



# The Rented Christmas

By Norman C. Ahern, Jr. and Yvonne Ahern

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**Pioneer**  
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# THE RENTED CHRISTMAS

By NORMAN C. AHERN AND YVONNE AHERN

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

	<u># of lines</u>
ANNE WESTON.....attractive woman in her late 30s; owns a rent shop	231
JIMMY .....part-time employee at the shop and one of the orphans helping in the “Rented Christmas”; late teens; slightly taller than John, if possible	77
JOHN DALE .....prominent businessman; 40s	115
BRIDGET.....John’s housekeeper	74
MARTHA .....John’s cook; Bridget’s sister	63
JEAN .....orphan; about 16	38
CYNTHIA.....another; about 13	27
WILLIE .....another; about 8	39
LETTIE .....another; about 6	28
MRS. ALICE LINDSEY.....matron in charge of the orphanage	8
FRED.....John’s business partner	16
CHRISTMAS CAROLERS .....children from the orphanage	n/a

## SETTING

Time: Christmas time.

Place: Downtown in a small city.

There are two interior sets—the rent shop and John Dale’s home. The rent shop can be very simple on the FORESTAGE, represented by an “L” shaped counter and a telephone on a wall. In prominent view a sign reads, “We Rent Anything.” There might be a wheelbarrow or two along with other things to rent (tools, etc.). A door and window frame are a nice touch, but optional.

On the main stage, John Dale’s living room is lavishly furnished with a sofa and armchairs CENTER. There is a fireplace with a mantel UP CENTER that should be able to show when there is a fire burning in it. A couple of tables, a floor lamp and later a Christmas tree are UPSTAGE. There is a window STAGE RIGHT with no furniture directly in front of it. There are three EXITS: STAGE RIGHT leads to the kitchen, UP LEFT leads to the hall and upstairs, and DOWN LEFT leads outside.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene One: The rent shop. Saturday, December 19, early afternoon.

Scene Two: John Dale’s living room. Monday, December 21, morning.

Scene Three: The same. Wednesday, December 23, morning.

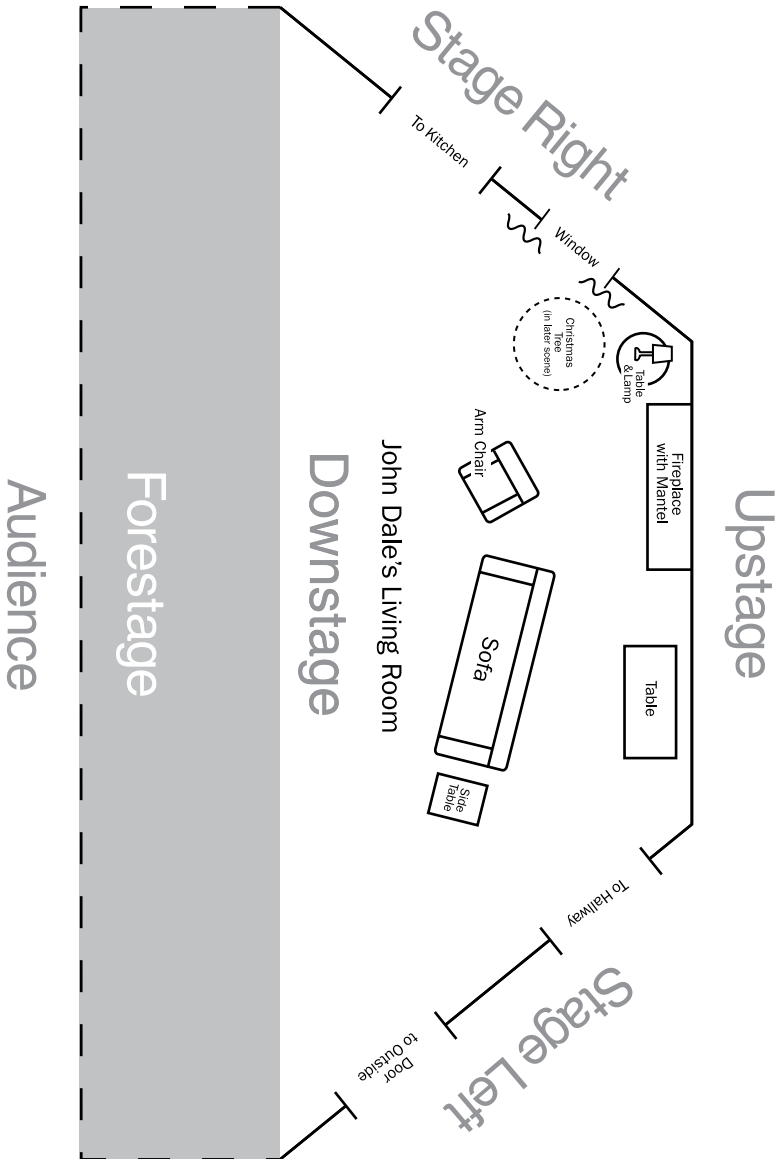
Scene Four: The same. Christmas Eve, late afternoon.

Scene Five: The same. Christmas Eve, after dinner.

Scene Six: The same. Early Christmas morning.

Scene Seven: The same. Christmas evening.

# The Rented Christmas - Set Design



## THE RENTED CHRISTMAS

### Scene One

- 1 LIGHTS UP: The rent shop, played in front of the curtain. ANNE is seated on a stool behind the counter doing paperwork. JIMMY is arranging some of the heavier equipment. JOHN paces back and forth at RIGHT reading the “WE RENT ANYTHING” sign.
- 5 **ANNE:** It sure has been slow today, hasn’t it, Jimmy?  
**JIMMY:** One wheelbarrow!  
**ANNE:** Everybody’s getting ready for Christmas. Leaves it dull around here. Maybe we ought to close up for the day. *(Starts working on her papers again. JOHN makes a decision and moves into the rental shop area.)* May I help you, sir?
- 10 **JOHN:** Yes, I would like to rent a Christmas. *(ANNE drops the pencil in mild astonishment. JIMMY stops his work for a moment. He is holding something obviously heavy.)* Your sign says you rent anything, so why not Christmas?
- 15 **ANNE:** Why not?! *(Takes out a small pad and poises her pencil ready to write. JIMMY returns to his work.)* What kind of Christmas would you like?
- JOHN:** *(Leans slightly on the counter, tips his head back dreamily as if he were viewing a long-cherished vision.)* It’s to begin the afternoon before Christmas and last until Christmas night. There must be a fully decorated Christmas tree...
- 20 **ANNE:** *(Writes.)* “...fully decorated tree.”  
**JOHN:** Christmas presents, Christmas carols... the works...  
**ANNE:** *(Writes.)* “...Christmas presents, Christmas carols, the works...” *(As he hesitates, she acts as if she’s finished.)* There. Will that be all, sir?
- 25 **JOHN:** No... we haven’t gotten to the most important items. It must include five children... *(ANNE hesitates. She glances at JIMMY, who makes the gesture that indicates JOHN might be a little “touched” in the head.)*
- 30 **ANNE:** *(Continues writing.)* “Five children...”  
**JOHN:** Five children... the eldest two, one boy and one girl, just home from school for the holidays...  
**ANNE:** *(Writes.)* “...home for the holidays...”
- 35 **JOHN:** ...and a wife...  
**ANNE:** *(Writes.)* “A wi—!” *(For a moment she shows danger of cracking up but regains her composure without a sign of fluster to her customer. Looks up, calm.)* Then you’re not married?

- 1 **JOHN:** No, I'm not married.
- ANNE:** I see. (*Speaks as she reads from her pad.*) "A tree fully decorated, presents, carols, a wife and five children." Should the younger children be girls or boys?
- 5 **JOHN:** Two girls and a boy. (*Cocks his head slightly as if contemplating further, then looks directly at her.*) That should do it.
- ANNE:** (*Continues writing.*) This will be rather expensive.
- JOHN:** I'll leave a check. (*ANNE looks up as if to receive further instructions. He writes out a check.*) You may send for more funds as you need them. Please forget expense. (*Lays the completed*
- 10 *check on the counter.*)
- ANNE:** (*Touches the check with one hand and regards it with amazement. Somewhat in a daze.*) I suppose you want this Christmas delivered to your home address?
- 15 **JOHN:** Certainly. Here is my card.
- ANNE:** (*Regards the card.*) John Dale! You live in the big house on Walnut Street.
- JOHN:** (*Nods.*) Across from the park.
- ANNE:** I walk by your house every morning on the way to the shop.
- 20 **JOHN:** Yes, I know. I've seen you many times... but I didn't know you worked here. (*They suddenly find themselves looking at each other in silent embarrassment. JOHN breaks the silence.*) If you have any further questions—about the order, that is—please give me a call. (*ANNE begins to write a receipt.*) I'm at home in the evenings, but
- 25 my servants will answer in the daytime. I shall advise them that you may be calling.
- ANNE:** All right. Here... let me give you a receipt. (*Hands the receipt to him.*)
- JOHN:** Thank you. (*Regards the receipt.*) Miss... Weston.
- 30 **ANNE:** (*Nods.*) Miss Anne Weston.
- JOHN:** Well, I'm pleased to meet you, Miss Weston, and I thank you. Again, good day. (*Bows slightly as he turns to leave. As he reaches the door, ANNE promises brightly.*)
- ANNE:** One Christmas... as ordered. (*JOHN pauses briefly at that remark, turns, smiles and leaves. ANNE continues to look toward*
- 35 *the door even after he has gone.*)
- JIMMY:** Do you think he was serious? (*ANNE does not reply but continues to stare at the door where JOHN just exited. JIMMY snaps his fingers.*)
- 40 **ANNE:** (*Brought back to earth.*) Huh?
- JIMMY:** I said do you think he was serious? About the order?

- 1 **ANNE:** Oh, yes. The order! (*Looks at the pad. Her eyes widen.*) The order! Oh, Jimmy! How did I ever get into this business?
- JIMMY:** Maybe he was just joking.
- ANNE:** No chance. (*Picks up the check.*) Look at this check. I'd say he
- 5 was serious.
- JIMMY:** (*Looks over ANNE'S shoulder at the check.*) Whoa! I'd say so!
- ANNE:** (*Puts the check down and looks at her list.*) A tree, yes! Presents, yes! Carols? (*Hesitant.*) Perhaps. But a wife and children?! On Christmas?! (*Puts her hand to her head.*) Oh, my!
- 10 **JIMMY:** Why couldn't he have wanted a lawnmower? We have plenty of them on hand.
- ANNE:** (*Laughs.*) I guess so with all that snow on the ground. Well, we say we rent anything, so we'll just have to take care of this. I like challenges, but this is no ordinary order. I'm going to need help!
- 15 **JIMMY:** You need help! HE'S the one who needs help!
- ANNE:** What do you mean? John Dale could probably BUY anything he wanted.
- JIMMY:** He can't buy happiness, and I'll bet that's what he's trying to do. (*Serious.*) It's a lonely person who tries to buy happiness.
- 20 **ANNE:** (*Shakes the serious mood just created.*) I don't know if he's lonely, Jimmy. (*Looks at the check, kisses it, opens both arms with enthusiasm.*) But I do know I'm going to try to fill his order.
- JIMMY:** He wants a play right in his own home.
- ANNE:** That's it! I'll think of it as casting a play—a play where the only
- 25 spectator is also the main character. How can you write a script for a play like that?
- JIMMY:** You can't! (*Picks up a little positive feeling.*) The actors will have to make it up as they go along. Imagine! Meeting your wife and children for the first time. (*Both laugh.*)
- 30 **ANNE:** I know what you mean. (*Bites her pencil while she thinks.*) But where to get the actors... and on Christmas?! Can you imagine what they would charge over at the actors' guild for Christmas Eve and all day Christmas?
- JIMMY:** He said not to worry about the expense.
- 35 **ANNE:** Then I'll give the actors' guild a call. (*JIMMY busies himself sweeping and straightening the shop. ANNE goes to the phone and dials. Pause.*) Hello. Yes, I would like to hire the services of some of your professional actors for Christmas Eve and all day Christmas. Yes, I know they would expect double pay for a holiday. They're
- 40 to play the parts of a family at Christmas time. I'll need a woman between 35 and 40, and five children. That's right, five. Let's see, a boy about 17 or 18, a girl a little younger, of high school age. In

1 the play they are to be home from school for the holidays. (*Looks at*  
*her memo pad, then speaks ponderingly and to herself.*) Then a boy  
and a girl somewhere between 6 and 12, and a girl about 13 or 14.  
No. We won't need a father; he's already there. I mean the play is  
5 for him. He ordered it. You see, I have a rent-all shop and a man  
came in just now and rented a Christmas. He doesn't have a family,  
so that's why I need the actors. No, it won't be on a stage. It will be  
in his home. They just act like children... you know, eat and quarrel  
and things like that. I know it's a problem, but we can work it out.  
10 Just one rehearsal. (*Hesitates, then comes to a decision.*) The 23rd  
of December. We could meet at... (*Picks up JOHN'S business card*  
*and looks at it.*) ...431 Walnut Street. What time? Oh, make it ten  
o'clock in the morning. My name is Anne Weston. The rental shop on  
Front Street. How much? All right! And the rest on Christmas Day?  
15 That will be fine. Now you're absolutely sure you won't have any  
problem getting them... not even the children? Well, this is going  
to be easier than I thought. I'll stop by your office this afternoon to  
make the arrangements. Thank you. Good-bye. (*Hangs up phone.*)

**JIMMY:** What did they say?

20 **ANNE:** They told me we could get anybody we wanted if we pay them  
enough. I'll stop by Mr. Dale's Monday morning to see what details  
I can get. You can take care of things here, can't you?

**JIMMY:** Sure.

**ANNE:** (*With pronounced optimism.*) This is going to be a cinch.

25 **JIMMY:** And you were going to close shop.

**ANNE:** Let's forget the near misses. This one we got! (*Picks up the*  
*check and regards it with glee.*) Looks like I'm in a pretty good  
business after all. (*BLACKOUT.*)

End of Scene One

## Scene Two

CURTAIN UP: The living room of JOHN'S substantial old home. Monday  
30 morning, December 21. MARTHA is arranging flowers in a vase on the  
mantel. BRIDGET is standing in the hall doorway.

**BRIDGET:** She said she'd be here at 9:30, and she's already five  
minutes late!

**MARTHA:** I wish she wouldn't come. (*Disgusted.*) A rented Christmas!  
35 What can Mr. Dale be thinking of?

**BRIDGET:** (*Sarcastic.*) He said "cooperate with her!"

**MARTHA:** She'll probably be telling me how to cook. I'm supposed to  
cooperate with her? Well, there's nothing much we can do about  
it. (*DOOR CHIMES RING.*)





- 1 **BRIDGET:** Here she is. *(Crosses to the door while MARTHA continues to work with the flowers, her back to the door. BRIDGET opens the door.)* Yes?
- 5 **ANNE'S VOICE:** *(From OFF DOWN LEFT.)* Hello. I'm Miss Weston. I called earlier.
- BRIDGET:** *(Very cold.)* Yes. Come in, please.
- ANNE:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT.)* Are you Bridget?
- BRIDGET:** Yes. *(Still very cold.)* Yes. This is my sister, Martha.
- 10 **ANNE:** Hello, Martha. *(MARTHA turns for a brief nod of recognition, but coldly goes back to her work.)* Did Mr. Dale tell you about his plans?
- BRIDGET:** Yes. He said we should cooperate with you... in every way in this... "rented Christmas." *(Turns to look out window.)*
- ANNE:** I was hoping you could tell me something about Mr. Dale.
- BRIDGET:** Yes, I suppose we could.
- 15 **ANNE:** I need to know the type of Christmas he is used to.
- BRIDGET:** *(Turns to face her.)* There has been no Christmas in this house for many years—ever since Mr. Dale's parents passed away. *(Turns back to the window, hands clasped behind her.)*
- MARTHA:** *(Without turning.)* Mr. Dale has preferred it that way.
- 20 **ANNE:** Oh, I see. *(Long pause.)* Have you been with Mr. Dale very long?
- BRIDGET:** *(Indignant. Turns to face her once again.)* We have been with the family for years.
- MARTHA:** *(Without turning, but with indignation.)* Even back in the old town.
- 25 **ANNE:** The old town?
- MARTHA:** *(Turns slightly.)* Yes, back in Riverton. That's where we're from.
- ANNE:** Riverton? What a pretty town! I passed through there two years ago.
- MARTHA:** You did? *(Turns to face ANNE and shows momentary interest, but stubbornly turns back to rearranging the flowers.)*
- 30 **ANNE:** Yes. I'm from Fremont, myself. Have you ever been there?
- BRIDGET:** We don't get up north.
- ANNE:** Did Mr. Dale live in Riverton?
- BRIDGET:** Yes, but his father's business brought them here.
- 35 **ANNE:** I'd like to take some notes. Do you mind if I take my coat off?
- BRIDGET:** Anything you wish. Please, forgive me. *(Obligingly helps her remove her coat and EXITS UP LEFT with it.)*
- ANNE:** *(Walks over to admire the flowers.)* They're so pretty. Are they real?
- 40 **MARTHA:** *(Brightens up a bit.)* Yes.

1 **ANNE:** Wherever do you get live flowers this time of year?!

**MARTHA:** (*Faces ANNE.*) I grow them in my room.

**ANNE:** Your room?

**MARTHA:** Yes. Flowers are my hobby.

5 **ANNE:** (*Leans over and smells the flowers.*) My mother always had a row of potted plants in the kitchen window.

**MARTHA:** Bridget bought me some box planters, so I have quite a garden.

**ANNE:** I'd like to see it. (*BRIDGET RE-ENTERS UP LEFT.*)

10 **MARTHA:** Miss Weston said her mother had potted plants in the kitchen.

**BRIDGET:** (*Ignores MARTHA'S remark.*) Would you like to sit over here, Miss Weston? (*Points to the couch.*)

**ANNE:** (*Sits down and takes a notepad and pencil from her purse, writing occasional notes.*) I suppose you're wondering what this is all about.

15 **BRIDGET:** Yes, we are.

**ANNE:** (*Very warm.*) I'll let you in on a secret... so am I. (*BRIDGET and MARTHA both look surprised.*) Last Saturday Mr. Dale came into

20 my rent shop and simply said he wanted to rent a Christmas.

**BRIDGET:** Yes, we've heard.

**ANNE:** I hardly know how to fill his order.

**MARTHA:** What does he want?

**ANNE:** The part I thought would be the hardest was the easiest. He

25 wanted a wife and five children, and I've hired them through the actors' guild. The decorations should be easy, but it still doesn't seem like much of a Christmas. I thought if I could personalize his Christmas a bit, then maybe we could get some happiness into it.

**MARTHA:** Mr. Dale hasn't been happy at all since his parents died.

30 **ANNE:** (*Thinks aloud.*) Jimmy was right.

**BRIDGET:** I beg your pardon?

**ANNE:** Sorry. I was just thinking. Please tell me more.

**BRIDGET:** Mr. Dale's parents were in an accident some time ago. It was just about this time of year. His father was killed, and his mother

35 was rendered an invalid. Mr. Dale gave her every consideration as long as she was with us.

**ANNE:** Does he have any other family?

**MARTHA:** His brother Lyle. He and his family are out in California.

**ANNE:** (*A quick breath of hope.*) Will they be coming for Christmas?

40 **BRIDGET:** No, Miss Weston. They don't get back very often.

1 **ANNE:** (*Disappointed.*) And there's no one else around close. (*BRIDGET and MARTHA shake their heads.*) Any hobbies?

**MARTHA:** Just his work.

**BRIDGET:** (*Somewhat proud.*) He's very successful. (*Holds on to*

5 *"successful" as if she realizes that this is questionable.*)

**ANNE:** (*Pauses briefly.*) Tell me about his boyhood.

**MARTHA:** John and Lyle were real close.

**BRIDGET:** Like two peas in a pod.

**MARTHA:** Played together.

10 **BRIDGET:** Fished together, sometimes the whole day.

**MARTHA:** Always made it back for supper, though.

**BRIDGET:** In the evenings they would ask me to read books aloud to them. (*ANNE is taking notes.*)

**MARTHA:** Such pleasant memories. (*Walks to the window and gazes*

15 *out.*)

**ANNE:** Does he ever go back to Riverton, to see the old house and things?

**BRIDGET:** That's the sad part, Miss Weston. When the Dales moved, the property became part of the new high school grounds.

20 **ANNE:** Do you have a photograph of the old house? (*MARTHA and BRIDGET look at each other.*)

**BRIDGET:** No... Mr. Dale's father had a picture taken one spring. Don't know where it is now. (*MARTHA turns and shakes her head sadly.*)

**ANNE:** (*With enthusiasm.*) Would Mr. Dale like a picture, if I could find

25 one?

**MARTHA:** (*Leaves the window and walks toward ANNE. Incredulous.*) Do you think you could?

**ANNE:** It's worth a try. Who took the picture?

**BRIDGET:** I believe it was Henry Terry. He still has a shop there.

30 **ANNE:** Maybe he kept the negative. I'll phone Riverton tomorrow. (*Stands up.*) Oh, one other thing. I've arranged for the actors to come here the morning of December 23<sup>rd</sup> for a rehearsal. I hope that will be all right.

**BRIDGET:** Quite all right.

35 **ANNE:** Maybe Martha could have some cookies to help keep the little ones interested.

**MARTHA:** I would be happy to. Uh, (*A little worried.*) what would you like me to fix for Christmas dinner?

**ANNE:** (*Throws her hands up slightly.*) That's out of my department.

40 You're the cook.

**MARTHA:** (*Relieved.*) All right! How many will be coming?

1 **ANNE:** There will be six in addition to the family here. Three of them will be teenagers, though, so better prepare for ten. *(ALL laugh.)*

**BRIDGET:** Anything else?

**ANNE:** *(Looks down at her notes.)* Oh... the decorations! Do you have any?

**BRIDGET:** There are some in the basement. But I'm not sure exactly what's there.

**ANNE:** I can always get some later. May I have my coat? *(BRIDGET EXITS UP LEFT. To MARTHA.)* I really must hurry, but I'm looking forward to seeing your flowers. Maybe after the rehearsal?

**MARTHA:** I hope so. *(BRIDGET ENTERS with ANNE'S coat.)*

**ANNE:** *(On impulse. To MARTHA.)* Why don't you come shopping with me? I have a lot to do for the children in the play. We're playing Santa, you know.

15 **MARTHA:** Why, I—

**ANNE:** I could use some help.

**MARTHA:** Well...

**BRIDGET:** *(Helps ANNE on with her coat.)* Go ahead, Martha. I'll get your coat. *(EXITS UP LEFT again.)*

20 **MARTHA:** *(Takes off her apron.)* I have my... misgivings.

**ANNE:** Whatever for?

**MARTHA:** *(Frowns.)* How can you buy presents for children you don't know?

**ANNE:** *(Without enthusiasm.)* We'll buy for the age. It's just for the play. *(BRIDGET RE-APPEARS with MARTHA'S coat and helps her put it on.)*

**MARTHA:** *(Shakes her head.)* But those actor children probably have everything they need.

**BRIDGET:** It'll be all right, Martha... it'll be all right. Do take your time... *(Urges her toward the door as ANNE walks beside her. BLACKOUT.)*

End of Scene Two

### Scene Three

LIGHTS UP: Morning, December 23rd. The flowers on the mantel have been removed. DOOR CHIMES RING. BRIDGET ENTERS UP LEFT and opens the front door.

35 **BRIDGET:** Come in, Miss Weston, please come in!

**ANNE:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT, wearing a warm coat with a brightly flowered neck scarf. She is carrying a sack with a framed picture inside.)* I got it, Bridget!



- 1 **BRIDGET:** The picture?
- ANNE:** *(Takes the picture from the sack and shows it to BRIDGET.)* Isn't it beautiful? It was Mr. Terry, all right, and he had the negative. It arrived this morning by Express Mail.
- 5 **BRIDGET:** *(Looks at the picture, then raises her voice and looks toward the kitchen.)* Martha, come here! You must see this!
- MARTHA:** *(ENTERS RIGHT wiping her hands on her apron.)* Yes? Why, good morning, Miss Weston.
- ANNE:** Good morning, Martha.
- 10 **BRIDGET:** Take a look at this picture.
- MARTHA:** *(Walks over and looks at the picture.)* That's the old home, all right. Here! Let me have a look by the light. *(Takes the picture to the window and looks at it intently.)* My, those colors are lovely. *(BRIDGET and ANNE walk over by MARTHA to look at the picture again.)*
- 15 Mr. Dale will certainly like this! Those lilac bushes look so real. I can almost smell them. And there's the old swing! *(Sighs and hands the picture back to ANNE.)*
- BRIDGET:** Imagine still having the negative after all these years.
- MARTHA:** I'd better get back to work. I have a lot of baking to do with all those children coming. *(Starts walking toward the kitchen.)*
- 20 Five... imagine, five children!
- ANNE:** *(Returns picture to the sack.)* And they should be here any minute. *(Hands the sack to BRIDGET.)* There's a card in the sack, "To John, with love." Will you please wrap the picture and tuck the card in?
- 25 **BRIDGET:** Yes, and I have a surprise for you. *(Starts to EXIT UP LEFT.)* I'll be right back. *(DOOR CHIMES RING.)*
- ANNE:** That's probably the people I'm expecting, Bridget. Is it all right if I let them in?
- BRIDGET:** Please do. *(She's OUT.)*
- 30 **ANNE:** *(Crosses to the front door and opens it.)* Jimmy! Come in! This is a surprise!
- JIMMY:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT.)* I've got some bad news, Miss Weston.
- ANNE:** Bad news?
- 35 **JIMMY:** I don't know what to say.
- ANNE:** What's the matter?
- JIMMY:** They called from the actors' guild.
- ANNE:** What's the matter?
- JIMMY:** The children aren't coming.
- 40 **ANNE:** Not coming?! *(Sits down on the nearest chair.)* Why?

- 1 **JIMMY:** Two of the children have the measles, and the others don't want to come by themselves. They really didn't want to miss Christmas at home, anyway.
- ANNE:** What about the mother?
- 5 **JIMMY:** That's worse yet. They hadn't found a person to play the part.
- ANNE:** They didn't even let us know! (*Clasps her hands in despair. Then she walks to the mantel where she leans her head on her hands.*)
- JIMMY:** She said she'd keep trying.
- 10 **ANNE:** (*Turns around.*) But we're out of time!
- JIMMY:** Maybe they'll come through with somebody.
- ANNE:** But even if they get a mother, whatever will we do for the children? (*Turns back to the fireplace again.*)
- JIMMY:** (*Hesitant.*) Could I play one of the parts, Miss Weston?
- 15 **ANNE:** (*Faces him quickly.*) Jimmy! Would you? Would you really want to?
- JIMMY:** Yes. I don't know if I'm a good enough actor, though.
- ANNE:** You're a very good actor. You've acted in all the plays they've put on at the orphanage, haven't you?
- 20 **JIMMY:** Yes, but—
- ANNE:** Of course you're a good enough actor. You can play the oldest boy. (*Thoughtful.*) But let's change your name to Jack. That ought to please him.
- JIMMY:** What do you mean?
- 25 **ANNE:** His name is John Dale. Jack is a nickname for John. It'll make him feel more like you're his son.
- JIMMY:** Suits me.
- ANNE:** I really appreciate your helping me out this way, Jimmy.
- JIMMY:** It's not only to help, Anne. I'd like the chance to be in a real
- 30 home with a mother and a father, even if it's just for a day.
- ANNE:** I understand, Jimmy.
- JIMMY:** (*Turns and looks out the window.*) Lately all the guys at school complain about arguing with their fathers over this and that. They don't know how lucky they are to have fathers to argue with.
- 35 **ANNE:** I lost my father when I was 14 years old.
- JIMMY:** You've never mentioned that before.
- ANNE:** (*Shrugs her shoulders.*) I got my first job when I was 16.
- JIMMY:** Sixteen?
- ANNE:** (*Nods.*) I helped my four younger brothers through college... so
- 40 it's been worth it.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### PROPERTIES

#### ONSTAGE:

The rent shop: Telephone, counter with papers, notepad, pencil, rent book, receipt book, telephone book; sign that reads “We Rent Anything”; wheelbarrows, shovels, pitchforks, miscellaneous tools, broom, dustpan, optional door and window.

John Dale’s living room: Fireplace with mantel, sofa, coffee table with newspapers and magazines, side table with telephone, two armchairs, flowers in a vase, lamp, bookshelf with books including a bible (Scenes Four: A decorated Christmas tree, wrapped presents, a basket of popcorn balls, plastic baggies)

#### BROUGHT ON:

Scene One:

Checkbook, business card (JOHN)

Scene Two:

Purse with notepad and pen (ANNE)

Martha’s coat (BRIDGET)

Scene Three:

Flowered neck scarf, sack with framed picture (ANNE)

Box of ornaments and Christmas decorations including a silver star or some other special-looking tree-topper (BRIDGET)

Briefcase (JOHN)

Scene Four:

Box containing nativity scene, strand of holly (BRIDGET)

Apron, tray of cookies (ANNE)

Suitcases (JIMMY)

Scene Five:

Book (JIMMY)

Wrapping paper, box containing seals, ribbon, scissors, cards, gift boxes which contain a red sweater, a bottle of perfume, slippers, a silver chain, books and bookends, a watch (ANNE)

Sled stacked with gifts, jewelry box with brooch, Christmas stockings (BRIDGET)

Tray of cookies (MARTHA)

Additional gifts including a checker set, doll house, framed picture of an old house, picture of Jean, knitted scarves (placed ONSTAGE between Scenes Five and Six)



Scene Six:

Small package containing brooch (JOHN)

Scene Seven:

Coat, red hat, mittens (BRIDGET)

Envelope in purse (ANNE)

#### SOUND EFFECTS

Door chime

#### COSTUMING

ALL except BRIDGET need winter coats, scarves, etc. ANNE'S scarf is brightly flowered for ACT ONE, Scene Three. MARTHA and ANNE both need aprons. CHILDREN wear night clothes in Scene Six. ANNE wears a brooch in Scene Seven. The CHILDREN all have new knitted scarves in Scene Seven.

#### ABOUT THE PRESENTS

The presents should be wrapped in such a way to open quickly with no cords or ribbons around the package. Ideally, boxes and their lids can be wrapped separately so the lids simply lift off. Because of the number of gifts needed under the tree, you might consider having the children who are acting in this play bring their own toys from home wrapped as Christmas presents. The presents that are essential properties of the play are a sled, a checker set, a doll house, a framed picture of an old house, a picture of Jean, two fine leather-covered books, perfume, a silver chain, slippers, two books, a brooch, a watch, books and bookends and knitted scarves for all the children.



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PO Box 4267

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