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*Dramatic Publishing*

# COMFORT AND JOY

**A Play in Two Acts**

**by**

**JACK HEIFNER**



**Dramatic Publishing**

**Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia**

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The world premiere of *COMFORT AND JOY* took place on December 2, 1995 at Portland Center Stage in Portland, Ore., Elizabeth Huddle, Producing Artistic Director.

Director . . . . . CLIFF FANNIN BAKER  
Scenic Designer . . . . . MICHAEL C. SMITH  
Costume Designer . . . . . ROSE PEDERSON  
Lighting Designer . . . . . DEREK DUARTE  
Sound Designer . . . . . JOHN GIBSON  
Stage Manager . . . . . KATHERINE GOSNELL  
Production Assistant . . . . . MEGAN CAVAGNARO

#### THE CAST

The Fairy . . . . . LARRY RANDOLPH  
Victor Pirelli . . . . . DAVID MEYERS  
Scott Dobson . . . . . CAMERON WATSON  
Tony Pirelli . . . . . MICHAEL MENDELSON  
Doris Dobson . . . . . CRISTINE McMURDO-WALLIS  
Gina Pirelli . . . . . AMY PERRY

# COMFORT AND JOY

A Play in Two Acts  
For 3 Men, 2 Women, 1 man or woman

## CHARACTERS

THE FAIRY . . . . . a man/woman of indeterminate age,  
but definitely not young  
VICTOR PIRELLI . . . . . an accountant, mid-30s  
SCOTT DOBSON . . . . . a publicist, mid-30s  
TONY PIRELLI . . . . . a flight attendant, early 30s  
DORIS DOBSON . . . . . a recent widow, early 50s  
GINA PIRELLI . . . . . a photographer, early 30s

and...

THE VOICE OF MARCI . . . . . Scott's secretary

TIME: Christmas Eve.

PLACE: A home in the Hollywood Hills.

Running time: 2 hours, 15 minutes.

**For John Seth Terry**

## PRODUCTION NOTES

**THE SET:** Large windows are seen across the back of the house with doors, right and left, opening onto a terrace. Beyond that, one can see the sky, mountains and the HOLLYWOOD sign. At night, twinkling stars, as well as the illuminated sign, are in view. The house is modern and comfortable, but is also a designer house and could be featured in decorating magazines.

UC is a stone fireplace. UR is a hallway to the front door, and downstage there is a door to the kitchen. Between these doors is a closet. Stage left there are two exits—one upstage that goes to the guest bedroom and one downstage that goes to the master suite. Again, there is a closet between these. Also UR is a cabinet for liquor and stage left there is a space where the Christmas tree will be placed.

There is one step down from this upstage area to the downstage playing space. Stage right there is a long, glass-top dining table with five chairs. Stage left are two chairs, a sofa and a coffee table. On the cabinet behind the sofa are two portable telephones, two answering machines and a fax machine.

UR, on the terrace, is an exit that goes around to the front of the house and stage left is an exit to the pool area, which cannot be seen from the audience.

**THE MUSIC:** The Christmas songs included in the script only serve as suggestions and other songs may be substituted by the producing theatre. Some songs may require a financial arrangement with the music publisher. Performing this play does not give one the right to perform the music suggested in the script without paying a royalty to the composers, unless the songs are in the public domain. Please choose your selections with this in mind.



## ADDITIONAL CHARACTER NOTES

**THE FAIRY** Part sorcerer, part sage and part ham actor. He can perform all kinds of magic. His looks are quite odd—somewhere between a pixie and a drag queen.

**VICTOR PIRELLI** A dark, intense man. He lives in Anaheim, Calif. He's married and has three children.

**SCOTT DOBSON** A preppy, good looking, athletic man. He is originally from Texas, but no longer has much of an accent. He works in the publicity office of a major Hollywood studio.

**TONY PIRELLI** A dark, handsome man. He is originally from the East Coast but has lived in Southern California for several years. He is Victor's younger brother.

**DORIS DOBSON** A well-dressed, good-looking woman. She lives in Houston, Texas. Scott's mother.

**GINA PIRELLI** A dark, pretty woman. She has been living all over the world for the last 13 years. She is eight months pregnant.

**VOICE OF MARCI** Heard only on one of the answering machines.

## PROLOGUE

*(The stage is dark. A Christmas overture is heard and a shimmering light appears. A loud voice from offstage cuts through this.)*

FAIRY'S VOICE. You call that an entrance? Give me an "up" tune and a follow spot.

*(Suddenly, loud, Broadway-style entrance music is heard. A spotlight hits the left side of the stage as THE FAIRY makes his entrance. He plays on the apron of the stage, directly to audience during the prologue.)*

FAIRY. Thank you, thank you. I feel like Judy at Carnegie Hall. Hello. Welcome. Shall we begin? Once upon a time... why are you looking at me that way? Oh, you're wondering what I'm wearing? For your information, madam—I am not a transvestite or buttery sprite or someone on their way to a Mardi Gras party. Haven't you ever been in the same room with a fairy before? Well, maybe you were and you didn't know it. And why, sir, are you laughing? Do you think all fairies are petite *Playboy* centerfolds with wings, like Tinkerbell? Or maybe you prefer Julia where-did-that-career-come-from Roberts in some tired old elf drag? I suggest you get over your Hollywood ideas about us. We've been portrayed badly. You think women, African-Americans and Hispanics have it rotten—pity us poor fairies. There is no affirmative action in fairy world. But I hear there's none in yours anymore, either. Ah, but more about me!

Fairies, like me, are capable of so much more than we've been credited with—things like magic and mischief. We are the muse, the inspiration, for artists and lovers. I was there to cheer Pablo Picasso during his blue period. I turned back the sheets and left a mint on the pillow for Heloise and Abelard. I moussed Pochahontas' hair. And believe me, although Hollywood is very much a part of this story, there are other places I'd rather spend my Christmas holidays—like in some damp forest or at the bottom of a swamp. Someplace that reminds me of home and Mama. *(He sheds a tear and then laughs.)* Just kidding! As a true fairy, I can bestow good or ill luck at will, and I particularly love moments of high emotion in which I can participate. I'm capable of rendering myself visible or invisible to the mortal eye—the only telltale sign of me may be a dank, musty odor. I've done my best to get rid of that. *(A Christmas carol begins to play and the lights come up slowly on the stage set and the sky in the background.)* Ah, we are all set to begin. Fasten your seat belts! Be prepared to go backwards and forwards and sideways. A house in the Hollywood Hills. Christmas Eve—a time, in a perfect world, for love and family, of healing old wounds, of birth, hope and forgiveness. Ah, but all is not well. And that's where I come in. You'll see me again soon. *(As THE FAIRY disappears, the lights come up full on the stage.)*

## ACT ONE

SCENE: *It is a warm, sunny day in Los Angeles and an inappropriate Christmas carol, "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas," is heard briefly as the lights come up. The time is late afternoon. The house is airy and comfortable but, at this moment magazines, newspapers, dishes, presents and such are scattered about. The bottom half of an artificial Christmas tree sits U. Beside it are a briefcase and a shopping bag.*

*VICTOR, sporting several days' growth of beard and wearing a pair of wrinkled pajamas, enters from the UL hallway (the guest bedroom) and crosses to the living room. He carries an empty bottle of Scotch. One of two telephones rings twice and one of two answering machines starts to play a recorded message. During the phone messages, VICTOR exits into the kitchen.*

SCOTT'S VOICE. Hello, this is Scott, I can't take your call right now, but at the sound of the tone, please leave a message.

MARCI'S VOICE. How dare you leave me here at the studio while you shop! All hell's broken loose! Madonna won't go to New York for the premiere if Roseanne and Geena Davis show up. I'm faxing the seating for the reception. Please advise.

*(The fax machine starts, adding more paper to a large pile that is already on the floor. SCOTT comes across the terrace carrying the top part of the fake tree. He wears slacks, a shirt and a tie, which he has loosened. He enters the living room. Hearing the tail end of Marci's message, SCOTT runs to pick up the portable phone, and he talks at the same time that he is putting the two parts of the tree together. He is also tidying up the house as best he can.)*

SCOTT. Marci? Do you know how hard it is to find a tree on Christmas Eve? And do you have any idea how difficult it is to cram an eight-foot spruce into a Miata? I finally got some green monstrosity, but it's in two pieces. Don't ask. No, I haven't checked my messages—I just got home. Listen, tell the studio brass I can't come back this afternoon. It's Christmas—all us Christians are off! Secretaries don't count. *(He goes to get the vacuum and a small stepladder out of the hall closet—the one between the two bedrooms.)* What can't wait? Assure Madonna, Roseanne will not be there. She wants to be there? She's not even in the movie. Tell her we've got two other films opening day after tomorrow and to take her pick. I'll leave for New York as soon as I'm through with this ridiculousness here. My mother's on her way and the house is a pigsty. Wouldn't you know Conchita would jump ship and leave for Guatemala? What seating arrangements? *(Looking at the pile of fax paper on the floor.)* How many faxes have you sent me in the last two hours? Start at the top of the list and tell me who's confirmed and who hasn't, and we'll go from there.

*(While saying this, SCOTT heads into the DL hallway carrying the portable phone. VICTOR comes back with another Scotch bottle, but it's almost empty. He downs it, then the doorbell rings. He exits to the front door. The second telephone rings twice and the second machine picks up.)*

TONY'S VOICE. Hi, this is Tony. Neither Scott nor I are available to answer your call at this time. At the sound of the tone, please leave a message.

DORIS' VOICE. Scott? It's your mother. I just pulled off some freeway trying to find the Hollywood Hills. I've asked for directions ten times. Oh, I see a Denny's up ahead. I'll pull in there for pie and directions.

*(She hangs up. VICTOR has returned with an armload of pretty packages. He puts them on the floor in the living room and then stretches out on the sofa to try and sleep. SCOTT enters from the master bedroom hallway carrying several shopping bags filled with ornaments. He does not see VICTOR on the sofa right away.)*

SCOTT. Okay, for one last time—Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins can come if they don't make any speeches. Put them at Roseanne's table and they won't hang around too long. *(Spotting VICTOR, he jumps.)* Victor! I gotta go, Marci. Don't call me anymore today. *(He hangs up the phone.)* Victor? *(He shakes VICTOR.)* VICTOR?

VICTOR. What? *(SCOTT is relieved that VICTOR is alive and goes back to working on the tree.)*

SCOTT. Listen, I really don't have time to run you to the emergency room this afternoon. You didn't swallow a bottle of Midol again, did you?

VICTOR. No, I've been downing Scotch. You're about out. Actually I've been wondering, why would a couple of guys have a bottle of Midol in their guest bathroom anyway? I mean, at my house Betsy has a closet full of pain killers and secret women's things I'm not supposed to mess with—but why would you or Tony need a woman's drug? There's a blond wig and a pink evening dress in there, too.

SCOTT. The stash belongs to Conchita. She may always have cramps, but at least she tries to look sexy while she cleans.

VICTOR. I mean, you don't have to cover up the evidence if you guys are into wearing women's clothes. I may not know much about gay life, but I do watch *Jenny Jones*.

SCOTT. Sorry to disappoint you, Victor, but your brother and I are just two normal, red-blooded guy types who sleep together.

VICTOR. I don't mind. I can't understand what you see in men, but I don't mind. I hate sex anyway.

SCOTT. Victor, do you remember you promised you'd be out of here by this afternoon?

VICTOR. I've packed my pitiful, little bag, but where am I gonna go?

SCOTT. Try and call Betsy. She can't keep refusing to talk to you. It's Christmas.

VICTOR. I phoned the neighbors this morning and found out she flew off, with the kids, to see her parents in Providence.

SCOTT. Great! That means you can go back to your own house now, can't you?

VICTOR. She's got a court order against me. Should I drive down to Anaheim and risk getting arrested? And

what do I do then? Spend the holidays celebrating the tattered remains of my marriage in some jail cell? (*He breaks into tears.*)

SCOTT. You've got to pull yourself together.

VICTOR. What for?

SCOTT. I need the guest room for my mom. She's never been to visit me before and she hasn't met Tony. Plus, she's still upset about my dad's death. I know! What if I pay for you to go to a hotel? The Beverly Wilshire. Wouldn't that be nice?

VICTOR. Get me a room on a high floor with a window that opens.

SCOTT. Victor, I'm pretty tired of you threatening to kill yourself! It's all you've talked about doing for a week!

VICTOR. I can't help it if I've been unsuccessful. I've really tried!

SCOTT. I promise you, you're not the first man whose wife caught him with another woman.

VICTOR. With a mouse, for heaven's sake!

SCOTT. Okay, a mouse. (*SCOTT works on cleaning the living room. He picks up the magazines and newspapers.*)

VICTOR. A mouse-in-training.

SCOTT. Whatever—let's just drop it. (*VICTOR continues, however, and SCOTT is clearly annoyed.*)

VICTOR. Why'd I have to stop off after work at the bar at the Disneyland Hotel? Something I've never done before in my life? There she was, on a break, sitting on a barstool in her Minnie Mouse suit having a margarita. The whole scene was so foreign to my world of split-level houses and three out-of-control kids and a wife who can practically quote word for word the Republican contract



with America, that I lost my sense of what was right and wrong. I've never cheated on Betsy before! (*VICTOR breaks down in tears.*) I mean, I threw away my marriage for a quickie in the backseat of a Pinto with a tipsy mouse! I'm disgusting.

SCOTT. Look—it's not totally your fault. Living a stone's throw from Disneyland—seeing the snow-capped Matterhorn sitting in ninety-degree heat in an orange grove every day while you drive to work—is bound to warp a person's mind. Take me, for instance—on the lot at the studio, I have to pass Beaver Cleaver's house and the Bates Motel just to grab a bagel. (*Seeing the three packages on the floor that VICTOR brought in earlier.*) What are these?

VICTOR. Oh, somebody delivered them. You sure do get a lot of gifts. I won't get anything this year, except switches. I've been a bad boy. (*SCOTT looks at the first two presents and then opens the third, which is in a pretty tapestry box with a ribbon around it.*)

SCOTT. Every paranoid movie star with a picture coming out next spring is already buttering me up. Let's see—here's a "save my career please" gift from Kevin Costner and a square thing from Demi Moore, and what's this? Funny, there's no card, no store name... (*He opens it and pulls out a PUPPET, a smaller version of THE FAIRY we've already met.*)

VICTOR. It looks like an ugly old doll.

SCOTT. It's perfect for that tree. Nobody ever knows what to put on the top anyway. (*During the following, SCOTT climbs the ladder and puts the PUPPET on the top.*)

VICTOR. Is that tree plastic?

SCOTT. Shut up!

VICTOR. I like plastic.

SCOTT. I wish Tony would get home. His flight must have landed an hour ago. He'll know exactly what to do about this mess since he's trained to smile and serve beverages even when the plane is going down. *(He goes back to cleaning the room. VICTOR follows him around.)*

VICTOR. Scott, really, I appreciate you letting me crash here. I always meant to invite you and Tony down to Anaheim, but Betsy said she wouldn't feel comfortable having two homosexuals for dinner.

SCOTT. Well, one homosexual for dinner is usually pretty filling. Plus, how can anybody get upset about not going to Anaheim?

VICTOR. Betsy prefers to be around straight people, who are white and go to our church. Did I show you a picture of her and the kids?

SCOTT. Yes. They look quite fetching in their sheets and hoods. *(SCOTT is joking but VICTOR doesn't laugh. He takes a picture out of the pocket of his pajama top and holds it in front of SCOTT's face.)*

VICTOR. Isn't Betsy beautiful? I think she looks like Doris Day or Patti Duke.

SCOTT. How about Doris Duke? Or David Duke?

VICTOR. I feel so guilty. I mean, I come here, ringing your doorbell in the middle of the night, upsetting your lives. Then Tony flies off and you're kind enough to let me stay, even though I don't know you at all.

SCOTT. Hey, you are Tony's brother.

VICTOR. Do you have a brother?

SCOTT. I'm an only child.

VICTOR. There were three of us—Tony, Gina and me. We always had pretty pitiful Christmases with our mom when we were kids back in Rhode Island.

SCOTT. So Tony's told me.

VICTOR. Dad left when we were toddlers. And now—my rotten brats are gonna grow up without a father just like I did! All because I slept with a fake mouse! *(He breaks into tears again and collapses on the sofa.)*

SCOTT. Listen, Victor, maybe you'd feel better if you shaved and cleaned up?

VICTOR. What for? So I'll look nice when I hang myself?

SCOTT. There's a terrible smell in here and I thought maybe it was you. *(VICTOR is sniffing at himself, as SCOTT pulls him up off the sofa.)* On your feet, Mouseketeer. Will you change the sheets on the bed in the guest room and clear out Conchita's remains? Can you do that for me?

VICTOR. I'll try. You're right—something really stinks. *(Telephone number one rings and SCOTT grabs it. VICTOR exits to the U hall, still sniffing himself. SCOTT opens the other two gifts while he talks on the phone.)*

SCOTT. What now? Yes—the gifts arrived. Along with some doll that looks like “apple-head” Barbie. *(He holds up the two gifts—a cowboy hat and a picture in a frame.)* Let's see—Kevin sent me a cowboy hat. I suppose he'd rather we remember “that movie” and forget his attempt to walk on water. And Demi sent me a picture of her in a silver frame. Well, of course she's naked. We've seen it all before. Stop faxing me!