

Christmas - light and dark sketch

Bible ref : John 1, Isaiah 9:2

On your marks:

Having drama instead of a sermon can work very well in worship with children present. The drama will speak to people of all ages in different ways and leave them with the images working in their imagination.

'The Loser' is the idea of the prince of darkness on the run after losing the battle with the light. He still wants to do evil, but is pathetically powerless. The Loser should come across, not as scary, but as a feeble person who is trying to be scary but failing miserably, a bit like Dick Dastardly but even less intimidating. Have something ridiculous about the costume – a hat that doesn't fit, for example. You're trying to make everyone see evil as a defeated force that doesn't need to bother us any more – we're on the winning side. Perfect love casts out fear. If small children will be present, think carefully about how scary you can reasonably make him: I overdid the panto-villain and when I cackled: 'You're scared of me, aren't you?' there was indeed a wail of terror from a toddler in the back row, instead of the 'Oh no we're not' I was hoping for...

The sketch deliberately uses lots of visuals – the costume, the candle, the bag of tricks. It is semi-panto style.

This sketch was performed in Bristol and my own church for Christingle services as half of a pair. The other half was the «Page:Starmaker sketch=900», also on this website. Both sketches put the Christmas story in the context of the big story of redemption, following through creation (in the Starmaker) through the Fall, Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection. They are both suitable for all-age services.

Get set:

You'll need a large lit candle very visible, burning before the sketch starts, a bag containing a length of black voile or net to be the shadow, a home made or real fire extinguisher (a whisky bottle tube covered with red paper with a length of hose and a funnel duct-taped to it seemed to serve the purpose), a black hole – you may have a better idea – I made a black card spiral with strips of sliced-up dustbin bag hanging from it, the whole dangling on a cord so that it spun in a sinister way as I talked, a candle snuffer, unless you can use your finger tips to put out a candle (– this is terribly impressive to small boys, but may be a health and safety risk when they all want to try it for themselves at home. The snuffer also leaves a great plume of smoke.) You need to prime a sidekick with matches or an igniter (better because silent – Lakeland do a good one at about £2) to relight the candle at the right point in the sketch

Go!
The Loser

The Loser enters. He is dressed in dark colours, possibly a ragged suit and a shady-looking hat. He carries a large scruffy bag. Enters running furtively backwards.

Is he coming? Is he coming? Is he....?

Turns and catches sight of lit candle

Argh!

Oh! It's only a candle. Just a candle. Nothing to worry about... Even so, I think I'll just ...

Tries to blow it out several times with increasing frustration. Gives up in whimpers, then catches sight of audience. Tries suddenly to look imposing

Aha! *People!* You're scared of me, aren't you?

Oh yes you are!

Oh yes you are!

(suddenly nearly in tears) Oh no! You're not!

frustrated I used to run a multinational reign of terror! I used to frighten people in every country in the world! And now all I have left is this bag of tricks. Would you like to see what's inside?

suddenly scheming Are you scared of what might be in it?

Oh yes you are!

Oh yes you are!

crossly Oh no, you're not!

Let me see... let me see... Aha! *pulls out shadow*

Ah yes, a lovely dark shadow! Ooh you can do so much with a shadow! You can let it creep up a wall at night so that it looks like a monster or a ghost! I do like people to be frightened... Are you frightened? Bother!

pulls out a fire extinguisher Aha! Here's my extinguisher. You might feel a spark of inspiration, a flame of love, a blaze of enthusiasm... One blast of this and suddenly, everything's bo-o-o-r-ing again.

pulls out black hole Oh and here's my favourite – my black hole. If I can sneak in – and it's getting harder – I can drop this over a person, or a home, or a school, or a church or a town or a country, and all the joy and love and light is sucked out of it. And before you know it, there's backbiting and squabbling and quarrelling and fighting and war and famine and ecological disaster! *evil laugh*

I think you'll agree, a very useful bag of tricks. But now it's all I've got!

tries to blow out candle again unsuccessfully

Oh yes I was doing very nicely thank you! I was running the world!
Well, how was I supposed to guess that he would take all his light and brilliance and brightness of heaven and wrap it up into a tiny – urgh – baby?

And then, even when this baby had grown to be a man, he would still slip through my fingers. He wasn't what I expected. He took me by surprise. He didn't shine in the high and mighty places I was expecting – he shone into the shadow people, the sad people, lonely people, sick people, the outsiders, the ones with nothing to live for, and he gave them a hope and a future... Everywhere I looked there was light shooting out of my shadows! I knew I had to do something so I ... snuffed out his light.

Snuffs out the candle and spreads out arms in crucifix shape for a moment, as if stretching in satisfaction. A second person relights the candle behind his back

And for three days, I knew I'd won! A shadow over the whole earth! Darkness, misery, hopelessness everywhere! But then that Sunday he pulled his biggest stunt of all. He burst out of the darkness in a blaze of light, brighter than the light at the start of creation itself, a light that nothing could ever put out. I just had time to grab my bag of tricks and run. That was two thousand years ago – and I'm *still* running away from him.

notices relit candle, jumps in surprise and whimpers

And – oh dear! I can feel him coming now! And I can see it in your faces! Shining like stars! And those horrible candles they're going to give you soon. Oh, the candles will go out, but what they *mean* will shine on in your lives and your hearts for ever and ever, and I can never put it out! Never!

Are you scared of me?
D'oh!

Picks up bag. Goes to try to blow out candle, but doesn't even bother trying

Ooooh! I'm out of here!

runs out

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