

NO CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR

A Christmas Play in Three Acts

by

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NO CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR

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Characters (in order of appearance)

CHOIR

SHOPPERS

MARIA ROSS, wife of JOSEPH, 30's—50's

CONNIE ALBERTSON, wife of DAVID, 30's—50's

JOSEPH ROSS, 30's—50's

DAVID ALBERTSTON, 30's—50's

STEPHANIE ROSS, daughter of JOSEPH and MARIA, teenager

VALERIE ROSS, daughter of JOSEPH and MARIA, teenager

CINDY ALBERTSON, son of DAVID and CONNIE, teenager

MISS SHAW, high-school choir director, 30's—50's

Time

Christmas season. Present. ACT I 12/19 and 12/20, ACT II 12/21, ACT III 12/23

COSTUMES

Contemporary dress.

Winter coats, hats, gloves, and scarves

Place

ACT I Scene 1: The Mall

ACT I Scene 2: Church

ACT I Scene 3: The Ross's Home

ACT II Scene 1: School

ACT II Scene 2: The Hospital

ACT II Scene 3: Church

ACT III Scene 1: The Mall

ACT III Scene 2: The Hospital

ACT III Scene 3: Grandparent's Home

ACT III Scene 4: The Ross's Home

PROPS

Bags of gifts

Tables

Chairs

Hospital bed

School chairs/desks

Bench

Free standing door

NO CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR

ACT I. Scene 1: The Mall

(At the lights come up, there is a mall scene with two chairs at center stage. The CHOIR is singing stage left. SHOPPERS dressed for winter carrying packages cross the stage listening to the CHOIR and looking into the windows. MARIA enters from stage right and crosses to the stage right chair. She carries many packages in both arms. As she drops into the chair, she lets the packages slowly drop to the sides of the chair. She watches the SHOPPERS and makes fun of them with mannerisms and facial expressions as the SHOPPERS listen to the CHOIR and shop. CONNIE enters from stage right carrying packages. She recognizes MARIA. She notices MARIA'S antics. The CHOIR finishes. SHOPPERS applaud. The CHOIR exits stage left. MARIA mimics them. CONNIE crosses to MARIA. The SHOPPERS exit stage right and stage left)

CONNIE

Maria, what are you doing?

MARIA

Watching the shoppers.

CONNIE

Watching?

MARIA

(shrugs shoulders)

I'm having a little fun with them. With the whole thing.

CONNIE

(incredulously)

The whole thing?

(CONNIE sits down in the stage left chair and puts packages down. MARIA blows a lock of hair away from her forehead and sighs)

MARIA

Comic relief. It's the only way I'm going to survive another week of this.

(MARIA takes right foot out of shoe and rubs foot)

CONNIE

This?

MARIA

The Christmas season.

CONNIE

It's that bad?

MARIA

Worse. Connie, this is the first time I've sat down since the day after Thanksgiving.

CONNIE

Maria!

(MARIA pulls out a long list out of her pocketbook and show CONNIE)

MARIA

Look at this! I'm nowhere done. (speaking with more intensity) And presents aren't all. I gotta buy dresses to wear at two parties. One's not enough. Joseph says we have to make a good impression at the office party and the neighborhood party.

CONNIE

(trying to calm MARIA down)

Wait.

MARIA

(looking straight ahead)

I haven't begun to cook all the stuff everyone wants. The kids say, (mockingly) "Make the Santa cookies, make the Santa cookies". (to CONNIE) Of course I'll throw most of them out on New Year's along with the dried out Christmas tree.

CONNIE

Just a minute.

MARIA

(with more intensity and speed)

When you're screaming for a little rest, there's Christmas eve. You think it's over after a big family dinner and church. (shakes head) It's just the beginning. Up 'til one...(with mocking wrapping and taping and wrapping and taping...

CONNIE

(trying to calm MARIA down)

Slow down.

MARIA

(hands up)

Then the dreadful day begins. There's the yelling and screaming: "That's mine!" "No it's not!" In the midst of total chaos, (slowly) we have to stop to take pictures. (mockingly) Do I look lovely? (loudly) In my bathrobe? (faster) While the kids are stuffing themselves with all the chocolate and candy the grandparents have dropped into their stockings—they're going to eat after that?-- I have to start dinner. I'm still in my bathrobe as I set the table.

CONNIE

(strongly)

Maria, please!

MARIA

After working so long to make a nice dinner with everyone's favorites, it's over in five, maybe ten minutes. They're like locusts. They'd make Moses proud. (looking at CONNIE) You don't think I should make fun of "the whole thing"? (looking straight ahead) I can't wait 'til four on Christmas day when I can lay on the couch with my feet up and fall asleep. It'll be the first rest I'll get from this moment 'til then. (MARIA sits back and blows away another lock of hair)

CONNIE

Are you done? You've exhausted me.

MARIA

(looking ahead) I've hardly started.

CONNIE

I read in...some magazine that there is as much stress at Christmas as there is with a divorce or death of a spouse.

MARIA

(looking at CONNIE) Maybe we shouldn't have it.

CONNIE

What?

MARIA

Christmas.

CONNIE

(startled)

You don't mean that.

MARIA

I know the kids would squawk.

CONNIE

For sure.

MARIA

(putting her shoe on)

Joseph would go ballistic. He's such a Christmas person. And his parents. Ouch! They'd never forgive me.

(MARIA picks up packages and stands up)

MARIA (cont'd)

(looking at CONNIE)

Would I dare?

CONNIE

(standing up)

You wouldn't!

MARIA

(shrugs shoulders)

You're right. It means too much to me, even with all the frenzy. I'll hang in there.

CONNIE

Good girl.

(CONNIE touches MARIA on the shoulder. They cross to stage right exit)

MARIA

Do you know Christmas day is only day of the year that I'm dressed for only four hours?

(CONNIE shakes her head)

MARIA (cont'd)

(as they reach the stage right exit)

Seriously: noon 'til four.

(CONNIE and MARIA exit stage right)

ACT II. Scene 2: Church

(Interior of a church. There is a door downstage stage right with a bench in front of it. The CHOIR is upstage to the door. The CHOIR is casually dressed for rehearsal. MARIA and CONNIE are in the CHOIR. The CHOIR sings one verse of a Christmas carol. JOSEPH

and DAVID enter from stage right and cross to the door. They are dressed with winter coats. They listen to the CHOIR finishing the song. After the CHOIR finishes, CHOIR member talk to each other. Some CHOIR members exit stage left. MARIA and CONNIE talk with each other)

JOSEPH

The choir sounds great. They'll make the Christmas eve service wonderful!

DAVID

They're better every year. (checking wristwatch) Practice must be done. The girls should be coming out.

JOSEPH

(with enthusiasm)

I love Christmas! (hands up) All of it!

DAVID

(checking wristwatch)

These last Christmas's must have been extra special for you and Maria.

(CHOIR disperses)

JOSEPH

(nodding)

It's been a spiritual journey for both of us. As a kid Christmas was mostly a tree, tinsel, presents...

DAVID

Who did you think Jesus was?

JOSEPH

Like many on the street, I would answer "the Son of God" if asked. But I never thought what it meant.

DAVID

The Bible has a lot to say about it.

JOSEPH

The Bible was the book we had in the attic with the most dust on it.

DAVID

And your wife?

JOSEPH

Maria went to church regularly while at home. She enjoyed the liturgy. She went to Sunday school “til the tenth grade. They talked about social issues. Maria said it was like health class in school.

DAVID

Sounds familiar.

JOSEPH

She was unsure about her faith. She wanted someone to challenge her about her beliefs. She thought her answers might shock some and she’d be set straight. But the people at her church seemed to think everyone and everybody’s beliefs were OK.

DAVID

Did she stick with church?

JOSEPH

She drifted away in college. I used to go to church on Christmas and Easter at home; but I stopped going in college too.

DAVID

What got you back?

JOSEPH

Children. We thought we should think about faith—for our children’s sakes.

DAVID

Is that when you returned to church?

JOSEPH

Not right away. First we considered the New Age movement. Remember that?

(DAVID nods)

JOSEPH (cont’d)

It was so vague and tepid. It didn’t satisfy. Incidentally where’s New Age now?

DAVID

(shrugs shoulders)

It’s gone pretty much, at least around here. What happened next?

JOSEPH

Everyone was excited about angels for a while. That got us thinking. Then there were several cover stories about Jesus. The first paragraph in the weekly news magazines stories sounded like everyone believed in Him. But by the end of the article, it sounded like no one

was convinced.

DAVID

Confusing?

JOSEPH

Definitely. Later Maria thought we should dust off the old Bible in my parent's attic. Actually read it ourselves. There we found something that made sense to us: God entering human history to bring salvation to people who couldn't save themselves. It was a unique message compared to all other religions and philosophies.

DAVID

It's the Christmas message.

JOSEPH

And now there's nothing that would keep us from celebrating Christmas.

(MARIA and CONNIE enter from door)

JOSEPH

Hi, girls. We were listening to you practicing.

DAVID

We had live entertainment with a message.

JOSEPH

The price was right.

(MARIA yawns)

DAVID

(to MARIA)

Tired?

MARIA

It was a nice break to just sit and sing.

JOSEPH

The kids just got home from chorus practice when we left to pick you up. They must have gotten their talent from you ladies.

(MARIA yawns again)

JOSEPH

(nodding)

That's a message too.

MARIA

(covering mouth with hand)

Sorry.

JOSEPH

Let's get home. Night David, Connie.

DAVID

Night.

CONNIE

Night.

MARIA

(yawning)

See you Sunday.

JOSEPH (points stage right)

Coat?

(JOSEPH puts right arm around MARIA. They cross to stage right exit and exit)

DAVID

(motioning toward stage right)

Shall we?

CONNIE

Just a minute. This may be our last quiet moment for the next week, too. I want to savor it.

(CONNIE sits down on bench. DAVID sits on bench stage left of her)

CONNIE (cont'd)

(taking Christmas list out of pocketbook)

Seeing the Ross's both together made me think of (holding up the list)...

DAVID

Your Christmas list.

CONNIE

(pointing to him)

I don't know what to get them. They have everything.

DAVID

How 'bout a Bible?

CONNIE

(shakes head)

Maria's in bible study with me. They have every version: the King James, NIV, NASB, RSV, TEV, TLB...

DAVID

XYZ?

CONNIE

(gently pushes DAVID)

Be serious! (thinking) We need some new ideas for gifts.

DAVID

(thinking)

Something meaningful.

CONNIE

Whatever. (putting list back into pocketbook) I'm ready.

(CONNIE yawns. DAVID reacts)

CONNIE (cont'd)

It's catchy.

(DAVID and CONNIE stand up, cross to stage right exit, and exit stage right)

ACT I, Scene 3: The Ross's Home

(The kitchen of the Ross home. MARIA is setting the table for dinner. JOSEPH enters hurriedly from stage right)

JOSEPH

(anxiously)

Hi, dear.

(JOSEPH kisses MARIA)

JOSEPH (cont'd)

How'd she do it?

MARIA

On the ice in her driveway. The doctor said her leg was broken. She went to surgery this afternoon.

JOSEPH

(hands up)

Great timing! She might not get out of the hospital until...after Christmas...or even New Year's.

MARIA

Should we visit her tonight?

JOSEPH

(thinking)

This is horrible.

MARIA

(pointing to envelope on table)

Maybe there's some good news. It's a letter for Stephen.

JOSEPH

(picking up envelope and examining it)

I hope so. It's a thick envelope.

(STEPHEN enters from stage right. JOSEPH puts down Envelope on table. STEPHEN crosses to table)

STEPHEN

Hi, mom. Hi, dad.

MARIA

Hi, Stephen.

JOSEPH

Unfortunately your grandmother fell down at home and broke her leg.

STEPHEN

No way!

JOSEPH

We're going to eat and then visit her at the hospital.

(VALERIE enters from stage right)

VALERIE

Visit who? Hi, mom, dad.

Hi, Val.

MARIA

And Stephen.

STEPHEN

And Stephen.

(mockingly)
VALERIE

C'mon kids. (to VALERIE) Your grandmother. She's broken her leg on the ice. She's at the hospital.

JOSEPH

Can I come?

VALERIE

Of course, after dinner.

MARIA

Let me get started on my math homework.

VALERIE

Go ahead.

MARIA

(VALERIE exits stage right)

Dear, there's some mail for you.

(pointing toward the envelope)
MARIA

Is it from...?

STEPHEN

There's a green and white insignia on it.

JOSEPH

(STEPHEN snatches envelope and opens it with expectation. He reads letter)

I got in.

(unhappily)
STEPHEN

JOSEPH

Early decision: That's great. Congratulations!

STEPHEN

(discouraged)

But no scholarship.

JOSEPH

You're kidding!

STEPHEN

(holding up empty envelope and turning it upside down)

Not even a dime.

JOSEPH

(to STEPHEN)

How can you go there? (to MARIA) How can we afford it?

MARIA

(to STEPHEN)

What are you going to do, dear?

STEPHEN

(shrugs shoulders)

I'll have to apply to the other schools I looked at in the fall.

JOSEPH

Where are the other applications?

STEPHEN

I didn't get any others. It looked so certain!

JOSEPH

Any pictures?

STEPHEN

No.

JOSEPH

Essays?

STEPHEN

I'll start writing them...tomorrow.

JOSEPH

(upset)

How do you expect to do an uns in a week and a half?

STEPHEN

It'll get done.

JOSEPH

Everything's a mess. It can't get done. There's no time. (shaking head) And with Christmas in between.

STEPHEN

Christmas makes it fun. Don't worry. I'll get the applications. In the mean time I have the school concert to look forward to. (holding hands up) Don't worry. It'll be OK.

JOSEPH

You're sure?

STEPHEN

Trust me.

(JOSEPH rolls his eyes)

JOSEPH

(to MARIA)

What else can go wrong?

MARIA

It'll work out.

(JOSEPH shakes head)

(lights out)

ACT II. Scene I: School

(As the lights come up, STEPHEN is sitting on top of the chair, VALERIE is sitting in a chair, and CINDY is standing. They are in school clothes)

STEPHEN

(anxiously)

She's gotta change her mind.

VALERIE

It makes... no sense.

CINDY

Why bother if it's gonna be that way?

VALERIE

She'll be reasonable.

CONNIE

I hope so.

(MISS SHAW enters briskly from stage left. She crosses to center stage)

MISS SHAW

(indignantly)

You students wanted to speak with me? (noticing STEPHEN on top of the seat) (motioning STEPHEN to sit down) Please!

(STEPHEN sits down on the seat)

STEPHEN

Miss Shaw, why can't we sing any carols at the assembly?

VALERIE

Like, (singing) "Joy to the world! The Lord has come..."

(MISS SHAW looks annoyed)

STEPHEN

(holding up a program)

You've taken them all out of the program.

CINDY

It is the season...

VALERIE

(singing)

"Away in the manger, no crib for a bed..."

(MISS SHAW taps her foot)

CINDY

The Christmas season.

MISS SHAW

(bristling and slow)

It's a holiday assembly.

VALERIE

(singing)

“Hark the herald angels sing...”

MISS SHAW

(annoyed at VALERIE)

That’s enough.

(STEPHEN stands up and show MISS SHAW the program)

STEPHEN

(earnestly)

Other holidays are included, some I’ve never even heard of.

(MISS SHAW looks at program and taps it)

CINDY

(pointing to STEPHEN and VALERIE)

What about our holiday?

MISS SHAW

It’s a...

CINDY

Christmas is the problem, isn’t it?

MISS SHAW

I said...

VALERIE

(standing up and singing)

“I heard the bells on Christmas day, their old familiar carols play”. That’s by Longfellow. He was from Maine. Can’t we even sing a carol written by someone from Maine?

MISS SHAW

(wry smile)

That’s not the point.

CINDY

Our mothers sing carols.

MISS SHAW

Your mothers sing at church. This is school.

STEPHEN

(thinking)

In the spirit of diversity, shouldn't Christmas carols be allowed as well as music from other traditions? It is a holiday assembly.

(MISS SHAW rubs her chin, pondering)

CINDY

(pleading)

Please!

MISS SHAW

I'll think about it.

(STEPHEN, VALERIE, and CINDY look encouraged)

MISS SHAW (cont'd)

I can't promise you anything else.

STEPHEN

Thank you, Miss Shaw.

CINDY

Thank you.

(MISS SHAW nods to each of them)

VALERIE

(singing)

"We wish you a Merry Christmas. We wish you a Merry Christmas".

(STEPHEN and CINDY join VALERIE in singing)

"We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year".

MISS SHAW

(curtly with a smile)

Thank you.

(MISS SHAW crosses to stage left. STEPHEN, VALERIE, and CINDY look excited and happy)

(lights out)

ACT II. Scene 2: The Hospital

(AS the lights come up, JOSEPH is sitting on the bench of the door. STEPHEN and VALERIE enter from stage right and cross to JOSEPH. They all have coats on. VALERIE carries a bouquet of flowers)

STEPHEN

Hi, dad.

JOSEPH

(standing)

Hi, kids. Thanks for coming over after school. Grandma will love those flowers.

VALERIE

How's grandma doing?

JOSEPH

(shrugs shoulders)

Fine, but it's slow. Her age. She's getting physical therapy. That should help.

VALERIE

Will she be out of the hospital for Christmas?

JOSEPH

It'll be close. How was school?

STEPHEN

(discouraged)

OK, except for chorus.

JOSEPH

You like chorus.

STEPHEN

It's the assembly.

JOSEPH

The Christmas assembly?

VALERIE

They don't call it that anymore.

STEPHEN

Val, Cindy Albertson, and me found out Miss Shaw took the Christmas carols out of the program.

VALERIE

(cynically)

Because it's a holiday concert.

STEPHEN

They have other religious and cultural songs on the program, I showed it to her.

VALERIE

We asked her to change it.

JOSEPH

And...

VALERIE

She said she'd think about it. Then she said we could sing Christmas carols at church.

JOSEPH

(annoyed)

This is preposterous!

STEPHEN

We're trying to work out...

JOSEPH

She won't change her mind.

(MARIA enters hurriedly from stage right stairs and crosses to door. She has coat on)

VALERIE

Hi, mom.

JOSEPH

Hi, dear. Didn't you bring grandpa?

MARIA

(excitedly)

I called you at the office.

JOSEPH

I didn't get your call. What's the matter?

MARIA

(excitedly)

I picked your dad at home like planned. One the way here, he had chest pain, then shortness of breath. I was scared. (points stage left) I took him to the E.R. He's there now.

To Read The Rest, Please Purchase The Script