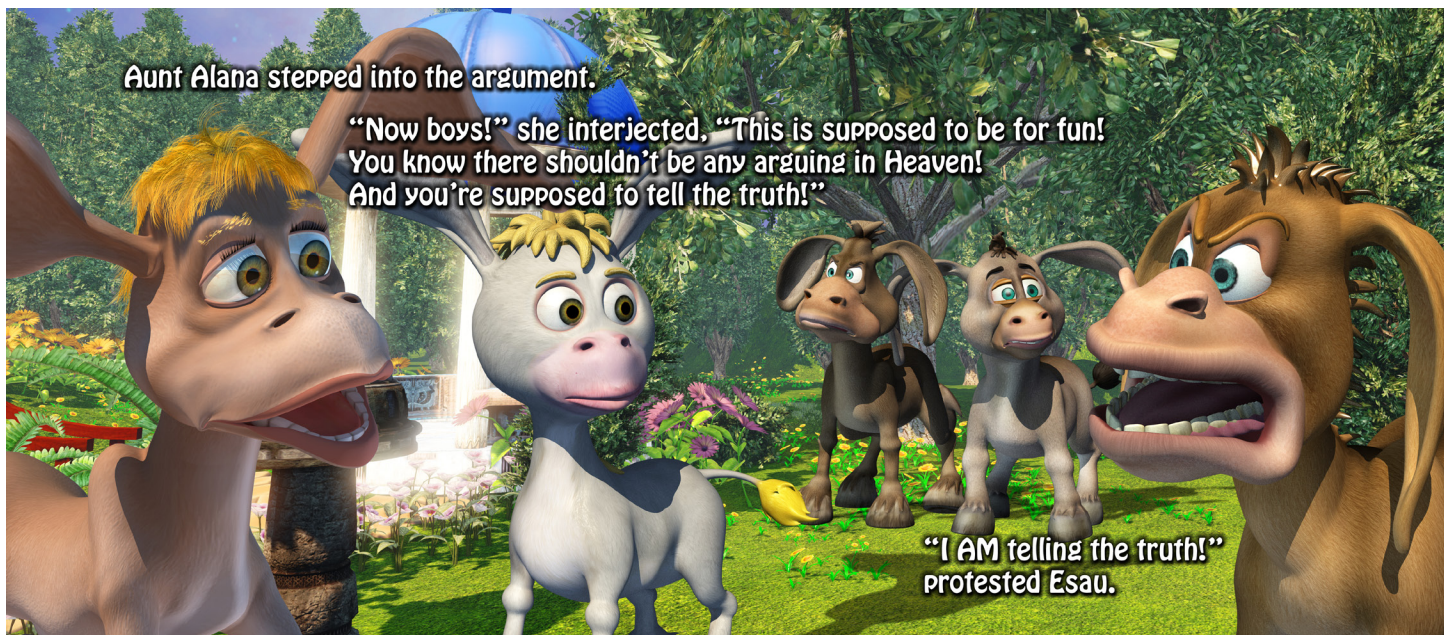
**It's where  
the majestic  
Crystal City  
stands...**

**...and watches over  
all the lands!**





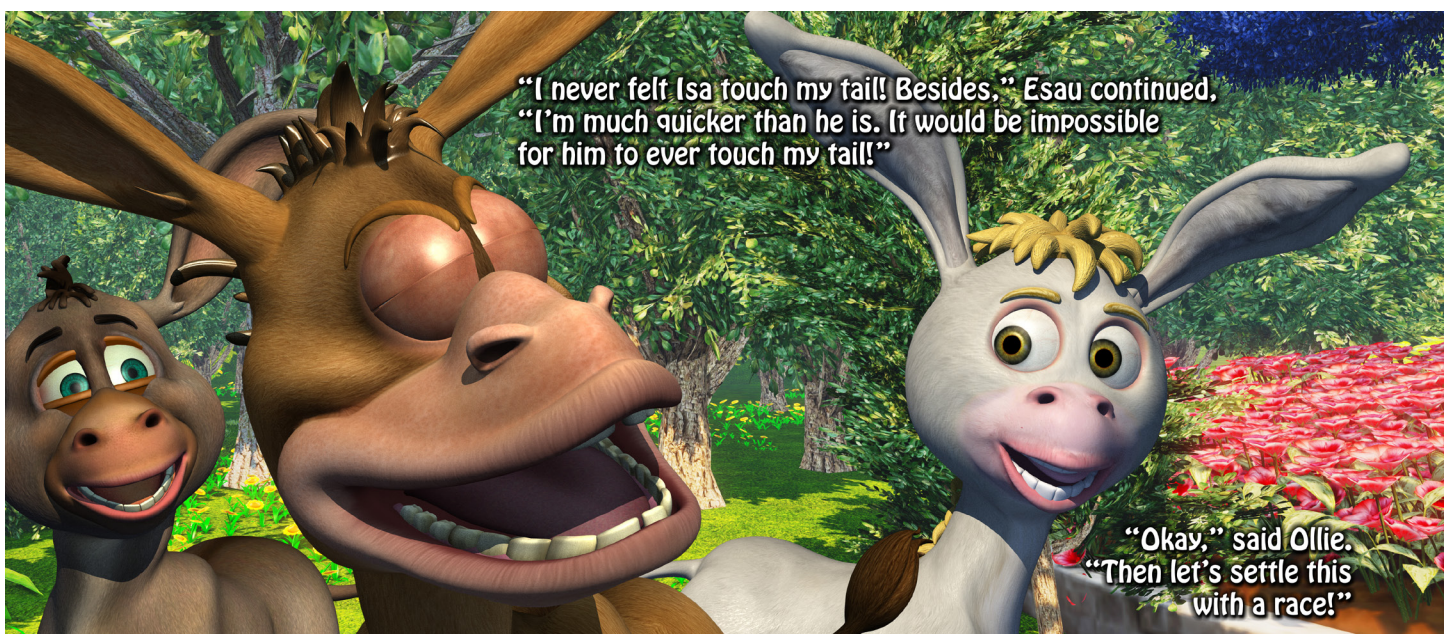




Aunt Alana stepped into the argument.

"Now boys!" she interjected, "This is supposed to be for fun! You know there shouldn't be any arguing in Heaven! And you're supposed to tell the truth!"

"I AM telling the truth!" protested Esau.



"I never felt Isa touch my tail! Besides," Esau continued, "I'm much quicker than he is. It would be impossible for him to ever touch my tail!"

"Okay," said Ollie. "Then let's settle this with a race!"



"A race?" asked Esau.

"If you beat him, Esau," said Ollie, "then we will take your word for it... he didn't touch your tail. If Isa wins, you have to give all the kids donkey rides!"

"I'll race him," said Isa. "I'll beat him, too!"

"Where would they race to?" asked Jeremy.









**"GO!"** Ollie yelled.

Both donkeys took off and raced down the path as fast as they could!



They were both nose-and-nose when Rupert the Raven flew up!

**"Hey, guys!"** Rupert yelled.  
**"What's the big rush?  
Is it dinner time already?"**

**"Now now, Rupert!"**  
Esau struggled to say.

**"Can't you see...  
we are racing?!"**



**"I can see you're both  
running, but you  
sure aren't going  
very fast!"**

**"If I was bigger, I'd  
offer you both a lift!"**

**"Good luck to  
both of you!"**

**"With that, Rupert flew off."**





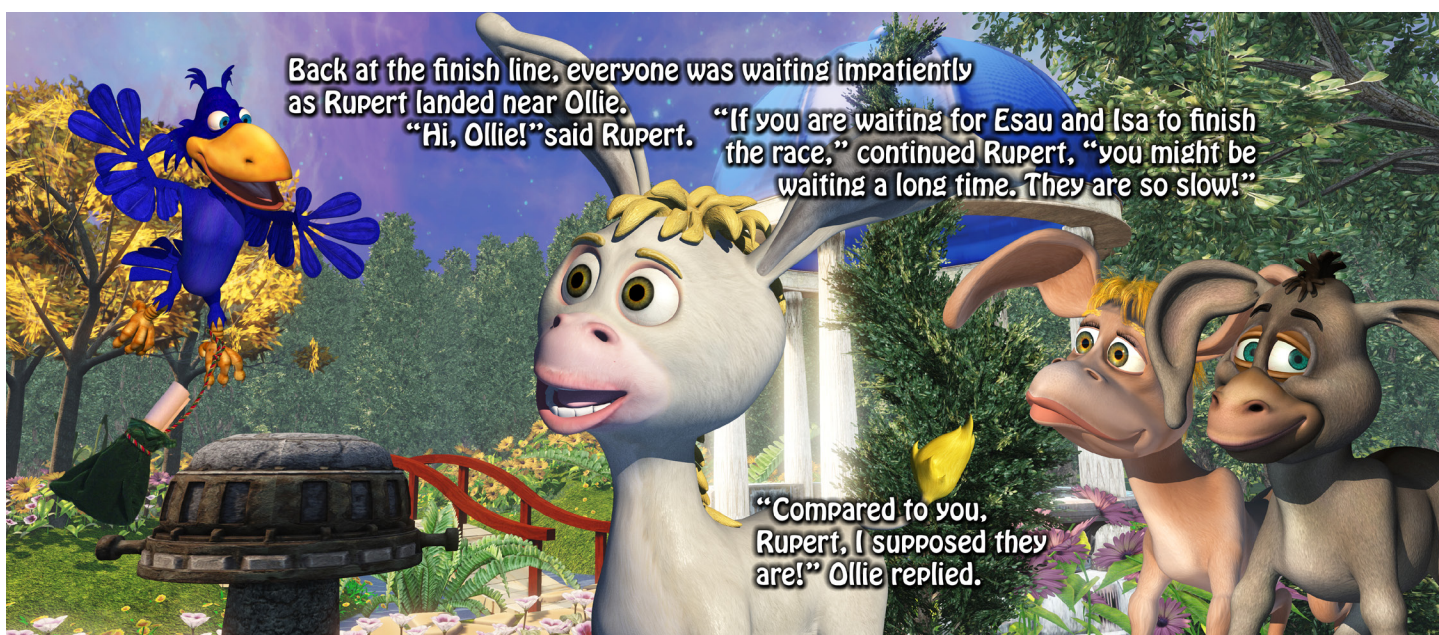
Both donkeys pushed on, as fast as they could go. They both made it to the half-way point...

... circled around the fountain...

... and then headed back!!



They were both getting a bit out of breath.  
Esau was slightly in the lead!



Back at the finish line, everyone was waiting impatiently as Rupert landed near Ollie.

"Hi, Ollie!" said Rupert.

"If you are waiting for Esau and Isa to finish the race," continued Rupert, "you might be waiting a long time. They are so slow!"

"Compared to you, Rupert, I supposed they are!" Ollie replied.





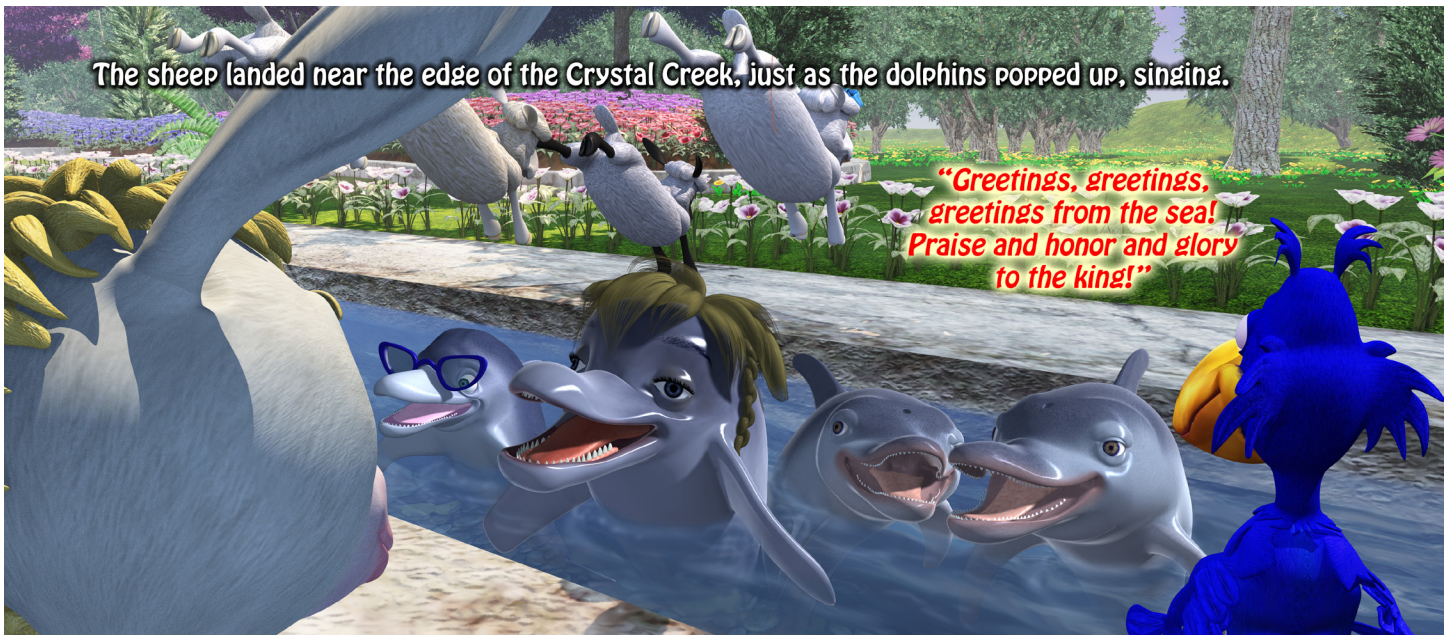
















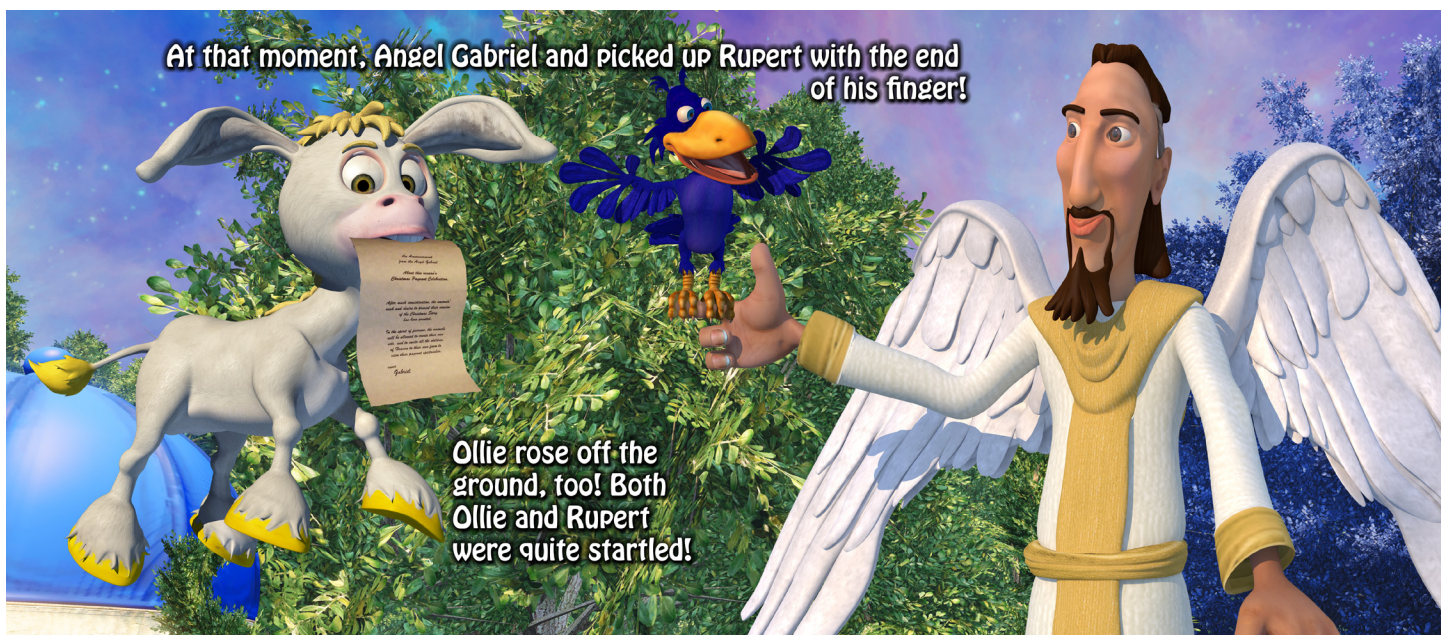






















Chapter 2:  
The Auditions

An hour later, many animals gathered near the farm to hear what Rupert had to say. Even the dolphins were there!

"Hey, everyone!" Rupert yelled. "Settle down! I've got some really exciting news! This year, for the first time ever, the animals are going to WIN the Christmas pageant contest!"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Aunt Alana. "How can you say we're going to win? The contest hasn't even started!"

"Yeah, Rupert!" added Ollie. "You don't want to give everyone false hopes!"

"I'm not lying!" protested Rupert. "I've been watching these Christmas pageants for years! Sure, all the contestants are great! I mean, how can you top a pageant when you have all the original characters in them?"

"Farmer John had quite an advantage," explained Rupert, "using the real Mary and the real Joseph and everybody else who was actually there!"

"But remember: this is a contest that will be judged by children! I know they will like us best!"













Jeremy concluded, "Let us make haste and skedaddle!"

The brothers turned...

... and raced off stage, clicking their heels together as they leaped through the air!



Everyone laughed and cheered! Ollie looked concerned.

"They were good, you have to admit," said Ollie cautiously, "but they aren't a shoe-in. This is a big role and there are others who want to be part of it!"



"So let me present to you... my friends, the elephants!" declared Ollie.

Hannibal, Massie and Muwanna all came up on stage, their front legs on each other's backs!





*"If you think we're cool, you're right!"*

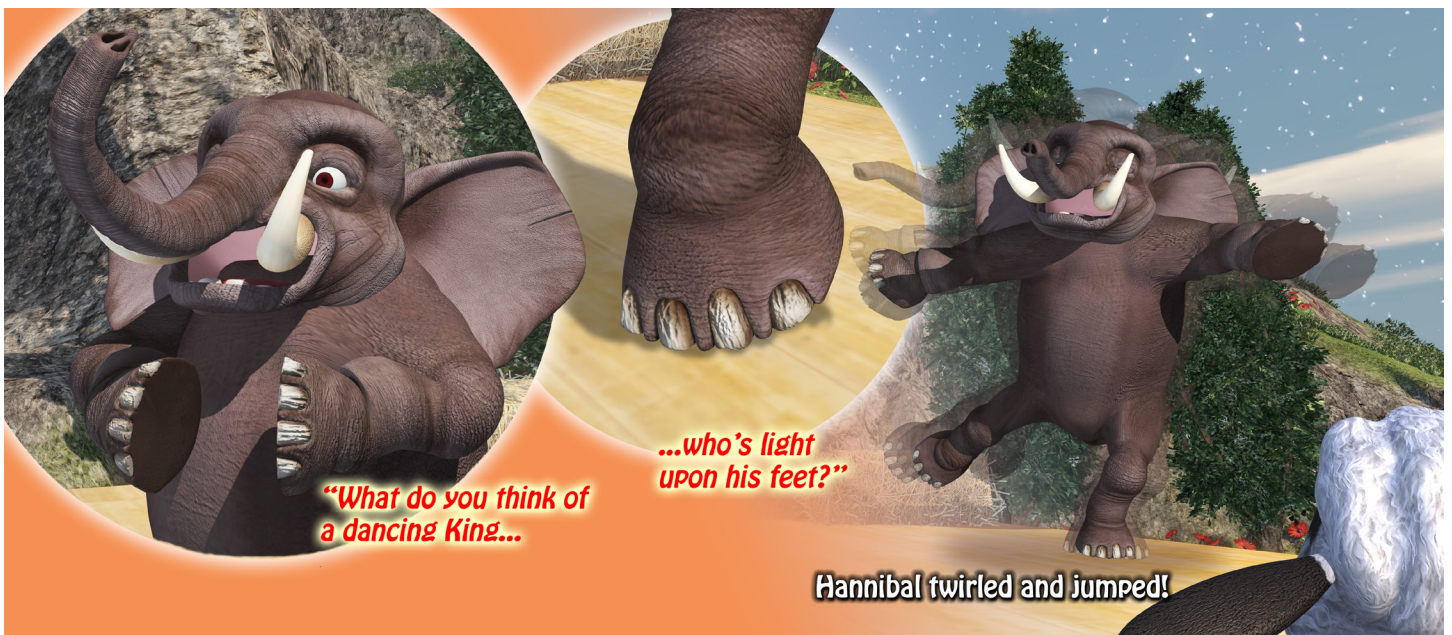


*"If you think we're wise, sit tight!"*



*"If you think we're  
rich and debonair."*















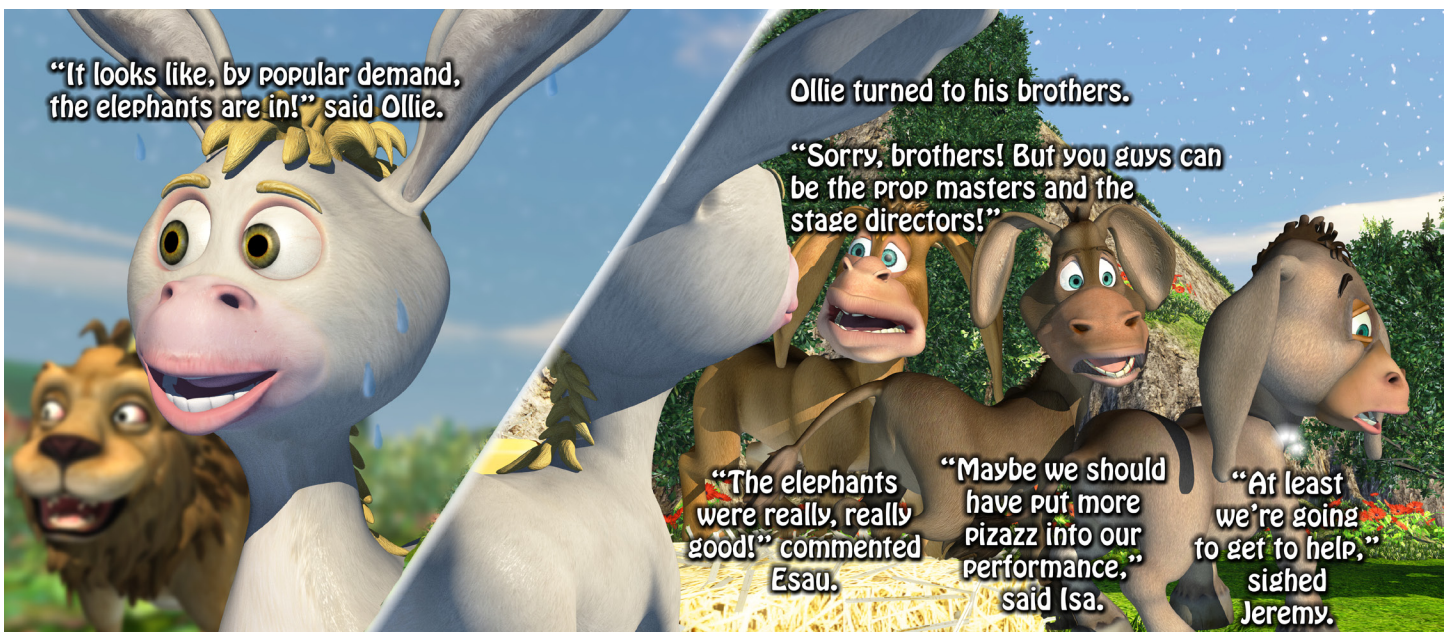






The animals went crazy!

The three donkey brothers looked on, a bit disappointed.



"It looks like, by popular demand, the elephants are in!" said Ollie.

Ollie turned to his brothers.

"Sorry, brothers! But you guys can be the prop masters and the stage directors!"

"The elephants were really, really good!" commented Esau.

"Maybe we should have put more pizzazz into our performance," said Isa.

"At least we're going to get to help," sighed Jeremy.



Ollie's three brothers went off to help with the preparations for the pageant.

End of Chapter 2

Chapter 3 starts on the next page!



### Chapter 3:

#### Preparations

Rupert, Ollie and Thelonious began to plan for the pageant.

"So how big of a crowd should we expect?" asked Thelonious.

"Everyone!" exclaimed Rupert. "And I think we need to fix a fancy dinner for everyone at the pageant!"

"Dinner?" asked Hannibal. "But what will we make for them?"

"Look around you!" said Rupert, waving towards the fields of corn. "This farm grows everything! We can get Pontifer to help us with the menu. He can tell us what to make!"

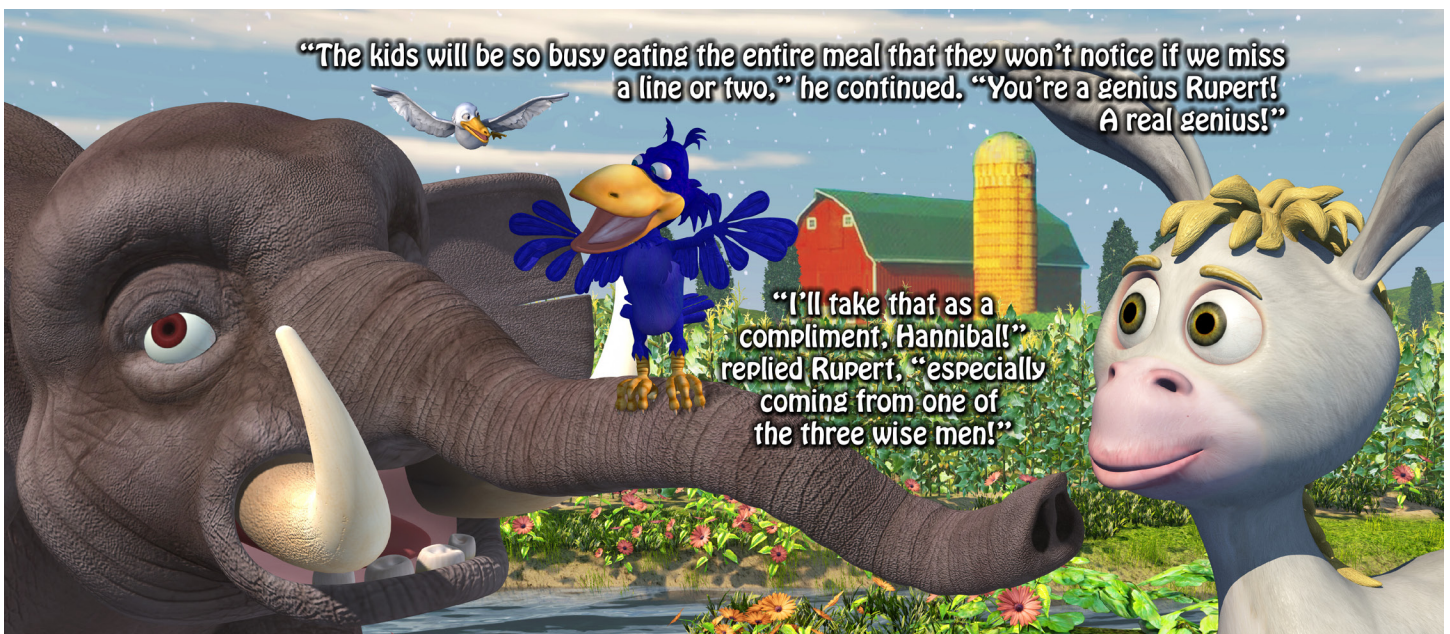
"I like that idea!" said Ollie.

"We can have popcorn balls!" continued Ollie. "And pomegranate punch, egg nog, plum pudding, and sugar plums with sesame seeds!"

"I saw Jonathan and Rhea just a while ago. I'll ask them to help, too!"

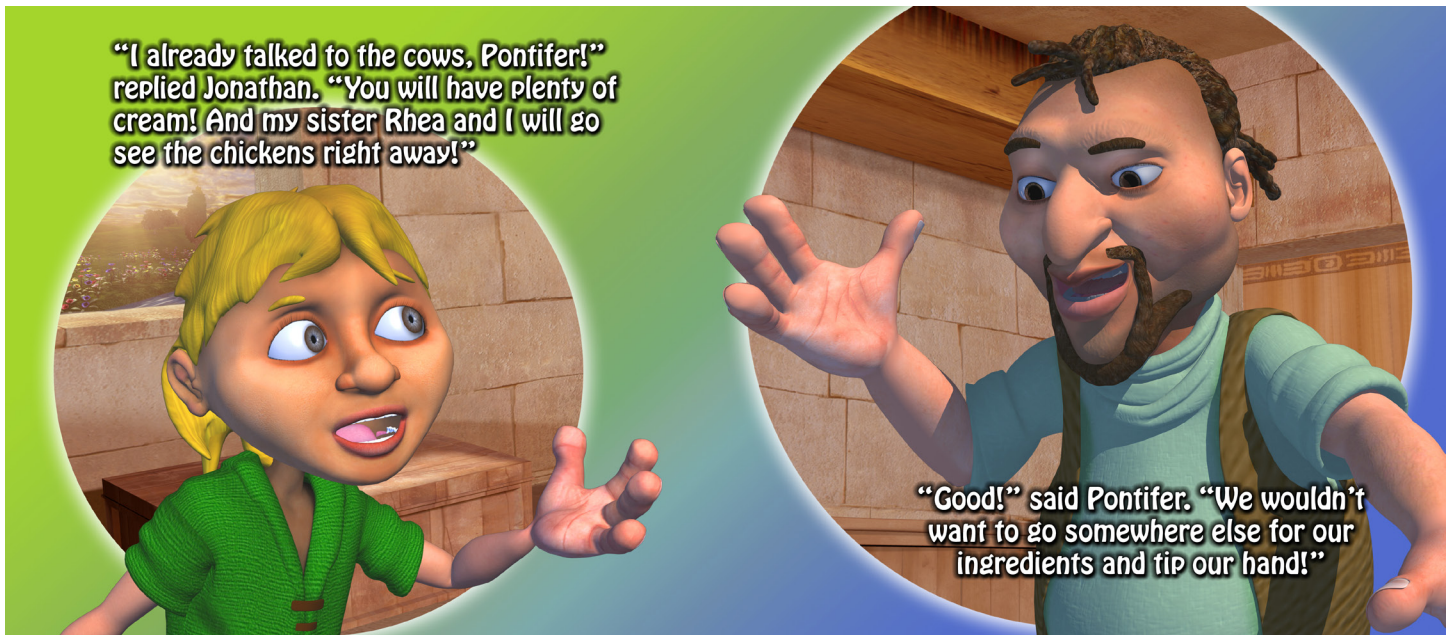








"I already talked to the cows, Pontifer!" replied Jonathan. "You will have plenty of cream! And my sister Rhea and I will go see the chickens right away!"



"Good!" said Pontifer. "We wouldn't want to go somewhere else for our ingredients and tip our hand!"

Jonathan and Rhea caught up with Emma the chicken just outside the farm's grain silo.



"We've been doing our best, Jonathan, to lay several eggs every day," said Emma. "How many do you need?"

"We don't really know," said Rhea. "It's just that we are planning to feed so many people!"

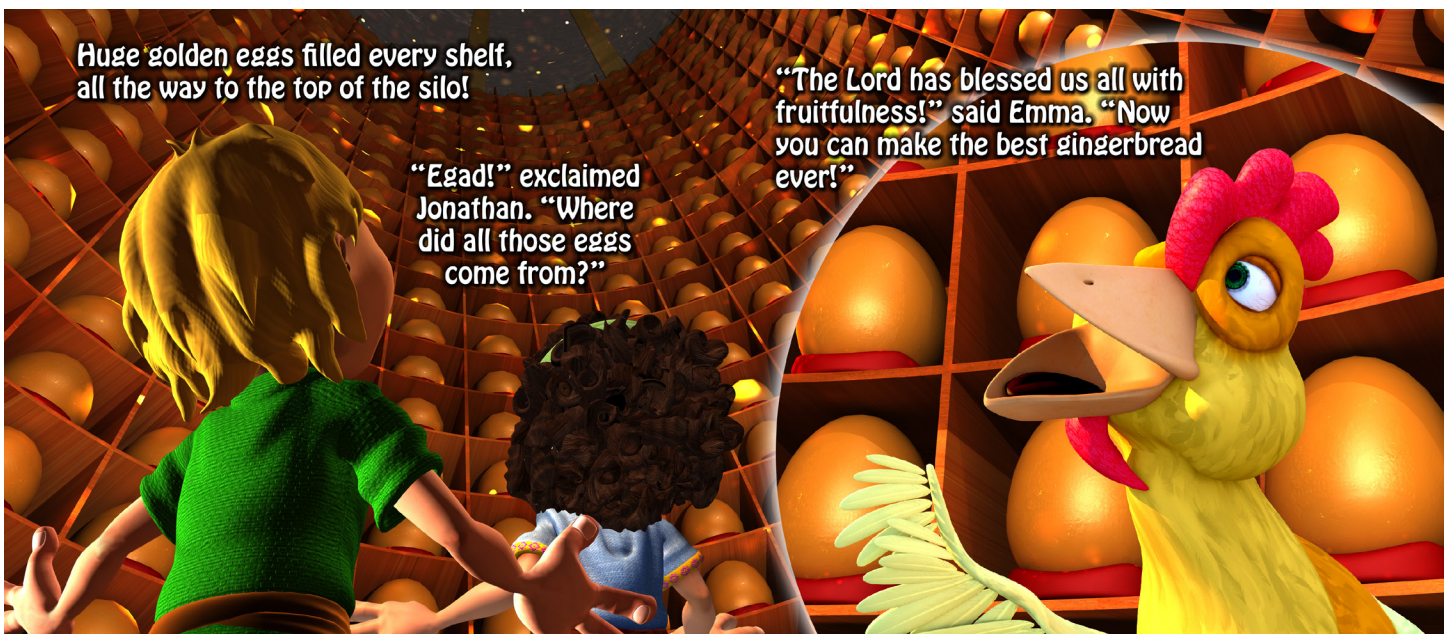


"That's what I suspected," replied Emma. "Just take a look inside!"





Emma led them both into the silo. Jonathan and Rhea looked around in amazement!



Huge golden eggs filled every shelf, all the way to the top of the silo!

"Egad!" exclaimed Jonathan. "Where did all those eggs come from?"

"The Lord has blessed us all with fruitfulness!" said Emma. "Now you can make the best gingerbread ever!"

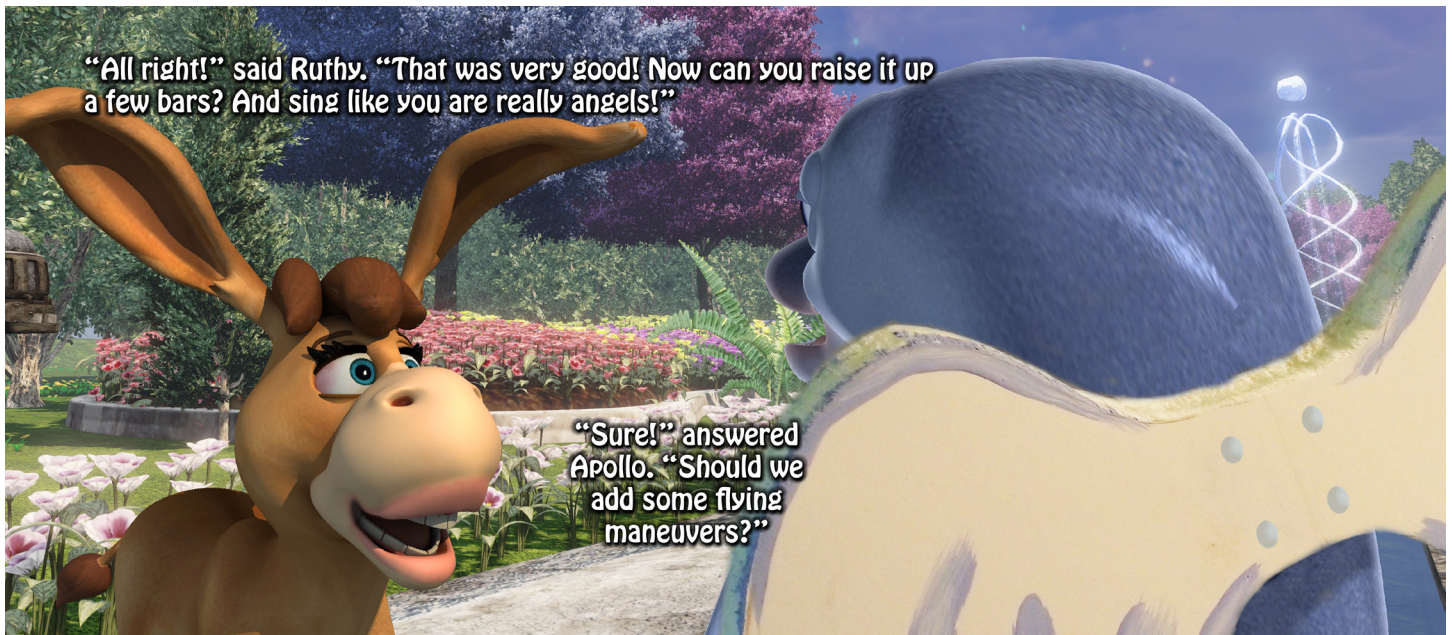


Meanwhile, Donkey Ruthy was rehearsing one of the acts.

*"Hark the Herald Angels sing,  
Glory to the newborn King!"*

sang the dolphins.













As Ruthy got closer to the stage, she could hear a loud argument. Farmer John was red in the face!

"But I NEED some of you animals in the Christmas Pageant!!!"

"You mean YOUR pageant!" exclaimed Rupert.

"What?!" responded Farmer John. "Why you little....!!!"

"Calm down, John!" pleaded his wife Sarah. "You asked, and that's all you can do. Ollie already told you NO!"



"But how are we supposed to enter this contest without animals?!" moaned Farmer John.

"Now look here, John!" complained Sarah. "You've got to give these animals a chance! We'll just have to get some people to wear animal costumes!"



"How could you do this to me, Ollie? After all, you haven't a CHANCE of winning!!!"

"Look, Farmer John," said Ollie. "I've got plenty to be grateful for. You've taken care of me for all of my life. But you have won this contest every year!"

"AND taken all the credit for it!" chimed in Rupert.





**"What?!" cried Farmer John.**

**"That's right!" complained Rupert.**

**"While we animals slaved away in your pageants, YOU kept all the prizes! Your place is full of awards! If you are going to win again, you're just going to have to do it without the animals!"**



***"It's our turn now to show what we can do!"***

**Rupert began to sing:**

***"Without the animals beside you to decorate the set, We will see pretty shortly, just who is the best!"***



***"This isn't personal or business!"***

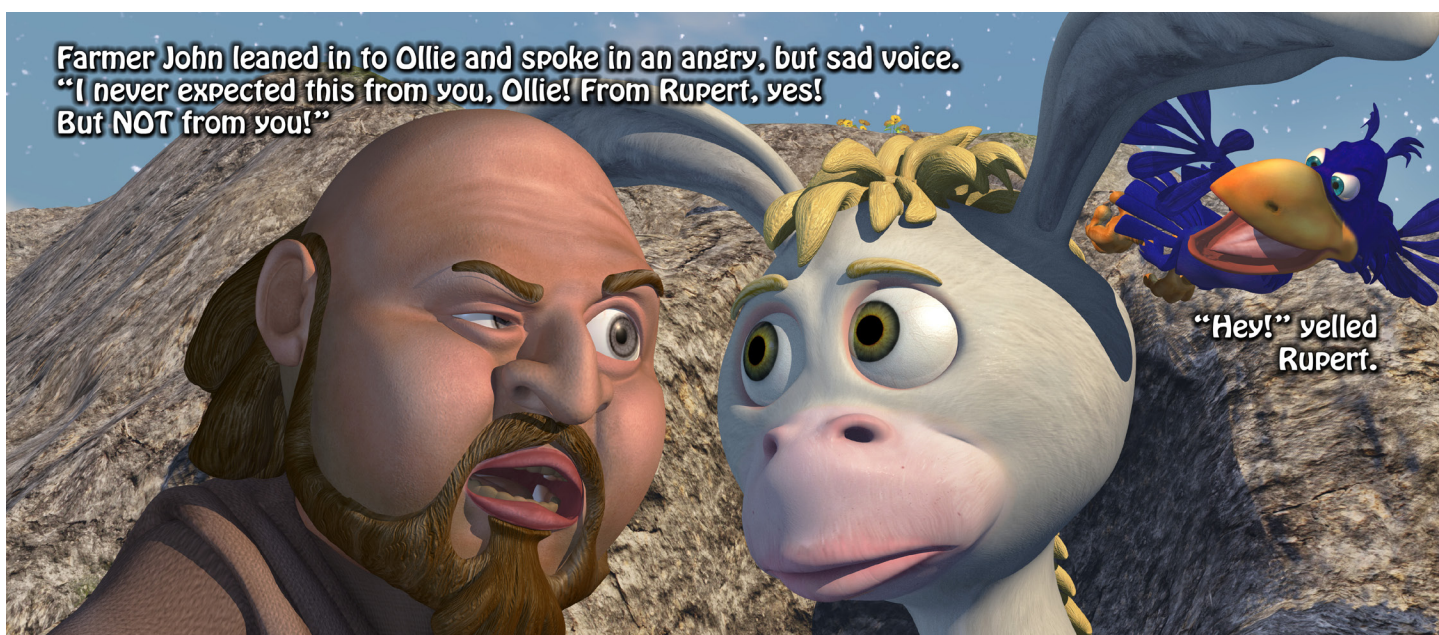
***"It's the way it's got to be!"***

***"This Christmas, Farmer John, You won't have any donkeys! You won't have any sheep! You won't have any cows!"***

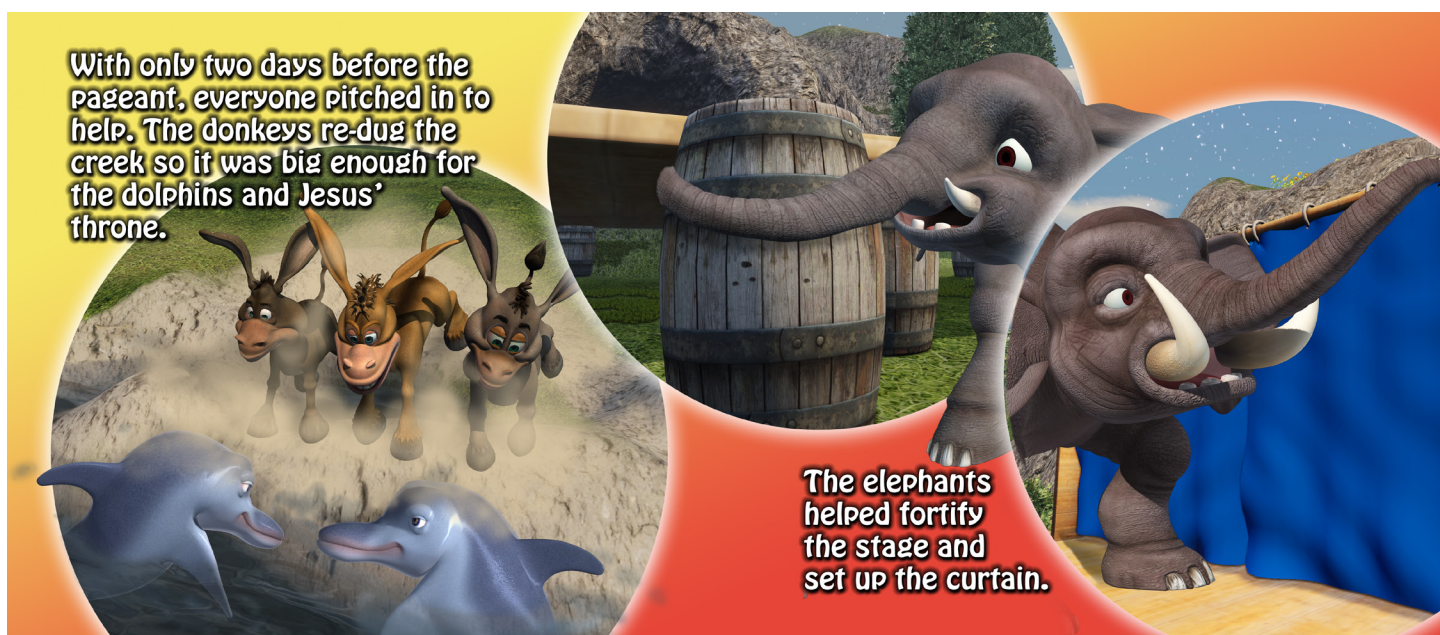














Even humans were helping! Jonathan and Rhea tried on the sheep costumes made from the wool sheared off of Whitey, Wooley and Snow.

Allondra, Jehu's wife, helped fit them with Shepherd's costumes. Thelonious the lion watched in awe.

"You little sheep look fabulous!" exclaimed Thelonious.

"They are doing very well!" said Allondra.

"Here, let me show you the costumes!"

"So, where is Jehu?" inquired Thelonious.

"He went to talk to some of the disciples about his father," said Allondra.

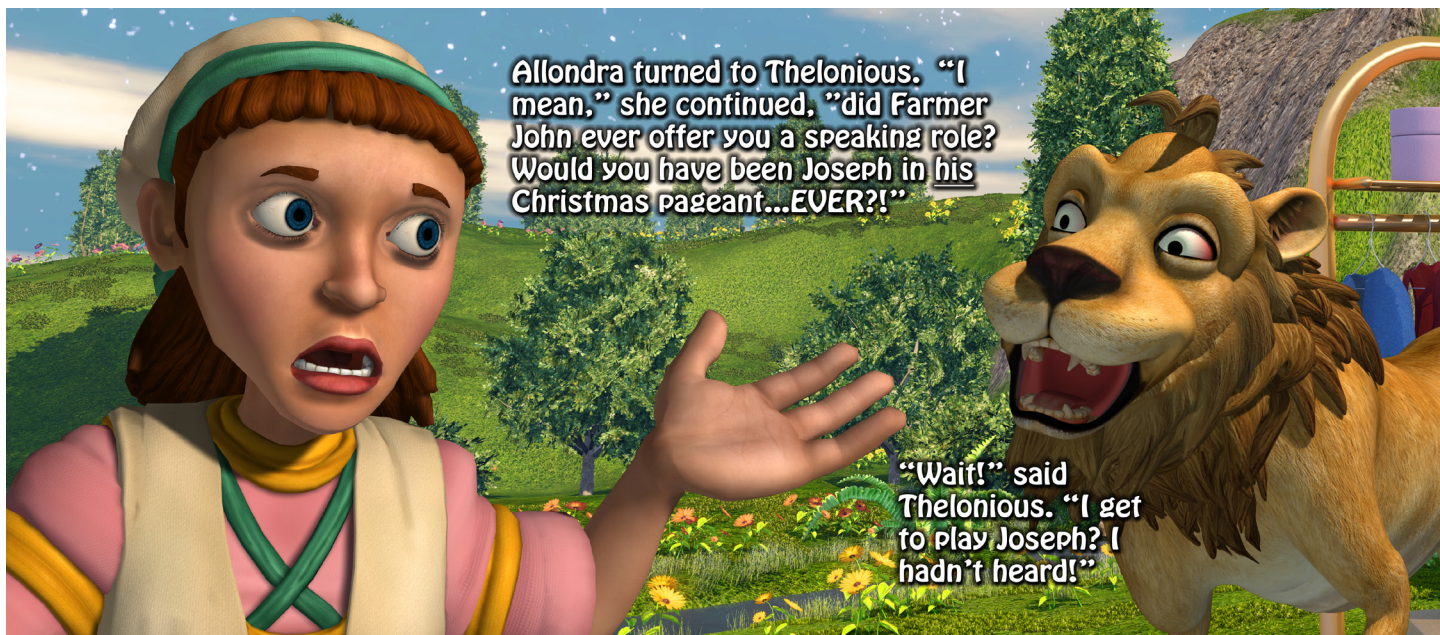
"Then you heard what happened this morning between Ollie and Farmer John?" Thelonious asked.

"Who hasn't?" replied Allondra.

"Farmer John thinks it's his right to win every year!" explained Allondra, as she helped adjust Wooley's shepherd costume.

"He has won so much, I think he believes it's his right to win! Why, even on Earth people learned to talk turns to help others!"





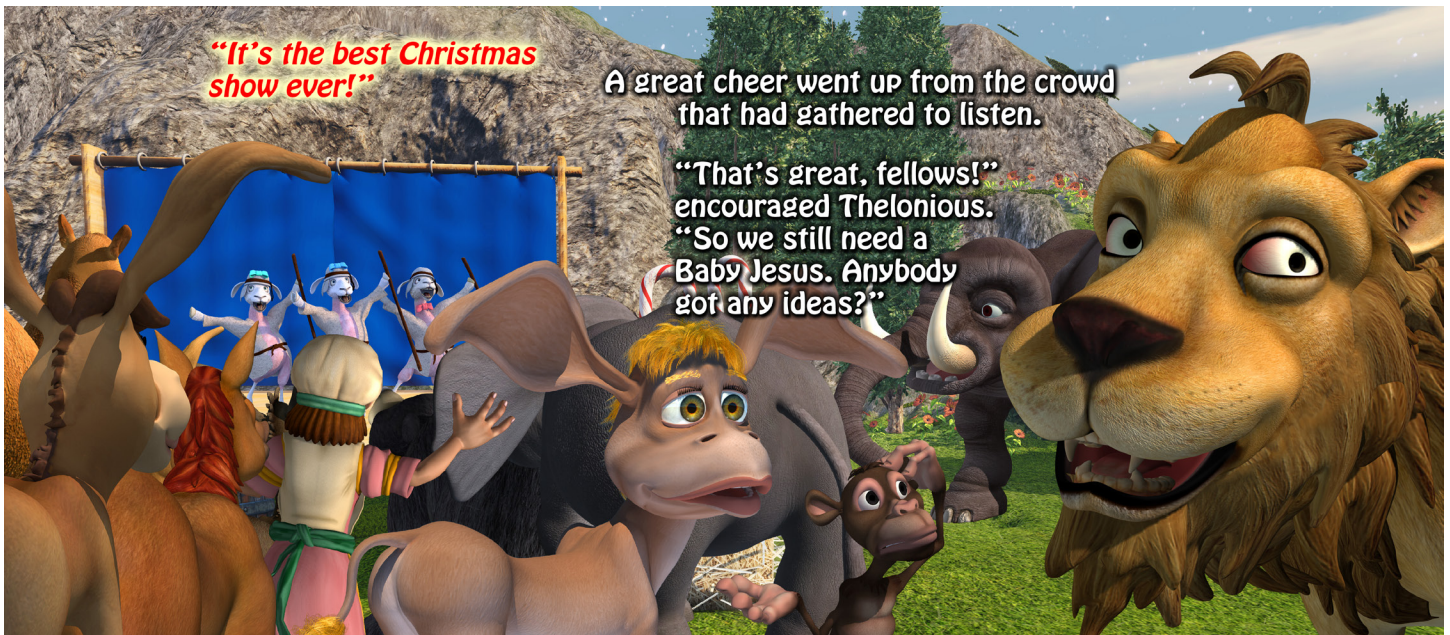












*"It's the best Christmas show ever!"*

A great cheer went up from the crowd that had gathered to listen.

"That's great, fellows!" encouraged Thelonious.

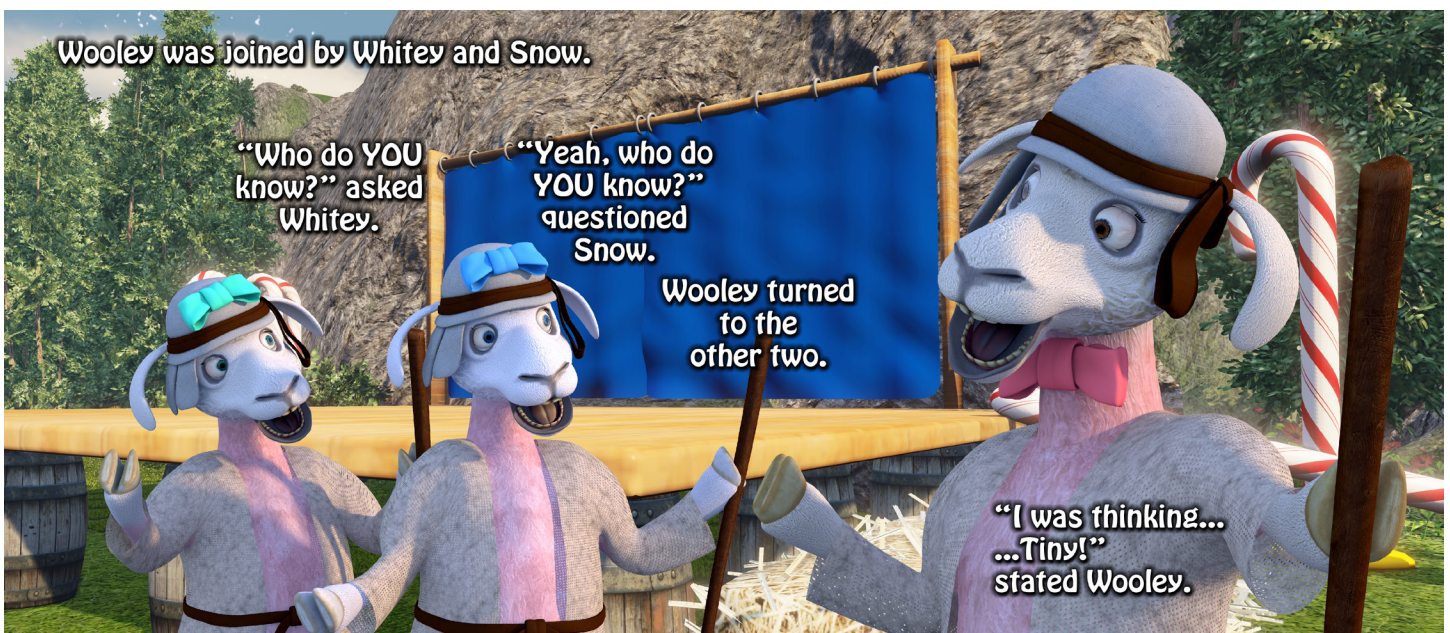
"So we still need a Baby Jesus. Anybody got any ideas?"



Suddenly Wooley jumped off the stage and landed in front of Thelonious!

"Ooh! Ooh! I know who to get for Baby Jesus!" Wooley exclaimed.

"Who?" asked Thelonious.



Wooley was joined by Whitey and Snow.

"Who do YOU know?" asked Whitey.

"Yeah, who do YOU know?" questioned Snow.

Wooley turned to the other two.

"I was thinking...  
...Tiny!" stated Wooley.







**Chapter 4:  
About Farmer John**

Meanwhile, in another part of Heaven, several of Jesus' disciples and friends gathered to discuss the situation involving Farmer John.

"I had a long talk with Jehu today," said Peter.

"This business with his father is getting troublesome!"

"Look," said Paul, "we all know Ollie's not the problem. He has never caused problems for anyone!"

"Well, at least anyone who was nice!" added Stephen.

"It's pretty natural," chimed in James, "for the kids to want to hang out with the animals. It is quite likely they are going to put on a spectacular show!"

"So what is Farmer John's problem?" asked Peter.







Jesus tossed the fish back. He took a deep breath.

"The purpose of this new Christmas pageant," said Jesus, "is to give the animals a chance to tell 'The Story'. Then all the children can see it from a different point of view."

"But Farmer John says that the animals are being unfair; that they are making it impossible for him to stage his regular show. He says that none of the animals will join his cast! He swears it's a boycott!"

"Can you blame them, Lord Jesus?" asked Stephen. "The animals just want a chance to be heard!"

"I know Farmer John pretty well," added Paul. "Why don't I go over and see if I can calm him down?"

Peter heard his stomach growl.

"All right," he said. "But since we're not eating these fish, did anyone bring any sandwiches?"



Jesus stood up. So did everyone else.

As Jesus began to sing, all five chairs sprang up into the air!

*"I guess I'm expecting a miracle!"*

The chairs twirled in the air, and turned into fruits and cakes!

*"Farmer John has some growing to do!"*

*"Suppose the animals really win the hearts of the children?"*

*"Won't that be cute?"*









Stephen, Paul and James started across the water. Stephen continued the song.

*"So you're saying to stay out of the contest, to let the best of them win!"*

sang Stephan.

Peter held back. He had had trouble with water before!



Peter gathered his fear, stepped into the water...

... and sank!

Paul continued the song.

*"To ignore the petty comments and stick by the rules!"*



A hand came down to help Peter.

James sang:

*"Encourage fair competition, Help them all do their best!"*

It was Jesus.













The sign popped off...

...and fell to the stage floor!



Farmer John's wife, Sarah, and his daughter Elizabeth were standing down below.

Pomegranate juice, Daddy?" asked Elizabeth.



"Where's Jehu when I need him the most?!" yelled Farmer John as he came down the ladder.

"Is he helping the animals? My own son?! I can't build all these sets without him!"

He began to sing.







Elizabeth sang back.

*"Daddy, Daddy Daddy don't  
be foolish!  
This is the greatest story  
Heaven ever had!  
You don't have to win  
the pageant each and  
every time!  
Why can't we just give  
them a hand?"*



Then it was his wife's turn to sing!

*"Now John, don't be so  
pigheaded!  
Things are different,  
that's a fact!  
But just do your best!  
It's all you can do,  
and trust that the  
outcome is blessed!"*



"Well," grumbled Farmer John,  
"You can TALK about being  
blessed, but I won't FEEL at  
all blessed if I don't win!"

"Now John!" said Sarah, "Surely you  
can find some charity in you heart for  
the children!"







"You don't understand!"  
Farmer John pleaded.

"Winning isn't just  
everything to me;  
it's the **ONLY** thing  
that matters!!!"



"I know up here in Heaven I'm  
not your wife any more," Sarah  
said, "but I know you better  
than anyone else!"

And if you don't adjust  
your attitude and have  
some charity towards the  
animals, you are going to  
have the worst Christmas  
of your life..."



"... whether you win,  
or lose!!!"

End of Chapter 4

Chapter 5  
starts on the  
next page!

Farmer John fumed!



## Chapter 5:

### Finding Baby Jesus

Meanwhile, in the swamps...

"Tiny!" yelled Rupert.  
"Tiny, where are you?"

"Rupert, Who is this Tiny?" asked Ollie. "How come I've never met him before? This seems like an awfully strange place for a baby lamb to live!"

"Who said Tiny was a lamb?" asked Rupert.

Ollie looked puzzled.  
"But you told me...!"

"He's just made a few friends with the lambs," said Rupert. "He's pretty much a loner. He thinks he'd scare the children!"

"And we want him to play Baby Jesus?!" exclaimed Ollie.

"You bet!" Rupert said. Then he yelled. "Tiny! Tiny, come on out!"

"Hi Rupert!" said a voice from inside a nearby tree.

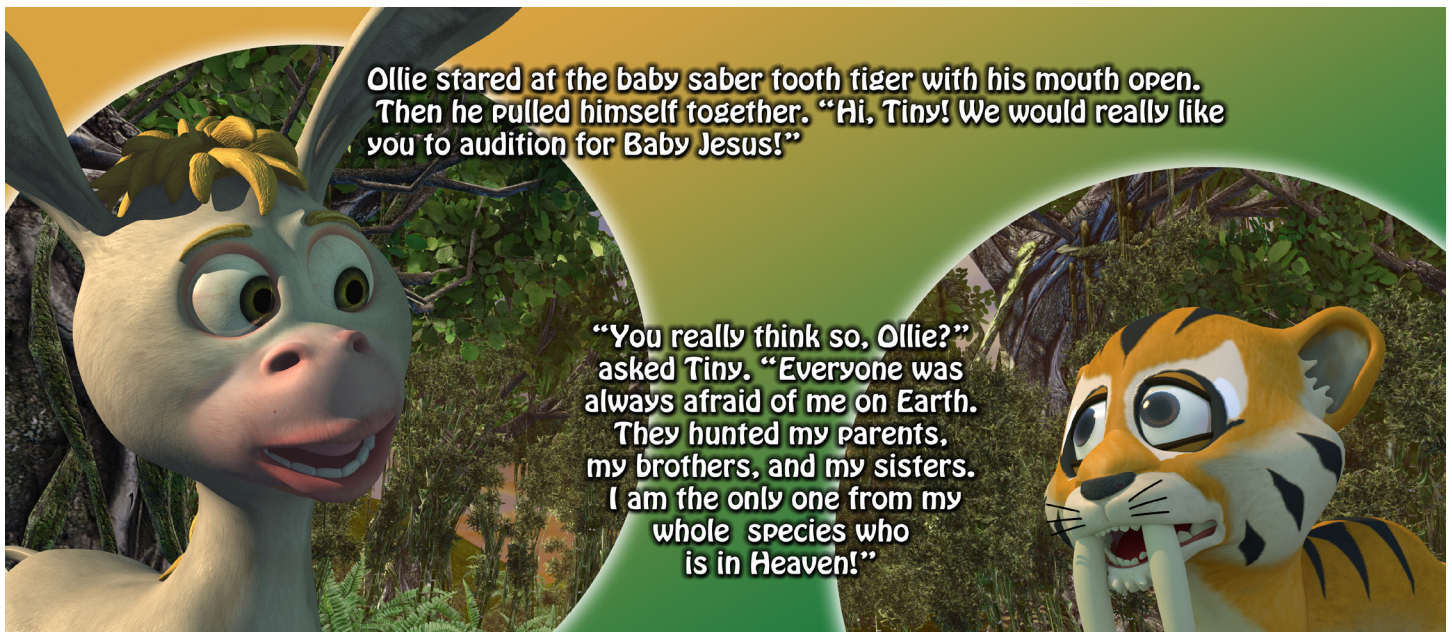




Startled, they both turned to look.  
A baby saber-toothed tiger hid  
inside a hollow tree.

"Tiny! we've been  
looking all over  
for you!" Rupert  
exclaimed.  
"I brought Ollie  
with me!"

"I know!" said Tiny.  
"Everyone knows  
who Ollie is!"



Ollie stared at the baby saber tooth tiger with his mouth open.  
Then he pulled himself together. "Hi, Tiny! We would really like  
you to audition for Baby Jesus!"

"You really think so, Ollie?"  
asked Tiny. "Everyone was  
always afraid of me on Earth.  
They hunted my parents,  
my brothers, and my sisters.  
I am the only one from my  
whole species who  
is in Heaven!"

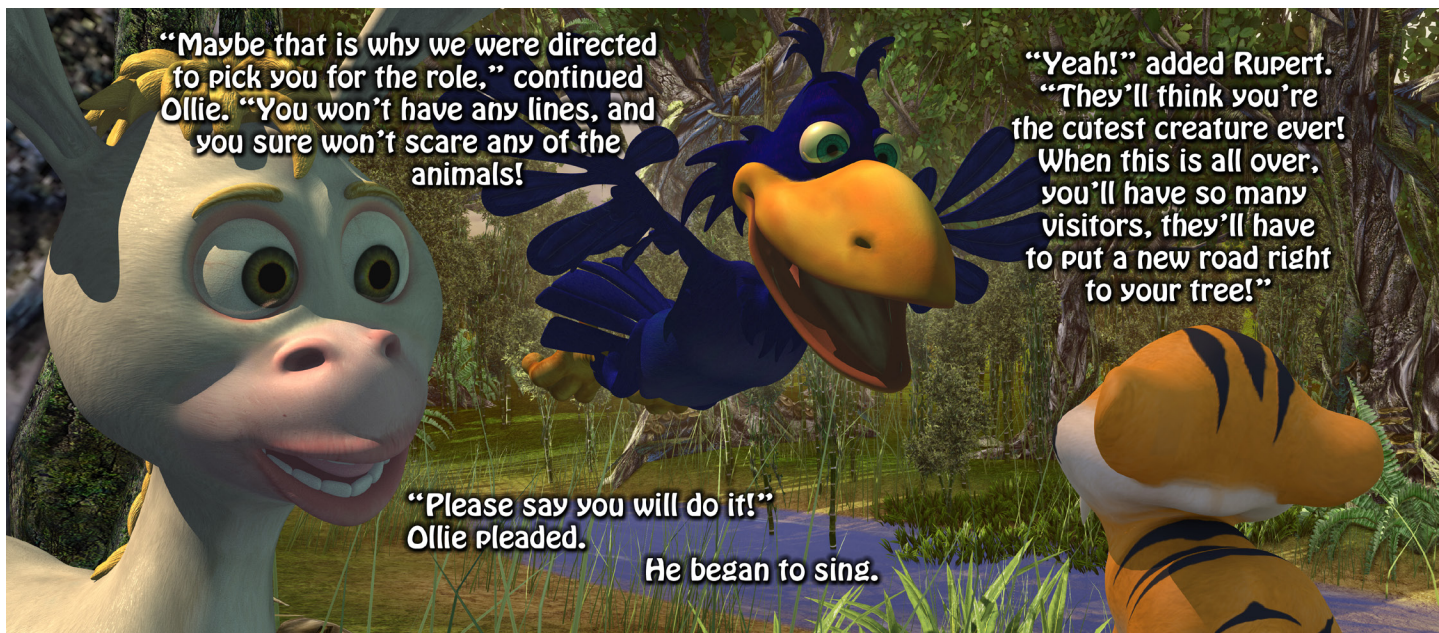


"Look, Tiny," said Ollie. "I think you  
are perfect for the part! Sure, you're  
different, but look at me!"

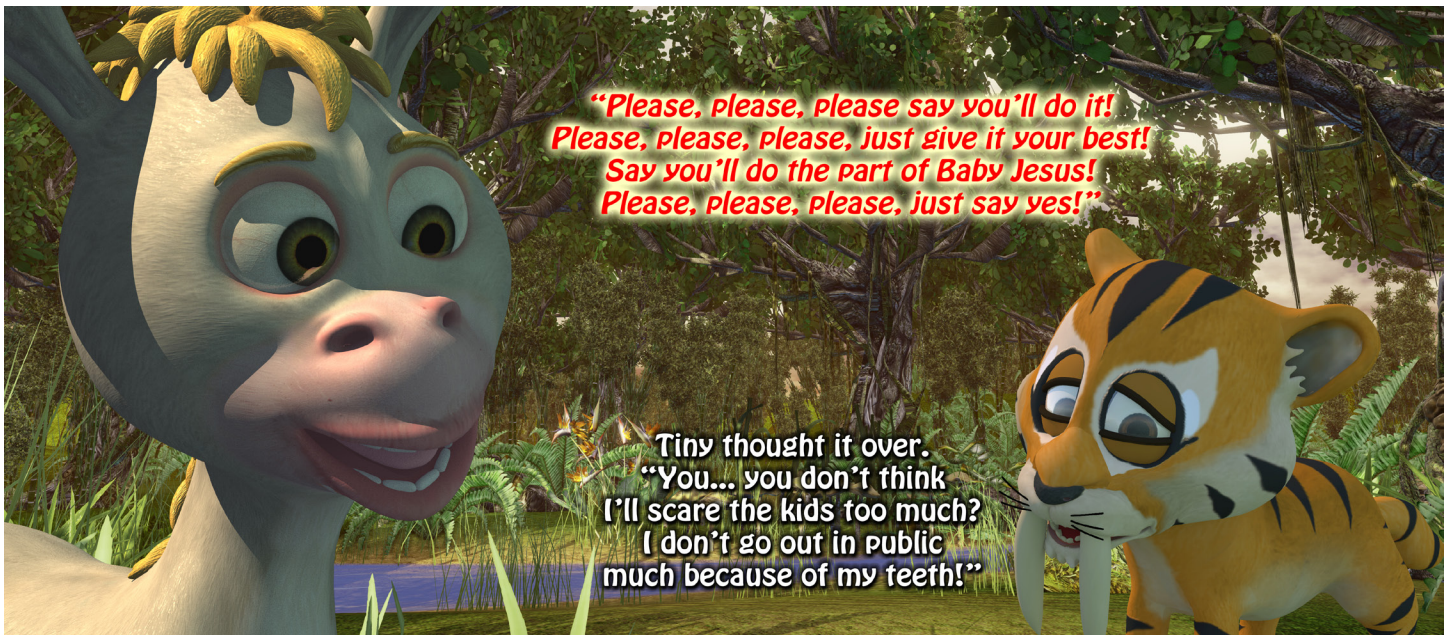
I'm different!  
When I was on  
Earth I was the  
only albino  
donkey in Israel!  
But God chose me  
for a special task!"

"Wow!" said Tiny.











Chapter 6:

Spying!

Tropical birds were singing... Jamaican style!

*"He's gonna make the world,  
A far better place to be!  
He's gonna put a smile  
on each face that he sees!"*

*He's gonna shine a little light,  
and bring us peace,  
When the little baby grows!  
He'll be the King!"*

*"He's gonna walk on water,  
calm the raging sea,  
He's gonna raise the dead  
and bring us to our knees!"*

Ollie and Rupert were listening to the birds  
as they were led by the baboon conductor.

The conductor turned to look  
back toward Rupert and Ollie.

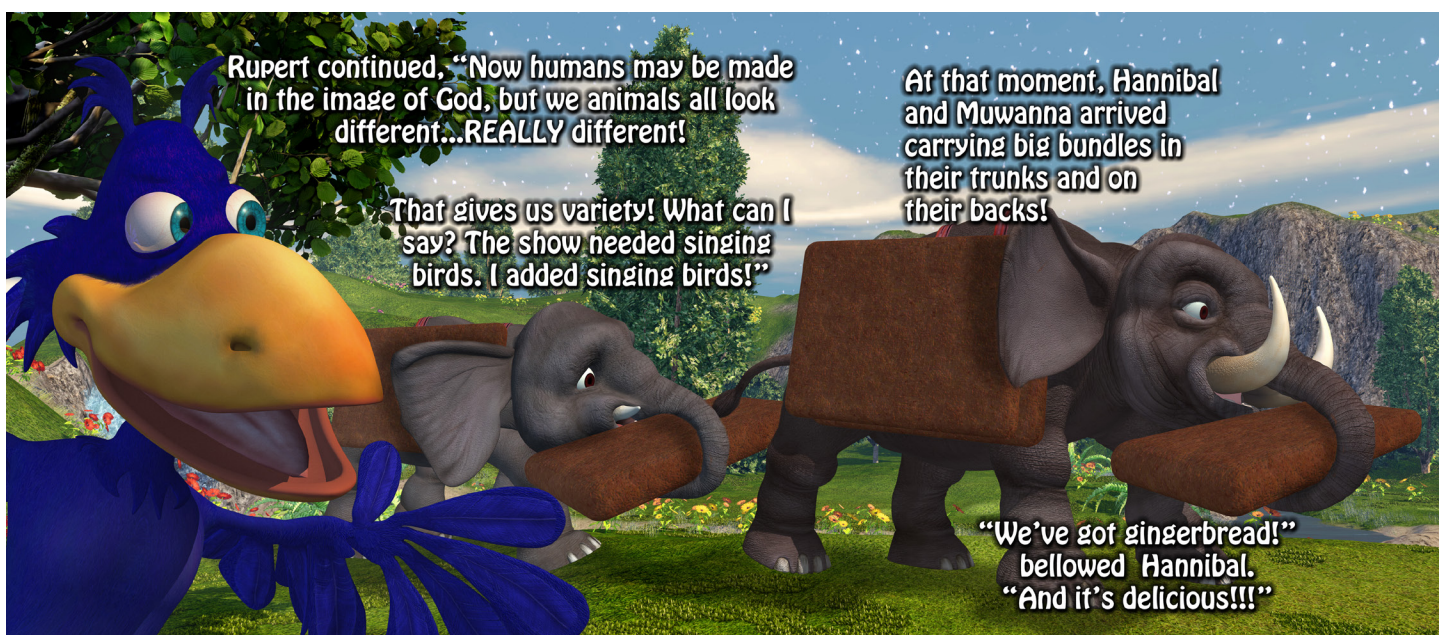
"So, what do  
you think, Boss?"  
asked the  
conductor.

*"He's gonna pay the price for  
everyone to be free!"*

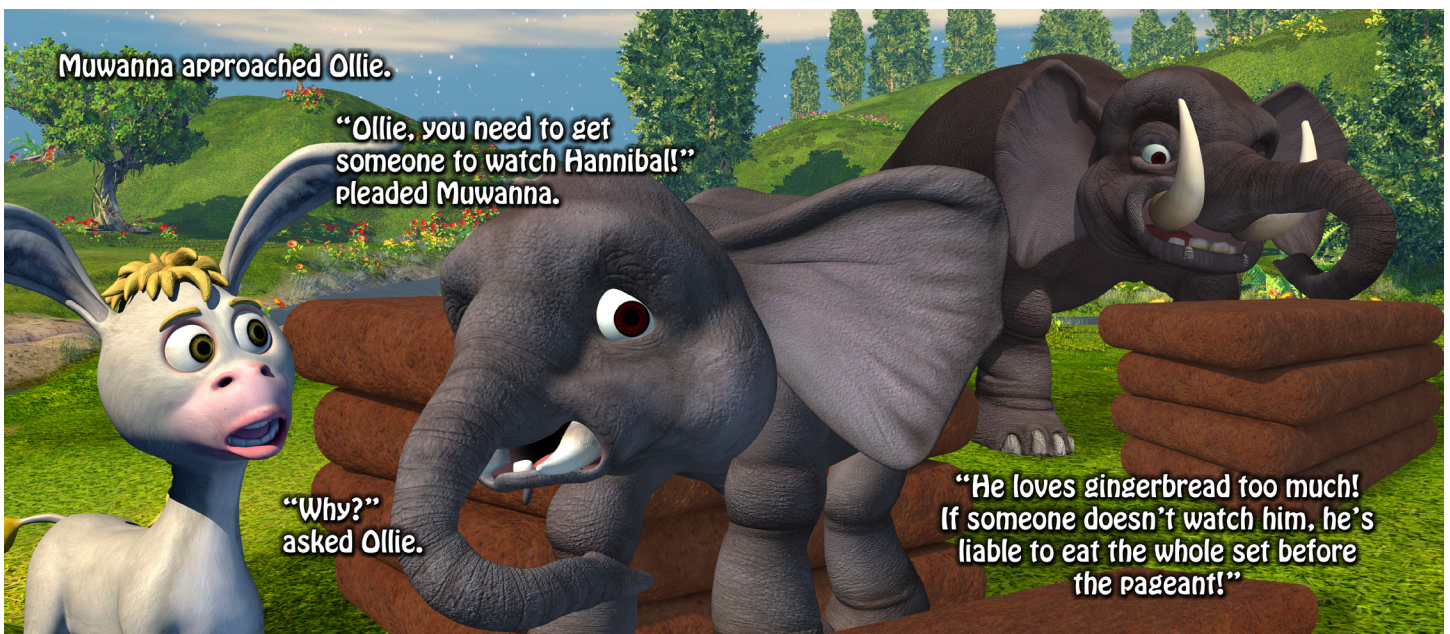
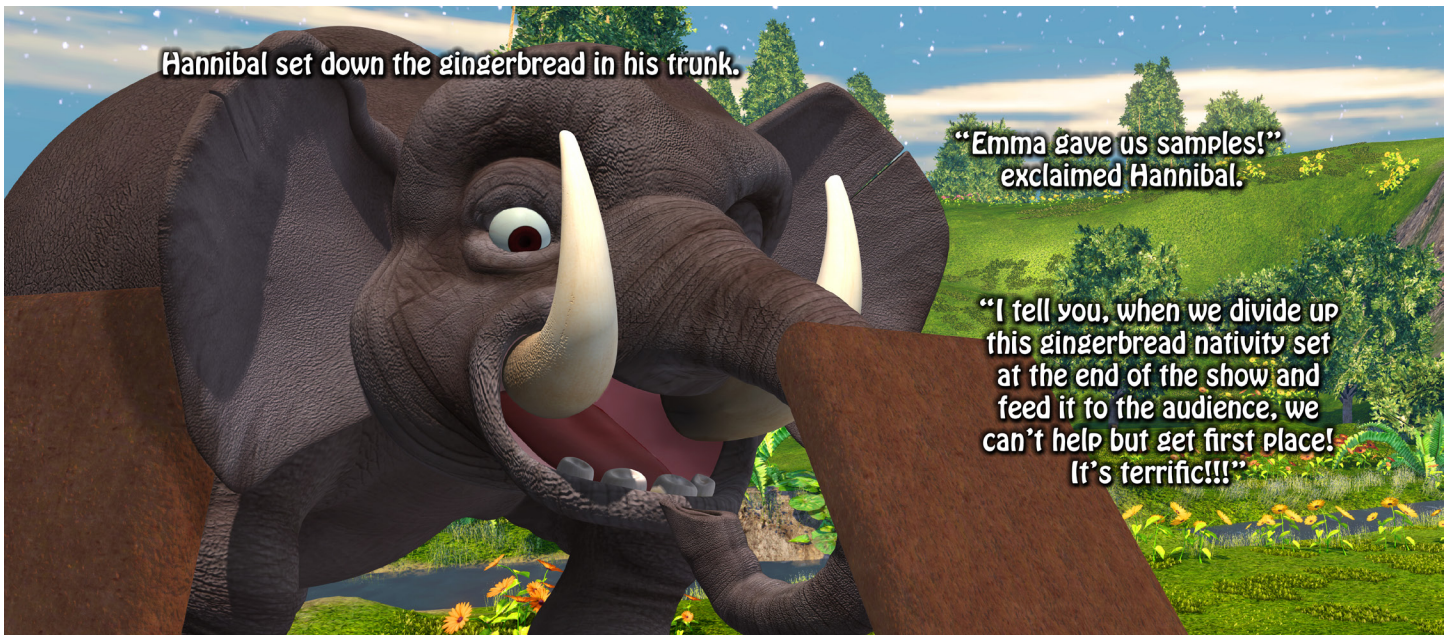
*When the little baby's grown,  
He'll be our King!"*

"I... I don't  
remember  
that song in  
the script!"  
Ollie stammered.









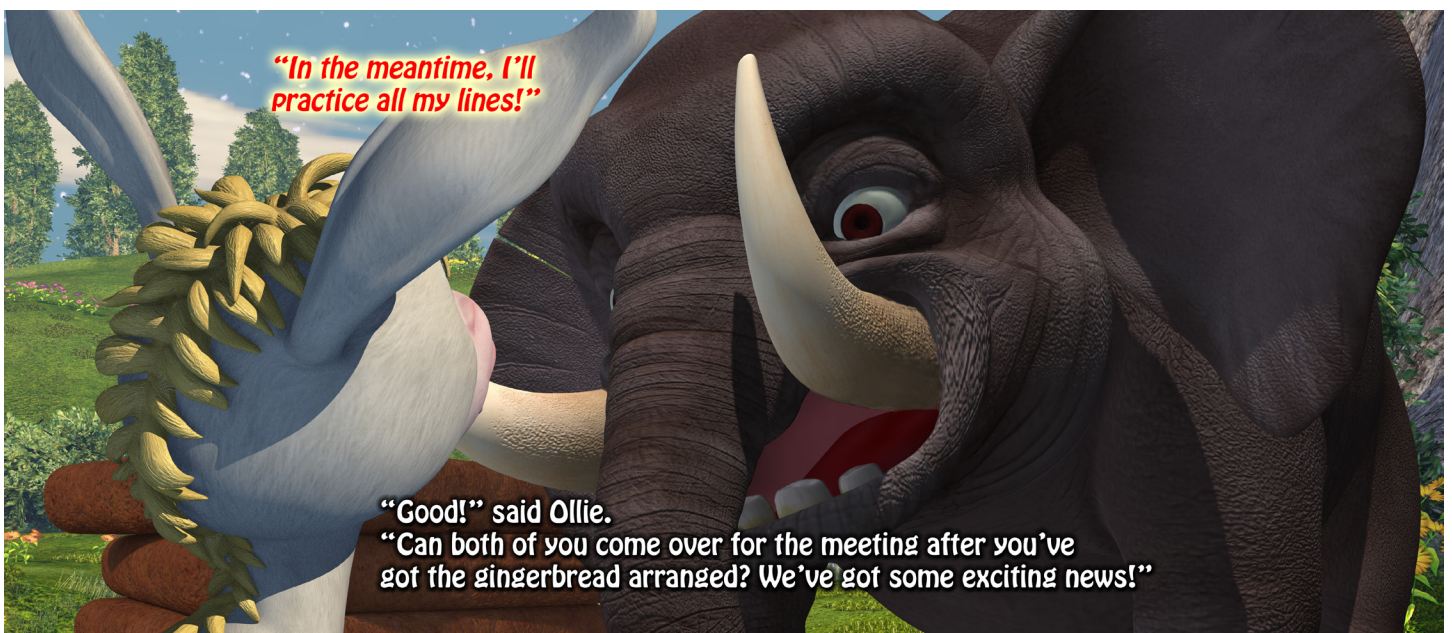




*"This gingerbread's delicious!  
Every bite!"*



*"I'll wait 'till the 'wrap' to  
have another snack!"*



*"In the meantime, I'll  
practice all my lines!"*

"Good!" said Ollie.  
"Can both of you come over for the meeting after you've  
got the gingerbread arranged? We've got some exciting news!"



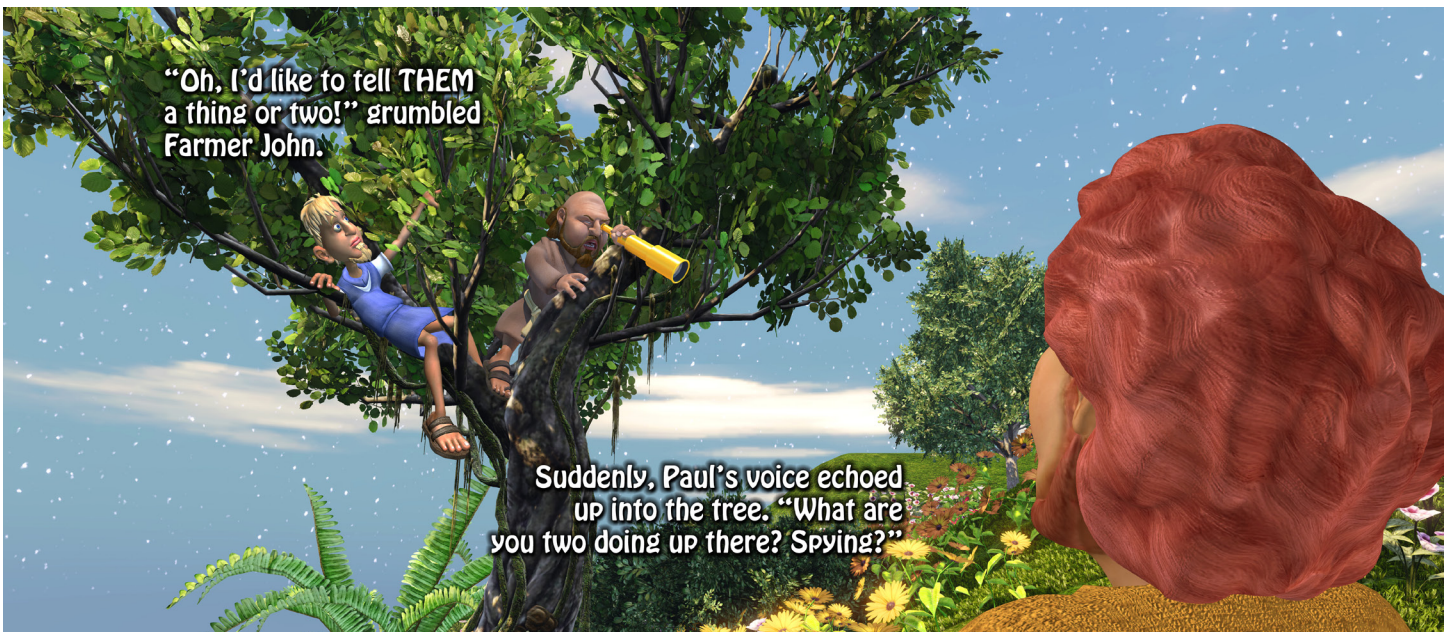






“Wha... What?!”  
stammered Farmer John.  
“It’s those kids of yours,  
Abner! They’re helping  
Ollie! How COULD they?!”

“Kids!” moaned Abner.  
“What can you do?”



“Oh, I’d like to tell THEM  
a thing or two!” grumbled  
Farmer John.

Suddenly, Paul’s voice echoed  
up into the tree. “What are  
you two doing up there? Spying?”



“Whoa?!” exclaimed a startled Abner.

He lost his grip on  
the tree and started  
to fall!





... taking Farmer John  
with him!



Farmer John sat up. His spy glass was  
broken into several pieces!

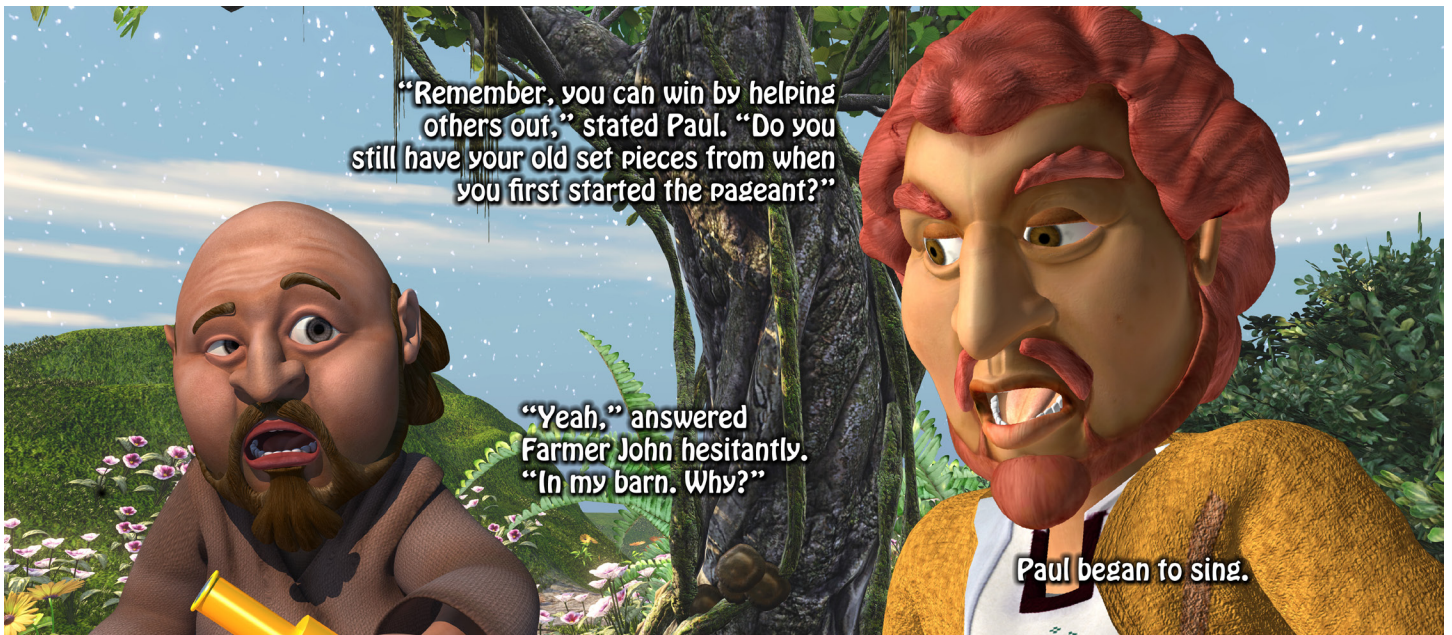
"Tarnation, Farmer John!"  
exclaimed Paul. "You  
shouldn't be spying on  
the animals! Why is  
winning so important  
to you?!"

"There's other ways  
to win besides  
spying," said Paul.

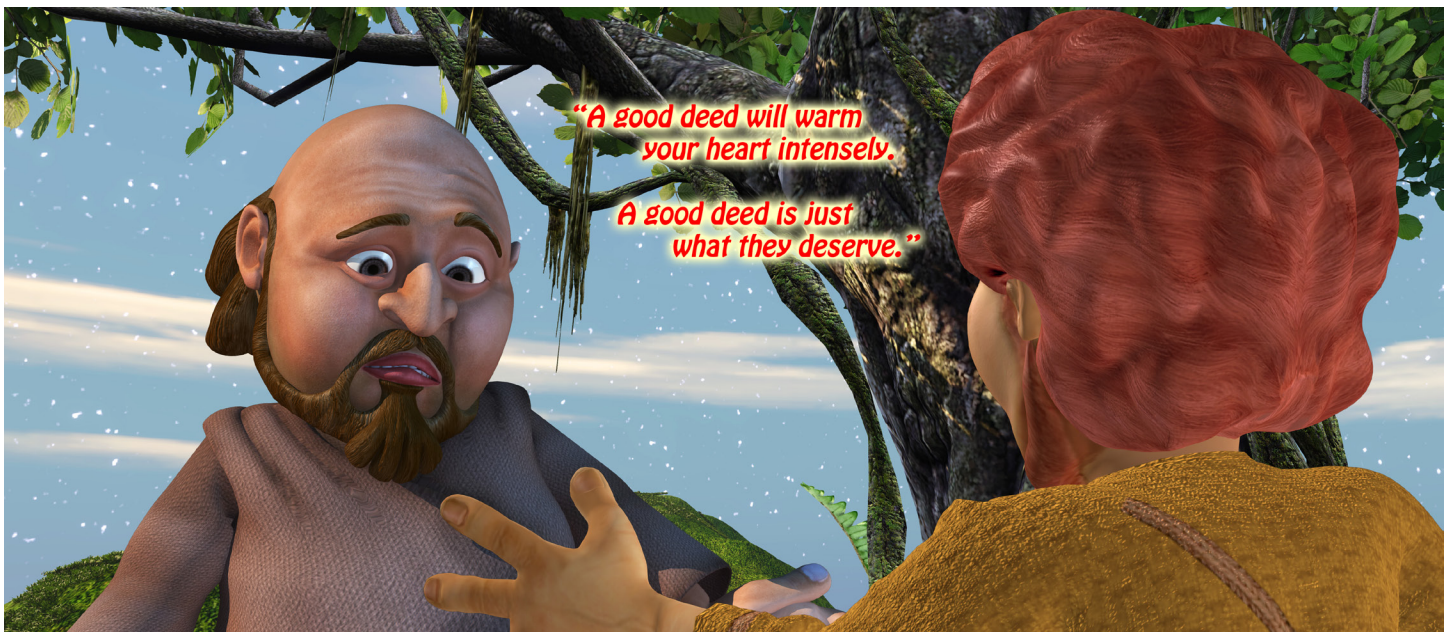
"There's only one way  
to win... the old fashioned  
way," added Abner. "You  
do whatever it takes, even  
if it means stepping on  
some toes!"

"That's what my  
pop-in-law has  
been telling me!"

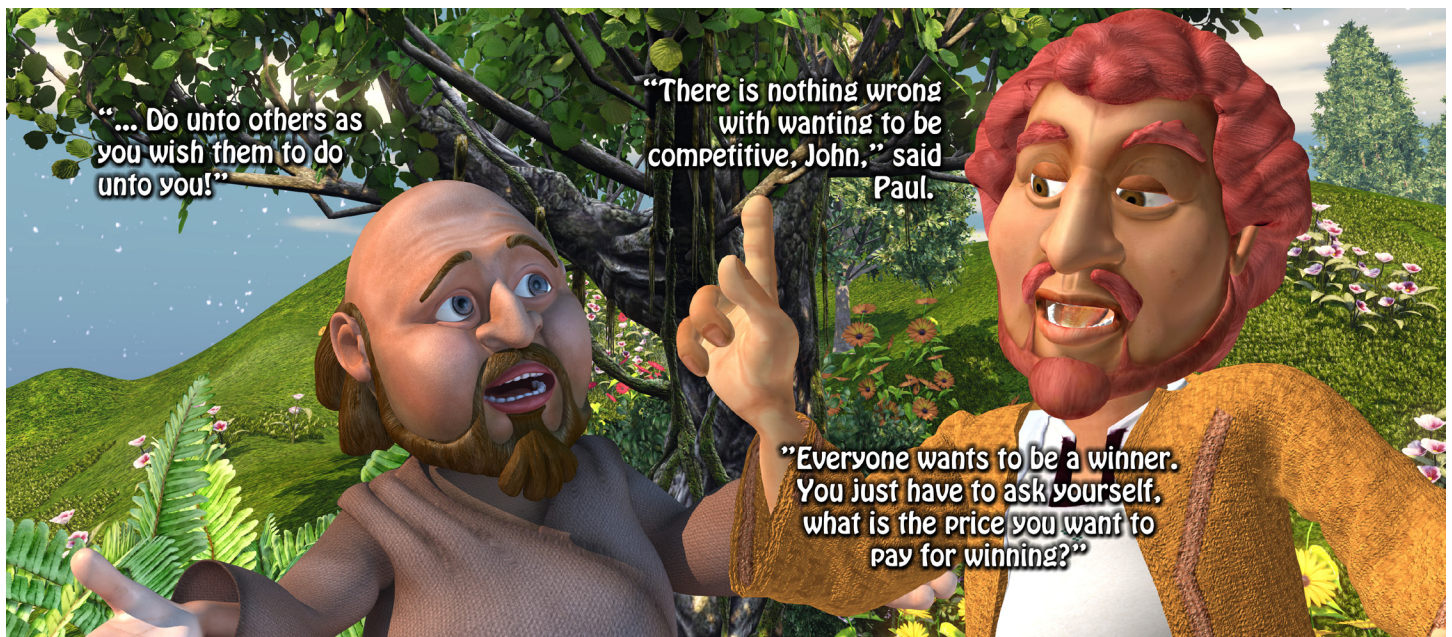








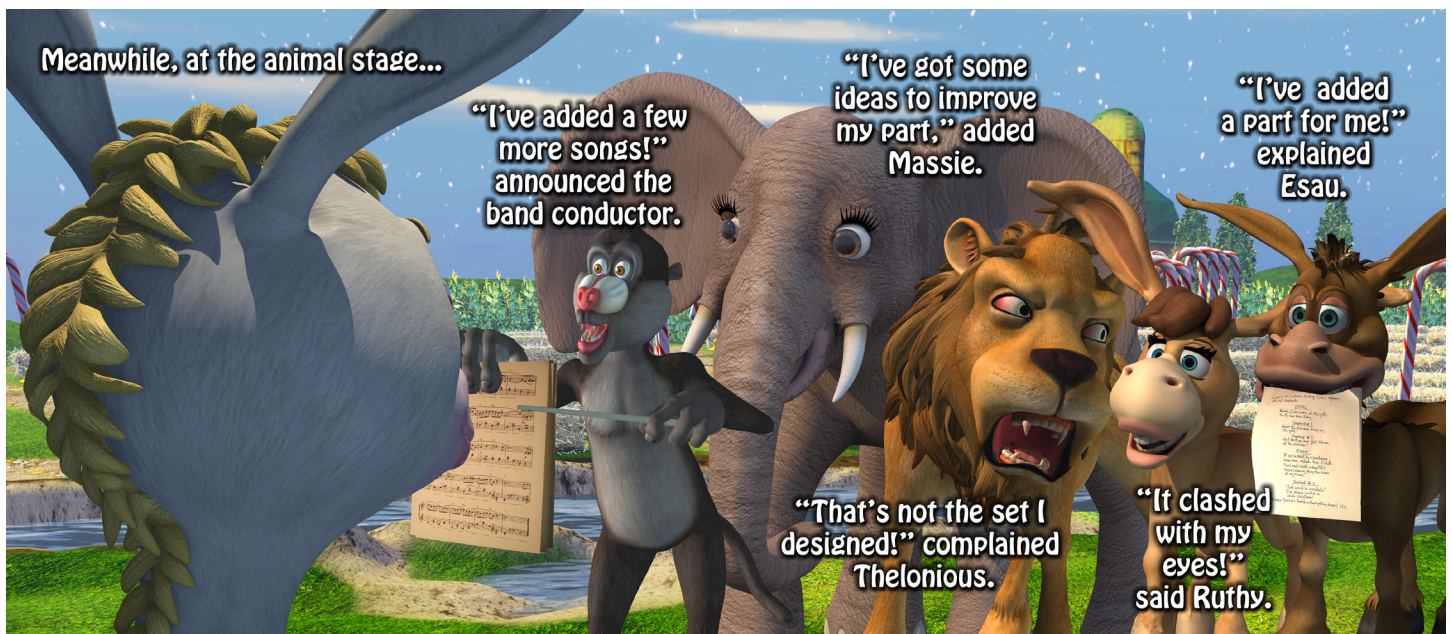




"... Do unto others as you wish them to do unto you!"

"There is nothing wrong with wanting to be competitive, John," said Paul.

"Everyone wants to be a winner. You just have to ask yourself, what is the price you want to pay for winning?"



Meanwhile, at the animal stage...

"I've added a few more songs!" announced the band conductor.

"I've got some ideas to improve my part," added Massie.

"I've added a part for me!" explained Esau.

"That's not the set I designed!" complained Thelonious.

"It clashed with my eyes!" said Ruthy.

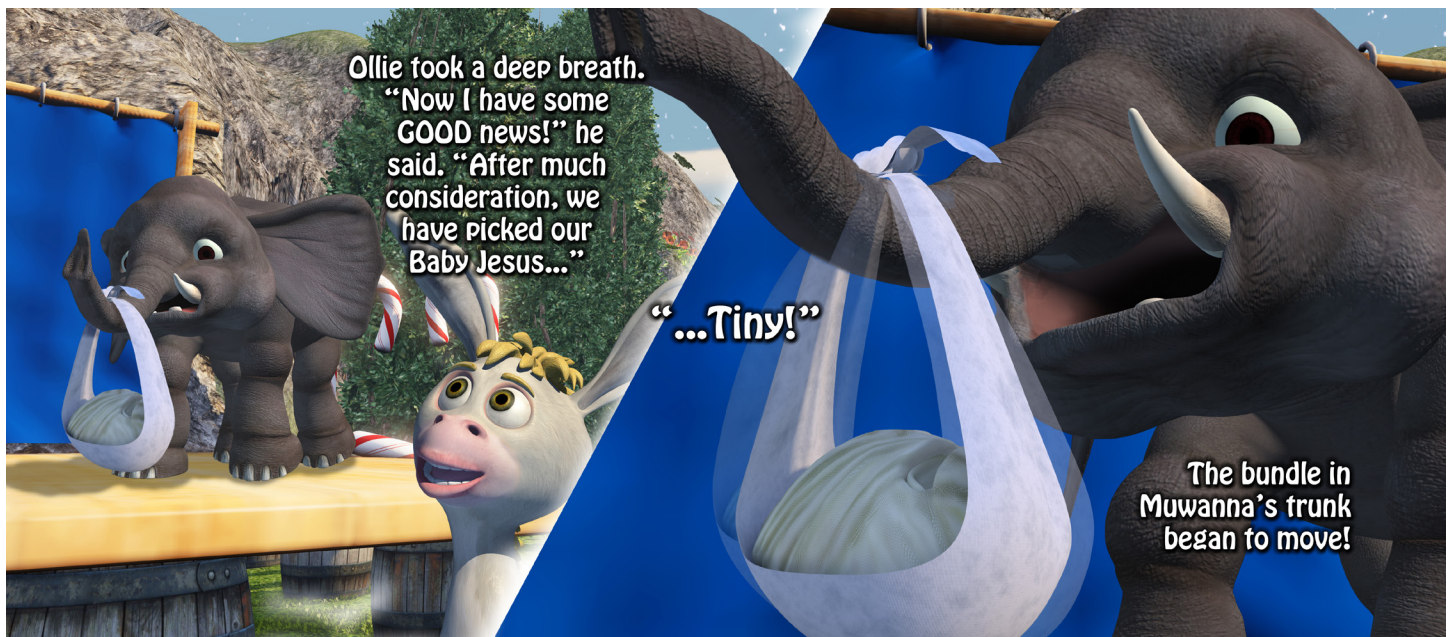


"STOP!!" yelled Ollie. Everyone went quiet.

"Have you all forgotten why we are here? We are supposed to be working together!!

We are losing sight of the vision. We are not here to bring glory to ourselves but to bring glory to Jesus. We are not here to shine the spotlight on our skills but on the life of the one who brought redemption to the world!"





Ollie took a deep breath. "Now I have some GOOD news!" he said. "After much consideration, we have picked our Baby Jesus..."

"...Tiny!"

The bundle in Muwanna's trunk began to move!



Suddenly, Tiny popped up!

He tumbled out, hung by one tooth for a moment,

... then dropped to the stage floor.



The crowd went wild! All the animals cheered!

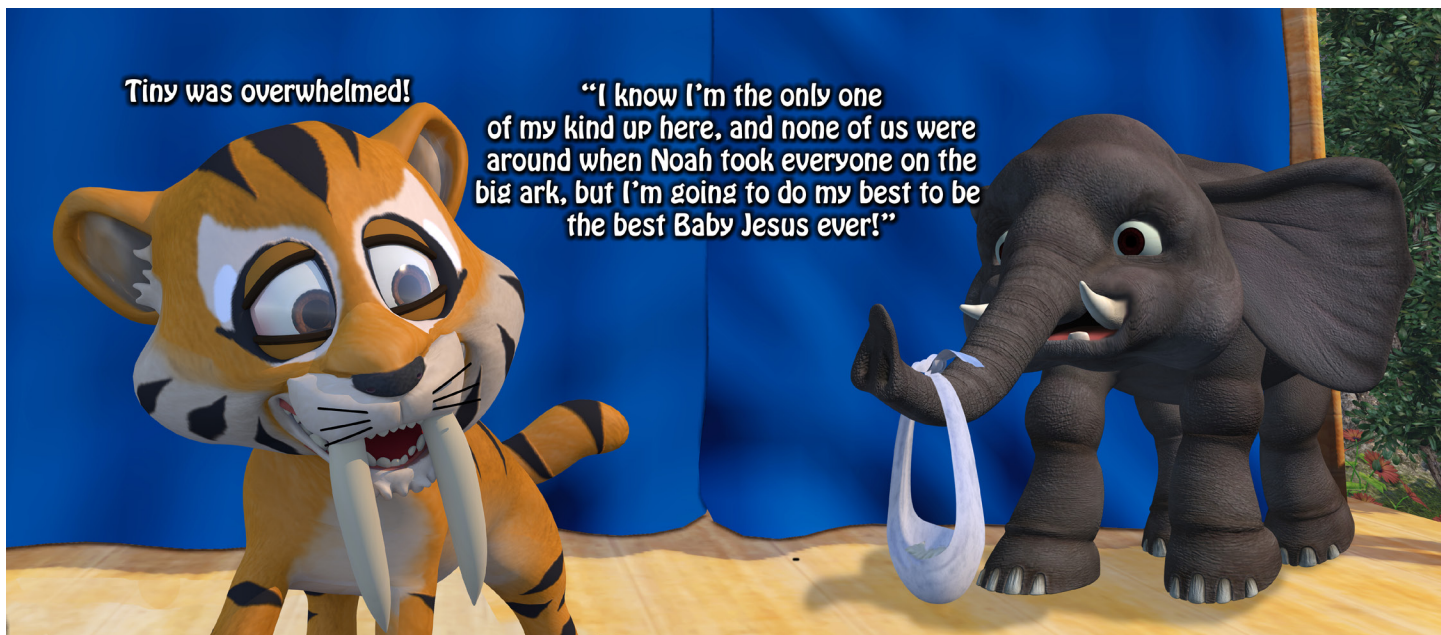
"Tiny, I think the children are going to love you as Baby Jesus!" exclaimed Thelionious enthusiastically.

"Wow! Thank you!" was all Tiny could think of to say.



Tiny was overwhelmed!

"I know I'm the only one  
of my kind up here, and none of us were  
around when Noah took everyone on the  
big ark, but I'm going to do my best to be  
the best Baby Jesus ever!"



Tiny began to sing!

*"I'll be the best Baby Jesus ever!  
I'll cuddle and I'll coo!"*

*"I'll be the best Baby Jesus!  
Everyone will think I'm cute!"*



*"I know I've got two big teeth,  
and stripes from ear-to-ear!"*

*But when I'm in the manger,  
you'll think that I'm so dear!"*





**"I'll be the best  
Baby Jesus.**

**Best Baby Jesus!**

**Better than  
all the rest!**

**I'll be the best Baby  
Jesus ever.**

**One you won't forget!"**



As Tiny continued  
to sing, Thelonious  
turned to Ollie.

"Well," commented  
Thelonious, "one  
thing is for sure...  
Tiny isn't troubled  
by thoughts of  
inadequacy or  
inferiority. It looks  
like he's going to  
play his part with  
confidence!"



Just then, Farmer John and Abner were hauling  
a cart of stage sets and props over the hill  
to the animal stage.

"Listen!" said Farmer John.  
"Do I hear singing?  
RATS!!"

"Father!" panted  
Abner. "I think... I need...  
to stop... and rest!"

"Nonsense. Abner! It's just over  
the hill!" said Farmer John.  
"I let you talk me into this, but  
the sooner we get it over with,  
the better!"











Suddenly the big tree shook,  
startling all the tropical birds!

"Ow! Ow! Ow!!" complained  
Farmer John from below.



The animals rushed over.

"Farmer John! Are  
you all right?"  
asked Ollie.

"Just... peachy!"  
Farmer John moaned,  
rubbing his bottom.



Rupert flew over and looked in the cart.  
"Wow!" he said. "These set pieces  
look terrific!"

"Well, it wasn't my idea to share," replied  
Farmer John as he struggled to get up.  
"But you all enjoy them!"

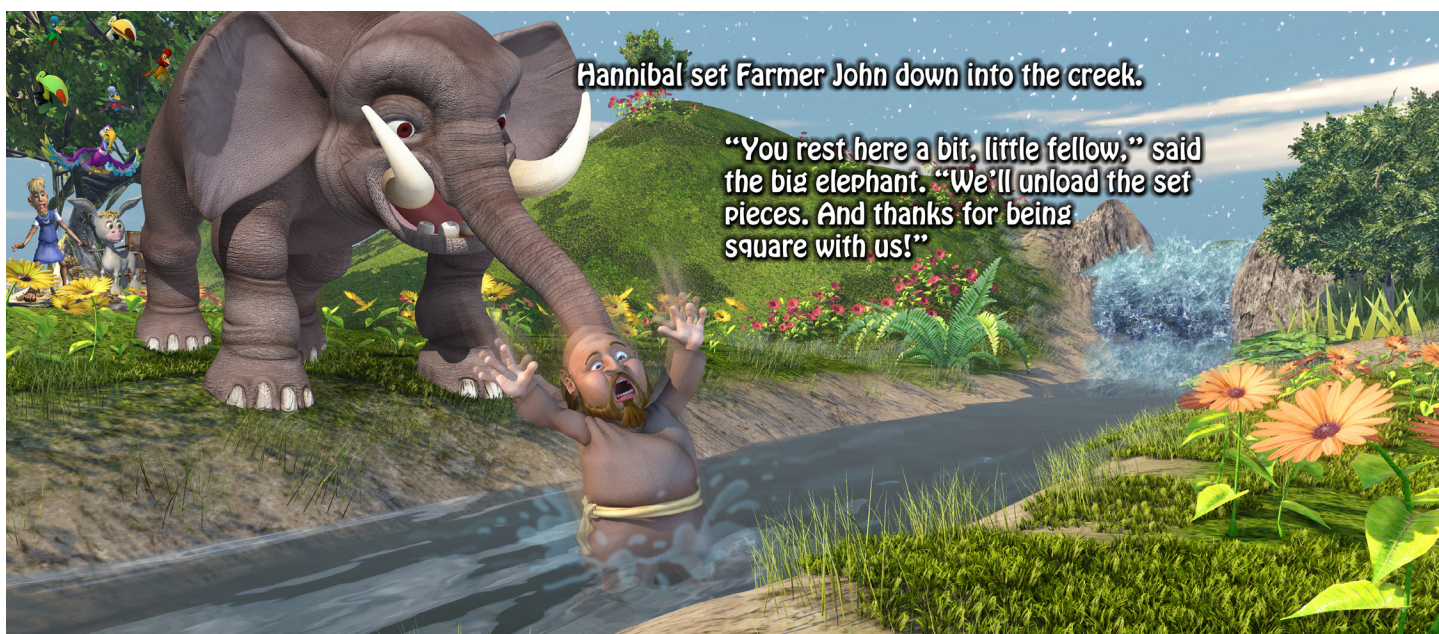




"Hannibal," asked Rupert, "will you take Farmer John over to the stream to wash up?"

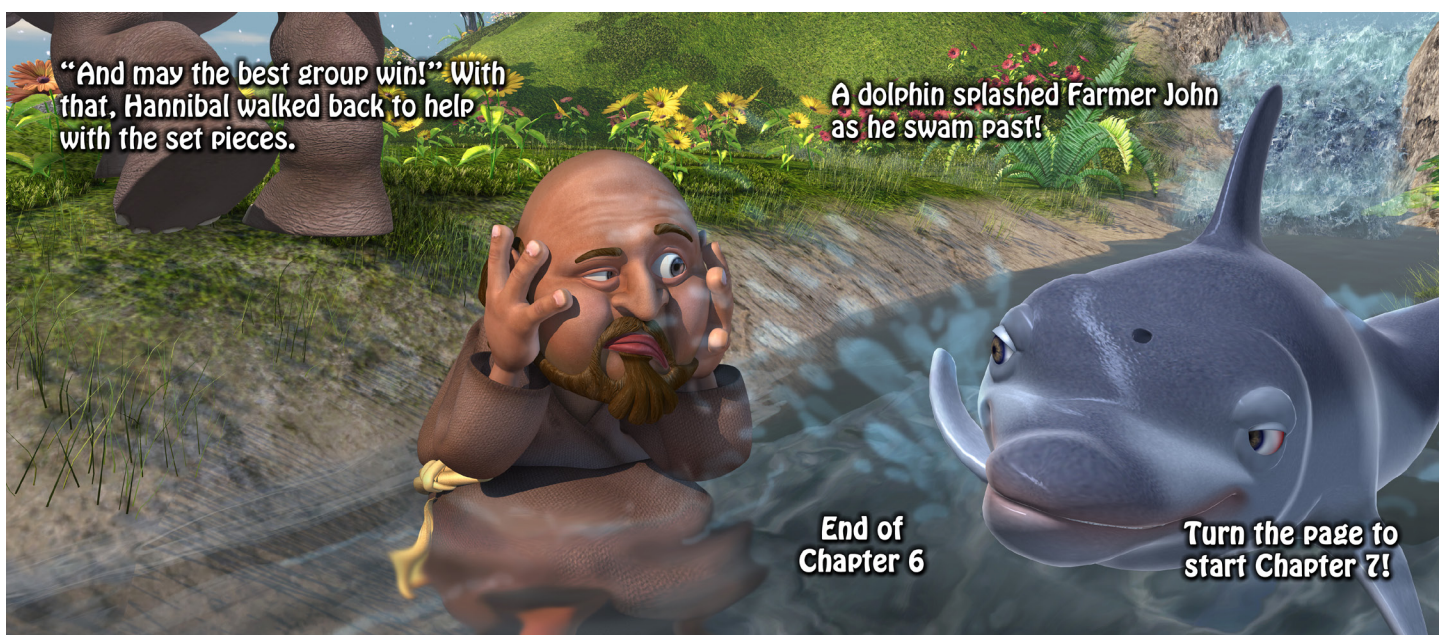
"Sure!" answered Hannibal.

"Hey!" yelled Farmer John.  
"Wait!"



Hannibal set Farmer John down into the creek.

"You rest here a bit, little fellow," said the big elephant. "We'll unload the set pieces. And thanks for being square with us!"



"And may the best group win!" With that, Hannibal walked back to help with the set pieces.

A dolphin splashed Farmer John as he swam past!

End of  
Chapter 6

Turn the page to  
start Chapter 7!



Chapter 7:

The Secret Valley

A little while later, both Farmer John and Abner were back at work on their pageant sets.

The cut-out animals looked nice, but it was obvious they were not real.

Farmer John was so happy working on the sets, he barely noticed he had visitors!

"Whoa!" he said, startled.

"This is quite a surprise, Jesus!"

"Well," said Jesus. "I was a bit worried about you. But I heard that you had put your self-interest aside and shared your set pieces with the animals. That was a grand gesture!"

"It took a bit of encouragement from me!" added Abner.

Jesus laughed. "Oh, yes! I know, Abner! Thank you!"

"And now, Farmer John. I want to know if there is anything I can do for you?!"

"Well," said Farmer John slowly. "this is the first year without real animals. They all joined Ollie!"













The cloud landed among animals of all kinds. Farmer John stepped out.

"This is... amazing!!!" was all he could say.

"Here are all animals you need!" said Peter.

"And they'll be more than happy to go with you!" James added.



"I was foolish to think that if I gave to others," Farmer John explained, "I wouldn't have everything I needed. I was missing the whole spirit of Christmas..."

...That God loved the world and gave his only begotten son, so whoever believed would have Heaven eternally..."



"... and not miss all of THIS!" Farmer John exclaimed.

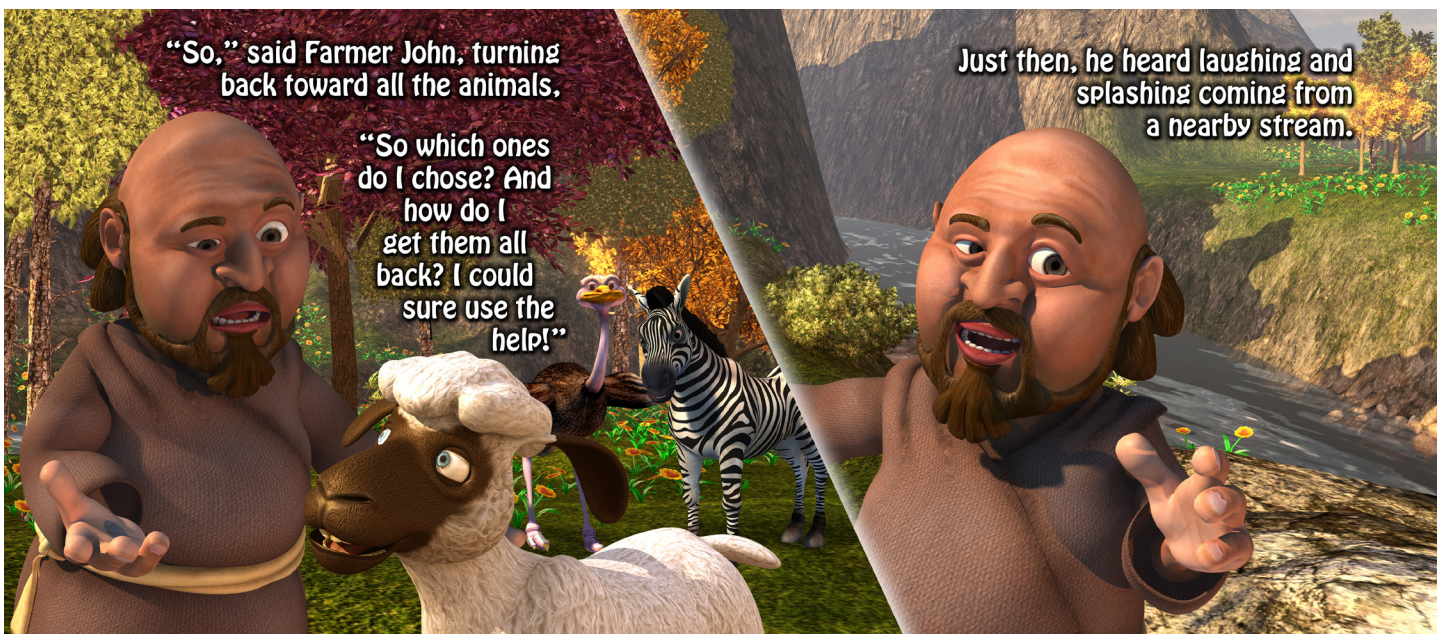
"It's a long journey back," said James. "Just follow the stream and it will lead right back to the Crystal City!"

"And don't worry about the animals," Peter added.

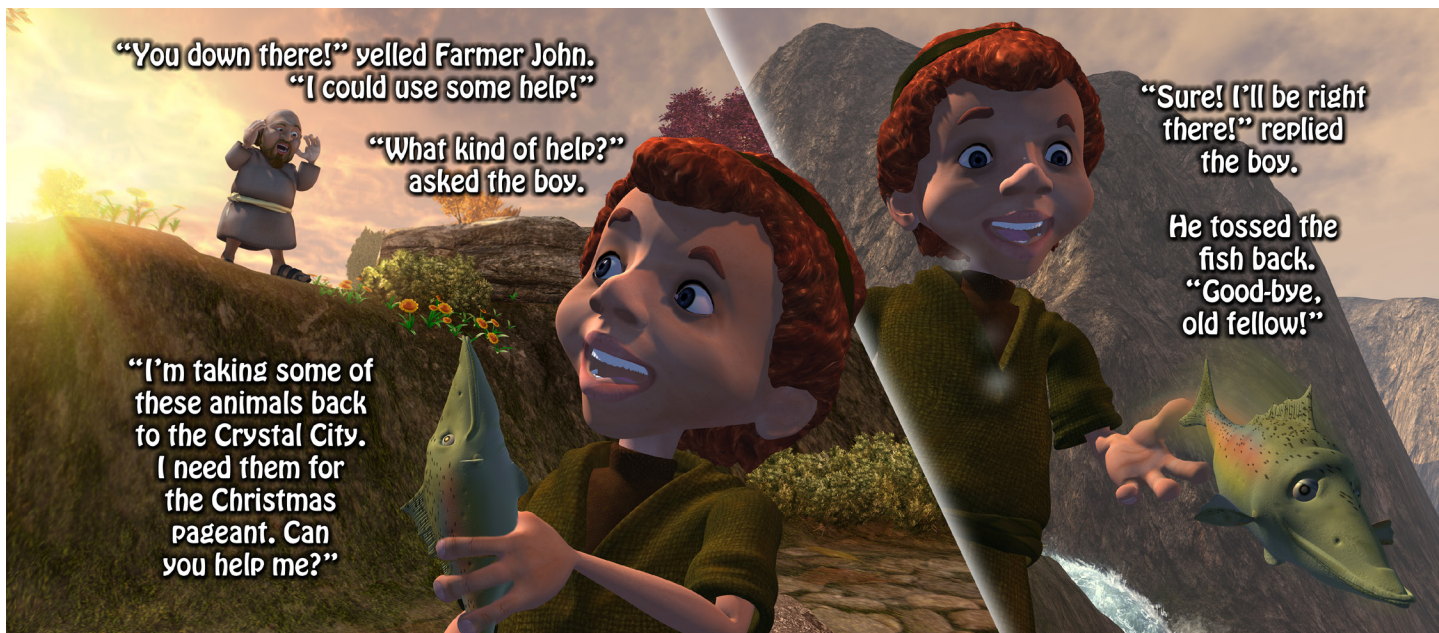
"They will have plenty of grazing land and water during the journey!"

The cloud rose from the ground.









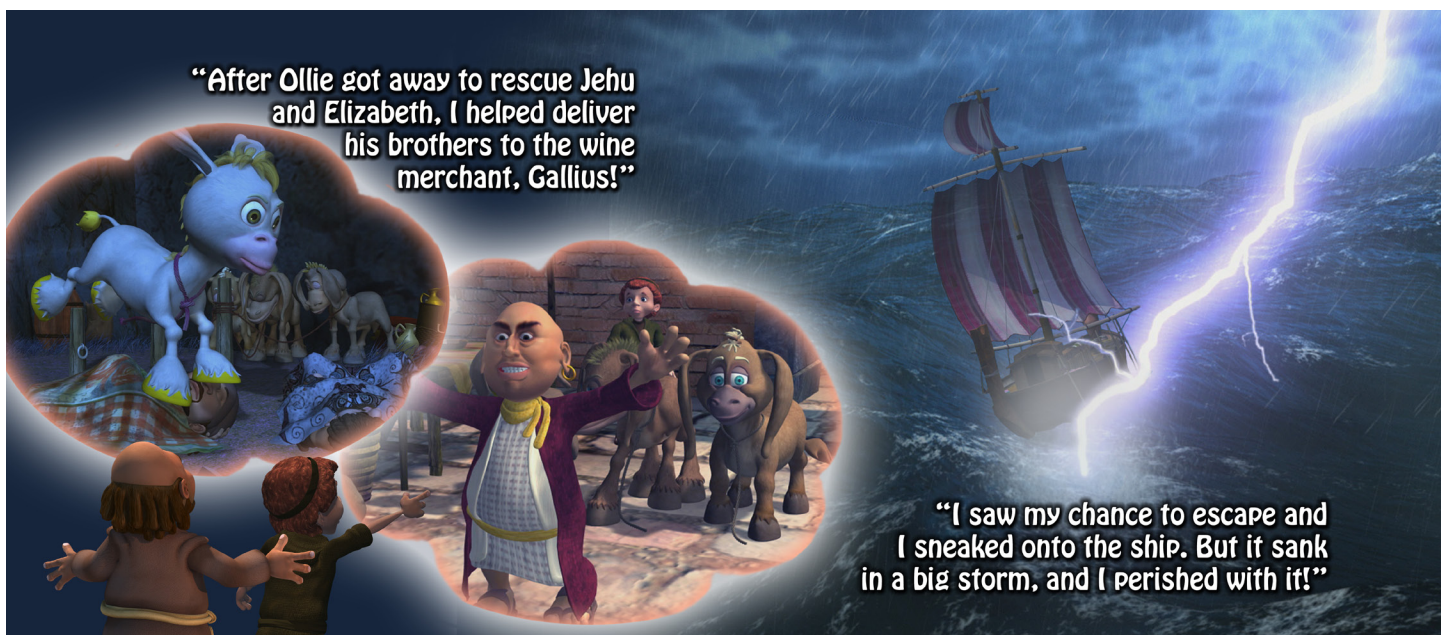




"We stole your donkeys," Meddi continued, "and tied up your two children in a net! They were hanging from a tree, directly above a pack of hungry jackals!"



"Ollie told me stealing was bad, and I listened. I guess that's why I'm here in Heaven, instead of... well, you know where!"



"After Ollie got away to rescue Jehu and Elizabeth, I helped deliver his brothers to the wine merchant, Gallius!"

"I saw my chance to escape and I sneaked onto the ship. But it sank in a big storm, and I perished with it!"



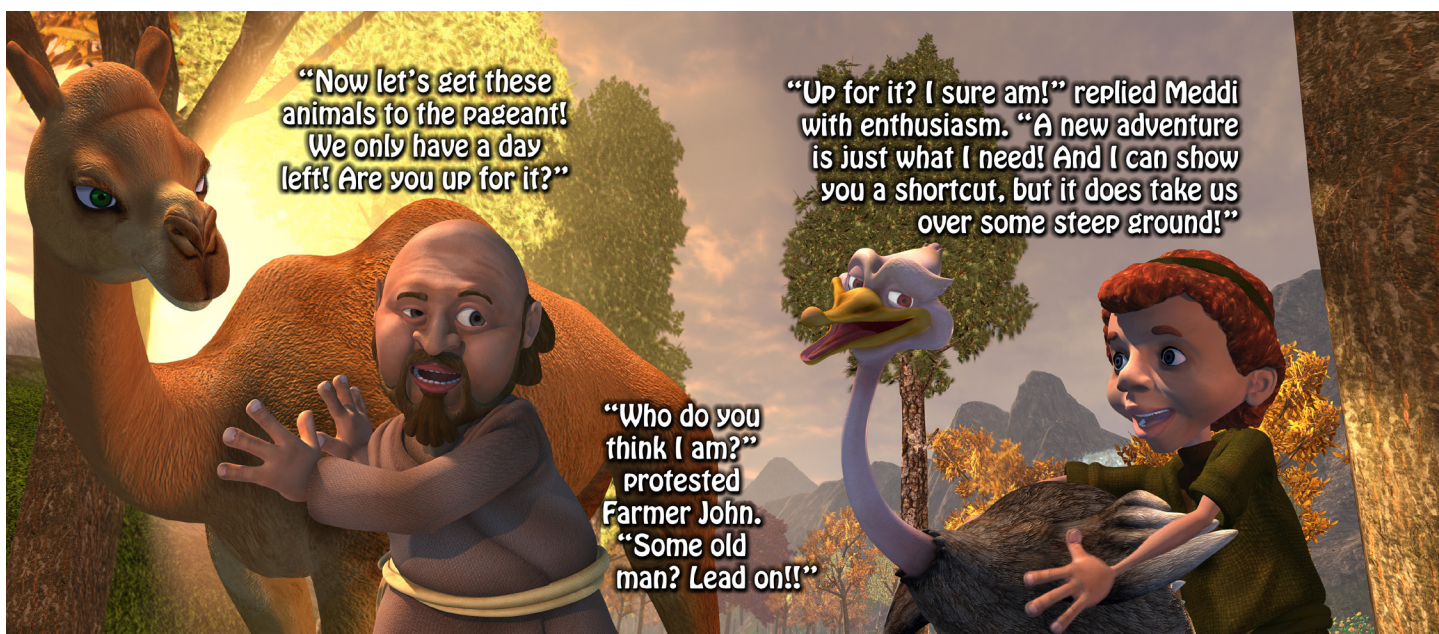


The memory bubble popped!

"That was a long time ago, Meddi," replied Farmer John softly.

"As I was drowning, an angel came and rescued me. That's why I'm here. I... I'm awfully sorry about what I did!"

"Don't worry about it. None of us lived a perfect life on Earth. Jesus forgave you... and I forgive you, too!"



"Now let's get these animals to the pageant! We only have a day left! Are you up for it?"

"Up for it? I sure am!" replied Meddi with enthusiasm. "A new adventure is just what I need! And I can show you a shortcut, but it does take us over some steep ground!"

"Who do you think I am?" protested Farmer John. "Some old man? Lead on!!"



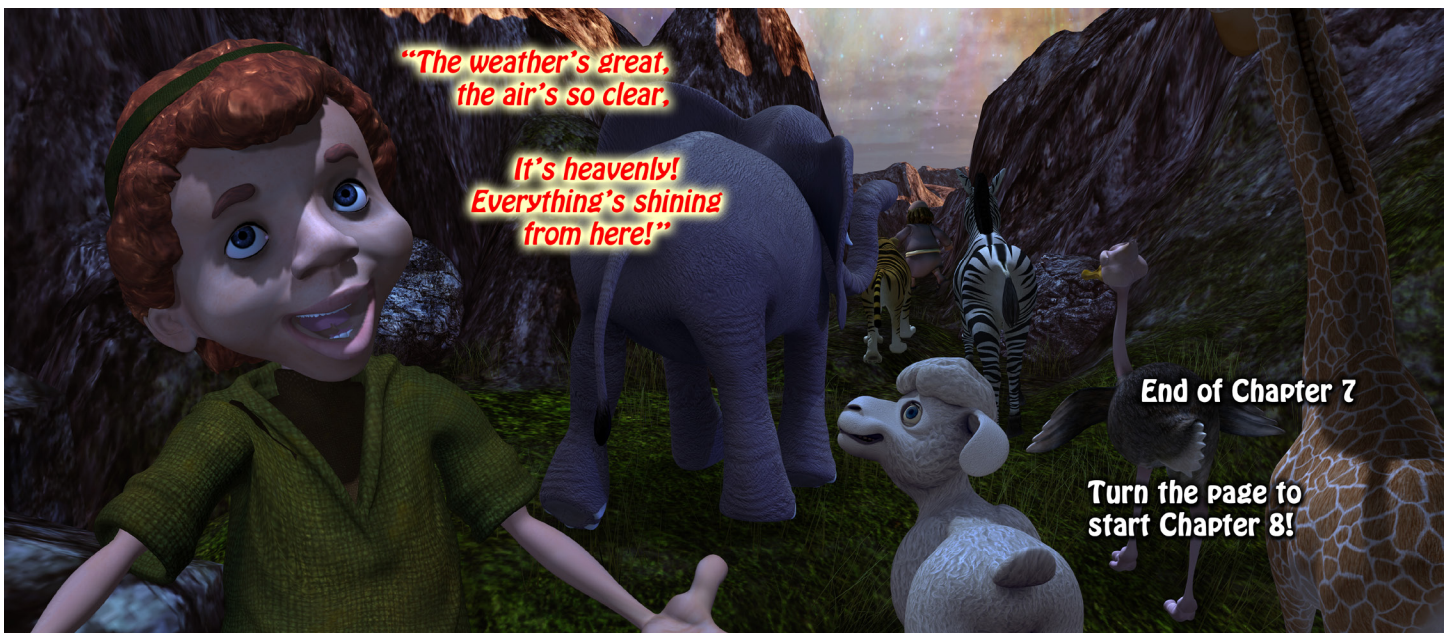
But Meddi's "shortcut" proved difficult not just for Farmer John, but for a lot of the animals!

Meddi picked up a small lamb who was struggling over the rocks, and carried him up the path.

"Thank you so much!" bleated the lamb. "I'm not strong like the others! I don't think I can make it!"

"Sure you can, little fellow!" encouraged Meddi. "I'll be watching out for you! I won't let you fail!"



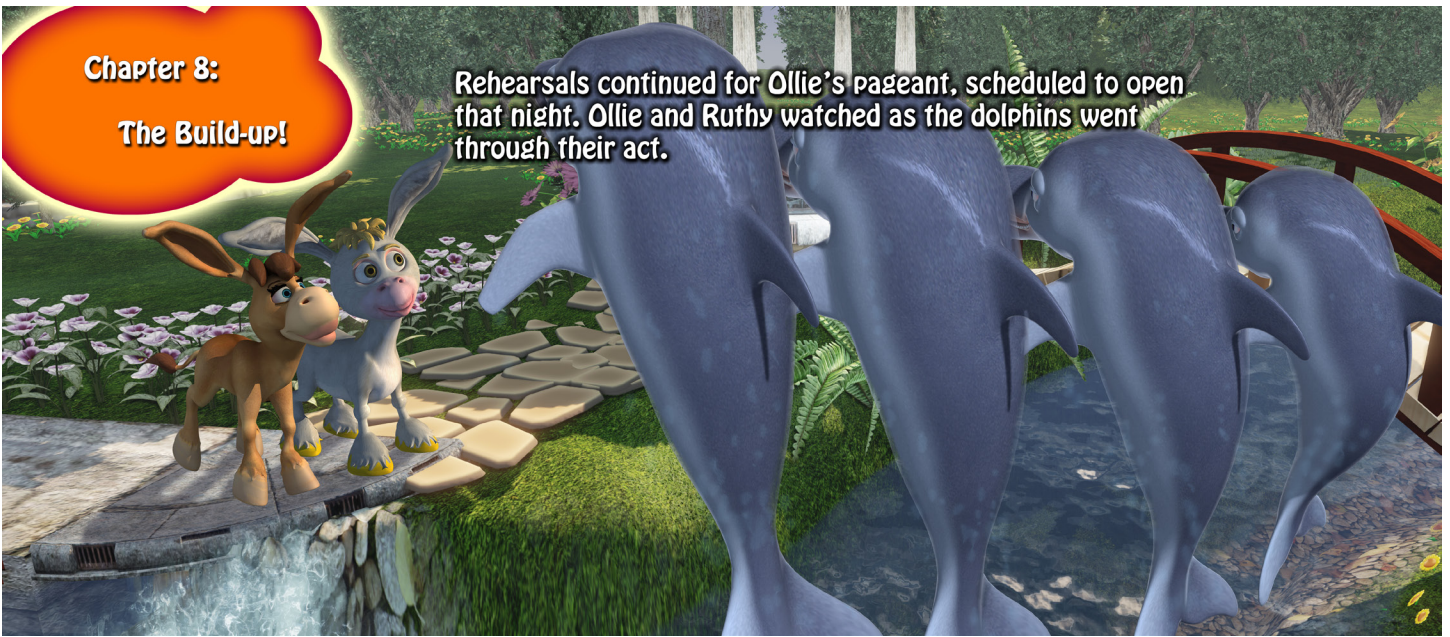




## Chapter 8:

### The Build-up!

Rehearsals continued for Ollie's pageant, scheduled to open that night. Ollie and Ruthy watched as the dolphins went through their act.



Meanwhile, Rupert flew up to Malachi the Angel, a roll of posters held tightly in his claws.

"Say, Malachi! Do you suppose you can help me out a bit?" asked Rupert.



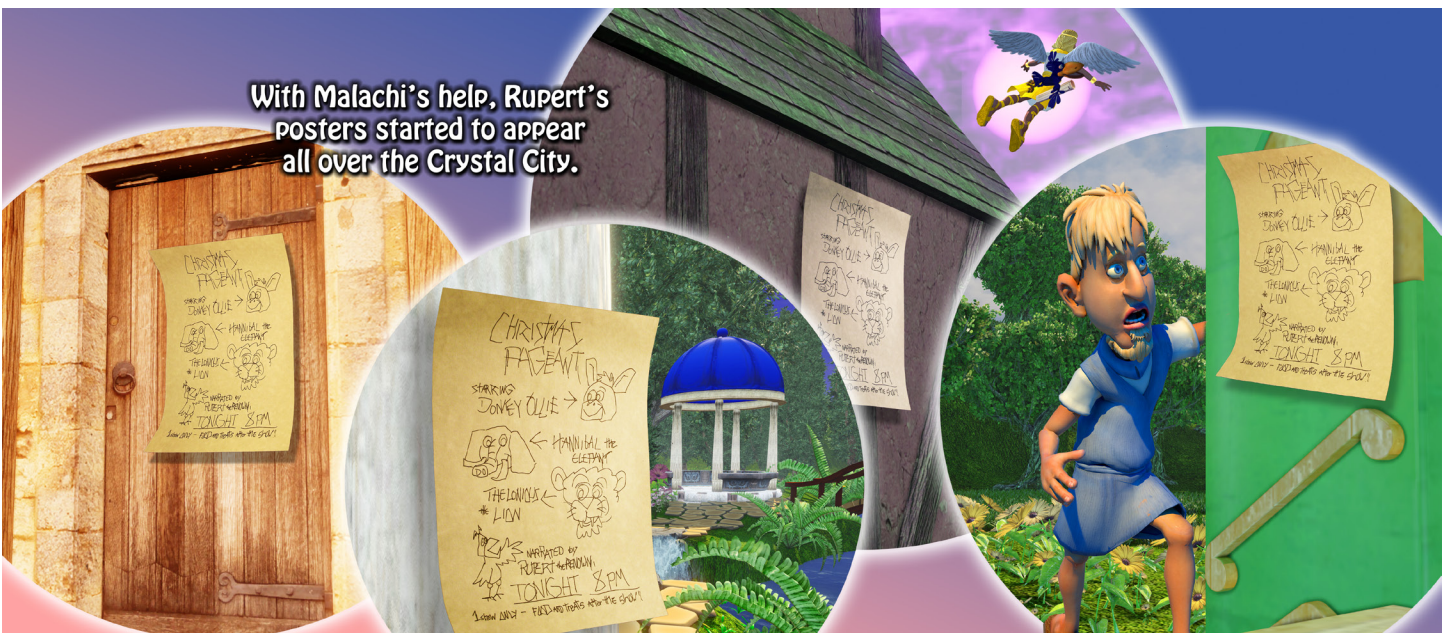
"Sure, brother Rupert!" answered Malachi.  
"How can I help you?"

"I'm trying to get all these posters for the pageant out today," said Rupert. "My wings are tired, and I've got a long way to go!"

"Sure!" exclaimed Malachi.  
"I'd love to help! Hop on!"



With Malachi's help, Rupert's posters started to appear all over the Crystal City.



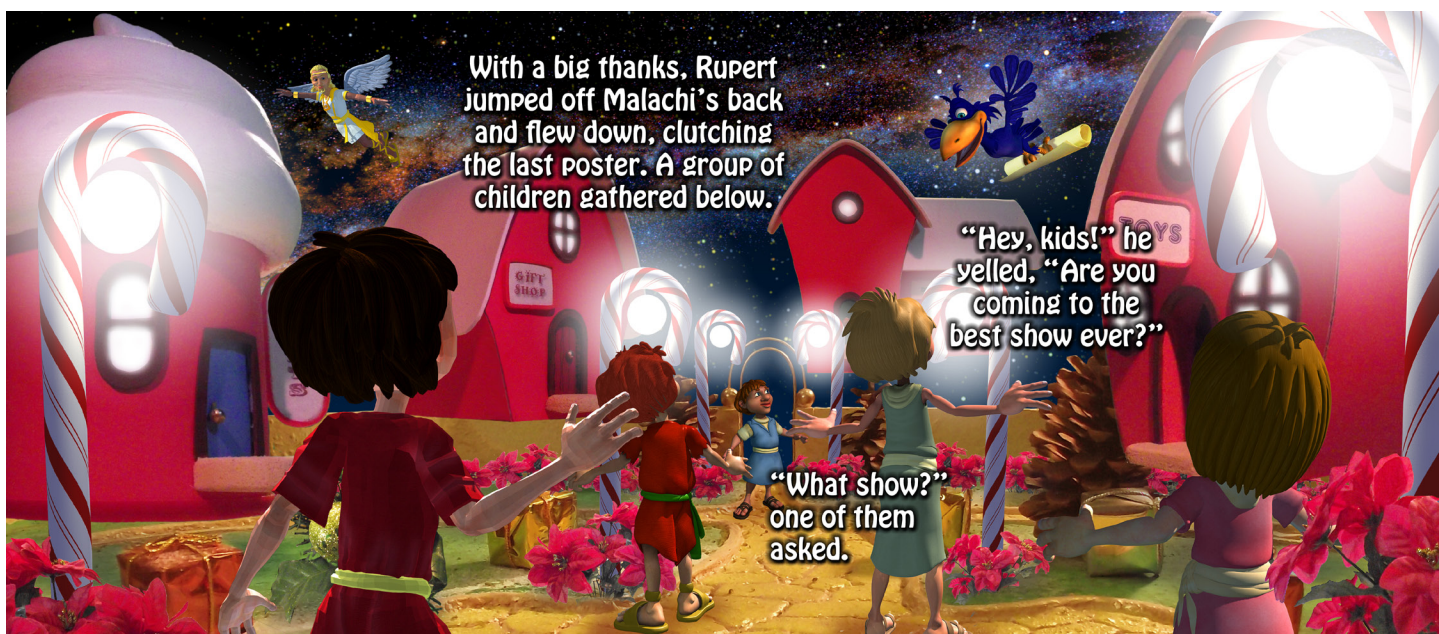




And they told people by word-of-mouth.

"Hey, don't forget to bring the kids to 'Christmas in Heaven', the best Christmas pageant ever! WITH the original stars from the era!" yelled Rupert.

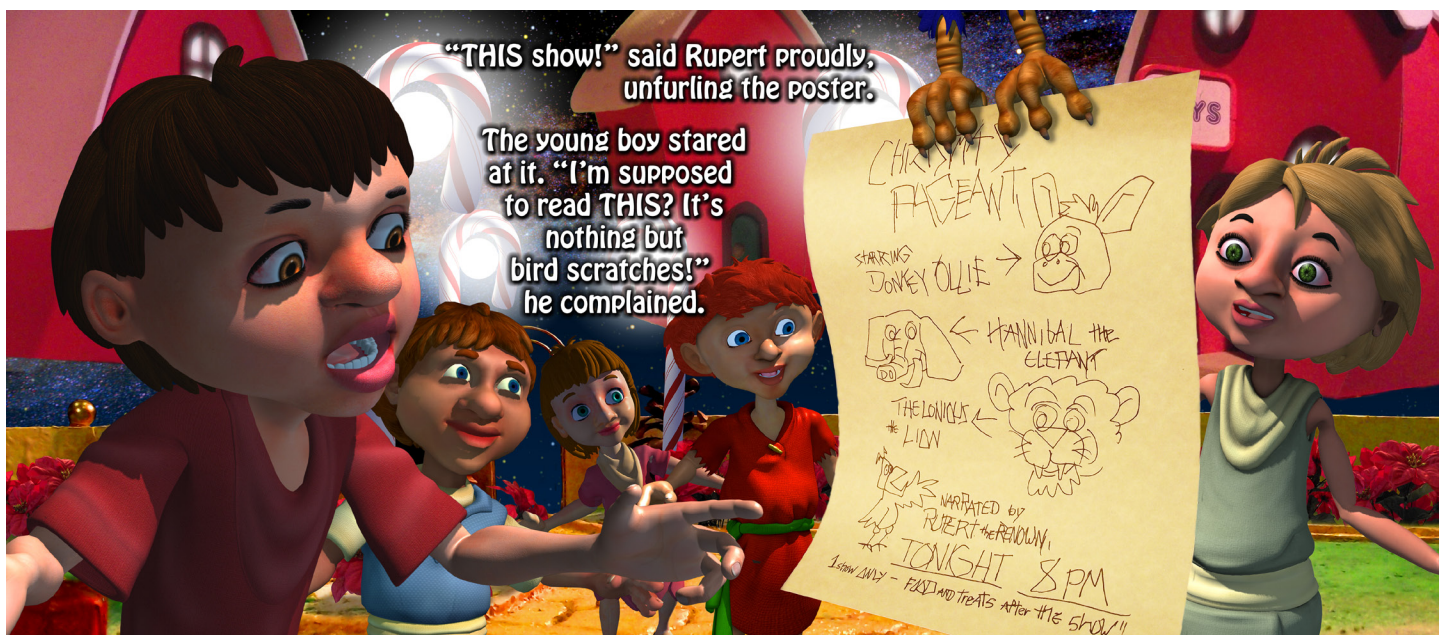
"Wouldn't dream of missing it!" came the reply.



With a big thanks, Rupert jumped off Malachi's back and flew down, clutching the last poster. A group of children gathered below.

"Hey, kids!" he yelled. "Are you coming to the best show ever?"

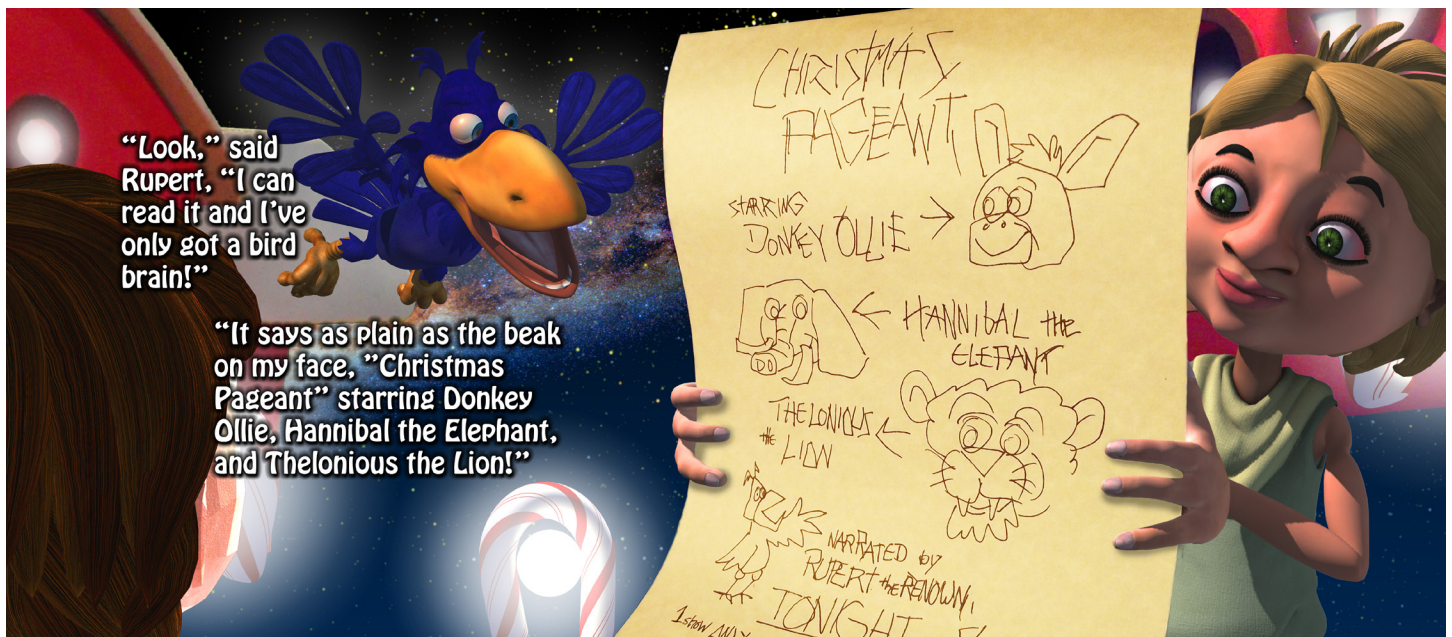
"What show?" one of them asked.



"THIS show!" said Rupert proudly, unfurling the poster.

The young boy stared at it. "I'm supposed to read THIS? It's nothing but bird scratches!" he complained.





"Look," said Rupert. "I can read it and I've only got a bird brain!"

"It says as plain as the beak on my face, "Christmas Pageant" starring Donkey Ollie, Hannibal the Elephant, and Thelonious the Lion!"



"Why didn't you just say so?!" said the boy. "Our teacher tells us stories about Donkey Ollie, Hannibal and Thelonious all the time!"

"Did she ever tell you stories about Rupert the Renown?" asked Rupert, somewhat concerned.



"RUMOR the renown?" asked the boy.

"NO. NO. NO! Not Rumor... RUPERT, silly!" he corrected. "I'm going to be the narrator. If it wasn't for me saving their hides, I doubt if any of them would have made it into Heaven!"

Rupert began to sing.





*"I remember like it was yesterday,  
I remember oh, so well!"*

*"When Ollie was just  
a young donkey colt,  
trapped at the  
bottom of a well."*



*"I remember when Hannibal  
wasn't so great,  
He was chained to a pole!"*

*"And the Lion King was  
starving for days,  
and treated like a fool!"*



*"I was there to make it happen,  
facilitate escapes,"*

*I delivered many messages,  
helped many avoid bad fate!"*





*"I was the unsung  
hero of yesteryear!"*

*It's true, it really is!*

*If Rupert the Renown  
had not been around,*

*things wouldn't be like they is!"*



*"That's amazing!" exclaimed  
a young boy.*

*"Just one of my  
many tricks!"  
said Rupert,  
dizzily.*

*"Do it again!"  
asked a small  
girl.*

*"No, I don't  
think so!"  
replied Rupert.*

*"But come see the  
pageant. You'll  
really get a kick  
out of it!"*



*Rupert began singing again.*

*"If you miss this play,  
you are foolish!"*

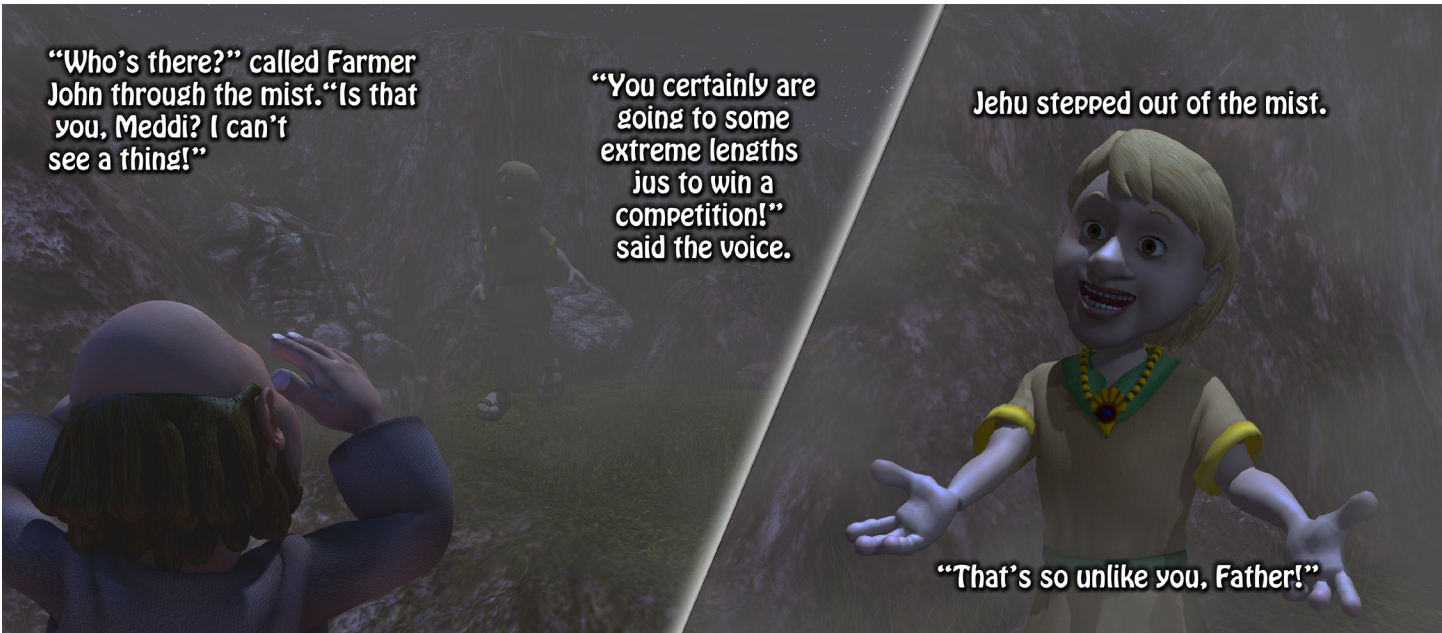
*You won't get  
a second chance.*

*To watch the true blue characters,  
act and sing and dance!"*










“Who’s there?” called Farmer John through the mist. “Is that you, Meddi? I can’t see a thing!”

“You certainly are going to some extreme lengths jus to win a competition!” said the voice.

Jehu stepped out of the mist.


“That’s so unlike you, Father!”



“Jehu!” exclaimed Farmer John. “My son! Good! You can help me get these animals to the-”

“No Father, let it go,” said Jehu.

“Even over in the Crystal City, I’ve heard stories about this mad farmer who has to win every year!”



“I don’t have to win every...

What do you mean, “Mad Farmer” ???!”

There was a pause, then both of them burst out in laughter!



After a moment, they both caught their breaths.

"Have I really been that bad?" asked Farmer John.

"You're just enthusiastic," said Jehu. "Well, this year, let's be enthusiastic for Ollie!"

Farmer John smiled. "When did you get to be so smart?"

"I had a good teacher," replied Jehu.

Just then Farmer John saw Meddi herding the last of the animals.

"Meddi," asked Farmer John, "could you take the animals back to their valley?"

"Uh, no problem. I guess," said Meddi. "Where are YOU going?"

Farmer John smiled. "I have a Christmas pageant to attend!" he said, brushing off his robe.

End of Chapter 8

Turn the page for the last chapter!



A night scene at an outdoor amphitheater. In the background, a stage with a blue curtain and a yellow star has a donkey and a lion on it. A pond in the center has a golden throne on a small island. The foreground is decorated with large candy canes and red bows. People are gathered around the pond.

## Chapter 9:

### The Pageant

As early evening approached, the amphitheater began to fill with people of all ages.

Ollie peeked through the curtain to see the throne in the middle of the pond. Thelonious joined him.

A close-up of a lion (Thelonious) and a donkey (Ollie) looking out over the amphitheater. In the background, the golden throne is on the pond island, surrounded by many children and candy canes. A blue bird is flying in the sky.

“They brought HIS throne about an hour ago,” said Thelonious. He turned to Ollie. “Nervous?” he asked.

“A little, yeah,” admitted Ollie.

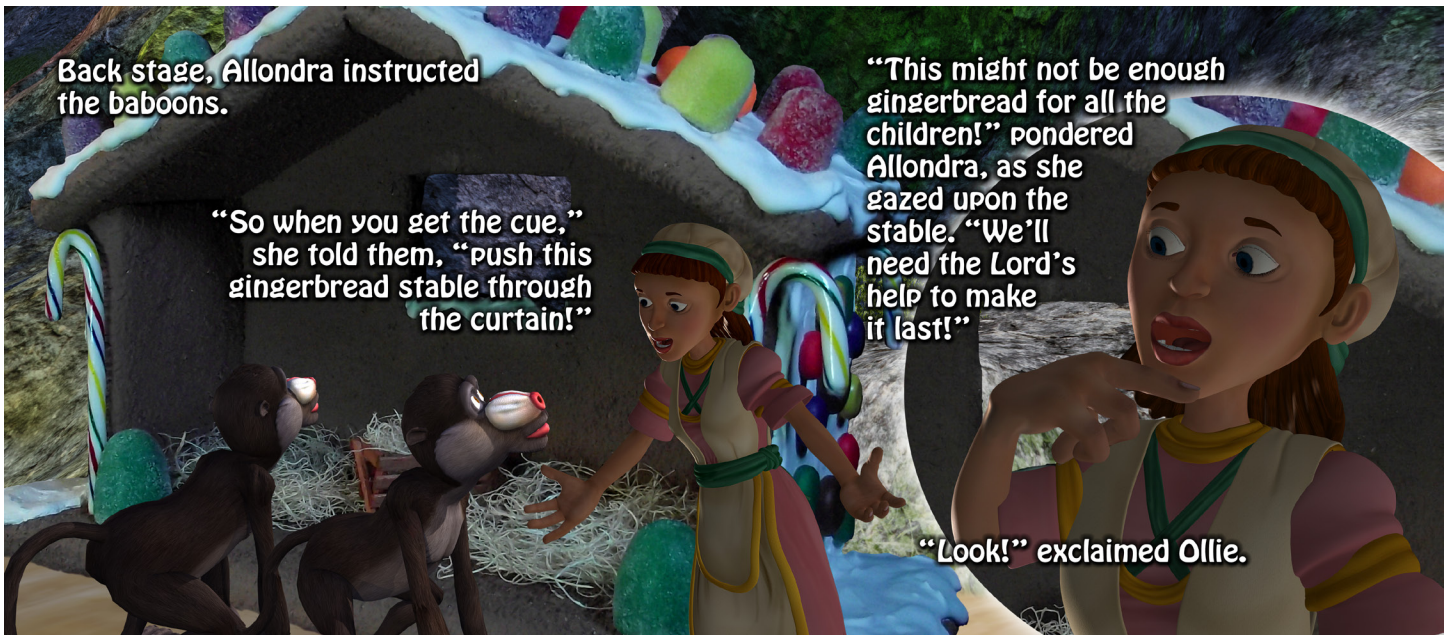
A group of children are walking along a path towards the amphitheater. In the foreground, the donkey (Ollie) and lion (Thelonious) are looking at them. A blue bird is also visible.

“Look!” added Ollie, “the children are already arriving! [...] I never knew there were so many children in Heaven!”

“I suppose that’s what makes it Heaven, Ollie!” answered Thelonious. “For what is more pure than the heart of an innocent child?”

“Wow!” exclaimed Rupert. “Thousands of children are on the way! I hope we have enough pomegranate juice!”



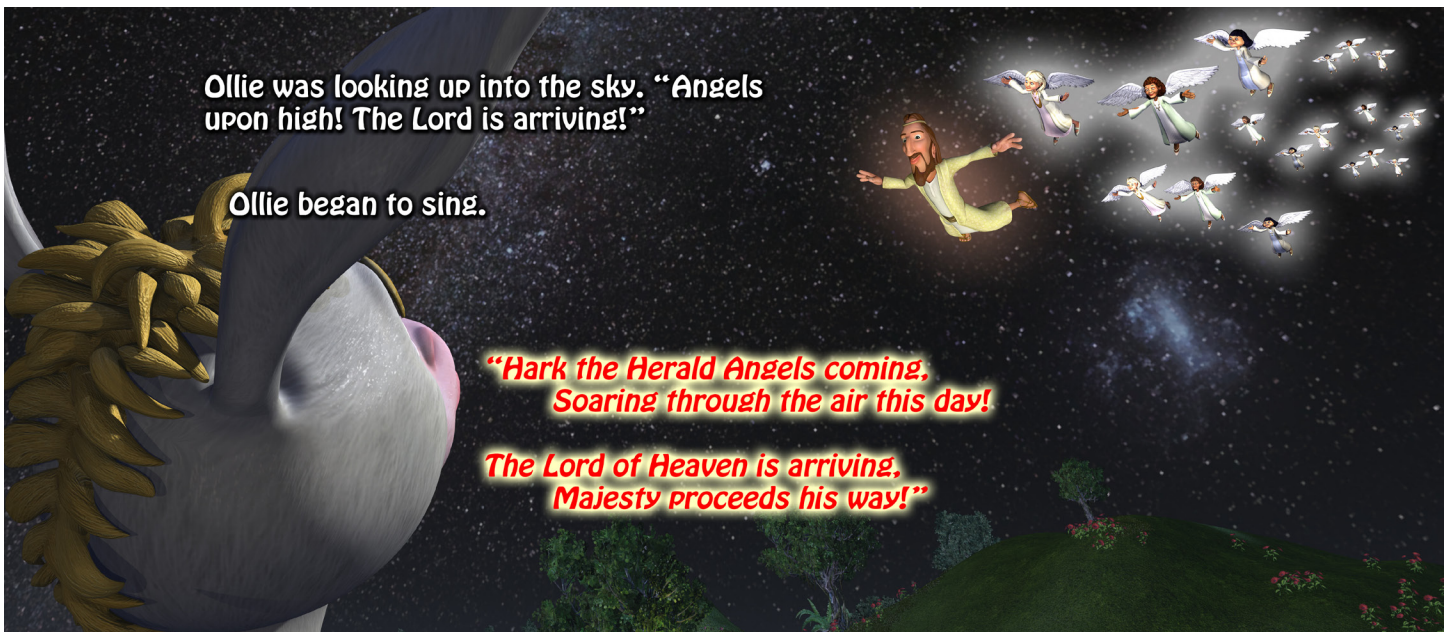


Back stage, Allondra instructed the baboons.

"So when you get the cue," she told them, "push this gingerbread stable through the curtain!"

"This might not be enough gingerbread for all the children!" pondered Allondra, as she gazed upon the stable. "We'll need the Lord's help to make it last!"

"Look!" exclaimed Ollie.



Ollie was looking up into the sky. "Angels upon high! The Lord is arriving!"

Ollie began to sing.

*"Hark the Herald Angels coming,  
Soaring through the air this day!"*

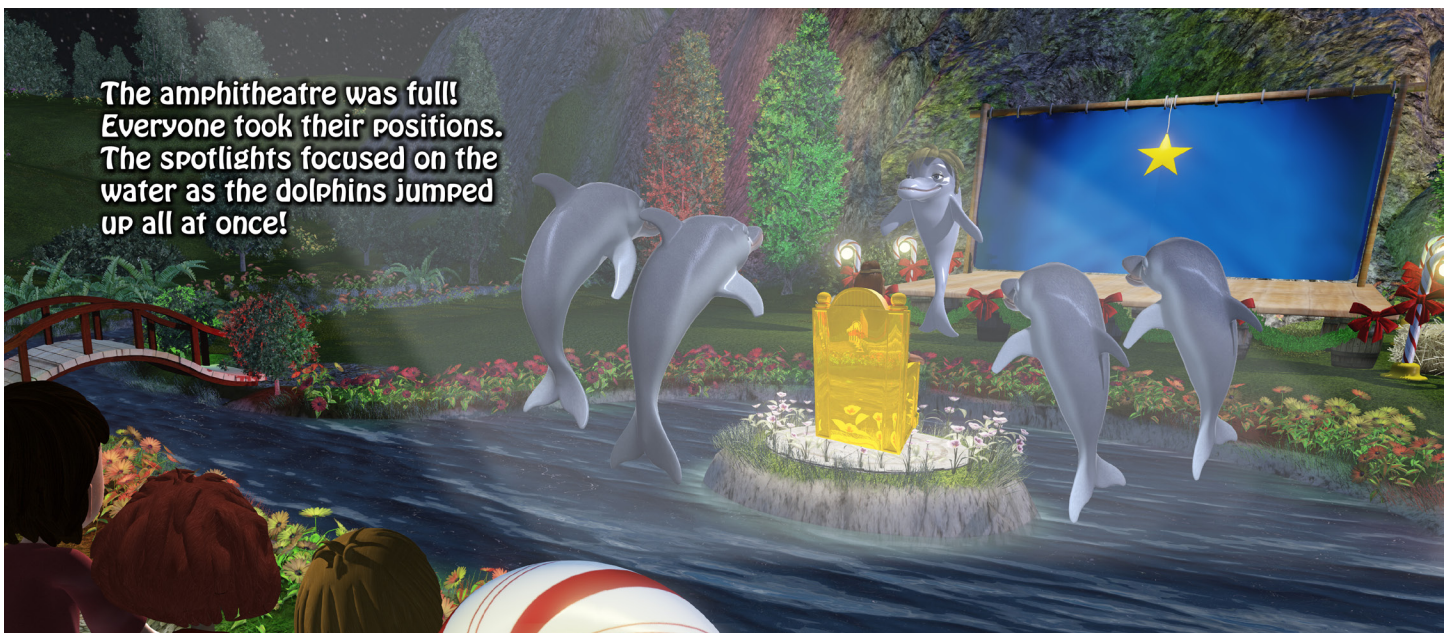
*The Lord of Heaven is arriving,  
Majesty proceeds his way!"*



*"The hosts of Heaven are rejoicing,  
The children are in rapturous awe!"*

*He alone creation's ruler,  
Jesus Christ, the Lord of all!"*









*"We're rocking today!  
Gathered for the Christmas play,  
It's Christmas in Heaven.  
The greatest place in the world!"*



*"It's Christmas, it's Christmas, just like years ago!"*



*"The shepherds were gathered, tending to their flocks!"*









*"It's snowing like never before!"*

*"It's Christmas.  
Christmas in Heaven!"*

*"Sit back everybody!  
Enjoy the show!"*



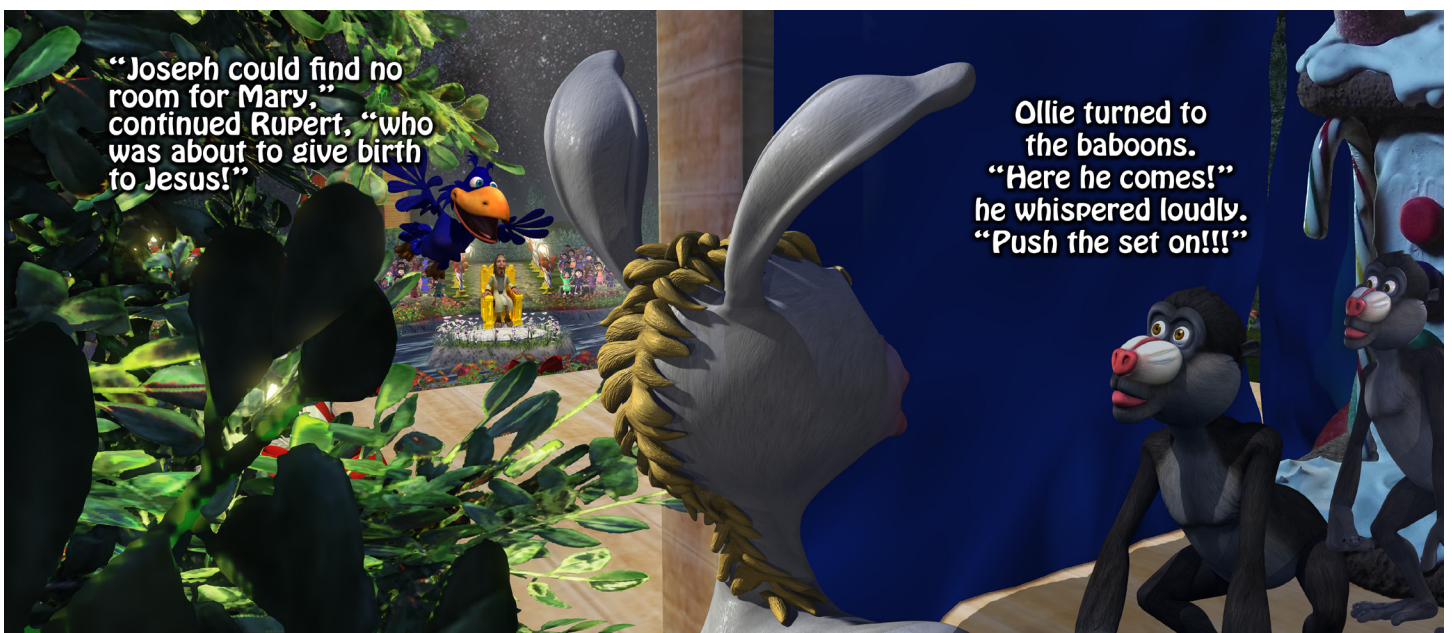


The children went crazy! The flying dolphins, the jumping children dressed as sheep, and the real sheep pretending to be shepherds were almost too much for them!



Rupert appeared from the back of the amphitheater and flew toward the stage.

"It was a busy season in Bethlehem!" said Rupert.



"Joseph could find no room for Mary," continued Rupert, "who was about to give birth to Jesus!"

Ollie turned to the baboons. "Here he comes!" he whispered loudly. "Push the set on!!!"









"Look Joseph! Isn't he handsome?"

Tiny popped his head up and smiled.

The crowd cheered!



Elizabeth was watching the show from the rear of the amphitheater when the floating cloud landed. Her father and brother got out.

"Have I missed much?" asked Farmer John.



"Oh, Father!" cried Elizabeth, giving him a big hug. "I'm SO glad you made it!"

"No, you haven't missed much!"

"Good!" replied Farmer John.

Suddenly the audience broke out in more cheers. They all looked toward the stage.













Hannibal pulled a large golden circus wagon. On top, baboons were throwing out golden beads to the children below!



Muwanna pulled a giant urn filled with aromatic spices...

...followed by Massie, who hauled a cart with bolts of fabric, a crown of burning incense on her head.

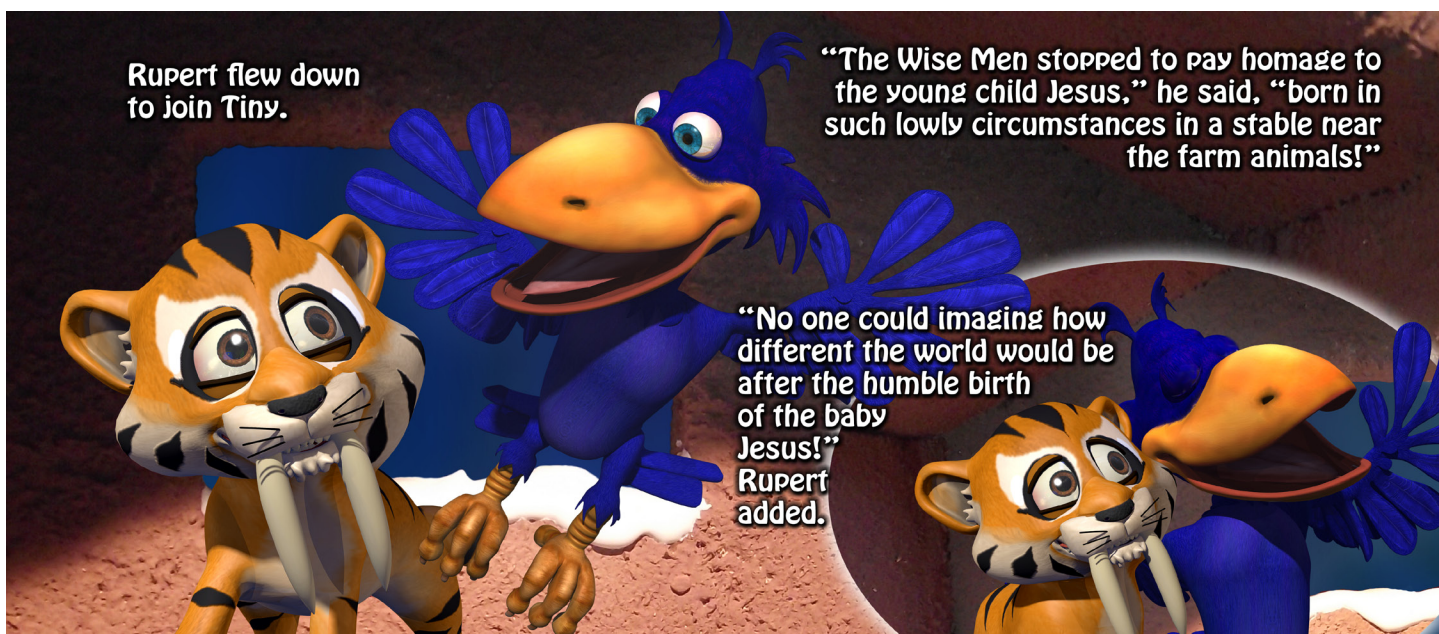


"The three wise men sought information from King Herod, who told them the scriptures indicated a Messiah would be born in Bethlehem!" Rupert announced.







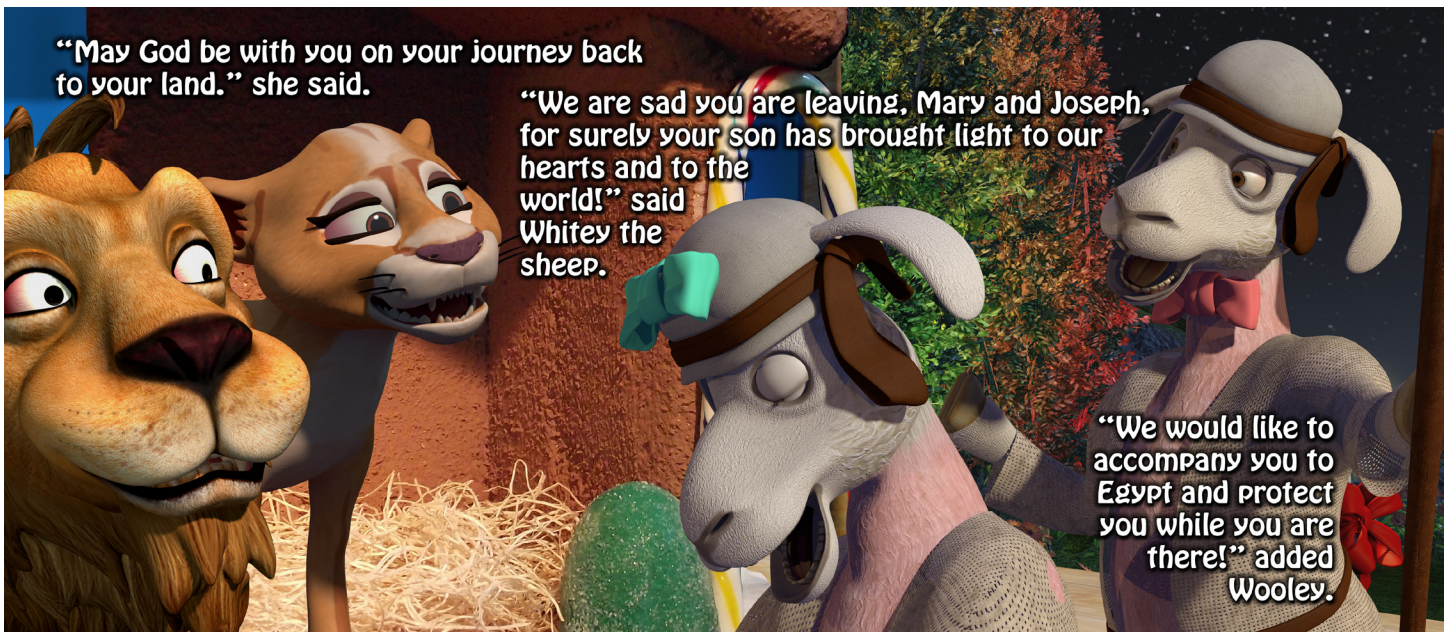






Thelonious spoke as Joseph. "Thank you so much, Magi, for the treasures you have showered upon us. We will take these gifts and flee into Egypt. Herod won't follow us there!"

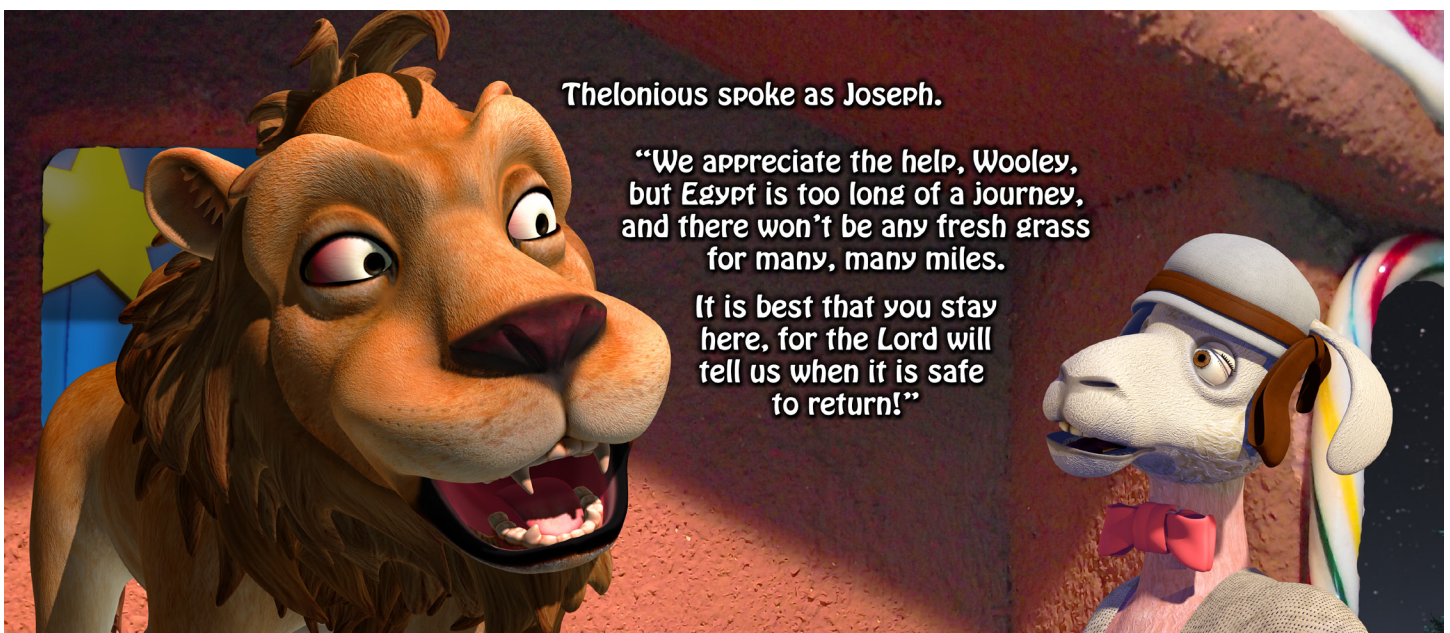
The lioness who played Mary spoke. "My heart is overjoyed with the many visitors that have welcomed my son!"



"May God be with you on your journey back to your land." she said.

"We are sad you are leaving, Mary and Joseph, for surely your son has brought light to our hearts and to the world!" said Whitey the sheep.

"We would like to accompany you to Egypt and protect you while you are there!" added Wooley.



Thelonious spoke as Joseph.

"We appreciate the help, Wooley, but Egypt is too long of a journey, and there won't be any fresh grass for many, many miles.

It is best that you stay here, for the Lord will tell us when it is safe to return!"









A tear of  
pride ran  
down Farmer  
John's face.



The cast gathered in front of the pond for a curtain call, singing!

*"We worship you,  
King Jesus,  
sitting on your throne!"*



*"You reign on high  
the heavens cry  
your praise  
for evermore!"*

*"We worship you,  
King Jesus!  
the glory's  
all your own!"*





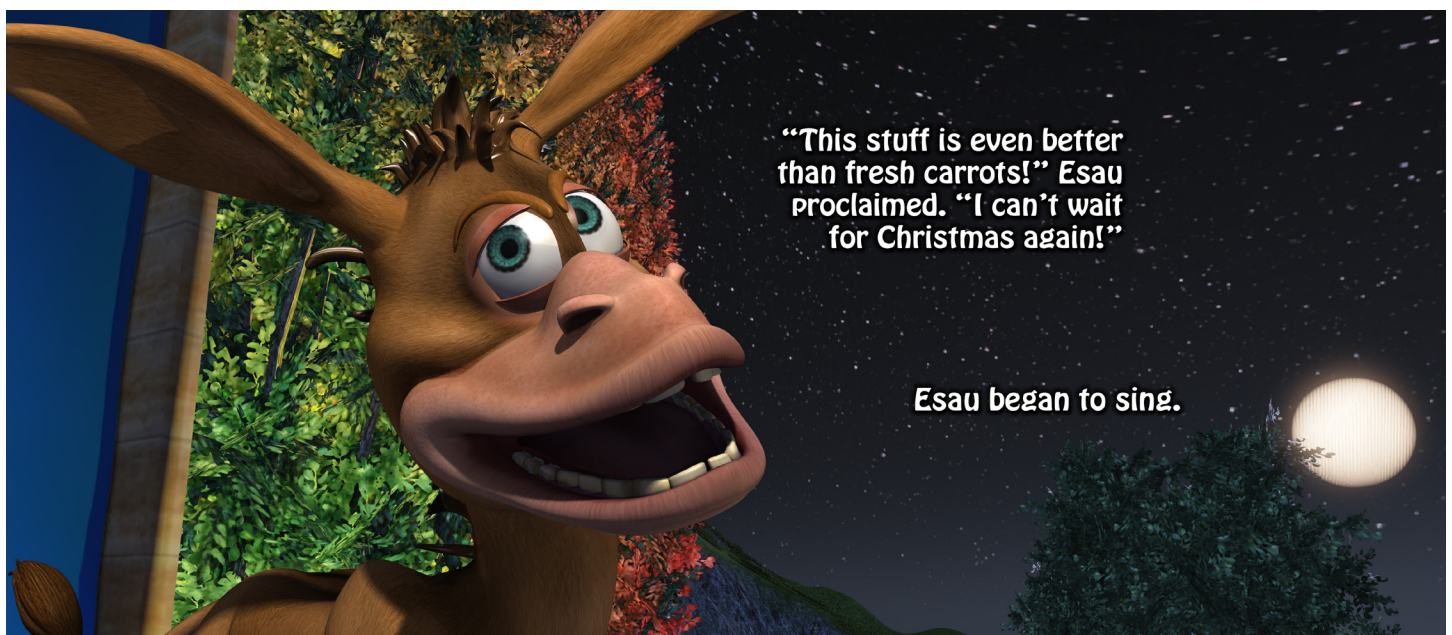
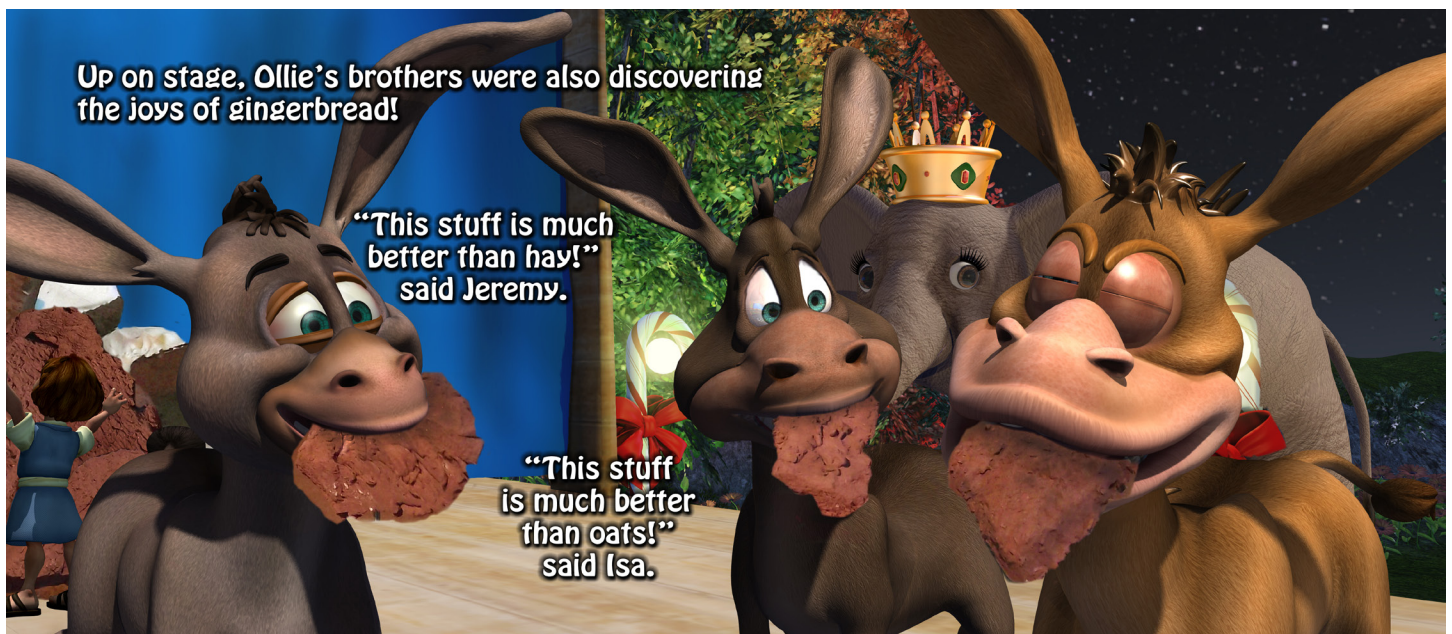




















*"I can't wait for Christmas  
to come rolling along!"*



Jeremy sang.

*"I love the three  
Wise Men the best!"*



Then it was Muwanna's turn.

*"I love the angels  
singing in the hills!"*











The head dolphin began to sing!

*"We wish you Merry Christmas,  
my friend!"*

*"Come back and see us again!"*

*"May your hearts be  
full of joy,*

*Every girl and boy!"*

*"It's Christmas in Heaven  
each day,*

*The joy and the laughter,  
it's gay!"*





