

ALONE IN THE CROWD

by JOHN COSPER

GENRE: Drama

SYNOPSIS: A mother in a house full of relatives struggles with feelings of loneliness in the aftermath of Christmas dinner.

TIME: Under 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 1

TOPIC: Christmas, Loneliness

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Psalm 25:16, Psalm 68:6

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Christmas

SUGGESTED USE: Worship Service

CHARACTERS:

TERI

PROPS: A dining room table following Christmas dinner: half-empty casserole dishes, empty plates, empty glasses, etc.

COSTUMES: Contemporary

SOUND: Wireless microphone

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: A dining room

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A dining room table set for twelve is completely covered in half-empty casserole dishes of Christmas day fixings, empty plates, and empty glasses. Teri enters, begins the ritual clean up all by herself. Her demeanor is calm, resigned. This is her ritual, and it's not unusual to have to clean up alone.

TERI: It's almost eerie how calm it is. Like a battlefield after the guns stop firing. Hard to believe such a short while ago my father-in-law was giving his future son-in-law the third degree, while my son and his cousin Eric fought over who would make the Super Bowl, and my niece cried and whined through the whole meal because she had slept no more than two hours last night. It's crazy, but I can't imagine that it's any worse than any other house on Christmas. No one would even think of being elsewhere today. Because wherever family is on Christmas day...that's home.

This was certainly home today. Jeff's parents sat right at the end with their three sons, one daughter, three daughters-in-law and son-in-law all present. Eight kids between the four couples so far sat here or in the kitchen. And let's not forget Grandma. I certainly won't. Between Jeff's mother and her it was like listening to Ebert and Roeper review every course of my meal as they tasted my version of their recipes.

The day began around the children and the tree with Santa's gifts and then everyone else's gifts, all those nice ugly sweaters and shoe polisher kits we'll be returning in the morning. Then we put on Rudolph and Year Without a Santa Claus while kids played and the parents slept... well, everyone but the cook and her unwilling teenage daughter assistant. But, now she's happily watching Home Alone with everyone else. (Sarcastically) Least I could do, really, let her take a break after she did all that hard work mashing those potatoes.

Trying to convince herself she's okay, she's where she belongs.

This is what Christmas is about. Being surrounded by family who have their differences, but nevertheless, love each other. I feel so bad for anyone who doesn't have a place to go like this. I invited one young girl from the office whose family lives out west. She didn't have money to fly home and see her folks. Until two years ago, I couldn't even imagine Christmas without my mom. She used to sit right over there, with my step-father. My one link to the past. But now that she's gone...

Well, there's no reason for David to keep coming. He goes to see his kids now. The two of them are in Pittsburgh, so that's where he moved. That's his family... his children, his grandchildren. I can't blame him. Since I was three, David was the only father I ever knew. His girls were my sisters, and David was fond of his wife's grandchildren. But why stay here when he can see his own flesh and blood?