

# **HALFWAY to CHRISTMAS**

*By Alberta Hawse*

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HALFWAY TO CHRISTMAS

-2-

**STORY OF THE PLAY**

Lyne and Gary Ambrose don't have the Christmas spirit yet, and my not get it at all this year! Their somewhat spoiled daughter and pampered son-in-law are living with them while he's out of work, and it's a little tense around the house, to say the least. On top of it all, Lyne and Gary agreed to take in a foster child for the holidays, against the advice of their daughter, and the child happens to be the same one who stole Lyne's purse at the mall! Real characters with real problems make this play an affirmation of faith as it reminds us that God does not solve problems halfway but through prayers, He solves them totally.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(2 m, 3 w, 1 boy)*

**GARY AMBROSE:** A Christian. Retired high school science teacher. In late 50's.

**LYNE:** His wife, active in church and civic groups. In middle 50's.

**ROBIN:** Their married daughter who has been rather spoiled. Early 30's. A nominal Christian.

**ARTHUR:** *(Art)* Her husband, also a Christian, unemployed quality control expert. Health conscious, sometimes a little boisterous.

**SALLY:** *(Small part)* Lyne's closest Christian friend. Very sensible.

**SKIPPER:** A 12-year-old boy living in a Halfway House for delinquent boys, future uncertain. *(Must be a good actor)*

*HALFWAY TO CHRISTMAS*

-3-

**ACT I:** Several days before Christmas.

**ACT II:** The day before Christmas.

**PLAYING TIME:** About 60 minutes.

**SETTING:** Ordinary comfortable living room. One larger table and one TV table, chairs, sofa, lamps, phone, etc. Christmas tree in prominent place. Sofa cluttered with Christmas decorations, boxes, lights, etc. Some packages partially wrapped. Draped greens or string of colored lights are sagging across walls or windows. Everything should look as half-way finished as possible but able to be plugged in or fastened up quickly. Two entrances needed. A third is possible. SR leads to kitchen and basement, SL to outside, UPC to hall and bedrooms.

**COSTUMES:** All wear ordinary winter clothing. Changes can be made. Skipper wears a cap that is pulled low over his eyes, and jeans with a well-worn jacket with the collar pulled up around his face. A bright new jacket is needed for his gift.

**SOUNDS:** Telephone, and any Christmas music that director wishes to use during play.

HALFWAY TO CHRISTMAS

-4-

**PROPS:** (*Other than stage furnishings and wall decorations.*) Tree decorations must include: 1 box of new decorative ornaments and hanging hooks; tinsel; one article such as a lighted church, or a candelabra that needs a bulb, or any item that can be assembled quickly. Special items also include one computer banner or painted sign to hang on wall that says "Welcome Lord Jesus" with picture of Infant Jesus. Also a sign on a tripod, saying "Deli Delight".

**Prelude Scene:**

Lyne's large purse  
Tray and two Styrofoam cups  
Couple of packages

**ACT I:**

Several toilet papers cylinders  
Few packages, wrapped and unwrapped  
Wise Men figurines  
Small glass of orange juice  
Large glass of greenish liquid

**ACT II:**

Boy's new jacket with pockets  
Clothing box with white tissue paper in it  
Platter of cookies  
Bowl of popcorn  
Bible that looks new  
Old fashioned ice cream churn paddle, if available  
Robin's rings  
Dish towel  
Apron

HALFWAY TO CHRISTMAS

-5-

**PRELUDE SCENE**

*(BEFORE CURTAIN: A small, tea room or patio type table and two small chairs are CS in front of curtain or set up in the living room with the room blacked out and the SPOTLIGHT on the table and chairs. A sign on a tripod at the side says "DELI DELIGHT." Soft mall-type CHRISTMAS MUSIC is fading as LYNE and SALLY enter. It is a week before Christmas and they have been shopping. Sally carries her purse, a few packages, and a tray with two Styrofoam cups of coffee. Lyne is carrying a large purse and a couple of packages which she sets down on the table. They begin to talk as they take off their jackets and sit down to relax.)*

SALLY: Lyne, are you sure you won't let me buy you a piece of pie? I can recommend the peanut butter cream.

LYNE: No way! *(Takes sip of coffee, relaxes.)* Thanks. This sure hits the spot.

SALLY: You looked as if you needed a pickup.

LYNE: *(Confessing.)* I'm fighting holiday apathy. I should be excited about Christmas but I'm not. *(Looks around and motions.)* Look at them out in the mall. All rushing around like mad ... for what?

SALLY: *(Smiles.)* See the one in the green slacks? I'll bet she has one of those fifty dollar toys for Junior that says "batteries not included."

LYNE: And she won't find it out until Christmas morning. *(THEY laugh.)* What about that man? He needs a forklift. I'll bet that box he has is marked "Easy to assemble."

SALLY: What a joke! How Jim hated those.

LYNE: Gary, too. He had more broken fingernails and bruised thumbs than a backyard mechanic.

HALFWAY TO CHRISTMAS

-6-

SALLY: (*Serious again.*) I'm as crazy as they are. I just ordered Jim a whole slew of video stuff that won't be in until January.

LYNE: If I didn't get it today, (*Indicating packages.*) I'm settling for gift certificates.

SALLY: I finally bought clothes for the grandkids. I gave up on things they really wanted from the ads. (*Mimicking a clerk.*) "I am very sorry, but I just sold the last one, and we're not expecting another shipment until the first of May."

LYNE: (*Nods.*) Or (*SHE mimics.*) "Lady, the ad was very plain. The sale ended TODAY at NOON."

SALLY: I think it's a conspiracy. What they need is some of your son-in-law's quality control. (*Reaches for LYNE'S cup.*) How about a refill?

LYNE: No, thanks. Something is working on my nerves and I prefer to think it's coffee.

SALLY: No second cup? No Christmas spirit? You are in a bad way. What is it?

LYNE: I don't know for sure, but since my daughter and her husband have moved in with us, I feel like an alien in my own home.

SALLY: I know the feeling.

LYNE: Gary has made part of my laundry room into an office for Arthur. His computer equipment is about the only thing they didn't put in storage.

SALLY: (*Alert.*) You mean they intend to stay indefinitely?

LYNE: Until he gets another job. They had to rent their house in order to meet the mortgage payments.

SALLY: Can't they afford a small apartment?

LYNE: Eventually. Arthur is sending out resumes. But the worry has brought on some of Robin's old stomach problems.

SALLY: Oh sweet mistletoe! Robin always got a stomachache whenever she had anything unpleasant to face. She's taking you for a ride. Don't tell me it's your "parental duty."

LYNE: But in an emergency ... if we love our children ...?

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