

Xmas Presence

A ten-minute holiday play
by Clark DesSoye

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Characters

<i>Liz</i>	<i>42, white woman, non-practicing Catholic</i>
<i>Rachel</i>	<i>38, white woman, Liz's partner, non-practicing Jew</i>
<i>Gertie</i>	<i>60, Liz's mother, non-practicing Buddhist</i>
<i>Alan</i>	<i>65, black man, Gertie's husband, non-practicing Muslim</i>
<i>Setting:</i>	<i>Present day, suburban living room. Projections on the blank walls show random social media posts and texts throughout between the ones that the characters reference.</i>

Act 1, Scene 1

Setting: A well-used living room with a couch and two end tables, a couple of overstuffed chairs, and a coffee table.

At Rise: Liz and Rachel are slouched on the sofa, feet on the coffee table, scrolling through their smart phones. Gertie is sitting cross-legged on one of the overstuffed chairs scrolling through her iPad. Alan is heard offstage from the kitchen. All are wearing pajamas and bathrobes. Several colorful gift bags with bows and tissue paper sticking out of them are scattered around the room.

ALAN (OS)

Does anyone want sugar, sweet-n-low?

LIZ AND RACHEL (TOGETHER)

No!

[A text from Sierra to “Dad” is projected on the wall by the kitchen with a picture of a black couple and their two young kids. “Greetings from South Africa, really love Karomo’s family! You and Gertie have to come here with us next time.”]

GERTIE

Alan, dear, we’ve gone over this before. We’re all *real* coffee drinkers; like you.

LIZ

OMG, did you see Aunt Loraine’s “sad dog” share of the day?

[Facebook post picturing a dog in need of adoption wearing a Santa hat is projected behind Liz.]

RACHEL

Yeah, and her usual, “What a sweetheart! If I didn’t already have my three angels....”

GERTIE

Oh, don’t be so... *[pause]* She means well.

ALAN (OS)

Oh, he *is* a sweetheart...

[Alan’s reply text is projected: “That’s wonderful. I will discuss it with her. Are you still thinking about April next year?”]

GERTIE

Have you heard from your brother?

LIZ

Not since last week. He said he’d be here by “brunch time.”

ALAN (OS)

When *is* “brunch time,” exactly?

LIZ

You, know, whenever he deigns to show up...

[A text from Liz to “Dipshit” is projected behind Liz: Where are you? Mom’s asking,]

RACHEL

Looks like David has gone full-on Christmas this year.

[Rachel shows her phone to Liz and Gertie leans over to see it also, while a Facebook post with a picture of a fully decorated Christmas tree with piles of presents underneath is projected on the wall behind Rachel.]

LIZ

Well, his child bride *is* Catholic. Some of them still take it seriously.

RACHEL

Unlike yourself.

LIZ

It was fun when I was a kid, right, Mom?

GERTIE

I'm sure it was *fun* for you and your brother — and your father. But I'm the one who dragged out all the decorations, bought all the presents and wrapped them.

LIZ

We spent hours opening presents, trying on the new sweaters and socks...

RACHEL

Socks?

LIZ

Always. Socks, socks, socks. *[Wiggling her sock-clad feet.]*

GERTIE

For me it was just a lot of work. And at the end of the day, it had nothing to do with Christ!

ALAN (OS)

Do you know where that good knife is?

GERTIE

“Good knife?”

ALAN

You know, the one we use to slice the bagels... Oh, there it is...

LIZ

In the knife drawer?

ALAN

Yeah. *[Pause.]* Be ready in a flash...

LIZ

Oh, here’s a text from Tommy now. Says “About 2 hours out.”

[A text message reply from “Dipshit” is projected behind Liz.]

GERTIE

Good. Why didn't he... Oh, I got it too!

[The same text message from “TPC” is projected behind Gertie.]

ALAN

Here we go. My red-pepper hummus came out... mmmm, perfect!

[Alan enters the room carrying a tray with mugs, a pot of coffee, a stack of small plates, a larger plate with sliced bagels, a bowl of hummus and a bowl with sticks of cream cheese. Alan looks at the coffee table, but there is no room for the tray with the girls' feet on it. Gertie looks up from her iPad.]

GERTIE

Girls. *[Pause]* Feet.

[Liz and Rachel look up noticing Alan for the first time and slowly swing their feet off the coffee table.]

ALAN

Oh, I forgot the knives.

[Alan finally sets the tray down and turns back slowly walking toward the kitchen. Everyone starts fixing themselves coffee.]

GERTIE

And napkins!

LIZ

And the oat milk we brought. For our coffee...

RACHEL

Check this out.

[Another holiday Facebook post projects behind Rachel. Now David's family is standing in front of the Christmas tree, dressed for church.]

LIZ

Oh, that's rich. Three little Jewish kids all ready to head out to Christmas Mass with their step mom and baby sister.

[Gertie leans in to look at Rachel's phone.]

GERTIE

Is that one wearing a yarmulke?

RACHEL

That's Henry. You know, I think he is; Star of David an' all...

[Alan returns quietly, carrying another tray with the napkins, knives and a carton of oat milk.]

LIZ

Oy!

[After putting the tray down, Alan pulls his smart phone out of his bathrobe pocket to snap a picture of the “feast.”]

ALAN

Doesn't this look good?

[A Facebook post with Alan's picture of the coffee and bagels appears projected behind Gertie. Alan shows her his phone and she nods.]

GERTIE

Perfect. Thank you, dear.

[Gertie touches Alan's arm affectionately as he fixes his coffee and sits on the arm of Gertie's chair. Everyone else begins fixing plates with bagels, spreading cream cheese and hummus.]

GERTIE (CONTINUES)

Oh. Once a year isn't going to hurt. Go ahead, m' dear, indulge...

[Alan gets up and fixes himself a plate, sitting down on the floor at Gertie's feet, she slides off her chair to join him on the floor giving him a hug.]

LIZ

Is that a menorah ornament on their tree?

RACHEL

Looks like...

[A text message from Rachel to “Mommy Dearest” appears behind her: Are you getting D’s posts?]

LIZ

Those poor kids must be so confused. How did he ever get Beth to let them stay with him over the holidays?

RACHEL

You know David, he can talk a leopard out of her spots...

[“Mommy Dearest” replies to Rachel’s text with a smiling face and an eggplant emoji.]

GERTIE

Oh, look. My sister ’s doing her annual good deed...

[Gertie turns her iPad toward Liz and Rachel as a Facebook post is projected behind her, showing a video of a festively decorated soup kitchen with men and women dressed as Santa spooning out turkey dinners to a line of shabbily dressed people.]

LIZ

I can’t tell; which one is Aunt Donna?

[Slowly the video also appears behind Liz and Rachel as well.]

GERTIE

The one in the middle...

LIZ

Oh, now I see her; that fake smile...

GERTIE

That's her new beau, oh I forget his name, next to her with the mashed potatoes.

LIZ

Beau? You mean "sugar daddy"?

ALAN

Isn't she a bit *[pause]* old for a sugar daddy?

[In the video, Donna is seen taking out her phone, snapping a selfie with her "boyfriend" and texting while there's a break in the line waiting to be served.]

RACHEL

He looks like a nice guy. What's he doing with Donna?

[A text from "D monster" projects behind Gertie with a picture: Hey Sis, feeding those in need with my new hunk. (Thumbs up emoji.) Whatta you think? A keeper?]

GERTIE

I think he owns a chain of restaurants in Virginia; maybe he's catering...

RACHEL

It does look good.

ALAN

I didn't realize how hungry I was.

[Alan eats contentedly along with everyone else. Reply text from Sierra projects near kitchen: Looks like you've got the gang eating well. XOXOX. Yes, we're thinking next April/May, after tax season. (Heart emoji)]

LIZ

Me neither. Mmmm.

RACHEL

Wonderful! Great job, Chef!

[Liz and Rachel lean across the coffee table to peck Alan on the cheek.]

GERTIE

Just love having my own little cook, thanks, sweetie.

*[Gertie's gives Alan a passionate kiss. Her reply text to "D monster" projects behind her:
"Nameste. Does HE have a name?"
Curtain.]*