

QUITTING TIME

by STEVE MUNSON

GENRE: Comedy

SYNOPSIS: A department store Santa sits down on a bench and begins to complain about his woes of the season to the young stranger next to him. Soon Santa shows himself to be something other than the kind old Kris Kringle one would expect.

DIRECTOR'S TIP: This is the Good Shepherd meets the hireling. The main difficulty in directing this sketch is not giving away the identity of the young man too soon. The impact of the conversation of these characters should resonate fully only after they have both left the stage. Don't be afraid to play the humor in this scene. Yes, it is ultimately a dramatic scene, but the Santa character has some humorous moments that you'll want to give their full weight.

TIME: Under 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 2

TOPIC: Priorities, Love

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Isaiah 53, Luke 9:57-62, John 10:1-18

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Christmas

SUGGESTED USE: Christmas, Pentecost, Lent

CHARACTERS:

Young Man –Age 20 -30; quiet, gentle, compassionate; a bit sad

Santa –Age 40 -50; rough manners; pot belly; a real talker; may have been homeless at one time

PROPS: 1) A bell

2) A prop cross (approx 7' high –can be of any material)

3) Small bottle of cheap liquor

COSTUMES: Contemporary clothing for Young Man; Santa wears a street-corner Santa suit, complete with belly, boots, cap and beard

SOUND: Two wireless mikes

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: A park bench

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Scene opens with YOUNG MAN sitting on a park bench center stage. He seems to be in some physical pain, and there is some blood on his forehead. He's pleasant-looking, with a kind and sensitive face, although he looks worn and tired for his age. He stares at the ground sadly, as though he has the weight of the world on his shoulders. After a moment, SANTA ENTERS, in full regalia. He carries a large bell — he's one of those street-corner Santas, hired for the season.

SANTA: *(Ringing his bell)* Ho, ho, ho! Meeeeerrrrrry Christmas! Ho, ho, ho! Ho, ho-o-o-oh, nuts! *(Tosses bell and pulls off his cap with disgust)*

If I have to say that one more time, I'll hurl. *(Checking his watch)* Hmmmm. Almost quittin' time, too. And good riddance. *(Exhausted, he sits on the bench next to YOUNG MAN, taking up most of the room.)* Man, what a day. My dogs are barkin'. I think even my corns have corns. *(Looks momentarily at YOUNG MAN, who smiles genuinely through his sadness)* Well, thank goodness that's over. *(Yawns and stretches widely)* A man can only stand to be so jolly. Know what I mean? A laugh here, a chuckle there, okay. But not 9 to 5, six days a week. It ain't natural. *(Checking his pockets)* Hey, you got a smoke? I left the house this morning and forgot my smokes.

YOUNG MAN: No, I don't. I'm sorry.

SANTA: S'all right. Filthy habit, anyway. Filthy. Cancer on a stick. Makes a man old before he's old. Know what I mean?

YOUNG MAN: Yes, I do.

SANTA: That's right. And you know what else? Cell phones. Cell phones. You see 'em everywheres. People drivin', people walkin', shoppin'.

Yackety-yack. Yackety-yack. But just you wait. Oh, they don't say anything about it now. Oh, they never tell you anything about it before it's too late to do anything about it. But you wait. You wait. *(Taps the side of his head)* Brain damage. Ra-di-a-tion. It's just a matter of time. *(Takes out a small bottle of some cheap liquor)* You live around here?

YOUNG MAN: No, I don't. I don't really live anywhere.

SANTA: What? Don't got a home? Now ain't that a kick in the keester. Aw, that's a shame. Well, bottoms up. *(Takes a swig from the bottle, then offers it to YOUNG MAN)* Want some?

YOUNG MAN: No, no thank you.

SANTA: *(Shrugs)* Okay. Suit yourself. *(Starts trying to pull off his boots, but he can't reach them over his potbelly. He struggles.)* Hey, guess I'd better lose some weight, huh? Say, could you help me there? *(Offers a leg. YOUNG MAN gets on his knees, tugs and pulls off one boot, then the other.)*