The Love Store

By Steven Orth

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STORY OF THE PLAY

If you've ever thought that Christmas has become too commercialized (and who among us hasn't felt that as we pulled out the credit card yet again) this is the play for you. Several customers wander in to a rather bare, nondescript store during the Christmas shopping season. All of them --- younger children, teenagers, and twenty-somethings -- are looking for the same thing, but for different reasons. Some aren't even sure what they want: they just know that they are missing something. Naomi, the widow working behind the counter, answers their questions kindly but indirectly. When the owner of a competing store enters the scene, the nature of both stores and their proprietors becomes clear. As the customers decide for or against their purchases, a surprise awaits them. Appropriate for all audiences, "The Love Store" begs the question, "What is the price of Love?" With a few minor changes, this play can be presented at any time of the year.

About 30 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 m, 4 w, 1 flexible, 1 boy, 1 girl.)

NAOMI: Elderly widow who misses her husband. Is mistaken for the store owner.

JOY: College graduate, lonely, never had a boyfriend.

CARRIE: Late teens, dressed somewhat provocatively, wants a father to tell her she's beautiful.

LEXI: Age 13, wants a friend to be there for her.

TOMAS: Late teens, attractive young man who wants a father to guide him.

SISTER: Little girl who wants to find a parent to love them.

BROTHER: Little boy, meek and sad.

LUCY/LUCIUS: *(Flexible)* Salesperson from the "Store Next Door."

PRODUCTION NOTES

The separate scenes noted within the script are for the benefit of the actors. This play is intended to be produced continuously with no internal blackouts.

SETTING

Winter time in a modern-day city, inside the "Love Store." The original production used a wire-frame set to emphasize the acting. Otherwise, exterior wall of store faces SR. Two large translucent windows sit on either side of the door from the street. Interior of the store has three shelves or racks located UC, DSR, and DSL. A counter sits SL with another door behind it.

PROPS / SET PIECES

Two chairs or stage boxes CS.
A stool behind the counter, newspaper or book for Naomi.
A small, nondescript gift box.
Some full clothing racks, flower vases, greeting cards, balloons are scattered about the store.

SOUND

City noise, traffic and crowd.
Winter wind and storm.

COSTUMES / MAKEUP

Since this is winter, all characters will need winter coats. Cold-weather accessories should be added only to appropriate characters.

NAOMI: Age makeup, gray hair; comfortable clothes but ones that haven't been in-style for a while.
JOY: No defining makeup, unwashed hair back in a loose ponytail, wisps in front of her face; frumpy gray college-name sweatshirt, sweatpants or yoga pants; tennis shoes.
CARRIE: Bold, defined makeup, modern hairstyle; fashionable, somewhat provocative clothes intended to draw the attention of boys. Also wears earbud headphones.
LEXI: Contemporary teen attire; wears earbud headphones and is constantly checking her cell phone.
TOMAS: Warm, stylish if not athletic-looking apparel.
SISTER: Child-appropriate winter clothes.
BROTHER: Child-appropriate winter clothes.
LUCY/LUCIUS: Upscale business attire.

Scene 1: Greetings

(AT RISE: The Love Store is dimly lit. NAOMI opens the door and busies herself making sure that the store is ready for the day. She moves behind the counter, sits, and begins to read. A backlight reveals LUCY is outside the Love Store trying to get individuals to go in to the Store Next Door. Shortly thereafter, JOY wanders in.)

NAOMI: *(Enthusiastically, to JOY.)* Merry Christmas!
JOY: *(Flatly.)* Good morning. *(Starts to browse through the store.)*
NAOMI: *(Unfazed.)* Can I help you find something?
JOY: No thanks. I'm just browsing.
NAOMI: Alright. Let me know if I can be of assistance.
JOY: Mm-hmm.

(JOY goes over to the books and starts skimming as NAOMI returns to her book while humming a carol. CARRIE ENTERS noisily.)

NAOMI: *(Continuing her enthusiasm.)* Merry Christmas!
CARRIE: *(Pulling the earbuds out of her ears.)* Wha? Yeah. Whatever.
NAOMI: Are you looking for anything in particular?
CARRIE: *(Bluntly.)* No.
NAOMI: *(Remaining polite.)* Sure. I'll be over here if you need something.
CARRIE: *(To herself.)* Need something...right.

(Distracted by their attempts to not look too interested in the shelves, JOY and CARRIE bump into each other.)

JOY: *(Apologizing.)* Oh! Sorry.
CARRIE: *(Snotty.)* You should be.
JOY: *(Retorting.)* What's your problem?
CARRIE: *(Antagonizing.)* You really wanna know?
JOY: No.
CARRIE: Good.

(THEY both turn and separate. LEXI ENTERS.)

LEXI: *(Quietly.)* Um, hello?
NAOMI: *(Crossing to her.)* Merry Christmas, and welcome.
LEXI: Is this the store I read about in the paper?
NAOMI: I don't think there was an ad. What did the paper say?
LEXI: *(Reading from a piece of newspaper.)* "Just in time for the season, a grand opening of a new location of the store that has everything."
CARRIE: *(Sarcastically.)* Does this store look new to you?
NAOMI: *(Ignoring CARRIE.)* This store has been here for years.
JOY: *(Sneezing off the dust on one particular book.)* That's not hard to believe.
NAOMI: I think the store you're speaking of is next door.
LEXI: You mean the one with all of the people lined up out front?
NAOMI: That's the one. You are certainly welcome to stay here as long as you would like.
CARRIE: At least it's warm in here.
NAOMI: *(Offering.)* Would you like some tea or hot cocoa?
JOY/LEXI/CARRIE: Sure!

(As NAOMI exits, the GIRLS respond to the awkwardness of their eager responses by returning to their own isolation.)

CARRIE: *(To herself.)* Who says "cocoa" anymore?
LEXI: *(To the other girls.)* I've never been in this store before. What do they even sell here?
CARRIE: *(Harshly.)* Silence.
JOY: Do you need to be so rude? It was a simple question.
CARRIE: Was I talking to you?
JOY: If you weren't then, you are now.
CARRIE: And now I'm not. *(Drifts away.)*
LEXI: *(Apologetically.)* I didn't mean to start an argument.
JOY: She's just an argument waiting to happen.
LEXI: You two know each other?

End of Freeview

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