

A CHRISTMAS APART

By Gregory Banks

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STORY OF THE PLAY

How do you explain to three kids that Christmas may never be the same in their family - that from now on every Christmas may be a Christmas apart?

Ever since Lee Ann and the children started going to church, husband Jake Stewart has felt alone and unhappy, so he's moved out. It's arranged that he will visit the children early on Christmas Eve, then drop them at the church for the pageant they're in. Maybe he'll even stay for it.

God once sent an angel to Joseph to explain the importance of creating a family. This time another "angel" brings that message to Jake. A sensitive, deeply religious play which deals with the crises facing today's families.

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SETTING

The Stewart home is a comfortable, middle class home with a fireplace USC and a couch CS. The front door is SR and upstage of it is a coatrack or closet while downstage of the door is a decorated Christmas Tree in front of a window. There is a doorway SL leading to the rest of the house and DSL is a chair and small table holding a phone and a framed picture. Additional furniture and holiday decorations are optional.

In scene 3, the church fellowship hall, there is a manager scene CS. If folding chairs are used for the "audience" they should be DS of the SR doorway which leads into the rest of the church.

SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: Stewart living room, 2 days before Christmas.

Scene 2: Living room, Christmas Eve day.

Scene 3: Church fellowship hall.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

JAKE STEWART: Father who finds his family and God.

LEE ANN STEWART: Christian mother.

LESLIE: Their eldest daughter, 13.

JENNY: Their younger daughter, 6.

JOSH: Their young son, 8.

KAREN SLOAN: Friend and Youth Leader.

PASTOR BURG: Minister if church.

KEVIN, TIMMY, and DEBBIE: Minor speaking parts in church

program, 6-7 years.

EXTRAS: (Non speaking.) In church program or as congregation.

COSTUMES

Lee Ann and Karen - casual winter clothes in scene 1 and 2; attractive dresses for church in scene 3.

Leslie – lounging robe for scenes 1 and 2; choir robe or attractive Sunday outfit for scene 3.

Jenny and Josh - pj's for scene 1 and 2; Biblical costumes for scene 3.

Jake - street clothes and overcoat for scene 1; Santa outfit for scene 3.

Pastor Burg - ministers collar or robes.

Extras in biblical costumes or as congregation.

Scene I

(AT RISE: Living room of the Stewart home. LEE ANN is sitting on the floor in front of the fire place wrapping presents. In walks LESLIE dressed for bed. She stands around for a few seconds as if pre-occupied.)

LEE ANN: Leslie you can help me wrap these presents for your brother and sister, before you go to bed if you want. *(LESLIE comes over, sits down and starts to wrap a package. She is very quiet and distant.)* I can tell you are upset about something. You want to talk about it.

LESLIE: I just don't understand the whole thing, Mom.

LEE ANN: You mean about your Father leaving?

LESLIE: How can he just decide to leave us? Doesn't he love us anymore. I don't understand how everything seems fine and we're a happy family and then Daddy decides things aren't that good and he isn't happy anymore. It just doesn't make sense to me Mom. Why has this happened? *(Tears running down HER cheeks, her MOTHER beckons her close. She goes over and lays her head on LEE ANN's shoulder.)*

LEE ANN: I know you are confused, Less, we all are, even your Father. These kind of things are never easy, and even more difficult to understand or explain. We just need to keep praying for the Lord's help and strength. *(Looking directly into HER eyes.)* Leslie, I don't know if anything will ever be like it was, but we can't give up. We must keep faith. I need you to be strong for Josh and Jenny. Now you go on to bed, you need your sleep. I love you honey.

LESLIE: *(Smiles.)* I love you too, Mom. *(Goes up the steps to bed.)*

(After LEE ANN knows LESLIE is upstairs, 20 seconds, she begins to stare at the family picture on the television set and her eyes begin to fill with tears. Someone KNOCKS at the front door and she rises and goes to open the door. In walks a bundled up JAKE.)

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JAKE: (*Cold shiver.*) Whey, it's cold out there.

LEE ANN: What do you want, Jake? It's late and the kids are asleep.

JAKE: I know it's late - I waited till I knew the kids would be in bed. I want to talk with you.

LEE ANN: What about? (*Turns away from HIS face.*)

JAKE: Well, I've settled into an apartment now; and I ... well, I ... I thought we could work out a schedule for Christmas. (*LEE ANN spins around.*)

LEE ANN: A schedule, what do you mean a schedule. (*Slightly frantic voice.*)

JAKE: I want the kids for either Christmas Day or Christmas Eve. I'm still their Father and I want them with me some over the the holidays, too.

LEE ANN: Well, why did you leave us then?

JAKE: We've discussed all of this before. There isn't any need to go back into it again. This is the best thing for both of us right now.

LEE ANN: (*With tearful emotion.*) And what about the kids, is it the best thing for them, too. How will it affect them not to be with both of us during Christmas. Have you thought about that? I've already seen how this has hampered the holiday enthusiasm of Leslie and Joshua. And Jenny is just to young to understand.

JAKE: Sure I've thought about it. (*Turns and speaks softly with HIS head dropped while walking away from LEE ANN.*) Do you think I want to disappoint and hurt them. I had to leave, my life isn't the same. Things have been changing too much for me. All of a sudden, you started going to church and got religious or something - nothing has been the same since. You and the kids seem happier than ever going to church. It's as if some spark has been added to your lives. Well, I'm miserable. I can't explain it, I just know I'm too set in my ways to change, now. Yet, I feel guilty everytime I set up a poker game or bring a beer in the house.

End of Freeview

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