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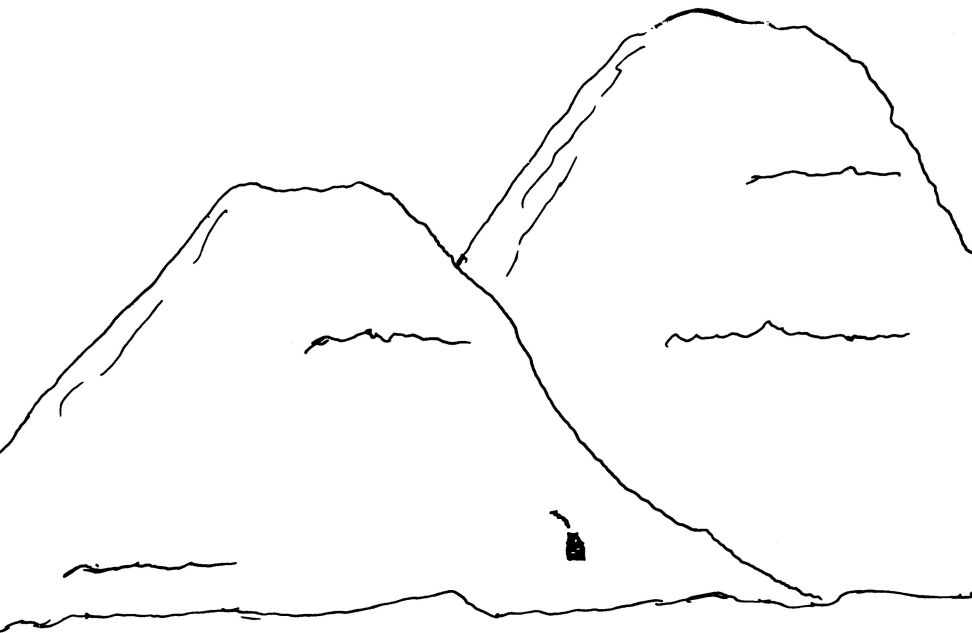
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Dramatic Publishing



The Homecoming

A play based on the book

by Earl Hamner, Jr.



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THE HOMECOMING . . .

The special strength of a loving family is at the heart of this play based on the book by Earl Hamner, Jr. which also inspired a television series of exceptional quality, "The Waltons." In the original book, however, they were called "the Spencers" and instead of "John Boy" it's Clay-Boy -- and that's how they're named in this play which is based directly on the original work.

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THE HOMECOMING

**A Play by
CHRISTOPHER SERGEL**

**Based upon the book by
EARL HAMNER, JR.**



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Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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(THE HOMECOMING)

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THE HOMECOMING

A Full-Length Play

For Twenty-Two Characters plus optional extras,
which include townspeople and churchgoers

CHARACTERS

The Spencer Family

Clay-Boy
Olivia Spencer
Clay Spencer
Matt
Becky
Mark
Shirley
Luke
John
Pattie Cake

Grandpa Homer

Grandma Ida

Birdshot

City Lady

Charlie Sneed

Sheriff

Ike Godsey

Rev. Dooly

Young "Joseph" and young "Mary"

Miss Emma Staples

Miss Etta Staples

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING about *The Homecoming*...

“What a wonderful play. Our senior citizen audience could really relate to the story of the Spencers. It was thoroughly enjoyed.”

*Jim Miller, Osceola Community Players,
Osceola, Ind.*

“It was an outstanding performance! *The Homecoming* was enjoyed by all who attended. The characters were believable and true to the traditions of ‘The Waltons’ ”

*Peggy Smith,
Wesleyan Christian Academy, North Branch, Mich.*

“What a wonderful production! A heartwarming play with all the right elements for a universal message.”

*Sherry Petrowski,
Maryville High School, Maryville, Tenn.*

“Wonderful adaptation! I used three platforms on three different levels. Two stayed the same and one was flexible. Very easy to stage for great effect!”

*Paul A. Orsett,
Wakefield School Theatre Co., Raleigh, N.C.*

Act One

The house lights dim and in the darkness the curtain, if used, rises.

Music is heard playing softly, perhaps coming from a harmonica, but this is optional. The song should be one already old-fashioned at the time of this play which is set in the Virginia mountains during the winter of 1933.

The music might be something such as "In The Gloaming" or "Sweet And Low".

Light is coming up at left which is the area of the kitchen.

OLIVIA SPENCER is entering left and carrying a small plant which she pauses to inspect. She is a strong, beautiful and sensitive woman in her mid to late thirties.

OLIVIA is suddenly seized by a concern, and comes downstage. She looks out over the audience, apparently from a window.

CLAY-BOY enters downright, and stands just onstage. He's a serious young man with corn colored hair. Meanwhile, OLIVIA continues to search for someone with her eyes.

CLAY-BOY

(Speaking quietly)

It's remembered in my family that on Christmas Eve of 1933 my father was late arriving home. That along with the love he and my mother bestowed upon their eight red-headed offspring is fact.

(He shows a writing tablet that he holds in his hand)

CLAY-BOY (Continued)

The rest I made up.

(The music concludes)

CLAY-BOY

(Reading from his tablet)

All day the cold Virginia sky had hung low over Spencer's Mountain. It promised snow before the fall of night.

OLIVIA

(Still searching with her eyes. A quiet protest)

It doesn't feel like Christmas.

CLAY-BOY

(Looking over to her)

Why not, Mama?

(At this question, OLIVIA looks over to him)

OLIVIA

Because—

(But she can't find the answer. She shakes her head and looks back out the window)

CLAY-BOY

(Glances at his tablet as a reminder, but not reading from it beyond the first few words)

That moment which had always come in other years, that mingled feeling of excitement and promise which Mama called The Christmas Spirit had evaded her. Christmas had always been a time of rejuvenation to Mama, a time to reaffirm her faith in God's goodness, to enjoy the closeness of friends and family—a time to believe in miracles again.

OLIVIA

(Nodding agreement, as she continues to search. Half to herself)

Miracles.

(She looks across to CLAY-BOY)

I wish it was spring already.

(With a touch of vehemence)

If it weren't for the children I'd be tempted to treat Christmas as just another day this year.

(Smiles ruefully)

Prospects being what they are; it could turn out to be just another day regardless.

CLAY-BOY

(Coming into her time)

What is it, Mama? What's the matter?

OLIVIA

It's—

(Stops herself and offers a substitute for her real concern. Holds up pot)

My Christmas cactus! I put it where it would get a little winter sun, but one of the children broke a window and it froze.

(Breaking bits away from it)

Covered with pink buds that'll never bloom.

(Looks back out the window)

Snow comen for sure.

(More light is coming up left and it reveals the young people who are already on stage, quietly doing various kitchen chores, or playing)

(OLIVIA has turned and gone back to them, putting the pot on the table)

OLIVIA

(As she crosses)

Y'all been underfoot all day. Why don't you go outside before it gets dark?

MATT

Too blustery cold.

BECKY

(Curious)

Why'd ya keep watchen out the window, Mama?

OLIVIA

Watchen out the—

BECKY

Ever since time for Daddy to get home.

SHIRLEY

Are you getten worried?

OLIVIA

I'll tell you what I was watchen. Come to the window. I hope he's still there.

(Urging them)

Come on!

MARK

What's still there?

OLIVIA

Y'all children want to see somethen pretty?

ALL

(As they crowd around her at the apparent window)

Yes! What is it? Where? Tell us! Where is it, Mama?

OLIVIA

(As she looks out, touching the head of the son with the reddest hair)

It's about the color of Luke's hair. I hope he's still—yes—there he is! On the tallest limb of the crab apple tree!

(They're all looking in the same direction. Then there's a gasp of pleasure and much pointing as they see)

A cardinal!

(They're enchanted. Then all eyes shift)

JOHN

There he goes!

(Their eyes follow the flight of the cardinal)

CLAY-BOY

(Glances briefly at his tablet)

The scarlet plumage flashed a single stroke of bright color in a landscape of winter gray, snow white, and ice blue.

LUKE

That red bird is goen to freeze tonight.

OLIVIA

He won't freeze. Not that bird.

CLAY-BOY

Looking back, I don't know if Mama was talking about the

cardinal, or if she was trying to say something to her red-headed children.

OLIVIA

A red bird has got the knack of surviving winter. He knows it, too. Otherwise he'd of headed South with the wrens and gold finches and the bluebirds back when the leaves started to turn.

LUKE

But the red birds don't have to?

OLIVIA

(Touching his hair)

Because they've got the knack of surviving.

SHIRLEY

I wish my daddy could fly. Then he wouldn't have to wait for the bus.

MARK

If Daddy goes flyen around, somebody's liable to think he's a turkey buzzard and shoot him down.

OLIVIA

(Emphatically)

Don't you worry about your Daddy. He's goen to be home for Christmas. You stop fretten about it.

BECKY

He won't be here if he stops off at Miss Emma's and Miss Etta's.

OLIVIA

(Scornfully)

The day your daddy spends Christmas Eve with those two old lady bootleggers is the day I walk out of this house.

PATTIE CAKE

If we walked out of the house, where would we go, Mama? Mama?

OLIVIA

(Dismissing this)

Your Daddy's goen to be home. Y'all just stop worryen. Come on the lot of you—tidy up a little.

(As she's getting them started, CLAY-BOY looks back to the audience)

CLAY-BOY

My father could only be with his family on weekends. When something called "the Depression" happened in Washington or New York or some distant place, the soapstone plant here closed down and people had to find some other ways of making a living. My father found work as a machinist in Waynesboro which was forty miles away. He had no car, so every Friday night he'd take a Trailways bus that let him off at Hickory Creek. From there Clay could walk the remaining six miles, or hitchhike if a car happened to go past. Sometimes on his way home—

OLIVIA

(To CLAY—BOY. As though continuing an argument)

He wouldn't stop at Miss Emma and Miss Etta Staples place tonight. Not on Christmas Eve.

CLAY-BOY

Of course not, Mama.

(He watches her looking off with a strange expression on her face)

I suspect maybe Mama had fantasies about how she'd enjoy setting dynamite under the Staples house and blowing it sky high. I think she enjoyed the vision of that stately decayed old house and its shelves of Mason jars filled with the notorious whiskey recipe the old ladies distilled being—

(Seeing it all in her head to herself)

—blown right off the map!

(She makes an “explosion” gesture and sound)

(The children are startled)

JOHN

Mama?

LUKE

What are you—

(Olivia is intensely embarrassed)

OLIVIA

There's work to do. Now get to it!

MATT

What should we—

OLIVIA

Who's goen to crack walnuts for my applesauce cake?

(For an instant they hesitate)

(Encouraging)

Run along now.

CLAY-BOY

(Sensing something in his mother. Deciding

to encourage them along)

The walnuts are out in the barn. But y'all don't want to walk through the snow.

MARK

Sure we do!

JOHN

Let's go out!

(They're scrambling into sweaters, jackets, caps and scarves)

OLIVIA

(Appreciating CLAY-BOY. Half aside to him)

Gives me a chance to get a little organized.

CLAY-BOY

Sure, Mama.

OLIVIA

(Turning back to her kitchen)

You look after everybody, Clay-Boy.

(She's going)

You're the oldest.

CLAY-BOY

Yes ma'am.

(He gestures to the group and they're pushing out through the real or imaginary doorway onto the suggested porch and then into the yard to the right)

CLAY-BOY

(As they're going. To audience)

If I had any wish back then it was that my mother would stop reminding me that I'm the oldest. It took all the fun out of things to be constantly reminded that I was a combination policeman, referee, guardian, and nursemaid to my brothers and sisters.

(He glances back at his mother who has taken several steps back for one more uneasy look out the window)

Course—my mother wasn't having much fun out of things either!

(CLAY-BOY turns toward the others who are pantomiming play in the snow)

(Sharply)

Y'all watch yourselves. Somebody gets hurt I'll get the blame. I'm like some old mother duck.

(Directing)

Matt—the sack with the walnuts is in the bin.

(MATT, long suffering, is going off right)

BECKY

(To PATTIE CAKE, who is stretched out on the ground making waving motions with her arms)

What are you doing, Pattie Cake?

PATTIE CAKE

Making a snow angel.

BECKY

Get up before you catch sick.

PATTIE CAKE

(Sitting up. Worried)

Clay-Boy, will I catch—

CLAY-BOY

No.

(MARK has sneaked up behind BECKY and put some imaginary snow down the back of her neck)

MARK

Gotcha!

BECKY

Ohhh!

CLAY-BOY

(Pushing between them)

Lordy God, I'll be glad when y'all grow up and learn sense.

(MATT is re-entering with a quarter filled burlap sack)

MATT

(As he comes)

That old cow carrying on like she wants to be milked already.

CLAY-BOY

(Considering)

Gonna give her an extra bucket of mash tonight. Christmas Eve for her too.

SHIRLEY

(Excited)