

SANTA COME HOME

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Cast of Characters

JOAN:	Housewife, 57. With her daughters grown and gone, Joan has been forging her independence.
PHILIP:	Joan's husband, 59. Recently retired TV celebrity, Captain Zeus, the consummate entertainer
SUSANNA:	Older daughter, 34, issue-wrestling social worker
TOM:	Susanna's husband, 35, handsome; habitually unemployed
ATHENA:	Younger daughter, 25, pretty, wholesome, habitually happy
GORDON:	Athena's friend, 60, white-hair, scruffy and bearded
MORGAN:	Susanna's friend, 20-25, small; hyperactive

ACT TWO, Scene One

GRANGE HALL STAGE

Philip, in Santa outfit--sans beard, hair, and hat--crosses the stage as if behind the curtain.

The stage is decorated for a small-town Christmas show. A Christmas tree stands upstage center, with gifts underneath. A nativity manger sits close by.

PHILIP

Costumes are hanging in the dressing room, people. What happened to the chairs?

Philip heads for the wings as Athena and Gordon enter, Gordon carrying his gift box. Joan follows behind. Behind them, Susanna comes arm in arm with Morgan. They mount the stage . . .

From the wings Philip carries two big chairs (for Santa and Mrs. Claus) and sets them beside the tree.

SUSANNA

(to Morgan)

That's right, one foot in front of the other.

PHILIP

(peeking through the curtain)

See the equipment out there? Athena? All the lights? Twenty-three million people. That's what it's all about.

ATHENA

(ignoring him)

Gordon, go ahead and put your gift under the tree.

Susanna leads Morgan offstage.

SUSANNA

Come on, hon, you can sleep in the wings. It'll be over before you know it.

PHILIP

Costumes, people.

SUSANNA

Mary does not need a half hour to pull a robe over her head.

PHILIP

We need to be dressed so we can prepare.

JOAN

We've had twenty-two years to prepare, Philip. Another minute isn't going to help.

PHILIP

Mental preparation, Joan. Time to become one with our characters, quiet the nerves, sharpen the concentration.

GORDON

Sounds like meditation.

JOAN

Oh, yes, meditation.

(seeing her chance to expose Gordon)

Meditation. Yes. Oh, Philip? Why don't we let Athena's friend lead us? In meditation?

PHILIP

Now? The film crew's all set up--

JOAN

--and share all that wisdom he acquired in the Himalayas--

PHILIP

They're about to let the audience in--

JOAN

Philip?

ATHENA

(onto Joan's scheme)

I'll meditate with you, Gordon. Come on over here.

PHILIP

Oh, really, Love, there's just no time--

SUSANNA

(getting it, she pulls Philip along)

Daddy? Athena thinks a little meditation might be enlightening, don't you?

PHILIP

Oh. Well. On second thought, maybe a little...

JOAN

If we all keep an open mind, isn't that right, Athena?

As they drag folding chairs from the wings.

GORDON

I don't know, it's been such a long time--

JOAN

A minute or two might be all the enlightenment we need.

GORDON

(standing behind them)

Okay then... I guess we could begin by sitting--

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JOAN
Sitting.

GORDON
--and closing our eyes.

JOAN
Closing our eyes. Of course.

ATHENA
Momma? We're supposed to be quiet.

Morgan drags a chair out from the wings.

MORGAN
Hey, can I get in on this?

SUSANNA
We're meditating, Morgan.

JOAN
I thought only the cast--

SUSANNA
Close your eyes, Mother.

MORGAN
I don't know. Looks like a set-up to me.

JOAN
Don't be silly.

MORGAN
(to Gordon)
How'd you get 'em to go along with you?

ATHENA
We're ready, Gordon.

GORDON
Well, now, as I recall, I suppose we should breathe--

JOAN
Breathe. Sorry.

GORDON
That's right...
(as Morgan slumps over, asleep)
See, you're more relaxed already.

Tom, dressed as Joseph, comes down the aisle, coffee mug in hand.

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TOM

Joseph is in the house.

SUSANNA

Asshole.

TOM

Hey, Athena, the pie was delicious. Nice and moist, not too filling.

SUSANNA

I thought it was great.

PHILIP

Tommy, come join us. We're meditating.

TOM

Bad back.

SUSANNA

Ah, the back. After fifteen years, the medical world is still mystified.

JOAN

(gently)

Be nice.

TOM

(as Joseph)

Lo, there was no room at the inn, so they tried the grange hall. I am so into this character.

ATHENA

You won't hurt your back, Tom. All you have to do is sit for two minutes and clear your mind.

SUSANNA

That shouldn't be tough.

(to Joan)

I couldn't let it go.

GORDON

And now let's see if we can empty our minds of all thoughts, all cares and concerns--

TOM

Already doin' it.

SUSANNA

No, you're not.

TOM

How the hell do you know?

SUSANNA

Because you're talking, numb-nuts.

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TOM

I don't have to think to talk.

SUSANNA

As you demonstrate time and again.

TOM

Okay. Okay. You want to see how it's done. Spread out.

He brings a stool from the wings and sits beside them.

GORDON

Good. Good. Now that everyone's here, if we're ready...Uh...

PHILIP

Close your eyes, breathe, clear your mind, got it. How about one minute?

GORDON

One minute, you say? Why not? One minute then. Ready?

TOM

When I was a kid, I could stay underwater a minute and a half.

SUSANNA

You should've gone for ten.

GORDON

If any thoughts come into your head, just shoo them away as you might a small puppy or playful kitten.

They sit quietly for ten seconds, breathing deeply.

JOAN

I'm sorry. Susanna, I just have to say one little thing. Not to criticize, but I think you might be using Morgan as a weapon. Give it some thought, Hon. That's all. Sorry, everyone.

TOM

You name it, it's a weapon: pies, lesbians . . .

SUSANNA

I knew he couldn't do it.

TOM

I'm doin' it. I'm doin' it. Right now. See?

SUSANNA

You cannot be meditating if you're talking!

TOM

I was meditating before I talked. Then again after. I'll do it again... See? No thoughts.

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GORDON

Tommy, how do you know you weren't thinking?

TOM

Because I checked. Am I thinking? No.

ATHENA

Isn't that a thought?

TOM

No, it's a check.

SUSANNA

I'm gonna scream.

GORDON

Maybe we could try another way. Let's see if we can go, oh, twenty seconds, without thinking of just one thing: say, a blue football.

PHILIP

Twenty seconds without thinking of a blue football? I've gone almost sixty years.

TOM

Thirty here.

(high five)

PHILIP

Okay, twenty seconds, here we go. No blue footballs. Ready? Set?

TOM

Piece of cake.

PHILIP

Go!

After three seconds, Tom begins struggling. Likewise Joan and Philip. And Susanna.

TOM

This is nuts!

(to his feet)

(going to the manger, looking out through the curtain)

SUSANNA

What's the matter, big shot?

ATHENA

He was just showing you, Tom.

TOM

Yeah, sure. Blue football. I told you, she followed me home.

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SUSANNA
You let her in!

TOM
She was homeless!

ATHENA
I'm sorry, what are we talking about?

SUSANNA
God, you're stupid.

TOM
You married me, what's that make you?

SUSANNA
A woman who's been educated.
(Joan touches her arm)
I know. I know.

ATHENA
Guys?

PHILIP
We really should get into our costumes--

JOAN
Oh, Philip, shut up and meditate.

SUSANNA
We can do this! Come on!

GORDON
We're very close. Fifteen seconds. Ready, everyone? Close your eyes...

MORGAN
How am I doing, big guy?

GORDON
You're doing splendidly, Morgan. Shhh. Fifteen seconds. Or how about ten? Why not?
Ten seconds of peaceful, quiet reflection--

TOM
There goes a green hockey puck.

SUSANNA
Imbecile.

JOAN
Susanna?

TOM
Yeah, can we hold it down? I'm trying not to think. Trying not to think.

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GORDON

Or should we try for five seconds?

TOM

How about if music's playing in your head--you know, no words, just the music...

SUSANNA

God! See what I put up with? Fifteen years.

TOM

At least I never shacked up with a lesbian.

ATHENA

Guys?

GORDON

Eyes closed, Susanna--

SUSANNA

Is it just me? He brings a woman home from a bar--

TOM

A lesbian! We were football buddies! Were!

He shoots a look at Morgan. One by one, all eyes open . . . and also turn to Morgan--whose eyes open too.

MORGAN

Hello, sports fans.

JOAN

You? You're the one he brought home?

SUSANNA

Ironic, wouldn't you say?

ATHENA

Wait. He brought Morgan home--

TOM

She. Followed. Me.

MORGAN

I followed him.

PHILIP

And that's probably enough meditation--

SUSANNA

We haven't slept together, if that's what you're all so concerned about. Morgan's been staying in the guest room. She's giving me time to adjust.

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TOM

I never thought I'd say this, but can we please meditate?

SUSANNA

God forbid anyone should talk about their relationship.

JOAN

As I said, there's a time and a place.

SUSANNA

When? Where? If no one ever listens!
(Tom's eyes remain closed.)

PHILIP

Right now I think it's time to get into our costumes.

SUSANNA

Not once in fifteen years of marriage--not once would he even talk to me about starting a family.

TOM

Ommmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

PHILIP

If we could clear the stage--

SUSANNA

Big deal, so you're infertile. Couples adopt children all the time. Women get artificially inseminated.

TOM

Meditating. No longer thinking.

PHILIP

(enthusiastic Santa)
Christmas spirit, kids. Right now, in Taiwan, they're opening presents.

TOM

And for your information, I did not get you lottery tickets this year. I got you a hundred-dollar gift certificate.

SUSANNA

Gift certificate to what, Avalon Hardware?

MORGAN

"Dang! How'd she guess?"

TOM

If you really were a guy, I'da kicked your butt.

ATHENA

I still don't understand. If she's-- Morgan?

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MORGAN
Question?

ATHENA
He's a guy. Why would you go home with him?

MORGAN
Needed a bed. Something to eat.

Susanna studies Morgan, hawklike.

JOAN
(to Morgan)
Excuse me, dear. You're not a lesbian, are you?

MORGAN
Lesbian?

SUSANNA
(revelation)
You're . . . homeless?

MORGAN
Was.

SUSANNA
You're *homeless*. I'M PREGNANT!

MORGAN
Woo-hoo!

TOM
Yeah!
(on second thought)
Well--

SUSANNA
You're homeless-- And I've been feeding you?

PHILIP
We really need to get a move on.

SUSANNA
--cooking you dinner when I get home from work, while you stretch your lazy ass in front of that TV!

TOM
I used to do all the cooking.

SUSANNA
(to Morgan)
For the last month, I've clean up after you! Put up with your football, your hockey-- Wrestling? I bought you that slutty Christmas dress!

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JOAN

I told you, Susanna. You are not a lesbian.

ATHENA

Excuse me, could I say something?

PHILIP

Maybe after the show, love, we could all have a little chat--

ATHENA

No. No. I need to tell you now-- I need to tell you all--

SUSANNA

No! No! I'm telling! And that's another thing.

(to Philip)

She sings Jingle Bells in Taiwanese?

PHILIP

Hon, Athena's a singer.

SUSANNA

I sing!

MORGAN

She sings.

TOM

No, she does.

SUSANNA

(to them both)

You shut up!

ATHENA

(erupting)

I did not come three thousand miles for this!

SUSANNA

Really. Then why did you come? Pray tell, what is Athena's great mystery?

ATHENA

I came to-- I came to spend Christmas with a loving, accepting family. But I'm starting to think that family was all a myth.

JOAN

Athena, dear, your loving, accepting family doesn't hear from you in over a year. And then you show up all smiles--with Father Christmas himself.

ATHENA

Momma--?

PHILIP

Joan, sweetie, we really need to get going--

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JOAN

How dare you move to San Francisco?

PHILIP

Well, we're all together now. That's the important thing. That, and of course the show.

JOAN

Oh, yeah, everything's just Jim-friggin'-dandy with you! Spend the best years of our lives prancing around the world in a Halloween costume, and you come home every Christmas so the town can have their wonderful Captain Zeus, Santa Claus, or whoever the hell you're supposed to be. And now, thirty years later, you just decide to quit your job in a blaze of glory--

PHILIP

They were going to fire me, Joan.

JOAN

--and come prancing back . . . home . . .

ATHENA

Daddy?

PHILIP

The company was filing for bankruptcy. Pulling the plug on my pension, my health plan. On me. So, yeah. Captain Zeus came home.

JOAN

Well, maybe I'm not ready for Captain Zeus.

ATHENA

Momma--?

JOAN

I have a life of my own now. Or maybe you haven't noticed. I had to make a life. What do you expect, when everyone leaves you?

ATHENA

I didn't leave you.

JOAN

Oh, Athena, you couldn't get farther away from me and still be in this country.

TOM

Hawaii.

ATHENA

It wasn't you, Momma. It wasn't anyone. It was me. That's what I've been trying to tell you--

JOAN

Philip, do you know what comes after retirement?

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PHILIP

Well, for starters, I thought we might head down to--

JOAN

If you say Florida, I swear to God--

PHILIP

--Disney World... I thought I might line up some guest appearances-- What's wrong with Florida?

JOAN

Shuffleboard! Sweltering heat!

PHILIP

Sunshine! Citrus fruits--

JOAN

Stewed prunes--and you--squeezed into that ridiculous outfit.

PHILIP

Well, what the hell do you want?

SUSANNA

Excuse me. Excuse me? Have I mentioned I'm pregnant?

STAGE MANAGER

House is open.

TOM

(peeking out upstage curtain)

Okay. They just opened the house.

(CROWD NOISE with CHILDREN)

JOAN

You actually think it's some kind of honor being Mrs. Zeus. Mrs. Claus. Sitting up here year after year, grinning like a fool.

SUSANNA

Try morning sickness.

TOM

Uh, here they come.

ATHENA

Costumes. Guys?

PHILIP

Okay, everyone, look. How about tonight we let Mrs. Claus hand out the gifts?

JOAN

(as a curse)

Go to Florida.

She marches offstage. A DOOR SLAMS. Morgan snaps awake.

MORGAN

Meditation over?

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STAGE MANAGER

Four minutes.

TOM

Umm . . . I think we're getting a countdown.

PHILIP

Costumes! Make-up!

ATHENA (O.S.)

(going after Joan)

Momma? Our costumes--

(returning)

She's locked in the dressing room.

Philip hurries to the wings.

PHILIP

Joan, it's live TV! Twenty-three million people!

JOAN (O.S.)

You invited em, you entertain 'em!