

A Stranger for Christmas

a play with music

By Carol Lynn Pearson

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Florence and Myrna, residents of a rest home in Pasadena, make up a story to test Myrna's children. Florence has never had a real family Christmas. Myrna had years of storybook Christmases with her five children who live in Idaho, but now her health needs have brought her to a warmer climate. Florence fantasizes that a family would come along and take her in for Christmas, but of course no family would put themselves out that way. Yes, they would, says Myrna, her children would; she taught them to be caring in just that way. "Would not," says Florence. "Would too," says Myrna. "Then let's find out." And thus is born Genevieve, a fictitious little old lady in a rest home near to Myrna's children in Idaho Falls. If one of them will agree to take in Genevieve, Florence's dream will as good as come true; she will really believe in Christmas then. Myrna calls her children one by one - and one by one they turn her down. Both women are desolate. In a final surprise scene that brings laughter and tears the dreams of all concerned come true in a real family Christmas. This story is based on the best selling book of the same name. About 90 minutes.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2M, 7W, 3B, 2G + chorus and extras if desired.)

MYRNA: Older woman in rest home.
FLORENCE: Another, Myrna's best friend.
RUTH: Their nurse.

RICHARD: Myrna's adult children.
BEVERLY: Another.
JOY: Another.
DALE: Another.
SUSIE: Another.
ROBBIE: Myrna's grandchildren
JULIE: Another.
BRETT: Another.
BRADLEY: Another.
SARA: Another.
ROSEMARY: Richard's wife.
CHORUS: Adults and children.

A STRANGER FOR CHRISTMAS

MUSICAL #1 - Prelude

(At stage right stands a CHORUS of thirty or so people, adults and children. They can be dressed, if desired, in winter wear, as if caroling. From this group will come Myrna's family. At stage left is a room in a rest home, fairly cheerful with pictures on wall and flowers on dresser. Two older women share this room, Myrna and Florence. MYRNA sits at a little desk, writing a letter. FLORENCE sits in her wheelchair, dozing. Between these two areas, raised a little, if possible, is a small kitchen containing a table and chairs and a counter, on which stand a telephone, mixer, toaster, etc. The director may find other creative ways to set the stage. As the play opens, LIGHTS are on the Chorus.)

MUSICAL #2 - Is There Room In Your Heart?

CHORUS:

IS THERE ROOM IN YOUR HEART FOR A STRANGER?
WILL YOU OPEN YOUR HEART
AND LET A STRANGER IN?
LIKE THE BABE WHO WAS BORN IN A MANGER
THERE ARE MANY TODAY
WHO HAVE BEEN TURNED AWAY.
IS THERE ROOM IN YOUR HEART FOR THEM?

IS THERE TIME IN YOUR DAY FOR A STRANGER?
CAN YOU REACH OUT YOUR HAND
TO DRY A STRANGER'S TEAR?
IN A WORLD FULL OF SORROW AND DANGER
THERE ARE HEARTS YOU CAN MEND,
THERE ARE SOULS TO BEFRIEND.
IS THERE TIME IN YOUR DAY FOR THEM?

THE LONELY, THE NEEDY, THE SICK, THE REVILED
ARE MY CHILD, YOUR CHILD, GOD'S CHILD.
HOW CAN WE HELP ALL THE WEAK ONES TO STAND?
PUT MY HAND, YOUR HAND IN GOD'S HAND.

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CHORUS: *(Cont'd.)*

IS THERE ROOM IN YOUR HEART FOR A STRANGER?
WILL YOU OPEN YOUR HEART
AND LET A STRANGER IN?
LIKE THE BABE WHO WAS BORN IN A MANGER
THERE ARE MANY TODAY
WHO HAVE BEEN TURNED AWAY.
IS THERE ROOM IN YOUR HEART FOR THEM?

MUSICAL #2a - No One Is a Stranger at Christmas -
Christmas Lullaby

CHORUS:

SLEEP, LITTLE BABY NOW,
WHILE WE SING OF YOUR BIRTH,
SING OF THE SAVIOR
COME NOW TO EARTH.

SLEEP, LITTLE BABY BORN
LOW IN THE HAY.
ARMS WILL PROTECT YOU,
ANGELS WILL PRAY.

SLEEP, LITTLE BABY NOW,
WHILE WE SING OF YOUR BIRTH,
SING OF THE SAVIOR
COME NOW TO EARTH.

(LIGHTS come up on MYRNA and FLORENCE. A television voice is heard.)

MAN: *(Voice over.)* ... With blue skies predicted through the Christmas weekend. And now stay tuned for our Wednesday night movie, the delightful musical, "Annie"!

(FLORENCE levels the remote control at the television as if it is a weapon, pushes the button and the sound abruptly stops. She turns her wheelchair away from the television in disgust.)

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FLORENCE: Huh uh! I'm not in the mood for that tonight, seeing Daddy Warbucks go to an orphanage to get somebody to entertain for Christmas. Why didn't he go to an old folks' home and ask for a little old lady that he could entertain for Christmas?

MYRNA: (*Brushing her hair.*) Well, maybe because orphans are cuter than little old ladies. Didn't you ever notice that?

FLORENCE: Cute? (*She leans back in her wheelchair and smiles.*) I used to be cute, cuter than Shirley Temple, they all said. Then I grew up. You know what a woman is who's not quite beautiful? She's interesting. Then handsome. When you become handsome, you know you're really over the hill.

MYRNA: You were almost a star, weren't you, Florence?

FLORENCE: Better. Stars come and go. I was a character actress. And I was never out of work for long. (*Points to a picture on her dresser.*) That's my favorite part — the one in the red dress — the queen!

MYRNA: (*Smiles.*) You play the queen very well.

FLORENCE: (*Regally.*) Yes. (*Pause.*) But wouldn't that be wonderful? What if tonight somebody, not Daddy Warbucks — old men don't interest me—but a family, a family, a real one with children and everything, walked right in the front door here and said, "We'd like to borrow a grandma for Christmas. Let's see. That one over there, the handsome one in the red dress, we'll take her."

MYRNA: (*Enjoying it.*) Oh, Florence.

FLORENCE: (*Transfixed.*) And then they would take me to their home for three days, and they would hang up my stocking along with theirs by the fireplace, and we would all sing Christmas carols around the piano, and I would polish the silver for Christmas dinner, and they would ask me what Christmas was like when I was a little girl, and they would tuck me in on Christmas Eve right along with the children and get me up early to open the presents, and there would be a few packages with my name on them under the tree, little things the children had made, and ... (*Sighs.*) Wouldn't that be wonderful?

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FLORENCE: (*Cont'd.*) I've never had a Christmas like that. I never had a family, you know, never even married.

MYRNA: (*Almost guiltily.*) I've had lots of Christmases like that. (*Caught up in remembering.*) Up in Idaho with Jack and our five children — oh, Christmas time was magic, like something right off the cover of "Ladies' Home Journal." The bright green wreath on the door ... the spicy smell of the gingerbread house ... the sound of presents being wrapped in the other room ... Oh, there were the usual tensions and squabbling, but when Christmas really settled in, everybody sort of softened and mellowed and glowed — just like the colored bulbs on the tree.

FLORENCE: Did you really make gingerbread houses?

MYRNA: Every year. Made a new one every year, from scratch. Stained glass windows from candy, Santa Claus on his sleigh out front. January first we'd all sit down and eat it. Oh, Florence, I've told you about the gingerbread houses!

FLORENCE: I know, I know.

MYRNA: (*Slowly.*) Only this year ...

FLORENCE: I'm sorry, Myrna. I know how you'll miss them.

MYRNA: Even after they married, they always came home for Christmas. I was lucky they all settled near to Idaho Falls. But then Jack died.

FLORENCE: I know.

MYRNA: And my arthritis was getting worse. Could hardly straighten out my fingers.

FLORENCE: I know.

MYRNA: "Go to a warmer climate," said the doctor. "Like Southern California." So I moved down here to my sister's. Then she died.

FLORENCE: I know. And the children had a family council and decided the best thing was to leave you here. Richard flew down and found the classiest rest home available. And they flew you home for the summer and for Christmas.

MYRNA: Have I told it that often? I must be getting old.

End of Freeview

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