CHRISTMAS on a High Note

By David Dunlap

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STORY

Grandma likes to follow tradition at Christmas and that means having the whole family over at her house for presents, turkey, and singing carols around her Christmas organ. So when unexpected visitors become stranded at her home, and the organ won't play a note, Grandma thinks the holiday is ruined. But the Christ child brought the first Christmas to all of us and on this night, three other young children bring it back to Grandma's.

CHARACTERS

(2 m, 5 w, 3 children)

MARGARET PRICE: Grandma who likes tradition, late 50's.
BETH LAWRENCE: Margaret's daughter, late 30's.
MICHAEL LAWRENCE: Beth's husband, same age.
CHRIS LAWRENCE: 14-year-old child of Beth and Michael. Can be boy or girl.
TERRY LAWRENCE: 8-year-old child of Beth and Michael. Can be boy or girl.
THELMA NICHOLS: Margaret's older sister, visiting from out of town.
BARBARA MARTIN: Wife of the minister of Margaret's church.
TRUDY CARTER: Poor, single mother, in her 30's.
JUSTIN CARTER: Trudy's 6-year-old son. *(Or daughter, Justine.)*
CHUCK WILSON: Organ repairman. Can be any age.

PLAYING TIME

Runs about 45 minutes.

SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: Late afternoon, Christmas Eve, present day.
Scene 2: An hour later.

PROPS

Crayons and coloring books for Terry; cassette tape player which can play on batteries or electric for Chris; dish towel for Margaret; plate of cookies for Beth; large stack of wrapped gifts for Michael; empty dish for Barbara; suitcases, purse with two envelopes, and a stick of gum in pocket for Thelma; bucket of building bricks for Terry; two suckers in coat pocket for Justin; snow shovel for Michael; tool box for Chuck; electrical cord *(behind organ).*

COSTUMES

Characters wear modern day, winter clothes. Winter coats are needed by Michael, Barbara, Thelma, Chris and Chuck. Trudy and her child wear clean but well-worn clothes and coats. Beth needs a watch. Chuck wears work clothes and a winter coat.

SOUND EFFECTS

Loud music on tape player; phone; knock on door; offstage crash; doorbell, and car horn.

SET

The living room of Margaret's typical, middle class home. There are two exits. The exit to the exterior of the house is DR. The second exit to the rest of the house is SL. There is a window USR. The room is neat and tastefully decorated. The furniture, while not new, is in good condition. There is a couch USC, and an easy chair SR. End tables are on either side of the couch, each with a lamp on it. One has a phone on it also. There is a coffee table in front of the couch. An organ and bench sits prominently SL. There is a decorated Christmas tree USR, in front of the window with many wrapped gifts stacked under it. The whole room is decorated for Christmas.

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: TERRY is sitting on the floor between the couch and using the coffee table as a desk. He is coloring. CHRIS is walking around the room, carrying a large cassette player close to his ear. He is listening to music, very loudly, and ignoring Terry.)

BETH: *(Off SL.)* Chris! *(HE doesn't answer.)* Chris! *(HE still does not answer.)*
TERRY: *(Loudly.)* Mom is calling you, Chris.
CHRIS: What do you want, Mom?
BETH: *(Standing in the doorway, SL.)* Will you please turn that thing down.
CHRIS: Oh, Mom. It sounds better this way.
BETH: You're going to rupture your eardrums.
CHRIS: Why do mothers always say things like that?
BETH: *(Smiling.)* Oh, dear. I guess I do sound like my mother. I guess it comes with the job. Now turn it down, please. *(Exits SL.)*
CHRIS: Oh, okay. *(Turns the music down.)*
TERRY: I told you she'd make you turn that off.
CHRIS: Oh, be quiet, you little twerp.
TERRY: I'm telling Mom and Dad on you. They said if you didn't stop picking on me, you'd be grounded for the rest of Christmas vacation.
CHRIS: So what. As long as we have to stay here at Grandma's, there's nothing to do anyway.
TERRY: If you let me listen to your new tape player, I might keep my mouth shut.
CHRIS: No. I don't want you touching this. I don't want it broken.
TERRY: I won't break it.
CHRIS: No. You got your own Christmas gift from Grandma. Play with that.
TERRY: But I can't ride a bicycle in the snow.
CHRIS: That's your problem. *(The PHONE rings.)*
MARGARET: *(Off SL.)* Chris, can you get that, please?

CHRIS: *(Turning off tape player and putting it on the organ bench.)* Sure, Grandma. *(Picks up the receiver.)* Hello … Jerry! I was hoping you'd call …

MARGARET: *(Off SL.)* Who is it?

CHRIS: *(Calling offstage.)* It's for me, Grandma. *(Into the receiver.)* Jerry, I'm going upstairs on the extension in my grandmother's bedroom. Hold on. *(Drops the receiver on the end table and starts toward the door, SL.)*

TERRY: Can't I at least listen to your tape player while you're gone?

CHRIS: No! I don't want the batteries run down. *(Exits.)*

TERRY: *(Stands and walks to the organ bench, looks around slyly, glances into the doorway, and then defiantly.)* I won't run the batteries down, then. I'll use the plug.

(TERRY takes the cord out of the back of the tape player, walks to the UPS of the organ, reaches behind the organ, and plugs in the tape player. He then walks back to the tape player and bends over to turn it on. As he does, MARGARET enters. When she begins to speak, Terry is startled. He turns quickly, and stands upright with his hands behind his back.)

MARGARET: Terry, what are you up to?

TERRY: Nothing, Grandma.

MARGARET: What do you have behind your back?

TERRY: *(Holding up HIS empty hands.)* Nothing.

MARGARET: *(Picks up the phone receiver, listens, and then hangs it up.)* Your mother and I just finished the last batch of cookies. Would you like one?

TERRY: Uh … yeah. In a minute.

MARGARET: Okay. *(Starts toward the door SL, and then looks back at TERRY.)* Are you sure you're not up to something?

(TERRY shakes his head no, trying to look innocent. MARGARET is unconvinced, but exits. Terry looks out the door, SL, to be sure she is gone. He then kneels by the tape

End of Freeview

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