# MERRY CHRISTMAS, DEAR GRANDPA

*By Michal Jacot*

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*Dedicated to Laurie, and to our Christmas of 2013.*
*In spite of the wrists, we made it through.*

## STORY OF THE PLAY

Amber has invited her whole family to her new home to have the "perfect family Christmas." She has decorated her house, carefully planned the meal, and even ironed her shoelaces! Once her brother, sister, parents, and curmudgeon of a grandfather show up, though, nothing goes right. When a last-minute accident prevents Amber from making Christmas dinner, it falls upon her kitchen-challenged siblings to take up the slack, with hilarious results. Just when the dinner can't get any worse, it ends up with a twist or two that makes it, indeed, the perfect family Christmas.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*Cast of 6: 3 m, 3 w*

**AMBER HARTLEY:** The middle child of three siblings, around 30 years old. A neat freak, who dresses casually but impeccably.

**FRANKIE HARTLEY:** Her younger sister. Personality-wise, she's the exact opposite of Amber.

**KEITH HARTLEY:** The older brother. Has a goofy sense of humor, although he's generally not as funny as he thinks he is.

**AL HARTLEY:** Their father. Genial and easygoing, and happy to let his wife do all the thinking for him.

**MARIE HARTLEY:** Their mother. Has big plans for an upcoming trip.

**WALTER "GRANDPA" HARTLEY:** Their grandfather, around 86 years old. A crusty, crabby, sour, bad-tempered man. He uses a cane, although he doesn't really need it for support; it's more of a weapon.

## SETTING

The action takes place in Amber's home in Oregon, during the Christmas season. Near the UR corner is the front door; next to it farther up is a door leading to the closet. There is a spacious picture window across the back center wall; the view outside is a snow-covered backyard. There is a sofa at center stage. Near the UL corner is an archway which presumably leads to the other rooms. At center left is a split Dutch door that leads to the kitchen; the top and bottom halves each have a sliding bolt lock. The entire apartment is decorated for Christmas, including a wall decoration hanging slightly crooked. For Act III, the sofa has been moved upstage to sit under the window. At center stage is a large table and chairs covered with a holiday tablecloth. The table is set with plates and silverware.

## ACT I

*(AT RISE: December 24th. AMBER enters. She is wearing a gray sweater with a little red heart embroidered over her heart. She is carrying a large armload of small boxed Christmas knick-knacks, intent on finishing up her holiday décor. She notices the crooked wall hanging and immediately goes to straighten it, but her arms are full and she struggles to reach it; she keeps trying, but drops a couple of items. When she bends down to pick them up, she drops a couple more from her unwieldy load. When she goes to pick those up, she remembers the crooked wall hanging and turns her attention back to it. When she does that, she drops more stuff.)*

**AMBER:** *(Exasperated.)* Seriously? *(Still carrying several items, she reaches for one of the things on the floor and trips over something else on the floor. With a yelp, she falls onto the couch, and everything she is carrying tumbles to the floor. She sits up, surveying the mess with annoyance.)*

**FRANKIE:** *(Enters, wearing a winter coat. As she removes her coat.)* There you go, Amber. I shoveled the sidewalk for you. *(Drops her coat on the floor.)* You know, I'm no expert on decorating, but I think those things are supposed to go on the tables and walls.

**AMBER:** Very funny. Speaking of where things are supposed to go, is that where your coat is supposed to go?

**FRANKIE:** Um…yeah. *(Pause.)* That's where I always leave it at my house. *(Pause.)* This is one of your trick questions, isn't it?

**AMBER:** You're standing right next to the closet, you know.

**FRANKIE:** Oh. Is that what those are for? I always thought they were…I don't know, little rooms for kids or something. *(Hangs her coat in closet.)*

**AMBER:** *(As she picks up the clutter.)* Thanks for shoveling.

**FRANKIE:** You owe me.

**AMBER:** I owe you? For what?

**FRANKIE:** For the shoveling. You never asked me to shovel your sidewalk at your apartment in New York.

**AMBER:** That's because the super did it. When you buy a house, you get to do all that fun stuff yourself.

**FRANKIE:** *(Steps over the boxes on the floor, making her way to the sofa. To AMBER's annoyance, FRANKIE sweeps a couple of stray boxes off the sofa to clear a spot for herself.)* Yeah, well, you *didn't* do it yourself. You told your sister to do it. I almost broke my neck out there. *(Notices AMBER glaring at her.)* What? *(AMBER indicates the stray boxes on the floor with a wave of her hand.)* Oh, right. *(FRANKIE half-heartedly helps pick them up as she talks.)* Anyway, you should have Scott come over and shovel for you. Isn't that what boyfriends are for? What made you think moving to Oregon was a good idea, anyway?

**AMBER:** I like it here. I've always wanted to live here. It's beautiful. And it's closer to Mom and Dad. They're never going to leave California, you know.

**FRANKIE:** At least it got you farther away from me. *(Smiles.)* And you met Scott, so that's not a bad deal. He looks like a nice guy, from the pictures you sent me.

**AMBER:** He's terrific. And I wasn't trying to get away from you, you know that. I'm glad you came all the way out here to spend Christmas with me. This is going to be so much fun! An old-fashioned family Christmas, right here in my new house. I have to make sure everything is just right.

**FRANKIE:** Amber, everything with you has got to be just right.

**AMBER:** That's not true.

**FRANKIE:** I watched you iron your shoelaces yesterday.

**AMBER:** *(Defensively.)* They were kinked! When you tie kinked shoelaces they don't lie on the shoe properly. So I pay attention to detail. That doesn't make me obsessive.

**FRANKIE:** Well, it looks like you missed a spot on one of them.

**AMBER:** *(Panicky, looks at her shoes.)* Where?

**FRANKIE:** Kidding. Kidding! *(AMBER relaxes.)* Maybe.

*(AMBER tenses up again, studies her shoes. FRANKIE smiles; she's enjoying this.)*

**FRANKIE:** *(Cont'd.)* Amber, calm down. They're fine. I'm going to go finish unpacking. Let me know when everyone else gets here. *(Heads for archway.)*
**AMBER:** Finish unpacking? You've been here for three days!
**FRANKIE:** I don't like to overdo it all at once. I pace myself. *(Glances at Amber's shoes and frowns. Disapprovingly.)* Hm. *(AMBER frantically looks at her shoes again. FRANKIE smiles evilly to herself and exits.)*

*(AMBER continues picking up boxes. SFX: Doorbell rings.)*

**AMBER:** Frankie, they're here!
**FRANKIE:** *(OS.)* Okey-dokey.
**AMBER:** Well, aren't you coming out?
**FRANKIE:** *(OS.)* I just left. Let me savor the moment of the new surroundings first.
**AMBER:** But we should both be standing here when I open the door.
**FRANKIE:** *(OS.)* Amber, just let them in. I'll be there in a minute.
**AMBER:** But … *(SFX: Doorbell rings again.)* That's just not the way it's supposed to be. *(Opens the door.)*

*(AL and MARIE enter. AL is carrying a bag full of Christmas presents.)*

**AL:** Heyyyyy!
**AMBER:** Heyyyy! *(Hugs THEM.)* Hi, Mom! Hi, Dad! Come on in!
**MARIE:** Oh, honey, it's so nice to see you! And what a beautiful place you have! Isn't this a beautiful place, Al?
**AL:** It's a beautiful place.
**MARIE:** That's a pretty sweater, honey.

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