GRANDPA HANGS THE HOLLY

By Don Elser

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PUBLISHED BY

Eldridge Publishing Company
PO Box 14367
Tallahassee, FL 32317
95church.com

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Ever since a tragedy befell Grandpa Howard, on Christmas Eve twenty-five years before the play begins, he has refused to celebrate the holiday season in the traditional way. Instead, he makes life miserable for everyone, including himself.

The Howard family is bravely trying to overcome his crepe hanging, but is making little headway. Mrs. Howard is conducting a drive to raise money for some homeless people and needs Grandpa's car. He refuses to cooperate. Mr. Howard and daughter, Susan, are trying to borrow money from Grandpa for a very important business deal that literally means life or death to Susan's boy friend. Grandpa refuses to listen. Young Larry and Betty Leland, the neighborhood pest, are constantly running afoul of Grandpa's temper. Even Ann, the maid, cannot escape his wrath.

Pathos and fantasy enter the story when Grandpa dreams of the beautiful woman who was once his wife. When tragedy threatens his favorite granddaughter, Susan, Granddad shows his true colors. He does a right about face and shows everyone what the Christmas spirit really is.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(4m, 7w, 4 or 5 extras)

GRANDAD HOWARD: Gruff man of seventy.
MR. HOWARD: Business man, Granddad's son.
MRS. HOWARD: His wife.
SUSAN HOWARD: The daughter.
LARRY HOWARD: The son.
MRS. LELAND: A neighbor.
BETTY LELAND: Larry's girl friend.
MISS BIRCH: A newspaper reporter.
ANN: The Howards' maid.
ARTHUR COLBY: Susan's fiance.
A YOUNG WOMAN: The Spirit of Granddad's departed wife.
NEIGHBOR LADIES: Four or five.

Act I - The evening before Christmas Eve.
Act II - Early Christmas Eve.
Act III - Fifteen minutes later.

Playing time: A full evening.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The setting represents the living room of the Howard home located in a small town not far from an Eastern city. It is comfortably, but not elaborately furnished, and decorated for Christmas in the traditional way.

USL, in the corner of the room, is a Christmas tree. In the large window at the UC of the room hangs a wreath. A door, SL, leads to the outside; another, SR, to the kitchen. Stairs, SR. Distribution of furniture is suggested in the accompanying diagram.

The scene outside the rear window is one of a snow-covered landscape with continuous snowfall during the play, increasing at times according to the speeches. If possible, the sound of wind could be added, especially in the second act, where everyone leaves for caroling and Grandad is left alone. Snow, of course, covers the clothes of everyone entering from SL. This, of course, can be artificial snow, while that falling outside the window can be small pieces of paper and cotton.

The sound of the airplane engine, which occurs twice during the play, should not be so loud that it drowns out the speakers. Loudness is not desired, but in order to produce the desired effect a sound record should be used.

In several places special lighting effects will add much. The Christmas tree will lend a lot of atmosphere with several strings of lights on it. A lighted wreath in the window is a good idea. When Grandad turns off the room lights, the bridge or floor light near his chair should be dim and just enough to outline his face and perhaps allow the audience to see a little of his expression. When the Woman appears on the stair landing, give her a spot and follow her down into room and out again as she exits.

PROPS

Act I
Newspaper - Grandad - on-stage.
Sleigh bells - offstage in the distance.
Christmas cards - on stereo.
Boots and packages - Susan - left entrance.
Several packages - Mr. Howard - left entrance.
Christmas tree decorations - on stage.
Piece of paper - Mrs. Howard.
Pencil - Mr. Howard.
Cup of tea - Grandad - right entrance.
Hymn books - Larry and Betty - left entrance.
Cookies - Larry - left entrance.
Glass of buttermilk - Susan - right entrance.

Act II
Cookies - Larry - right entrance.
Newspaper - Grandad - stairs.
Package under Christmas tree - Larry.
Pine tree branches - Larry - left entrance.
Large cake pan - Mrs. Leland - left entrance.
Magazine - Mr. Howard - left entrance.
Hymn books - Larry and Betty - right entrance.

Act III
Cup - Mrs. Leland - right entrance.
Notebook - Miss Birch - left entrance.
Wrist watch - Miss Birch.
Cup - Ann - right entrance.
Handkerchief - Ann.

COSTUME and CHARACTER PLOT

GRANDAD HOWARD - About 70. Surprisingly agile for his age, intelligent and apparently well educated. Dresses in wrinkled but clean clothes. Is gruff and sharp except when reminiscing.

MR. HOWARD - Typical business man, nearing fifty, large and powerful. Small black mustache. Wears a business suit and carries a brief case.

MRS. HOWARD - A middle-aged woman with slightly graying hair. Is a good mother; likes to organize and run things. Gets excited rather easily.

SUSAN - Attractive, about 20. Dresses neatly; is given to moodiness at times, like her grandfather.

LARRY - Typical adolescent; indifferent to important family affairs. Dresses in sweaters, loud mufflers and stocking cap. Likes to be dramatic.

MRS. LELAND - Typical next-door neighbor. Likes to gossip, carry the news, gush, and exaggerate.

BETTY LELAND - A miniature of her mother; gushing, little-girlish. Wears ribbons in her hair.

ARTHUR COLBY - An ambitious man, 25. Wears regular business suit or some sort of pilot's uniform.

MISS BIRCH - A studious, good looking person, about 30. Capable of getting any situation under control.

ANN - Typical maid with apron or full uniform.

YOUNG WOMAN - This part could be played by Susan, but, since several of the speeches are rather long and important, it is better to allow another person to put full time on the part. She wears a long white dress.

NEIGHBOR LADIES - Number left to the director. All entrances from outside or SL require the wearing of winter clothing. Since it is supposed to be snowing throughout the play, this should be indicated by appearance of snow on clothing.

End of Freeview

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