

THE MAN WHO CAME FOR CHRISTMAS

*By Bobby G. Wood
Author of the acclaimed play,
"Christmas Comes to Detroit Louie"*

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The Man Who Came For Christmas

-2-

STORY OF THE PLAY

Here's the story of a mysterious stranger, who one night, changes forever the lives of a small group of stranded travelers. The group is a mismatched bunch of people thrown together, perhaps by circumstances, perhaps not. It is Christmas Eve and their bus has broken down in a snowstorm. Far away from town, they seek refuge in an old bus station/general store.

Each traveler has his own fear or weakness. The Cripple depends on his crutches not only to walk, but to gain sympathy. They are his excuse not to face life. The Woman feels she must wear valuable jewelry to be worth something as a human being. The Preacher has lost sight of God and can only see as far as his flask. The young Husband and Wife are lying and running away, afraid to go home again. Charley, the bus station agent, uses tall tales to hide his true soul.

As the travelers begin to settle down for the night, they hear a noise outside and let in a stranger whose hands and back are broken and bleeding. Afraid at first of being robbed by this man whose presence cannot really be explained, they soon read the Christmas story from the Bible. The Stranger tells how each of them could have played a role at the nativity.

The next morning the travelers wake up to find the Stranger gone, but the gifts He has left surpass their greatest dreams.

The Man Who Came For Christmas

-3-

SETTING

Combination small bus station/general store with stove or fireplace and several wooden chairs. Homey, but run-down. Has two exits, one to outside and one to a back room. Act I opens before curtain on the store's "front porch" where Charley, as an old man in a rocking chair, starts to tell his story.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 m, 2 w, 1 b, 1 g)

CHARLEY: Uncle with a story.

GIRL: His niece.

BOY: His nephew.

BUS DRIVER: Tries to repair bus.

AGENT CHARLEY: Stretches the truth to feel important.

CRIPPLE (*Bill Martin*): Lets his handicap ruin his life.

PREACHER (*James Harrold*): Has lost sight of God; is dependent on booze.

WOMAN (*Darlene Gale*): Leads a tough life; her jewelry is her crutch.

YOUNG HUSBAND/WIFE: Running away; lie about (*Jimmy and Mary Williams*) being married.

THE STRANGER: Mysterious man who changes the lives of the travelers.

Props: Rocking chair for Charley before curtain; crutches for Cripple, flashy jewelry for Woman; flask for Preacher; bus tickets for Young Husband and Wife; luggage; blanket; medicine; coffee pot and mugs; dusty Bible; note from Stranger.

Playing Time: Approx. 40 minutes.

The Man Who Came For Christmas

-4-

ACT I

(BEFORE CURTAIN: The OLD MAN is in a rocking chair in front of the store with the young BOY and GIRL sitting at his feet listening to him.)

GIRL: Uncle Charley, you tell the best stories of anybody. I'll bet you know more people than anybody in the whole world.

CHARLEY: Yessir. In my day I've met a lot of people. Lot of them have passed right by here, famous people, like Buffalo Bill. He stopped by one day when his Wild West Show was passing through and he gave me a genuine buffalo hide.

BOY: Wow! Think of that! BUFFALO BILL!

GIRL: Uncle Charley, will you tell us something?

CHARLEY: Sure, honey. You know your Uncle Charley knows just about everything. What would you like to know?

GIRL: Hanging up on the wall inside there, you've got a pair of crutches, some jewelry, and an old brown bottle ... and it looks like two old bus tickets.

BOY: They've been there for years and years. Every since we were just "kids." What have you got them up there for, Uncle Charley?

GIRL: Are you trying to sell them?

CHARLEY: Sell them? No indeed, they're not for sale. Don't guess they'd bring very much, not now anyways. One time though they were worth a lot, to some people anyway. You wouldn't think it now, but once there were five people who didn't think they could live without them.

BOY: If they couldn't live without them, how did you get them? Did you shoot them, Uncle Charley?

CHARLEY: No, no, nothing as exciting as all that, but you see, there's a story that goes with them. Fact is, I guess that's the reason I keep them hanging there, so's people will ask and I can tell them.

GIRL: Tell us! Please tell us, Uncle Charley!

The Man Who Came For Christmas

-5-

CHARLEY: Kinda funny. I thought everybody in this whole territory had heard that story. Every farmer, Indian, tourist, or drifter that's stopped by here has been told that story, and you've never heard it? (*CHILDREN shake heads no.*) Okay, but don't interrupt me now and I'll tell you. (*Leans back in rocker and begins story.*) It was Christmas Eve night some fifteen or twenty years ago, right smack in the middle of the worst blizzard this country has ever seen. It all started when the old bus that used to come over the mountains twice a week broke down right in front of the store ... it was the bus station too, back then. The bus hardly ever stopped cause nobody wanted to come here, and nobody that lived here could afford to leave. Well sir, when they come a'walking through that door right then I knew that something unusual was going to happen for an odder bunch of ducks I'd never seen. (*Shakes head and laughs.*) Well, like I said, the bus broke down in the middle of the worst snow storm I can remember and they came walking in ... (*Curtain opens.*)

(*AT RISE: CURTAIN opens as PASSENGERS file through outside door. The scene is a country store/bus stop waiting room. ALL are talking at once, complaining to the driver about the delay. Some are carrying luggage.*)

DRIVER: All right, ALL RIGHT! I know it's cold and I know it's Christmas, and I know you're late, but I ain't Santa Claus and I ain't got no magic wand, and unless some of you do have one, you're just gonna have to wait until I can find the trouble and get some parts sent in from town. When I get it running, and if the road is passable by then, then we'll all make it on into town.

(*PASSENGERS gather around stove, DRIVER exits and returns assisting a CRIPPLED MAN who is complaining.*)

DRIVER: Just find a place here by the fire, mister. Here's you a chair. Just sit tight, folks. The agent will be here in a moment in case you want some coffee or something.

The Man Who Came For Christmas

-6-

Let me warn you before he gets here though ... try not to ask him too many questions. He likes to talk ... and he's kinda loose with the facts.

AGENT: *(Enters.)* Howdy folks! *(PASSENGERS just nod ... not overly enthusiastic with HIS presence.)* Just make yourselves at home. May be here for quite a spell. Last time the bus broke down here it took three weeks to get it fixed. The passengers ended up walking to town. *(Looks out window.)* Way that snow's coming down out there don't figure any of you will be walking anywhere. Might as well relax and get acquainted ... never was one much for formal introductions, but Charley Jones is my name and station agent's my game. I'm mighty proud to meet you. *(Shakes hands around.)* Just make yourselves comfortable now and I'll whip up some coffee, maybe it'll thaw you out a bit. *(HE exits.)*

CRIPPLE: Talky old cuss, isn't he? *(Extends hand to PREACHER.)* Martin is my name, Bill Martin. And yours?

PREACHER: Rev uh ... James Harrold. It's good to meet you.

CRIPPLE: As long as we're all stuck here I guess we might as well get acquainted.

WOMAN: I'm MISS Darlene Gale. It's a pleasure, I'm sure. *(Not too interested in THEM.)*

BOY: I'm Jimmy Williams, and this is my wife Mary.

(AGENT enters with coffee pot and mugs.)

AGENT: Well now, glad to see you folks getting acquainted with one another. No sense sitting round here like dummies, no sir! No telling how long you'll be here. I remember one time the bus broke down, it took so long to get it fixed that two of the passengers got acquainted, got hitched and already settled down to housekeeping fore the other passengers left town. *(Laughs to himself as HE pours the coffee.)* No sir ... you just can't tell.

End of Freeview

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