



**drama by george**

George Halitzka • Writer, Director, Educator  
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# You Want Change for That Quarter?

*By George Halitzka*

(KRISTA stands center stage, beside a sign and a collection can--she is taking donations for the Salvation Army in a busy mall. All around her are various SHOPPERS whom we'll meet later; they are in freeze poses indicative of their characters. As the lights come up and we hear tinny music over the loudspeakers, everyone unfreezes and goes his or her separate way. GEORGE and LAURA, a young couple, begin to cross the stage. GEORGE is staggering under the weight of many gift-wrapped boxes and shopping bags. His honey is walking briskly along with nothing in her hands, carrying on a steady stream of dialogue.)

LAURA

. . . And forget Aunt Selma; she bought me socks for my birthday! Socks! They weren't even Abercrombie; some Wal-Mart special . . . could you believe it?

(No answer.)

Could you believe it, Georgie?

(She glances backwards her struggling husband.)

What's taking so long?

(GEORGE is trying to say something, but has a shopping bag in his mouth. He spits it out.)

GEORGE

Laura--Sugar Cookie--do we have to finish Christmas shopping in [Current Month]?

LAURA

Now Georgie, you know the early bird gets the Fall Clearance. Let me help.

(With total sincerity, LAURA takes a tiny bag off the top of the stack and keeps walking. GEORGE staggers over to a nearby bench, where he drops his load.)

LAURA (*cont'd*)

You're keeping track of all this, right? You know what happens when I see a sale . . . There are some things money can't buy, but for everything else, there's a second mortgage.

(A beat.)

Oh! What are we doing for your mother? I thought maybe a new vacuum, but the woman already rides a broomstick . . . And Aunt Mildred! What do you get for the Cat Lady?

(a sudden inspiration)

Carpet deodorizer! Perfect! Are you coming, Georgie-Porgie?

GEORGE

Why don't I wait here, Cream Puff?

LAURA

Whatever your little heart desires. Hold that.

(She shoves the one bag she is carrying into his mouth and walks away. GEORGE is left to think dark thoughts about his blushing bride.)

GEORGE

When they said marriage was a second job, I didn't think I'd be a baggage handler!

(VINCE and AMBER enter. VINCE is carrying a couple of bags from the less-expensive stores in the mall. AMBER is busy dropping hints. While VINCE makes some sarcastic remarks, it's important that they remain good-natured; he's more amused than annoyed by AMBER's incessant hint-dropping.)

AMBER

Dad! Are you listening?

VINCE

Ever since we got here.

AMBER

Do you know what everybody in my class does on Saturdays?

VINCE  
Make Dad take them to the mall?

AMBER  
No! They play PSP.

VINCE  
Really?

AMBER  
I saw one on sale for a hundred and fifty bucks!

VINCE  
What am I, the Birthday Fairy?

AMBER  
I think she has a smaller gut. Ashley Blake's dad tells her what *she's* getting.

VINCE  
Do I *look* like Ashley Blake's dad?

AMBER  
No, he has hair. I won't tell Mom--*promise!*

VINCE  
Tell her what?

AMBER  
About the PSP!

(VINCE heads over towards the donations bucket.)

Where are you going?

VINCE  
(He drops something in the kettle.)  
God bless!

KRISTA  
Thank you, sir!

AMBER  
Dad, that was PSP money!

VINCE  
Do you remember last year when I couldn't find a job?

AMBER

Yeah . . .

VINCE

The Salvation Army helped us get school clothes for you and Josh. Right now we have a little extra, so I want to say "thank you."

AMBER

Nothing says grateful like video games for your daughter.

VINCE

Wait and see, Amber.

(VINCE and AMBER exit with AMBER still whining ad lib. GEORGE speaks confidentially to KRISTA.)

GEORGE

Listen to her! Only thinking about herself. If my kids talk like that, they won't live to see twelve!

(CATHY, a stressed-out college shopper, enters with a large calculator. She is doing some very complex math as she enters.)

CATHY

So if I eat Ramen all week, I'll have fifteen dollars . . . but that stupid parking ticket; that's ten bucks. Just enough for milk and cereal . . . ohhh, I forgot about the Stats book for midterms.

(slight pause)

I haven't given blood in a couple weeks--

(In her rush, she doesn't see KRISTA! CATHY runs right into the poor girl, knocking her down.)

Omigosh! I'm so sorry! I mean, I'm *really* sorry! I can't tell you how bad I feel!

CATHY

(starting to get up)

It's okay--

CATHY

(pushing her back down)

Are you sure? You aren't going to sue me . . . I only have money for Ramen!

KRISTA

I'm fine! Listen, have you tried Decaf?

CATHY

(scribbling on her list)

Coffee! I forgot coffee! Omigosh . . . you're one of those Salvation Army people! I *always* give you something. Here--take my calculator. And my phone number! Call me next month, and I'll give you ten dollars--plus interest 'cause I forgot.

(She drops to her knees.)

CATHY (*cont'd*)

Please forgive me! Some poor homeless person will catch pneumonia and lose hope and kill himself in the gutter because I was so greedy! Ohhh . . . how could I forget?

(CATHY sticks her phone number--and calculator--in the bucket, then starts to exit.)

KRISTA

Um . . . God bless you!

CATHY

You're just trying to make me feel guilty!

(rolling up her sleeve)

Red Cross, here I come!

(CATHY exits, wringing her hands. GEORGE shakes his head and speaks to KRISTA again.)

GEORGE

Forgot to budget for the Salvation Army? Some people aren't thankful for what they've got!

(REVEREND ARTHUR P. PREACHMORE [we'll just call him ART] enters. He walks over to KRISTA, carrying an enormous Bible.)

ART

Pr-aise God for young people like you who help the less fortunate! As the Lord's most *Hoooooly* Book tells us in *Second Opinions*, the third chapter and the sixth verse, "It is more blessed to give than to cast the first stone at a glass house!"

ART (*cont'd*)

Well done, my *goooooood* and faithful servant, sayeth The Most Right Reverend Arthur P. Preachmore the Third!

KRISTA

Thanks . . . Reverend.

ART

Don't thank *me*, young lady! Our Heavenly Father has blessed me so abundantly that I may give to your most *woooorthy* cause!

(He pulls out his wallet and counts out five crisp bills, very deliberately and with a flourish.)

Would *five hundred dollars* help those in need?

KRISTA

Yes, Reverend, anything you can give--

ART

Say no more, young lady! As the *Goooooood* Book says, "Whatever ye do unto the least of these my brethren, ye do it with five loaves and three fishes!" God has given me so much--

(indicating KRISTA)

so I may help those with so little.

KRISTA

God bless you, Reverend.

ART

(laying hands on KRISTA's forehead)

May *Goooooood* shine His light upon thee!

(ART exits. GEORGE is left staring after him in disbelief.)

GEORGE

Is he still married to Tammy Faye?

(Finally, at long last, LAURA returns! She comes over to the bench, carrying one more shopping bag. She sneaks up behind our friend GEORGE and puts her hands over his eyes.)

LAURA

Guess who!

GEORGE

Don't do that, Love Muffin--

LAURA

I found the *perfect* present for your mother!

(She takes out a box and hands it to him.)

GEORGE

(reading)

"One large fruitcake."

LAURA

Anything happen while I was gone?

GEORGE

You won't believe this. A guy tried to donate to the Salvation Army, and his daughter just wanted video games!

LAURA

How greedy!

GEORGE

Then this college girl forgot to budget for charity!

LAURA

I hope she feels guilty!

GEORGE

And a preacher put in five hundred bucks so everybody would notice!

LAURA

What a show-off!

GEORGE

Do you have *our* donation, Sugar Plum?

LAURA

Of course, Apple Dumpling! I'm thankful we've been blessed with high credit limits so we can give it away.

(LAURA hands GEORGE some money. He walks over the KRISTA and puts it in the kettle with a smile.)

GEORGE

God bless you!

KRISTA

You, too. Thank you, sir.

(GEORGE turns and begins to walk away. Under her breath--)

Hm! You want change for that quarter?

(KRISTA innocently turns away. GEORGE turns around and looks at her for a moment--no, it couldn't be. We hear some tinny music over the loudspeakers again as LAURA begins to load up GEORGIE-PORGIE again, and the lights fade to blackout . . . )

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