

HIS ONLY SON

By David Dunlap

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Richard Franklin is a bitter man who can't stop blaming his son William for an accident which killed an older Franklin son one Christmas some 20 years ago. The tragedy has soured their father-son relationship although Richard, an important church member, and William, who is indifferent to religion, have learned to live with it.

A crisis this Christmas, however, makes both men face up to the true meaning of what giving - and forgiving - really means. Additional roles include Betty, the wife who knows God is the source of all strength; the Franklin daughters; and Aunt Hazel, the know-it-all relative who doesn't even know how funny she is.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2m, 4w)

RICHARD FRANKLIN: Middle aged patriarch of the Franklin household.

BETTY FRANKLIN: Richard's wife, same age.

WILLIAM FRANKLIN: Married son who lives a few hours away, 30.

SHARON ANDERSON: Married daughter, 25, several months pregnant.

BECKY FRANKLIN: Teenage daughter.

AUNT HAZEL: Older relative.

PLAYING TIME: 60 minutes.

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SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: Attic of the Franklin home, Friday afternoon, mid-December, current year.

Scene 2: Same set, several hours later.

Scene 3: Same set, Saturday morning.

SET PROPS

Large steamer trunk; rocking chair; old, folded crib covered with a quilt; high chair; stacks of newspapers; many boxes of different sizes; and other miscellaneous items.

HAND PROPS

Photograph album; a dusty newspaper; 8 x 10 family photograph; wallet for William containing a small picture; large box with "Billy" written on it containing: small stuffed animal, stack of report cards, trophy, Bible; a tray and three cans of soft drink; watch for Betty.

TIME

The present, a week or two before Christmas.

SETTING

The attic of the Franklin home. The attic has one entrance, USC. This entrance leads to a small landing and stairway down to a hallway. The walls are wooden with the wall studs visible. At SR are one or two dormer style windows. These windows have no curtains, but the panes are clouded with dirt. The attic is cluttered with miscellaneous pieces of furniture, trunks, suitcases, boxes of all sizes, and other memorabilia. The attic appears dirty and dingy.

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Scene 1

(AT RISE: It is a Friday afternoon in mid-December. As the CURTAIN opens, BETTY is sitting on a large trunk with a photo album in her lap. AUNT HAZEL is walking around, looking at the junk and talking. Although the set is in full LIGHT, it still appears dingy.)

AUNT HAZEL: Betty, it's not healthy for you to sit in this dusty old attic. *(Coughs.)*

BETTY: Oh, Aunt Hazel, I -

AUNT HAZEL: What are you doing up here anyway?

BETTY: I was just looking for a few things.

AUNT HAZEL: *(Looking around.)* It all looks like junk to me. *(BETTY appears irritated, but remains silent.)* Are you all ready for Christmas, Betty?

BETTY: Just about. I still have to do some shopping and a little more baking. How about you?

AUNT HAZEL: Oh, yes. You know me. I never let anything go to the last minute. I've been ready for weeks.

BETTY: Where are you spending the holiday? At Sherry's again this year?

AUNT HAZEL: Yes. I wouldn't miss Christmas at Sherry's. She always goes out of her way to make Christmas extra special.

BETTY: *(Unimpressed.)* That's nice.

AUNT HAZEL: Isn't it wonderful about Sherry's boy, Bob. I did tell you the good news, didn't I?

BETTY: *(Uninterested.)* Yes.

AUNT HAZEL: Do you realize that this is his fourth promotion in three years? He certainly is a go-getter.

BETTY: I suppose he is.

AUNT HAZEL: It's a shame your William doesn't have some of his cousin's ambition. He might be able to get -

BETTY: Aunt Hazel. William is doing just fine. You leave him alone.

AUNT HAZEL: Now your Ricky. There was a smart one. I'm sure Ricky would have given Bob a run for his money if he hadn't ... Well, you know what I mean.

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BETTY: (*Sadly.*) Yes.

AUNT HAZEL: It's twenty years ago this Christmas, isn't it?

BETTY: Yes.

AUNT HAZEL: Terrible thing to have happen on Christmas.

BETTY: It would have been terrible anytime.

AUNT HAZEL: Oh, of course. It's a wonder you and Richard are able to celebrate Christmas at all after having something like that happen.

BETTY: The first few Christmases were the worst. And it still is a little difficult at times.

AUNT HAZEL: I imagine you both regret buying Ricky a bicycle that Christmas. I'm sure you would -

SHARON: (*Offstage.*) Mom? Are you home?

BETTY: (*Relieved for an interruption, calls offstage.*) I'm up here. In the attic.

SHARON: (*Entering.*) Hi, Mom. I ... (*Seeing HAZEL.*) Oh, hello, Aunt Hazel.

AUNT HAZEL: Hello, my dear. How are you this afternoon?

SHARON: I'm okay. A little tired, I guess.

AUNT HAZEL: Well, don't you baby yourself too much. That's the worst thing a woman could do when ... (*Looking around and then whispering as if saying something secretive.*) ... when she's in the family way.

SHARON: But my doctor said -

AUNT HAZEL: Doctors! What do they know about having babies. In my day, a woman in your condition could do three loads of laundry, scrub the floors, and feed the chickens all before breakfast. We couldn't allow ourselves to get tired.

BETTY: (*Laughing.*) Aunt Hazel, you never even had any children.

AUNT HAZEL: (*A little irritated.*) Nevertheless, you shouldn't be too easy on yourself.

SHARON: Whatever you say, Aunt Hazel.

AUNT HAZEL: Well, I still have a million things to do. (*Hugs SHARON.*) You remember what I said, my dear. You'll be happy you did. Well, I'm off. Good-bye, Betty. (*Exits.*)

SHARON: (*Shaking HER head and laughing.*) She's off, all right. (*BOTH women laugh.*) I guess she'll never change.

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BETTY: Unfortunately, you're right. *(Pauses.)* Are you sure you're okay? You look pale.

SHARON: I feel much better than I did this morning. Were you this sick when you were pregnant?

BETTY: All four times. It shouldn't last much longer, though.

SHARON: I hope you're right. I can't take much more of this. Everyone I know gains weight when they're expecting but I've lost three pounds.

BETTY: Don't rush it. That will come soon enough.

SHARON: Yes, I suppose you're right. *(Looking around.)* What are you doing in the attic?

BETTY: I finished my decorating downstairs so I thought I'd try to sort through the leftover boxes of decorations up here. Unfortunately, I found this old photo album in the first box I opened and never got any cleaning done.

SHARON: *(Jokingly.)* I don't know why you bother cleaning anything out up here. You never throw any of it away.

BETTY: You never know when I might need some of this stuff.

SHARON: *(Kicking a huge stack of old newspapers.)* Like these. *(Picking up a paper and blows a cloud of dust off of it; looks at the paper.)* This paper is nine years old! *(BOTH women laugh.)*

BETTY: I guess it's time I had your father take those to the trash.

SHARON: *(Jokingly.)* Oh, you never know when you might need them.

BETTY: I can't imagine what people who don't have large attics do with all their old things.

SHARON: They throw them away.

BETTY: I'm glad I don't have to do that. These keepsakes bring back a lot good memories. Like this. *(Standing and indicating a picture in the photo album in HER hands.)* Do you remember this trip to Florida?

SHARON: *(Looking at the picture.)* Oh! Look at my hair. It's so frizzy! I look awful.

BETTY: *(Looking closely at the picture.)* I guess it was pretty fuzzy. The home permanent I gave you didn't turn out quite the way I'd hoped. *(Laughs.)*

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