

ALL IS CALM

A CHRISTMAS COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Donald Payton

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SYNOPSIS: There's something about Christmas that's happy and peaceful—except at the home of the Maxwell's. There's something about Christmas that's calm and celestial---except son Lucas who is far from either on this Christmas day, because his world has just slid out from under him—no sled. All year long Lucas had talked of a sled, but on Christmas morning...no sled, and he just can't figure it out. He hinted all year—did everything but draw a map. Well, while Lucas gripes and commotion reigns at the Maxwell's, Mrs. Brown and her children, Ian and Paige, drop in for the Christmas basket promised them. While conversing with Ian and Paige, Lucas discovers how happy they are, yet they didn't get a thing for Christmas--- nothing but a few nuts. And all they want is to be able to play with all the children—children like Lucas. This makes Lucas think, and with Paige and Ian helping, he flies into his packages and the Christmas spirit reigns again, Here's a timely, down-to-earth Christmas play with laughs, fun, but plenty of logic and common sense.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 MEN, 5 WOMEN)

MR. MAXWELL (m)Father, middle-aged. *(45 lines)*

MRS. MAXWELL (f).....Mother, middle-aged. *(29 lines)*

LUCAS (m).....The son, nine or ten, usually very full of life, but today he seems very quiet. He is wearing loud pajamas. *(86 lines)*

COURTNEY (f).....A daughter, fifteen, cute. Has on pajamas and a robe. *(33 lines)*

CAROLINE (f)A daughter, seventeen, pretty. Has pajamas and a robe. *(16 lines)*

BY DONALD PAYTON

MRS. BROWN (f)A kind, considerate woman. Not dressed very well, but certainly not dressed comically.
(8 lines)

IAN BROWN (m).....Mrs. Brown's son, nine or ten, small for his age. Wide-eyed and poorly dressed.
(41 lines)

PAIGE BROWN (f).....Mrs. Brown's daughter, aged seven or eight, but very small for her age. Very quiet, but always has a smile. She, too, is dressed poorly. (4 lines)

HAND PROPERTIES

COURTNEY - Sweater.

CAROLINE - Bracelet.

MR. MAXWELL - Box with screw driver set, box with ratchet set, box of candy, tie, sled.

PAIGE - Walnuts, packages with tool chest, package with binoculars.

IAN - Package with ball glove and ball.

LUCAS - Package with football, bowl of fruit.

MRS. BROWN - Basket.

MRS. MAXWELL - Handkerchief.

SETTING

The living room of the Maxwell home.

TIME: Christmas morning.

SETTING:

There are three exits from the MAXWELLS' living room. An opening in the wall left leads to the front door; a door in the wall left leads into the dining room and kitchen; an archway rear-center leads into the rest of the house. A Christmas tree stands in the right corner of the room, or may be placed more to the center, depending upon its size. Presents are piled around the foot of the tree. A bookcase is along the right wall, rear. A divan is placed at the left-rear corner of the room, facing down-right-center. Easy chairs are at right-center and right-front. A small table covered with Christmas cards is at the left of the latter chair. A floor lamp is to the rear of the chair. A footstool is in front of the chair at right-center. At left-front is a desk and chair. Additional furniture, such as other chairs and a radio, may be added if desired.

AT RISE:

The Maxwell family - MR. and MRS. MAXWELL, COURTNEY, CAROLINE, LUCAS - are gathered about the Christmas tree, opening their presents. That is, all except LUCAS, who is sitting, chin in hands, gazing into space. His presents, still wrapped, are beside him. His mood definitely doesn't befit that of a boy of his age and speed, especially on Christmas morning.

COURTNEY: *(Happily holding up a sweater.)* Just what I wanted, Mother.

CAROLINE: And this bracelet is simply charming, Father. I don't know how I can thank you and Mother enough.

MRS. MAXWELL: We hoped you'd like it, dear.

COURTNEY: *(Still looking at her sweater.)* It's beautiful.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Who has been busily unwrapping a box . . . removes a set of screwdrivers.)* Caroline, how did you know I needed a screwdriver set?

CAROLINE: It couldn't have been because you've been talking about tools every hour for the past month, Father. That couldn't have been it.

COURTNEY: And think how my necklace will go with this. *(Hugging her mother.)* Oh, Mother, I think you and Daddy are so swell.

MR. MAXWELL: (*Unwraps another package, removes a large ratchet set.*) And a ratchet set. Courtney Maxwell, you couldn't have given me a more useful and needed gift. That's what I like about our children, Janet, they think of such darned useful things.

COURTNEY: (*As she rips open another package.*) I'm even more excited on Christmas day than I used to be. I hope I never lose spirit.

MRS. MAXWELL: (*Her hand on her shoulder.*) You won't, dear. I haven't.

COURTNEY: There's something about Christmas that makes everybody so happy.

LUCAS: (*Chin in hands, sadly.*) If I had it my way.

COURTNEY: It makes everybody forget his problems.

LUCAS: (*A little louder.*) If I had it my way.

COURTNEY: And it makes everybody feel that he's just as good as everybody else. No better - no worse. It's a grand day.

LUCAS: (*Disgustedly.*) Some luck.

COURTNEY: Everybody's in such a good mood - even Father.

MR. MAXWELL: Of course I'm in a good mood. (*Takes box of candy from off table.*) Here have a chocolate. (*COURTNEY takes one.*) Caroline?

CAROLINE: (*Taking one.*) Thank you, Father.

MR. MAXWELL: Janet? (*She takes one, smiling.*) Yes sir, Christmas is a day where you can just forget about your troubles and relax.

LUCAS: I ain't even offered a chocolate.

MR. MAXWELL: Excuse me. Here, son.

LUCAS takes three, MR. MAXWELL returns box.

COURTNEY: You've been eating candy since you've been up. If you're still hungry, try licking the chocolate off your face.

LUCAS: (*Disgustedly.*) For cryin' out loud.

COURTNEY: You'd sit right there and eat one piece after another till you turned as green as a Christmas tree.

LUCAS: Which is beside the point. The point is that I ain't even offered a piece of candy or anything else in my own house on Christmas day. I'd just as well be an orphan, on Christmas day, standin' on the outside lookin' on the inside with my little nose pressed against the cold glass.

CAROLINE: Lucas, the rest of us are perfectly happy and we do not intend for you to sit there and spoil our Christmas. I think we should all be very happy and thankful for everything.

COURTNEY: And I do, too. And since Uncle Harry is coming, things couldn't be better.

LUCAS: If I had it my way.

CAROLINE: You're probably the only human being in the whole world that is pouting.

LUCAS: I ain't poutin'. The point is that

CAROLINE: (*Breaking in.*) The point is that you're one of the most thoughtless, thankless, helpless, and hopeless creatures that ever walked the earth.

COURTNEY: (*Walking over to him, arms akimbo.*) All I can say, Lucas Maxwell, is that I'm certainly ashamed.

LUCAS: And I'd be too, if I were you.

COURTNEY: I'm ashamed of you. Mother, you're going to have to do something about Lucas. He's acting just like a little animal—and on Christmas day.

MRS. MAXWELL: (*As both she and MR. MAXWELL turn toward LUCAS.*) Lucas, what's the matter with you?

LUCAS: (*Morosely.*) Nothing . . . nothing at all.

MRS. MAXWELL: (*As she turns back to unwrapping presents.*) Then act more cheerful, dear. This is Christmas.

MR. MAXWELL: (*Picking a tie off the Christmas tree.*) And look at this tie. From Lucas to Pop. I'll wear it this afternoon. Better than that, I'll put it right on in just a few minutes.

LUCAS: (*Picks up a box and gazes at it sadly.*) This box is long enough, but it ain't wide enough.

MR. MAXWELL: (*Happily.*) Wonder how Lucas knew I needed a tie?

LUCAS: (*Holding up another box.*) And this one's wide enough, but it isn't long enough.

MR. MAXWELL: Maybe I dropped another hint.

LUCAS: It just ain't there. I've looked at every package and it just couldn't be there.

COURTNEY: What do you mean "looked at every package"? You haven't opened a single box. Not one.

LUCAS: And this pitiful one here. It ain't long enough and it ain't even wide enough.

COURTNEY: (*Snatching it.*) That's from me, Lucas Maxwell, and if I'd dreamed you'd act like a little beast, I certainly wouldn't have given it to you.

MRS. MAXWELL: For goodness sake, Lucas, what's wrong?

COURTNEY: (*Pointing to Lucas.*) Mother, I demand to have this creature put out of the house—onto the street with the rest of the animals.

MRS. MAXWELL: (*To Courtney.*) Don't be so dramatic, honey.

LUCAS: (*Rising, pacing the floor.*) I can't figure it out. I couldn't have hinted any more without comin' right out and sayin' the word. I have been talking about it since Easter.

MR. MAXWELL: Do you mean you didn't get what you wanted, Lucas?

LUCAS: (*Exasperated, he lets his hands fall to his sides with a plop.*) And he don't know yet.

MRS. MAXWELL: Go ahead and open your presents, dear. I know you'll be happy.

LUCAS: (*Coming over, sitting again.*) I even hinted on Halloween—between apples. I did everything within my power, and it just ain't here.

MRS. MAXWELL: Lucas, open your presents before Uncle Harry gets here.

LUCAS: (*Gazing straight ahead.*) Even sent a letter to Santa Claus, in care of Pop, and that didn't even get results.

MR. MAXWELL: (*Raising his voice just a bit.*) Lucas, open your presents and be thankful you have them.

LUCAS: And then I sent a letter to Pop in care of Santa Claus at Dennison's department store, where they sell them at prices ranging from four dollars to ten dollars with easy credit terms as low as fifty cents down and fifty cents a month, no questions asked—and that didn't even get results.

MR. MAXWELL: (*Sharply.*) Lucas, open your boxes.

LUCAS: I don't know what else I coulda done unless I'd a drawn a map.

COURTNEY: I'd be ashamed, Lucas. Thousands of little children all over this world don't get what they want.

LUCAS: And I'm one of them.

CAROLINE: How do you know it isn't among those presents there, Lucas?

LUCAS: 'Cause they ain't long enough and they ain't wide enough. Shoot, I'll bet Clyde got his.

COURTNEY: I never saw a little boy so selfish.

LUCAS: *(Rising.)* I just can't figure it out. *(By this time, the whole family is very perturbed and all are watching him as he strolls sadly to the window, right, and gazes out.)* Look at that snow . . . eight inches of snow on the ground and me in the house—which is where I see I'm gonna spend the day. There goes Clifford by on his new sled. And there goes Herb right behind him.

MR. MAXWELL: Did the boy want a sled, Janet?

MRS. MAXWELL: I guess he must have, John.

LUCAS: You guess? If I'd a dropped many more hints, the house would have been knocked down by the impact.

COURTNEY: *(Arms akimbo, sharply.)* If you aren't going to open your boxes, go put on your clothes.

LUCAS: *(Coming over and dropping into the chair again.)* Why do I need clothes? I ain't goin' nowhere. I ain't goin' out with the fellows—in the snow—on our sleds—to have fun.

MRS. MAXWELL: I'm sure Clyde will let you ride on his.

LUCAS: I'd slide over the hill on my stomach before I'd bum a ride. I ain't gonna let 'em know my Christmas fell through. Shoot, no.

CAROLINE: Most little children in this world would be tickled with an apple—or an orange—

LUCAS: *(Breaking in, rising again.)* Or a sled. *(He walks once again to the window, peers out.)* There goes Clyde by on his new sled. All the way by. He wouldn't stop here . . . probably knows I ain't got no sled. *(Turns.)* Things like that get around.

COURTNEY: *(Arms akimbo.)* Lucas, Uncle Harry will be here soon and you haven't even started to open your presents.

LUCAS: *(Comes sadly over and drops in chair, right.)* I still can't figure out how it happened. I did everything but put it in the paper.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Moving over to Mrs. Maxwell.)* I didn't know the boy had his heart set on a sled.

COURTNEY: *(Disgustedly.)* He probably didn't, Father. He just wants to gripe. He'd be griping even if you'd given him the biggest sled in the world.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Venturing a couple of steps toward Lucas.)* Lucas, we must all be able to face life—and disappointments—and reality.

LUCAS: *(Gazing front into space.)* It's a cold, cruel world.

MRS. MAXWELL: You should be thankful you have as much as you do, Lucas. There are little children all over this world that would be tickled with a warm fire. You're very selfish.

They all watch LUCAS as he rises morosely, walks with hands behind his back toward window, and gazes out again.

COURTNEY: I never saw anything like it in my whole life.

LUCAS: *(Gazing out.)* There goes Clifford back by. And I see Calvin. He has his new sled. *(He turns, plants hands deep in pockets, strolls across room.)* I guess all I can do is build another snow man to go with the one I built yesterday.

MR. MAXWELL: When I was your age, Lucas, I used to track rabbits when it snowed. Sit down, son.

LUCAS: *(Sitting again, chin in hands.)* If I had it my way.

MR. MAXWELL: I tracked them through the woods and timber. Used to go over hill after hill on a rabbit track.

LUCAS: I'd rather go over on a sled.

MR. MAXWELL: I tracked for hours. Just me my dog, Chester, and a pair of binoculars. And do you know what I thought?

LUCAS: *(Dryly.)* Probably thought you were Dan'l Boone.

MR. MAXWELL: I thought I was the luckiest lad in the whole world. We didn't have a lot of toys and games and candy on Christmas, Lucas, but we had something better—more wonderful—something we looked forward to for days. Do you know what that was?

LUCAS: Rabbit stew?

MR. MAXWELL: Our family reunion. Everybody would get together then, and we had the real Christmas spirit. My mother and aunts and grandmother would bake turkeys and hams and sweet potatoes and pies and everybody was happy and thankful for everything. Son, you should have been there with me.

LUCAS: Don't you think that would have been a little difficult?

MRS. MAXWELL: Lucas, you are sitting here attempting to be funny while your father is trying to drive in a point.

COURTNEY: And I hope he does. I hope he finds a board with a nail in it and drives the point as deep as he can get it.

MR. MAXWELL: I'm trying to show you, Lucas, that although my brothers and I had no toys or things that cost money, we had something more valuable. We had appreciation for every little thing, and we thought we were the luckiest boys in the whole world. And son, you haven't lived until you've tracked a rabbit for hours in the cold and then finally spotted the little guy hopping his way across a snowy meadow.

LUCAS: (*Chin in hands again.*) I ain't gonna live much longer anyway. I'm dead as soon as the guys find out I didn't get anything for Christmas.

COURTNEY: (*Shrieking.*) I can't stand this a minute longer. I simply cannot.

CAROLINE: (*Also shrieking.*) And I can't either.

MRS. MAXWELL: (*To her daughters.*) Christmas voices, dears.

LUCAS: (*Gazing into space.*) And I can't figure out how it happened. It's simply beyond me.

MRS. MAXWELL: (*Sharply.*) Lucas Maxwell, this has gone far enough. We can't stand around all day waiting for you. Uncle Harry will arrive any moment.

COURTNEY: And what about Mrs. Brown, Mother, what about Mrs. Brown?

MRS. MAXWELL: I completely forgot about her, and we haven't started packing her box yet.

MR. MAXWELL: Is Mrs. Brown coming by?

MRS. MAXWELL: Yes. I thought that with Mitchell gone and she and her children having so little this year, it would be nice if we packed them a fine basket.

CAROLINE: We'll start packing it, Mother. *(She starts left.)*

COURTNEY: We'll put in a bit of everything. *(She and CAROLINE exit left.)*

MRS. MAXWELL: *(Calling after them.)* I'll be there in a moment. *(Turns to Lucas.)* Lucas, I'm terribly ashamed of you. Ian would be tickled with most anything.

MR. MAXWELL: Who's Ian, Janet?

MRS. MAXWELL: Mrs. Brown's little boy. And I'll bet he didn't get hardly anything and isn't complaining half as much as this one. And Paige, Ian's little sister. . . she'd be happy just to look at some presents. I think the boy has too much, John. He isn't thankful for anything.

MR. MAXWELL: Lucas, open your boxes. *(He walks over to LUCAS, glares down at him.)* Lucas! *(He turns once more to MRS. MAXWELL.)* It's Christmas morning all over the world. In every home there is peace and tranquility. In every home there is happiness and laughter. And what do we have in our home? A moron.

MRS. MAXWELL: Now, John.

MR. MAXWELL: I mean it, Janet. Did you ever see a kid like him, especially on Christmas morning? Just a real moron.

MRS. MAXWELL: *(To LUCAS.)* I know you're disappointed, dear, but I do wish you'd try to take it like a little man. *(Turns to MR. MAXWELL.)* He's just hurt that we didn't get him what he wanted.

MR. MAXWELL: If he doesn't start acting like a human being, he may have something to be hurt about. *(Glare in LUCAS' face.)* Did you hear that, Lucas? *(He then turns disgustedly to MRS. MAXWELL.)* And he acts like he doesn't even hear us.

MRS. MAXWELL: Well, I can't stay in here and put up with that, John. I have dozens of things to do. *(She turns and goes out left.)*

MR. MAXWELL: Lucas, open your boxes. *(He puts hands on hips, glares.)* For the last time, Lucas, I'm asking you to open your boxes. You have something that I know you will be very proud of. I personally picked it out myself.

MR. MAXWELL looks at LUCAS, who continues to stare into space.

MR. MAXWELL: I know how you feel, Lucas. Once, I had my mind set on a knife. For weeks I'd been dreaming of that knife. Then came Christmas—and no knife. And do you know what I said, son? *(Pause, no answer.)* I said I was thankful for what I did get. And I was. *(He starts walking around the room.)* Remember, Lucas, it's more blessed to give than to receive, and I thank you very much for what you gave me.

MR. MAXWELL stops, looks at LUCAS who still says nothing. Then he picks up LUCAS' presents, three or four strong, and crosses to him once again.

MR. MAXWELL: Here are your packages, Lucas. *(He dumps them in LUCAS' chair.)* To Lucas from Mother. *(And he picks up the package, surveys it.)* Here's a note. *(He reads it.)* To my little son, with lots of cheer, I hope you cherish this all year. Mother. *(MR. MAXWELL looks again at LUCAS, who still says nothing, then picks up another package.)* To Lucas from Courtney. *(Picks up another.)* And this one's to Lucas from Caroline. *(Another one.)* And this one—this one—*(He reads the card on it.)* To Lucas from Pop. Here's a present from your pop, I hope you like it, son, a lot. I thought it would be just what you wanted, Lucas. It's genuine pigskin. I thought you'd get . . . a kick out of it.

The doorbell rings.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Sternly.)* Lucas, open your packages. I've said all I'm going to say. I'd hate to give you a time-out on Christmas, son, but if that's what you want, that's what you'll get. *(He turns and starts left.)*

Doorbell rings again.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Coming to a halt.)* The doorbell. *(He turns, goes to door, right, opens it. At the door are MRS. BROWN and her two children. One's first impression would be that they don't have much financially, but that they have a wealth of cheerfulness, love, and companionship.)*

MR. MAXWELL: Hello, Mrs Brown. Merry Christmas. C'mon in.

MRS. BROWN: Merry Christmas, John. We better not. We got snow on our shoes.

MR. MAXWELL: Snow is part of Christmas . . . a big part. It's the Christmas spirit, that's what it is—the Christmas spirit falling from the sky. And with all the Christmas spirit on the outside, what would just a little hurt on the inside? In fact, I'm sure we'd rather like it.

MRS. BROWN: (*Edging in, her children following.*) Is this a good time?

MR. MAXWELL: (*Smiling cordially.*) It's the best time, Mrs. Brown. Janet's in the kitchen basting the turkey and mixing the eggnog—why don't you head on back? In fact, I'll even go in with you. (*He puts his hand on her shoulder and pushes her gently toward the door, left.*) Got to go in every once in awhile and take a big whiff, and maybe a little sip. Nothing like a kitchen on Christmas day, I always say.

MR. MAXWELL and MRS. BROWN exit left. IAN and PAIGE are still standing just inside the door, right, their hands behind them. They're both looking at LUCAS, who is still staring into space. PAIGE comes over and whispers something in Ian's ear, he nods affirmatively. She takes a quick step toward LUCAS, and then stops. Then she takes a rather long step . . . stops again, her hands still behind her back. She smiles at LUCAS, who is still staring sadly into space, ventures another step toward him, and now finds herself standing beside him. She holds her upstage hand, clenched, toward LUCAS. He looks up, then down again. She moves her fist closer to LUCAS, holding it in front of him.

IAN: (*Coming up, stopping behind PAIGE.*) She wants to give you something.

LUCAS holds out a hand, cups it directly under PAIGE's, and she drops an English walnut into it. LUCAS looks at the nut, puzzled. PAIGE smiles happily, her hand darts to her up-stage pocket, and she comes up with another nut, again in a clenched fist. Again she thrusts it toward LUCAS, who cups both his hands together under hers. She raises her fist a foot or so above his, and drops the nut. Then she puts her hands behind her back, steps back a couple of steps, smiles.

IAN: She's Paige. She's my little sister. I'm Ian. You're Lucas? We've heard a lot about you. Our mom's told us about you. (PAIGE whispers something in IAN's ear.) He doesn't care, Paige. You don't care if Paige looks at the Christmas tree, do you, Lucas?

LUCAS: Shoot, no, I don't care. She can have the tree for all I care.

PAIGE looks suddenly to her brother, excited.

IAN: (To PAIGE.) He's making a joke, Paige. (To LUCAS.) We don't have a Christmas tree this year.

PAIGE advances toward the tree, her eyes shining. She stops in front of it, gazes at it, cautiously pushes out a hand toward it.

IAN: Only don't touch nothin', Paige. (She jerks her hand back quickly, looks at LUCAS.) Christmas trees are to be seen and not hurt.

PAIGE: It is a pretty tree.

LUCAS: (Quietly.) Thanks.

IAN: If our dad was alive, we'd have a Christmas tree, wouldn't we, P.? *(She nods affirmatively.)* We'd have one just that big and just that many ornaments all over it. Wouldn't we? *(She smiles and nods affirmatively.)* And look at the Christmas paper and everything. *(They walk around the room, looking at the different bits of wrapping paper scattered there.)* You'll have something wrapped up next year, P., just you watch and see. *(He spots LUCAS' packages that are still wrapped.)* Look at the presents—come here and look at the presents. *(She bounces over, her eyes become saucers as she sees the brilliantly wrapped packages.)* Whose are these, Lucas?

LUCAS: They're mine.

IAN: And you ain't opened them yet, Lucas?

LUCAS: Nope.

IAN: Is it okay if we watch you open 'em? *(PAIGE reaches out and touches a present.)* Don't touch the boxes, Paige. Pretty packages like them are to be seen and not hurt. *(She jerks her hand back.)* And Lucas is gonna let us watch him open boxes. *(They both watch LUCAS closely. He clammers down from out of the chair, sits again, chin in hands. There is a pause, the IAN speaks, fearfully.)* Aren't you gonna open your boxes, Lucas?

LUCAS: *(Sadly.)* Ain't no use. The packages ain't long enough and they ain't wide enough.

IAN: For what?

LUCAS: For what I wanted for Christmas. Shoot. It's a bad deal. Didn't get a thing I wanted. Every boy on the block got one but me. I still can't figure out how it happened. *(PAIGE sniffs.)* What's wrong with her?

IAN: It's 'cause you're sad, Lucas. Paige doesn't like to see anyone sad, especially on Christmas day.

LUCAS: Well, ask her how she'd feel if she didn't get what she wanted? Things like that make a difference.

IAN: I guess you're right, Lucas. But Paige did get to come over here and look at the Christmas tree and ornaments and boxes. *(She nods again.)* Didn't you, P.?

PAIGE: I like the angel on top. You see it, Ian?

LUCAS: *(Looking up slowly.)* Do you mean that was all you got? *(Paige shakes her hand negatively.)*

IAN: She got something else, too.

PAIGE steps up, holds out her clenched fist, LUCAS holds out his hand and she drops another nut into it.

PAIGE: We both got a whole bunch of these walnuts.

LUCAS: Is that all? (*PAIGE smiles, nods affirmatively.*) You mean that's all you got for Christmas? (*She smiles, nods again.*) You just got to come over here, and you just got a few nuts? (*She nods again.*) If that's all you got, why give them to me?

IAN: She knew you were sad, Lucas. Paige wants everybody to have a merry Christmas. Paige's like that.

She smiles, holds out her hand again.

LUCAS: I better not take anymore.

IAN: Go ahead if it would make you happy, Lucas. I got some, too, and I can give mine to Paige.

LUCAS: (*Looking rather sick.*) No, I—I—just go ahead and keep them to yourself. I ain't too fond of nuts, anyway.

IAN: I'm sorry your Christmas is spoiled.

LUCAS: What did you get for Christmas, Ian?

IAN: I got something good, too. I got to play with some of those boys out at the hill. They let me slide on their sleds once.

LUCAS: You mean all you got was a ride on a sled? A ride? A ride isn't a present. You can't hold a ride and show it to the guys. A ride is just a ride and then it's over. That was—all you got?

IAN: It was a lot of fun, Lucas. I hit a jump and flew right up into the air. That's the good thing about Christmas—I don't think those boys would have let me ride on any other day. You're lucky to have so many boys with sleds in your neighborhood.

LUCAS: You mean none of your friends have a sled?

IAN: We will have them some day. But it was great when they let me slide today. Why are people so different on Christmas, do you think? And why can't they be good on every day instead of just one?

LUCAS: Maybe they don't think, Ian.

IAN: Most of the time they won't let me play 'cause my clothes aren't nice and we live on the other side of town. I guess you feel the same way, don't you, Lucas?

LUCAS: I . . . I . . .

IAN: You don't have to say anything. It doesn't make a difference. I already had my Christmas wish answered. And so has Paige. We always have Christmas wishes. Last year, I wished that you and your friends would let me play sled and stuff with them. (*IAN turns and walks slowly toward window. PAIGE stands glued to the spot and watches him. He stands in front of window, looks out.*) But I guess that'll never happen, Lucas, 'cause we're just too different.

LUCAS: (*Rising.*) Well, if I had it my way, Ian, I, well—(*Hands deep in pockets.*) If I had it my way.

IAN: (*Beckoning with his finger.*) Come here, Lucas. I want to show you something. (*LUCAS moves to window, and he peers out.*) Look at your snowman out there. (*PAIGE comes over and presses in between them. They are all three peering out.*) I got a snowman, too, and it looks just like that. Mine's a little dirty 'cause of the trains and cars where I live. But they're both made out of the same stuff. They're both the same on the inside. (*He turns, crosses stage.*) So the only real difference in them is where they were made and where they stand.

LUCAS: (*He shoves hands deep in pockets, starts walking around the room. He finally comes over, sits, sadly talks to himself.*) Lucas, I am disappointed in ya. You ain't got no sense . . . no heart . . . you're selfish. You don't deserve nothing for Christmas . . . not even a walnut.

IAN: I'm sorry you didn't have a happy Christmas, Lucas. And Paige's sorry, too. (*She nods affirmatively.*) Everybody oughta be happy on Christmas.

LUCAS: I'm a jerk.

IAN: Is there anything we could do, Lucas?

LUCAS: I'm even worse than that. I'm two jerks. I oughta be hung up over the fireplace. Hung up by the heel that I am.

PAIGE comes over, holds out her clenched fist again. LUCAS looks up, holds out her clenched fist again. LUCAS looks up, holds out his hand and she again drops a nut into it.

IAN: Paige wants to help you have a real merry Christmas.

LUCAS: *(To PAIGE.)* You mean . . . that's all you got?

IAN: *(Quickly.)* I got one left I can give you if you ain't happy yet, Lucas. Me and Paige don't wanta leave you unless you is happy. *(His hand goes to pocket.)*

LUCAS: I'm three jerks. *(He sinks back in chair.)* I don't deserve even a nut. Not even a nut with a worm in it. I don't even deserve the worm. *(Rises, sticks hands deep in pockets.)* I'm a worm. That's what I am. A slimy worm who doesn't even deserve a nut.

PAIGE and IAN watch wide-eyed as LUCAS starts beating a path around the room.

LUCAS: They're happy with nuts and I get all kinds of stuff and sit around like an ostrich. I stand around with my head in the sand while Christmas goes by. If I had it my way, yes. *(He darts to candy box.)* Here, have a chocolate, Paige. Take five.

She smiles and eagerly takes a couple.

LUCAS: Take some, Ian. *(He does.)* Take another, Paige, Christmas comes but once a year. *(He puts candy box up and runs to the fruit bowl.)* Have an apple, and an orange, and some grapes. Fill your pockets.

She takes some of each, stuffs them into her pockets as LUCAS moves with bowl to IAN.

LUCAS: Take all you want, Ian. There's more where this came from. *(He smiles at them.)* Now we'll open all my boxes. *(To Paige.)* You wanta? *(She nods excitedly.)* You wanta, Ian?

BY DONALD PAYTON

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