

THE CHRISTMAS VISITOR (a short play)  
by Lou Bisignani

Scene: A small apartment in a big city

Time: Christmas Eve, 1944. About Nine P.M.

Setting: An upholstered chair, a small tree on a table  
several small boxes of ornaments. The tree should  
have working lights

Cast: A woman, 30's

A boy, eight or nine

A girl, six or seven

A man, 30's

(Note: the children can be 2 boys or 2 girls)

(Before the lights come up, we here the song "I'll Be  
Home For Christmas". The music fades as the lights  
come up. The woman is seated.

Boy: Mom...Mom...aren't we going to do the tree? It's  
getting late.

Woman: I know honey. In a few minutes. I just need a few  
minutes.

Boy: But Mom...it's getting awful late! And Katie (or Bobby)  
and me have to get to bed soon...you know... 'cause  
Santa...

Woman: I know...you're right. It's just...

Boy: How about I get this box of ornaments open for  
you? O.K., Mom?

Girl: Are you feelin' alright, Mom? You're not gonna be  
sick again, are you, Mom?

Woman: No, honey...I'm not going to be sick. I wouldn't  
want to be sick for Christmas, now would I?

Girl: No, Mommy! You can't be sick for Christmas! Don't  
worry 'cause I said a prayer for you to get all  
better.

Woman: Thank you, honey! (embraces girl) I promise I won't  
worry and I won't be sick...not tonight!

Boy: I opened the box, Mom! Should I start with the bottom of the tree and you do the top and Katie (Bobby) can do the middle? Whatta ya say, Mom?

Woman: I..I just..It's just so hard! Christmas...he...your daddy...he loved Christmas so much.

Girl: Mom...I'll help you. Please Mom...it's almost Christmas.

Woman: I'm sorry, honey. You're right. Let me just rest for a while, then I'll be alright. And we'll do the tree. You'll see. I promise. (exits to bedroom)

Girl: Why does she always cry?

Boy: It's the letter. She always cries when she reads it. I wish it had never come here.

Girl: She shouldn't read it then.

Boy: You wouldn't understand. You're too little.

Girls: What was he like? I can't remember him. Do you? Was he nice?

Boy: Sure I do! You were only a baby when he went away! But I remember him real good!

Girl: Why'd he go away? Didn't he love us?

Boy: Course he loved us but he had to go and fight some real bad guys.

Woman: (emerging from bedroom, has overheard) He was very good, and he loved you both very much! And he didn't want to leave you! He wanted to stay here, but he said that sometimes you have to do things that you don't want to do! And he said he loved you so much that he wanted you to grow up in a world that wasn't full of hate! I think that's why he went...to fight. Neither of us ever thought he wouldn't come back. At least I didn't! I was so proud of him...and he was so handsome in his uniform. I guess I was just a dope! (gathers them in her arms but releases them before the last line;

drops the letter and exits to bedroom, sobbing)  
Boy: (after a pause) It's our fault she's crying. We  
          shouldn't have asked about him. (Handles an ornament)

Girl: What does the letter say? Why does she keep reading  
      it, if it makes her cry?

Boy: You're just a little kid! You just don't know nothin'!

Girl: I tried to read the letter, once but I couldn't! I  
      couldn't understand the words! And It's in cursive!  
      Can you read it to me?

Boy: (picks up letter) It says he died! He was very brave  
      and fought real good....but he's not coming back...  
      ever.

Girl: You're not reading it! Read it to me...please!

Boy: Ahh...all right.! I'll read it, but then, that's it!  
      No more questions! We gotta get this tree decorated!  
      (letter in hand) See...there's a letter, and it's  
      signed with his name, but there's a little note  
      attached at the top.

Girl: Will you read me all of it, please?

Boy: O.K., this is what the note says. 'Dear Mrs. Cabot.  
      You don't know me, but I feel like I know you real  
      well. I was a friend of your husband, Jack, and we  
      got along swell. He was a good guy. I guess you got  
      your letter from the army, and I'm real sorry. But I  
      thought you ought to have this letter that Jack wrote  
      the morning he got killed. I think you should know  
      that he talked about you and the kids all the time.  
      He took a lot of ribbing about that from the other  
      guys in the platoon, but he didn't care. When he got  
      hit, his eyes were burned real bad. The last thing I  
      heard him say was he wouldn't be able to see your  
      face. He died real brave, and because of what he did,  
      he probably saved a couple of us. Anyway, I'm real  
      sorry, like I said and well, I guess that's all I  
      got to say.       Pfc. Jimmy Taggert'

Girl: Is that the whole letter? And what's a platoon?

Boy: You ask the goonyest questions! No, that's not the

letter...that's just a note from some guy who knew him! Now be quiet!... 'Dear Mary, I am writing to let you know how cold it is here now! They say it'll snow again tonight, and we already have a foot of snow on the ground. You know how I love snow, especially this close to Christmas. That's a joke, hon! Some poor guys from the south never saw snow like this, and one froze his feet last night! Of course, that means he's going home. Just writing that made me realize how much I want to go home! Home to you and the kids. I finally got the latest picture you sent. The mail is taking months to get through now. But, I loved getting it! My buddies are sick of me telling them how pretty you are! I dreamt last night that something happened to me and I wouldn't see you again, and I woke right up! It scared me! But I'm O.K. now, because I know it was only a dream. Well, I have to close now. The word is we'll be ending this thing pretty soon, but I know I'm going to miss Christmas again. So do the tree real pretty like you do. I wish I could be there to help. I love you very much and miss you more than I can say. Kiss the kids for me. All love...Jack'

Girl: I wish he could be here! He could help with the tree!  
I think he wouldn't have gone away if he loved us.

Boy: Don't you say that! Don't you ever say that! He loved us! All of us! (There is a sound at the door) What's that? Somebody at the door? It's kinda late.

Girl: (whispered) Better not open the door. It couldn't be Santa...could it?

Boy: No! Uh...I don't think so. (peers through window in door) It's a man. I don't know who. (knocking at door) Maybe he's looking for Mom.

Girl: Don't open the door!

Boy: Don't be silly! (opens door a crack) Who are you looking for, Mister?

Man: (outside) I think I'm lost. This looks like the one I'm trying to find, but I'm a little confused. It's awfully cold! But I don't want to be any trouble.

Boy: Wait a minute, Mister. I'll call my Mom.

Man: Is she sleeping, or something? Uh...never mind. I'm sorry. I didn't mean....

Boy: Well, she's laying down, but I can get her;

Man: Don't bother her. I...I better be on my way.

Boy: No, wait! You can come in...come on!

Man: (door opens) If you think it's O.K. (enters and closes door; he wears shirt and trousers - no coat; he is wearing dark glasses)

Boy: Yeah. It's O.K. You must be cold, you don't have a coat!

Man: I'm O.K., kid. Is this your baby sister (brother)?

Girl: Who are you? And I'm not a baby! I don't think we should have let you in!

Boy: Don't say that! He's lost and it's awful cold outside!

Girl: Should I call Mom? I think we better call her!

Boy: No! Let her alone for now! I'll call her in a little while.

Man: Are you the man (lady) of the house, then?

Boy: Yeah, I guess so. My Dad's dead!

Man: That's rough. Is your Mom O.K.?

Boy: She cries a lot, anymore. She says she wishes it wasn't Christmas!

Man: That why the tree isn't decorated yet? It's getting late.

Boy: We were gonna do it, but Mom started crying again. She says my Dad loved Christmas, and it makes her cry. So she's just taking a little rest.

Man: Well, let her rest. If you'll let me, I could help you with the tree.

Boy: You said you were lost. Who were you looking for, Mister?

Man: It's funny. I can't remember the name. Well...what do you say? Can I help?

Girl: Let him help! I want the tree to get done! Oh, please Mister!

Man: Sure, kid (honey). I love to decorate trees. I love Christmas! (he opens a box, removes several ornaments) You kids hang the low ornaments and I'll do the higher ones.

Boy: There's more in this box! (opens second box)

Girl: I remember this one! I made this last year!

Boy: This is my favorite! He's like an olden day soldier!

Girl: How come you're wearing those dark glasses, Mister? It's dark out.

Man: Oh, I got my eyes hurt. In the war. It helps to wear them. Here...put this one over on that branch.

(As they decorate tree, they can make some more improvised comments; when the tree is almost done, the man should plug in the lights)

Girl: Ohhh! It's beootiful!

Man: Wait! Here's the angel for the top of the tree! Oh, I guess somebody pasted a picture of your Mom's face over the angel's face. See?

Girl: You're right. That's my Mom!

Man: (puts angel on top of tree) There! It's done!

Boy: Gosh! It looks swell! Thanks, Mister!

Girl: I love our tree! It's the best ever! (hugs Man)

Man: I...guess I better get going. I've got a long way to go tonight.

Boy: But, it's snowing! And you don't have a coat or anything! Maybe you should stay here!

Girl: Please...please...please stay, Mister!

Man: I'm afraid I can't. I really have to go' But I'm really glad I was able to see you two. I just wish I could see your mother for a moment. See her face. (he opens door to bedroom and peers in) Ah...she's asleep. (he closes door) Listen, maybe you better not tell your mother I was here. It might...well, it might make her mad. You letting a stranger in the house, and all. (he exits)

Boy: I wish he could have stayed longer.

Girl: He was nice. I wish Mom could have seen him.

Boy: Think we should tell her?

Girl: He said not to. Why, do you think we should?

Boy: I don't know.

Woman: (enters from bedroom) I thought I heard voices. Did I...I guess I was dreaming.

Boy: Are you O.K., Mom? Are you feeling better?

Woman: Yes...yes. I'm alright. I think we better get started on that tree. It's late...and you two have to get to bed soon.

Boy: It's all done, Mom! Look!

Girl: We did it all by ourselves! Nobody helped us, honest!

Woman: Ohh! It's beautiful! How did you...all by yourselves!

Boy: We just did it! Honest we did!

Girl: All by ourselves!

Woman: Well, I'm very, very proud of you. Both of you! I can't believe what a good job you did! (kisses, hugs)

them; notices floor inside door) The floor is wet by the door. Did you go out?

Boy: No! No! We didn't!

Girl: Maybe the man... (Boy nudges her)

Woman: What? What man? Was somebody here? Answer me!

Boy: He asked us not to tell you.

Woman: He...who? Who was in here? While I was asleep! Oh, my God!!

Boy: It's O.K., Mom! He was lost...and cold! And we just... let him in.

Girl: He was nice, Mom. He helped us with the tree.

Woman: Oh, my God! You should never let anyone in! It could be anyone...they could...well, never ever do it again!

Boy: I'm sorry Mom, but he was nice. He really was. And he was real good at doing the tree.

Woman: I don't care! Please. Just promise me you won't do that again!

Girl: Sorry.

Boy: We won't, Mom. We promise.

Woman: What did he want? Who was he? What did he look like?

Boy: He was just cold...and lost. He never said his name. He was just sort of tall and thin. (describe the actor)

Girl: And he had real dark glasses!

Woman: Dark glasses? At night?

Boy: He said his eyes were hurt...in the war!

Woman: In...the war...?

Boy: He didn't want to bother you, he said. That's why we didn't call you.

Woman: He was tall?...Was his hair dark?

Boy: Yeah it was. Why, Mom? Do you think you know him?

Woman: (opens door and looks out) Did he say which way... where he was going? (closes door) What else did he say.

Boy: About what, Mom?

Woman: Think...anything you can remember!...Think! (grips boy's shoulders)

Girl: He said you were an angel, Mom!

Woman: What? What do you mean?

Boy: No! He said the angel was a picture of you, Mom! Is it? It does look like you. Is it, Mom?

Woman: (dazed) You two better get dressed for bed. Go on, now.

Boy: O.K., Mom.

Girl: Goodnight, Mom. (they exit)

Woman: (picks up letter) "...his eyes were hurt bad. The last thing I heard him say...was he...wouldn't be able to see your face..." (she drops letter, moves to tree and touches angel as...)

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK