THE BACHELOR'S CHRISTMAS FAMILY

By Sherry Elder Roseberry

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STORY OF THE PLAY

This turn-of-the-century Christmas is going to be a white one for bachelor Robert Kelley: white because his white lie has caught up with him! His boss, who only hires family men, wants to meet Robert's wife and kids. Robert decides to rent a family but has to disqualify several zany applicants. He is desperate until he spies sweet Mary O'Riley selling fruit. This one-act play is lighthearted, easy-to-stage and includes suggestions for favorite carols as well as one new song.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 8 w [doubling possible], I b, 1 g, extras as carolers)

ROBERT KELLEY: A young man who needs a ready made family.
MR. MADSON: A boss who strongly believes in the family.
MARY O'RILEY: A lovely young woman caring for a brother and sister.
MARK O'RILEY: Mary's little brother.
LEEZA O'RILEY: Mary's little sister.
OLD MAID: A bag lady who gets the wrong idea from Robert.
SHOPPER: A woman with troubles of her own.
CAROLERS: Any number.
INTERVIEWEES: *(5)*
MAGGIE SMITH: Very fat, eats anything she can.
SWEDISH WOMAN: Nice appearance - limited vocabulary.
SALLY PARKER: Plenty of voice, children, and plans.
MARTHA/ELIZABETH THATCHER: Spinsters looking for a man.

(Note: With a quick change, the Bag Lady can play one of the interviewees.)

PROPERTIES

Advertisement handbills for Robert; fan for Sally Parker; basket of fruit and tray of refreshments including glasses of punch for Mary; toy frog for Mark; and employment contract for Mr. Madson.

SYNOPSIS

The play takes place at the turn of the century. Furniture and clothes should fit that time period.

SCENE SYNOPSIS

SCENE 1: Early afternoon. Takes place in front of curtain small desk and chair.

SCENE 2: A few hours later. Takes place on the floor with audience or working between and in front of tables if dinner theater.

SCENE 3: That evening. Takes place on stage in Robert Kelley's living room; rocking chair, braided rug, and desk with bowl of fruit, CS; small Christmas tree with candy canes and an end table with a bowl of fruit, SR; small couch or deacon's chair, SL. The kitchen exit is USL; front door, DSL.

SCENE 4: The next evening in Robert's living room.

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: ROBERT walks on from SR with papers in hand. He sits at desk and studies papers as MR. MADSON enters SL.)

MR. MADSON: Robert, my boy - how long has it been since you joined us?

ROBERT: Six months, sir.

MR. MADSON: Six months you've done a fine job. I see no reason why we can't draw up a permanent contract for you in our firm. Do you?

ROBERT: *(Elated.)* No, sir!

MR. MADSON: Good. I'll have the papers drawn up and bring them to your house tomorrow evening.

ROBERT: *(Jumps up.)* Sir, that really won't be necessary. I'll sign the contract here.

MR. MADSON: My boy, you know how I feel about my employees being family men -

ROBERT: Yes, sir.

MR. MADSON: *(Hands in lapels; continues.)* I believe that a happy family man makes a happier employee, especially at Christmas. You told me about your fine family -

ROBERT: *(Near panic.)* Yes, I know, sir, but -

MR. MADSON: And I make it a policy to visit all my new employees and their families. I'm anxious to meet the little woman. Now mind you, tell her not to fuss. I'll see you tomorrow night. *(Exits SL.)*

ROBERT: *(Doomed.)* Robert, my boy, you've done it this time. Where are you going to get a family? What are you going to do? *(Paces.)* I think I might have an idea. At least, it's worth a try. *(Exits SL.)*

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: Town square, on floor with audience. A group of CAROLERS has entered from SL. After singing two songs, they form small groups and pretend to visit. ROBERT enters from SL with armful of advertisements. He passes them out to the ladies as he makes small talk.)

ROBERT: Excuse, me, ma'am, I'm advertising for a family - excuse me, I need to rent a family.

(As ROBERT tries to peddle his papers, the CAROLERS go off as an OLD MAID comes on from SR. She is nervously waiting for a trolley. Robert sees her, gets cold feet, thinks - then to audience:)

ROBERT: What did you expect? I'm a desperate man. Excuse me, ma'am ... but can I rent you for a few hours?

OLD MAID: *(Shocked.)* What? What did you say? *(Starts swinging HER bag.)* I heard about men like you - my dear departed mother warned me. *(Backs HIM around the tables or between aisles.)*

ROBERT: Miss, you've got it all wrong! I didn't mean ... you don't understand ...

(BOTH ad lib. They almost move in slow motion as she chases him around floor and up the stairs to the stage.)

OLD MAID: Oh, I know what you mean all right! I know exactly what you meant. Oh, I understand all right. I know how your kind preys on defenseless women like me.

ROBERT: Defenseless! *(As THEY move across stage to exit SR.)*

OLD MAID: You men see a well-turned ankle and a pretty face and you think you can take liberties.

ROBERT: *(Aside.)* I bet you haven't had much problem.

OLD MAID: What - what - *(Sputter, spurt.)* For women everywhere, I'm going to teach you a lesson!

End of Freeview

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