A Little Peace for Christmas

By Tim Mogford

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The Davies' house is a picture of confusion and complications this Christmas Day with the arrival of various extended family members and guests. No one can find Uncle John, there's body glitter all over Kelly's room, Sandy and her daughters have been doing something with feathers in the kitchen, and nobody knows what Nana Jane might do this year! But then a stranger appears who might be Sandy's new boyfriend, Phil's old friend from college, or (if we believe Grandpa) the mysterious Uncle Don from the Amazon. The stranger says nothing, and yet his soft smile is calming to everyone, and things seem to get better all around him. As the various crises are resolved and the family is finally united, they ask the stranger to stay to share dinner with them. He gently declines, for he is after all, needed many other places.

PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

A Little Peace for Christmas was originally presented at Schuylkill Valley High School on November 13 and 14, 2009, with the following cast:

MAN: Eli Agia; BOB DAVIES: Dante Filipini; JANE DAVIES: Sarah Raggad; SARA DAVIES: Becky Straus; SAM WYLER: Noah Horst; KELLY DAVIES: Morgan Kauffman; MARY DOWNES: Courtney Schlappich; CHRIS DAVIES: Nolan Boyer; JOHN DOWNES: Ethan Fritz; AUNT RACHEL: Allison Frymoyer; KYLIE DOWNES: Kara Fouse; UNCLE DAVE: Ian Moody; KYRA DOWNES: Kirsten Dimovitz; SANDY DAVIES: Elizabeth Batz; AUTUMN DAVIES: Danielle Shatto; RAINBOW DAVIES: Kim Lukacz; JIM PRICE: Josh McNeil; UNCLE PHIL: Blake Tobias; KEVIN: Morgan Rohrbach; JAKE: Connor Kilgore; ABBIE: Katie Ganster; LAUREN: Julie Millhouse; DEB: Amanda Winkler; JILL: Victoria Long; KARYN: Caitlyn LeVan; MEG: Alex Nertavich.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(10 m, 16 w)

MAN: An honest, open face. Could be any age over 18 but clearly younger than Sam.

BOB DAVIES: Husband and father.
SARA DAVIES: Wife and mother.
KELLY DAVIES: Their daughter, a teenager.
CHRIS DAVIES: Their son.

JANE DAVIES: Bob's mother.
SAM WYLER: Sara's father. A man whose bark and bite are about as bad as each other.

MARY DOWNES: Sara's sister.
JOHN DOWNES: Mary's husband.
KYLIE DOWNES: Their daughter, a young teen.
KYRA DOWNES: Their daughter, a young teen.

AUNT RACHEL: Sara's sister.
UNCLE DAVE: Rachel's estranged husband.

SANDY DAVIES: Bob's sister.
AUTUMN DAVIES: Her daughter.
RAINBOW DAVIES: Her daughter.

JIM PRICE: Bob's neighbor.
PHIL: Bob's friend.

KEVIN: Chris' friend.
JAKE: Kelly's boyfriend.
ABBIE: Kelly's friend.
LAUREN: Kylie/Kyra's friend.
DEB: Kelly's friend.
JILL: Kylie/Kyra's friend.
KARYN: Kelly's friend.
MEG: Kylie/Kyra's friend.

SETTING

An ordinary family living room, as detailed as the director wishes. At least two chairs and a coffee table; possibly a couch and armchair. Perhaps there are decorations for Christmas. The living room is the throughway between the kitchen (SR) and the dining room (SL). Characters will use the set not just as a place to sit and talk, but also as the quickest way to get from one hive of activity to the other.

PROPS

Newspaper
Napkins
Cell phone
Body glitter cream
Wooden spoon
Cardboard box
Large wrapped gift
Necklace (ethnic-styled, not jeweled)
Feather dream wafters
White lab coats
Backpacks with notebooks and gadgets
Pack of chewing gum
Crockery and other tableware
Glasses
Tray
3 small bags
Nail polish
Penny
Umbrella
Bandaids

A Little Peace for Christmas

(AT RISE: The Davies' family home at Christmas. SAM sits in the most comfortable chair in the room. He is in his sixties, rumpled but formal in white shirt and bland tie, a sport coat over the chair behind him. He grimaces at the paper he is reading.)

SAM: Bad news. Nothing but bad news. Some Christmas this turned out to be. Thanks for all the bad news. Thanks for nothing. *(Pause.)* Not that anyone else cares. Bunch of dummies. Ungrateful, spoiled little prima donnas. That's what they are. *(Pause, then calls loudly.)* That's what you are! It wasn't always bad news, you know! *(Pause.)* That's what happens. *(Calls out SL, in the direction of the dining room.)* That's what happens when you leave the country to a bunch of drugged-up hippies! That's why this happens!

(Unseen by SAM, the MAN enters SR. Perhaps there is a brief lighting change. He is neatly but not formally dressed – shirt, pants. He sits in one of the available chairs and looks around him.)

SAM: *(Cont'd. Still shouting.)* Is anyone listening to me? *(To himself again.)* No one is listening to me. Forty-five years of sacrifice and no one is listening to me. Well, that's what happens. *(Suddenly notices the MAN. Initially startled, he quickly regains his hostility.)* Who are you?

(The MAN looks at him steadily; a faint smile.)

SAM: *(Cont'd.)* Sneaking up on people. No manners. That's part of the problem. *(Pause. He shakes his paper at the Man.)* Bad news! What am I telling you for? You're the one who made it. You're one of them. Aren't you?

(The MAN smiles, then looks away.)

SAM: *(Cont'd.)* Well, what are going to do about it, that's what I want to know. Only so much bad news the world can take before… Well, it starts with manners. Common civility, that's what it starts with. No one bothers to talk nice any more. I've been sitting here for hours, no one's --

(SARA enters. She wears an apron over a dress outfit for the holiday. Like her, the outfit is rather stressed and creased right now. She is genuinely warm and caring, but struggling to retain her composure.)

SARA: Did you call, Dad?
SAM: Did I call! Well, it's nice of you to notice. Nice of you to come in and check on me. Make sure I haven't actually died here.
SARA: Did you want something? *(She's straightening up around him, starts to fold up the paper.)*
SAM: Don't fold that up! That's what I'm talking about. Full of bad news. Don't fold it up!
SARA: You just said it was full of bad news.
SAM: Of course it is! What isn't? But that's all I got here to amuse myself. Except him, of course.
SARA: *(Hasn't noticed the Man. She looks at him now, startled.)* Oh! I'm sorry. I didn't see you sitting there.

(The MAN smiles.)

SAM: That's what happens. No one ever sees anyone sitting anywhere. That's why this country is going down the toilet.
SARA: *(Looking curiously at the Man, but is pulled out of it by her father's comments.)* The country's not going down the toilet, Dad. Don't be silly.
SAM: Of course it's going down the toilet! This newspaper was thrown on my porch by a boy with a hole in his ear the size of a quarter! I got Amazon warriors on my front porch now!

(Offstage, KELLY calls out "Mom!" SARA closes her eyes briefly and shrugs in response.)

End of Freeview

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