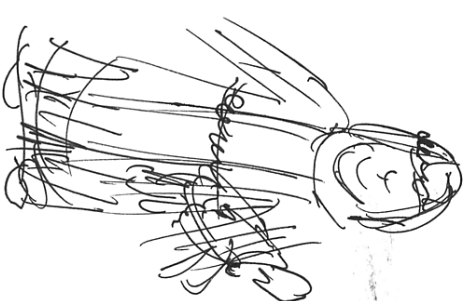


Christopher's Christmas



It was nearly Christmas and Christopher's Sunday School always did a Nativity play.



Mrs Lindley the Sunday School teacher said to Christopher "Christopher you sing so beautifully and can remember things so well. We want you to be the Angel Gabriel in the Nativity play"



And Christopher said: "No, I don't want to be in the Christmas play"



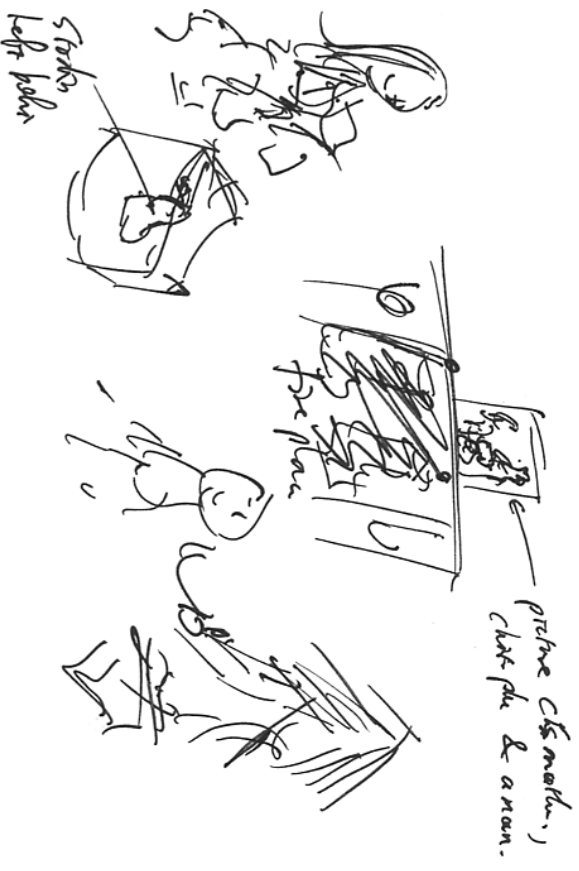
The Vicar came to Christopher and said. "Mrs Lindley wants you to be in the Nativity play, you sing so beautifully, you will be a lovely Angel Gabriel."



And Christopher said, "No, I don't want to be in the Christmas play"



Later at home Christopher and his mother were unpacking the Christmas box ... sparkling tinsel, Christmas tree decorations, fairy lights and stockings



His mother said

"The vicar and Mrs Lindley would like you to be Angel Gabriel in the Nativity play."



And Christopher said,
"No, I don't want to be in the Christmas play"



"But why?" asked Christopher's mother,
"You sing so beautifully and everyone likes to listen to you".



"I don't want everyone to laugh at me", answered Christopher.



"Of course no one will laugh at you" said his mother.



"They did last year", said Christopher.



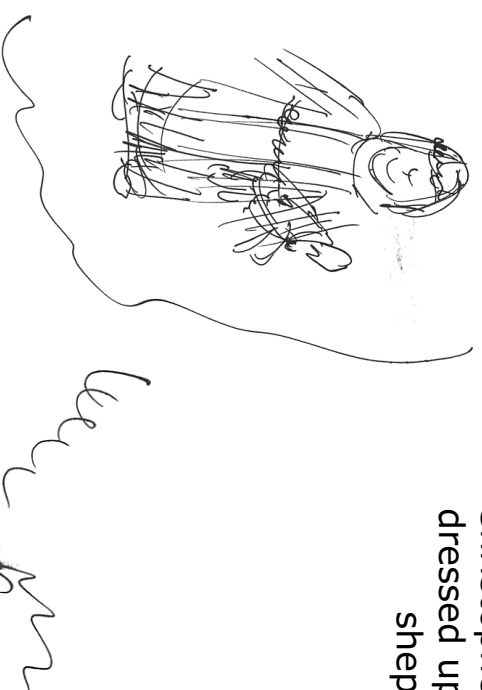
Last year Christopher had been much younger and was a shepherd in the Nativity play.

"You look lovely" said Mrs Lindley

"You're a brave boy", said the vicar



Christopher had dressed up as a shepherd.



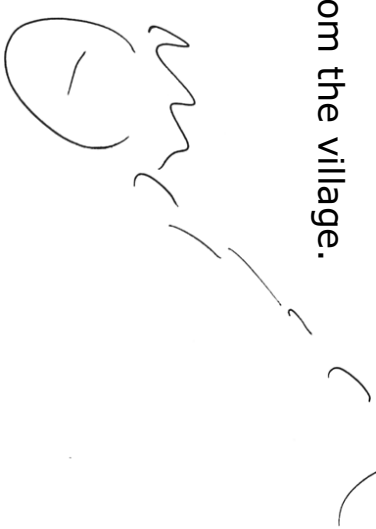
He wore an old dressing gown. It was a grown-up dressing gown and his mother cut off the bottom so it fitted, but it still went all the way to the ground.

On his head he wore an old tea towel and he held the toy lamb his daddy had given him at his last birthday.

On the day of the play everyone was there. His mother sat in the front row, next to the vicar.

Jenny's mother and father were there and Ben's mother and father.

Everyone from the village.



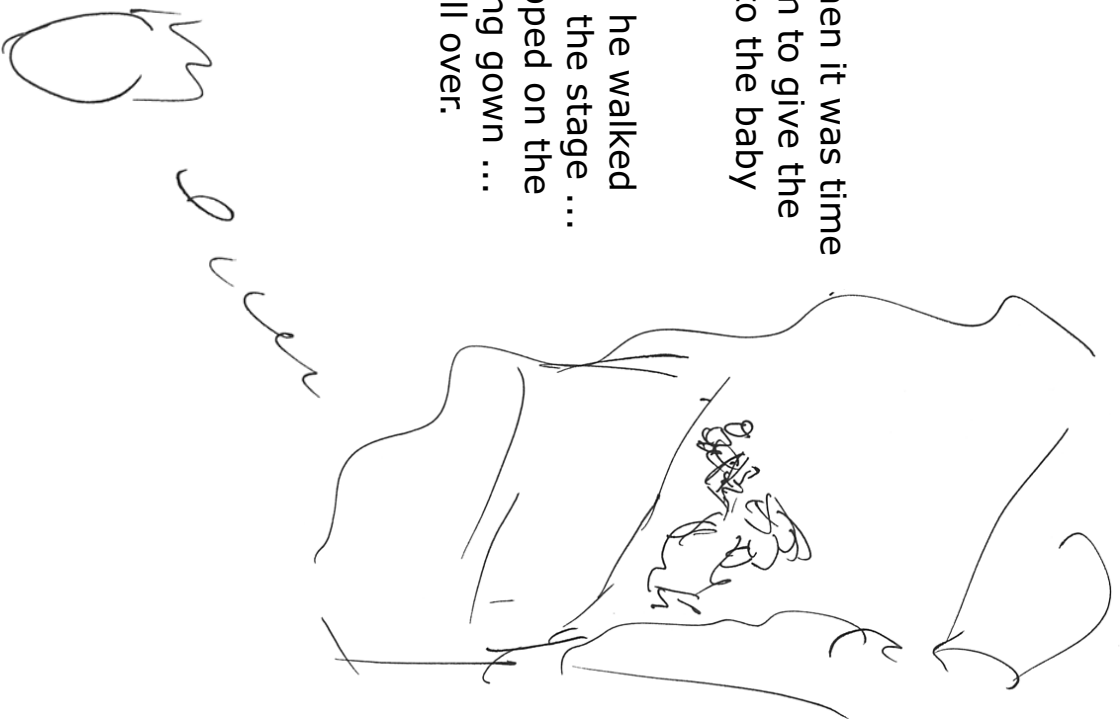
At the right time Christopher sang "While shepherds watched"

and his mother smiled, and the vicar smiled ... and everyone smiled.



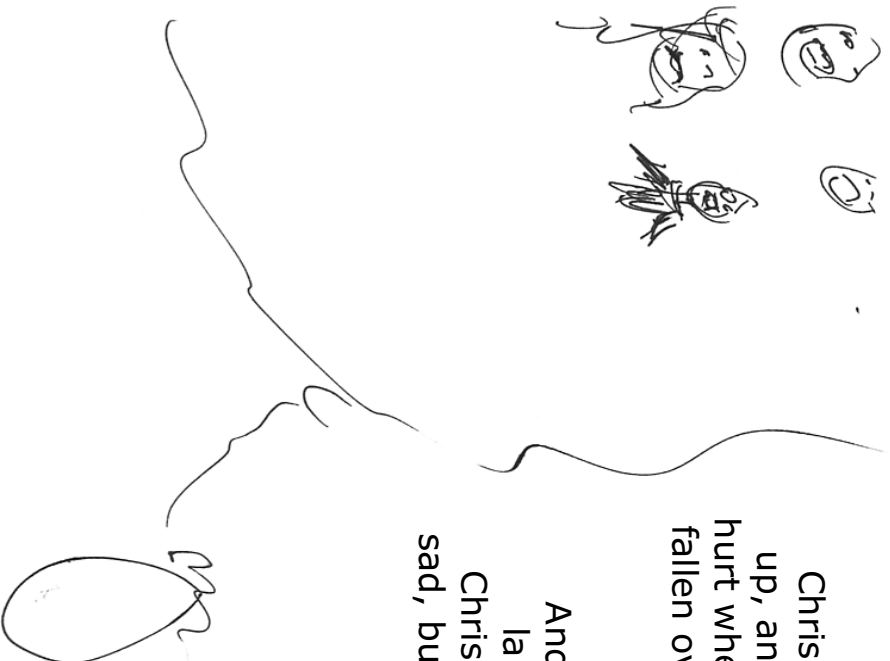
And then it was time
for him to give the
lamb to the baby
Jesus.

But as he walked
across the stage ...
he tripped on the
dressing gown ...
and fell over.

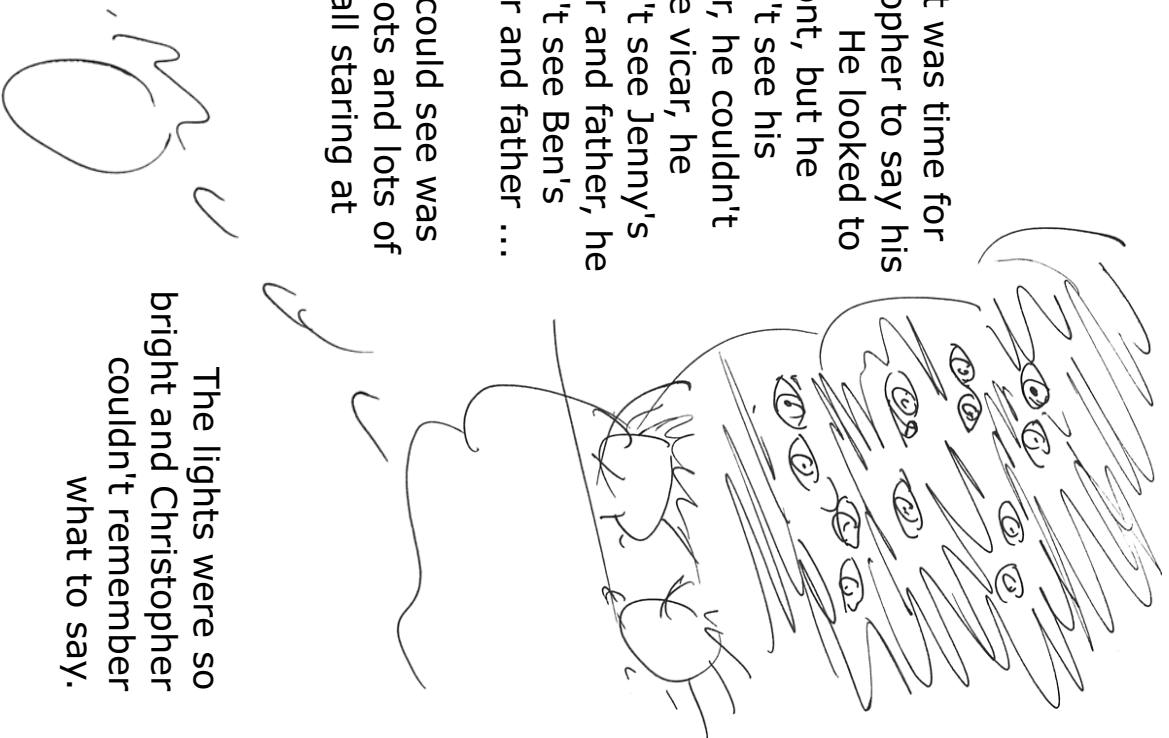


Christopher got
up, and his knee
hurt where he had
fallen over, but he
didn't cry.

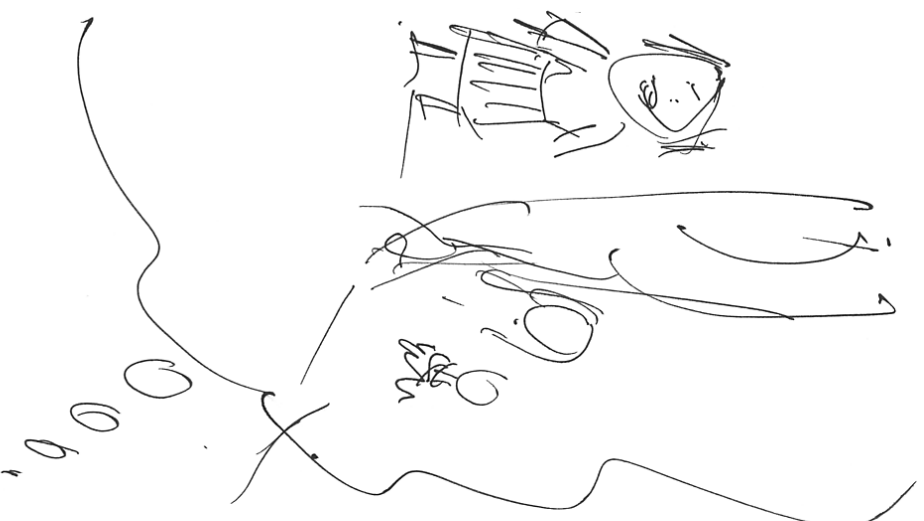
And everyone
laughed and
Christopher felt
sad, but he didn't
cry.



Then it was time for Christopher to say his words. He looked to the front, but he couldn't see his mother, he couldn't see the vicar, he couldn't see Jenny's mother and father, he couldn't see Ben's mother and father ...



The lights were so bright and Christopher couldn't remember what to say.



"Here's a lamb for baby Jesus" said Mrs Lindley, from the side of the stage. But Christopher couldn't say anything. He tried, but his mouth just opened and he couldn't say anything.



"It's OK" said Mrs Lindley " just give the lamb to Jesus"

But Christopher just stood there.

"Go on give it to him" said Mrs Lindley

But Christopher held tightly to the lamb his daddy had given him. "No" he said, "I'm not giving it, it's mine".

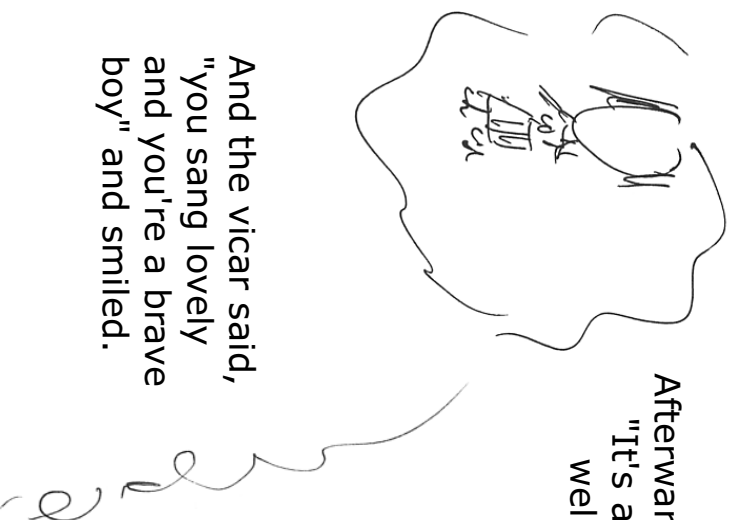
And everyone laughed, and Christopher was sad, but he didn't cry.



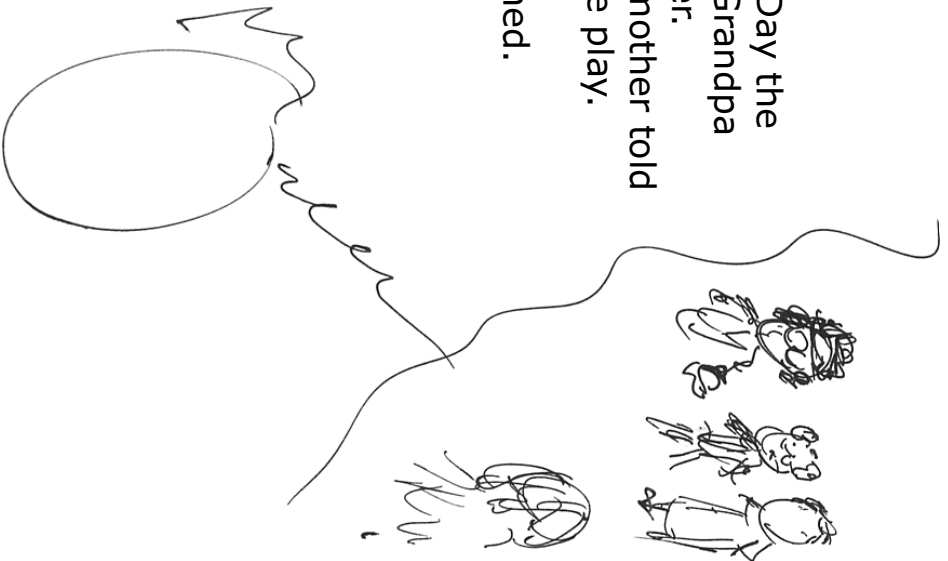
Afterwards Mrs Lindley said "It's alright, you did very well" and she laughed.

And the vicar said, "you sang lovely and you're a brave boy" and smiled.

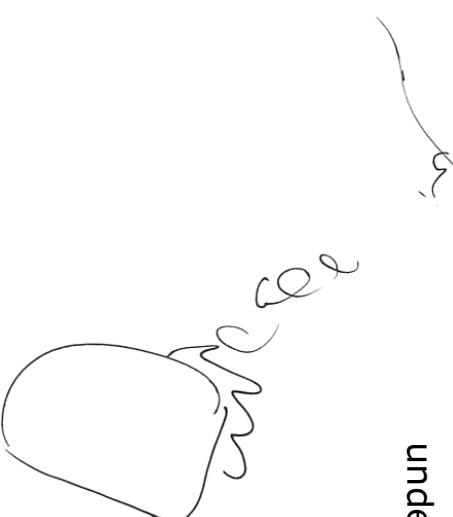
But all Christopher could think about was that everyone laughed, and he felt sad, but he didn't cry.



On Christmas Day the
Grannies and Grandpa
came for dinner.
Christopher's mother told
them about the play.
And they laughed.



Then Grannie
McKenzie said
"I remember when
Tommy was a little
boy, he was in the
Christmas play and ... "
But then Grandpa said
something to her and
Grannie Arnold said
"let's play a game".
So he never heard the
rest of the story.
Christopher was sad,
and he didn't
understand why, but
he didn't cry.



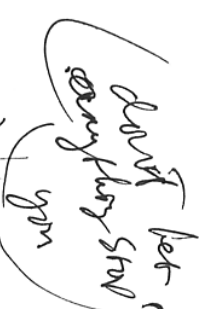
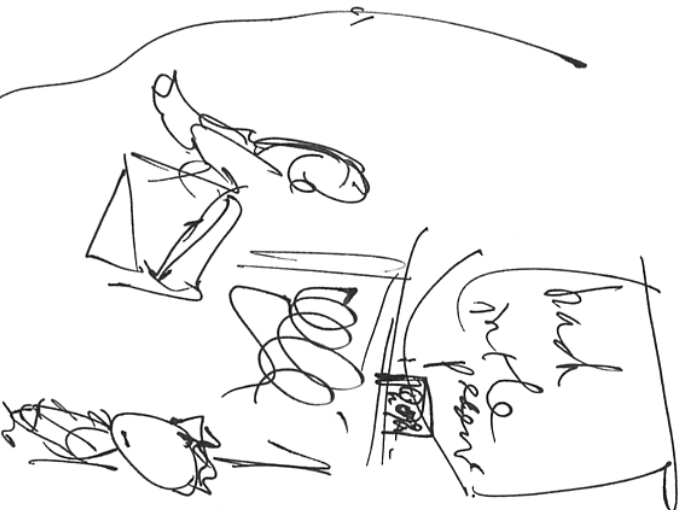
"So that's why I don't want to be in the play" said Christopher.

"I understand" said his mother. "But everyone smiled when you sang"

"Yes", said Christopher

"And you're so much bigger than last year"

"Yes" said Christopher, "but they may laugh again"



"I'm sure they won't" said his mother,

"but if anything happens, just think - everyone wants to hear you sing - don't let anything stop you"

"OK" said Christopher, "I'll be in the play" and suddenly he felt so excited.



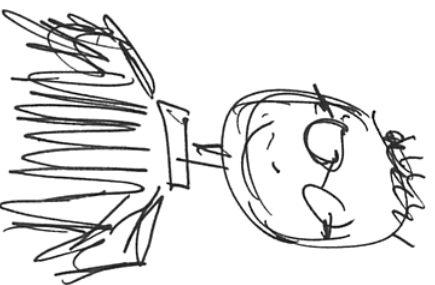
"I'm so glad you'll be in the play", said Mrs Lindley.



"I'm looking forward to hearing you sing", said the vicar.

"Can people in heaven hear us sing", asked Christopher.

"Yes, I'm sure they can", said the vicar, "so you can sing for them too"



On the day of the play Christopher was dressed in an old sheet his mother had cut up for him.

He stood at the front and said "Don't be afraid! I bring good news."



And he looked out and everyone smiled: his mother, the vicar, Jenny's mother and father, Ben's mother and father and everyone in the village.

Later it was his turn to sing "Nowell, Nowell". He sang it all on his own and he didn't forget a single word.



Then Christopher remembered what his mother had said "everyone wants you to sing". So Christopher started to sing "Away in a Manger", then "Once in Royal David's City", and every Christmas carol he knew.



Everyone smiled.



He sang "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "While Shepherds Watched".

Then Mrs Lindley got on the stage ... and then ... she tripped and fell over.

And everyone laughed, but Christopher didn't mind.

Mrs Lindley wanted him to stop, but he remembered what his mother had said "don't let anything stop you".



After the play
Mrs Lindley said,
"Thank you Christopher"



The vicar said,
"you sound like you
could sing forever",
and smiled.



"You were lovely",
said his mother,
"your daddy would
have been proud of
you".



On Christmas Day
Grannie McKenzie
and Grandpa and
Grannie Arnold
came for dinner.

Christopher's mother told them all
about the Nativity play"
"How lovely", said Grannie Arnold,
"will you sing for us later".

Grannie McKenzie said, "I remember when your daddy was a little boy". Then she looked at Christopher's mother.

"Go on", said Christopher's mother.

"Well", said Grannie McKenzie, "He was Joseph in the Nativity play ... " and she told the whole story.



Christopher felt so happy, but in a funny way. And he cried a little too. But it was a good sort of crying.

It was a good Christmas.