

THE GUIDING STAR

By Cheryl Harrison

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THE GUIDING STAR

-2-

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CHARLES HENDERSON: Wealthy man in search of something.

ELIZABETH HENDERSON: Charles' wife, "better than thou" attitude.

KATIE: Henderson's maid, a good Christian lady.

MARK SHEPHERD: Pastor of local church.

ANGELA BARRINGTON: Henderson's blonde, wealthy, nosy neighbor.

GEORGE WISE: Poor, unfortunate soul heading for the mission.

BERNIE WISE: Cousin of George, not too bright.

HAROLD SMITH: Retired motel manager.

MARTHA SMITH: Harold's wife.

JOE and MARY BLANTON: Young couple caught in a snowstorm.

THE GUIDING STAR

-3-

PLAYING TIME: About 45 minutes.

TIME/PLACE: The present, Christmas Eve. All action takes place in the modern living room of the wealthy Henderson family.

SETTING: The living room has one picture window and two exits, one to the outside and one to the interior of the home. The room is furnished with a sofa, loveseat, chairs, end table and lamp, Christmas tree and other holiday decorations, telephone, and coat rack.

COSTUMES: Characters wear modern day dress, winter clothes and coats. Pastor wears a suit. George and Bernie dress as bums. Katie should wear a maid's uniform. Joe, Mary, Angela, Pastor, George and Ernie should change into Biblical costumes if optional nativity scene is included.

PROPS: Dust cloth, coffee tray, room deodorant spray, glass of water - for Katie; book, money, afghan - for Charles; wrapped baby doll - for Mary.

SOUND EFFECTS: Doorbell, telephone.

THE GUIDING STAR

-4-

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: KATIE comes on humming carols, happy about the season, as she dusts and tidies up. She could be decorating a Christmas tree throughout the play. Enter LIZ.)

LIZ: Katie, have you seen Mr. Henderson?

KATIE: *(Cleaning.)* Yes ma'am. He's on top of the house putting up that big fancy star just like you ordered ... I mean asked him to, ma'am.

LIZ: Oh wonderful! That star will be the biggest and the brightest in the county. You know it will just put that Angela Barrington's star to shame. Did I tell you that we spent a fortune on that star alone this year ... not too mention all the other decorations?

KATIE: *(Uninterested.)* Yes ma'am ... many times.

LIZ: *(Pacing.)* Oh Katie, everything is finally starting to fall into place and this will be the biggest and best Christmas we've ever had. But it certainly gets harder and harder every year to try and outdo the last one. *(Pause.)* Maybe we should only have Christmas every two years. Then we could really do it right. What do you think? Christmas every other year.

KATIE: I'm sorry, ma'am, but I think Christmas is just too special to have only once every two years. After all, it's not really about trying to out do one another. It's about the birth of our Savior.

LIZ: *(Laughing.)* Oh Katie. *(Talking down to HER.)* Now I know that that's the way people like you think about Christmas but it's different for people of ... well ... like me. Oh really, you wouldn't understand now, would you?

KATIE: *(A little indignant.)* If you will excuse my manners, ma'am, I think that it is you who does not understand. The true meaning of Christmas is not fancy decorations and bright lights, it's ...

THE GUIDING STAR

-5-

LIZ: *(With authority.)* Katie, I think that you are forgetting your place and besides I don't have time for all that church stuff now. You seem to have forgotten that I always give quite generously to that little church of yours. I've done my part and more this Christmas.

(KATIE shakes head in frustration. Enter CHARLES from outdoors.)

LIZ: *(Excited.)* Did you get it up? Is it the biggest star in the county? Oh, it just has to be.

CHARLES: Now slow down, dear. It is up and it is quite bright. But go ahead and look for yourself ... you won't be satisfied until you do.

LIZ: Get my coat, Katie. I'm going to look at my star. *(KATIE gets LIZ her coat.)* Hurry, Katie, and you can come and see it with me.

(KATIE grabs her coat quickly and THEY exit briefly. CHARLES takes coat off and goes to window to watch them. They re-enter.)

LIZ: Oh, Charles, it is perfect. I can't wait for everyone to see it. The grandchildren will be so excited. And just you wait until that Angela Barrington sees that star. She will just die of jealousy.

KATIE: It certainly is beautiful, Mr. Henderson. I imagine it is just like the star that shone over the stable in Bethlehem the night Christ was born.

LIZ: Stable? Really Katie, you are so quaint, you really do believe that stuff don't you. *(Goes to CHARLES.)* Oh Charles, it's worth every penny we spent and more.

CHARLES: *(Proudly.)* Well my dear, the Hendersons always have the best! But you know, even with that big star out there and everything else in place, I just can't help but feel like I've forgotten something ... like something is missing. Are you quite sure we have everything out this year?

THE GUIDING STAR

-6-

LIZ: Oh Charles, what could be missing? We have everything! The best decorations in town, lots of presents, and a wonderful family coming home for Christmas Eve dinner tomorrow. What else could there be? Which reminds me, Katie do you have all the rooms ready for the children? And we must go over the menu together.

CHARLES: Now just relax, Liz. I'm sure Katie has everything under control.

KATIE: Thank you sir, and yes I do have everything under control. I just wanted to clear one thing with you folks.

CHARLES: What's that, Katie?

KATIE: Well, I would like to take about an hour or so off tomorrow evening to attend the Christmas Eve service at our church. I go every year, but since the children are coming home and we are having a special dinner, I thought I would just go for the service and not stay for the party afterwards.

LIZ: *(Almost laughing.)* Oh my dear Katie, you are a card! Imagine Charles ... the night off. Isn't she a riot ... always kidding us.

KATIE: Not the entire evening ma'am, just an hour or so. And I am definitely not kidding around.

CHARLES: Now Liz, perhaps we should hear Katie out. After all, it is for only an hour.

LIZ: But Charles, it is simply out of the question. This is the first time in years that everyone in our family will be together for dinner and it must be perfect. No Katie, I'm afraid you are needed here.

KATIE: But this is very important to me. Why not bring your family along and come to church with me. We could have a lovely dinner before and ...

CHARLES: Now Katie, I do appreciate your invitation but we haven't seen our children for quite a while and we want to spend time with them and the grandchildren. Surely you can understand that.

LIZ: Oh Charles, enough of this nonsense. Katie, we don't have time for church and especially on Christmas. There's too much to do and I'm afraid you'll have to stay and help too ... if you want to keep your job that is!

End of Freeview

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