

THE GIFT: 7 POUNDS, 3 OUNCES

By Gary Ray Stapp

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DEDICATION

*To my friends of The Chamber Players Community Theatre:
Thank you for your encouragement and support, and for
allowing me to use you to develop and test my playwriting.
You have each been a gift to me.*

STORY OF THE PLAY

An emotional, heart-opening journey about love, friendship, family, sacrifice, and what it truly means to give begins with an enormous Christmas tree wrestled into the warmth of a Colorado cabin. The Britton family, Brad and Tina and their son Nick, are eagerly anticipating the joy of a fun-filled holiday vacation spent with their close friends, Kyle and Jan, who arrive bearing gifts of sentiment, sarcasm, and sass. The two couples merrily begin to share their laughter, their affection, and their memories of the good ol' days, but too soon Jan begins to question Nick's paternity. When the others are confronted with secrets, both past and present, the bonds of their relationships are made vulnerable. And just as it appears to all of them that their proverbial "happily ever after" is about to slip away, the real spirit of Christmas ultimately reminds them of their love and compassion for one another through a gift. A gift born sixteen years ago.

ORIGINAL CAST/PRODUCTION

Produced by The Chamber Players Community Theatre in December 2016 under the direction of the playwright and with the assistance of Denise Scheibmeir and Steve Markham, and with the following cast: Karen Katzer as Tina Britton; Kenneth J. Amaya as Brad Britton; Austin Wickwire as Nick Britton; Shauna Devening as Jan Danfield; and Tom Emerson, Jr. as Kyle Danfield.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 2 w, 1 male teen)

TINA BRITTON (f.): A caring, efficient mother and wife, mid-30s.

BRAD BRITTON (m.): A protective, loving husband and father, mid-30s.

NICK (m.): A spirited and mature young man, about 15.

JAN DANFIELD (f.): A sassy and devoted wife, teetering with secrets, mid-30s.

KYLE DANFIELD (m.): A likeable and fun-loving husband with a juvenile sense of humor, mid-30s.

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PLACE

The great room of the Britton family cabin in Colorado.

TIME

Present, just before Christmas

SETTING

A rustic cabin with a large front door centered on the upstage wall. Next to the door are several pegs on which hang various winter coats. At Up Stage Left is a staircase that leads to upstairs bedrooms. At Up Stage Right is an impressive stone fireplace with a great pine mantel, and decorated with framed family photos and a few knick-knacks. Above the mantel is a large "casual" portrait of the Britton family. At Stage Left, below the staircase is a door that leads to the family room in the basement, and at Stage Right is a doorway leading to the kitchen. At Stage Center is a small sofa and two coordinating chairs, a coffee table, and lamp tables. At Stage Right is a small dining table with three chairs and a bench. A credenza sets against Stage Left wall.

SOUND EFFECTS

A car honk and kids crying out.

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ACT I Scene 1

(AT RISE: Late afternoon, December 23. A modest flickering of flames in the fireplace; snow lightly falls beyond a window above the stairs. All is quiet for a few beats, then the basement door opens and TINA enters SL carrying a cardboard box overflowing with various Christmas decorations. She sets the box on the sofa and digs through it for a moment before extracting a hideous porcelain Santa figurine. She grimaces at the sight of it, then looks around the room for a place to set it. She shakes her head.)

TINA: Brad, Brad, Brad. This gift of yours looks more like a Sasquatch than a Santa Claus. Where am I going to put this ugly little thing? Besides in the bottom of the trash can? *(Sighs.)* Oh well. *(Looks around and decides to place it on the credenza, front and center. She looks at it for a moment before moving it toward the back and behind other objects, then steps back and appraises the arrangement.)* I can't do it! I cannot look at this alien-like little troll every day for the next week. *(Takes the figurine and hides it in the credenza drawer.)* Sorry, Santa. Not this year. *(As SHE crosses back to the sofa, a thought occurs to her. She hurries USC and analyzes the space between the front door and arrangement of the sofa and tables. She then moves a lamp and lamp table USC a few feet from the door and makes a calculation. Quickly, she crosses to the credenza, retrieves the figurine and then takes away the lamp and replaces it with the figurine.)* This just may be the perfect spot for you, Mr. Santa.

(Quickly, TINA exits SR to kitchen. After a beat, there is a shuffling noise offstage, and a couple of grunts resonate beyond the front door, USC.)

BRAD: (OS.) Okay, son, now be careful and don't break anything.

(The front door opens and snow is seen lightly swirling in the air. NICK enters, backing in as he carries the bottom end of an enormous Christmas tree complete with an attached tree stand at its base.)

NICK: Dad, tell me again why I'm carrying the heavy end?

BRAD: *(Calling from behind the mass of tree as they work to squeeze it through the door.)* Because you're young and you have a strong back.

NICK: So, it's because I'm stronger than you, right?

BRAD: I didn't say that.

NICK: Well, Dad, your actions are speaking louder than your words.

BRAD: Nick, you're talking kind of smart for a fifteen-year-old.

NICK: I'll be sixteen in just a couple of days.

BRAD: That's merely a technicality.

NICK: Technicality-smechnicality. I am smart.

BRAD: Then why are you on the heavy end?

NICK: That's cheap.

BRAD: *(Laughs.)* And nothing is better than cheap labor.

NICK: Cheap labor? Then you're paying me to carry the heavy end?

BRAD: Paying you? Really? And I thought you said you were smart?

NICK: Then I'm free labor. Not cheap. And I'm being exploited for child labor just because I'm your son.

BRAD: Bingo. Now, just a little farther inside—

NICK: Dad, this tree is huge! We should have cut down the smaller one.

BRAD: Nonsense. It's perfect. Just watch where you're going and don't break anything, or your mother will kill us.

NICK: She'll kill you, anyway.

(Suddenly THEIR movement ceases.)

End of Freeview

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