

Christmas In Cape Coral

(A Three Act Holiday Romantic Comedy)

by Carl Megill

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Christmas In Cape Coral

(A Holiday Romantic Comedy)

A Play in Three Acts

SYNOPSIS

Alan Rogers discovers, on Christmas Eve, he is the father of a precocious ten year old girl, from an affair he had with a married woman. While visiting Cape Coral, Florida, he plans to win over the still married Mary Warner and have her and his daughter to return to New York City to become the family they are supposed to be.

ACTS AND SCENES

All acts and scenes take place in the Warner living room, Cape Coral, Florida.

ACT III takes place in the same location, but twelve years later.

CAST

MARY WARNER.....A sensible and caring housewife
and mother in her 30's. She's bored,
but stays married for the stability and
and the love of her daughter, Tina.

JOHN WARNER.....Mary's husband and advertising executive
in his 30's. A stuffed shirt. Strictly business.
Family and everything else is a distant second.

TINA WARNER.....A bright and witty ten year old. Sometimes a
little too precocious. Hates living in Florida.

ALAN ROGERS.....A journalist in his 30's. He's glib and
irresponsible; never grown up. Tina's
real father.

MOTHER.....Mary's mom; in her 50's. She's a fun-loving
widow who would love to see her daughter
as fun-loving as she is. Hates John, adores Alan.

(NOTE: ALL CHARACTERS AGE 12 YEARS IN ACT III. Since only Mary, Alan and Mother are in the final act, that would make Mary and Alan in their mid 40's and Mother in her mid 60's. No double-casting needed, just makeup.)

Scene

The WARNER household in Cape Coral, Florida

Time

Twelve years ago.

ACT I

SETTING:

We are in the home of JOHN and MARY WARNER in Cape Coral, Florida. It is modestly furnished with a sofa center stage, an end table to the left and a coffee table in front of it. The kitchen is to the right with a bar separating the two rooms. Along the back is the door to the outside. In the left downstage area is a decorated Christmas tree. Behind the living room wall is a hallway leading to the bedrooms.

AT RISE:

Although it is Christmas Eve, most of the décor shows we are in Florida. MARY enters from the hallway carrying a large cardboard box and humming “Deck the Halls.” The head of a large cardboard Santa is sticking out of the top of the box. MARY puts the box down near the tree. SHE pulls the cardboard Santa out and stands it up.

MARY

Okay, Santa, how did you enjoy the past year up in the attic?

(Imitating Santa’s voice)

Not too bad, Mary, until those filthy squirrels tried to build a nest in my beard. Ho! Ho! Ho!

(MARY kneels down, grabs the cord for the lights and looks for the outlet)

MARY

Oh please, if there is a Santa Claus, let these lights work.

(MARY plugs them into the outlet, but nothing happens.

MARY stands. She screams at the cardboard Santa.)

MARY

AHHH!!! I hope when you get home tonight, you find Mrs. Claus in bed with an elf!

(TINA enters from the hallway carrying a small wrapped present.)

TINA

What's all the screaming about, Mommy?

MARY

Oh, I'm sorry, Tina. It's just that, well, why is it when you take the lights off the tree they're in working order? You're very careful about packing them away. You store them away in a nice, quiet spot for a year. You bring them down, very carefully, plug them in and it's like they're all asleep.

TINA

Don't ask me. I'm just a kid. Why do we have to have an artificial tree? Why can't we have a real one like when we lived in New York?

MARY

This is so much easier. It's this, or we string popcorn on a six foot palm tree.

(MARY looks through the box. TINA starts for the front door.)

TINA

I'll be right back.

MARY

Where are you going?

TINA

I'm taking Alicia's gift over to her.

MARY

Okay, but hurry back, I want you to help me get ready for the party.

TINA

(unenthused)

Oh boy.

MARY

Hey, Tina, what's the matter?

TINA

Nothing.

MARY

Come here. Tell Mommy. Now, what's the matter?

(TINA walks back to where MARY is.)

TINA

It's just that, well, it's hard to get into the Christmas spirit when it's eighty-five degrees outside. I miss the snow and all my friends up north.

(MARY holds TINA affectionately.)

MARY

I know, but this is where Daddy's job is. We had to move. You understand, don't you?

TINA

(walks away disappointed)

Yeah, I guess.

MARY

Hey, when you get back, we'll pretend it's Christmas in New York. I'll make hot cocoa and we can stand in the kitchen with the freezer door open.

TINA

(looks back)

Nice try, Mom.

(JOHN ENTERS from the hallway and almost knocks TINA over with the suitcase

HE is carrying.)

JOHN

Whoa, look out there, Tiny.

TINA

Dad, my name is Tina, not Tiny.

JOHN

I know that. Tiny is just a pet name, like Princess, or Kitten. Would you like me to call you one of those?

TINA

Don't you dare. Tiny is bad enough. I don't want people thinking you got me at the SPCA.

JOHN

Where are you going?

TINA

I'm going to give Alicia her Christmas present.

JOHN

What did you get her?

TINA

A Michael Jackson CD.

JOHN

Who's Michael Jackson?

TINA

Who's Michael Jackson? Daddy, did you just come out of a time tunnel? You know, Michael Jackson...

(sings)

Beat it, Beat it...

JOHN

(interrupting)

Tina?

TINA

Huh?

JOHN

Beat it.

(TINA EXITS out the front door. JOHN ENTERS
the living room and places his suitcase on the sofa.)

JOHN

Where does that child get such a smart mouth?

MARY

I don't know. It must come from my mother-in-law's side of the family. John, give me a hand here and help me find out which bulb is out.

JOHN

Can't right now, Mary, I've got to get to the airport.

MARY

Oh, please. It will only take a second and what do you mean you've got to get to the airport?

(JOHN opens his suitcase and looks through it.)

JOHN

Just what I said, I've got to be at the airport in half an hour.

MARY

(in a high-pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

JOHN

I've got to fly to New York to get a contract signed.

MARY

(high-pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

JOHN

It's a brand new account.

MARY

(high-pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

JOHN

Will you stop saying "On Christmas Eve?" Yes, on Christmas Eve. I told you when I took this job that I would have to go on business trips.

MARY

(High-pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

(JOHN shoots MARY a look)

MARY (continued)

Okay, I realize you have to take important business trips, but what client would make you fly to New York to sign a contract on Christmas?

JOHN

Goldberg and Sons.

MARY

Goldberg and Sons.

JOHN

Yes, they've come up with this fantastic new item that's going to sell millions.

MARY

What item?

JOHN

Designer yarmulkes.

MARY

Now let me get this straight. You're giving up Christmas with your family so you can fly to New York to sign a contract with Goldberg and Sons, so they can sell millions of yarmulkes.

JOHN

Now you've got it.

MARY

Are you insane? Doesn't being with your family on Christmas Eve mean anything to you? Is your stupid job that important to you that you can't delay this trip until after Christmas? Is the almighty buck that important to you, John?

JOHN

(yelling back)

That's right, because it's the almighty buck that got you a house on the canal in Cape Coral. It's the almighty buck that got you a standing in the community. And it's the almighty buck that got you...

MARY

(screaming)

PALMETTO BUGS IN THE KITCHEN!!!!

(JOHN throws his hands up and walks away.)

JOHN

I give up. There's no talking to you.

MARY

What about Tina? She's expecting to open her presents under the tree tomorrow with you.

JOHN

Just apologize to her for me. Tell her I had to go to the North Pole and see Santa about a special gift for her.

MARY

John, she found out there's no Santa two years ago.

JOHN

Who told her?

MARY

Your mother.

JOHN

My mother? My mother lives in California.

MARY

She sent Tina a telegram.

JOHN

She did not.

MARY

It said, "Grow up – stop – there is no Santa – stop- it's really mommy and daddy – stop- Love, Grandma Warner." And she sent it collect.

JOHN

Look, if it's going to upset Tina that much, here...

(JOHN reaches into his suitcase, pulls out a small wrapped present
and tosses it to MARY.)

MARY

What is it?

JOHN

Its Tina's present from me.

MARY

(looks it over)

What did you get her?

JOHN

Perfume.

MARY

Perfume?

JOHN

Yes, Chanel Number Five.

MARY

You got a ten year old little girl Chanel Number Five for Christmas?

JOHN

I had to. They were out of Obsession.

MARY

I think you are making a big mistake.

(JOHN SLAMS the lid of the suitcase.)

JOHN

A mistake? If anyone made a mistake around here, it's you.

MARY

And what is that supposed to mean?

JOHN

You know what I mean.

MARY

No, why don't you tell me what you mean?

JOHN

Okay, Okay, I'll tell you. I mean that mistake that sleeps in the other bedroom in this house.

MARY

You mean our daughter?

JOHN

I mean yours and Alan Rogers' daughter.

MARY

You told me you were never going to bring that up again.

JOHN

Well, I'm glad I did.

MARY

I will explain it to you once more. You and I were separated. We were getting a divorce. Alan and I were going to get married.

JOHN

Alan Rogers was a drunken stumblebum who couldn't hold a job.

MARY

(defensive)

Alan loved me and I loved him.

JOHN

Then why did you come back to me?

MARY

(backing down)

Because he was a drunken stumblebum who couldn't hold a job.

JOHN

(satisfied)

Aha!

MARY

You knew I was pregnant. Why did you take me back?

JOHN

Because you were scared and because I still loved you. And, I promised to be a good father, which I have been. So, let's just drop it, Mary.

(JOHN locks the lid on the suitcase.)

MARY

What am I supposed to do about this Christmas party we're having this evening? All our neighbors and friends are going to be here. What am I supposed to tell them?

JOHN

Just tell them I was called away on business.

MARY

Terrific. That's just great.

JOHN

Look, Mary, just tell them whatever you have to. Just handle it. I'll see you day after tomorrow.

(JOHN picks up the suitcase and walks to the front door.)

MARY

What will I tell Tina?

JOHN

Tell her Daddy got on a 747 pulled by eight tiny reindeer.

(JOHN EXITS slamming the door behind him. MARY runs to the door and opens it.)

MARY

(yells)

Hey, John !

JOHN (OS)

What?

MARY

(nasty)

Merry Christmas!

(MARY slams the door and storms into the living room. SHE looks at the cardboard Santa.)

MARY

What are you smiling about?

(SHE punches Santa in the face and the head comes off. She exits into the kitchen. SHE takes out a punch bowl from under the bar. SHE reaches into the refrigerator and pulls out two quarts of eggnog and slams them on the bar. MOTHER ENTERS. MARY sees her.)

MARY

Oh, hi, Ma.

MOTHER

Are you mad, or did you find another palmetto bug?

MARY

I'm mad. That John can be so infuriating. Want to help me set up for the party? There's some decorations in that box.

MOTHER

Sure.

(MARY ENTERS the living room. MOTHER reaches into the box and pulls out decorations as MARY continues fussing with the lights.)

MOTHER

I couldn't help notice John leaving with a suitcase. What is he, taking his shirts out to be stuffed?

MARY

No.

MOTHER

You finally came to your senses and threw him out, huh? Good for you.

MARY

No.

MOTHER

Too bad.

MARY

Are you ready for this, Ma? He just left on a business trip to New York.

MOTHER

(high-pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

MARY

That's what I said.

MOTHER

Mary, you know I'm the last one to interfere in your business and, believe me, there is nothing I would do or say to express my personal opinion about your husband, but when are you going to smarten up and dump that conceited blowhard?

MARY

Okay, Ma, first of all, you're always the first one to interfere in my business. And, secondly, John gives me and Tina stability. I owe him a lot.. I almost made a terrible mistake in my life and John took me back.

MOTHER

But, Mary, he doesn't know how to have fun.

MARY

John knows how to have fun.

MOTHER

Right, John's idea of having fun is reading Advertising Age with his tie undone.

MARY

Well, there's more to life than having fun, you know.

MOTHER

What happened to the little girl I raised to enjoy life and take chances? Look at you. You're a... a...a...

MARY

A what, Ma?

MOTHER

A housewife. Yech!

MARY

I'm also the mother of a ten year old little girl who just happens to be your granddaughter. Remember?

MOTHER

Mary, you were ten years old once and you didn't turn out so bad.

MARY

You just got done saying I was a yechhy housewife.

MOTHER

Well, you can still be a housewife and enjoy life, just not with old Mr. Stick-Up-The Butt.

MARY

I suppose you think I should have married Alan Rogers.

MOTHER

Now, Alan was fun.

MARY

Alan had a drinking problem.

MOTHER

He had a couple of beers at night; hardly a reason to call Betty Ford.

MARY

I didn't like riding in the car with him when he drank.

MOTHER

Then you should have called Henry Ford. Besides, Alan knew how to have fun.

MARY

So does John.

MOTHER

Please, John makes Tom Brokaw look like Carrot Top.

MARY

Okay, Ma, Alan made me have fun. Alan made me enjoy life and, oh yeah, Alan made me pregnant.

MOTHER

You can't blame him for that.

MARY

You mean I'm to blame?

MOTHER

I look at it this way. Alan was just poking fun at you and you took it seriously.

MARY

Nice, Ma. So, according to you, the only way to have fun is by having sex.

MOTHER

Your father and I had fun almost every night. In fact, I can tell you now, the night your father died, we were having fun.

MARY

Ma, that's disgusting.

MOTHER

That's the truth. I funned your father to death.

MARY

I don't want to hear anymore.

MOTHER

I should have picked up on the clue that he was heading in the wrong direction.

MARY

Wrong direction?

MOTHER

Yeah, he kept yelling, "I'm going! I'm going!"

MARY

Enough, Ma.

MOTHER

I can still remember the paramedics carrying your father out with a smile on his lips and a look of shock in his eyes.

MARY

Do you know what the word “enough” means?

MOTHER

Apparently your father did. Look, all I’m saying is you could have done a lot worse than Alan... and you did.

MARY

Listen, you want to help? Put a little rum in the eggnog for me. It’s behind the bar. And I mean a little. I don’t want the guests lit up more than the tree.

(MOTHER walks behind the bar and brings out the bottle.)

MOTHER

Fine, I’ll just put a little in for flavor.

(SHE looks to see MARY is not watching and empties the bottle into the bowl.)

MARY

I wish I knew what light is out.

(MOTHER stirs the eggnog and puts the bowl in the fridge.)

MOTHER

I’ll see you tonight at eight.

(MOTHER walks to the front door.)

MARY

What? Oh, yeah, thanks a lot. Is the eggnog chilling?

MOTHER

As will your guests. Bye.

(MOTHER EXITS. MARY continues to fidget with the bulbs on the tree. The doorbell RINGS. She walks over to the front door.)

MARY

What did you forget, Ma?

(MARY opens the door. ALAN enters.)

ALAN

Uh, excuse me, mam, but, uh, I seem to be...

MARY

(flabbergasted)

Alan? Alan Rogers?

ALAN

(amazed)

Hey, that's pretty good. You got both names. What are you, one of those psychics?

MARY

Alan, it's me. Mary Warner.

ALAN

Mary Warner? I'm sorry, you'll have to excuse me. I had a terrible accident a few years ago and suffered a head trauma, or something. The doctors say my memory may never be total again. Mary Warner you say? Nope. Sorry, doesn't ring a bell.

MARY

Alan, get in here. You didn't suffer any head trauma.

(ALAN and MARY enter the living room.)

ALAN

Well, you may be right. It wasn't a head trauma. It was more of a headache and it wasn't an accident. It was from eating ice cream too fast. (smiles) It's great to see you, Mary.

MARY

What are you doing in Cape Coral?

ALAN

Is that where I am? You know, I've been driving around for hours and, wouldn't you know it, my rental car broke down right in front of your house, and, you wouldn't happen to have a fuel pump for a Yugo, would you?

(ALAN looks out over the audience.)

ALAN

Hey, what a great view. Look at that canal; the boats going back and forth. You've got a dock and no boat. Where's your boat?

MARY

Boats make John seasick. Actually, a damp washcloth makes John seasick.

ALAN

Really. By the way, where is Old John?

MARY

He's on his way to New York for a business trip.

ALAN

(high-pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

MARY

That seems to be the most popular response. Now come on, Alan, what are you doing here?

ALAN

Okay, you want the truth, or some big ol' whopper of a lie? Okay, truth it is. The truth is, I, uh, I'm a Jehovah's Witness. Have you ever thought about eternal damnation? No, huh, okay, I, uh, I'm working my way through college and how are you fixed for magazines? I guess you're not buying any of this. Okay, I, I've been, well, plain and simple, I've been...stalking you.

(MARY reacts)

ALAN (continued)

Well, not in that, you know, creepy, hiding in the bushes kind of stalking. Look...

(HE pulls out a snapshot)

ALAN (continued)

I came across this old snapshot of you and me when we were at MacGregor and Sons. You know, the Christmas party. Remember?

MARY

(looks at the picture)

Oh, yeah. I remember that.

ALAN

Well, anyway, I got to thinking, gee, I wonder what ever happened to Ol' Mary. So, I did a search online for your address and, well, here I am. So, how the heck are you, Mary? What have you been doing the past decade? I sure missed you.

MARY

I've missed you, too, Alan.

ALAN

You? Well, you sure could have fooled me. I mean, not so much as a handshake. I mean, is this anyway for two people who were going to get married to act?

MARY

Oh, you're right.

(ALAN leans down, thinking he's going to get a kiss, but MARY gives him a hearty handshake instead.)

ALAN

Whoa, total fake-out. So, do you have a few minutes to get caught up?

MARY

Sure, sit down.

(ALAN sits on the sofa. MARY sits in the chair to the left.)

MARY

So, what have you been up to?

ALAN

Well, let's see, since the night you left me to go back to John, quite a bit has happened. For instance, did you know I got married?

MARY

(surprised)

You did? That's wonderful.

ALAN

Yeah, well, I also got a divorce.

MARY

Oh, I'm sorry.

ALAN

Well, actually when you don't consummate the marriage, it's called an annulment. We were only married two days. Yeah, uh, irreconcilable differences. I wanted to be married until the day I die and she wanted me dead.

MARY

Oh.

ALAN

Well, don't be sad. Did you know I haven't had a drink for three years?

MARY

Really? You must be pretty thirsty.

(THEY laugh)

ALAN

Hey, that's a good one. Yeah, after you left, I, uh, took up a new hobby... getting wasted. Yeah, got pretty good at it, too. But now having a drink is the last thing on my mind.

MARY

Well, that's good, Alan.

ALAN

Yeah, so what do you have to drink around here? I'm thirsty as hell. Soda will be fine.

(MARY EXITS to the kitchen.)

MARY

Are you still working at MacGregor and Sons?

ALAN

No, I got fired from there.

MARY

You're kidding. What happened?

ALAN

Well, one day I went out for a two martini lunch and didn't get back until dinnertime...two weeks later. Yeah, I kept showing up for work, but on the wrong floor.

(MARY pours the soda)

MARY

So, where did you go from there?

ALAN

I got a job on a small town radio station in New Jersey. Yeah, we used to joke the station was so small, we only had thirty-two songs on our top forty.

(MARY laughs while she pours herself a glass of eggnog.)

MARY

Are you still working there?

(MARY ENTERS the living room and hands ALAN his soda.)

ALAN

Uh, no, I met a girl in a bar and that night I went on the air and played "You Light Up My Life" seventeen times in a row. Yeah, the station manager and engineer carried me out kicking and screaming. It was pretty ugly. They said I kept proposing to the Debby Boone album cover.

MARY

What happened then?

ALAN

Well, let's see, I had a friend get me a job with the New York City Parks Commission.

MARY

That sounds interesting. Were you in charge of scheduling the recreational activities for the kids?

ALAN

Close. I was in charge of scrubbing the pigeon crap off the statues.

MARY

Oh.

ALAN

Yeah, I had hit rock bottom. But, that's when I quit drinking. I went back to college and now I'm a freelance writer. Yeah, in fact, I'm here in Florida working on an article about senior citizens. I'm not sure on what I'm going to call it. I'm leaning towards, "The Early Bird Special Catches The Worm."

(MARY holds up her glass.)

MARY

Well, here's to your success.

(THEY clink glasses. ALAN notices a picture of TINA on the end table and picks it up.)

ALAN

Who's this?

(MARY chokes on her eggnog.)

ALAN

Are you okay there, Mary?

MARY

Yeah, I forgot to stir the rum into the eggnog. I'll be all right.

(MARY stirs the eggnog with her finger.)

ALAN

So, who is this?

MARY

Oh, that's our daught...uh, I mean, my daughter, Tina.

ALAN

Your daughter? I didn't know you had any kids.

MARY

Just the one.

ALAN

Wow, she's adorable. How old is she?

MARY

She's ten.

ALAN

Ten. She looks like her mommy.

(MARY takes the picture from ALAN.)

MARY

Do you think so? I always thought she looked like her father.

ALAN

Maybe. It's been a long time since I've seen John.

(MARY puts the picture face down on the coffee table.)

ALAN

Hey, listen, since John is away on business, how about the three of us going out for dinner?

MARY

Alan, are you insane? I'm married.

ALAN

Hey, I asked you out to dinner, not Plato's Retreat.

MARY

I can't, I'm having a Christmas party here tonight. All my neighbors are coming.

ALAN

Great, so what time do you want me here?

MARY

You can't come, Alan. My mother will be here, too.

ALAN

(surprised)

Your mom? Your mom moved down here? How is she? You know, I loved your mother. I think I would have married her if it wasn't for the fact that I was living with her daughter.

MARY

She was crazy about you, too. She didn't talk to me for a year when I went back with John. Alan, please, promise me you won't come to the party tonight. Please.

ALAN

Yeah, okay, I promise I won't come to your stupid old Christmas party tonight, okay?

(TINA enters carrying a video game cartridge.)

TINA

Hey, Mom, look what Alicia gave me; a Nintendo cartridge.

MARY

That's nice, Tina, but you don't have a Nintendo.

TINA

I know, but it's never too late to drop a hint. Wink. Wink.

(TINA notices Alan)

TINA

Hi.

MARY

Tina, this is Alan Rogers. Alan and I worked together in New York. Alan, this is our daughter. John's and my daughter, I mean, uh...

TINA

Are you having a stroke? Hi, I'm Tina.

ALAN

It's very nice to meet you, Tina. So, are you married?

(TINA giggles. ALAN looks at the video game cartridge.)

ALAN

Hey, Space Invaders. I used to be pretty good at this.

TINA

Do you have a Nintendo system?

ALAN

No, I used to play it at the arcade.

(TINA takes the cartridge back.)

TINA

Oh, well, maybe I can make a lamp out of it. Where's Daddy?

MARY

Uh, honey, you better sit down.

(TINA sits on the sofa.)

TINA

Uh-oh, bad news. What is it this time? No Easter Bunny? No Tooth Fairy? Where's the telegram?

MARY

No, it's nothing like that.

TINA

Well, what is it?

MARY

Uh, Daddy was called away on business.

TINA

(high pitched voice)

On Christmas Eve?

MARY

Another county heard from.

TINA

When will he be back?

MARY

Not until Monday.

TINA

Great. What could be so important that he can't be here for Christmas?

MARY

Designer yarmulkes.

TINA

What?

MARY

He had to fly to New York, but we'll still have a great Christmas. Don't worry. Now, why don't you go get ready for the party?

TINA

Okay.

(TINA walks to the hallway depressed.)

TINA

You know, sometimes life really sucks.

MARY

Hey, young lady, that will be enough.

(TINA EXITS)

MARY

I don't know where she picks up that kind of language.

ALAN

Really, especially when we all know that sometimes life really blows.

MARY

Nice, Alan. Now, excuse me while I get back to working on this freaking tree.

ALAN

You're right. I don't know where she picks up that kind of language.

(MARY goes back working on the tree light. ALAN walks over and leans on the wall.)

ALAN

Did I hear you say designer yarmulkes?

MARY

Yes, that's why John flew to New York. He's in advertising now and he had to sign on a new account.

ALAN

Is he any good at this advertising thing?

MARY

Not at first. He got taken off the Goya Bean account because they didn't like the slogan he came up with.

ALAN

Which was?

MARY

"A fart in every forkful." Ah, these lights make me so damn mad.

ALAN

What's the matter?

MARY

(frustrated)

I can't find which one of these lights is out.

ALAN

You really should try them before you put them on the tree.

MARY

I did, Alan. I'm not stupid, you know?

(ALAN looks at the light switch on the wall He is leaning on. HE flips the switch and all the tree lights come on. ALAN and MARY look at each other and laugh.)

(CURTAIN)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Scene 1

AT RISE:

It is ten p.m. Christmas Eve. There are cups and plates on the tables and chairs all over the set.

The party has just ended. MARY is at the front door. MOTHER is standing upstage, wearing a terrycloth robe. TINA is seated in the chair.

MARY

Good night. Thanks for coming. Sorry John couldn't be here, but he had to go to New York on business.

PEOPLE

(OS and in high-pitched voices)

On Christmas Eve!!!

(MARY closes the door and enters the living room.)

MARY

Tina, honey, do Mommy a favor and start bringing some of these cups and plates into the kitchen.

TINA

Sure, Mommy.

(TINA starts cleaning up, while MARY pours an eggnog and walks over to MOTHER. SHE is staring out over the audience.)

MARY

Eggnog, Ma?

MOTHER

Huh? Oh, thanks dear.

(SHE hands the eggnog to MOTHER)

MARY

What are you staring at?

MOTHER

The canal out back looks so peaceful. The lights shining on it, the ripples on the water, the couple making love on your dock.

MARY

(looking hard)

Where? Hey, you two, knock it off.

MOTHER

I think that's what he's trying to do, Mary. Where's your spirit of romance?

MARY

When you're married to John, the spirit is willing, but the body is dead.

(The doorbell RINGS. MARY goes to the door, opens it and ALAN steps in)

MARY

(surprised)

Alan!

ALAN

Yeah, sorry I'm late, you know, but I had some last minute shopping to do.

MARY

You promised me you weren't going to come to the party.

ALAN

Yeah, well, I didn't, you know? I came after the party.

(MOTHER sees ALAN and rushes over.)

MOTHER

Oh, my god, Alan Rogers. We were just talking about you today.

ALAN

Hey there, Mom. How are you?

(ALAN gives HER a big hug and kiss.)

ALAN

How is the sexiest girl on the east coast?

MOTHER

Who's the sexiest girl on the west coast?

ALAN

Well, if you were there, you'd be.

MOTHER

Oh, Alan, you always knew how to blow smoke up my skirt. Mary, why didn't you tell me Alan was coming?

MARY

He wasn't supposed to.

MOTHER

What do you mean?

ALAN

Yeah, well, she means I wasn't supposed to come until later and now it's later, you see?

MOTHER

What brings you to Florida, Alan?

ALAN

Me? Uh, Florida? Yeah, well, I'm a journalist now and I'm like doing an article on senior citizens in Florida.

MARY

Actually, Ma, Alan has been stalking me.

MOTHER

Stalking you?

MARY

Yeah, but not in that creepy, hide in the bushes kind of way, right, Alan?

MOTHER

Alan, do you still have the “hots” for my daughter? When are you going to take her away from all of this and show her what fun is?

ALAN

Yeah, well, it’s good to know you’re still a conservative, Mom.

MOTHER

Have you seen Tina?

MARY

(interrupting)

Uh, Ma, can I talk you to you?

(TINA runs up)

TINA

Uncle Alan!

(SHE gives HIM a hug.)

MOTHER

Uncle Alan?

ALAN

Hey there, kid. What’s new?

MARY

Uh, Tina, honey, why don’t you take Uncle, uh, Alan into the kitchen and get him a glass of soda?

TINA

Okay.

ALAN

Yeah, come on, I’ll race you.

TINA

Last one to the kitchen has to eat the fruitcake.

ALAN

Yuk!

(TINA and ALAM rush off to the kitchen. MARY and MOTHER walk upstage.)

MOTHER

Mary, did you tell Alan he's Tina's father?

(MARY takes the eggnog from MOTHER and drinks it down.)

MARY

Not exactly, Ma.

(SHE looks at the empty glass she is holding.)

MARY

Hey, your glass is empty. Let me get you a refill.

MOTHER

Mary, what do you mean?

MARY

I mean, let me get you some more eggnog.

MOTHER

That's not what I mean.

MARY

You mean, what do I mean by "not exactly?"

MOTHER

That's exactly what I mean.

MARY

Let me get some eggnog.

MOTHER

I don't want any damn eggnog.

MARY

I know, but I do.

(MARY EXITS to the kitchen. ALAN and TINA walk up to MOTHER.)

ALAN

Gee, there, Mom, you really look great.

TINA

Why does he call you Mom? You're not his mother.

MOTHER

Because he's the son I never had. One Mother's Day, Alan sent me a beautiful dozen, long-stemmed roses. Nobody ever sent me flowers; not even your grandfather, the old fart. Whenever Alan and your mother would come to visit me, Alan made me feel like he was one of my own children. He made me feel good.

ALAN

Yeah, well, before you depress everybody, what made you move down here?

MOTHER

I got tired of scraping my windshield with a credit card every winter. That, and well, I wanted to be near my daughter, my granddaughter and...

ALAN

John?

MOTHER

No, the beach.

ALAN

Still carrying that torch for John, huh?

MOTHER

You know what the difference between Calista Flockhart and John is?

ALAN

No.

MOTHER

She's a two petite and he's a horse's patoot.

(MARY walks up with more eggnog.)

MARY

Can you call a cease fire on John for a minute? It's almost time for the Parade of Boats.

ALAN

Parade of what?

MARY

Parade of Boats. Every Christmas Eve, all the people who live on the canal, who own a boat, decorate them and parade up and down the canal. It's really quite beautiful, until Mr. Jenks gets drunk and falls overboard, that is.

MOTHER

Well, I see you got your refill.

MARY

(holds up two fingers)

I got three refills.

MOTHER

Tina, Alan, why don't you put some Christmas music on the stereo?

TINA

You mean, why don't we get lost so you can yell at Mommy?

ALAN

Hey, you're pretty astute for a short person.

(TINA and ALAN go to the stereo and look through some albums.)

MOTHER

Mary, don't you dare get drunk.

MARY

Why not? You're always telling me I don't know how to have fun.

2-1-8

MOTHER

I want to know why you never told Alan that he's Tina's father.

(MARY takes a drink of eggnog.)

MARY

I don't understand why nobody likes the eggnog. Okay, it is a little strong, but really quite tasty.

(SHE smacks her lips.)

MOTHER

Mary, you are avoiding the question. Now, why haven't you told him?

(The doorbell RINGS.)

MARY

I better get that.

MOTHER

Mary.

TINA

I'll get it.

(TINA goes to the door and speaks to a man.)

MARY

Mom, what was I supposed to do? I was pregnant and I went back to John. It would have made things worse by telling Alan. John has been a wonderful father to Tina.

MOTHER

Oh sure, giving the kid Chanel Number Five for Christmas.

MARY

I never said he was a master of judgment.

(TINA closes the door and goes back to Alan.)

MOTHER

Mary, keeping this from Alan all these years is cruel. He has a right to know.

2-1-9

MARY

(ashamed)

I know.

MOTHER

So, when are you going to tell him?

MARY

Well, I figure since she graduates in eight years...

MOTHER

Mary, if you don't tell him, I will. I'm wearing my carrying out a threat face.

MARY

Okay, okay, lose the face. I'll tell him.

MOTHER

When?

MARY

I'll tell him tonight, okay? Geesh.

(ALAN and TINA laugh and giggle.)

MOTHER

Look at them, Mary. Are you going to deny that man the right to watch his own daughter grow up?

MARY

Ma, I said I'd tell him and I will. I just don't know how. I mean, suppose Tina finds out Alan is her father. How am I going to explain that to her? Suppose Alan wants to take her away? What am I supposed to say? Oh sure, Alan, have a grand old time. Don't forget to write.

MOTHER

You've had ten years to practice a speech. I say tell him and let the chips fall where they may.

(MARY looks at the floor.)

MOTHER

What are you looking at?

MARY

The chips on the floor. Who's the slob?

(MARY picks up some chips.)

MOTHER

Mary.

MARY

Okay, come on guys, it's almost time for the parade.

MOTHER

Oh, right, your neighbor, Mrs. Jenks, asked me to ride on their boat. I promised her I would help her fish Mr. Jenks out of the canal when he falls in.

(ALAN and TINA walk upstage. MOTHER kisses Tina goodbye.)

MOTHER

Merry Christmas, sweetheart.

TINA

Merry Christmas, Grandma.

(MOTHER gives ALAN a kiss and hug.)

MOTHER

Merry Christmas, Alan. It's wonderful to see you again.

ALAN

Yeah, thanks there, Mom, and Merry Christmas to you, too.

MOTHER

And, Mary, Merry Christmas. Make it something special.

(SHE gives MARY a kiss and a "thumbs up.")

MARY

Merry Christmas, Ma.

2-1-11

(MOTHER walks to the front door, opens it and stands in the doorway.)

MOTHER

Okay, Mr. Jenks, I'm ready when you are.

MOTHER flashes open her robe to reveal a sexy bathing suit. SHE exits.)

ALAN

If your mother whips open that robe out there, Mr. Jenks won't be the only one toppling into the canal.

MARY

Well, have a seat on the sofa. The parade should be starting soon.

(TINA and ALAN sit on the sofa.)

MARY

Want something to drink?

ALAN

No thanks.

MARY

(takes a deep breath)

I do.

(MARY EXITS to the kitchen and pours a cup of eggnog.)

TINA

I miss being up north at Christmas. I heard they had snow up in New York yesterday. This is my third Christmas here in the Wonderful World of Warmth.

(MARY ENTERS from the kitchen)

MARY

I think you better get ready for bed before Santa gets here.

ALAN

But, I just got here.

2-1-12

MARY

Not you, fool.

TINA

Mom, there is no Santa Claus, remember?

ALAN

(shocked)

What? Says who??

TINA

Says Grandma Warner.

ALAN

John's mother?

MARY

She sent Tina a telegram.

ALAN

You're kidding.

TINA

Nope. I'm still waiting for a candy-gram from her saying, "Dear Tina – stop – there is no God – stop – Love, Grandma Warner."

ALAN

What's her address? I'm going to send her a Nasty-gram. What will I say? Let me think. Ah, Dear Grandma Warner – stop – Stop – stop.

TINA

Look, I get it. There is no fat, jolly guy dressed up in a red suit and beard, except for the wino who hangs out in front of the deli on Cape Coral Parkway, but there is a spirit of Santa Claus; a spirit inside each and every one of us. It's the spirit of giving. Like when I gave Alicia her gift today. She loved it and that made me feel really good. It's the same spirit mommy and daddy get when they put my presents under the tree.

ALAN

When did you get so smart?

2-1-13

TINA

It's hard to say. I have a feeling it was when I saw mommy and daddy putting my presents under the tree.

ALAN

A dead giveaway.

(TINA kisses ALAN on the cheek)

TINA

Good night.

ALAN

Where are you going, kiddo? Don't you want to see the parade?

TINA

I've seen it twice and I still don't get it. Besides, I want to give mommy her chance to get the spirit of Santa Claus.

(SHE runs over and gives MARY a kiss)

MARY

Good night, honey.

(TINA EXITS)

ALAN

She's a great kid, Mary.

MARY

Yeah, I think I'll keep her.

ALAN

Hey, look, I think the parade is starting.

MARY

Really?

ALAN

You know, I think you could probably see better if you sat over here.

2-1-14

MARY

No, I don't think...

ALAN

Oh, come on, Mary. I won't bite, unless you're into that kind of thing.

(MARY thinks it over for a second and then sits next to ALAN on the sofa.

HE puts his arm over the back of the sofa, so MARY can put her head under his arm.)

ALAN

You're right, Mary. The boats look beautiful all lit up. Who's that on the front of the first boat with the glass of champagne? Don't tell me; Mr. Jenks.

MARY

Yeah, Alicia's father. He's usually lit up more than the boat. Oh, look, there's Ma. Hi, Ma.

(MARY waves)

MARY(continued)

From what I understand, Mr. Jenks has fallen overboard five years in a row.

(THEY both wave)

ALAN

Oops, you better check to see if that's a new world's record.

MARY

Is he all right?

ALAN

Yeah, your mother did her Superman robe removal, there, and dove in.

(THEY both laugh. MARY is beginning to feel the effects of the eggnog as SHE looks adoringly into ALAN'S eyes.)

MARY

Alan, there is something I've got to tell you.

ALAN

Yeah, well before you tell me, I think there is something you should know.

2-1-15

MARY

What is it?

ALAN

(hesitant)

Mary, I, uh, you see, I, uh...

MARY

Whatever it is, it can't be as bad as what I have to say. So, just say it.

ALAN

Mary, I'm, I'm still in love with you.

MARY

Well, I was wrong.

(SHE stands)

Time for another eggnog.

(SHE EXITS to the kitchen. ALAN follows her, but stands on the other side of the bar.)

ALAN

Mary, listen to me, please. I know, you know, that I've acted foolishly in the past, you know, irresponsible, the whole thing. But, I've changed. You even said so. Even my analyst thinks so.

MARY

You've been seeing an analyst?

(SHE pours another cup of eggnog.)

ALAN

Yeah, yeah, and he's done wonders for me. And I've done wonders for him.

MARY

You've done wonders for him?

ALAN

Yeah, with the money he's made off of me, he's bought a beach house on Long Island.

(MARY ENTERS the living room with ALAN following.)

2-1-16

MARY

Okay, so you're still in love with me. So, what do you want me to say? That I still love you and we should run away together?

ALAN

(hopeful)

Yeah, would you?

MARY

Alan, I'm very comfortable here. John is a good provider and he loves me.

ALAN

But do you love him?

MARY

He's a good father to Tina.

ALAN

But do you love him?

MARY

He has a good job.

ALAN

But do you love him?

MARY

The idea of Twenty Questions is to change the question each time. Besides, whether I love him or not is not the point.

ALAN

What is the point?

MARY

The point is I'm not going to leave John because you want me to. I mean, you show up here, after ten years, and expect to pick things up from where we left off.

2-1-17

ALAN

I'm not the one who left, Mary.

MARY

Believe me, I left for a very good reason.

ALAN

Look, I didn't want to tell you this, but, well, I've been following you.

MARY

Following me?

ALAN

Yeah, do you remember last week when you had your legs waxed?

MARY

Yes.

ALAN

Well, I was in the next booth.

MARY

That was you doing all that screaming?

ALAN

Hey, I have a low threshold of pain, okay? For the past three days I have been sitting outside your house trying to get up enough nerve to come in, you know? Then, when I saw John leaving with a suitcase, all kinds of wonderful thoughts went through my mind. I pictured him leaving you for his secretary. I thought maybe he embezzled funds and was making a getaway. I thought he was leaving you because he didn't like your legs waxed.

MARY

But he didn't do any of those things. He left on a business trip.

ALAN

Yeah, well, that's what he told you.

MARY

Alan, you're talking crazy. I'm not leaving John for you and that's that.

2-1-18

(ALAN sits on the sofa depressed. MARY sits next to HIM)

MARY

Alan, if things were different, I'd come back in a minute

ALAN

Yeah, yeah, sure.

MARY

I would.

ALAN

Yeah, right.

MARY

(angry)

I said I'd come back to you in a minute, damn it, and I mean it.

ALAN

(angry)

Why the hell would you want to come back to me?

MARY

(yelling)

Because Tina is your daughter!

(MARY clasps her hands over HER mouth. ALAN is stunned.)

ALAN

What did you say?

MARY

Nothing. I didn't say anything.

ALAN

You did, too. Now, what did you say?

2-1-19

MARY

I said... (mumbling) Tina is your daughter.

ALAN

What?

MARY

(takes a deep breath)

Tina is your daughter.

ALAN

Tina is my...nah.

(HE looks deeply in MARY'S eyes)

ALAN

Nah.

MARY

I left ten years ago. Tina is ten years old. You do the math.

ALAN

Nah, if Tina is my daughter, why did you wait ten years to tell me?

MARY

I didn't want to tell you at all. I didn't think I'd ever see you again. I'm sorry. When I found out I was pregnant, I got scared.

ALAN

That's why you went back to John?

MARY

He said he would take me back and be a good father to the baby; which he has been.

ALAN

Are you going to tell Tina I'm her father?

MARY

No, I can't.

2-1-20

ALAN

You can't? Why can't you?

MARY

Because Tina thinks John is a good father.

ALAN

So, she could be wrong. I mean, when I was her age, I used to think girls were just for tripping in the playground.

MARY

I know this must be upsetting for you, but, I had to tell you. It was only fair. Please don't take it too hard.

ALAN

(brightens)

This is great!

MARY

(confused)

What?

ALAN

Yeah, now you have no reason to stay. It'll be just you, me and Tina. The way it should be, you know?

MARY

Haven't you heard anything I've said?

ALAN

Yeah, you said I was a father. All my life I wanted to be a parent and now I am. Of course, I've missed the first ten years, but that's okay. I mean, it'll be like starting all over again.

MARY

Alan, you still don't understand.

ALAN

Mary, think about all the cool things I've missed in the past ten years. Ten years of, of birthdays, ten years of Christmas; not to mention ten years of Father's Day presents.

MARY

In the past ten years you've also missed out on tonsillitis, a broken arm, mumps, chicken pox, and measles; not to mention colic. Would you have liked to have been here for all that?

ALAN

Yeah, sure, well, okay, maybe not the colic.

(ALAN stands)

ALAN(continued)

You wait right here. I'll be right back. This is going to be the best Christmas we've ever had.

(ALAN walks to the front door and opens it. He looks back adoringly.)

ALAN

Merry Christmas, darling.

(ALAN EXITS. MARY stands dumbfounded in front of the sofa. SHE picks up her cup
And looks at it.)

MARY

I need a refill.

(SHE EXITS to the kitchen.)

(CURTAIN)

