

# ***BENEATH the Guiding Star***

*By Cheryl Harrison*

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**STORY OF THE PLAY**

Last Christmas the wealthy Hendersons found Christ with the help of their maid Katie; two workmen, George and Bernie; and a certain bright star they had mounted on their rooftop. (*"The Guiding Star."*)

This year Charles and Liz want to put Christ in everyone's Christmas, but that may not be so easy, at least not with Liz's family. Liz's parents are fighting non-stop and Liz's sister Sue criticizes everything and everyone. Sue especially doesn't want her 12-year-old son, William, around George and Bernie.

The two men are trying to fix the Henderson's star, but between almost breaking the window with the ladder and falling off the roof, they are having more than their share of problems. Carol, Tim, and Aunt Grace are the only ones in the family who seem to have any Christmas spirit.

When Katie discovers the kitchen money has been stolen, Sue immediately accuses George and Bernie. Unfortunately the money falls out of William's coat and the lonely young boy, desperately upset, runs away. Through prayer William is found and Sue's eyes are opened. The family is reunited in spirit and not surprisingly, the beautiful guiding star starts shining again.

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(5m, 6w, 1 b)*

**CHARLES HENDERSON:** Wealthy Christian man who is practical and easy going.

**LIZ HENDERSON:** His wife who is planning the family dinner for Christmas Day. She found Christ last year.

**KATIE:** The Henderson's maid but treated as part of the family.

**CAROL:** Charles and Liz's daughter.

**TIM:** Carol's husband, studying to be a preacher.

**GEORGE WISE:** Lives at the mission, works for Henderson's doing odd jobs.

**BERNIE WISE:** Cousin of George. *(Not too bright)*

**HERMAN and HAZEL BROWN:** Parents of Liz, always fighting.

**SUE:** Uppity sister of Liz, too busy to give much time to her son.

**WILLIAM:** Sue's son, about 12-years old.

**GRACE:** Liz's aunt, a sweet Christian lady.

**SCENE SYNOPSIS**

Scene 1: Two days before Christmas.

Scene 2: Christmas Eve, mid-morning.

Scene 3: Christmas Eve, after lunch.

Scene 4: Later, that afternoon.

Scene 5: Later, early evening.

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**SETTING**

All action takes place in the nicely furnished living room of Henderson home. UPS is a large picture window through which you can see snow, the light of the guiding star, and the comic antics of George and Bernie. There is a door to the outside and another exit to the kitchen and the rest of the house. The room is furnished with a sofa, loveseat, chairs, end table, phone, lamps, Christmas tree, and other holiday decorations. There is either a coat closet or coat rack.

**PLAYING TIME**

Runs 45 minutes to an hour, depending if carols are included.

**PROPS**

List for Liz; newspaper for Charles; coffee/cookie tray for Katie; hat and ladder for Bernie; overnight bags/gifts for family; business card in a purse and a fashion magazine for Sue; knitting for Grace; board game for Herman/William; small tin box for Katie; and envelope of money in William's coat.

**COSTUMES**

Characters wear modern day winter clothes and coats. Katie can wear a maid's uniform or a simple dark skirt and white blouse and Bernie and George wear work clothes. Sue's clothes are fancier than anyone else's.

**SFX**

Doorbell, phone, breaking glass, thump from Bernie's fall, Christmas music as desired.

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SCENE 1

(AT RISE: It is two days before Christmas. CHARLES is reading the newspaper and LIZ is checking her guest list.)

LIZ: Well there, *(Looking at list.)* that's all finished. Finally!

CHARLES: *(Reading.)* What's that, dear?

LIZ: Our guest list for Christmas Day dinner. Do you want to guess who's coming to dinner or should I just tell you?

CHARLES: *(Putting down the paper.)* Why don't you not tell me and let me be surprised. That way I won't have to worry about it.

LIZ: Worry! But why would you say such a thing as that?

CHARLES: Because I saw your sister's name at the top of your list, that's why.

LIZ: Oh. Yes, Sue did decide to come this year for a change. She's really in for a surprise when she sees how we've changed and especially when she sees who else is coming to dinner.

CHARLES: I think we've changed for the good, don't you?

LIZ: Oh yes, no doubt about that, but I don't think Sue would agree. She's never been one for church and neither were we a few years ago, you know.

CHARLES: Yes, but that has all changed now.

LIZ: I am so glad that we found Christ and allowed him into our home, but I think in a way that further alienated my sister from me. It seems like we have less and less in common now than ever before. She always makes fun of church people. I really think that is one reason she hasn't been here, even for Christmas for so long.

CHARLES: Why do you suppose she changed her mind this year?

LIZ: Who knows with Sue! I just hope we can have a positive impact on her and William.

CHARLES: So her wonderful son William will also be gracing us with his appearance.

LIZ: Charles, don't start now. Anyway, maybe they've changed too.

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CHARLES: We can only hope. So, anyway who else is coming to this dinner of yours?

LIZ: Well, our darling daughter Carol and her husband of course, Aunt Grace, and Mom and Dad. *(Sadly.)* But not Bill this year. I will miss him at dinner.

CHARLES: Yes but it is our son's turn to eat dinner with his in-laws this year. We'll still get to see him after Christmas.

LIZ: I know. I know! It's just better when both of our children are here.

CHARLES: Is anyone else coming? I thought you were inviting George and Bernie.

LIZ: Oh yes, of course they're on the list right here with Sue. I don't know how they will get along, but I really want them to come. They're part of this family too, at least it seems so even if they do only work for us.

CHARLES: Yes, if it weren't for them we may have never come to be Christians. We owe them a lot. I'm really pleased with the work they do around here, and Pastor Shepherd says that they are the best guests they have at the mission.

*(KATIE enters with coffee tray.)*

LIZ: Katie, I'm so glad you came in. I need to see you about this Christmas dinner guest list and the menu.

KATIE: That's fine, ma'am. Would you care for some coffee?

LIZ: Yes, thank you Katie.

CHARLES: I'll take some too. Katie, you are a jewel. *(SHE pour coffee for THEM.)* Could be an explosive dinner this year, Katie.

KATIE: What's he talking about, Mrs. Henderson?

LIZ: Here, read the guest list. *(Hands HER the list.)*

KATIE: Oh I see, so Sue is coming to dinner. Should I seat her by George or by Bernie?

CHARLES: How about right smack between them? *(Laughs.)*

LIZ: All right you two, that's enough.

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KATIE: We're sorry ma'am, but you have to admit it will be an interesting trio.

LIZ: I'll say! Do you remember how I reacted the first time I met George and Bernie?

KATIE: How could we forget!

CHARLES: I especially like the way Bernie threw water in your face when you fainted. *(THEY all laugh.)*

LIZ: Ah yes! That was some night, wasn't it!?

KATIE: You blamed it all on the star on top of the house. That was the first year we had it up, wasn't it?

CHARLES: Yes, yes I believe it was, but certainly not the last.

KATIE: Yes, that star was a real guiding light for many people that Christmas.

LIZ: That star has become more than a decoration. Maybe it will work another miracle this year ... this time for Sue and even Mom and Dad. They used to take us to church all the time, and now they never darken the doors. It seems like all they do is fuss and fight. They never have a good word to say to each other.

*(Enter GEORGE from outside, followed by BERNIE - who doesn't say anything, just stands with hat in hand.)*

CHARLES: Hello, George. Did you finished putting up all those decorations?

GEORGE: Yes sir, and it sure does look pretty out there. Those new decorations look great.

LIZ: How about the star? Did you get it up?

GEORGE: Yep! And it's even prettier and brighter than before. *(BERNIE nods.)*

LIZ: That's just perfect, George and Bernie.

GEORGE: We just came in to let you know that Bernie and I are done, and we're ready to head home to the mission for the night. And I wanted to thank you again for askin' us to Christmas dinner. You folks are so good to us, you treat us just like family. It's 'bout enough to make a grown man cry.

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