

***STOCKING STUFFERS***  
Five short Christmas comedies  
By James Venhaus

Featuring: *The First Christmas, Santa's Little Helper,*  
*Three Kings, Kringle-phobia* and  
*Happy Holidays from Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner*

**Visit the playwright online at:**  
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*For Laura*

## *The First Christmas*

### **Characters**

DAVID: About 30 - 35. Down-to-earth and funny.

SARAH: About the same age but much neater and more refined.

### **Notes**

The play takes place in the living rooms of a recently divorced couple. The only scenery is an undecorated Christmas tree placed in the center of the stage. The stage right side of the stage (and the right side of the Christmas tree) are located in David's living room. The stage left side of the stage (and the left side of the tree) takes place in Sara's living room. It is as if an imaginary line divides the stage in half right down the middle of the tree. (Like a TV split screen effect.) As David and Sarah begin decorating the tree, each decorates "their half" only. But they act as if they are decorating the entire tree. Only the audience sees the spilt, to the characters, the tree is whole.

### **Time**

A few days before Christmas

### **Acknowledgements**

*The First Christmas* was first presented by the State University of New York at Brockport as part of their "Festival of Ten" on February 23, 2001. The production was directed by Susan Hopkins.

The cast in order of appearance was:

DAVID	Adam Petzold
SARAH	Joanna Schmitt

*The First Christmas* was subsequently presented by Ground Zero Theater Company (Kimberlyn Crowe, Artistic Director) in Dallas, Texas on December 6, 2001. The play was directed by Cynthia Hestand.

The cast in order of appearance was as follows:

DAVID	Anthony L. Ramirez
SARAH	Denise Jackson

## *The First Christmas*

*(At rise David enters with a decaying cardboard box held together by duct tape full of Christmas ornaments. He puts them down and begins talking to Roger whom the audience does not see.)*

DAVID: Thanks for coming over Roger, but you really don't have to stay. Oh, I mean, it's good to see you, but I'm O.K., really. In fact, I'm looking forward to it. This will be the first Christmas that I get to do things my way. There is a certain freedom in being single that I had forgotten all about. For example, no more traveling back and forth between her family and my family, no more of her mother's cooking, in fact, no more of her mother, period. And, for the first time in my adult life, I get to decorate the Christmas tree my way. She was so anal about the tree. Every couple of years we had to buy all new ornaments, and she had them in this, this, plastic organizer thing, with ornaments in one section, hooks in another. And get this, she put them away in reverse order, so that the *next* year, the first ornament out of the box was the first one on the tree. It was like Christmas with Martha fucking Stewart, except worse.

*(At the mention of the "plastic organizer thing" Sarah enters with a Rubbermaid organizer (green bottom, red top) filled with Christmas ornaments, and sets them down. She also talks to someone who the audience does not see.)*

SARAH: Thanks for coming over. I could use the company. Everybody warned me that the "firsts" would be the hardest. The first night alone, the first anniversary, first Christmas. But, I'm enjoying the "firsts" more than I thought. Like, the first night alone I got to sleep in the middle of the bed, with my arms and legs in every corner and snored as loud as I wanted to. I finally get to order pizza with pineapples on it. We got married so young that I never got to enjoy being by myself. I can see why people stay single so long. The house is finally neat and clean. One of the things that bothered me about him was that he was a total slob. He never hung up his clothes; he just threw the dishes in the sink. I was constantly either picking up after him, or nagging him to pick up after himself. I felt like his mother. He just didn't have any respect for things. You know, we had to buy new things all the time because he didn't take care of the things we had. And this time of year was the worst. He had these ratty old ornaments that were falling apart, and he didn't take care of them and he didn't care how they went on the tree. He had them in this moldy cardboard box and after New Years he just tossed them back in the box, hooks and all. It was a mess.

*(David pulls out an ornament that is attached by its hook to at least a dozen more ornaments. He untangles them while Sarah speaks.)*

SARAH: Decorating the tree took forever, because nothing was where it should be, and we spent half the time untangling the ornaments and fixing the lights.

*(David puts his hand in his box and stabs himself on an exposed ornament hook.)*

SARAH: Something that should take an hour at most was dragged out half the night.

DAVID: She rushed the whole process. Decorating the tree was supposed to be a nice time for the family to spend together. It was something I looked forward to doing with her each year. I wanted to create a tradition in our family so that when we had kids, we would have these traditions that were ours. I wanted to relax and enjoy it, but she was so uptight.

SARAH: I mean if we had kids it would be different, but -

*(Pause.)*

SARAH: I'm enjoying not having to compromise about every little thing. I get to decorate the tree the way it should be done, and for the first time in a long time, I can be proud of it. When people come over, this is a tree that will start conversations.

DAVID: It was like a contest with her. She was keeping up with the Christmas Joneses. I don't think she ever caught on that nobody cared.

SARAH: I don't think he ever caught on that people notice things like this.

SARAH & DAVID (together): S/He had no appreciation for what was important to me.

SARAH: And he drank. Not so much that you would call him an alcoholic, but at Christmas time... Let's just say that I always had to be the designated driver.

## *Santa's Little Helper*

### **Characters**

TIM: A man in his mid to late 30's  
MAGGIE: Office secretary.  
MICHAEL: A guy who works in an office  
RANDOM OFFICE GUY/GAL: Ditto.

### **Setting**

An office supply storeroom in a big office building on the night of the annual office Christmas party.

### **Acknowledgements**

*Santa's Little Helper* was first presented by Loyola University, New Orleans on November, 23rd, 2003. The play was directed by Coby Nathanson.

The cast in order of appearance was as follows:

MICHAEL	Frederick Hansen
MAGGIE	Christina Chvala
TIM	Quinn Dennehy
OFFICE GAL	Jaqueline Steager

*Santa's Little Helper* was subsequently presented by Ground Zero Theater Company (Kimberlyn Crowe, Artistic Director) in Dallas, Texas on December 4th, 2003. The play was directed by Wm. Paul Williams.

The cast in order of appearance was as follows:

MICHAEL	Ben Casey
MAGGIE	Andra Laine
TIM	Sean Perez
OFFICE GUY	Brian Witkowicz
OFFICE GAL	Valerie Hauss-Smith

## *Santa's Little Helper*

*(SETTING: The office supply storeroom in a large office building during the annual office Christmas party. Stacks of cardboard boxes line the room. MAGGIE is wearing a "Santa's helper" outfit with a red Santa hat, red tunic with a short red skirt trimmed in white fur. She is checking her look in a pocket mirror as MICHAEL is putting his sports jacket back on and straightening his tie. They do this without making eye-contact with each other. Finally MICHAEL speaks.)*

MICHAEL: Thanks.

MAGGIE: For what?

MICHAEL: Well. You know. For everything. You were great.

MAGGIE: Oh stop it. You'll make me blush.

MICHAEL: No I mean it. I've never been with a woman who . . .

MAGGIE: Honey, do me a favor on your way out.

MICHAEL: What?

MAGGIE: Send in the next one.

*(Dejected, MICHAEL leaves. As he opens the door TIM enters. He is wearing a sports jacket, tie, paper party hat and is holding two glasses of champagne. He is just tipsy enough to do something stupid. As he bursts through the door, you can hear the office party noises in the other room.)*

TIM: There you are. I've been looking all over for you.

MAGGIE: Well, here I am.

*(He stumbles over to her, and almost knocks her over as he tries to kiss her.)*

MAGGIE: Oh! Hey. Wait a minute. Whoa there big fella.  
*(Flirtatiously)* You're moving kinda fast aren't you?

TIM: Well, I'm a fast movin' kinda guy.

MAGGIE: Well now, do mama a big favor, and take it nice and slow.

TIM: Nice and slow, huh? I can do nice and slow. *(Slowly moves in for another kiss.)*

MAGGIE: *(Playfully.)* No, no, no. No sugar for you just yet. Not until . . . Not until we talk a little bit.

TIM: Dirty talk, huh? You're a nasty little girl.

*(He swoops in for another kiss. She ducks underneath him and sits on top of one of the cardboard boxes.)*

MAGGIE: Why don't you come over here and tell Santa's little helper what you want for Christmas?

TIM: I want you.

MAGGIE: Little 'ol me? That's all?

TIM: It's all I can think about.

MAGGIE: Surely you want something else besides me.

TIM: Nope. Not right now.

MAGGIE: What about later?

TIM: Later?

MAGGIE: Tell me what you want. What do you really want in life.

TIM: *(He drops his head as he realizes he is getting nowhere.)* Are we really going to have this conversation? I thought that maybe you and I could . . .

MAGGIE: Not until you tell me what you want for Christmas.

TIM: Um . . . World peace, good will toward men, all that crap. Now come here.

## *Three Kings*

### **Characters**

ROB: a nice man in his mid 30's married to Susan

SUSAN: a nice woman in her late 20's married to Rob

DANA: a nice woman, with a great sense of humor. Married to Hank.  
Late 30's

HANK: a bit of a jerk, with a competitive streak, married to Dana.  
Late 30's

### **Setting**

The dining room of a suburban home. A Christmas tree can be seen in the adjoining living room. The dining room table has been cleared and set up for poker.

### **Time**

Ten minutes before midnight on Christmas Eve

### **Acknowledgements**

*Three Kings* was first presented by the Bootstraps Comedy Theatre, Dallas, Texas as part of the "A Very F.I.T. Christmas" festival on December 1, 2005. The play was directed by Matt Lyle.

The cast in order of appearance was as follows:

ROB	Brian Witkowicz
SUSAN	Jennifer Youle
DANA	Kim Lyle
HANK	Johnny Sequenzia

### ***Three Kings***

*(Lights up on the dining room of a suburban home. A Christmas tree can be seen in the adjoining living room. The dining room table has been cleared and set up for poker. ROB, DANA & HANK are sitting at the table. ROB is dealing the next hand. SUSAN is in the kitchen, off-stage.)*

ROB: Honey, come on. We're ready.

SUSAN: I'm getting another drink. Does anyone else want anything?

DANA: I'm good. Thanks.

HANK: I'll take another beer, *(DANA shoots him a dirty look.)* since you're up.

SUSAN: No problem. *(Entering from kitchen.)* OK. What's the game this time?

ROB: Five card draw.

SUSAN: OK. This is the one where I get to throw away some of my cards and get new ones, right?

ROB: Right.

HANK: *(Slightly frustrated.)* How is that she doesn't know the rules to any of the games, but she has the largest stack of chips?

DANA: Maybe she knows more than she lets on.

SUSAN: That's right. This could all be an act. I might be an internationally known poker genius sent here to steal all of your nickels.

ROB: Somebody didn't ante.

DANA: That's me. Sorry. *(She throws in a chip.)*

ROB: To ya honey.

SUSAN: Umm . . . OK. Let me see.

HANK: She checks.

DANA: Cool your engines. Hank.

SUSAN: Ten cents. *(She throws in a blue chip.)*

DANA: I'll call. *(She throws in a blue chip.)*

HANK: See your ten and bump a quarter.

DANA: Whoa there Mr. Nickel-King, are sure you can afford it?

HANK: You'll see.

ROB: Call. Twenty-five cents to you.

SUSAN: Oh, I call then. *(She throws in a red chip.)*

DANA: I'm in, too.

ROB: How many cards?

SUSAN: One for me.

DANA: I'll take three.

ROB: Hank, how many cards?

HANK: I'll take two.

ROB: OK, and the dealer takes three. OK hon, what's your bet?

SUSAN: Can I bet a dollar?

ROB: No. There is a twenty-five cent betting limit.

SUSAN: Oh, that's right. OK, then a quarter.

DANA: I'm out.

HANK: See a quarter, bump a quarter.

ROB: I'm out.

## *Kringle-phobia*

### **Characters**

GENE: A man in his mid to late 30's

LORRAINE: His wife. About the same age.

TIMMY (or TINA): Their son (or daughter). About age 8 or 9

3 SANTAS: Any age or gender. Dressed in traditional Santa suits.

### **Setting**

The family living room.

### **Time**

Early December.

### **Acknowledgements**

*Kringle-phobia* was first presented by the n.u.f.a.n ensemble, Chicago Illinois as part of the "7 Plays in 7 Days" festival on December 8, 2008. The play was directed by Juan Castaneda.

The cast in order of appearance was as follows:

GENE	Eric S. Pahl
LORRAINE	Kinga Schirott
TIMMY	Tom Sutton
SANTA 1	Zach Johnson-Dunlop
SANTA 2	Adam Melberth
SANTA 3	Tony Adams

## ***Kringle-phobia***

*(As the lights come up on GENE and LORRAINE'S living room, GENE enters running at top speed. He is being chased by SANTA who is wielding an axe. GENE manages to put the couch between himself and SANTA and they bob and weave around. SANTA takes a few swings at GENE and narrowly misses him with the axe.)*

GENE: Get away from me. Get out of my house!

*(A CAR HORN sounds from outside. Both men freeze and look towards the front door.)*

GENE: Oh crap.

*(SANTA ducks behind the couch. LORRAINE enters.)*

LORRAINE: Gene? Are you OK? What is taking so long?

GENE: Sorry honey. I'm almost ready.

LORRAINE: I heard yelling. Were you talking to someone?

GENE: I was just, you know . . . psych-ing myself up for the trip.

LORRAINE: Not the Santa thing again.

GENE: Don't start with me Lorraine. This is very serious.

LORRAINE: A grown man who is scared of Santa Claus. I'm supposed to take that seriously?

GENE: It's a medical condition.

LORRAINE: What's it called? Kringle-phobia? Get in the car.

GENE: Now just a minute, Lorraine.

LORRAINE: If you don't go this year, Timmy will be very upset, and I will never forgive you. Good God, Gene. What is the matter with you?

GENE: Nothing. I just thought that . . . *(He peeks behind the couch.)*

LORRAINE: What? You would let your son down again with this silly fear. It's bad enough that you don't watch Rudolph with him every year. He thinks you hate Christmas.

GENE: I don't.

LORRAINE: Well, how is he supposed to know that?

GENE: I'll be fine. As long as we just go into the store, see the . . . the . . . man.

LORRAINE: Santa. His name is Santa Claus.

GENE: As long as we go in, see Santa Claus and leave, I'll be OK. Just give me a minute.

*(GENE sits on the sofa. LORRAINE crosses over to him, kisses him on the forehead and sits next to him.)*

LORRAINE: Look Gene, you need to get in that car and take your son to the mall to see Santa. This is probably his last year to believe in all this. You can do it. I know you can.

GENE: Thanks Lorraine. Thank you.

LORRAINE: Now, go get in the car before I get out my kettle and start ringing my little hand bell.

GENE: Not funny, Lorraine. Not funny.

*(They begin to leave, LORRAINE first then GENE. He stops at the front door and takes one last look at the room.)*

GENE: *(Mantra-like)* I'm not afraid of Santa. I'm not afraid of Santa. I'm not afraid of Santa. I'm not afraid of Santa.

*(As he chants, the axe starts to rise from behind the couch. LORRAINE enters, the axe drops back behind the couch.)*

LORRAINE: Dear Lord Gene! Timmy is in the car.

TIMMY: *(Enters)* Mom! Dad! Come on. The line is probably around the whole food court by now. *(He sees that his dad is shaken up.)* Dad, are you OK?

## ***Happy Holidays from Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner***

### **Characters**

JULIA: A receptionist at the law firm of Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner. She is bright, pretty and in her 20's

### **Setting**

The reception desk at the law firm of Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner.

### **Time**

Five minutes before Five o'clock on December 23.

### **Acknowledgements**

*Happy Holidays from Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner* was first presented by Loyola University, New Orleans on November, 23rd, 2003. The play was directed by Coby Nathanson.

The cast was as follows:

JULIA                      Jessica Lozano

*Happy Holidays from Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner* was subsequently presented by Ground Zero Theater Company (Kimberlyn Crowe, Artistic Director) in Dallas, Texas on December 4th, 2003. The play was directed by Matt Tomlanovich.

The cast was as follows:

JULIA                      Andra Laine

***Happy Holidays from Anderson, Davis, Seton  
and Fenner***

*(At rise we hear a phone ringing and the lights come up on empty reception desk in the lobby of the law firm of Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner. A clock on the wall reads 4:55 p.m. Enter Julia, smartly dressed in business attire and wearing a telephone headset with the cord dangling behind her. She is straightening her dress and adjusting her hose.)*

JULIA: Crap, crap, crap, crap.

*(She runs behind the desk and plugs her headset cord in.)*

JULIA: Happy Holidays from Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner. How may I direct your call? Ms. Davis has gone for the day. Would you like her voice-mail? . . . I'm sorry sir; I can't give you that information. I can put you through to her voice mail. Sir, I just can't give you that number, Ms. Davis left strict *(the caller hangs up)* Hello? Hello? Jerk.

*(She unplugs the headset and starts to exit and is almost off-stage when the phone rings. She lets out an exasperated sigh as she runs back behind the desk)*

JULIA: Happy Holidays from Anderson, Davis, . . . Oh, Hi Amanda. . . . It has been so slow. Almost everyone is gone for the holidays, and there hasn't been a soul walk through the front door in almost three hours. But it seems like every time I try to do anything or go to the bathroom . . . *(another line starts to ring)* Oh, hang on a sec. Happy Holidays from Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner. How may I direct your call? Thank you and have a nice day. . . Are you still there Amanda? Actually, can I call you right back. I had just stepped out to the ladies room when you called. . . Thanks.

*(She hangs up, unplugs the headset and exits. After a beat, the phone rings.)*

JULIA: Are you kidding me?

*(She runs behind the desk and plugs her headset cord in.)*

JULIA: Happy Holidays from Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner. How may I . . . Amanda, that is not funny. I had just made in to the bathroom and . . . Of course, I was running. . . Stop laughing. I don't think this is very . . . I'm hanging up now.

*(She hangs up, stares at the phone for a beat, then unplugs the headset and barely makes it from behind the desk when the phone rings. She mumbles something under her breath and plugs the headset back in.)*

JULIA: Listen Amanda, CUT IT OUT. I don't appreciate being . . . Oh, hello Mr. Anderson . . . No sir, not at all. No, that's not how I . . . I've been saying Happy Holidays from Ander- . . . I'm sorry sir, I thought you were someone else. . . Yes sir. It won't happen again.

*(She hangs up and before she can do anything, the phone rings.)*

JULIA: Happy Holidays from Anderson . . . Amanda, I could kill you. That was my boss on the other line. I almost bit his head off . . . Well, he sounded confused but I could tell he was not happy . . . No I can't tonight. I've got to be a Macy's at 5:30, and after that Chris and I are going out . . . Yeah, tonight's the big night. I'm kind of nervous. I think he might say those three little words that I've . . .

*(The phone ring.s)*

JULIA: Gotta go. Call me back. *(She hangs up that line and answers another.)* Happy Holidays from Anderson, Davis, Seton and Fenner. How may I direct your call? Oh Chris, I'm glad you called. Listen, I get off in a few minutes and . . . What?! . . . Not again. Chris don't. Please. . . You've cancelled twice already. . . Cancel, reschedule, whatever. You know what I . . . Alright, when? . . . I guess so. No, it's OK, I understand. *(The phone rings)* I gotta go, call me back

*(She hangs up and answers the other line.)*

JULIA: Happy Holidays from Ander- . . . Hey, Amanda. Do you still want to go to the movies tonight? . . . Yes, can you believe it? Not only that, but he calls five minutes before I get off work. . . He said he had to work late, and I know that he . . . No, I don't think he would. Would he? . . . I mean, if there was someone else, I could tell *(beat)* couldn't I? *(the phone rings)* I'll call you back.