

# Christmas at the Lake

Betty Annand





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CHRISTMAS AT THE LAKE

By Betty Annand

CAST

JIM: A man who usually enjoys sitting back and letting his wife plan their social life, but every once in a while he decides he could do it better.

ETHEL: Jim's wife, a patient and amiable woman who makes everyone feel welcome.

JOZZIE: An unkempt recluse who lives alone with her dog, Boo, at the top end of Loonsome Lake.

ALINE: One of Jim and Ethel's daughters.

MARY: Another of Jim and Ethel's daughters.

HORACE: Ethel's cousin. He has a heart of gold, but is annoyingly loud.

PEARL: Horace's wife. She has a passive personality.

IRIS: An elderly spinster and neighbour of Jim and Ethel's. Talks more than she listens and is fond of brandy.

JEAN: Iris' sister and also an elderly spinster, also fond of brandy. She lives with Iris.

SIMON: Jozzie's long-lost husband.

Place:

*A cabin at Loonsome Lake.*

Time:

*December 20. Late afternoon.*

ACT ONE

SETTING: The living room of a cabin, plain but homey. A door stage left leads to the kitchen, bedroom and outside door, or there can be a separate door to the bedroom center upstage. Living room has a table with a table cloth, binoculars, and cell phone. There are two chairs at the table and two chairs and a small desk stage right. A small divan with an afghan, a rocking chair, and a small table stage left. There's a big calendar on the wall up stage with the date showing December 20. This has to be made so the date is easily removed and replaced with other dates. There are some pictures of fish and the lake on the walls. There is a knitting basket by the divan and it has some wool and large needles in it. There is a fishing box in the corner of the room with some fishing lures, tangled line and other fishing items inside.

AT RISE: *ETHEL enters carrying a box of food. She puts it down on a chair then goes back in the kitchen and brings out a tray with two cups, a teapot, and a tin of cookies. As she puts them on the table, she hears a door slam and the noise of wood being dropped in a wood box.*

ETHEL: Don't put any more wood in the stove, Jim, I don't want to get home too late. *(JIM enters, smiling)*

JIM: Too late Ethel!

ETHEL: You did that on purpose! Honestly, Jim, I don't know what's gotten into you lately! I told you when I agreed to come up to the cabin that I could only stay for a few days and now by the time we wait for the fire to burn out, we won't get home until around five. Why can't you put it out with some water?

JIM: Well...a...*(he scratches his head trying to think of something then his face lights up and he says)* Can't! It'll crack the lining!

ETHEL: Now I'll be up until midnight. There's so much to do and it's less than a week before Christmas. I don't know how I'm going to get it all done! You are just going to have to help more, that's all. Come and get your tea. *(they sit and she pours the tea)*

JIM: I don't know what you're fussing about! What's to do? Mary and Steve have taken Aline and Charlie's two kids to Disneyland along with Emma so they won't be coming home.

ETHEL: It's going to be so quiet without the little ones. We'll miss them terribly.

JIM: Who's we? You got a rat in your pocket?

ETHEL: (*ignoring him*) Thank heavens Aline and Charlie will be with us!

JIM: How long are they staying?

ETHEL: I think Aline said they could only stay for two nights.

JIM: Then why don't they stay home?

ETHEL: I hope they think of our house as their home!

JIM: I don't know why at least one of our girls couldn't have married an ordinary man!

ETHEL: Ordinary! What's more ordinary than a lawyer and a teacher?

JIM: Steve helps criminals get off scott free and Charlie is a tree hugger! Why couldn't they pick a logger or a fisherman--someone who's not afraid to get his hands dirty?

ETHEL: It's Christmas! You should be happy they want to spend it with us! I know a lot of people whose children never come home.

JIM: Yeah! Some people have all the luck! At least it's going to be a lot more peaceful with just the four of us.

ETHEL: There are more coming than that!

JIM: Who else did you invite without asking me?

ETHEL: Since when do I have to ask you?

JIM: Since it's my house and my food they'll be eating!

ETHEL: And what would you say if I had asked you?

JIM: I'd say tell them to buy their own bloody turkey and stay home where they belong!

ETHEL: Now you know why I never ask!

JIM: I hope you didn't invite your cousin Horace and Pearl!

ETHEL: Of course I did! We always have them, you know that. They've no family but us, and Horace has always liked you.

JIM: Oh he likes me alright. He likes me so much he's gonna' kill me if he keeps slapping me on the back every time he sees me. I swear he's the reason I need these hearing aids! *(in a VERY loud voice)* How's my Jimsey boy, are you reee-tired yet, or are you still usin' those old Michelins? Har Har Har!

ETHEL: He's only trying to be cheerful. And he's right, our tires do need replacing!

JIM: There's plenty of wear in them yet and when they do need replacing, I'm not buying them from him!

ETHEL: I don't know why you have to be so stubborn! And why don't you like Pearl?

JIM: Come on Ethel--you know darn well why!

ETHEL: She does not cheat! She just happens to be lucky at cards! You really are a poor loser, Jim!

JIM: She cheats! *(they sit and drink tea for a second)* It's all a lot of nonsense anyway. It's time we put a stop to it. It's so commercialized now--everybody going out and buying stuff they can't afford! People gorging themselves on food! It's not like it was in our day--kids aren't happy with just one present anymore, they expect a pile of them. *(ETHEL doesn't say anything)* Well?

ETHEL: I'm just waiting for you to say it.

JIM: Say what?

ETHEL: Bah! Humbug! Isn't that what Scrooge always says?

JIM: I am not a Scrooge! *(he changes his tone)* Ethel, let's stay up here this year--just the two of us. You could phone everyone and wish them a Merry Christmas, then tell them we've decided to take a holiday this year. What do you say?

ETHEL: You know we can't do that. Jean and Iris would have nowhere to go. They've looked forward to spending Christmas with us ever since their niece moved to France. They're getting on in years and it's not easy for them having no family here.

JIM: If they'd stop talking and listen once in a while, they might not have ended up lonely old maids! But then they are both so deaf, they wouldn't have heard anyone if they did propose. One Christmas isn't going to kill anyone. Let's stay here. We can run home tonight and get the turkey and no one will know we were there!

ETHEL: (*gets up and to take the tea cups out*) Come on, Jim. Take that box out to the car and I'll wash these cups. The fire should be safe to leave now. (*she exits*)

JIM: (*gets up and takes the box, but as he starts to exit he stops, turns around and says, loudly*) No, by God! I'm not going!

ETHEL: (*from the kitchen*) What did you say, dear?

JIM: (*calls to her*) I said I'm not leaving! (*ETHEL comes back in*)

ETHEL: What's the matter with you Jim? I don't know what's bothering you lately, but we can talk about it on the way home. It's getting late.

JIM: You weren't listening--as usual. I said I am not going! You can go if you want to, but I am spending Christmas right here at the lake! (*ETHEL looks at him for a second then nods her head*)

ETHEL: Very well, Jim, you can just stay here then! There's lots of buns in the freezer, cans of beans, and Kraft dinners in the cupboard. All you have to do is use a can opener and you can get your own Christmas dinner. Maybe you can get together with that Crazy Jozzie across the lake. I don't think she likes people any more than you do!

JIM: She's not crazy, she just likes to be alone.

ETHEL: She's not all there and you know it, but whatever. I'll leave you the cell phone and if you change your mind, I'll see if I can find someone to come and pick you up.

JIM: You're taking the truck?

**END OF FREEVIEW**

***You'll want to read and perform this show!***