

A RICH MAN'S CHRISTMAS

By Renee Vinson

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DEDICATION

To my wonderful, beautiful, indescribable family: Gerald, my sweetheart and my encourager, the man who says I can when I feel like I can't. Aislinn, your smile lights up my heart every day. You are mommy's sunshine. Aidan, your courage amazes us. What a gift from God the two of you are. And of course, I thank my heavenly Father who gives the gift to write in the first place. May every word be for Your glory.

STORY OF PLAY

It's Christmas Eve and successful businessman Thomas Benson is having the worst day of his life. First, his wife announces she is leaving with their pregnant teenage daughter to live with relatives where they will be away from his condemnation. Then his accountant has news from the IRS that may make Thomas' business go belly-up. How could life get any worse? Utterly depressed and defeated, Thomas passes out that night at the office. Then two born-again ex-con janitors in Santa hats, appear on the scene. Can the lovable duo change Thomas's Christmas? With their help, he examines his life and convictions, and rediscovers what makes life truly rich in this warm and humorous Christmas play.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4m, 3w)

THOMAS BENSON: Late 40s. A successful, self-made businessman who owns a small chain of shoe stores. He's proud of what he has achieved but has sacrificed his family in the process. Wears a nicely-tailored business suit initially.

LAURA BENSON: Mid to late 40s. A concerned mother who has grown to realize that success and happiness cannot be measured in money. Nicely dressed, but not too flashy.

NICHOLAS HOWE: Late 20s to early 30s. An ex-convict, born-again, who works cleaning offices. Clean cut, but may have a ponytail. Wears coveralls and a Santa hat.

HYPE CARTER: Early to mid 40s (could be older or younger.) Nick's co-worker who is also an ex-convict who's been born-again. He is a very simple, hillbilly kind of guy who tends to overreact. He also wears coveralls and a Santa hat.

THEODORE CHEATUM: Thomas Benson's accountant. Late 30s to early 40s (his age is also flexible.) Flashy dresser. Has a fake, insincere smile that stays on his face most of the time.

CRICKET BENSON: 18-20 years old. Thomas and Laura's daughter who's recently found out she is pregnant and told her parents. Nicely dressed in contemporary fashion of the day.

LILLY: Late 20s or older. Thomas' secretary. Very efficient and business-like with a dry sense of humor.

SETTING

An executive office suite. To one side is Thomas' office with a large wood desk with intercom and phone. Formal pictures (English foxhunts, etc.) on walls. Formal sofa sits stage left. Two formal chairs in front of desk. Lowboy with brandy decanter, glasses, and a Christmas flower arrangement. Tall wastebasket beside desk. A beautifully framed 8 x 10 photo (or larger) of Laura and Cricket Benson hangs on the wall. To the other side of the stage is Lilly's office area with smaller desk, office chair, computer, intercom and phone.

PROPS

Brandy decanter with glasses
Pen for Thomas
Coats and purses for Laura and Cricket
Briefcase, calculator, papers for Cheatum
Liquor bottle in drawer
Vacuum cleaner and water bottle for Hype
Caddy with cleaning supplies for Nick
Extra coveralls for Thomas
(2) Santa hats
Bible

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Christmas Eve. Early afternoon. THOMAS is at his desk talking on the phone, with his feet propped up on the desk in a casual, confident manner. He gestures with a pen as he talks.)

THOMAS: *(Smiling to HIMSELF as he talks.)* So we exceeded record sales? *(Pause.)* Is that right? *(Pause. HE lets out a long whistle.)* Twenty percent over last year? Man, that's incredible! *(Intercom BUZZES. HE frowns and ignores it.)* I've been wanting to branch out with some new stores next year, and I think this is a good sign. Pretty soon Benson Shoe Outlet will be all over the state! *(Intercom BUZZES again.)* Would you mind holding a minute, Ron? *(Pause.)* I appreciate it. *(HE resumes a proper seating position and the presses the intercom, very irritated.)* Lily! I thought I said no interruptions!

LILLY: *(On intercom.)* It's your wife, sir. She said she really needed to speak with you.

THOMAS: *(Presses intercom.)* Tell her I will call her back.

LILLY: *(On intercom.)* She insisted, sir.

THOMAS: *(Exasperated, presses intercom.)* Oh, all right! Tell her I'll be right with her. *(HE picks the phone back up.)* Hey, Ron! Listen, I've got an important call from my stockbroker. Thanks for the great job. I couldn't ask for a better District Manager. *(Pauses, then laughs.)* No, Ron. YOU the man! Happy holidays. Ciao. *(HE then impatiently presses another line.)* Couldn't it wait, Laura? *(Pause.)* What did you say? Your cell phone is breaking up. *(Pause. HE angrily stands up.)* Here? You're coming here? With her? *(Pause.)* Can't it wait? *(HE looks at his watch.)* I'll be home around 5 o'clock. We can discuss it before the party. *(Pause. HE angrily runs his hands through his hair.)* What do you mean you're not going? Laura, you're not making sense! Just wait ... Laura? Laura? *(Incredulous, HE looks at the receiver.)* She just hung up on me!

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(HE goes over to the lowboy and nervously pours a drink. He stares at it for a moment, then gulps it down. He walks over to the intercom.)

THOMAS: Lilly! I need you in my office. PRONTO! *(HE sits back down at his desk. ENTER LILLY SL.)*

LILLY: Yes, sir? You buzzed?

THOMAS: *(Tapping pen on desk.)* What other appointments do I have today?

LILLY: Just a 2 o'clock with Mr. Cheatum, sir. *(SHE draws out cheat-um.)*

THOMAS: *(Slight smile.)* Strange name for an accountant, isn't it?

LILLY: *(Smiles.)* I think I would have chosen another occupation with that name, sir.

THOMAS: Such as?

LILLY: *(Thinks for a moment.)* Hmmm. A politician. Hands down.

THOMAS: How about an Internal Revenue Service auditor?

LILLY: *(Laughs.)* Now, that's a good one, sir.

THOMAS: Well, Mr. Cheatum may have a peculiar name. But ol' Theodore has been an asset to Benson Shoes. He has a sharp eye for all those little tax breaks.

LILLY: I hope so, sir.

THOMAS: *(Sighs wearily.)* Anyway, my wife is on her way here. *(Irritated.)* Something just couldn't wait! Make sure there are no interruptions.

LILLY: Yes, sir. *(SHE starts to EXIT SL, then pauses.)* Uh, sir? May I ask how your daughter is doing?

THOMAS: *(Sighs.)* I guess you've heard our ugly news, huh?

LILLY: Your wife told me, sir.

THOMAS: *(Frowns.)* She did? *(Shakes HIS head.)* I would have liked to keep it secret a bit longer. It's still hard to believe my daughter is pregnant. What a slap in the face! Be glad you don't have kids, Lilly.

LILLY: Well, sir. There could be worse things than Cricket having a baby.

THOMAS: *(Laughs bitterly.)* Oh really? Like?

LILLY: She could be messed up with drugs or alcohol.

End of Freeview

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