

A CHRISTMAS VACATION

By David Dunlap

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THE STORY OF THE PLAY

It's Christmas in Florida! But somehow it doesn't seem very festive. Linda is worried because her recently-widowed mother, Susan, is adamant about staying in her Florida condominium rather than coming up north to celebrate the holiday. Linda decides she and her husband and children better see what's wrong, even if it means they won't be celebrating Christmas the "right way" with all the familiar traditions.

And non-traditional it is! Instead of warm fires and sled rides the kids are sunbathing and riding jet skis. And it's hardly Christmas Eve grilling hot dogs and eating with strangers. But when Linda objects because her mother may miss Christmas Eve services, she finds the real and generous reason why her mother wanted to spend Christmas in Florida. She learns Christmas is not about traditions or getting what you want, but about giving. A sunshine-filled play that still carries a strong message.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 flexible parts, approx. 3 m, 5 w, 1 child)

SUSAN JORDAN: Elderly woman, recently widowed.

LINDA DUFFY: Susan's daughter, 35 to 45 years old.

TOM DUFFY: Linda's husband, about the same age as Linda.

TONY/TONI DUFFY: Tom and Linda's youngest child. Can be either boy or girl about the age of ten.

ROBIN DUFFY: Tom and Linda's teenage child. Can be either male or female.

RANDY JORDAN: Susan's son. He is a few years younger than Linda. By changing the appropriate dialogue, this part could be played by a female, also.

MARGE WATSON: Susan's elderly, and disagreeable sister.

MADLINE (MATTY) SINGLETON: Susan's neighbor and friend, about Susan's age.

JEREMIAH (JERRY) JACKSON: Another neighbor, a little older than Susan.

PLAYING TIME: About 45 minutes.

SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: Christmas Eve day, early afternoon.

Scene 2: Several hours later, about dinner time.

TIME: The present.

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PROPS

Purse and car keys for Susan; key for Matty; suitcases for Linda's family and Aunt Marge; wallet and money for Tom; duffel bag for Randy; beach towels for Tom, Randy, and Tony; two bags of groceries for Susan; glass of iced tea for Susan; tray, plate, package of hot dogs for Tom; shopping bag for Robin.

COSTUMES

Susan, Matty, Marge, and Linda wear nice warm-weather casual clothes appropriate for their ages. Jerry wears a loud Hawaiian shirt, long shorts, dark knee-high socks, and wild tennis shoes. Randy wears more casual clothes, even jeans. He, Tom, and Tony need to change into swimming suits. Both Robin and Marge need tennis shoes to match Jerry's. In addition, Robin needs a new pair of brown shoes.

SET

The patio in the back of Susan's Florida condominium. The house is L-shaped, wrapping around the patio across UPS and SL. SR is enclosed by a low fence. There are two exits from the stage. UPC is a door into the house. This can be a double sliding glass door or just a single back door. The second exit is through a gate in the fence SR. This leads to a walkway around to the front of the house (*unseen*). There is a window SL in the wall of the house. A picnic or patio table with chairs sits under this window DSL. USL is a barbecue grill, sitting against the house. SRC are two patio or lawn chairs with a small table between them. There are plants and shrubs visible behind the fence, SR and at the sides of the house as desired.

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SCENE 1

(AT RISE: It is early afternoon, the day before Christmas. The stage is brightly lit. As the scene begins, the stage is empty.)

MATTY: *(Off, SR.)* Yoo-hoo! Sue? Are you back here?
(Enters SR but stays behind the fence. SHE is dressed in summer clothes.) Sue?

SUSAN: *(Enters UPC also dressed in summer clothes.)*
Matty! Come in, come in. *(MATTY enters the patio.)*
Can I get you something to drink? Iced tea? Lemonade?

MATTY: No, thanks, Sue. I just stopped by to see if your kids and grandkids have arrived yet.

SUSAN: *(Sits and motions MATTY to do so also.)* No. I'm not sure what time they'll be here.

MATTY: *(Sitting.)* You mean they didn't tell you what time their plane arrives?

SUSAN: Yes, they did, but to be perfectly honest, I lost the paper I wrote it on. *(Laughing.)* It seems like the older I get, the more forgetful I become.

MATTY: *(Laughing.)* Me, too. Just last week, Jerry drove me all the way to town to buy groceries and when I got there, I couldn't remember half the things I needed. I guess I'm going to have to start writing everything down like you do.

SUSAN: *(Smiling.)* I've had to do that for years. It's always worked, but it doesn't help when I lose the notes. It's a good thing Linda and Tom didn't expect me to meet them at the airport. I'd have had to call her and admit I lost the note.

MATTY: She'd understand that, wouldn't she?

SUSAN: Oh, you don't know my Linda. She already thinks I'm too old and forgetful to live by myself.

MATTY: *(Stands and stretches.)* Well, that's what's great about living in one of Florida's biggest retirement communities. There's always plenty of other old goats around to help you out.

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SUSAN: *(Trying to get out of the chair but with difficulty.)*
Help me up, will you, Matty? I'm stiff from that aerobics class we went to yesterday. *(MATTY, with some difficulty, helps SUSAN out of the chair.)* Thank-you.

MATTY: Doesn't Linda realize how nice it is to live here?

SUSAN: I've tried to convince her of that, but when I visited her last summer, she just wouldn't listen. She insisted I stay up north with her and Tom.

MATTY: Yuk! I'd hate to spend winter up north again. Sixty some winters in the snow and cold was enough for me.

SUSAN: I agree. When Charley and I moved here five years ago, Linda thought it was great, but after he died last year, she decided it was her job to take care of me.

MATTY: My son is the same way. Just because we can't move as fast as we used to, they think we're overgrown babies.

SUSAN: I know, I know. *(Pauses and then changes the subject.)* So, are you all ready for Christmas?

MATTY: Just about. I have some gifts to wrap yet. I always put it off to the last minute. All that cutting and taping make my hands ache. I wish I could just give my grandkids money, but they're still at that age when they like to open presents.

SUSAN: When will your family be here?

MATTY: The day after Christmas. I only have two more days to get those presents wrapped.

SUSAN: I'm lucky. Tony and Robin PREFER that I give them money. It makes gift giving much easier. All I have to do is write a check. It's great.

JERRY: *(Enters SR dressed in an Hawaiian style shirt and bright shorts. HE wears colorful, slightly out-of-style tennis shoes with knee-high, black dress socks.)* Merry Christmas, ladies. Thought I heard you two over here.

MATTY: Jerry, where'd you get those tennis shoes?

JERRY: *(Proudly.)* You like 'em? I got a great buy on them over at that little shoe store that's going out of business. You know. The one across from the mall. Pretty stylish, huh?

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