CHRISTMAS IN HER HEART

a Holiday Comedy in Two Acts

by Walt Vail

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STORY OF THE PLAY

It's been five years since Geraldine Pointer's husband George and daughter Christine walked out on her just weeks before Christmas, fed up as they were with her nagging demands for wealth and position. Since then, Geraldine has sworn off Christmas, refusing to send cards or to exchange gifts with anyone, not even with her Christmas-loving neighbor, Marion Rush. Geraldine, not a bad sort at heart, has become a regular female Scrooge.

But this Christmas, strange things are happening. Geraldine's neighbors, acquaintances and even her cleaning lady are stopping in to say thank you for the cards and gifts they're received from Geraldine. But she swears she hasn't send any of them! What's more, the ghosts of Geraldine's parents, Ezra and Maggie Fink, are loose from five years in purgatory, and charged by Saint Peter with "Bringing joy back into Geraldine's heart," since they are the ones who reared her to be so materialistic in the first place.

The mystery of Geraldine's gifts to others and the re-awakening of her Christmas spirit, combine with Ezra and Maggie winning their way into heaven and the reunion of Geraldine with her daughter to create a warm-hearted holiday comedy in two acts!

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(3 m, 6 w)

GERALDINE POINTER: A divorced woman.
MAGGIE FINK: The ghost of Geraldine's mother.
EZRA FINK: The ghost of Geraldine's father.
MARION RUSH: Geraldine's best friend.
MRS. GORMLEY: Geraldine's cleaning lady.
SAM BLACKBURN: Geraldine's male acquaintance.
MRS. JEFFRIES: A neighbor.
GEORGE POINTER: Geraldine's ex-husband.
CHRISTINE BRADFORD: Geraldine's daughter.

PLACE: Geraldine's house, an aging Victorian structure, spacious but a bit rundown, in the small town of Roseberry, Pennsylvania.

TIME: The present.

SETTING

The living area of a large, aging Victorian home in a small town in Pennsylvania. It's a beautiful old place, but the furnishings are also old and fairly worn. The paint and wallpaper are faded, and what was once ostentatious has now become drab. It is the week before Christmas, but there's not a trace of Christmas decoration. This is the Pointer residence, where Geraldine grew up. It was originally furnished by her parents, Ezra and Maggie Pointer, now deceased. Geraldine, divorced, now lives here alone.

PROPS

Box of Christmas card and envelopes
Wad of money
Pen, stamps
Note that descend on a string from above
Shopping bag, wrapped gift package (MARION)
Purse
3 individual Christmas cards (MRS. GROMLEY, SAM, GEORGE)
Vacuum cleaner
TV set
Suitcase
Christmas tree and decorations
Star for top of tree, angel
Strands of cranberries
Shopping bag, wrapped gift (MRS. JEFFRIES)
Wrapped gift (SAM)
Doll ornament
Christmas card (GERALDINE)
Pink package with pink baby outfit inside
Diamond ring
Bundle with baby inside

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: Preset LIGHTING changes to a room dimly lit by a full moon. The hall clock strikes the hour: it's 3 a.m. GERALDINE enters in her nightgown, sleepwalking. She goes directly to a small writing desk in the parlor, opens a drawer and takes out an old box of Christmas cards and a wad of money. She sits and begins signing cards, and addressing envelopes. She prepares two or three of these, stuffing, sealing and putting stamps on the envelopes. As she works, there is a ghostly FLASH OF LIGHT. It doesn't affect GERALDINE at all, but suddenly, the spirits of her father EZRA, and her mother, MAGGIE appear.)

EZRA: What in blazes?? Where are we?
MAGGIE: I dunno. I was bending over, picking up one more rock, when it occurred to me that our five years in purgatory were about up.
EZRA: Look here ... it's our house, ain't it?
MAGGIE: Our house? Can't be. It's all run-down.
EZRA: And there, at the writing desk. Isn't that Geraldine?
MAGGIE: She's aged, if it is.
EZRA: It's Geraldine! Geraldine, darlin!!
MAGGIE: Hold on, now. She can't hear you. Appears to be asleep. Her eyes are closed.
EZRA: She's writing something, her eyes can't be closed ... but darned if they ain't shut tight! She's sleep-writing.
MAGGIE: Whatever that is. You don't suppose we're alive again, do you?
EZRA: After five years in purgatory? Hell, no.
MAGGIE: Heavens, no! Heavens, no!
EZRA: Sorry. Heavens, no. But what are we doing back here? Shouldn't we be knocking on Saint Peter's gate?
MAGGIE: Something left unfinished, that's my guess.
EZRA: I thought purgatory took care of all that.
MAGGIE: Look at Geraldine, will you? Wonder what she's been up to in the five years since we died?
EZRA: Wake her up and ask her.

MAGGIE: Are you crazy? Wake her out of a sound sleep to confront two old ghosts? You want her to die of a heart attack?

EZRA: Well, no. *(A note is lowered from the sky on a string.)* What the devil?

MAGGIE: What the angel! What the angel!

EZRA: Sorry. What the angel?

MAGGIE: It's a note from above. Read it! *(EZRA takes the note, unrolls it and reads silently.)* Out loud!

EZRA: Oh. *(Reads.)* "One year after your passing, Geraldine's husband George and daughter Christine left her. It was two weeks before Christmas. Your job, should you agree to take it, is to bring joy back into Geraldine's heart, for it was the two of you who were at the root of Geraldine's problem. If you succeed, you will be transported to the gates of heaven. If you fail, five more years in purgatory. Good luck. Saint Peter." Well, I'll be damned!

MAGGIE: Saved! You'll be saved! Will you watch your mouth?

EZRA: Sorry. I'll be saved!

MAGGIE: "Bring joy back into Geraldine's heart." Now, how are we to do that?

EZRA: You got me. I'm stumped.

MAGGIE: Look over her shoulder, see what she's writing.

EZRA: *(Looking.)* Christmas cards. Season's greetings. And she's stuffing cash into each card!!

MAGGIE: Giving away money? I never taught her to do that.

EZRA: You never did it in your lifetime. Made me work my butt off while you stashed it away. Say, could that be the problem? We did teach her to take care of number one, didn't we?

MAGGIE: We sure did. I don't approve of giving way money. Get a job, that's my motto.

EZRA: Always was. And then we ended up in purgatory.

MAGGIE: I can't figure it out. Why?

EZRA: Saint Peter's trying to tell us something.

MAGGIE: Like what?

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