

Hope's Diner

By Phillip D. Smith

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to Samantha, who, from the beginning, listened, watched, and stood by me, held my hand, believed in me, and gave me the encouragement I needed to make it through the whole production. You have made my life much brighter and enjoyable. Thank you.

STORY OF THE PLAY

It is a snowy Christmas Eve and at a lonely roadside diner, Hope, the owner, and Darla, a waitress, are working the evening shift, anxious to close up and get home. But late-arriving customers need food to warm their bodies and faith to warm their souls. Rusty, a quiet truck driver, arrives first, followed by Meredith, a depressed homeless mother with a young daughter, and finally Randall, a brash, arrogant young man who's been traveling for a while. When Rusty convinces Meredith to get a fresh start through his outreach ministry, his unassuming act of kindness and generosity affects Randall, who wonders why anyone would go to so much trouble. Remembering that God sends people into our lives for a reason, Darla and Hope decide that they can help Randall find a purpose in his life through Jesus, and as a start, invite Randall to join them for Christmas Eve service. These unforgettable characters will leave you with a renewed sense of hope this Christmas as well. Optional songs suggested to enhance your production.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Originally produced as *Another Night Before Christmas* on December 10 and 12, 2004. The original cast included:

Hope (Julia): Mary Anna Valderas

Darla: Rachael Wainner

Meredith: Kaye Adams

Yvonne: Jessica Wyner

Rusty: Charles Jensen

Randall: Joseph Wayne Guinn

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2m, 3w, 1 girl)

HOPE: Owner of the diner. She knows how to run her business and while not overly sweet, she realizes that kindness and concern helps maintain a consistent clientele. She has a strong faith and understands that God sends people into our lives for a reason.

DARLA: Waitress. In her early twenties, she has been hurt by men before and is guarded when it comes to relationships. Her interactions with RANDALL should be sharp and even terse at times.

MEREDITH: Homeless woman who is quiet, reserved, and almost given up on life. She is reluctant in speaking, moving, approaching any other character, except her daughter.

YVONNE: Daughter, 7 or 8 years old. Even though she does not speak, she is the catalyst for change in Meredith's life. Her reactions to different stimuli, such as direct comments made to her, should be reserved, understated, but powerful. During the song "Sleigh Ride," she becomes involved, but returns to her subdued manner once the song is completed.

RUSTY: Forty to sixty-year-old truck driver and pastor. He is a grandfatherly type who cares deeply about people and is willing to help anyone at anytime. He is outgoing and well versed in Biblical application.

RANDALL: Drifter. He is outgoing, brash, arrogant, obnoxious, and yet charming. His free spirit helps carry the production through the first half. The change he goes through should be noticeable but not overdone.

SETTING

It is Christmas Eve, current day. The props and set pieces need to make the stage look like a small mom-and-pop diner, including a counter, tables, chairs, stools, a coat rack, and other items that will enhance the atmosphere.

Note: See end of script for a complete list of props.

MUSIC

The music in the play is optional, but the songs listed below were chosen to help build the story (with the exception of "The Christmas Waltz" and "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year.") When using any song, be sure to obtain rights from the music publisher.

The Christmas Waltz (c)1954, Sands Music Corp.

Sung by Choir. Hope and Darla enter in the last few measures of this song to begin the production.

Sleigh Ride/On A Sleigh Ride With You! (c)1997, Word Music

Song should be fun allowing Randall to flirt with Darla, taking her on an imaginary sleigh ride.

Grown-Up Christmas List (c)1990, Warner-Tamerlane Publ, Corp.

Meredith should sing this song to the audience and at the end turn to Yvonne and sing to her.

King of Glory (Mac Powell & Third Day) (c)2000, New Spring Publishing, Inc/Vandura 2500 Songs (ASCAP)

Randall begins this song after he has moved to the DL table where he sings the first verse. He moves CS during the second verse before Darla and Hope take over singing.

Good News (Rob Mathes) (c)1995, River Oaks Music & Maybe I Can Music (EMI)

Sung by Darla to Randall.

Jesus Born On This Day (Mariah Carey/Walter Afanasieff) (c)1994, Sony/ATV Tunes LLC & Wallyworld Music

By Hope, Darla and Choir. Hope begins singing this song to Randall at the DL table, but then moves CS to complete it.

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year (c)1963, Barnaby Music (Warner Bros. Pub) from "Holiday Classics" collection by David. T. Clydesdale (c)1997, Word Music

Song to close the program.

HOPE'S DINER

(At RISE: Music plays under. It is evening. Hope is UC behind the counter, Darla is DL wiping a table.)

DARLA: I'm almost finished with the tables. Do you want me to start on the floor? *(CROSSES SR to table.)*

HOPE: No, let's wait. Someone might wander in after awhile.

DARLA: In this snowstorm? You really think so?

HOPE: I tell you what, if no one comes in before the top of the hour, then we'll shut down and go home.

DARLA: Deal.

HOPE: Just think, you might be getting home early this Christmas Eve.

DARLA: I don't think anyone is getting home early in this weather. Although it would be nice to make it to midnight services.

HOPE: We're not doing midnight services this year.

DARLA: Why not?

HOPE: Too many members of the staff are out of town.

DARLA: Would you like to come with me?

HOPE: I think once I make it home, I'm not going to want to leave.

DARLA: Are you still going to see your mother tomorrow?

HOPE: Plan on it. What about you?

DARLA: A couple of friends invited me over.

HOPE: Whatever happened to that boy you were seeing? I haven't seen him around in a couple of months.

DARLA: And you won't. I found out he had another girlfriend on the other side of town. One that drove a cherry red Corvette.

HOPE: Oh, sweetie, I'm so sorry.

DARLA: Don't be. I'm better off without him.

HOPE: Maybe, but Christmas can be so lonely.

DARLA: True, but I imagine you have it tougher.

HOPE: After time, it becomes less lonely.

DARLA: How long has it been?

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HOPE: It's been over ten years since Vincent died. Although sometimes, it does seem like yesterday when we started this diner.

DARLA: You've done an excellent job of keeping it going.

HOPE: Thank you. I have some good help.

DARLA: *(Feigned look of shock.)* You mean you hired someone else?

HOPE: Silly.

DARLA: *(Looking out the door SL.)* Look at that thing pulling in.

HOPE: What?

DARLA: That rig. Even in the snow it looks like it just rolled off the assembly line. Shiny wax job, even the chrome reflects the traffic lights. I bet it doesn't have a hundred miles on it.

HOPE: You are so easily impressed.

DARLA: You have to admit, you've never seen a rig that nice before.

HOPE: I don't know that I've ever noticed.

DARLA: I do. And you would remember if you had.

HOPE: If you say so.

DARLA: I did.

HOPE: Why do you think it would stop here?

DARLA: Why not? Truck drivers need to eat.

HOPE: Well, we better have something for him to eat.

DARLA: Do you want to wait until he orders?

HOPE: *(Thinking.)* No, let's just plop something down in front of him and tell him it's all we have.

DARLA: I take back what I said earlier.

HOPE: What?

DARLA: That you were doing a good job of keeping this place running.

HOPE: Go mop the floor.

(RUSTY ENTERS SL, crosses to the counter SL and sits on the stool.)

HOPE: *(Continued.)* Welcome. What can I get for you?

End of Freeview

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