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## **Family Plays**

# An Old-Fashioned Christmas



Comedy by  
**Sally Bowman**

# An Old-Fashioned Christmas

**Comedy. By Sally Bowman.** *Cast: 2 to 3m., 5w., extras.* Residents of a retirement center wish for an old-fashioned Christmas. Their wish comes true, with unexpected complications: the microwave becomes a wood stove, with a pile of wood waiting to be chopped; the bathroom disappears and an outhouse springs up in the backyard, etc. They eventually decide that today is better. *An Old-Fashioned Christmas* is fun for actors and audiences of all ages. Mature performers will enjoy portraying themselves and their friends (and maybe an enemy or two). Young actors will get a good workout in character development as they put on makeup, add a touch of gray to their hair and imitate their grandparents (with perhaps a spoonful of spoof). The play is fun any time of year. It was first presented by the Hi Desert Playhouse Guild in Joshua Tree, California. *Set: a retirement center lobby at Christmastime. Approximate running time: 25 to 30 minutes. Code: O91.*

## Family Plays

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ISBN-13 978-0-88680-424-4



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An Old-Fashioned Christmas

# AN OLD- FASHIONED CHRISTMAS

*A One-Act Comedy*

by  
**SALLY BOWMAN**

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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SALLY BOWMAN

Printed in the United States of America  
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(AN OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS)

ISBN: 978-0-88680-424-4

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“Produced by special arrangement with  
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## **ABOUT THE PLAY**

Here's a play that's fun for actors and audiences of all ages. Senior citizens will enjoy portraying themselves and their friends (and maybe an enemy or two). Young actors will get a good workout in character development as they put on make-up, add a touch of gray to their hair, and imitate their grandparents (with perhaps a spoonful of spoof).

The residents of a retirement center wish for an old-fashioned Christmas...and their wish comes true, with unexpected complications: the microwave becomes a wood stove (with no wood); the bathroom disappears and an outhouse springs up in the back yard. They eventually decide that today is better! Audiences of all ages will love it.

Playing time is 20 to 30 minutes.

## AN OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS

### CHARACTERS

**Social Director.**

**Emma.** The lazy one

**Florence.** The romantic one

**Mildred.** The playful one, not too bright

**May.** The pushy one

**Al.** A grumpy old man

**John.** A childishly macho old man

**Spirit of Christmas.** (If desired, the Spirit and Social Director may be played by the same person)

(If a larger cast is desired, more retirees may be added. They can join in the dialogue ad-lib.)

*Time:* The present, at Christmas time

*Place:* Lobby of a modern retirement hotel

First presented by the Hi Desert Playhouse Guild, Joshua Tree, California



**PRODUCTION NOTES***Properties*

Small plastic Christmas tree—on coffee table

Top ornament for the tree—Social Director

Plastic Christmas wreath—Social Director (there must be a nail or hook on a wall or door on which to hang the wreath)

Wand—Spirit of Christmas

Coats, hats, and other clothing—in closet

Coat—on hatrack, for Mildred

Small, spindly Christmas tree—Policeman #1

Paper sack (with old-fashioned box of crayons if possible)—Mildred

*Costumes*

The residents of the retirement center wear modern clothing appropriate to their age. Some of the women may wear pants suits, some may wear dresses. The men may wear slacks and sports jackets, with or without a tie.

The Spirit of Christmas may wear a white flowing robe trimmed with silver Christmas tinsel. A silver star on her forehead and a wand with a star on the end would be appropriate embellishments. If necessary to keep the cast size down, the Social Director and the Spirit may be played by the same person.

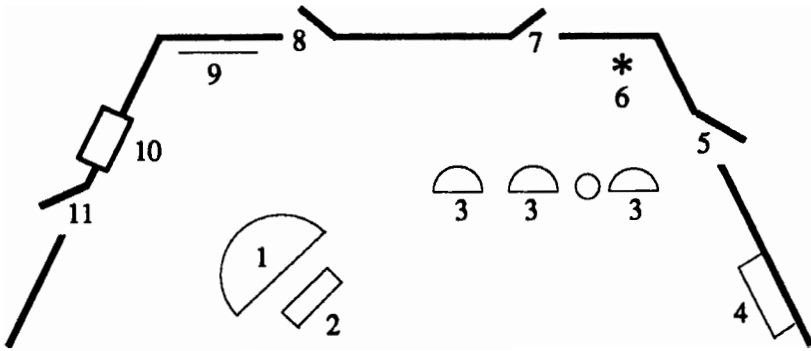
The police may be male or female or one of each. Since they enter during “the past,” old-fashioned police costumes would add to the fun of the play, but modern uniforms—or simply khaki slacks and shirts with police badges—would be acceptable.

*Lights, Sound, and Special Effects*

The only sounds called for in the script are a telephone ringing and voices and laughter emanating from the kitchen.

For an exciting special effect have the Spirit enter and exit without going through a door. Perhaps a cloud of smoke? Perhaps appearing from behind the fireplace, and disappearing the same way? Or let the lights flicker and go out momentarily. Otherwise no special lighting effects are called for.

Snowflakes appearing outside the window are another nice touch.

*The Set*

1. Sofa
2. Coffee table
3. Easy chairs (with end table(s) if desired)
4. Fireplace (optional)
5. Front door
6. Hatrack
7. Closet door
8. Bathroom door
9. Possible location of bulletin board with a notice: "No bingo tonight—Santa Claus is coming"
10. Window
11. Door to kitchen

*The set represents the lobby of a retirement hotel. Add pictures, bookshelves, curtains, and other set decorations as desired.*

## AN OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS

*[The scene is the lobby of a modern retirement hotel somewhere in the sun belt. The lobby is furnished with easy chairs and a sofa, a coffee table, and (if it can be managed) a fireplace. There is a placard on the wall which can be read by the audience, obviously listing the week's activities. A sign has been placed over it, cater-cornered, stating in big black letters: NO BINGO TONIGHT—SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN! Seated in the lobby are some of the occupants of the hotel. As the scene opens, they are talking quietly with each other. The SOCIAL DIRECTOR enters. She puts a top on a small plastic tree, which is standing on the coffee table. She is carrying a plastic Christmas wreath, which she hangs on the wall. Then turning to the group, she addresses them]*

SOCIAL DIRECTOR. There now! Doesn't that look a lot more like Christmas? *[She becomes kittenish, shaking a finger at them]* I hope you've all been good, because Santa Claus is going to make a surprise visit tonight! *[She gets no response, so with a shrug she walks off the stage]*

EMMA. Now if Paul Newman was coming! *[The WOMEN giggle]*

FLORENCE. Or Cary Grant!

MILDRED. Now you're talking—how about Maurice Chevalier—or *[she purses her lips and tries a French accent]* Charles Boyay!

MAY. Take him—I like Frank Sinatra. Boopee-doopee-doo *[she rises and dances around]*.

EMMA. Christmas just isn't the same any more. People don't celebrate the way we did. Can you believe my son and his wife are going on a cruise? I used to spend two whole days before Christmas, just cooking. I made pies, cakes, got the dressing ready and baked the turkey all night in a slow oven. I wouldn't be surprised if they cooked ours in the microwave here. *[She makes a gesture of disgust]*

JOHN. We raised our birds. *[In a macho manner]* Lordy, we had to plow through the snow to cut down a tree. *[He shakes his head]* We always had a big tom turkey. I remember Ma picking the feathers off that thing.

AL. We always had lots of company—besides a big family.

FLORENCE. *[She sidles up to Al and tries to look alluring. She licks her lips and smooths her hair]* I too had a big family and I miss them. Perhaps we could console each other—especially at this time of year—

AL. *[His eyes widen and then he looks alarmed. He backs away and stammers:]* I don't—I mean we— *[grumbling]* —Gee whiz!

MAY. *[She ignores the action by Florence and Al]* We always had a maid and a cook. I never set foot in the kitchen. *[She shrugs and looks bored]* The maid always took our wet clothes to the kitchen to dry them off after my brother and I played in the snow. We had snow in Ohio for Christmas. Sometimes I get tired of this constant sunshine. *[She walks to the window and peers out, then makes a gesture of disgust]*

MILDRED. We had help in the house too, but Momma always baked our Christmas pies and cookies. I can still smell them—they smelled so good. *[She gazes away over the heads of the others, and sighs]*

EMMA. Well. I'm sorry I never got to know the idle rich in my young days. *[She looks scornfully at Mildred and May]*. Us kids would string popcorn and cranberries for the tree. Poppa would go out into the woods and cut us a tree.

JOHN. We had a big fire in the fireplace, and the night before Christmas Pop would bank the fire and we'd hang up our stockings. Always got an orange in the toe of the sock. *[He gazes over their heads and sighs]* I remember that orange—

FLORENCE. I baked gingerbread men for my kids. And we always had roast goose for Christmas. It was a family tradition—English, you know.

MAY. Ick! Goose is so greasy!

FLORENCE. *[Defensively]* Well, it was a tradition!

MAY. *[She walks over to the plastic tree and sniffs it contemptuously]* It would be nice to have an old-fashioned Christmas—like the ones we remember. With a real tree— *[she flicks the tree with her finger]* not this old plastic thing. It doesn't even *feel* like a tree.

EMMA. A real tree—with candles instead of electric lights! Candles smell nice.

MILDRED. And we could string popcorn and cranberries! And make paper chains like we used to! *[They all become animated and talk at once, remembering Christmases from their past]*

JOHN. I always tried to stay awake for Santa Claus when I was a kid. Never made it. *[He laughs]*

FLORENCE. We could make real wreaths—out of fir boughs.

AL. I'm gonna hang up my sock! Maybe I'll get some walnuts in it! Used to always get a handful. *[Grumbling]*

MAY. *[She claps her hands for silence]* Listen! Listen! I just thought of something! I saw this play on TV where some people—just like us—wanted an old-fashioned Christmas and they made a circle and wished for the Spirit of Christmas to grant their wish. And the Spirit came and granted their wish. Let's do that! Let's wish for the Spirit of Christmas to grant our wish! *[They all fall silent and look at May]*

AL. You must be nuts!

MAY. *[Defensively]* Well—it was on television—and it looked so real. *[She turns to Al]* It won't cost you anything to try! *[She turns to the others]* And—well—*[Her voice picks up enthusiasm]*. What can it hurt if we re-enact the play? After all, it is Christmas eve. Might be fun! Huh? Huh? *[She moves from one to the other as she says the last few lines]*

FLORENCE. I never heard of a Spirit of Christmas!

EMMA. Didn't they have one in Dickens?—you know the story about little Timmy and old Mr. Scrooge?

JOHN. *[Disgustedly]* That's *Tiny* Tim and old Scrooge... Geeeeeech!

MAY. Yeah, there was a spirit in that story and see what happened!

MILDRED. *[Wide-eyed, ready for a story]* What did happen?

AL. *[With disdain]* Don't you women ever read anything but love stories? In the Dickens story, the Spirit of Christmas Past showed Old Scrooge how things were when he was a lad. How even though his father forgot him, his sister didn't, and they had a nice Christmas because somebody loved him. *[He says the last part with emotion and surreptitiously wipes a tear from his eye]*

MAY. You see! The Spirit of Christmas did bring back an old-fashioned Christmas for him. We should try it. *[They all hold reflective poses for a moment]*

FLORENCE. Well, I don't mind.

MILDRED. Me neither. I mean, me too.

EMMA. *[Without enthusiasm]* Might as well. *[JOHN and AL shuffle their feet and look at each other sideways. Both speak at once:]*

JOHN. Okay.

AL. Why not?

MAY. *[Excitedly, pleased that she is getting her way]* Now, let me see. First we form a circle. *[ALL shuffle around awkwardly, moving in and out and finally form a circle with a little prompting by May]*

MAY. Now in the play, they all closed their eyes and then said, "Spirit of Christmas"—and then they wished for what they wanted.

AL. *[Grumpily]* Well, let's do something. I'm getting tired of standing here.

MAY. Okay. Everybody close your eyes. *[ALL comply]* Now all together, say: "Oh Spirit of Christmas, take us back to our early days and give us an old-fashioned Christmas." *[She waits. No one repeats the line]*

MAY. C'mon, you guys! Repeat after me: "Oh Spirit of Christmas"—*[The OTHERS repeat it, the MEN mumbling]* "Give us an old-fashioned Christmas"—*[She waits for the response, which is a little ragged]* "Like the ones we used to know." *[The OTHERS repeat the last phrase and then stand silently holding each other by the hand]*

*[The SPIRIT of CHRISTMAS appears. As she begins her speech, one by one the SENIOR CITIZENS open their eyes to stare in amazement at the apparition]*

THE SPIRIT. I am the Spirit of Christmas you called forth, and I will grant you, for this one day, the kind of old-fashioned Christmas you enjoyed as children. Remember—you asked for it, and everything will be as it was then. *[The SPIRIT waves her wand. Then, picking up the plastic tree and taking the plastic wreath off the wall, she exits]*

MAY. *[Clapping her hands]* Oh how wonderful! *[MILDRED, EMMA, and FLORENCE all join in, saying ad-lib: "Beautiful!" "How marvelous!" "Wonderful—wonderful!" The MEN continue to stand, open-mouthed, holding each other by the hand. The WOMEN turn to the spot where the plastic tree stood]*

MILDRED. What about our tree?

FLORENCE. We'll have to get one.

EMMA. We're supposed to cut our own, if it's like it used to be.

MAY. And we will. That is, the men will. *[She turns to Al and John]* You fellows will have to go out and cut us a tree.

AL. You're crazy!

JOHN. Cut one? Where?

MAY. That's up to you. *[She turns to the other women]* Meanwhile, we'll get the trimmings ready. We'll pop corn, string cranberries...

EMMA. And make wreaths! And paper bows!

MILDRED. And paper chains, we'll make lots of paper rings and color them with crayon.

FLORENCE. Oh it's all so romantic!