

SETTING:

We are in the home of JOHN and MARY

WARNER in Cape Coral, Florida. It is modestly furnished with a sofa center stage, an end table to the left and a coffee table in front of it. The kitchen is to the right with a bar separating the two rooms. Along the back is the door to the outside. In the left downstage area is a decorated Christmas tree. Behind the living room wall is a hallway leading to the bedrooms.

AT RISE:

Although it is Christmas Eve, most of the décor shows we are in Florida. MARY enters from the hallway carrying a large cardboard box and humming “Deck the Halls.” The head of a large cardboard Santa is sticking out of the top of the box. MARY puts the box down near the tree. SHE pulls the cardboard Santa out and stands it up.

MARY

Okay, Santa, how did you enjoy the past year up in the attic?

(Imitating Santa’s voice)

Not too bad, Mary, until those filthy squirrels tried to build a nest in my beard. Ho! Ho! Ho!

(MARY kneels down, grabs the cord for the lights and looks for the outlet)

MARY

Oh please, if there is a Santa Claus, let these lights work.

(MARY plugs them into the outlet, but nothing happens.

MARY stands. She screams at the cardboard Santa.)

MARY

AHHH!!! I hope when you get home tonight, you find Mrs. Claus in bed with an elf!

(TINA enters from the hallway carrying a small wrapped present.)

TINA

What's all the screaming about, Mommy?

MARY

Oh, I'm sorry, Tina. It's just that, well, why is it when you take the lights off the tree they're in working order? You're very careful about packing them away. You store them away in a nice, quiet spot for a year. You bring them down, very carefully, plug them in and it's like they're all asleep.

TINA

Don't ask me. I'm just a kid. Why do we have to have an artificial tree? Why can't we have a real one like when we lived in New York?

MARY

This is so much easier. It's this, or we string popcorn on a six foot palm tree.

(MARY looks through the box. TINA starts for the front door.)

TINA

I'll be right back.

MARY

Where are you going?

TINA

I'm taking Alicia's gift over to her.

MARY

Okay, but hurry back, I want you to help me get ready for the party.

TINA

(unenthused)

Oh boy.

MARY

Hey, Tina, what's the matter?

TINA

Nothing.

MARY

Come here. Tell Mommy. Now, what's the matter?

(TINA walks back to where MARY is.)

TINA

It's just that, well, it's hard to get into the Christmas spirit when it's eighty-five degrees outside. I miss the snow and all my friends up north.

(MARY holds TINA affectionately.)

MARY

I know, but this is where Daddy's job is. We had to move. You understand, don't you?

TINA

(walks away disappointed)

Yeah, I guess.

MARY

Hey, when you get back, we'll pretend it's Christmas in New York. I'll make hot cocoa and we can stand in the kitchen with the freezer door open.

TINA

(looks back)

Nice try, Mom.

(JOHN ENTERS from the hallway and almost knocks TINA over with the suitcase HE is carrying.)

JOHN

Whoa, look out there, Tiny.

TINA

Dad, my name is Tina, not Tiny.

JOHN

I know that. Tiny is just a pet name, like Princess, or Kitten. Would you like me to call you one of those?

TINA

Don't you dare. Tiny is bad enough. I don't want people thinking you got me at the SPCA.

JOHN

Where are you going?

TINA

I'm going to give Alicia her Christmas present.

JOHN

What did you get her?

TINA

A Michael Jackson CD.

JOHN

Who's Michael Jackson?

TINA

Who's Michael Jackson? Daddy, did you just come out of a time tunnel? You know, Michael Jackson...

(sings)

Beat it, Beat it...

JOHN

(interrupting)

Tina?

TINA

Huh?

JOHN

Beat it.

(TINA EXITS out the front door. JOHN ENTERS
the living room and places his suitcase on the sofa.)

JOHN

Where does that child get such a smart mouth?

MARY

I don't know. It must come from my mother-in-law's side of the family. John, give me a hand here and help me find out which bulb is out.

JOHN

Can't right now, Mary, I've got to get to the airport.

MARY

Oh, please. It will only take a second and what do you mean you've got to get to the airport?

(JOHN opens his suitcase and looks through it.)

JOHN

Just what I said, I've got to be at the airport in half an hour.

MARY

(in a high-pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

JOHN

I've got to fly to New York to get a contract signed.

MARY

(high-pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

JOHN

It's a brand new account.

MARY

(high-pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

JOHN

Will you stop saying "On Christmas Eve?" Yes, on Christmas Eve. I told you when I took this job that I would have to go on business trips.

MARY

(High-pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

(JOHN shoots MARY a look)

MARY (continued)

Okay, I realize you have to take important business trips, but what client would make you fly to New York to sign a contract on Christmas?

JOHN

Goldberg and Sons.

MARY

Goldberg and Sons.

JOHN

Yes, they've come up with this fantastic new item that's going to sell millions.

MARY

What item?

JOHN

Designer yarmulkes.

MARY

Now let me get this straight. You're giving up Christmas with your family so you can fly to New York to sign a contract with Goldberg and Sons, so they can sell millions of yarmulkes.

JOHN

Now you've got it.

MARY

Are you insane? Doesn't being with your family on Christmas Eve mean anything to you? Is your stupid job that important to you that you can't delay this trip until after Christmas? Is the almighty buck that important to you, John?

JOHN

(yelling back)

That's right, because it's the almighty buck that got you a house on the canal in Cape Coral. It's the almighty buck that got you a standing in the community. And it's the almighty buck that got you...

MARY

(screaming)

PALMETTO BUGS IN THE KITCHEN!!!!

(JOHN throws his hands up and walks away.)

JOHN

I give up. There's no talking to you.

MARY

What about Tina? She's expecting to open her presents under the tree tomorrow with you.

JOHN

Just apologize to her for me. Tell her I had to go to the North Pole and see Santa about a special gift for her.

MARY

John, she found out there's no Santa two years ago.

JOHN

Who told her?

MARY

Your mother.

JOHN

My mother? My mother lives in California.

MARY

She sent Tina a telegram.

JOHN

She did not.

MARY

It said, "Grow up – stop – there is no Santa – stop- it's really mommy and daddy – stop- Love, Grandma Warner." And she sent it collect.

JOHN

Look, if it's going to upset Tina that much, here...

(JOHN reaches into his suitcase, pulls out a small wrapped present
and tosses it to MARY.)

MARY

What is it?

JOHN

Its Tina's present from me.

MARY

(looks it over)

What did you get her?

JOHN

Perfume.

MARY

Perfume?

JOHN

Yes, Chanel Number Five.

MARY

You got a ten year old little girl Chanel Number Five for Christmas?

JOHN

I had to. They were out of Obsession.

MARY

I think you are making a big mistake.

(JOHN SLAMS the lid of the suitcase.)

JOHN

A mistake? If anyone made a mistake around here, it's you.

MARY

And what is that supposed to mean?

JOHN

You know what I mean.

MARY

No, why don't you tell me what you mean?

JOHN

Okay, Okay, I'll tell you. I mean that mistake that sleeps in the other bedroom in this house.

MARY

You mean our daughter?

JOHN

I mean yours and Alan Rogers' daughter.

MARY

You told me you were never going to bring that up again.

JOHN

Well, I'm glad I did.

MARY

I will explain it to you once more. You and I were separated. We were getting a divorce. Alan and I were going to get married.

JOHN

Alan Rogers was a drunken stumblebum who couldn't hold a job.

MARY

(defensive)

Alan loved me and I loved him.

JOHN

Then why did you come back to me?

MARY

(backing down)

Because he was a drunken stumblebum who couldn't hold a job.

JOHN

(satisfied)

Aha!

MARY

You knew I was pregnant. Why did you take me back?

JOHN

Because you were scared and because I still loved you. And, I promised to be a good father, which I have been. So, let's just drop it, Mary.

(JOHN locks the lid on the suitcase.)

MARY

What am I supposed to do about this Christmas party we're having this evening? All our neighbors and friends are going to be here. What am I supposed to tell them?

