

Merry Magic

Pamela Loyd





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MERRY MAGIC

By Pamela Loyd

CAST

LOUISE: A cheerful, imaginative woman of retirement age. Wears a Christmas sweater or shirt, slacks, and flat casual shoes.

HERBERT: Louise's husband. A likeable man of retirement age with a caring heart he tries to hide behind contrary humor. Dressed casually in everyday slacks and shirt.

Place:

Living room of LOUISE and HERBERT.

Time:

Christmas morning, present day.

PRODUCTION NOTE: Louise and Herbert will decorate a small Christmas tree with whatever small colorful objects they find around the house. While a number of possible objects are listed in the text, feel free to improvise, as Louise does, and use whatever your own imagination suggests to you.

Setting: Christmas morning, but there is no Christmas tree or decorations on stage yet. Two comfortable chairs face forward but slightly turned toward each other, with a small table between them. Chairs look worn, as though they've been used for years. A throw is over the back of LOUISE's chair. There is a rug in front of them, another small table on a side wall, and a small desk (or table that can be made to look like a desk) with a decorative box (containing bright colored ribbons, buttons, silk flowers) and a jewelry box (containing bracelets and necklaces) on top or in drawers. There are various colors of post-it notes and different colored pens (or other objects you wish to use) in a desk drawer. At stage left is exit for the front door. At stage right is exit for other parts of the house. If possible, there is also a closet door (or a tall cabinet that could be used as a closet). Exits can be arranged differently if necessary.

At Rise: LOUISE and HERBERT sit in the two chairs. LOUISE sips coffee, smiles, hums a Christmas Carol. HERBERT'S coffee is on the small table between them while he reads the newspaper. There is a brief silence before LOUISE speaks.

LOUISE: *(lifts coffee cup in a toast)* Merry Christmas, Herbert. To the man who is still the man of my dreams.

HERBERT: (*still looking at newspaper*) Look at these ads. All these big sales tomorrow. It would be a better Christmas for people if they put this stuff on sale *before* Christmas, not after. That's the problem with Christmas these days--

LOUISE: (*stands, goes to HERBERT, pulls newspaper down, cheerful*) News flash, Herbert, news flash. Your wife is trying to talk to you. So stop being a Mr. Humbug.

HERBERT: Mr. Humbug? Hey, I like that. (*stands, raises fists playfully like a strongman*) I'm Mr. Humbug, the Christmas Superhero, saving the world from...What am I saving the world from, Louise?

LOUISE: (*cheerful teasing*) You're saving the world from all the problems of Christmas.

HERBERT: (*enthusiastic*) That's right, that's what I'm doing. Merry Humbug, Louise.

LOUISE: So Herbert, how about an eggnog? Maybe with a little brandy, and nutmeg on top? To celebrate Merry Humbug.

HERBERT: We have eggnog?

LOUISE: Of course. It's Christmas. We always have eggnog on Christmas.

HERBERT: Wait a minute. I thought we agreed we weren't going to make a fuss about Christmas this year.

LOUISE: I'm not making a fuss. Drinking eggnog isn't a fuss.

HERBERT: Well, it's part of the fuss. I thought we weren't going to do anything.

LOUISE: I never agreed to not do anything. I just agreed to not make a fuss. (*sings*) "I wish you a Merry Christmas, I wish you a Merry Christmas, I wish you --"

HERBERT: I don't like the sound of that. That sounds like you're going to make a fuss anyway, Louise.

LOUISE: Oh no, I just thought a few non-fuss things would be O.K.

HERBERT: (*wary*) Like what?

LOUISE: Well, like wearing my Christmas sweater. I didn't go to any fuss to get it because I already had it, from last year. I had to put on something this morning and it was just as easy to put this on as anything else.

HERBERT: But you had to get it out of storage in the garage.

LOUISE: And there's no fuss if I want to sing a few Christmas Carols, is there? I mean, I didn't have to go out and fight the crowds to get them, it doesn't require any work on my part, I can just sing them with no trouble at all. *(sings, and dances around room)* "I wish you a Merry Christmas, I wish you a Merry Christmas, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy —"

HERBERT: Louise! I think you're trying to sneak Christmas in on me, over my objections.

LOUISE: Oh Herbie, what objections? You always liked Christmas. Remember all the wonderful times we had with the kids?

HERBERT: Yes I do. And that's...well, I've already explained this to you. I don't want to talk about it again.

LOUISE: Remember the magic of it all? The lights and the colors, the smells of Christmas trees and cookies baking, and the kids rushing out to the tree at 5:00 in the morning...

HERBERT: And the mess of all that ripped up wrapping paper and boxes...it was all a big fuss...*(pause)* but I kind of liked it...then...

LOUISE: Oh, Herbie. *(hugs him)*

HERBERT: Well it won't be the same this year, Louise, with the kids not coming...I mean they live so far away now, and David and his wife and kids spending Christmas back east with her parents *[can change "back east" to "out west" if you live on the east coast]* and Janet and family all doing a ski holiday for Christmas...I mean with no one coming, no grandchildren, no happy laughter, I just...I couldn't...I mean, what was the point?

LOUISE: The point is that Christmas counts, even if the kids aren't here.

HERBERT: Yes, but---

LOUISE: *We're here*, Herbie. Us. You and me. And even if it was just me, all by myself, I'd still celebrate.

HERBERT: You would? Without me? Without your Mr. Humbug?

LOUISE: Yes, my dear. Because Christmas isn't just for kids, it's for everyone. You know what I mean. The anticipation of something wonderful about to happen, the belief that life is good, that feeling inside that hopes and dreams can still come true. The magic is still here if you just look for it.

HERBERT: And where are you going to look for it, Louise?

LOUISE: I don't know. In my heart? *(looks out the window)*

HERBERT: Is it out the window, Louise? Just waiting out there for you to find it?

LOUISE: Maybe it is. *(pause)* Herbert, what's that out in the street? Herbert, come here. *(HERBERT goes to her at the window)* Look, what is that out there in the gutter?

HERBERT: It looks like a Christmas tree. *(walks back to his chair)*

LOUISE: Already? It's just now Christmas and someone has already thrown out their Christmas tree?

HERBERT: *(sits, sips his coffee)* Maybe they decided it was too much fuss and decided to go fishing instead.

LOUISE: How could they just throw out a Christmas tree so soon? Poor little thing.

HERBERT: Hmph.

LOUISE: Herbert, go get it and bring it inside.

HERBERT: Louise, you're acting like it's a stray puppy that needs to be rescued.

END OF FREEREAD