The Gift – Wrapped in Love

By Vicki Lake

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DEDICATION

To the faithful members of Potpourri Players.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Harry Hamilton, a local town council member, successfully persuades the council to eliminate the manger scene from the town square, only to discover that just a block away a local community church will host a living nativity. And guess who is chosen to be Joseph, Mary, and Baby Jesus? Harry's son and daughter-in-law had become Christians during the previous year and are delighted when the pastor asks them and their new son to portray the holy family.

Forced to visit the live nativity by his wife, the doting mother and grandmother, Harry at first appears to be bored with the choir's music and activities. However, as he reads one of the distributed tracts explaining why Jesus came to earth, his Scrooge-like heart is touched and Harry finds himself actually kneeling at the manger.

This drama can be combined with musical numbers for actual scenes or bridges between scenes. Ensemble or choir members can be utilized as extras.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The play premiered as part of a musical in December, 1993, and was presented again in December, 2003, at Community Church of Greenwood, IN.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

4 m, 4 w, 2 flexible, extras

HARRY HAMILTON: 40–50s, businessman and town council member wanting to have the manger scene removed from the town square.

JANE HAMILTON: 40–50s, wife of Harry.

STEVE HAMILTON: *(Joseph.)* businessman, son of Harry.

JILL HAMILTON: *(Mary.)* wife of Steve.

PASTOR PHILLIPS: Local pastor of Steve and Jill, instigator of live nativity scene.

GEORGE WEBB: Town council member.

LUCILLE WILHELM: Town council member.

DOUG (or DONNA) HANSON: Town council member.

DEAN (or DIANA) JONES: Church choir director.

EMMA SHORT: Friend of Jane Hamilton.

EXTRAS: As Townspeople, Choir Members, Nativity Characters, and Church Teens.

SETTING

Scene 1: Current day, a few weeks before Christmas. Late afternoon on a town street.
Scene 2: Several hours later.
Scene 3: The next morning.
Scene 4: Later that morning.
Scene 5: That night. Three areas played before the curtain – the church choir rehearsal room, Harry's living room, and Steve's house.
Scene 6: A week later. The church choir room (before curtain or the aisles of your theatre) and the nativity, located CS, in front of the church façade.

MUSIC: There are several opportunities for songs -- solos as well as choir numbers. Be sure to obtain permission to use copyrighted songs or arrangements.

Optional Scene: On page 10 after Steve's line, "Wow - could they ever dance," an optional scene was inserted in the original production. Children dressed as toys, including a toy soldier, performed some choreography to "March of the Tin Soldier" or similar-sounding song. It gave an opportunity for children of the congregation to participate in the production.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Late afternoon, several weeks before Christmas. CHOIR and CAST MEMBERS enter the town street carrying various items: briefcases, lunch boxes, newspapers, books, grocery sacks, shopping bags, wrapped Christmas packages, etc., as if they were heading home after a busy day. Holiday MUSIC plays softly in the background. STEVE HAMILTON at stage right notices his dad, HARRY, crossing the street at center stage. He hurries to catch up to him.)

STEVE: Hey, Dad, wait up!
HARRY: Oh, hi, son.
STEVE: Why are you in such a hurry? Does Mom have one of her great meals fixed for you tonight? Let me guess – lasagna and homemade garlic rolls topped off with her one-of-a-kind cheese cake.
HARRY: Wrong guess. I'm skipping supper tonight. I really need to talk to George Webb before the town council meeting tonight. Mom's eating out with Emma after Christmas shopping all afternoon with Jill and the baby.
STEVE: She'll be tired.
HARRY: Not too tired to go home and watch her once-a-year viewing of *White Christmas*. Sooo – am I ever glad I've got council tonight.
STEVE: Is there a full agenda for the meeting?
HARRY: Not too many items – just one or two heavies.
STEVE: Well, I do hope you all pass the "No Smoking Laws" for public places.
HARRY: We'll see how the majority rules. Gotta be democratic you know!
STEVE: Not to change the subject, but guess what your grandson did yesterday?
HARRY: Whatever he did, I'm sure it was spectacular. He's a chip off the old block.
STEVE: He rolled over for the first time. According to the books he's not supposed to do that for another two weeks.

HARRY: *(Proudly.)* Hey! This kid's no textbook average. Why, he's a Hamilton.
STEVE: Whatever you say.
HARRY: *(Looking at his watch.)* I better run along or I'll be late.
STEVE: See you, Dad. Have a great council meeting.

(STEVE exits into a store and HARRY crosses to stage left in front of the town hall where he meets GEORGE WEBB.)

HARRY: *(Waving to GEORGE.)* Hey, George.
GEORGE: *(Concerned.)* What's up, Harry? Don't tell me you want to change the agenda for tonight. You know Doug will insist on the "No Smoking Laws" in public places vote – no getting around that.
HARRY: I know. But I would like to bring up one small new item of business and I'll need your backing. Remember that you owe me one after last month's meeting.
GEORGE: What's that?
HARRY: First of all, I want you to realize that sooner or later the council will have to face this issue whether we want to or not. It's just a matter of time.
GEORGE: *(Skeptical.)* Doesn't sound too promising already.
HARRY: The ACLU has already brought suit against a town in Illinois – and, mind you, won its case.
GEORGE: *(Jokingly.)* Well, what had the town done wrong or, perhaps, right according to the situation?
HARRY: They allowed a manger scene on the town square.
GEORGE: For heaven's sake, Harry, you're not wanting us to remove the manger scene from our town square. It's tradition! Why that would be sacrilegious.
HARRY: Now wait a minute, George, before you get your feathers all ruffled up. Think about it. It would be better for us to just go ahead and do it before any group comes in and raises a stink. We don't need to pay any legal fees.
GEORGE: *(Pleadingly.)* But Harry…you can't take Christ out of Christmas.

End of Freeview

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