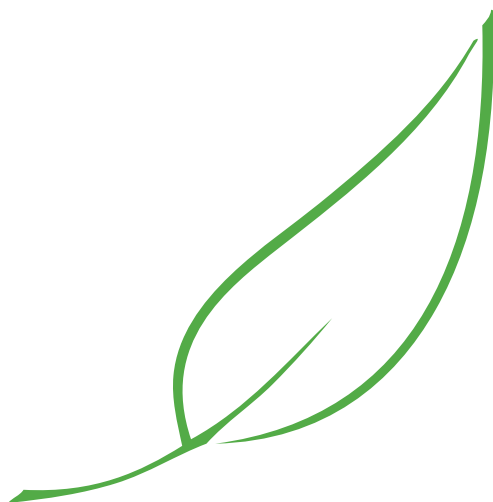


The Clubhouse Christmas

By Celeste Bonfanti



GREEN ROOM PRESS

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THE CLUBHOUSE CHRISTMAS

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THE CLUBHOUSE CHRISTMAS

By Celeste Bonfanti

SYNOPSIS: Sometimes friends don't always get along, and for the young people who use "The Cave" (an old tool shed) as a clubhouse, things don't always run smoothly. But when a new member, hiding a sad secret, joins the club, everyone learns to work together to help create a merry Christmas. Christmas songs and laughs abound in this original holiday production.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 male, 9 female, flexible)

RAY (m)A leader in the group. He tends to be bossy but this is because he is defensive, since his two buddies left the group. Likes order and respect. *(110 lines)*

ANNE (f)The Cave's other leader. She also tends to be bossy and she doesn't like Ray to get the upper hand. Characteristically impatient. *(110 lines)*

GRETCHEN (f)The Cave used to be Gretchen's dad's tool shed and therefore she tries to challenge Ray and Anne at times, particularly with regard to the rights of "the little kids." *(74 lines)*

PAM AND KATHERINE (f).....These girls are Gretchen's little sisters and provide quite a bit of comedy in the show. They aren't afraid of Ray or Anne but they ARE afraid of Eddie. *(PAM - 15 lines, KATHERINE - 14 lines)*

- TIFFANY (f).....A pretty cheerleader, like, you know.
But Tiffany isn't dumb; she is easy-
going and refuses to let the bickering get
to her. (68 lines)
- CASEY (f)She provides comic relief throughout the
show and is willing to do anything for a
laugh to ease the tension. Outgoing,
cheerful and friendly. (68 lines)
- BRYCE (f)Bryce must be a patient and confident
soul, because she dares to introduce Julie
to the group in spite of protest. Handles
her kooky little brother well and, with
Gretchen, champions the rights of "the
little kids". (70 lines)
- EDDIE (m).....Bryce's little brother, who lives in a
fantasy world of pirates and make-
believe. He is the most broadly comic
character in the show, but we see his
serious side at the end of Scene 2. (23
lines)
- JULIE (f).....Quiet and shy, with a secret we discover
in Scene 3. She isn't a happy girl, and
we need to see this. Always watching
and listening. (33 lines plus important
monologue)
- MARILYN (f).....The show's catalyst—she makes things
happen, even though she isn't a club
member. She isn't afraid of Ray or
Anne and she is sensitive enough to feel
a real sense of responsibility for helping
solve the problem. (30 lines)

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This play was written in 1986 for The Rainbow Factory Youth Theatre of Mercer County, New Jersey. Several members of The Rainbow Factory played guitar, so the music was live. Cast members are encouraged to play their own instruments in “The Clubhouse Christmas”. If there are no musicians in the cast, recorded music may be used. The song titles have been intentionally left blank, so that the cast and director may decide which songs they want to include. The only required songs are “Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer” and “We Wish You a Merry Christmas” – the rest are up to you.

STAGING DIRECTIONS

The show is intentionally very simple to stage - - The Cave is underfurnished, after all. It can be done without flats, and any flats which are used should be rustic and very simple. All the action takes place in The Cave. Costumes are street clothes, light jackets and winter wear. Julie needs only a jacket; everyone else should have obviously warmer winter coats, hats, gloves, etc. Tiffany needs a cheerleader’s jacket.

PROPS LIST

The principal prop is a large poster of a music group. This should also be agreed upon by the cast and director. Groups’ popularity is a very changeable thing; the group your cast wants when you begin rehearsal might not even be the same by the time you open! And it’s unlikely that 100% of the cast will be in agreement on the choice. But remember, the CHARACTERS like this group – not all the actors have to!

- ☐ Poster of Music Group
- ☐ “Welcome to The Cave” poster – to be made by the cast
- ☐ Flipchart calendar on easel with the following dates:

October 25	November 4	December 8
December 9	December 14	December 17
December 20	December 22	
- ☐ 10 folding chairs – they don’t have to match

*This perusal script is for reading purposes only.
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- ☐ Halloween decorations
- ☐ Thanksgiving decorations
- ☐ Christmas decorations – this may include a tree
- ☐ Empty coffee can
- ☐ Spongy red clown nose
- ☐ Jingle bells
- ☐ Eye patch
- ☐ Wooden sword
- ☐ Full bags which don't need to be unpacked
- ☐ 2 backpacks, with notebooks, pens, markers and highlighters
- ☐ several sets of jingle bells in Anne's backpack
- ☐ Homework for Gretchen
- ☐ 10 sets of stapled "song sheets"
- ☐ Nine wrapped presents – 7 unopened / 1 mittens / 1 scarf
- ☐ Large envelope full of cash!
- ☐ Bread or other food which can be packed in Gretchen's cheeks!
- ☐ Large hand-drawn map which can be fixed to "wall" during show

Optional:

- ☐ Large stuffed sheep (to be set with the full bags)
- ☐ Three sets of costume antlers (to be kept in one backpack)
- ☐ Guitars or other instruments to be played onstage OR boom box
- ☐ Costume antlers or Santa hats

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

All action takes place in the clubhouse. A large calendar, its date changed prior to each scene, denotes the passage of time. Folding chairs are scattered around, and on the wall up center is a POSTER of a pop group, which all club members consistently greet with a tap, high five, word, etc. An additional hand-lettered POSTER proclaims 'Welcome to The Cave' and decorates the wall. At rise, the date is October 25th. Christmas songs are played between scenes.

A few Halloween decorations adorn the walls. Enter CASEY, in jacket - - looks around.

CASEY: I'm first? I can't believe it. I'm never first. *(To POSTER.)* How you doing, guys? *(Pats their heads with a finger.)* You cold? It can't be easy living here day in and day out. I know it still feels pretty much like an old tool shed, but Gretchen's dad didn't finish building his new one until last week, you know? Like, all we have to put in it right now are these old folding chairs from Gretchen's basement. That's why we're doing this show, see? So we can earn money to get new stuff and make it feel more like a real clubhouse. *(Pause.)* You're sure I can't talk you into being in the show with us? Well, we sure could use your voices! I mean, we do OK when it's just us, but it's a different story in front of real people, you know? How do you do it up there on the stage? And you make it look like fun! *(Acts out concert. Pause)* This isn't much fun . . . especially with everyone arguing all the time. I mean, I LIKE them all, and I know their bark is worse than their bite, you know? But their bark is pretty bad. *(Turns a chair to sit.)* It's just that everybody wants to be the boss. Well, not everybody. Mostly Anne . . . and Ray . . . he's all defensive because Stanley and Eric stopped coming and now he's the only guy, so he thinks he has to tell everybody what to do. And Gretchen's a little bossy, too, because The Cave is on her property . . . They're nice enough in ones and twos . . . It's the fours and fives that concern me. *(Noises off as people approach.)* Well, here goes.

Enter RAY and ANNE with backpacks, arguing, followed by BRYCE and EDDIE (with eye patch and wooden sword.) ALL but EDDIE automatically greet the POSTER upon entering - - ALL wear jackets.

RAY: . . . We've been over this a hundred times, Anne. You don't get it because you don't want to get it.

ANNE: I don't get it because it doesn't make sense.

RAY: Yes, it does, if you just think for a minute.

ANNE: Admit it, Ray - - my idea was better - - again - - and it has nothing to do with . . . (*Noticing CASEY.*) Casey, what are you doing here? You're never first.

CASEY: Nice to see you, too, Anne.

EDDIE: (*Brandishes sword.*) Arrggh!

RAY: (*Not pleased.*) Babysitting again, Bryce?

BRYCE: Well, he's supposed to be with my sister, but she left school sick.

CASEY: What's the matter with her?

EDDIE: The usual . . . she had a math test last period.

CASEY: Boy, she's good. I haven't gotten away with that since third grade! How's it going, Eddie?

EDDIE: I'm not Eddie! I'm a pirate! (*Strides around.*) Ahoy, there, mateys! Captain Alexander W. Blood here. Who's next to walk the plank?

RAY: That would be Anne.

ANNE: Oh, you're a riot, you are.

Enter GRETCHEN, PAM and KATHERINE.

RAY: Oh, what is this, a nursery school?

EDDIE: It's the Good Ship Jolly Roger and she's going down. Avast! Avast! Batten down the hatches! (*To PAM and KATHERINE.*) The high seas are no place for wenches! Down below, before I throw you to the sharks! (*PAM and KATHERINE shriek and run behind a chair.*)

GRETCHEN: Bryce, can you please get a hold of Captain Hook here? Come on, girls, he's only pretending.

EDDIE: Avast, ye landlubber!

GRETCHEN: Bryce!

BRYCE: Eddie, cut it out.

ANNE: If we could get started sometime before the end of the year, people . . .? (*ALL find seats and settle, PAM and KATHERINE as far from EDDIE as possible.*) Are we all here . . .? Where's Tiffany?

Enter TIFFANY, out of breath, in cheerleading jacket.

TIFFANY: Sorry!

ANNE: Let me guess . . .

ALL BUT LITTLE KIDS: Cheerleading practice.

TIFFANY: Yeah, I'm, like, beat.

RAY: What's so hard about shaking pompoms around? (*Takes notebook out of backpack.*)

TIFFANY: It's not all fun and games, you know. I was, like, the bottom of the pyramid. Let me tell you, it's not easy to hold Nora Sackinowski on your shoulders for twenty minutes, you know?

CASEY: Nora Sackinowski! And you lived to tell the tale? You're tougher than you look!

ANNE: Well, let's get going, now that you're here. (*TIFFANY sits.*) I used exactly six dollars and seventeen cents of our hard-earned money to get these sheets copied, so put your names on them and don't lose them. If you do, you can pay for the next set.

RAY: (*Checks notebook.*) That leaves us with exactly seventy-four dollars and eleven cents in the kitty.

KATHERINE: (*Looking around.*) Where's the kitty?

PAM: (*Looking around.*) Here, kitty, kitty, kitty!

GRETCHEN: Shh. Not that kind of kitty. Ray means the money we have for our clubhouse.

KATHERINE: Where did you get all that money?

BRYCE: Well, we had a bake sale. That raised twenty-two dollars.

RAY: (*Checks notebook.*) And fifty cents.

TIFFANY: We washed cars for three Saturdays in August . . .

RAY: (*Checks notebook.*) . . . And earned thirty-seven dollars and forty-two cents.

GRETCHEN: (*To KATHERINE and PAM.*) Well, the forty two cents we found under Dr. Finkelstein's floor mat.

ANNE: While we're on the subject of money, I'd like to suggest that for future meetings, if we have to run a babysitting service, a quarter a sibling should be paid into the kitty.

BRYCE: Hey!

RAY: Anne, that's the first good suggestion I've ever heard from you.
I second the motion.

GRETCHEN: Excuse me, as The Cave is on MY property, I think my sisters should be excused from that rule.

BRYCE: Excuse ME, but I think it's a stupid rule!

CASEY: Me, too!

TIFFANY: Me, three!

RAY, ANNE, GRETCHEN, BRYCE, TIFFANY and CASEY begin to argue loudly and EDDIE takes the opportunity to terrorize PAM and KATHERINE, who run screaming to hide behind GRETCHEN. At last, RAY fishes a whistle out from inside his shirt and blows it long and loud - - ALL fall quiet

RAY: I move that we postpone the adoption of the rule until after the show, since SOME people seem to have a problem with it for some reason, and we can't waste any more time on it. All agreed signify by saying "aye". *(Pause - - looks around.)* All opposed, signify by saying "nay".

ALL BUT RAY: Nay!

RAY: Hey, the little kids don't get to vote!

GRETCHEN: Why not? The rule affects them most of all! *(Loud assent from EDDIE, PAM, KATHERINE, TIFFANY, CASEY and BRYCE.)*

ANNE: They're not members!

BRYCE: Then they shouldn't have to pay! *(Loud assent from EDDIE, PAM, KATHERINE, TIFFANY, CASEY and GRETCHEN.)*

RAY: OK, OK, let's just get going. We're wasting time!

ANNE: All right, it's decided. "Guests" don't have to pay . . . YET.

GRETCHEN: *(Aside.)* And they never will.

ANNE: I heard that.

GRETCHEN: I don't care.

RAY: Anne, just pass out the sheets, will you?

PAM: You didn't say the magic word.

RAY: What?

KATHERINE: Mom says you don't get anything unless you say the magic word.

RAY: Oh, right. Anne, pass out the sheets . . . NOW.

PAM: Nope. That's not the magic word.

GRETCHEN: Shhh, it's OK. Some people don't have any manners.

ANNE: You know, it's one thing to have little brothers and sisters here. It's another to have them interrupting all the time.

RAY: Moving right along . . . ! The sheets!

PAM AND KATHERINE: Please!

RAY: Whatever! (*Snatches sheets from ANNE and passes them out.*)

ANNE: Excuse you! OK, we have to start somewhere, so why don't we pick something easy? If you turn to page one, number two you'll see _____. (*Insert name of Christmas song.*) Now we all know this song. We sing it every year.

TIFFANY: But, like, not for an audience.

RAY: Never mind the audience. We need them. More specifically, we need their money if we're ever going to make The Cave here look like something.

BRYCE: But we've never done anything like this before. Do you really think anyone will come?

ANNE: Stop talking like that, Bryce, of course they'll come.

BRYCE: Well, how do you know?

RAY: Publicity. Posters everywhere, ads in the newspaper . . .

CASEY: Besides, I know they're going to come.

ANNE: And how, may I ask, do you know this?

CASEY: Well, I . . . I had a dream. (*Loud groans from ALL but LITTLE KIDS.*)

GRETCHEN: Not another one, Casey.

TIFFANY: Casey, your dreams kind of make me wonder what your mom's been putting in your Yoo Hoo, you know?

RAY: Yeah, if I had dreams like yours, I'd donate my brain to science.

ANNE: I thought you already had.

BRYCE: Nice one.

GRETCHEN: OK, Casey, I'll bite. What was your dream?

CASEY: Well . . . (*Stands.*) It started on top of this mountain. It was beautiful all around, and I was standing there all alone, see? And this . . . little pink dot appeared.

TIFFANY: Here we go.

GRETCHEN: Shhh!

CASEY: This . . . little pink dot appeared, right in the air over my head. And I . . . I reached up . . . (*Demonstrates.*) . . . and it . . . disappeared.

ANNE: (*After a pause.*) . . . And . . . ?

CASEY: (*Surprised.*) Well, that's it! Then I woke up. (*Laughs from BRYCE, TIFFANY, GRETCHEN, EDDIE, PAM and KATHERINE, protests from ANNE.*)

RAY: Casey, you really need help - - you know that, don't you?

ANNE: OK, OK, people, page one, number two _____.
(*Insert name of Christmas song.*) Are we ready? And one, two, three . . .

All sing:

CHRISTMAS SONG #1: _____

The song doesn't sound like much.

RAY: Anne, you were flat.

ANNE: I was not!

CASEY: We were ALL pretty weak.

ANNE: Speak for yourself. And why were the little kids singing?

GRETCHEN: Why shouldn't they?

ANNE: Because they aren't in the show.

BRYCE: Anne, I was thinking . . .

ANNE: That's a first.

BRYCE: Ha, ha. Listen, why CAN'T the little kids be in the show?

RAY: Are you out of your mind?

CASEY: No, that's me, remember?

BRYCE: Seriously. People LOVE to see little kids in shows. They could be a real draw.

GRETCHEN: I agree. Christmas is for little kids, anyway.

TIFFANY: No, it isn't. I mean, it is, but . . . it's like, for everyone, not JUST little kids.

CASEY: That's right.

ANNE: They aren't in the club, Bryce. They're just here because you and Gretchen get stuck babysitting them.

RAY: Yeah, if they were in the show, they'd have to be here every meeting between now and Christmas!

EDDIE: (*Draws sword on RAY.*) Avast, avast, ye scurvy scum!
Arggh!

BRYCE: Eddie, you're not exactly charming the birds out of the trees.

ANNE: Look, we don't have time to debate the merits of little brothers and sisters! We are trying to put on a SHOW here. I know it feels like Christmas is a long way away, but we really only have about seven weeks to rehearse and plan the whole show.

RAY: If we look at the merits of little kids in the show versus the monumental problems they cause . . .

EDDIE: (*Draws sword again.*) Arggh! Ye dirty dog!

RAY: I rest my case.

GRETCHEN: Well, let's vote! All in favor of having the little kids in the show, signify by saying "aye".

ALL BUT RAY AND ANNE: Aye!

ANNE: Wait a minute! They can't vote!

GRETCHEN: All opposed?

ANNE AND RAY: Nay!

GRETCHEN: What does our board of directors think? (*"Listens" to POSTER.*) They think it's a brilliant idea! Motion carried! Welcome to the show, you guys!

Cheers from PAM, KATHERINE and EDDIE.

RAY: Gretchen!

GRETCHEN: You two were outvoted, anyway!

CASEY: Yeah!

ANNE: That wasn't a real vote.

TIFFANY: It, like, seemed real to me.

GRETCHEN: I wonder what my parents would say if they knew you were being mean to the little kids.

ANNE: (*Suspicious.*) You wouldn't dare . . .

GRETCHEN: Oh, no? I wonder how willing they'd be to let us have The Cave for our clubhouse.

RAY: That's blackmail!

GRETCHEN: All's fair in love and war, and I love my little sisters.
(*Ruffles their hair - - they stick out their tongues at RAY.*)

RAY: Hey! What happened to the manners thing?

ANNE: Oh, fine. This is going to be just great! I can see it now! “A Very Barney Christmas.”

KATHERINE: There’s no need to be insulting!

BRYCE: Um, while we’re on the subject of people joining the show . . .

RAY: Forget it.

BRYCE: No, listen. There’s this new girl in chorus at school. She just moved to town and she doesn’t really know anyone yet . . .

ANNE: That’s not our problem, Bryce.

BRYCE: Shh, listen. I’m only suggesting this because she has an amazing voice and, forgive me, but I think we can use all the help we can get.

TIFFANY: Hear, hear!

GRETCHEN: It would be nice to have another strong voice.

ANNE: To do what? We’ve hardly sung anything yet!

TIFFANY: Yeah, like, another song, please? I’ve got to get to the mall to pick out a present for Jerry’s birthday.

RAY: Jerry?

TIFFANY: My boyfriend.

RAY: I thought your boyfriend’s name was Shawn.

TIFFANY: That was last week.

CASEY: Let’s try something with a little pizzazz, you know? (*Flips through sheets.*) How about _____? (*Insert name of Christmas song.*) Number nine on page five. (*Murmurs of assent from ALL.*)

RAY: Anything. Here we go. And a one and a two and . . .

All sing:

CHRISTMAS SONG #2: _____

The singing is not good this time, either.

ANNE: That was a little better, I guess.

BRYCE: But it lacks something, doesn’t it?

CASEY: Like another voice. Huh? Huh? Whaddaya say? All in favor of inviting Bryce’s friend along to the next meeting signify by saying “aye”!

ALL BUT ANNE AND RAY: Aye!

CASEY: Any opposed? Good! Motion carried!

ANNE: Hey!

CASEY: That's democracy at work, buddy! It's a beautiful thing! See you all next time! Stay out of trouble, hear? Don't forget to write! (*Shakes hands with EDDIE, PAM and KATHERINE.*)

EDDIE: Don't go that way, matey! You'll end up in the briny deep!

CASEY: I'll chance it with the sharks. See you. (*High fives POSTER and exits.*)

RAY: I don't recall a decision to end this meeting!

GRETCHEN: Time for dinner, Ray. Come on, call it a day.

TIFFANY: We'll, like, get more done next time.

ANNE: We'd better. This was not what I'd call a rehearsal.

EDDIE: Shiver me timbers! It was a mutiny!

RAY: Precisely.

GRETCHEN: Come on, girls. (*Pats POSTER and exits with PAM and KATHERINE.*)

BRYCE: Her name is Julie, by the way. (*Waves to POSTER and exits with EDDIE.*)

ANNE: Who?

RAY: Her friend! Don't you listen?

ANNE: It's you who doesn't listen!

The argument continues in ad lib - - finally ANNE and RAY exit, still arguing, with goodbyes to POSTER.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

Calendar reads November 4th.

Halloween decorations have been replaced with Thanksgiving decorations. Enter RAY and GRETCHEN, in jackets. RAY carries backpack. Both greet POSTER.

RAY: So not only do we have to include the little kids in the show, we now have to work around their schedules?

GRETCHEN: No, we don't have to work around their schedules! I'm just telling you that they have a Daisy meeting today, so they won't be here.

RAY: And when they don't know what's going on in the show, what do we do then?

GRETCHEN: What's to know? They sing the same songs everybody else is singing! They don't have any speaking parts. You know, Ray, this isn't really a problem. You just like to pretend everything's an emergency so you can feel like you're managing stress or something.

RAY: So I can feel like I'm managing stress??? Let me tell you, I'm up to my eyes in stress!!

GRETCHEN: We are too young for stress!!

RAY: You're never too young for stress! It starts with the first day of kindergarten, goes straight through graduation and it never ends! People stress out about their retirement!

GRETCHEN: It's a clubhouse, Ray! A little show to earn money to buy things for our clubhouse! Relax!

RAY: *(To POSTER.)* "Relax", she tells me. You ever hear such ridiculous nonsense?

GRETCHEN: Look, just because you're the rooster in the henhouse doesn't mean I'm chicken! *(Noises off.)*

Enter ANNE (with backpack) and TIFFANY, both in jackets - - they greet POSTER.

TIFFANY: Hi, guys.

GRETCHEN: Hey.

ANNE: Where's Teeny and Tiny?

RAY: (*Falsetto.*) They have a DAISY meeting.

ANNE: What, we have to work around their schedules now?

RAY: THANK you! (*Starts to unpack bag.*)

GRETCHEN: People, this isn't Carnegie Hall!

ANNE: This is exactly why I didn't want the little sisters and brothers to join.

TIFFANY: Aw, c'mon, they're cute!

ANNE: Yeah, like a train wreck. (*Starts to unpack bag.*)

ANNE: They BELONG at Daisy meetings, NOT in shows in front of a paying audience.

Enter CASEY in jacket - - she greets POSTER.

GRETCHEN: Before you ask, Pam and Katherine aren't here because they're at a Daisy meeting and it's no big deal, OK?

CASEY: (*Bewildered.*) O . . . kay. Hey, Tiff, how was practice?

TIFFANY: Don't ask. Desiree kept cracking her gum behind me, you know? Selena's got this new, like, perfume and she must have poured about a half gallon over her head because she was sending off, like, toxic clouds. I have such a headache, and those new uniforms are, like, a little skimpy for November, you know?

CASEY: Tiff, you're a cheerleader! Skimpy is the name of the game!

ANNE: Can we get going, please? (*ALL begin to settle.*) Is everybody here?

RAY: Nope. Not Bryce and Captain Blood.

ANNE: Shoot! We have a ton of things to do!

RAY: Just start. She can tell time.

ANNE: FINE.

CASEY: (*To TIFFANY.*) You know how when some people say "fine" it doesn't really mean "fine"?

TIFFANY: Yeah. It means, like, "Drop dead."

ANNE: What it means is people aren't taking this show seriously enough. This isn't a car wash or a bake sale. It's a performance, and we need to practice.

RAY: So start, I said.

CASEY: Now, Ray, where's that magic word?

RAY: (*Rolls up sleeves.*) I'll give you a magic word . . .

GRETCHEN: Now, now. Order in the court.

ANNE: OK. It's time to get the posters put together and start getting the advertising organized. So, a name. We have to decide on a name for the show.

CASEY: (*After a pause.*) How about . . . "The Christmas Show"?

ALL look at her.

GRETCHEN: I think Anne was looking for something a little more . . . imaginative. What about . . . "Happy Holidays to You"?

TIFFANY: Aw, I don't know. That doesn't seem very, you know, imaginative to me. (*GRETCHEN sticks her tongue out at her. TIFFANY rolls eyes.*)

RAY: Well, we have to give this some thought, now. We want a name that'll really grab them.

ANNE: (*After a long pause.*) "Christmas Carol Cavalcade".

TIFFANY: Wicked!

CASEY: I like it, I like it!

RAY: All in favor?

ALL: Aye.

RAY: (*"Listens" to POSTER.*) And the word from the board is . . . GOOD! "Christmas Carol Cavalcade" it is.

Murmurs of enthusiasm. Enter BRYCE, EDDIE and JULIE, in jackets. BRYCE greets POSTER.

ANNE: You're late.

BRYCE: Sorry. This is . . .

ANNE: We voted on a name for the show already.

GRETCHEN: Anne . . .

RAY: And Gretchen's sisters seem to think a Daisy meeting is more important than the show, so we're not having the best meeting.

CASEY: That's what I like to see . . . the warm, welcoming hand of friendship. (*To JULIE.*) You must be Bryce's friend.

BRYCE: Everybody, I'd like you to meet Julie Haines. Julie, this is The Cave.

EDDIE: Aye, I've checked her out, mates, and she's safe to come aboard.

CASEY: Thanks, Eddie.

EDDIE: That's Captain to you.

CASEY: Sorry, Captain.

GRETCHEN: Julie, I'm Gretchen Klein. The Cave used to be my father's tool shed.

RAY: Ray Peters.

ANNE: Anne Russo.

TIFFANY: I'm Tiffany Kingsley.

CASEY: Nice to meet you, Julie. I'm Casey McBride. You're in class with my brother Neil.

TIFFANY: He's gorgeous.

CASEY: He's a slob and he drinks milk out of the carton. Welcome to The Cave.

JULIE: Thanks.

CASEY: We sure can use your voice!

JULIE: Thanks for letting me join. It's nice to meet you all.

ANNE: Here are your song sheets.

EDDIE: (*Draws sword on JULIE.*) Lose 'em and ye walk the plank, lassie.

BRYCE: Eddie.

ANNE: (*To JULIE.*) Bryce probably told you we meet here at The Cave twice a week after school. The show is on December 22nd at (*Venue of performance.*) and the money we make is going toward some real furniture and things for fixing up The Cave here. Any questions, see the board of directors. (*Jerks thumb at POSTER, JULIE giggles.*)

RAY: OK, people, to the music. Time's a'wasting. How about a kiddie song? We need to practice the kiddie songs. And remember, when we do the kiddie songs, we have to make them really interesting.

GRETCHEN: . . . Interesting.

RAY: Yeah. Little kids like a lot of action. Don't you, Captain?

EDDIE: Chasing a ship down, setting fire to her and raising the black flag - - that's the only action I'm after!

BRYCE: Well, you're not exactly a typical little kid.

TIFFANY: Yeah, they like dancing around and stuff, you know?

ANNE: YOU can dance around.

TIFFANY: Hey, I've just had Nora Sackinowski on my shoulders!

RAY: Never mind. Pam, Katherine and Eddie are going to dance around. Now . . .

EDDIE: (*Brandishes sword.*) Avast, ye worm!

RAY: Hey, kids like to see other kids having fun.

BRYCE: (*Hurriedly.*) Pirate captains, too!

EDDIE: The only dancing that will be done will be on the end of a rope, ye dogs! (*Acts out a hanging.*)

BRYCE: Um, maybe the girls should dance around.

GRETCHEN: Good thinking.

CASEY: Oh, I'll dance around with them.

RAY: Great. So, a kiddie song. How about number seven on page four? _____. (*Insert name of Christmas song. ALL find it on sheets.*) With lots of energy, now. Remember, if they're bored, they're running in the aisles. OK? And a one and a two and . . .

All sing:

CHRISTMAS SONG #3: _____

The singing is much better from here on out.

TIFFANY: Wow! Julie, you can sing!

BRYCE: Didn't I tell you? How about her?

CASEY: We sound way better with you!

GRETCHEN: I'll say!

RAY: We need more energy.

ANNE: And it needs to be louder. Now, does everybody with a speaking part remember which part of the blurb they're responsible for? (*Nods and murmurs from ALL but LITTLE KIDS and JULIE.*)

JULIE: The blurb?

ANNE: Yeah. We all take a Christmas idea and read up on it and give a little presentation about it in between the songs. Like, my family is Italian and we have this tradition of eating seven different kinds of fish on Christmas Eve. I'm talking about that.

GRETCHEN: My dad's a fireman and he organizes volunteers for Toys for Tots. All our dads pitch in. I'm talking about that. Hey, maybe your dad would like to get involved, huh?

JULIE: . . . My dad . . . I don't have a dad.

RAY: Divorced? My folks, too.

JULIE: No . . . my dad died last year. (*Awkward pause.*)

GRETCHEN: Oh, Julie, I'm really sorry. (*ALL murmur sympathy.*)

TIFFANY: What . . . happened?

JULIE: He got sick. Cancer.

CASEY: That's rotten . . . *(Pause, then briskly.)* Well, I'm sure we can come up with something for Julie's blurb.

BRYCE: Yeah, we'll work on it.

ANNE: OK, let's move on. Number three on page two.
_____ *(Insert name of song.)* We need
jingle bells for this. Who's shaking the jingle bells?

TIFFANY: Me.

ANNE: *(Fishes them out of backpack - - tosses them.)* Here. Now, don't go too fast.

RAY: Or too loud.

GRETCHEN: And don't stand near me because it throws me off.

ANNE: And remember when you put them down, you have to . . .

TIFFANY: Guys, they're, like, jingle bells, not a nuclear warhead!

ANNE: OK, OK. Ready? One . . . two . . .

All sing:

CHRISTMAS SONG #4: _____

RAY: We need more practice.

CASEY: What are you talking about? That was great!

RAY: I guess it depends on your standards, Casey.

CASEY: Oh, pardon me, Mr. Music!

ANNE: It's the bells.

TIFFANY: It was not!

GRETCHEN: They throw me off!

CASEY: It sounded fine!

RAY: We just need more practice!

ANNE: And we now have less than six weeks, so everybody go over your music and your blurbs and for heaven's sake, get here on time for the next meeting!

TIFFANY: I've got to go. I have a date. *(Gets ready to leave. All follow.)*

RAY: Jerry?

TIFFANY: Ray, you are SO behind the times. It's Mark.

ANNE: This week.

TIFFANY: Jealous?

ANNE: *(Rolls eyes.)* Oh, yeah.

TIFFANY: Thought so. See you next time, Julie. Bye, all. (*Blows kiss to POSTER and exits.*)

GRETCHEN: Yeah, welcome to the club, Julie. Next time you can meet my little sisters.

RAY: IF they come.

GRETCHEN: When they come.

ANNE: They'd better come!

GRETCHEN: They WILL come. For Pete's sake, it's not like they've missed before. If my folks knew how you were talking about them . . .

RAY: Oh, not that again!

Exit ANNE, RAY and GRETCHEN, arguing, with goodbye pats and waves to POSTER.

CASEY: It never stops! Whatever happened to peace on earth, good will toward men . . . and women, come to think of it? Well, next time I'm bringing my earplugs. Then let's see who's flat. Bye, you guys. (*To POSTER.*) You, too. (*Exits.*)

BRYCE: Well . . . that's them. They're noisy and we fight a lot.

JULIE: They're ok. At the end of the day, they're your friends. If you needed them, they'd be there.

BRYCE: You know it.

JULIE: (*Wandering up to POSTER.*) Which one is your favorite?

BRYCE: (*Follows her, pointing.*) _____. (*Insert name of band member.*) I don't know why. This poster was the only thing we could agree on to put in the Cave here. We talk to them like they're really here. Stupid, huh?

JULIE: No. (*Looks at POSTER.*) I think I like this one the best. S/He looks . . . kind of sad.

BRYCE: I think so, too. Like s/he's lonely.

JULIE: Yeah.

BRYCE: Come on. We have to buy a loaf of bread for Mom on the way home. Why don't you come to the store with us? Then we'll walk you home.

JULIE: (*Too fast.*) No! I mean, that's nice of you but I really have to get right back, you know . . .? Thanks, anyway.



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