

TO SEE CHRIST AT CHRISTMAS

by Gregory G. Banks

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Story of the play

The Grant family is a family divided. Mrs. Grant and the daughters are strong Christians, but they can't convince Bruce Grant or son, B.J., of the importance of God in their lives - until a heart attack lands Bruce in the hospital shortly before Christmas. There he and B.J. meet other faithful Christians. But it isn't until they get to know Thad, a critically ill little boy whose dying wish is to see Christ at Christmas, that Bruce and B.J. find God.

Performance time:

30 minutes.

Sets:

A hospital multi-purpose room and a regular hospital room.

CAST

BRUCE GRANT: Middle aged father, uninvolved in the spiritual lives of his family. Presently the victim of a heart attack.

EILEEN GRANT: Bruce's wife. Good Christian mother, places high emphasis on involving her family in church.

CHERYL MAYS: Oldest daughter of Bruce and Eileen. She is a faithful Christian, married and has a six year old daughter, Candy. Her husband is presently out of town.

DARRYL GRANT: Seventeen year old daughter of the Grants. Active young Christian unconcerned about fitting in with the crowd. Consistently pursuing her brother's and father's salvation.

B. J. GRANT: Nineteen year old son of Grants, stubborn, pessimistic and humanistic. Likes to be his own boss.

ELLY GRANT: Youngest daughter of Grants, somewhat quiet and passive.

CANDY MAYS: Cheryl's six year old daughter, Elly's shadow.

PASTOR: Caring pastor of local church the Grants attend.

PASTOR'S WIFE: Very caring and compassionate wife of the pastor.

ANGELA SHELTON: Director of Public Relations, Grant Memorial Hospital

DOC: Very concerned physician for Bruce Grant. Has a strong desire to help people in both physical and spiritual ways.

NURSE: On duty nurse at Grace Memorial Hospital.

THAD: Ten year old boy in the midst of a lengthy stay at the hospital. He is dying of a fatal disease - but has a ironically optimistic disposition due to his greatest desire ... to be with Jesus at Christmas. For several years prior to this year he has been part of a manger scene at his home church.

PETE: Very lively young boy who is also a patient of the hospital. Thad's tag along.

ACT I

(AT RISE: Waiting room of Grace Memorial Hospital - EILEEN and CHERYL are sitting together on a couch. Cheryl sits at a slight angle with her arm around her mother. DARRYL sits in a chair across the room with ELLY and CANDY sitting on the floor at Darryl's feet working a puzzle. B.J. is pacing the floor as if in an angry tizzy.)

CHERYL: Try and relax a little, mom. The Doctor says Daddy's condition has stabilized now, and there doesn't seem to be any damage to his heart.

EILEEN: Thank the Lord. Everything seemed touch and go for awhile. I am afraid, dear; I had begun to fear the worst. I am so relieved your father is going to be alright. *(Deep sigh.)*

DARRYL: *(Reaches down and pats ELLY on the back.)* See there, Elly I told you Daddy was too tough to let this whip him.

ELLY: Yea, I'm sure glad you were right. I really thought Daddy was gonna die. Now I know everything is gonna be OK.

B.J.: *(Discontinues HIS pacing and speaks with an angry urgency.)* Everything is gonna be just fine, huh. Dad nearly dies with a heart attack and just because some phony doctor says things look better, you all act as if nothing has happened. *(Deep sigh of disgust as HE begins to pace again.)* I can't believe this. Here it is two days before Christmas and this has to happen. If Dad really does get better, he'll still be stuck up here for two or three weeks. We're gonna have to run back and forth up here all that time, and life's gonna be a real drag. This is really gonna be some kind of Christmas to celebrate, ain't it.

DARRYL: Considering the way you celebrate Christmas, you may be closer to a real Christmas than ever before.

B.J.: (*Stops in HIS track and glares at DARRYL.*) Listen, Darryl, the way I celebrate Christmas is my business. If you all want to go to church and waste your time with that boring God stuff, go right ahead. Don't trouble me none; and if I want to run around with all my buddies and drink to the holidays, then I'm gonna do that. So get off my case.

CHERRYL: But we just want you to realize Christmas is a family holiday; and we all should be together and happy on Christmas. Especially at a time like this.

EILEEN: Son, God has already given us the greatest gift we could have this Christmas. Your Dad is still alive. We each need to share in that gift.

B.J.: (*Shaking HIS head.*) Come on, Mom. Here you go again. Every time something good happens, you think you're (*Mockingly.*) loving God is responsible for another great miracle. Why is it that none of you look at the bad things that happen, like with Dad, and give your God credit for those. Religion is so hypocritical. God is the reason for all good things that happen, like some kind of crutch for life just being great. Well life isn't just great; most the time it really stinks. When are you all gonna wake up and see this God stuff is a big joke and so is Christmas if you don't enjoy the good things in life. (*Pause.*) I gotta get out of here. Be back later. (*Storms out of the room with EVERYONE left looking at each other.*)

EILEEN: What's it gonna take for your brother to see that the Lord is what's missing from his life.

CHERYL: I don't know Mom. He's like so many of the kids today. They seem to have such a cloudy view of life and the future. It's as if they really don't care to be a part of it.

DARRYL: He's awful upset about Daddy. B.J. is like most kids today but he gets a lot of that attitude from Daddy, as well. You know how Dad never wants to listen to talk about going to church or changing his life. He's satisfied the way he is. You know how he always says, "girls, I'm a good ole boy, just let me be me." (*Pause.*) Wonder if he still feels that way now.

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EILEEN: I am so hoping this sudden attack, will cause him to see how precious life can really be, especially now that he knows it can be gone in a brief moment.

CHERYL: I'd like so much to see Daddy going to church with us. We could do so much more together that way. All he ever wants to do now is sit in his old chair and watch TV.

CANDY: Yea, and Papa snores in his chair, too. I can barely hear the television when he's asleep. *(ALL laugh.)*

CHERYL: It's hard to explain, but there's something very special about having your family attend church together.

DARRYL: That'd be great; but I really wonder what it will take to reach B.J., if he can be reached. He's always so difficult. He wants to be his own boss, do what he wants to do, when he wants to do it. I don't see how we've put up with him all these years.

ELLY: It ain't been easy. *(Drawn out.) (ALL laugh.)*

EILEEN: We're just gonna have to remember that Christmas is a time of miracles. We need to have faith and pray. Somehow the Lord will get through to them. I have to believe that.

CHERYL: *(Looking out the door to the R.)* Mom, I called the pastor earlier and I think I see him and his wife coming down the hall. They are always so quick to respond to our needs.

DARRYL: They are super people. We're lucky to have a pastor that cares for his people the way ours does.

(PASTOR and his WIFE enter from SR - outside entrance to hospital.)

PASTOR: Hello, everyone.

(ALL respond with a hello or hi.)

PASTOR'S WIFE: *(Goes to sit on other side of EILEEN.)*
Eileen, we got here as soon as we could. Have you received any good news yet?

End of Freeview

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