

The Christmas Prodigal

A Two-Act Play

By Dewey W. Todd

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DEDICATION

This play is dedicated to Haley and Will – the two most wonderful children I could ever have imagined. We have certainly had our challenging times, but love conquers all and I am so proud of you both! You will both do great things!

STORY OF THE PLAY

Here is a touching comedy, a modern-day spin on the story of the Prodigal Son. After years of being over-shadowed by her pretty and over-confident older sister, Peri leaves home, taking the money from her college savings. Like the story from the New Testament, Peri, once quiet and hard-working, lives a life of excess, but finally realizes she wants to return to her family. A homeless man, who has more connection to the family than anyone initially realizes, urges Peri to call home. But will it be the same old story, or will the Stewarts have learned something from her absence? Will they—and Peri herself—seek forgiveness, become more loving to each other and better Christians all around? In addition to the beautiful message, humor is added by Uncle Marvin, the peanut-butter king; Naomi, his fact-challenged wife; and Benjamin, the obsequious boyfriend of older sister Ashley. About 80 minutes.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The play premiered at First Baptist Church, Newnan, Georgia, on December 10 & 12, 2010. It was produced by Rev. Lee Chitwood and directed by Amy Dees. Set design: Warren Moore. Props: Denise Schermerhorn, Caroline Flournoy, and Hallie Flournoy. The cast was as follows: NARRATOR: Sam Cook; GRANDPA MILES: Richard Booth; GRANDMA HELEN: Cynda Pierce; YOUNG PERI STEWART: Laurel Huster; ANGELA STEWART: Cindy Bowles; YOUNG ASHLEY STEWART: Ashlee Grace Chitwood; ROB STEWART: David Porter; UNCLE MARVIN: Sam Harkness; AUNT NAOMI: Debby Shefelton; PERI STEWART: Gracie Shefelton; ASHLEY STEWART: Alison Dees; BENJAMIN: Jacob Fussell; LILLIE: Caitlin Singleton; MUGSY: Doug Bowles; MAX: Travis Montgomery; ABIGAIL: Beth Fussell; BUNGLE: Steve Bowles.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 m, 6 w, 3 flexible, 2 girls)

NARRATOR: A fun, jovial gentleman, whose job is to tell us all about “Christmas” and bring us up to date.

GRANDMA HELEN: The perfect grandmother type. Loving, sweet, but very wise. *(Will sing in a trio at the end.)*

GRANDPA MILES: Helen’s perfect counterpart. Funny, easy-going, sometimes grumpy.

ANGELA STEWART: A good mom, but sort of a “Martha” rather than a “Mary.”

ROB STEWART: The dad, gentle and interesting, but gets uptight easily.

YOUNG ASHLEY: Their older daughter, 10 years old, pretty, smart and a little over-confident.

YOUNG PERI: The younger daughter, 8 years old, fairly quiet and artistic.

UNCLE MARVIN: The sloppy, obnoxious uncle who cannot dress properly.

AUNT NAOMI: Marvin’s wife, not much more socially adept. Uses incorrect movie and TV references.

ASHLEY: 20 years old. Still pretty, smart and still over-confident

BENJAMIN: Ashley’s boyfriend from college. Overly dramatic; obsequious, sort of an Eddie Haskell type.

PERI: 18 years old. Quiet, artistic, but a hurting spirit. *(Will sing in a trio at the end.)*

MUGSY, LILLIE and MAX: Peri’s “good-time” friends – around 19 or 20. Free spirits with sloppy dress and nonconformist attitudes. Lillie has wild, died hair.

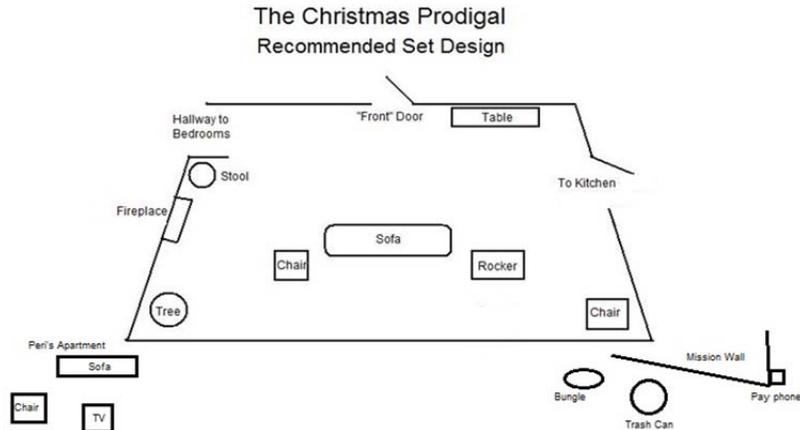
ABIGAIL: Late middle-aged mission worker who befriends Peri.

BUNGLE: Old homeless man. Initially annoys Peri, but becomes her friend. *(Sings in a trio at the end.)*

DOUBLING: *Mugsy, Lillie and Max can also play Benjamin, Abigail and Bungle.*

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SETTING

The stage needs to be setup with variable lighting to allow for multiple settings throughout the play. The main stage is the Stewart home. It should be a living room with a stage rear center entry "front door." A door opening at stage left goes to the family kitchen and a door opening at stage right goes to the bedrooms. Furniture is scattered around the living room and there is a Christmas tree down at stage right front. Grandma Helen should have a rocker. For Act II the living room will still be used, but for Scene 1 it should be rearranged to be Peri's apartment, then back to the living room. In Scene 2, a small section downstage needs to be set up as the outer wall of a homeless shelter. A portable wall section could be rolled onstage for this scene. Note: Several copyrighted songs are mentioned in the script. If used, be sure to obtain permission first.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- ACT I, Scene 1: The Stewarts' living room, ten years ago.
- ACT I, Scene 2: The Stewarts' living room, a year ago.
- ACT II, Scene 1: Peri's apartment, three months ago.
- ACT II, Scene 2: Split scene: The Stewarts' living room and the homeless shelter street entrance, today.
- ACT II, Scene 3: The Stewarts' living room.

ACT I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Solo spot on the NARRATOR. In the living room GRANDMA HELEN is knitting in her rocker while GRANDPA is on the sofa, head on his chest sound asleep.)

NARRATOR: Good evening! Welcome to Christmas! And, I do mean that in every sense of the word. You see, our little town here is *named* Christmas. No one knows for sure, but we assume our founders chose that name because they wanted a place where it felt like Christmas all year long – and it truly does. It is small, though. Fact is, everybody knows everything about everybody. Everyone knows whose check is good and whose husband isn't. Everybody knows what everyone else is up to, but they take the paper just to see who got caught at it! *(Chuckles.)* Of course, sometimes we do get a little bit of the big-city badness from around us and it does come to taint our pleasant water at times. And, to be honest, sometimes things aren't perfect – even in Christmas – because of our own fallen condition. Oh, we try. Good schools, good churches, good parents – but, sometimes we just have to learn things the hard way. In fact, right now I'm reminded of a story that Jesus told one time. It was about a Father who had two sons. One day, one of them decided he just didn't belong anymore. And so he.... Well, I'll tell you what. Maybe it would be better if I just let the Stewart family tell you the story. They live here in Christmas. Miles and Helen have retired now, but they spend every Christmas with their son Rob and his family. Oh, they are a typical busy family. In fact.... Well, like I said, let's let *them* tell you their story. To begin, let's go back about ten years ago and let them introduce themselves.

(NARRATOR exits and LIGHTS come up on main stage. While HELEN knits, MILES' head falls back and he begins to snore loudly. Helen stops knitting for a few seconds, then

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picks up a pillow and hits Miles in the face. The reaction is immediate and comedic.)

MILES: Tarnation, Helen! What did you do that for!? I had visions of sugarplums dancing in my head!

HELEN: Sugarplums, my foot! You were dreaming about that big fat turkey and sweet potato casserole Angela is working on in the kitchen. *(Returns to knitting.)*

MILES: *(Grins.)* Yeah! Even so, you shouldn't wake up an old man by hitting him in the face with a pillow. I almost had a heart attack.

HELEN: Well, stay awake then. Marvin and Naomi will be here in a minute and I don't want to have to wipe drool off your face.

MILES: I sure hope he isn't passing out more of that awful homemade peanut butter of his. Blech!

HELEN: Now, Miles – you know he puts his heart and soul in to making that peanut butter every year and he means well, so be nice.

MILES: Maybe so, but it smells like he puts some of his old socks in it, too. In fact, it smells like something you would use to caulk a toilet with.

HELEN: Oh hush. Naomi IS your sister. Act like you care! After all, Rob will do just like he always does. He'll wait one week and then donate it to the homeless mission.

MILES: Yeah, well, even THEY have standards. I feel guilty every time I drive by there.

(YOUNG PERI walks into the room shyly, holding a piece of paper. She is wearing a magenta sweater.)

HELEN: *(Puts down her knitting.)* Oh, my precious little Periwinkle! Come show Grandma Helen what you have.

PERI: It's just a drawing. *(Comes over and sits in Helen's lap and hands her the drawing.)*

HELEN: Wow! What beautiful colors! You have the most wonderful imagination. Grandpa, look at the beautiful picture Peri drew. *(Hands it to MILES.)*

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MILES: *(Holds it upside down.)* Yeah, that's a real nice boat, Cupcake!

PERI: You have it upside down, Grandpa. That's a rainbow.

MILES: *(Turns it around.)* Oh, yeah! Didn't think I'd ever seen a lake that color before. Come to think of it – I've never seen a sky that color before either. And, quite frankly, I've never seen a rainbow all different shades of blue. *(Chuckles.)*

HELEN: *(Snatches it back.)* Oh, you big galoof, you have no artistic appreciation! Peri, I think it's gorgeous! *(Kisses HER.)*

PERI: Thanks, Grandma. Do you think Daddy will like it?

HELEN: I know he will, sweetheart.

(ANGELA enters with a tray of hors d'oeuvres and sets them on a table in the back of the room.)

ANGELA: Peri, Ashley, come on in here! Daddy will be back from the store in a minute and Uncle Marvin and Aunt Naomi will be here soon!

MILES: Yuck! Toilet caulk!

PERI: I'm here already, Mommy.

ANGELA: Oh, sorry, Angel, I didn't see you. Put your drawing stuff away and get ready. And, for heaven's sake, take off that tacky sweater and put on the beautiful white dress I laid out for you. You want to look pretty in Mommy's Christmas pictures!

PERI: But, Mommy, this is my favorite sweater and I think--

ANGELA: Now, honey, don't argue with Mommy. Just do as I say!

PERI: *(Holds up the picture.)* Mommy, did you see my--

ANGELA: *(Sternly.)* Not now, baby, company's coming.

ASHLEY: *(Importantly from offstage.)* Ladies and gentlemen...introducing Princess Ashley! *(YOUNG ASHLEY enters wearing her white Christmas dress and a crown from a beauty pageant, walking elegantly.)*

ANGELA: *(Claps her hands together delighted.)* Oh, Your Majesty, you look radiant. *(Bows, then hugs and kisses HER.)* You do look lovely, sweetheart.

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