A Little Christmas Spirit

By Pat Cook

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STORY OF THE PLAY

J. D. Morse has been looking high and low for a special Christmas gift for his grandson. Finally, as a last resort he takes the advice of a flier on his car windshield and wanders into Nick's Emporium, an old-fashioned store chock-full of all sorts of gifts and knickknacks. He has a hard time explaining to Nick what he's looking for, but finds himself falling under the old storekeeper's spell. Just when Morse is about to buy something, he runs outside to chase some kids away from his car. When he returns, he finds the store suddenly dark and quiet. A policeman then shows up to run him off because, "This place ain't been open in 40 years!" Morse finds a way back, not only to the store, but to a time 40 years ago when he was a younger man. This Yuletide fantasy is full of humor and the holiday spirit and makes us all wish we could find a "Nick's Emporium" where life stands still and we can all truly enjoy *A LITTLE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT.*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 M, 5 W, 2 Girls)

J. D. MORSE: A slightly bitter old man, around 60, who spends most of his time on business and little else.

JERRY MORSE: J. D. as a young man, 21, playful but a bit skeptical.

NICK: A whimsical old store owner, who delights in his family, in the season, and in helping people.

MONA: (Adult) A woman in her late 50s who doesn't complain but is nevertheless a bit sad.

MONA: (Younger) A friend of the family, around 20, who's content with her life but loves Nick's family.

ANGELINA: Nick's plump wife of many years, slightly overbearing but with a kindly heart and giving nature.

SANDRA: Nick's oldest daughter, in her late teens, a wise-cracking, but amiable character.

KIM: J. D.'s daughter, around 30, who worries about her father and his lack of spirit.

OFFICER NIVEN: A cop in his 50s who's just doing his job so others might spend time at home.

MARY: Nick and Angelina's 8-year-old daughter who just wants to help.

JENNY: Nick and Angelina's 7-year-old daughter who says, "Me, too."

Time: The present, Christmas Eve.
Place: Nick's Emporium.

SETTING

The setting is a quaint old shop, an emporium chock- full of all sorts of knickknacks and dry goods, odd items, most still in their boxes, seemingly placed at random and overflowing the shelves. It's warm atmosphere which seems to demand inspection and introspection, an open invitation for memories of years gone by.

There are two doors in this floor plan. The front door is located SL and leads to the outside. The second door, located behind the main counter, is located SR and leads to the store- room. Also, a staircase is located USR, which leads upstairs to the bedrooms. There are various, heavily-laden shelves around the room which house boxes marked "Toys," "Shirts & Socks," "Kitchen Utensils," "Lamp Wicks & Bulbs," and an infinity of other items, waiting to be wrapped and given to loved ones in celebration of the holiday.

There is also a large, brightly decorated Christmas tree, located DSR, which leads off. In fact, someone can walk behind the tree and disappear offstage. A long old table all but dominates the center of the room and a main counter runs parallel to the SR wall.

PROPS

SET: bell, mirror, cloth, boxes, ribbons, violin bow, ribbon bow, archery bow
NICK: Sleigh bells, candy, watch, feather duster, handkerchief, turkey on a platter, bag of toys
MORSE: An advertising flyer, eyeglasses, wristwatch
NIVEN: flashlight, notepad and pen
MONA: muffler
ANGELINA: cup of cocoa, tablecloth, napkins, covered dishes
JERRY: eyeglasses
MARY: silverware, covered dishes
JENNY: silverware, egg beater, covered dishes
SANDRA: plates, glasses, pitcher
KIM: small flashlight

ACT I

(AT RISE: The room is quiet. Only a soft CAROL plays from the storeroom. The front door opens, ringing the overhead bell and announcing the arrival of J. D. MORSE. He yells at someone offstage.)

MORSE: Why don't you kids watch what you're doing?! What? Does your mother know you're out here? *(HE shuts the door and mutters to himself.)* I'm beginning to think Scrooge was right. Just a little misunderstood, if you ask me. Quiet old guy, minding his own business and suddenly, whang, he gets visited by three ghosts and gives away everything he owns. What IS this place? *(HE looks around.)* Will you look at all this junk? Everything scattered around like a pile of leaves. Must be run by the government. *(HE calls out.)* Hello? Yo! Anybody home? I'm stealing a bunch of stuff in here! *(Back to HIMSELF.)* Nothing, do you believe it? Everyone else has security guards, attack dogs and shoplifting cameras. What does this place have? *(HE clangs the bell over the door.)* A bell over the door. And you could steal that, too. *(HE jangles the bell vigorously.)* Hello! Anybody here! I'm setting fire to this place! (*HE stops playing with the bell.)* Nothing, do you believe it? *(NICK enters, unnoticed, from the back room.)* A bell over the door. I haven't seen one of these since I was a kid. My ... seems like everybody used to have one of these. I remember old Smitty used to have one in his store. Used to sell hats.

NICK: You want a hat?

MORSE: *(Jumps and turns.)* Excuse me!

NICK: Merry Christmas.

MORSE: *(Crosses to NICK.)* I was just looking around.

NICK: Yeah, you were the one who was going to steal something and then burn the place down, right?

MORSE: *(Trying to laugh it off.)* Oh, I was just kidding around, you know. Squeaky wheel gets the grease.

NICK: You need grease? *(HE ducks down behind the counter.)*

MORSE: No. *(NICK resumes his position.)* I was just making a point. Maybe a little too much, I guess. Just probing where I shouldn't, I suppose. Like they say, never kick a skunk.
NICK: You want a skunk? *(HE ducks down again.)*
MORSE: NO! *(NICK resumes his position.)* I just found this ... *(HE reaches in his pocket.)* Wait a minute, you got a skunk under there?
NICK: I never know until I look. You'd be surprised what gets in here.
MORSE: I doubt it.
NICK: Sorry, I didn't hear you come in.
MORSE: Well, I did.
NICK: Do it again.
MORSE: What?
NICK: Come in again, will you? I'll try to pay attention this time.
MORSE: But I was just ...
NICK: It'll help me out tremendously. Please?
MORSE: Oh! *(HE moves to the door. NICK bends down behind the counter. Morse, rather than leaving, simply opens and shuts the door, ringing the bell.)* I'm back and ... *(Looks around.)* Oh, where is he? *(Crosses to the counter.)* Hello?

(NICK pops up causing MORSE to jump.)

NICK: Merry Christmas!
MORSE: *(Catching HIMSELF.)* Don't DO that!
NICK: How'd you get here?
MORSE: *(Points to the door.)* I came in ... I thought you were going to watch?
NICK: Sorry, I thought I found a skunk.
MORSE: *(Glaring.)* Me, too.
NICK: Came in the front door, did you?
MORSE: No, I was dropped by helicopter. You ARE getting professional help, aren't you?

End of Freeview

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