

DREAMS Come True at Christmas

By David Dunlap

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STORY OF THE PLAY

This is not a happy Christmas Eve in the Stewart home. While young Cory prepares, unwillingly, to be an angel in the church pageant, the oldest son, J.J., who has just returned from several months in juvenile hall for burglary, struggles to regain trust from his mother, Maureen, and very angry father, Joe.

Just as it seems he may achieve this goal, the Stewarts receive a call from the mall security officer claiming J.J. has been caught shoplifting again. His mother and aunt believe J.J.'s denial because they can see how he's changed.

But his father is so angry, he won't even attend church with them to see Cory's performance. He's even angry when the juvenile hall chaplain tells him that sometimes you have to work on faith, even when all the evidence points in the other direction. The chaplain leaves saying that maybe an angel in a dream will convince Joe like an angel convinced Joseph about his fiancée Mary those many years ago.

An angel - of sorts - finally does convince Joe and reunites the family. Here's a play with realistic characters and an ending that is warm without being syrupy. One interior living room set.

SET

The living room of the Stewart home. There are two exits. A doorway to the interior of the house is DSL and the door to the exterior is USR. A coat rack, with a few coats hanging on it, is next to this door. There is a fireplace USC. On the mantle are family pictures and various knick-knacks. There is a couch, SR, and an easy chair, SLC, next to the fireplace. End tables with lamps on them sit next to both the couch and chair. In front of the easy chair is a hassock. A large, decorated Christmas tree with stacks of presents under it is USL. The entire room is decorated for Christmas.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 m, 4 w, 1 child)

JOE STEWART: Father who doesn't have enough faith, in his early to mid 40's.

MAUREEN STEWART: Joe's wife, about the same age.

J.J. STEWART: Their 16-year-old son, recently returned from several months in a juvenile detention center.

CORY STEWART: Ten-year-old child of Joe and Maureen's. Can be either a girl or boy.

LIZZY: Maureen's older sister.

DALE GIBSON: Friend of J.J.'s, also 16.

ANGELA GIBSON: Dale's mother.

SECURITY GUARD: Uniformed security officer. Any age, male or female.

ADAM HUGHES: Chaplain of the juvenile detention center, about 30 years old.

PLAYING TIME: 35 minutes.

TIME: The present.

SYNOPSIS: Scene 1: Midday, Christmas Eve.

Scene 2: Early evening.

SFX: Doorbell, phone, door knocks.

PROPS

Coats for all except Joe (*Dale's coat should be extra roomy with pockets.*) toy for Cory; three large shopping bags filled with wrapped gifts; newspaper; plate of iced sugar cookies; glittery angel costume for Cory, small and poorly made; release form and pen; stack of register receipts; coffee mug.

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: It is midday, Christmas Eve. The empty set is brightly lit. There is a KNOCK at the DOOR, SR. After second KNOCK, MAUREEN enters, SL.)

MAUREEN: *(Crossing to the door.)* Just a minute. I'm coming. *(Opens the door.)*

LIZZY: *(Enters and quickly hugs MAUREEN. Excitedly.)*
Merry Christmas, Sis. Isn't this the most wonderful Christmas Eve you've ever seen?! *(Giggles as SHE walks to the center of the room and begins to remove her coat.)*

MAUREEN: Lizzy, you've said that every year since I can remember. Every Christmas can't be the best.

LIZZY: It seems like it to me. They just keep getting better every year. *(Smiles and laughs. SHE continues singing a peppy Christmas song as MAUREEN helps her with her coat.)* C'mon, Sis. Dance with me. *(Tries to get MAUREEN to dance.)*

MAUREEN: *(Pulling away, but good-naturedly.)* Lizzy, would you please act your age? You're older than I am, but you're acting like a kid!

LIZZY: Oh, I just can't help it. I just get so excited about Christmas. *(Giggles.)*

MAUREEN: I hate perky people.

LIZZY: Oh, you do not. You love me *(Hugs MAUREEN.)*
Now, I know you have my present around here somewhere. And I'm going to find it. *(Starts looking through the presents under the tree.)*

MAUREEN: It won't do you any good. I learned years ago to hide your present in a place you'll never find it.

LIZZY: *(Stands.)* Mom always used to do that, too. I never understood why.

MAUREEN: Probably because you could never keep your hands off of them. *(Laughs.)*

LIZZY: *(Giggling.)* Yes, it used to drive my Charley crazy, too.

MAUREEN: You're a snoop.

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LIZZY: I suppose I am. But I can't help it. (*Excitedly.*) I just love Christmas.

MAUREEN: A perky one at that. Nothing worse than a perky snoop.

LIZZY: (*Laughs.*) How about the children. Are they excited about the holiday?

MAUREEN: (*Smiling.*) Of course. Cory has been driving me crazy. I finally gave her one of her gifts just to keep her out of my hair.

LIZZY: Oh, yeah? Then I think I should be able to open one of my gifts, too.

MAUREEN: If you were ten-years-old, I'd consider it. But you're long past ten, even if you don't act like it. (*Laughs.*)

LIZZY: (*Feigning indignation.*) Maureen. Don't be nasty. I'm only one year older than you.

MAUREEN: Now, Lizzy. Don't add dishonesty to your list of faults. How many years older are you?

LIZZY: One ... two ... Okay, okay. Five. But I act young for my age.

MAUREEN: That's true. (*Laughs.*)

LIZZY: How about J.J.? Is he excited about the holiday?

MAUREEN: Yes. He really seems to be. It's great to have him home again. Even though he'd given us so much trouble, I sure missed him while he was gone. Those six months were such a long time.

LIZZY: They didn't mistreat him in that detention center, did they?

MAUREEN: (*Sitting in the easy chair.*) He doesn't talk about it much. The center seemed okay when Joe and I visited him there, though.

LIZZY: (*Sitting on the couch.*) How are J.J. and his Dad getting along? I know Joe was pretty hurt and angry when J.J. got arrested.

MAUREEN: Well, I guess the relationship is a little strained. But J.J.'s only been home two weeks. It's bound to take some time. He and Joe said some pretty awful things to each other at the police station when Joe went to bail him out.

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LIZZY: Well, if either one of them think they're going to ruin Christmas for me, they have another thing coming.

MAUREEN: I don't think that could happen. In fact, J.J. has really changed a lot. He agreed to go back to school. And he's working hard to do well. I hate to admit it, but the time he spent at the detention center seems to have done him some good.

CORY: (*Rushing in, SL, carrying a toy.*) Aunt Lizzy! (*Hugs HER.*) I didn't know you were here. (*Holding up the toy.*) Look what I got. I talked Mom into giving me a present early.

LIZZY: I heard. I'm not allowed to open any of my presents, yet. (*Hugs CORY.*) All set for the Christmas program at the church tonight?

CORY: (*Dully.*) Yeah, I guess so.

LIZZY: What's wrong?

CORY: I have to be an angel and wear a pair of big, dumb wings.

MAUREEN: Cory. Mrs. Baxter has worked very hard making those costumes for the program tonight. That's not nice to say.

CORY: Well, she didn't work hard enough because they still look dumb. (*Sitting next to LIZZY on the couch.*)

MAUREEN: Cory!

LIZZY: You might not like it, but every kid in our church has had to wear those dumb wings at one time or another since old Mrs. Baxter was put in charge of the Christmas Eve program.

MAUREEN: Lizzy! (*Smiles, in spite of HERSELF.*)

CORY: I bet J.J. never wore those dumb wings.

J.J.: (*Entering SL.*) Oh yes I did. I didn't like it, but it didn't kill me. Hi, Aunt Lizzy.

LIZZY: Merry Christmas, J.J. Cory, maybe if you run out to my car and bring in the presents it will help take your mind off those dumb wings.

CORY: Well ...

LIZZY: I'll let you shake yours and try to guess what it is.

CORY: Okay. (*Stands.*)

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