A Candle in the Window

By
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STORY OF THE PLAY

A small group of weary travelers discover the power of the season while trapped in a lonely train station on Christmas Eve. As a blizzard rages outside, the troubled people are forced to turn to each other for companionship. Trying to make them more comfortable is the old stationmaster, Charlie. When the clock strikes midnight, there is a knock on the station door and seven youngsters appear. They've seen the station lights from the nearby church where, in secret, they've been practicing the story of the nativity which they plan to present at regular service. They offer to perform their play for the travelers and afterward, speak to the travelers individually, giving advice which is seemingly wise beyond their years. The next morning, as a new, younger stationmaster lights a Christmas candle, we realize the mysterious stop in the travelers' journey was more than accidental and has given them a renewed spirit and resolve.

TIME

Performance time: approximately 2 hours.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(5 m, 4 w, 3 boys, 4 girls.)

CHARLIE: Aging stationmaster. Kind-hearted.

TRAVELERS
NEIL: College student studying art.

IRVING: 30s - 40s. Wants to be a writer.

VIOLET: Extremely energetic senior citizen.

TRUDY: Violet's sister. Reserved and quite.

ANNE: 20s - 30s. Teacher.

GEORGE: 20s - 30s. Abusive husband.

SARAH: 20s. George's wife. She is pregnant.

CHILDREN
JOHN: The oldest, is the leader. Plays Joseph.

KATHRYN: Oldest girl. Plays Angel.

ELIZABETH: Plays Mary.

WALLY: Plays Shepherd.

HELEN: Plays Shepherd.

MABEL: Littlest girl, mouthy and outspoken. Plays Wise Man.

FRANCIS: Littlest boy. Plays Wise Man.

JEREMY: 20s – 30s. Stationmaster.

SETTING

The interior of a small train station, somewhere in rural America, sometime in the 1980s. USC is an archway on a raised platform. Through the arch there is a door, SL that leads outside to the boarding dock. Through the arch SR there is an open doorway that leads to an offstage room in the station. A sign reading "Restrooms/Vending Machines" points down the hallway. The US arch wall contains a large frosted window that lets in little light and no view of the surrounding countryside. Under the window is a big, boxy black trunk. Two steps lead down into the waiting room of the station. Along the SR wall is the ticket booth and a short bench under a pay phone. Between the ticket booth and the telephone is a chair and a small table with a nativity scene in figurines. Along the SL wall is a medium-sized wooden bench, a decorated Christmas tree, and a fireplace, all up on a slightly raised platform. There are two chairs near the fireplace. In CS of the station are two enormous wooden benches, back-to-back, so one bench faces the audience and one faces upstage. It is evident that someone has taken care to give the train station a warm holiday feeling. The outside of the frosted window is decorated with colored lights and an electric candle glows on the windowsill.

PROPS

Large white candle
Coats, purses, backpack, suitcases
Quarter
Vending machine snacks on a tray
Blankets
Candy canes
Flashlight
2 cups of coffee
Writing pad and pen
Church music box
Soda crate
Small bag of coins
Perfume
Silver dollar
Keys tied with black string
Sarah's note
Men's wallet
Coins
Small book and pen
Wastebasket
Pot of coffee and foam cups
Magazine
Angel ornament
Envelope with money
Package of gum
Keys for Charlie
Stuffed toy sheep
Foil star tied to staff by yarn
Frankenstein monster figure
Glasses
Sketch pad and pen
Matches
Dollars

PRODUCTION NOTES

The music is used to gently bridge the many different short scenes. Oftentimes the music comes in under dialogue and therefore needs to be subtle and unobtrusive. Simple recordings of one or two instruments are the most effective. Piano, flute, guitar, harp or other stringed instruments work well. There are many recordings of these traditional holiday songs available, played on bells, chimes or music boxes. To keep the story line moving, the music fades out as soon as the next scene is ready to play. It is not necessary that these songs are played in their entirety.

ACT I

The fire in the fireplace is a very simple effect to achieve. Attach several long strips of colorful cellophane paper to small fireplace logs. Under the logs use a quiet fan to blow the cellophane strips upward. Mount two or three small lights inside the fireplace, directing the instruments on the cellophane strips.

ACT II

Note on nativity: It is important that the children play the nativity scene as sincerely as possible. Their mistakes are innocent and their intention is never to be "funny or entertaining." Their costumes are traditional and made with the best possible care, especially the Angel's costume which maybe looks too real. The singing of “All Through the Night” should be done without musical accompaniment as in the best lullaby tradition.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: It is Christmas Eve and there is a raging blizzard outside. SFX: We hear a TRAIN WHISTLE. CHARLIE, an aging stationmaster wearing a thick red coat, enters from the hallway. He stops suddenly as if he's forgotten something important. He exits quickly down the hallway and returns a second later carrying a large white candle which he places on the mantelpiece. After a quick look around the station, he crosses to the door leading to the boarding dock and goes outside. Every time the door is open there is a rush of wind and a flurry of snowflakes. The stage is empty for a moment. The door opens again and Charlie leads the TRAVELERS into the station.)

CHARLIE: Come on inside where it's warm. I'll put the coffee on. *(Holds the door wide for the weary PASSENGERS who file in one after another, anxious to get in out of the storm.)* That's right. Here we are. Go on over there by the fire.

(The PASSENGERS, like moths, are drawn to the light and heat of the fire. NEIL, a young man, crosses to the pay phone. He puts some coins in, jiggers the coin return, repeats several times. He slams the receiver down. By this point EVERYONE is watching him.)

NEIL: The phone's out of order!
CHARLIE: Not out of order. It's the storm. Lines must be down.
NEIL: I need to get a message to my family right away.
CHARLIE: I know you do, son.
NEIL: It's very important. Is there anywhere else I can find a phone?
CHARLIE: I'm afraid not. Not in this storm. When the lines are down, they're usually down for days.
NEIL: Perfect. *(Crosses to the DS center bench and sits.)*

End of Freeview

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