

A BIG FAMILY CHRISTMAS

by JOHN COSPER

GENRE: Drama

SYNOPSIS: An overworked and underappreciated woman searches for peace in the midst of the holiday festivities.

DIRECTOR'S TIP: Keep up the pace of the dialogue to simulate the frantic atmosphere of a holiday meal.

TIME: Over 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 7

TOPIC: Healing, Family

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Luke 10:38-42

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Christmas

SUGGESTED USE: Christmas

CHARACTERS:

MORGAN - a 20 to 30 something single girl

TAMMY - frazzled mom

LUCY - married to Tammy's brother-in-law

KELCI - Tammy's daughter

TANYA - Tammy's sister-in-law

DOT - Tammy's mother-in-law

PROPS: A dining table, silverware, plates, glasses, etc. for nine people

COSTUMES: Contemporary

SOUND: Wireless microphones

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: A dining room

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A dining table is on stage, large enough for nine people. TAMMY enters with silverware, starts to set the table. LUCY enters.

LUCY: Tammy? Tammy, I need a spot on the stove for the dumplings.

TAMMY: There should be an open burner already.

LUCY: Well there's not. You've got corn on one, gravy one another, potatoes, and our mother-in-law's green beans.

TAMMY: I didn't realize it had become that full. Well, the potatoes can be moved, I think. They just need to be kept warm. Set them on a towel on the counter.

LUCY: Will do. By the way, that's a nice young lady you have helping in there.

TAMMY: Morgan? Yes, she's a sweetheart.

LUCY: Shame she's single. She should find a nice young man, have a family of her own for Christmas.

TAMMY: That's why she's here, to enjoy a fun, old-fashioned family Christmas.

LUCY: Well, she's not going to enjoy it working all night in the kitchen! Set her loose; let her come chat with the rest of us.

MORGAN enters with a stack of plates.

TAMMY: She's free to do what she wants.

LUCY: Really, Morgan, come hang with the family in the living room.

TAMMY: Oh, I'm having a great time helping Tammy, but thanks anyway.

LUCY: Suit yourself.

LUCY exits.

MORGAN: This is the dining table for tonight?

TAMMY: Sure is.

MORGAN: Wow, you weren't kidding when you said full house. What is this... *(Counting chairs)* two, four, six, eight, nine people for dinner?

TAMMY: Nine adults, plus a baby, plus the kids' table still has to be brought up from the basement.

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MORGAN: How many kids?

TAMMY: Tonight? Six.

MORGAN: My goodness.

TAMMY: (*Smiles*) You wanted to have a big old-fashioned family Christmas...minus the Griswold madness.

MORGAN: You don't need a large family to have a disaster like that. My father nearly burned out our whole living room because the Christmas light wires were stripped.

TAMMY: That sounds exciting!

MORGAN: We all went out for Chinese food that Christmas and stayed the night in a Holiday Inn. And not the one Bing Crosby sang at—this place was kind of scary. My mother told my father she felt less than Christian walking into that place.

TAMMY: Thankfully, nothing that traumatic ever happens around here.

MORGAN: Eh, it wasn't so traumatic. We made the best of it. Mom and Dad let me stay up that night, and we watched Christmas movies on cable. The next day we drove to Grandma's for a visit. Stayed through New Year's.

TAMMY: We used to visit my grandparents after Christmas. Family tradition till they died.

MORGAN: Our trip was more necessity than tradition. It took a week to fumigate the house and recarpet. My birthday present that January was a new coat of paint in the living room. Not what I wanted, but Dad let me help with the painting.

TAMMY: Huh, I can't ever imagine my father allowing that. He was so protective of his house.

MORGAN: Oh, my Dad loved doing things with me. I was mowing the grass and fishing by the time I was eight.

TAMMY: Sounds like he was a great guy.

MORGAN: I miss them like crazy.

TAMMY: How long ago did they pass?

MORGAN: Pass? Oh, you mean...my parents aren't dead.

TAMMY: They're not?

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MORGAN: No!

TAMMY: But you said you were going to be alone this Christmas.

MORGAN: I am! The jerks took a second honeymoon for Christmas and went on a cruise.

TAMMY: That's awful.

MORGAN: Not really. I got them a coupon for the cruise as an anniversary gift. Being the thrifty shoppers they are, they went with the cheapest option, Christmas. But they've promised me a trip to Canada with them later this spring. Mom's planning to do Christmas in a cabin in Vancouver on Valentines Day.

TAMMY: Well, well. And here, I thought I was doing a favor for a poor girl who was lonely at Christmas.

MORGAN: Tammy, I do appreciate the invitation. It would have been lonely at my little apartment, and I don't have many friends in town yet.

TAMMY: You'll be hard-pressed to feel lonely here. This place is always bursting with people. Though no single young men, I'm afraid.

MORGAN: Oh that's the least of my worries. My last job, I got so sick of being set up with anyone and everyone my coworkers were related to. Just because he's a relative doesn't mean he can't be a total creep.

TAMMY: I hear you.

MORGAN: So who do I get to meet?

TAMMY: Well, you know my husband, Jim. Our kids, Kelci, Bryce, and Riley. Jim's brother Curt and his wife Lucy, whom you've already met, and their kids. They have three. Jim's sister Tanya and her husband Dumbo—

MORGAN: Dumbo?

TAMMY: Sorry, Duncan. We call him Dumbo because of Bryce. He has really big ears, and little Bryce thought maybe he was related to the Disney character.

MORGAN: I see.

TAMMY: They have a little boy, nine months old. He's adorable, but sadly, they saddled him with his father's silly name, Duncan Jr. And then of course, there's Nana and Poppa.

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MORGAN: I met them too. Are they your parents?

TAMMY: Jim's. My parents are both gone.

MORGAN: I'm sorry.

TAMMY: Oh...nothing to worry about. Mom died when I was young, and Dad was five years ago. My stepmom is still alive, but she lives in Texas.

KELCI enters with glasses.

KELCI: Here are the glasses, Mom.

TAMMY: Set them on the table. You know how they go.

KELCI: Mom!

TAMMY: Kelci, this is not too much to ask for a little help.

KELCI: But it's Christmas! A kid shouldn't have to work on Christmas!

TAMMY: That's right! Mommies should do all the work, right?

MORGAN: I can take the glasses, Kelci.

TAMMY: That's not necessary, Morgan.

MORGAN: I don't mind.

KELCI: Thanks, Morgan.

KELCI exits.

TAMMY: Kelci, do me a favor and empty the dishwasher too. Kelci? She's not listening to me. It's Christmas, and no one wants to do any work.

MORGAN: Glad I could be here to help.

TAMMY: You don't have to do that.

MORGAN: You were kind enough to invite me. I want to help.

TAMMY: Well, I guess I can't refuse that, can I?

MORGAN: So, does your mom ever visit for Christmas?

TAMMY: My stepmom. And no, she's never been up here for Christmas. She has her own children that come see her. My half-brother and my stepsister. And they have

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plenty of babies running around, so she's never lonely.

MORGAN: Must be hard on you, though. I mean, you grew up with them, right?

TAMMY: We see each other from time to time. My brother Eric stopped in on a business trip a few months ago to save a few bucks on a hotel.

MORGAN: That must have been nice.

TAMMY: It was okay. We really only got a few hours to visit, but we made the most of it. By that, I mean Jim and Eric played video games while I watched.

MORGAN: That's not terribly exciting.

TAMMY: Well, the boys had a good time. And it's always nice to see my brother, even if it is just a short visit.

MORGAN: I'm sure it is.

TAMMY: You don't have any siblings to visit?

MORGAN: Only child.

TAMMY: Wow... must have been nice at Christmas. No one trying to steal your Santa toys and all.

MORGAN: Oh, I had plenty of cousins that would try to make off with Strawberry Shortcake and her pals.

TAMMY: Then you haven't missed out on all the joys of Christmas.

MORGAN: Not at all.

Tanya enters, carrying a baby.

TANYA: Merry Christmas, Tammy.

TAMMY: Tanya, hello.

TANYA: Who is this? I don't believe we've been introduced!

TAMMY: Tanya, this is Morgan. She works with me at the office.

TANYA: Lovely to meet you.

MORGAN: Same here. And this must be?

TANYA: This is little Duncan. We call him our little donut.

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MORGAN: He's so precious.

TANYA: Thanks. So how did you get suckered into working slave duty on Christmas Eve? Tammy promise you a raise?

MORGAN: Not at all. Tammy invited me to enjoy a fun, old-fashioned, family Christmas.

TANYA: Well, you can't very well enjoy it from here. Everyone's gathered in the other room!

MORGAN: Thanks, but I think Tammy could really use some help in here.

TANYA: Help nothing. This is what Tammy does every Christmas. This is her fun—now you come have some of your own.

MORGAN: Maybe after dinner?

TANYA: Shy girl. Too bad Duncan's brother Eric's out of town. I think you two might get along.

Tanya exits.

MORGAN: Too bad indeed.

TAMMY: You don't like being fixed up?

MORGAN: It's not that I wouldn't want to be fixed up. I just hate how everyone seems to think they know what's best for me.

TAMMY: I hear you. And I can tell you that Duncan's brother would not be the prize Tanya promised you.

MORGAN: Big ears?

TAMMY: Trekkie. Goes to a convention once a month in full Klingon makeup and uniform.

MORGAN: I think I'll pass.

TAMMY: It is a wonder to me that someone such as you is single.

MORGAN: Why do you say that?

TAMMY: You don't have any siblings to visit?

MORGAN: You make it sound like there's something wrong with me deep down.

TAMMY: I don't mean to imply that.

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MORGAN: Truth is, most of the fellas my age are the ones with the problem, looking for a second mommy and not an equal partner. I'd rather stay single than become single mom to a twenty-five-year-old.

TAMMY: Makes sense to me. At any rate, it's my gain this Christmas, having your company.

MORGAN: What are you talking about?

TAMMY: This has been so pleasant, working alongside you. I can't even begin to tell you how much easier it's made my day.

MORGAN: It's been my pleasure. But Tammy, you've got a huge family here. You don't need someone like me, and it's me who should be thanking you.

DOT enters.

DOT: There you are. You know the beans were burning?

TAMMY: Hello, Nana.

DOT: I took the liberty of turning off the burner. And why are the potatoes just sitting out?

TAMMY: Lucy needed a spot for her dumplings.

DOT: You girls and your dumplings! That's not a part of the Christmas meal I served my kids.

TAMMY: Lucy and I had traditions we grew up with. That was one of hers, just like the quiche for breakfast was mine.

DOT: All the more reason I won't be sleeping the night here. Please, you'll have to forgive my daughter-in-law. She's still got a lot to learn about holiday hosting. Such as introducing all her guests?

TAMMY: Nana, this is Morgan, a friend from work. Morgan, this is Nana, Jim's mother.

DOT: Some friend you are, Tammy, making this sweet young thing slave away fixing dinner. Come on, come sit in the other room and let us get to know you.

MORGAN: No, thanks.

DOT: Oh please, don't feel the least bit bad leaving Tammy. She volunteered for this position years ago, and despite the few annoyances that she can never get over, she does a rather good job giving us a pleasant holiday.

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MORGAN: I'm sure I'll have plenty of time to socialize during dinner and after.

DOT: What a jewel, she works hard without complaint. Taking notes, Tammy?

TAMMY: I'm not the one who does all the complaining!

DOT: All I know is that every time I try to make this holiday better with some sage advice, you complain. I'm only trying to help.

TAMMY sits, frustrated.

TAMMY: The best help you can give right now is to clear out of my dining room while I finish up!

DOT: Suit yourself. Don't let her drag down your spirits, Morgan. We never do.

DOT exits. MORGAN walks over to TAMMY.

MORGAN: Are you okay?

TAMMY: Every Christmas it's the same. One complaint after another from my mother-in-law. But if it wasn't for her, no one would try to engage me in conversation at all. Morgan, I'm so sorry, I should never have invited you.

MORGAN: Don't say that.

TAMMY: It was completely selfish. She's right; I brought you here to have some help. Some company. I hate this holiday, Morgan. I hate people I am related to only by marriage running all over my house, making demands of me every second like I'm some kind of maid. The best part of the whole holiday to me is the day after. They'll all be at the mall, exchanging the gifts they hated, leaving me here alone to sleep. It's the only peace I get.

MORGAN: I'm so sorry.

TAMMY: Peace on Earth. Good will towards men. Dirty lies, Morgan, all of them.

MORGAN: What?

TAMMY: It's all marketing! It's nothing but an excuse for selling cheap gifts and ending the year with a financial bang for all retailers.

MORGAN: What about the kids?

TAMMY: What about them?

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MORGAN: Think about how great Christmas was when we were kids. Isn't it worth it for them?

TAMMY: I do enough sacrificing for them all year. Why should I have to go overboard for one day a year? It's not like any of them say thank you. No one says thank you. They come to enjoy each other, my husband, and his family. They love my children, but no one gives a care for me. So they go on and have their merry little time, and I'm stuck in here alone. All alone, in a house full of people. How is this supposed to be a season of joy?

..... *Lights down.*

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