

The Family Fruitcake

By
Rebecca Frohling

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DEDICATION

To every single one of the wonderful people at the Albright, without whom this script literally would not be. To Beth and Alia for the line ideas. To all my friends and family for your constant love and support; especially Mom and Dad, who have never stopped believing in me. And to D and the two Es, also for love, for support, and for believing in me, all feelings which are easily and gratefully returned. This play is wacky; by comparison, our Christmases have been positively sane. But there's still time.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Laurie McKinnon is determined that everyone should have a normal Christmas, especially while the eldest son is away serving in the military. She rushes about making sure everything is ready for the impending arrival of the extended family, although her husband, Jim, and teenage daughter, Kelsey, are unconvinced of the need to impress everyone. Meanwhile, youngest daughter Emma arrives downstairs in full camouflage makeup. Her mother is less than enthused. Visitors soon trickle in. Laurie's very pregnant sister with her husband, who gets lost easily; Jim's brother, his worrisome wife and 6 children, and even the neighbor children arrive to add to the day. Best of all is Aunt Bev, who needs no prompting to spin the tale of the Swenson fruitcake. The fruitcake was made some 20 years ago, and has never been eaten. It has become a family tradition to keep it in the pantry until Christmas, when it earns a place on the table only to be put away for the next year. The afternoon brings arguments, tears, joy, and reconciliations, some long overdue. But no matter what, it will always be a regular McKinnon Christmas— just as long as they have the fruitcake. And nothing could go wrong with that...could it? About 65 minutes.

PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

December 2012, Albright Theater in Batavia, Illinois.

Cast included:

Kent Lillig, Kathy Lillig, Hannah Klose, Allison Griffiths, Aaron Stevens, Mark Conway, Erica Anderson, Ron Gustin, Lori Klose, Lauren Isenhardt, Scott Lillig, Tim Gustin, Mark Lillig, Benny Avila, Tony Avila, Vicki White, Kim Green, Annie Hanlin, Alexander Perry, and Sydney Grom.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Cast of 20: 4 m, 5 w, 11 youth (approx. 5 boys, 6 girls.)

JIM MCKINNON: All American dad, likes football, mid 40s.

LAURIE MCKINNON: Loving mother and wife; overcome by holiday preparations, early 40s.

SCOTT MCKINNON: Son, serving in the military, 18-21.

KELSEY MCKINNON: Typical teen daughter, sullen and dramatic, 14-16.

EMMA MCKINNON: Daughter, hero-worships her handsome and brave older brother, 8-11.

BEV SWENSON: Laurie's great aunt. Talks to anyone who will listen, or, barring that, herself. Knits. Constantly. Age indeterminate.

KARINN DODSON: Laurie's sister who is newly married and heavily pregnant. Flighty, artistic, dramatic, early 30s.

DAVID DODSON: Karinn's husband. New to the family gatherings; panics easily. No sense of direction whatsoever, early 30s.

PAT MCKINNON, SR.: Jim's brother. Good-natured and inhumanly patient, 40s.

EDIE MCKINNON: Pat's wife. Tightly wound worrier, mainly about her children, late 30s.

CHARITY MCKINNON: Snippity teenage daughter of Pat and Edie, same age as Kelsey.

PATRICK MCKINNON, JR.: Son of Pat and Edie. Prone to allergies, according to his mother. Same age as Emma.

LUKE MCKINNON: Son of Pat and Edie. Bookworm. Frequently overlooked by his own family, 8-9.

MATTHEW, MARK and MICHAEL MCKINNON: Triplet sons of Pat and Edie, 5-7. Troublemakers who can become angels at a moment's notice.

CHRISTINE CARTER: Next-door neighbor. In a hurry.

OLIVE, RIPLEY and FRANCIE CARTER: Neighbor's children. Ridiculously precocious.

SETTING

Christmas afternoon in the living and dining room of Jim and Laurie McKinnon's cozy home. Stage right is an entrance leading to the front door. Next to it is Jim's overstuffed recliner facing an unseen TV downstage. An optional decorated Christmas tree is also DSR. On the other side of the recliner, upstage, rests a tiny matching couch. A particularly ugly afghan or two covers the couch; Jim's chair has a blanket with a football team logo, topped with a bandana with the same logo, both draped over the back of the chair.

Upstage center is an open entrance to the kitchen and bathroom. Stage left there is a long portable dining room table with various lightweight non-matching chairs. The table is in the process of being set for dinner, and it has a long Christmas tablecloth that hangs to the floor.

Behind it, in the back corner, sits a small sideboard. There is a second doorway stage left, leading to the upstairs. The walls hold various family photos, children's artwork, tinsel & decorations, etc. A riser in front of the stage can be the setting for the McKinnon's front porch, with a patio couch set on the center stage left hand side.

ACT I

(AT RISE: JIM MCKINNON enters from the kitchen, dressed in a T-shirt, jeans, and ratty sneakers, and carrying a beer. He casts a furtive glance behind him; we can hear various noises of dinner preparation coming from the kitchen. Satisfied, he roots under the blanket on the recliner and retrieves a battered baseball cap in the same football team logo as the blanket. He takes a remote from the chair arm and sits down, facing the TV and audience.)

LAURIE: *(Offstage.)* Jim, for the last time, take off the hat!

JIM: *(Jumps at being caught. Obstinate.)* No.

(Pause.)

LAURIE: *(OS.)* What??

JIM: You know I have to wear this!!

(LAURIE enters, exasperated. She is clearly up to her elbows in Christmas dinner preparations, and more than a little harried at trying to do everything herself. Her hair is messy, her oven mitts scorched.)

LAURIE: People are going to be here any minute!

JIM: The game is going to be on any minute! *(As Laurie starts to speak.)* If I don't wear my lucky hat, they might lose the game. Now, you don't want that, do you?

LAURIE: I really don't—

JIM: Of course you don't! I'll take it off when the game's over. Until then, the hat has to stay on. Game stays on, hat stays on. Game goes off, hat goes off. Game on, hat on. Game off, hat off.

(KELSEY MCKINNON, wearing ratty casual clothes, enters from the upstairs.)

KELSEY: Just when I thought my family couldn't get any more insane...

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LAURIE: Not you too! Don't you want to put on something nice for a change?

KELSEY: Mom, it's just the family. They have seen us before.

LAURIE: Well, at least for the sake of your poor old Great Aunt Bev...

KELSEY: Aunt Bev wouldn't notice if I dressed up like Tweety Bird.

(KELSEY plops down on the couch, whips out a phone, and immerses herself in texting. LAURIE is trying to think of a counter-argument. SFX: A buzzing from the kitchen.)

LAURIE: Turkey! *(SHE whips around and exits.)*

JIM: No, pass it! Pass it... *(Groans. To KELSEY, who is not listening.)* No offense, it's ridiculous. *(To the TV again.)* What are they paying you for?!

(HE settles back as a small head pokes around the edge of the stair entrance. EMMA MCKINNON has a camouflage headband on Rambo style, and patchy camouflage make-up on her face. She holds one hand to her mouth as if holding a walkie-talkie; the other pretends to aim a rifle at Jim.)

EMMA: Breaker, breaker. I've got him covered. Go around front...back me up. On my signal—NOW! *(Pretends to shoot.)*

JIM: Up the center?? Not that way. *(Slumps.)* Idiots. That's all we ever get, idiots. *(Notices EMMA.)* Hey, pumpkin.

EMMA: Hey. *(Runs and climbs in HIS lap.)* They losing already?

JIM: Yup.

EMMA: Well, you always know what they should do. Why don't you go and be their manager?

JIM: I was thinking the same thing.

LAURIE: *(Enters.)* Maybe an hour or two longer on the turkey, and— *(Notices EMMA.)* Oh, no! Emma, what did you do to yourself?

End of Freeview

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