

The Perfect Gift I

The Original Stageplay



Cleveland O. McLeish

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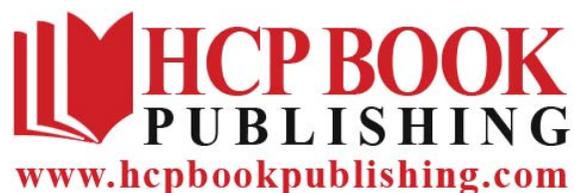


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Characters

MALES

Josef

Pastor Adolphus

Balthazar – Wise Man

Caspar – Wise Man

King Herod

Joseph

Jack

Shepherds

Inn-Keeper

Adviser/ Angel

FEMALES

Carmen

Jennifer

Gene

Mary

Inn-Keeper's Wife

Setting

ACT I – Home – Living/Dining Room

ACT II – Biblical Outdoor Setting

The Story

There is trouble at home for a loving couple, and their teenage daughter as secrets begin to surface, and the consequences of choices come to light in this dramatic Christmas Play, “The Christmas Gift.” A seemingly loving couple is routinely affected by a lack of proper communication.

When they finally decide to be honest with each other, sparks fly, and trouble looms on the horizon for this 18-year marriage. But the Christmas Play being performed at their church may just be the catalyst for change and reconciliation that this family needs.

Please Note: This is Part I of a two-part play that begins in Christmas and concludes in Easter, so expect that the end will leave the audience hanging and anxious for the exciting conclusion.

Play Details

Length: 60-90 Minutes

Cast: 10 Males, 5 Females, Plus Extras. (Some characters can be doubled)

Audience: Teens & Adults

Genre: Contemporary Drama

THE SCRIPT



SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP

Setting: Living/Dining Room

Furniture suggests middle-income residence. There is a couch at center stage, a coffee table, an ottoman, and a few vases with flowers. There is an adjoining dining room with a floating table, counters, a refrigerator, dining table with chairs.

The table is already set for dinner.

Carmen walks out with bowls of food that she places on the table. She wipes her hand in her apron and continues to set the table for dinner. She pauses and looks at her watch. She sighs deeply.

Gene enters.

GENE: Hey, neighbor.

CARMEN: *(startled)* Gene, why can't you knock like everybody else?

GENE: Aw, don't do that to your girl. You know we have an open door relationship.

CARMEN: You're going to give me a heart failure one of these days.

GENE: Your heart is strong, mama. Anyway, my husband going be home any minute now, so are you finished?

Carmen shakes her head. She goes for some containers of food that she hands to Gene.

CARMEN: He's going to find out one day that you can't cook and you've been lying to him all these months.

GENE: He won't find out. I signed up for the cooking class.

CARMEN: You did?

GENE: Well, in my mind I did. But I will make it a reality soon.

CARMEN: You should have taken my advice and just told him the truth.

GENE: You don't know my husband. He likes good food. It's not my fault he can't tell the difference between take-out and a home-cooked meal.

CARMEN: I just think the fact that you're lying to him, it's just not going to end well for you.

Josef comes in from work carrying his briefcase.

GENE: Okay, this is my cue to go. Hi Josef.

Josef looks at the containers in her hand.

JOSEF: Your husband still doesn't know you can't cook?

GENE: And I appreciate you not telling him. See ya!

Gene exits.

Josef looks at the table and smiles. Carmen blinks her eyes at him and frowns.

CARMEN: You're late, again.

JOSEF: Don't start.

CARMEN: Dinner has been ready for over two hours.

JOSEF: You're just setting the table.

CARMEN: You're just coming home. I thought work for you ended at five.

JOSEF: It's called overtime.

CARMEN: Overtime? Since when do you do overtime?

JOSEF: I actually came home in a very good mood.

CARMEN: You came home to a wife who is not. Josef, I work just as hard as you and I have to come home and prepare your dinner. The least you can do is be here on time, so we can eat it before it gets cold.

JOSEF: You're the one always complaining that I'm not pulling my weight around here with the bills. This is what I get for trying.

CARMEN: I know you were not at the office.

JOSEF: How would you know that?

CARMEN: I called.

JOSEF: Why would you do that?

CARMEN: I'm your wife. I think I have a right to know where my husband is.

JOSEF: You don't trust me?

CARMEN: This is not about trust.

JOSEF: What is it about then?

Carmen sighs.

CARMEN: You haven't heard a word I have said, have you?

She proceeds to finish setting the table. Josef looks confused.

JOSEF: What do you want from me?

CARMEN: I just told you.

JOSEF: I think I missed it, so tell me again.

CARMEN: Where were you? You left the office three hours ago.

JOSEF: I had a few things to do.

CARMEN: And you didn't think you should communicate this with your wife?

JOSEF: I think my wife should learn to trust me. We've been married over 16 years.

CARMEN: It's 18 years actually.

JOSEF: Point is, I can run a few errands without having to give an account to my mother about it.

CARMEN: I'm your wife, not your mother.

JOSEF: Then act like my wife.

CARMEN: You know what, this is giving me a headache. Are you ready to eat?

JOSEF: You really think I would still want to eat after all that?

CARMEN: Why not?

Josef shakes his head and exits almost bouncing Jennifer over as she enters.

JENNIFER: Hi, Daddy ---

Josef is gone without a word.

JENNIFER: Okay. Interesting. Mom, can I borrow your phone?

CARMEN: Nope.

JENNIFER: My screen just froze up again. I will just need it for a few minutes.

CARMEN: You said that yesterday, and I didn't have the use of my phone for three hours.

JENNIFER: C'mon Mom. I have friends waiting for me. I am missing some very important information just standing here talking to you.

CARMEN: I'm expecting a call, so my answer is still no.

JENNIFER: Great. You wanted me to be more friendly and socialize, and now that I am, you're shutting me down.

Jennifer drops on the couch.

CARMEN: I need to talk to you anyway.

JENNIFER: About what?

CARMEN: The time you're coming home from church in the nights.

JENNIFER: It never used to be a problem.

CARMEN: That was when we traveled together. I don't like the idea of you walking home alone.

JENNIFER: So, you and dad can start coming again, so I don't have to.

Pause.

CARMEN: The church thing is kinda over-rated.

JENNIFER: And you say this to me now after raising me in the church?

CARMEN: I'm sorry, honey, but I think it works for you as a teen. It's just not working for us now.

JENNIFER: Let me see if I understand you, Mom. You guys argued less when you were going to church. You smiled more. You were a lot more generous and accommodating. You helped people. I don't see how that is not your thing anymore.

CARMEN: Do you want some dinner?

JENNIFER: Yeah, I expected that. No, I'm not very hungry.

CARMEN: How's school?

JENNIFER: Another six months and high school will be a thing of the past for me. I'm pretty excited that my life is moving so fast. Very soon I will be in college and away from ---

Pause.

CARMEN: Go ahead and say it. I already know what you want to say.

JENNIFER: I just don't understand why you guys argue so much.

CARMEN: You're too young to understand.

JENNIFER: Right. You would be surprised at just how much I understand.

CARMEN: Stop trying to counsel me, Jen.

Pause.

JENNIFER: Okay. I'm stopping right now.

Jen turns and exits.

CARMEN: (*calling after her*) Jen --- Jennifer ---

Jen is gone.

Carmen rubs her forehead in frustration. She shares herself a plate of food and sits to eat alone.

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE 2

LIGHTS UP

Josef is fast asleep on the couch.

Jennifer enters and goes to the fridge. She takes out an apple and heads back to her room. She stops when she sees someone on the couch. She stands over the couch and leans over it as she bites into the apple.

Josef groans and turns.

JENNIFER: So, Dad.

JOSEF: Uhm.

JENNIFER: Are you sleeping?

JOSEF: Yeah.

JENNIFER: Okay. Shouldn't you be sleeping in your bed?

JOSEF: I guess.

JENNIFER: Any particular reason why you are sleeping on the couch?

JOSEF: Nope.

JENNIFER: Okay. It's Saturday, do you have any plans?

JOSEF: Nope.

JENNIFER: Can I borrow your phone?

JOSEF: Sure. *(hands phone to Jennifer who quickly exits)*

Pause.

Josef sits up.

JOSEF: What just happened?

Carmen enters. She is holding some paperwork/statements.

CARMEN: Josef, I got the bank statements for this month, and I'm not sure what is going on.

JOSEF: Good morning.

CARMEN: I'm serious.

JOSEF: So, you're talking to me now?

CARMEN: Just enough for you to tell me what's going on.

JOSEF: Are you accusing me of something?

CARMEN: You tell me.

JOSEF: I don't think I like your tone.

Carmen sits. Calms herself before speaking again.

CARMEN: I'm seeing some very large withdrawals from our joint account. Do you know anything about that?

JOSEF: I took some money to take care of some business.

CARMEN: What kind of business?

JOSEF: Since when do I need to report to you what I do with my money?

CARMEN: Well, this would be our money.

JOSEF: Which is a combination of your money and my money.

CARMEN: Mostly my money.

JOSEF: You just couldn't help yourself, could you?

Pause.

CARMEN: I'm really trying not to get upset, so if you just talk to me and not try to take me in circles, I'm sure we'll be fine.

JOSEF: I already told you I took the money to take care of some business. If that's not enough information for you, too bad. It's all I have to say.

Josef lies back on the couch and pulls the covers over him.

Carmen grabs the cover off him and rolls him out off the couch. Josef jumps up off the floor ready to defend himself. Carmen throws the statements at him.

CARMEN: You can't just do what you feel like, Josef. We were actually saving this money for something specific.

JOSEF: I am sick and tired of you telling me what I can and cannot do. Yes, you're working more money than me, but I contribute too, and I have the same right to the money in the joint account as you.

CARMEN: I really can't do this anymore.

Pause. Carmen rubs her head in frustration. She exits.

Josef is unable to go back to sleep.

JOSEF: My life can't possibly get any worse than this.

LIGHTS OUT