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The Match Girl's Christmas

by Nick Perrin

(based on 'The Little Match Girl', by Hans Christian Andersen)

Scene 1 The Christmas Fair

[During the music, all actors enter informally, and head straight for seating area, apart from RICH & POOR CHILDREN (including CHILD 1-4), who stay out of sight. OLD TOM moves to his stage block. SELLERS act as if selling – or really sell – their wares. TOWN CRIER, MR. JONES & MAYOR take up prominent positions ready to open the Christmas Fair. All may speak to each other, to appear natural.]

BRASS BAND CAROLS (Instrumental) (© Track 1 / 11)

[As TOWN CRIER rings his bell, all turn to face him. Note: Oyez means 'hear ye'. It may be pronounced either 'ohyes' or – more commonly – 'ohyay'.]

TOWN CRIER *(ringing bell)* Oyez, oyez, oyez! Pray silence for Mr Jones and the worshipful Mayor of _____ *[your local town].*

MR JONES Happy Christmas everyone! And thank you for coming out on such a cold night! It's time to open our Christmas fair, and I'm going to hand straight over to the Mayor!

[MR JONES leads applause, stepping back to look at MAYOR.]

MAYOR Thank you Mr Jones! I can hardly believe another year's gone by and it's Christmas again! The _____ *[your town]* Christmas fair is always a great start to the festive season. So – without further ado – I declare this Christmas Fair... *(points to TOWN CRIER)* open!

[TOWN CRIER rings bell again as all cheer.]

ALL Hooray!

MR JONES Thank you Mr Mayor. (*addressing crowd*) The traditional Nativity play will be starting in a few minutes. In the meantime we have lots of last-minute Christmas bargains on sale, and mince pies to buy...

MAYOR (*wagging finger*) ...And keep an eye out for Old Tom, the chestnut seller!

MR JONES Hot chestnuts! There's nothing better when Christmas is coming!

[TOWN CRIER to seating area. POOR CHILDREN (incl. CHILD 1, 2, 3 & 4) enter to the music, skipping, dancing etc. As they sing they keep active, spread out in groups around the whole performing area. Some might mime throwing snowballs or do clapping games as they sing. While all this is happening, MR JONES & MAYOR wander around informally together, or else go to seating area. SELLERS finish selling, put trays of wares aside and join in with the others.]

CHRISTMAS IS COMING (☉ Track 2 / 12)

Poor Children (+ Chorus Left)

CHRISTMAS IS COMING, THE GOOSE IS GETTING FAT!
 PLEASE PUT A PENNY IN THE OLD MAN'S HAT.
 IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A PENNY A HA'PENNY WILL DO.
 IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A HA'PENNY THEN GOD BLESS YOU!
 CHRISTMAS IS COMING, THE GOOSE IS GETTING FAT!
 PLEASE PUT A PENNY IN THE OLD MAN'S HAT.

[RICH CHILDREN enter, singing.]

Rich Children (+ Chorus Right)

BRIGHTLY SHINING CHRISTMAS STAR,
 HOW I WONDER WHAT YOU ARE.
 UP ABOVE THE WORLD SO HIGH,
 LIKE A DIAMOND IN THE SKY.
 BRIGHTLY SHINING CHRISTMAS STAR,
 HOW I WONDER WHAT YOU ARE.

Poor Children (+ Chorus Left)

.....CHRISTMAS IS COMING!
CHRISTMAS IS COMING!
 CHRISTMAS IS COMING, THE GOOSE IS GETTING FAT!
 PLEASE PUT A PENNY IN THE OLD MAN'S HAT.

Rich Children (+ Chorus Right)

BRIGHTLY SHINING CHRISTMAS STAR,
 HOW I WONDER WHAT YOU ARE.
CHRISTMAS IS COMING!
CHRISTMAS IS COMING!
 BRIGHTLY SHINING CHRISTMAS STAR,
 HOW I WONDER WHAT YOU ARE.

Poor Children (+ Chorus Left)

CHRISTMAS IS COMING, THE GOOSE IS GETTING FAT!
 PLEASE PUT A PENNY IN THE OLD MAN'S HAT.
 IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A PENNY A HA'PENNY WILL DO.
 IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A HA'PENNY GOD THEN BLESS YOU!
 CHRISTMAS IS COMING THE GOOSE IS GETTING FAT!
 PLEASE PUT A PENNY IN THE OLD MAN'S HAT.

Poor Children CHRISTMAS IS COMING ____!
Rich Children CHRISTMAS IS COMING ____!
All CHRISTMAS IS COMING ____!

[All children sit where they are. OLD TOM stands. NARRATOR moves to prominent position by Nativity area.]

Old Tom *(speaking over music)* It was Christmas Eve. Snow had been falling all day and it was very cold. A poor little girl was dressed in rags and had no shoes on her feet. She struggled along the freezing streets.

Child 1 Why was she out on such a cold day?

Old Tom She had matches to sell. She also had a cruel father who would beat her if she went home without any money.

Child 2 What a horrible man!

Old Tom He was. But now close your eyes! Can you imagine the Match Girl?

Child 1, 2, 3, 4 Yes!

Old Tom Imagine she's here... Sitting by the lamp post.

Child 1, 2, 3, 4 *(imagining, with eyes shut)* Oh yes!

Child 4 *(still with eyes shut)* She looks very cold!

[As music ends, TOWN CRIER rings bell again.]

TOWN CRIER *(ringing bell)* Oyez, oyez, oyez! Pray silence for Mr Jones!

MR JONES Thank you, Mr Town Crier! Now – if you would all like to sit down. It's time for the Nativity play. Let's give the cast a warm welcome.

[MR JONES leads applause as he moves to seating area. RICH & POOR children sit facing Nativity area in groups.]

NARRATOR Every year, in December, we remember the story of Christmas. We begin our play by going back in time, to a little town in Israel called Bethlehem.

[ANGELS – and ANIMALS if you choose – move to Nativity area during the music. Children remain sitting as they sing.]

O LITTLE TOWN... / MATCHES

(☉ Track 4 / 14)

Chorus O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM,
HOW STILL WE SEE THEE LIE.
ABOVE THY DEEP AND DREAMLESS SLEEP
THE SILENT STARS GO BY.
YET IN THE DARK STREETS SHINETH
THE EVERLASTING LIGHT.
THE HOPES AND FEARS OF ALL THE YEARS
ARE MET IN THEE TONIGHT.

MATCH GIRL wanders between groups, trying to sell matches but is ignored

[Chorus repeat, humming, as MATCH GIRL sings. If possible she walks slowly while singing, apart from 'I'm freezing cold' section.]

Match Girl MATCHES! BUY MY MATCHES!
MATCHES! BUY MY MATCHES!
I'M FREEZING COLD AND STARVING.
THEY'RE ONLY A PENNY A BOX...
MATCHES! BUY MY MATCHES!

MATCH GIRL slowly walks back to the the lamp post

[Music continues under dialogue. MARY & JOSEPH enter. INNKEEPERS take well separated places, ready for MARY & JOSEPH to approach them during song. INNKEEPER 1 or 2 might stand on Stage Block (b). INNKEEPER 3 should stand nearest to the Nativity area (a).]

Child 1 *(sadly)* The Match Girl's gone back to the lamp post.

Child 2 No-one's buying her matches...

Old Tom Everyone's enjoying Christmas. They're too busy to notice her...

[Music ends.]

NARRATOR When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, it was very busy. They couldn't find anywhere to stay.

[RICH & POOR CHILDREN stand to sing, facing MARY, JOSEPH & INNKEEPERS who must always be visible.]

RAT, TAT, RAT-A-TA-TAT

(☉ Tracks 5 / 15)

Chorus	RAT, TAT, RAT-A-TA-TAT AT MY WINDOW SHUTTERS, KNOCK! KNOCK! AT MY DOOR. WHO'S THAT TAPPING AT MY WINDOW SHUTTERS, KNOCK! KNOCK! AT MY DOOR?	←	MARY & JOSEPH approach INNKEEPER 1 and all mime knocking
		←	
Innkeeper 1	THERE'S NO USE A-KNOCKING, I'VE NO ROOM TO SPARE AND I REALLY DO NOT CARE.	←	INNKEEPER 1 shakes his head
Chorus	THERE'S NO USE A-KNOCKING, HE'S NO ROOM TO SPARE AND HE REALLY DOES NOT CARE. BUT JOSEPH SAID:		
Joseph	PLEASE WILL YOU HELP US? WE'RE TIRED AND WORN. HAVE YOU A PLACE WHERE OUR CHILD CAN BE BORN?	←	INNKEEPER 1 shakes his head and points to INNKEEPER 2
Chorus	RAT, TAT, RAT-A-TA-TAT... <i>(etc.)</i>	←	MARY & JOSEPH approach INNKEEPER 2, as above
Innkeeper 2	THERE'S NO USE A-KNOCKING, NOT A SINGLE BED. SHOULD HAVE CALLED AND BOOKED AHEAD.		
Chorus	THERE'S NO USE A-KNOCKING, NOT A SINGLE BED. SHOULD HAVE CALLED AND BOOKED AHEAD. BUT JOSEPH SAID:		
Joseph	PLEASE WILL YOU HELP US? WE'RE TIRED AND WORN. HAVE YOU A PLACE WHERE OUR CHILD CAN BE BORN?	←	INNKEEPER 2 shakes head and points to INNKEEPER 3