

“IT IS CHRISTMAS AFTER ALL”

A MONOLOGUE

by

LYNDON HOUSE

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“It Is Christmas After All”

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“It Is Christmas After All”

THE SET REQUIRES ONE TABLE AND ONE CHAIR

ANY FURTHER SET DRESSING IS DISCRETIONARY

PROPS ARE AS FOLLOWS :-

SCENE ONE.....PACKET OF TURKISH DELIGHTS
PAIR OF SLIPPERS WRAPPED AS CHRISTMAS GIFT
CHRISTMAS CRACKER
CHRISTMAS TABLE DECORATION

SCENE TWO.....NONE

SCENE THREE.....BASEBALL CAP

It's Christmas morning. Melvyn waits for a visitor who will change his life forever. He goes on a journey that takes him to the depths of despair before eventually reaching some kind of understanding.

It Is Christmas After All was first performed as a rehearsed reading at ‘Studio B’ of The Sherman Theatre, Cardiff.

Melvyn was played by Giles Thomas.

It was directed by Sarah Argent and produced by Theatr y Byd.

SCENE ONE

(Scene: Room in Melvyn’s house.)

I love listening to Christmas carols. Really brings it home that it's Christmas day again. Me and Mam, we always played this record on Christmas morning. Get us into the spirit like. These carols are better than Cliff Richard, or Slade or Wizzard. Oh Christmas day is wonderful, my favourite day of the whole year. Mam's too. I was up early this morning. Got lots to prepare.

(Looks at watch) I wonder how long it will take her to get here.

Mam used to love Christmas as well. Mind you, last year didn't get off on the right foot. I'd only just got out of bed, when Mam came to the bottom of the stairs and shouted up, “*Melvyn, get up quick. There's a pool of sick on the path by the front gate. Go and clean it up. I'm not having any sick outside my house on Christmas Day*”. She was very particular about things like that. Well I went out, and sure enough, there it was. Some drunkard had been sick over the gate. Yellowy-green, it was. I remember as I was cleaning it up thinking, what a vivid, almost striking, yellowy-green. With little, tiny red bits in it. Not a great start to the day at all. But colourful mind.

It was last Christmas that Mam's stomach pains started. I remember saying to her. “*Mam you've over-indulged, ate and drunk too much. It's your own fault.*” We laughed about it then... Cancer is a terrible thing. It's not really like a disease at all. More like an animal, feasting on you. Not just taking away your health and your life, but your dignity as well...Mam was always a very dignified woman. Thought a lot about her appearance. Always so clean and fresh. I think that was one of the things that upset her so much. Not being clean. Who would have thought it... Just last Christmas.

It's funny really, Coincidence like, because it was on a Christmas, years ago, when Dad went. There one minute, gone the next. Oh, I don't mean gone, dead. I mean gone, gone. Just upped and left on Christmas Eve, with Megan Richards, from Rossiter Street. Mam never liked the Richards. Reckoned that old Mrs. Richards never keep a nice front room.

Dad was always a bit of a rum cove. One day when I was a boy, some bullies attacked me when I was coming home from school, and wrote rude words on my face and hands with a biro. When I got home, Mam went ballistic. I can still remember her scrubbing my face, shouting for Dad... “*Will!...Come and see what these little tups have done to our Melvyn.*” Well Dad came in, and he looked at me, and he looked at Mam, then he said, “*It's a bad do Iris. Fair play, they've got lovely hand-writing though*”.

That year he left, Mam cried and cried. I'd have given anything to have given her a present that would have stopped her crying. It was a nice present mind. Dad helped me buy it. But I saved up for it. It was a brooch... But it didn't stop her crying.

“It Is Christmas After All”

Oh, I mustn't get all maudlin. It is Christmas after all. I've got it all planned out. I just gone through the Radio Times and marked down all the programmes that I'm going to watch today.

There's a good one on this morning. About how they'll help bring a happy Christmas to people less fortunate... You know the poor and the sick. Make their dreams come true. Re-unite them with long lost relatives. Nice to have a Christmas programme like that. Years ago, it always used to be from a children's hospital. I can always remember, Michael Aspel on one side, and Leslie Crowther on the other.

This afternoon, there's my favourite film of all time on BBC 2. I'm really looking forward to it. You know, the one with James Stewart, and he's lost all his money, and he's about to kill himself, when an angel comes to rescue him. Shows him what life would have been like if he'd never been born. Everything so different, so awful. Shows him what a wonderful life he's had. That's the name of the film, *It's A Wonderful Life*. It has a lovely happy ending. Always makes me cry... I wonder why it is that happy endings make you cry just as much as sad ones.

Mam used to love that film too. She asked me once if I'd like it to happen to me. You know, see everything as though I'd never been born. I didn't answer, because I wouldn't. Just imagine, you see everything as though you've never been born, and nothing has changed. It's all exactly the same. As though your life was meaningless.

Cor, time's moving on. I'll have to get the turkey in the oven in the next half an hour or so. It's not a proper turkey mind. I mean, there'd be too much and... There's only... me. So I've bought one of those turkey crowns. You know, all meat. So there's no waste. Though I'll miss the leg mind.

There's enough for a nice cooked dinner. Then I'll have turkey sandwiches tonight, when I'm watching the big film. Then there'll be plenty left over for cold turkey and chips for Boxing Day. We always had cold turkey and chips on Boxing Day. I've bought a jar of Branston Pickle, and a jar of pickled beetroot. I don't usually eat them, but it is Christmas after all. After our cold turkey and chips, me and Mam always used to go for a walk, down to the park. Even if it was raining. I remember last year, Mam put her arm through mine and hugged me close. “*Cor,*” she said. “*I've got my handsome boyfriend with me. He's the most handsomest boyfriend in the world.*” I said, “*Mam, stop it*”, and tried to pull away, but she pulled me closer and held me tight, then she started tickling me and made me laugh. That was a lovely day that. We had a lovely walk. I think I'll go again tomorrow... Though... I wonder if that gang of boys will be there again. They're always hanging around lately. Why can't they leave people alone? They've no respect. Call me terrible names. I tried to tell them off. I shout to them, “*I'll have your parents onto you,*” I shout. But they just laugh at me. Oh, I don't mind them laughing... But they don't have to call me those terrible names... [Ponders] Might be raining tomorrow... Can't go out if it's raining... Probably stay in. Yes... Stay in.

All the other men in the office are going to the rugby. Been planning it for weeks. I'm glad they didn't ask me, because I didn't really want to go, and in any case, I'd have missed my cold turkey and chips... No, I'm glad they didn't ask me...

There was all kinds of shenanigans at the Christmas party yesterday. I didn't stay like. Came home soon as it started. Well, I had lots to do see. I told them, “*I've*

“It Is Christmas After All”

got lots to sort out. Christmas shopping and the like. Got lots to prepare.” They all had a good laugh when I told them... Don't suppose anyone missed me.

[Hears introduction to Hark The Herald Angels Sing]

Oh wait a minute. This is my favourite carol.

[Sings along]Hark the herald angels sing,

Beecham's pills are just the thing.

One for women, two for men,

Three for children under ten.

If you want to go to heaven,

You must take five, six or seven.

If you want to go to hell,

You must take the box as well.

Hark the herald angels sing,

Beecham's Pills are just the thing.

I always sung along to that. Mam used to laugh. She said I had a voice like Ivor Emmanuel. She loved Ivor Emmanuel. Always watched Zulu, on the telly. She used to sit on the edge of her seat, and shout... *“Well done, Ivor... Get him, Ivor... Watch that darkie behind you, Ivor.”* Mam was sure that the Zulus would have won if it hadn't been for Ivor's singing... I wonder what became of Ivor Emmanuel. Probably dead for all I know. Killed by the Zulus.

I think I'll have a sweetie... I know I shouldn't, might spoil my dinner. But it is Christmas, after all. [Eats sweet][Whilst chewing] Mam used to like Turkish Delights. We'd be watching the telly and she'd say, *“Melvyn, pass me one of them jellies with powder on”*. She always called them that. I suppose she was right. That's what they are. Jellies with powder on. [Looks at watch]

I went out for a little walk this morning. Just for a few minutes, for a breath of fresh air. It was lovely to see the kids out, playing with their new Christmas presents. Bikes and scooters. Mr. Thomas from the end house was out with his boy and their new model car. One of those radio controlled ones. I said hello, but I don't think they heard me because they didn't answer.

It made me think back to when I was a boy. It used to be so exciting on Christmas Eve. I used to have a bath and go to bed. Then hang my stocking on the end of the bed and try to get to sleep as quickly as possible. Isn't it funny how the more you try to get to sleep, the more you stay awake. Mam said that one year I actually cried to go to sleep. Then you'd wake up on Christmas morning, and look at your stocking, and it would be bulging. That was the best part of all I think. There's something magical about that. It'd still be dark outside, and I'd empty my stocking. There was always an apple and an orange... There was a great, long pencil one year... I had a monkey on a stick, I remember as well. A powerball, and always lots of chocolate. I used to love the chocolate. Chocolate buttons, chocolate coins, chocolate Father Christmases. We used to hang chocolate decorations on the tree as well, and Mam used to say, *“Don't you eat those decorations till we take the tree down mind”*. But I always did. I used to think I was clever. I'd take one down, eat the chocolate,

then put the silver paper back in shape and hang it back up. Mam and Dad never let on they knew.

Anyway, after I'd emptied my stocking, I'd wait on the bed, so excited, till Mam and Dad would tell me that it was time to go downstairs and open my main presents... Wonderful memories...Isn't it a pity that you can't always be as happy as you are when you're a little boy on Christmas morning... Such a pity.

I remember one year, I had a Dalek suit. Mam helped me put it on, and we walked across to Nan's house at the other end of the road. Nan was so shocked when she saw me. *“I will instroy you”*, I said. *“You will be instroyed.”* They both laughed. Even when I knew the word was destroy, I still said instroy... Because it made Mam laugh.

Those children were so happy this morning. It's lovely to see them enjoying themselves, so happy. Makes me feel happy inside as well. The magic of Christmas. Happy children. Oh, don't get me wrong mind. I don't like children in that way. Oh no. Definitely not. Not like that. Despite what Mostyn Evans might say.

He's my next-door neighbour, and we don't get on at all. He's an arrogant man. Really loud. I don't like him. He's always trying to stir it up and cause trouble. You know what he did this summer. Without a word of a lie, I'm telling you. He planted his beans right up against my greenhouse. Blocked out all the light. My tomatoes didn't stand an earthly. He did it deliberately. I know he did. I had him though. Well I had to do my weed-killing, didn't I. And it wasn't my fault that some went over onto his beans. You ought to have heard him... But it wasn't my fault.

Then there's his son, Geraint. Always walking around with that airgun. Do you know what he did last summer. He shot my welly. Without a word of a lie, I'm telling you, he shot my welly. Well I had my wellies hanging up in the shed, see, and I went in there one day, and there was a hole in one of them. I knew it was Geraint. He shot my welly through the shed window. Well I wasn't having that, I had my dander up, so I went round, knocked on his door. I told him, *“Your Geraint has shot my welly”*. *“What?”* he said. I said, *“He have shot my welly, in the shed”*. Do you know what he did. He just laughed at me. Stood there and laughed at me. So I went back home and called the police. Firing off that airgun like that. I had the police to him. Let's see who's laughing now I thought.

That night he came round, banging on the door, shouting threats. And Mam so sick. Shouting how I had the police to him. Using that foul language, upsetting Mam. I told him, *“go away, you're upsetting Mam.”* But he kept on and on, and Mam got more and more upset, and she was so ill. She wanted some peace. I told her not to worry and that everything was all right. But her pain was so bad, and she started to cry. He was making that noise and she was crying and all she wanted was some peace. It wasn't right... [Pause] It wasn't right.

[Long Pause]

I think I'll lay the table...Mam always had the table looking lovely for Christmas day. White tablecloth, best dinner-service. And... The centrepiece. [Takes out Christmas Ornament] Beautiful isn't it? It's very old too. Mam loved this. Always the centrepiece of the Christmas dinner-table for as long as I can remember. She only brought it out for the one day. Kept it hidden away in the drawer the rest of the year. She loved her Christmas traditions.

“It Is Christmas After All”

She can't be much longer. [Sits at table]

I've bought a nice yule-log, and a little bottle of sparkling wine. We always had a bottle of wine. We'd toast the season, then pull our crackers before Mam would serve the dinner. I've bought some crackers this year. Only half a dozen mind. I pulled one last night, to get the festivities under way, so to speak... Oh, go on then... [Pulls cracker. Examines contents. Reads joke]

“Where do you weigh whales?”

“At a whaleweigh station.”

I'll open my present now. I know it's daft, but I've bought myself a present. Just to open this morning. You know. [Takes parcel][Whilst unwrapping] I know it won't be a surprise, but you've got to open a present on Christmas morning, and I could do with a new pair... [Puts on slippers] Merry Christmas.

[Sound of carols stops] Oh... The record's finished... Ah well, that's the carols over for another year.

[Sits in complete silence] Oh dear it's quiet. When the house is this quiet, I can hear Mam... *“Melvyn, bring the car round to the front... Melvyn, what do you think of your Mam's new coat... Melvyn, where's my medicine... Melvyn!..”* [Turns head]
“Coming Mam.”

[Sings slowly and falteringly] Hark the herald angels sing,
Beecham's Pills are just the thing.

One for women,
Two for men,

Three for children... under... ten. [Voice tails off. Sits in silence. Realises he is utterly alone. Facade of optimism crumbles. Starts to break down]

[Silence interrupted by doorbell] She's here at last. The doctor. She's come to see Mam... She's upstairs. You see I couldn't let her go on suffering like that. It wasn't right. She was in such pain. I mean you wouldn't let a dog suffer like that, would you. It was quick, and easy. I just... pushed down on the pillow... And she... went to sleep... She's with the angels now.

All those Christmases ago, when Dad left, I couldn't give Mam a present that would stop her crying... But this year I could.

I'd better answer it... I wonder if the doctor would like a little drink while she's here. It is Christmas after all.