

ONE CHRISTMAS EVE

By James Rhodes

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The wealthy Collins family returns from dining out Christmas Eve to find their home empty, thanks to three bumbling burglars who not only take all the furniture but every one of the perfectly wrapped Christmas presents! With nearly all their worldly possessions gone, Mom and Dad, son and daughter have to confront each other as to the true meaning of Christmas. Slowly, as they recount happier times as a family, they come to realize how much faith they have placed in material things. With the help of a neighbor's Bible and visiting carolers, the Collins family finds peace and joy.

CHARACTERS

***SMITTY:** Prowler.

MONTANA: Another.

***TEN SPEED:** Another.

BOB COLLINS: The father.

JUNE COLLINS: The mother.

KEN COLLINS: The teenage son.

MARKIE COLLINS: The teenage daughter.

***OFFICER McCLINTICK:** Plainclothes policeman.

MRS. ANDERSON: Next-door neighbor.

HANNAH: The Collins' maid.

BETH ANN HIGGINS: A family acquaintance.

CAROLERS: Any number.

**These parts may be played by women by changing pronouns.*

Time: Christmas Eve, present day.

Playing Time: Thirty minutes or longer, depending on the number of songs the carolers sing.

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SETTING

All action takes place inside the wealthy Collins home in a small town in California. The home would look upper class if any furnishings were left. As the play opens, all that remains is a beautifully decorated, lit Christmas tree SR and one lonely wrapped present underneath it. The room has a large picture window and two entrances, one SL to the outside and the other SR to the rest of the home. There is a phone on the floor, UL.

COSTUMES

The 3 burglars wear dark, patched clothing; Collins family wears fashionable, expensive, preppy-style clothing and shoes; Officer wears uniform with hat; Mrs. Anderson wears nice coat in muted color; Hannah wears nice clothes for an older woman; Carolers wear outdoor coats, hats, etc.

PROPS

Handkerchief and watch for Smitty; nicely wrapped present (*on-stage.*) for Prowlers to take; coats for Collins family; purse with tissue inside for June; folding chairs (*off SR.*) for Ken; watch for Bob; notebook and pen for Officer; a thermos of lemonade and a hamper filled with cookies and a Bible for Mrs. Anderson; 4 sleeping bags and disposable cups (*offstage.*) for Bob and Ken; watch for Beth Ann.

SOUND EFFECTS

Crash, phone ring, Christmas music, door knock.

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SCENE 1

(AT RISE: The stage is dark except for the glow of LIGHTS on a Christmas tree at SR. In the distance can be heard the MUSIC of "O Holy Night." The MUSIC plays for a few moments before the two PROWLERS come in from off SL. MUSIC lowers as they enter to take a final look around. All that remains is one present beneath the tree.)

SMITTY: Don't you think we ought to leave them something? We got all their furniture and clothes and appliances now.

MONTANA: *(Looks around with smug satisfaction.)* They got the tree, haven't they? After all, it is Christmas. I always did have a soft spot in my heart for this time of year.

SMITTY: You really picked a good one this time, Montana. We can live off what we made from this haul for at least a couple of years. Who lives here, anyway?

MONTANA: Somebody named Collins. Man and wife and two teenagers. From what I've seen of them, they deserve to be ripped off.

SMITTY: You always was a good judge of character, Montana.

MONTANA: Yeah, ain't I. That's why I hang out with people like you, Smitty.

SMITTY: *(Takes handkerchief from pocket blows nose.)* Gee ... thanks, Montana. This Collins family ... they must have the bread. That wide-screen color TV must have cost a bundle.

MONTANA: *(Takes the remaining present and shakes it by HIS ear.)* The old man's a big shot at the bank. He ain't hurtin' for money. His wife's one of those social broads. Always doing charity work, getting her name in the paper. *(HE holds on to present and later exits with it.)*

SMITTY: What about the kids? You know me, Montana. I get along great with kids.

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MONTANA: There's always an exception to every rule. And these Collins brats are the exception, in spades. Spoiled rotten, disrespectful, and wrapped up in themselves.

SMITTY: Gee, Montana, I kinda feel sorry for this family.

MONTANA: Sorry enough to bring back everything we took?

SMITTY: *(Shakes HIS head.)* We gotta make a livin' too, don't we?

MONTANA: Their loss is our gain. *(Laughs, pokes SMITTY with elbow.)* Right, Smitty-boy?

SMITTY: Right. Montana, can I ask you something? How come the neighbors didn't come out when we parked the truck in the driveway?

MONTANA: *(Goes to window.)* That's why you need me, Smitty. I make sure everything is clear before I make a move. This is Christmas Eve, right?

SMITTY: *(Glances at watch.)* If you say so, Montana.

MONTANA: Trust me. The Collins' next-door neighbors are Christians. I knew they would be at church tonight. All you got to do is use your brains, Smitty.

SMITTY: Nobody can say that about you, Montana.

MONTANA: *(Frowning.)* Say what?

SMITTY: That you don't use your brains, Montana. Honest, that's what I meant.

MONTANA: Sometimes you're a real yo-yo. Let's get a move on. We're pushing our luck as it is.

(THEY start for the door as TEN SPEED rushes in.)

TEN SPEED: Smitty! Montana! It's getting cold out there.

MONTANA: Don't sweat it, Ten Speed, we're just checking to make sure we got everything.

TEN SPEED: What's left besides that Christmas tree? *(Walks over to tree.)*

SMITTY: You had a tree when you were a kid, Ten Speed?

TEN SPEED: Sure. We didn't have much, but my old man always made sure we had a tree. He used to go out in the woods, take me along, and cut down our own tree. Those were good times.

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MONTANA: Spare us the story of your life, Ten Speed.

SMITTY: Ah, Montana. I want to hear about the tree and all that Christmas stuff. Did Santa Claus come to your house, too, Ten Speed?

TEN SPEED: Nah ... we lived in a mean neighborhood. Santa woulda gotten mugged if he showed up where I lived.

SMITTY: Gee, Ten Speed, I'm sorry. I always got some kind of a present each Christmas.

MONTANA: I know one present you'll get this Christmas if we don't get a move on.

SMITTY: What's that, Montana?

MONTANA: A free trip to the slammer with all expenses paid ... that's what.

TEN SPEED: That wouldn't be so bad. At least it'd beat staying in that cold truck out there. How come it ain't got a heater, Montana?

MONTANA: What do you want ... a limousine?

TEN SPEED: That wouldn't be so bad. Maybe the next job we pull we can latch onto a stretch limo.

SMITTY: Man, that would be some Christmas present.

TEN SPEED: You tell 'em, Smitty. *(Looks around.)* We did a good job here. Look at how neat we left the place. Nothing like taking pride in your work.

MONTANA: Okay ... okay ... that's enough. Let's get outta here. The Collins family might get home early.

(They ALL move to SL.)

TEN SPEED: I'm going to have a tree this Christmas. What's Christmas without a tree? *(ALL exit except SMITTY.)*

SMITTY: *(Looks around.)* Merry Christmas, anyway, you Collinses. *(HE exits.)*

(MUSIC swells and dies as LIGHTS fade denoting the short passing of time. BOB, JUNE, KEN, and MARKIE enter SL. Bob switches on lights. They react to the empty house.)

End of Freeview

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