

CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY

a comedy in one act

*adapted from the short story
by William Dean Howells*

by Burton Bumgarner

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STORY OF THE PLAY

As Christmas day approaches, a young girl asks her father for a story. After some persuasion the father spins a delightful tale about a little girl named Betsy who makes a wish to have Christmas every day of the year. Her wish comes true. At first it is all very exciting, with Santa's visit, the opening of packages, the singing of carols, and the arrival of the cousins for dinner. But soon the daily repetition wears thin. Santa is too exhausted to deliver presents and goes to sleep in Betsy's living room. The carolers have no energy to sing, all of the forests are cleared of Christmas trees, and turkeys go for \$1,000 each. Eventually the only food for Christmas dinners is sardines and cranberries. People become angry and throw packages at each other, houses are overflowing with toys, and everyone is worn out. After a year of Christmas every day, Betsy gets another wish, and she wishes for the holiday just once a year. Adapted from the short story by William Dean Howells, **Christmas Every Day** is a delightful Victorian tale of childhood imagination and the magic of Christmas.

Running Time:

30 minutes

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 m, 8 f, extras)

FATHER: An upper-class New Yorker, late 19th century.

DAUGHTER: 10 to 12 years old.

BETSY: 10 to 12 years old.

DAVY: Betsy's brother, 15 to 17 years old.

WILL: Betsy's brother, 13 to 15 years old.

GEORGE: Betsy's father.

MARTHA: Betsy's mother.

GRANDMOTHER: Betsy's grandmother.

SALLY: Betsy's cousin, her age.

STEPHEN: Sally's brother, Will's age.

LAWRENCE: Sally's brother, Davy's age.

MARY: Betsy's aunt, Sally's mother.

JAMES: Betsy's uncle.

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT: Male (could be female).

SANTA: Himself.

MOTHER: Daughter's mother, appears at the very end.

CAROLERS: Any number, all ages, male and female.

Christmas Every Day is set in the parlor of a late 19th century home in New York. The set must have a front door, a Christmas tree decorated in the late 19th century style, and a fireplace from which Santa can enter and exit. The ages of the children are merely suggestions.

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(AT RISE: The setting is the library or parlor of an upper-class New York family of the late 19th century. A wingback or Windsor chair, end table, ottoman, and lamp are DSR. The curtain may be closed. FATHER is reading a book. After several counts, the DAUGHTER appears from behind the chair, unseen by Father. She smiles at her father, but is somewhat annoyed by his reading. She tickles his ear with a feather. He shakes his head and scratches his ear. She tickles his other ear, with the same reaction. She blows across his head, and quickly ducks behind the chair. He looks back, then returns to his reading. She appears again, tickles his face with the feather, then ducks behind the chair. Finally Father realizes he is not alone. She appears and slowly brushes the feather across his forehead. He scratches his forehead and pretends to ignore her. She silently giggles. She slowly brushes the feather beneath his nose. He cuts his eyes back, watches the feather, and is quite surprised when it makes him sneeze. The Daughter quickly ducks behind the chair, giggling out loud.)

FATHER: Must be dusty. I'll speak to the maid about it tomorrow. *(DAUGHTER giggles. FATHER returns to his book. Daughter appears and tickles his ear with the feather. He slowly reaches up and grabs her arm.)* Ahh! I've caught a tickle monster! *(SHE laughs uncontrollably as HE pulls her around in front of the chair.)* What's this? It's not a tickle monster at all! It's a little girl! And a very pretty little girl at that! Why, not only is it a pretty little girl, it's a pretty little girl who looks terribly familiar!

DAUGHTER: *(Laughing.)* Of course, I look familiar! I'm your daughter!

FATHER: *(Teasing.)* My daughter? Do I have a daughter? I seem to remember a daughter. *(SHE jumps in HIS lap, and he grunts in discomfort.)* You're right. I DO have a daughter. But she's much smaller than you. Why, she's no bigger than a pumpkin.

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DAUGHTER: I am a lot bigger than a pumpkin!

FATHER: But my little girl is so tiny. You're far too big to be my little girl.

DAUGHTER: I AM your little girl, and I'm not too big!

FATHER: Well, now. If you ARE my little girl, and I'm not saying that you are, I have a question for you. Why aren't you in school?

DAUGHTER: It's Saturday, silly.

FATHER: Oh. I had no idea. Well, then. Why aren't you outside playing?

DAUGHTER: Mother says it's too cold.

FATHER: Nonsense. Cold air is good for ... for the digestion.

DAUGHTER: Mother is afraid I'll catch a chill.

FATHER: Well, then. Why aren't you playing with your brothers?

DAUGHTER: My brothers are boys!

FATHER: Well, then. Why aren't you playing with your cousins?

DAUGHTER: My cousins live across town. In order to play with my cousins I would have to cross town, which means I would have to go outside in the cold which Mother says I can't do because I may catch a chill.

FATHER: Well, then. (*Thinks.*) Why are you in here?

DAUGHTER: I want to know what you're doing.

FATHER: Why, I'm reading a book. (*DAUGHTER takes the book from FATHER and looks at the cover.*) It's a book by Mr. Dickens. You remember the man who wrote the story about Scrooge and Tiny Tim?

DAUGHTER: Yes.

FATHER: Well, I'm to meet him next month when he comes to New York, and this is supposed to be one of his finest books.

DAUGHTER: "A Tale of Two Cities"? (*Places the book aside.*) It sounds tedious.

FATHER: Well, now. It's a very noble tale about ... uh ... it's not exactly like his other works ... uh ... you're right. It IS tedious. Since you've eradicated my desire to read Mr. Dickens, what would you have me do?

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DAUGHTER: I want you to tell me a story.

FATHER: Another story, huh? (*DAUGHTER smiles and nods.*) Well, let's see. Once upon a time there was a little pig.

DAUGHTER: No pig stories!

FATHER: No pig stories?

DAUGHTER: I've heard all the pig stories I ever want to hear.

FATHER: Very well, Once upon a time there was a little girl who wore a red cape ...

DAUGHTER: No wolf stories either.

FATHER: No wolf stories either? (*DAUGHTER shakes her head.*) Well, let me try again. Once upon a time there was a boy named Jack who traded his family's only cow for some magic beans ...

DAUGHTER: No giant stories!

FATHER: I can't tell a pig story, a wolf story or a giant story. You're a very particular little girl. What kind of story would you have me tell?

DAUGHTER: Tell me a Christmas story. Christmas is almost here, you know.

FATHER: It seems to me that I've told about as many stories about Christmas as I've told about pigs and wolves and giants.

DAUGHTER: Christmas is more interesting.

FATHER: I just may be able to tell you a Christmas story, if you will be kind enough to serve tea.

DAUGHTER: It's too early in the day for tea. We haven't even had breakfast.

FATHER: Nonetheless, I will not tell a Christmas story until I have tea.

DAUGHTER: But Mother will be very angry if I go in the kitchen and try and make tea.

FATHER: Oh, I don't want tea from the kitchen. I want tea that you make.

(The CURTAIN opens. DAUGHTER smiles. US is the parlor of a Victorian home at Christmas. A tree is decorated and surrounded by numerous presents.)

End of Freeview

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