

PS: Merry Christmas

By Pat Cook

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DEDICATION

To Lucy, we miss you so.

STORY OF THE PLAY

You ever get a Christmas letter? You know, one of those notes inserted into a Christmas card tell you way more than you ever wanted to know about the senders? Karen Brookshire loves writing them. Not so her family – they’d much rather dive behind the couch. With a boy-crazy daughter, a smarty-pants son and a klutzy husband she has her hands full.

So Karen has to write their Christmas letter by herself recalling such events as their daughter’s first date, which unfortunately occurred at the same time as two overly-adoring aunts were visiting, and their son’s high school graduation where he not only won the embarrassing “Perfect Attendance Award” but also found out that he would still be living at home.

But the more Karen writes, the more her imagination soars. She even pictures the rest of her family pulling a “Mission Impossible” to get rid of the letter.

Full of humor and poignant memories, this theatrical greeting card brings home the true meaning of family, of tradition and, of course, Christmas itself.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 6 w, 1 flexible, 2 girls; doubling possible)

KAREN BROOKSHIRE: 40-ish mother and heart of the family.

MARLON BROOKSHIRE: Karen's rather klutzy husband.

THAD BROOKSHIRE: College freshman and wise-cracking son.

KATIE BROOKSHIRE: 15-year-old daughter worried about her image.

VIRGINIA: 8 year old in the late 1800s *(May double as Young Karen.)*

GRAMMA KUSHMAN: Karen's loving grandmother, late 70s *(May double as Mrs. Barnhouse.)*

DODO: Karen's slightly pompous older sister.

GRETCHEN: Karen's other older sister, a tad overweight.

YOUNG KAREN: Karen when she was a girl *(may be double-cast with Virginia.)*

WAITER: Sarcastic server. *(May double as Expert.)*

EXPERT: TV Antique show expert. *(May double as Waiter.)*

MRS. BARNHOUSE: Antique collector. *(May double as Gramma Kushman.)*

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SETTING

Time: Early December, the present.

Place: The Brookshire house.

The living room has a couch located just left of CS facing out as an angle. A coffee table rests in front of the couch while two end tables flank it. There are lamps on each of the end tables. DSR is a small computer table and chair. On top of the table reside a small computer and various notepads alongside a jar with an eclectic selection of pens, pencils, erasers, etc. US of the computer table is a raised platform on which rests an old style kitchen table.

ACT I

(A solitary LIGHT comes up DSR on the computer table. Seated in the chair and facing out is KAREN BROOKSHIRE, deep in thought. She thinks a minute and looks out.)

KAREN: "We wish you a Merry Christmas!" *(Smiles brightly then suddenly changes her mind.)* Nah. *(Taps the delete key a few times and again looks out.)* "Merry Christmas!" *(Shakes her head.)* Nope, that would come second after the title. *(Taps the delete key a few more times. Thinks and types vigorously, then stops and reads.)* "Ho, Ho, Ho!" *(Hits the delete key again as she speaks.)* "No, No, No." *(Leans back.)* Need a catchy title. *(Speaks to audience.)* I'm trying to write our traditional Christmas letter. You know? Those inserts you receive with some Christmas cards, telling you all about the people who thought enough of you to send a Christmas card in the first place? And they think SO much of you they want to fill you in on a whole year of their lives. Like you asked, right? I hear you snickering out there, I know. A lot of people feel the same way, even here in the Brookshire household. For instance, here is my family.

(LIGHTS come up on the couch. Seated is MARLON, reading the paper. THAD is sitting nearby holding the TV remote and looking out while KATIE is leaning on a couch arm, listening to her cell phone.)

KAREN: *(Continued.)* That's them. My daughter, Katie, with her cell phone glued to her ear. Thad, our oldest, now in college and letting everyone know about it. And my husband, Marlon, the breadwinner. Aren't they cute?

(LIGHTS dim out on the family.)

KAREN: *(Continued.)* Hold on to that picture. Here is that same family the minute I tell them it's time to compose our traditional Christmas letter.

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(LIGHTS come up again on the couch. ALL are gone, leaving only the newspaper on the couch in their wake.)

KAREN: *(Continued.)* Oh, come ON now! *(Rises and moves to the couch.)* Don't pull this with me; you knew this day was coming!

(SHE looks behind the couch. MARLON, THAD and KATIE timidly look over the couch back.)

MARLON: *(Mock surprise.)* Oh, Hi, Hon. I uh ... I was looking for my car keys.

KAREN: *(To MARLON.)* Uh huh. *(To SON.)* Thad?

THAD: I was helping Dad look for his keys. *(MARLON elbows THAD.)* Ow!

KAREN: Katie?

KATIE: Oh, I ... I was ... I.... Well, GAH! I couldn't think quick enough to come up with anything like that "car keys" thing, GAH!

KAREN: *(Shaking her head.)* Get up, all of you. Look at you, what a spectacle.

(THEY rise and move to the front of the couch.)

MARLON: *(To KATIE.)* Always have a good excuse ready to pull out at a moment's notice; you just never know when she's going to spring something on you.

KAREN: Fine advice to give your daughter, especially here at Christmastime.

MARLON: *(Smiles sheepishly.)* What're fathers for?

KATIE: Why do we have to write that dopey letter, anyway?

KAREN: Because I think it's a lovely thing to do. Isn't that enough for you?

KATIE: *(Stuck.)* Uhhh....

MARLON: *(Leans in to HER.)* Got you, didn't she?

THAD: Aw, Mom, nobody ever reads those things!

KAREN: Now where did you hear that?

THAD: *(Quickly.)* Dad told me.

MARLON: What?!

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THAD: You said have a good excuse ready, that's mine.
Worked pretty good, didn't it?

MARLON: Don't use me!

KAREN: Well, did you tell him that?

MARLON: Uhm... *(Bends down again.)* Just where ARE
those car keys?

KAREN: Listen to you all. You'd think I was trying to make
you work in the fields or clean out the gutters. *(To*
MARLON.) Which, by the way, Marlon –

MARLON: *(Straightens up.)* I'll get to it, I promise.

KAREN: Well, hurry; the birds are nesting.

KATIE: But Mom, I thought you always wrote those things.
Why do you have to drag us into it?

*(KAREN'S shoulders droop and she puts a hand to her
forehead.)*

MARLON: *(Aside to KAREN.)* You wanted a girl.

KAREN: Look, this can be fun, you know?

THAD: Uh oh, new approach.

KATIE: I should've seen this one coming.

MARLON: Karen, you should've led off with that one.

KAREN: This is NOT a new approach, it's the same one I
started with. Something the whole family can do together.

MARLON: But, Hon, be fair. Nothing happened to us this
year.

KATIE: Yeah, just the same old stuff we go through every
year; what's to write about?

THAD: And even if we DID write it nobody would read it.

KAREN: Now, just how do you know that?

THAD: *(Blurts out.)* Oh, Mom, think about it. The letter
shows up and nobody goes near it. It's like your fruitcake!

*(Both MARLON and KATIE suddenly move away from
THAD.)*

MARLON and KATIE: Ooooh!

End of Freeview

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