

ANGEL IN THE PARK

By Maxine Minson

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STORY

Each Christmas season an eccentric philanthropist disguises himself for the explicit purpose of observing people and bestowing upon some worthy recipient a reward for his or her outstanding moral characteristics.

This year, the day before Christmas, the philanthropist disguises himself as a beggar in the city park. He encounters some colorful characters in a short span of time. There is Disco Danny, the ambitious young entertainer and his "Dancing Dolls," who is so intent upon his own career that he cannot devote time or money to help a poor beggar. The beggar meets two society ladies, who deceive themselves that they are contributors to charity; a thief with a smooth tongue and a coat lined with stolen watches; and the Sweet Singers of Charity. He also witnesses a knock-down brawl with a local Santa Claus. Charity seems to be a word that everyone has lost the meaning of until Harriet Adams appears on the scene. Children accompany Harriet, who is handicapped, from the orphanage. She wins the heart of the audience and the beggar with her generous spirit.

This is a play designed to carry a moral message, which is most meaningful during the Christmas season, while also presenting characters in humorous circumstances. The play is short and lends itself to a low budget and quick production. It can be presented with as few as sixteen people or as many as thirty-one.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CHARLES VAN CASTLE III: A middle-aged, wealthy philanthropist.

JAMES: Mr. Van Castle's efficient, uniformed driver.

LEADER OF THE SWEET SINGERS OF CHARITY: An overly pompous, authoritative woman.

SWEET SINGERS OF CHARITY: A choral group. (2-10 people.)

SANTA CLAUS: A rather ill tempered Santa.

POLICE OFFICER #1: An over-worked, disgusted officer.

POLICE OFFICER #2: Another.

DISCO DANNY: A young, ambitious, second-rate entertainer.

DANCING DOLLS: Danny's second-rate back-up dancers.

THIEF: A sinister man with a long coat and hat.

CHARLOTTE: A society lady.

ELMIRA: Another.

HARRIET ADAMS: Handicapped lady who works at orphanage.

CHILDREN: 2 to 5 children from the Eastridge Orphanage.

SYNOPSIS

STAGE SETTING: The stage is bare except for a park bench located UCS and a garbage can marked "CITY PARK" located USR.

PLAYING TIME: About 25 minutes.

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(AT RISE: CHAUFFEUR enters SL carrying a large paper sack. HE crosses to CS, looks around, then turns and calls offstage L.)

CHAUFFEUR: It's all right, Mr. Van Castle. There's no one about. You can come over.

(Mr. VAN CASTLE, well dressed enters SL.)

MR. VAN CASTLE: Thank you. James. Yes, it's quite deserted. Good, I can change without anyone seeing.

(There is a furtive activity. The CHAUFFEUR takes an old, tattered, and obviously worn coat from the sack. There is also a wig, a mustache, and an old, worn hat.)

MR. VAN CASTLE: I know it's eccentric of me, but I tell you this is my favorite time of the year. I really look forward to this bit of deception. You know James; it gives me an insight into people that would otherwise be totally impossible to achieve ... here, let me have the hat. *(Places the hat on HIS head.)* Now how do I look?

CHAUFFEUR: Well sir, if I do say so ... rather like a typical bum in the park. Certainly not like Arthur Van Castle III, the president and chairman of the board of the largest conglomerate on the East Coast.

MR. VAN CASTLE: Good ... good. Exactly what I want. You know James; my action would never be workable if people had any conception of who I really was.

CHAUFFEUR: I do think, sir, that it is a most generous thing you do.

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MR. VAN CASTLE: Nonsense, James. Actually, I am the one who gains from this guise. In the world of high finance and corrupt business practices, I occasionally need to have my faith in the basic goodness of man reconfirmed. The Christmas season always gives me the opportunity to do just that.

CHAUFFEUR: But still, sir, such a generous monetary contribution is exceptionally unusual, especially given in such an unusual manner.

MR. VAN CASTLE: I suppose it is in a way ... but by sitting here in this park during this season of the year, I will have the advantage of seeing people at their best and at their worse. I just happen to believe that goodness justifies reward for its own sake. And since I happen to have been abundantly blessed in the financial area of life, I like to share a bit of that wealth with someone who least expects it, but yet richly deserves it. I don't think this is really so unusual ... at least, I hope such an attitude is not.

CHAUFFEUR: Well, you seem all ready to begin your search for this worthy person. Is there anything else before I leave, sir?

MR. VAN CASTLE: No, I think not, James. Just be sure to return by four o'clock. Remember I have that Christmas party that I must attend at the office at that time.

CHAUFFEUR: Very well, I will see you at four. Good-bye, sir.

(The CHAUFFEUR touches his hat, turns and exits SL. MR. VAN CASTLE settles himself on the park bench. He picks up his newspaper and unfolding it begins to read. The singing of a Christmas carol by a group is heard faintly and then more distinctly offstage SR. The singing increases in volume and several people enter SR. They are dressed in black. The group LEADER is carrying a tambourine and a large sign over her shoulder, which reads "SWEET SINGERS OF CHARITY." The Leader stops singing and holds up her hand for silence when she sees Mr. Van Castle. The others cease singing.)

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LEADER: Oh, look, my beloved. Here is a poor, lonely soul in need of our consolation and the blessings of our songs.

(The LEADER crosses USL of the park bench. The SINGERS crowd around U and UR of the bench. The LEADER extends her Tambourine to MR. VAN CASTLE.)

LEADER: My good man, perhaps you would care to receive a blessing and contribute to our efforts. A dollar, perhaps two ... or some change ... whatever you can give...

(SHE is interrupted by a bell RINGING off SL. A SANTA in a rather bedraggled suit is carrying a kettle and RINGING a bell. He enters SL and crosses DSL while RINGING the bell and calling out in a listless monotone.)

SANTA: Ho, ho, ho ... Merry Christmas everybody, Merry Christmas.

(The LEADER stares at him for a moment. Then she indignantly regains her composure and motions her troupe to follow her. THEY move DSL and resume their singing, which is simultaneous with the bell RINGING and the chanting of SANTA. This continues for a clamorous moment and then the Leader shakes her head negatively. She holds up her hand to cease singing and crosses to the Santa who is still chanting and RINGING his bell oblivious to the disconcertment HE is causing.)

LEADER: My good man. *(SHE holds up her hand indicating for him to stay. HE stops and looks at her.)* We are the Sweet Singers of Charily and we were here first. We are attempting to shower blessings upon others with our caroling. I'm afraid that you are interfering with our efforts. I must ask you to take your bell and go elsewhere. We simply cannot have such interruption.

End of Freeview

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