

The Christmas Letters

A 2-Act Dramedy

By Mark Bradford

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Quick Info

Stage is set up as follows: Stage left will be where Wendy and Mark converse. It will start with a living room scene with a Lazy Boy (see Archie Bunker) and there will be some set changes

Stage Right is where Young Wendy and Young Mark re-enact scenes from their Christmas letter. There will be set changes there as well.

Character List:

Mark (age 82) Think Archie Bunker

Wendy (Age 78 Think Lucille Ball)

Young Wendy (referred to as YW) (Age varies 21-45)... Think Lucille Ball

Sally – Wendy's best friend age 21-25) ... think Rhoda Morganstern in Mary Tyler Moore Show

Allen – The Life insurance salesman (age 35-40)...think Seinfeld's David Puddy

Young Mark (YM) – (age 21-45) think Ross Geller from Friends

Voice of God – Male Voice enhanced to sound Godlike

Maddie – 20 female home from college and not too thrilled about it. Think Haley Dunphy in Modern Family

Sequence of Play:

Song 1 Young Mark sings “Looking through the Eyes of Eileen”

Act 1 Scene 1 Part 1 Older Mark and Wendy explain how the Christmas letter got started

Act 1, Scene 1 Part 2 Young Wendy and Sally on how Wendy and Mark met

Song 2 Video Ah yes, I Remember it well

Act 1, Scene 2 Part 1 Old Mark and Wendy discuss the event that created the reality approach

Act 1, Scene 2 Part Two Young Mark Insurance salesman Allen, and Young Wendy

Song 3

Act 1 Scene 3 Part 1 Intro to the garbage letter Old Mark and Wendy

Act 1 Scene 3 Part 2 Young Mark and Wendy Garbage Day

Act 1 Scene 4 Part 1 Old Mark Reading Porn

Act 1 Scene 4 Part 2 God speaks to Young Mark

End of first act

Opening to second act

Old Mark Reads Open Letter to John Lennon

Act 2, Scene 1 Part 2 Maddie comes out as gay

Song 6 Nobody told me there'd be days like this Lennon

Act 2 Scene 2 Part 1 Mark meets YM, Wendy meets YW

Act 2 Scene 2 Part 2 Meeting our first grandchild in Covid Through the window /open door

Song 7

Act 2 Scene 3, Part 1 We made it, didn't we Wendy

Act 2 Scene 3 Part 2 The retirement 7-month trip

Song 8 Teach your children well

Act 2 Scene 4 Part 1 Old Mark and Young Mark Old Wendy and young Wendy conversation

END OF PLAY Oh Blah di, Oh Blah Da

ACT 1, SCENE 1 PART 1

Setting:

As the lights come up, On one side of the stage there is a living room with MARK (75) snoozing away in his Lazy-Boy, A few seconds after the lights come on, WENDY (70 and healthy) slips through the door and peers into Mark's face. She runs her hand over his mouth to see if he is sleeping and doesn't notice his eyes pop open. Instead she scurries around and everytime she looks at him he closes his eyes and pretends to be asleep. This goes on for 30 seconds.

Finally MARK can't stand it.

MARK

Jesus Wendy, Can you just leave me alone? I'm trying to sleep here!

WENDY

So you ARE awake! You won't believe what I just found. I can't wait to show you!

MARK (groans)

It's not another cat, is it?

WENDY

Oh Goodness no! The last one only lasted a week before it escaped.

MARK

Good! I always hated cats.

WENDY

You are so silly. That's why I love you.

MARK

Is that the reason? I've been trying to figure that out. You know when I go up to heaven and St. Pete asks me what I did that was right, I won't know what to say because you won't be there to interrupt me.

WENDY: (laughs)

There you go again! (Pauses) Well, don't you want to know what I found?

MARK

I have a feeling you are going to tell me anyway

WENDY

Remember all those Christmas letters you wrote when we started dating and when the kids were still home?

MARK

You mean the ones I wrote that were hilarious but you always hated them because they were not exactly, down to the letter, true?

WENDY (Claps her hands)

YES!

MARK

You mean the ones we sent to our friends and neighbors and your college buddies?

WENDY Claps her hands again)

YES!

MARK

You mean the ones we argued about from the end of September through December and cost us over \$400 a year just to mail out? You mean THOSE Christmas letter?

WENDY Turns to audience, Gleefully)

Yes!

MARK

The ones that Our daughter made into a little booklet a few years ago?

WENDY

Yes! Yes! Yes!!

MARK

Nope, I don't remember.

(WENDY's face falls in confused disappointment (two second count)

WENDY

Well, I found a copy and I thought it would be fun to read through some of them We haven't read through them in a long time.

: MARK (sarcastically)

Yeah... that sounds like a boat load of fun.

WENDY

Oh come on, people loved our letters. And as I read through them, it is like reading our life history. They talk about how we met, why you started sending them out instead of regular cards...

MARK

Oh yeah, it all had to do with that life insurance guy. What a bastard he was.

WENDY

Well, his wife was a friend of mine so I was trying to be nice...and when we had our kids and all kinds of things.

MARK

Wendy, that stuff is BORING. I mean, if you wrote a play about them, who in their right mind would come and see it? Nobody! That's who.

WENDY

I think you would be surprised. The stories are really funny and people like to laugh. Plus, I think what we went through was pretty normal. And people laugh at normal.

MARK: (Longer Pause)

I suppose. And we are about as boring as watching paint dry, so I guess that makes us normal.

WENDY

Boring? I don't think our life was boring at all. You were always able to find humor in situations. The things you wrote were hilarious.

MARK

And then you changed them all around to make them true. What fun is there in that?

WENDY

Well, whatever. I would like to read the story about how we met.

MARK

That old story? No one cares about it. Come to think about it, it was probably the biggest mistake of your life. Besides, you wrote that one, not me.

WENDY

It was in a letter I wrote to my mom, silly. Just listen to it.

MARK

OK, but make it fast

WENDY: (Looks excited, pulls a piece of paper and starts reading while MARK pulls a pillow over his head. WENDY turns to the audience and starts reading.

Dear Mom. I will see you in a few days for Christmas, but I have exciting news!

I think I met the boy of my dreams!

I was at a party with Sally and in walks this tall guy. His name is Mark and, well, he is very tall and the sparks are flying. I will tell.....

END OF SCENE 1, PART 1

ACT 1 SCENE 1 PART 2

LIGHTS ON LIVING ROOM GO OFF. STAGE RIGHT LIGHTS COME ON TO A ROOM WHERE SALLY (25 AND IN A PARTY DRESS) IS MAKING SNACKS. THERE IS A DOOR THAT LEADS BACKSTAGE AND IT IS NOISY BACKSTAGE. A REAL PARTY.

YOUNG WENDY (YW) COMES RUSHING THROUGH THE DOOR

YW

Sally!, Sally! It's happening I can't believe it's happening

SALLY

Wendy! What's happening?

YW

Sally, Oh my God Sally! Him! Him! I met Him!

SALLY

You met who?

YW

Him! I met HIM! And he's sooo tall?

SALLY

Wait a second....You met Mark? The guy from next door?

YW

Yes! OMG Yes! I was just talking about how much fun it is to go grocery shopping and he said "Well, wait til you buy gas!" and it's HIM Sally I know it's him! Sally....he's soooo tall.

SALLY

Wendy, slow down. This is Mark?

YW

Yes!

SALLY

From across the hall?

YW:

Yes!

SALLY

The guy who wears disco clothes to go work That Mark?

YW (weaker)

Yes ?

SALLY

The guy who loses his keys and has to break into his own apartment?

YW (weaker still)

Yes?

SALLY

The guy with a college degree but works for minimum wage? That Mark? (Sally looks disapprovingly)

YW(almost a whisper)

Yes? (3 count pause, Wendy brightens and is instantly excited) But Sally He's so tall!

SALLY

Wendy, as your best friend...Listen to me! Mark is a rube. He doesn't have money. He burns water when he cooks. He plays Old Beatles Music all night long. (while SALLY lists all the negatives, Wendy looks more and more downcast. Then she brightens and in a throaty-sexy voice)

YW

But he's so

SALLY

Tall! I get it. He's tall. He hasn't shaved in 3 weeks, Wendy and his place smells like a sewer. Wendy, are you nuts? Snap out of it!!

Wendy is not paying attention. She is peeking in the back room where Mark is. Wendy is swooning. Sally grabs her and pulls her back to center stage.

SALLY

Wendy! He's a rube! Get it? A rube! He has no money. He wears disco pants! Wendy!

WENDY

But he's so tall. And he doesn't smoke. And he has lots of friends. And his family is close. Sally, I love you, but...

(WENDY frees herself and heads toward the back door where she peeks in and then looks back at SALLY)

WENDY (now fully turned on)

Oh my God, Sally, he's just so tall!

WENDY walks through the door while Sally looks on incredulous. Wendy leans back through the doorway and waves Ta-ta with her fingers

END OF ACT 1, SCENE 1 PART 2

CHANGE SET MUSIC "Ah Yes, I remember it well" Maurice Chevalier

ACT 1 SCENE 2 PART 1 Three Weeks Later

Stage Left is the same only MARK is now sitting with a blanket on his lower body. Stage Right is a kitchen table with three seats

Light come up with MARK again sitting in his easy chair, snoring. WENDY comes in, as before, checks to make sure he is breathing and then goes around making noises until MARK wakes up

MARK

Geez what is it this time?

WENDY

Who, me?

MARK

Who else would it be. I was just sitting here thinking all my important thoughts and Boom, there you are.

WENDY

I just want to talk to my husband! How are you feeling now, dear. Your fever is still over 101. I'm worried about you.

MARK

I'm fine. Don't worry about me.

WENDY

Well, I'm going to read you another Christmas letter. I told our daughter we were reading them, she said her favorite one was about our dog peeing on the carpet She said it was your best.

MARK (laughs)

Ah yes. That was a good one. That was our very first one after we got married and we had just gotten that braggy letter from that insurance guy, telling us about his perfect life and his perfect daughter and his perfect condo in Tahoe and his new Mercedes.

WENDY

Yep that's the one.

MARK

I remember that as I was reading it that Hillary our 3-legged dog was peeing in the corner of the dining room, less than five minutes after I had taken her out. His life was so perfect, and here my dog was peeing in the corner. That pissed me off.

WENDY

That was our first "fun" letter and 40 years later we were still doing it.

MARK

Gosh, I hated that guy.

LIGHTS GO BLACK

END OF ACT 1 SCENE 2, PART ONE

ACT 1 SCENE 2, PART 2

LIGHTS GO ON STAGE RIGHT

Young Mark (YM) is sitting across the kitchen table from ALLEN. They are glaring at each other. There is obvious conflict.

YM

So, let me get this straight. You want me to buy whole life insurance

ALLEN

That's right

YM

Can you explain what this thing called, let me see, ahhh here it is...whole life premium deferred annuities? Explain what that means to me?

ALLEN

Nope

YM

Nope?

ALLEN

That's right

YM

Why not?

ALLEN

Because only smart people can understand it

YM

Only smart people?

ALLEN

That's right.

YM

So you don't think I'm smart enough to understand it

ALLEN

If the shoe fits (pause)..are you going to buy or not. I have things to do

YM

Well go ahead and leave cause I'm not buying.

ALLEN

Yes you are. Cause I'm not leaving until you do.

YM

You're not leaving?

ALLEN

That's right. Not until you buy something.

YM enters from the rear door. Holding grocery bags.

YW

Hey Allen. Good to see you. Are you boys getting along?

Mark and Allen glare at each other while YW gives them cookies but notices the tension

YW

So?

YM

So Mr. Insurance guy over there just implied that I am stupid because I don't know what whole life premium deferred annuities are.

YW

Well do you?

YM

No!

YW (turns to ALLEN)

Well, Allen, do you?

ALLEN

Of course not, no one knows what whole life premium deferred annuity means. Be real.

YW (turns to MARK)

See, was that so hard? No one knows what it is. But my friend from work tells me we should have it So I think we should buy it..

YM (turns to YW as if to strangle her but stops)

Wendy, you do realize that if we buy a life policy we are betting we are going to die before we turn 65. And Allen over here is betting we won't. Don't you get it, we only win if I DIE?

ALLEN

Well, not if you buy whole life, you see

YM stops ALLEN with a stare

YM

I want you to leave....NOW

ALLEN

Nope

YM

What?

ALLEN

Not gonna happen. Do you realize that unless I sell something that I have wasted my entire evening for nothing. No sir, I'm not leaving until you buy something.

YM

But you've already been here for three hours. You have called me stupid, and now you tell me that whole life premium preferred annuity isis...is I don't know what it is.

ALLEN

See, now you are getting it. Just sign here and I'll leave. But I'm not leaving until you sign it.

YW after a long pause

That does kind of make sense, Mark

YM

Arrrggghhhh...Just give me the damn paper.

ALLEN

Wonderful! Sign here and here. And, oh yeah I need a check for \$1,000. (Wendy hands ALLEN a check and ALLEN gets up with a wry smile) Oh yeah, your dog is peeing on the carpet over there.

YM

Arrrrggghhh

Stage does dark

END OF ACT 1 SCENE 2, PART 2

ACT 1 SCENE 3 PART 1

Stage Left lights come up.

MARK is again sitting in his Lazy Boy, snoring away. WENDY enters from the rear and does her usual, again checking to see if MARK is awake. MARK grabs her hand

MARK

Ha! Gotcha!

WENDY (laughs)

Cut it out, you old fool!

MARK

You know, one of these days I'm going to miss you waking me up all the time.Nah, I won't (laughs).

WENDY

You will miss me when I'm gone and you know it. I will miss you for sure

MARK

Yes, I suppose, With all the broken hips and heart attacks and pneumonia going around our friends, I feel like I am dodging bombs all the time. The bad news is, one is going to eventually hit me and no one knows when that will happen to them.

WENDY

Yeah, I know. But guess what I have! (she waves the Christmas letter book in the air) I brought another Christmas letter you might find funny. It was the one we wrote when we first had Glen and our lives changed forever. You made that funny chart that showed how our days had changed from partying on weekends to feeding Glen or changing his diaper 24 hours a day.

MARK (laughs a little)

Well that was how it was. It was an amazing thing that first couple of months when he was born. We went from thinking about ski vacations and weekends camping with friends to trying to do one simple thing. Keep Glen from crying.

WENDY

It wasn't that simple, was it. Seems like we were either sleeping, feeding him, or changing his diaper.

MARK

There was always one other thing that we talked about.

WENDY

What?

MARK

It was something that happened every week. Don't you remember?

WENDY

No, I don't. Hmmm

MARK

Well, let me give you a hint. After we gave up using cloth diapers because, well because, where did we throw the disposable diaper?

WENDY (thinks for a moment, then brightens)

In....the...Garbage.

Stage left lights go out

END OF ACT 1, SCENE 3 PART 1

ACT 1 SCENE 3 PART 2

Stage Right lights come up. It is a bedroom set with a double bed where YW and YM are sleeping. Wendy wakes up in a panic and starts pounding on Mark.

YW

Mark! Mark! Mark! Mark!

YM

Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!

YW

Wake Up! Wake up! Don't you hear it?

YM

Hear what? It's 6 in the morning!

YW

Listen! (Both try to listen)

Don't you hear it?

MARK (looks incredulously at YW, (pause)

No!

YW

Listen! (They both listen)

YM

Nope, Nothing!

YW (Starts pounding on YM with a pillow)

It's the garbage truck! It's the garbage truck!

YM

Uh oh

YW (looks menacingly at YM)

Be honest! Did you put the trash out last night? Did you? And don't you dare lie!

YM

Well, uhhhh

YW (hitting YM with pillow again)

You didn't! You didn't! You didn't!

YM

Well

YW (stops in middle of pillow fight...gets wild eyed, looks at audience)

We...must...take...out...the garbage

We...MUST...take...out...the..GARBAGE...NOW

YM (pleading)

But we were only here two days this week. The can is empty!

YW (pauses to listen)

Can't you hear that? Can't you hear the garbage truck? Oh My God.

(YW finds YM's pants and throws them at him)

Now get out!

YM

What ?

YW

Get out there and do your job!

YM

But Wendy

YW

Don't you But Wendy me. It's YOUR job to take out the garbage! Now get out there and DO YOUR JOB!!

YM (puts on pants and goes running out the door)

YW looks at audience with a satisfied smile

Lights go down

END OF ACT 1, SCENE 3, PART 2

ACT 1, SCENE 4 PART 1

Stage Left lights up, Mark is thumbing through a letter on his own as he sits in his chair. Stifling a giggle here or there, he seems wary of making sure Wendy doesn't see him reading them. Wendy comes blustering in and Mark hurriedly hides the letter. Wendy sees him hiding something and stops in front of him

WENDY

OK! Out with it!!!

MARK

Out with what?

WENDY (holds out her hand)

Come on hand it over.

MARK

Hand over what?

WENDY

Whatever you are reading. Come on, hand it over. Oh My Gosh, Is it porn?

MARK

Porn?

WENDY

Oh my gosh, Mark. It' is porn, isn't it? (WENDY starts breaking down) Markkkkkk...why would I need porn. Aren't I enough?

MARK (looks aghast)

Wendy it's not porn!

WENDY (Out of control)

I have tried to be a good wife! I really have! I try to get interested in sports. I have tried to play golf. I have tried to like some of your weird friends. I have even tried some of those crazy things you saw on the INTERNET. None of that worked? You are using Porn????

MARK

Wendy!!!!

WENDY

What?

MARK

It isn't porn!

WENDY (stops wailing)

It isn't?

MARK

No! Thirty years ago, maybe, well...probably....but not now!

WENDY

Then what are you reading? Old Baseball books? Democrat books? New Age Religion? What?

MARK (sheepishly and unwillingly pulls out the papers)

It's the Christmas letters. See, I'm reading our old Christmas letters. (tosses them at WENDY)

WENDY (looks through them)

But, But, But why?

MARK

As it turns out, they are kind of cool. And the ones we wrote when the kids were little are actually pretty funny.

(Pause) You thought I was reading porn? That's hilarious!!

WENDY

That's so sweet? But why are you hiding them?

MARK

Well, there are things a man just doesn't want his wife to know.

WENDY

But you are reading about our life together. That is so sweet!

MARK

Of course. Why would I want to read about anything else?

WENDY

That's why I love you! (she exits)

MARK

That's why I love you too sweetly! (MARK turns to make sure she is gone, reaches under his blanket and pulls out a huge book, clearly entitled Debby Does Dallas

Finally, back to business (starts leafing through book)

Stage left lights go out.

END OF ACT 1 SCENE 4 PART 1

ACT 1 SCENE 4 PART 2

Stage right lights come up

YM is fast asleep in bed

VOICE OF GOD

Mark!

YM (no response God tries again)

VOICE OF GOD

Mark Bradford! (MARK rustles, Voice of God gets angry)

VOICE OF GOD

Mark Bradford! Get up!

(no movement by YM, long pause)

VOICE OF GOD

Breakfast is ready!

YM (wakes up instantly)

Who? What? Where?

VOICE OF GOD (laughs)

That one always works. I love it. Ahem....Mark... This is God

YM looks confused and then lays back down

VOICE OF GOD

Mark!

YM (disgustedly)

What?

VOICE OF GOD

Wake up! This is GOD

YM

Really? And I'm John Lennon

VOICE OF GOD

You are NOT John Lennon. He happens to be sitting beside me. (Pause) I am really God, Yahway, Mr. Omnipotent,
The three-in-one.... you know....God!

YM

Really? (pause) Well, Gee, OK. What do you want? And don't make it too weird ok?

VOICE OF GOD

Who, Me? Just because I made someone build a boat and load it up with animals? Just because I made someone else live inside a whale? I even threw a couple of people into a pit. I'll admit that those were weird. The best one was having Moses talk to a burning bush when I gave him the 12 Commandments. That was crazy. But for you, this one is easy.

YM (doubtful)

Wait, 12 Commandments?

VOICE OF GOD

I gave Moses 12, but you know how men are. Anyway, that is beside the point.

YM

Well..OK, what do you want?

VOICE OF GOD

Mark. I need to tell you . Something important.

YM (still not sure)

Well, OK. Should I take notes?

VOICE OF GOD (sounds slightly angry)

Just listen up, OK?

YM (accepting)

OK What is it?

VOICE OF GOD

You are doing fine.

YM (long pause)

What?

VOICE OF GOD

Mark, I said you are doing fine.

YM

Alright, Is this some kind of joke?

VOICE OF GOD

Not a joke

YM

You came all the way here, AND brought John Lennon along, just to tell me I'm doing fine?

VOICE OF GOD

Yep

YM

Why?

VOICE OF GOD

Because it looked like you needed to hear it.

YM

Really?

VOICE OF GOD

Yes Really. Maybe more than most. Just look at you.

YM

(feels his body) I think I'm doing OK. What's wrong with me. Maybe a few bags under my eyes and sometimes I yell at the kids. But why choose me?

VOICE OF GOD

Silly human. I talk to everyone. But some people never listen. Where do you think "Strawberry Fields Forever" came from. Or John's best song "Imagine". Even "I wanna hold your hand" John actually listened to me. Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, not so much.

YM (laughs)

Hey you really are God.

VOICE OF GOD

The Big Guy. That's me.

YM

Then do you mind if I ask you a few questions about what happened last year?

VOICE OF GOD

Fire away! (a gunshot goes off) VOICE OF GOD laughs

Fire away! Get it? That's a little God humor.

YM

Ok Here goes. You know I have three kids

VOICE OF GOD

You're welcome.

YM

What?

VOICE OF GOD

Do you have any idea how hard it is to create life? You should try it sometime.

YM

I think I had a hand in it, didn't I?

VOICE OF GOD

Well, that wasn't your hand, but OK.

YM

Ahh, you are a bit of a jokester, aren't you.

VOICE OF GOD

You bet I am. For example, I could have made asparagus taste like ice cream, but I didn't. I could have made sugar healthy, but I didn't. I was in a foul mood when I did some of that stuff.

YM

Well...Thanks, I guess

VOICE OF GOD

So, you have questions? I only have a few minutes. I've got a lot going on.

YM

Well, first there is my son, named Glen and he turned 16 this year and promptly had an accident in my car and...

VOICE OF GOD (Interrupts)

He'll be fine. Next?

YM

Then there is Julie. She thinks she is the queen and has this high shrill voice that..

VOICE OF GOD (Interrupts)

She'll be fine....Next?

YM

Then Maddie, she is 10 and she doesn't have a lot of friends and she kind of gets lost in the shuffle I think (a prolonged silence) God? You still there?

VOICE OF GOD

Still here.

YM

And Maddie?

VOICE OF GOD

Let's just say, you have a surprise coming.

YM

A surprise? A good surprise or a bad surprise?

VOICE OF GOD

Can't tell you. It's a secret.

YM

A secret? God has secrets?

VOICE OF GOD

Oh My, just look at the time! I got to go. Sorry

YM

Wait? What?

VOICE OF GOD

It's a secret, Mark. You will just have to trust me. You know...like the phrase "In God We Trust."

YM

You came up with that one too?

VOICE OF GOD

Of course....But I really got to go. See ya!

YM

Hey! That's not fair. Wait a minute!

END OF ACT 1

Intermission

song: And so this is Christmas by John Lennon

Act 2, Scene 1, Part 1
An Open Christmas Letter to John Lennon

From Mark Bradford

December 2024

So this is Christmas And what have you done?

Another year over And a new one just begun

And so this is Christmas I hope you had fun

The near and the dear one The old and the young

Dear John:

It was 24 years ago this month when someone shot you dead. One bullet from the chamber of a gun held by a crazed fan ended it. Ended it for you and it ended it for all of us. It was sad. All you were doing was returning home to your family at a time when it seemed you had just figured out who you were, a simple father with a loving family who was cursed with the legacy of being a Beatle.

So sad.

You were one of those guys who always asked the hard questions that had seemingly easy answers.

Why was there war? Who was Jesus, really?

And this one, I will try to answer today. "And so this is Christmas, and what have you done?"

Gulp.

The answer, to be honest, is not a lot.

For all of my good intentions, not a lot.

Like you, when I was younger I was driven by the need to BE SOMEBODY BIG. You succeeded, I did not. While your words and songs will live on forever, I have spent my days writing thousands of words that only a few will ever read, teaching students who are only half-interested, and being a husband and father to three incredible kids and one truly incredible wife.

It has been a good life. For many years, I was Mr. Volunteer, thinking that I could help society. I was wrong. The Mega-Forces of the television, Internet, and now AI are much more powerful than my little voice of reason and respect and love and all the good things. I, unlike you, am a small voice crying in the night.

This very day, all around me, I encounter people who are angry, full of despair, and ignorant to the fact that they control their own emotions, their own destiny, and their own attitude. I fear I, and my other baby-boomers have failed. We have the tools, we lack the moral compass.

I will tell you, John, that Christmas has never been a “thing” for me. The whole Christmas Story has been an unsolvable puzzle because of the “religion” that has grown around the simple message of “Love one another.” Yet that same religion prefers to exclude those who need love the most?

While love is not all you need, it should be the base of how we exist, as opposed to “he who has the most toys wins.” I began to reject Christmas as a time for hope when the capitalist systems began using it as a time for profit and others were using it as a time to control, sometimes to even start wars.

Now, I keep Christmas in my own way every day. That way is simply to wake up, be positive, and try to treat people around me nicely even though there are times when I do not feel like it. I know now that I am a miracle. And so is everyone else. Why do we treat other miracles the way we do?

But you see, John, those simple concepts were not taught to me in church. They were not taught to me in school.. They were taught to me by my father.

You never had a stay-at-home father, John, so you spent much of your life flailing around trying to figure it all out. It is not easy being a dad, and many times I wonder if I did more harm than good.

That leads me back to the question, what have I done?

The easy answer, at age 75, is I have “checked out,” leaving the task of “improving society” to others while I have wandered off into a smaller, less confusing and less demanding space. I no longer volunteer for

anything and somehow I feel OK with that. I never really felt like my contributions were of any lasting effect, anyway, unlike yours.

Meanwhile, my generation of baby boomers is now full of greybeards and hip replacement candidates. We stand at the brink of World War Three led by men who value power over people. It seems to me that selfish lunatics run and ruin this world. Meanwhile, most of us spend our time being nice, helping others and saving lives.

It is a miraculous time to be alive and I am sorry you missed it.

You never got to be 70. You never got the opportunity to have aches and pains and COVID and to experience a whole life. It was not until I was 68 that I figured out my place in the world was NOT as a “life changer of others.” Instead, it is simply as a get-along guy, just trying to stay alive, have a bit of fun, and love others as best I can.

Your old buddy, Paul, of course, is a billionaire. I am not sure you would feel comfortable as a billionaire. I mean, how many millions should one guy have while people down the street are selling their blood for food? Maybe you would have had blinders on, too, but I think you and Mr. George Harrison felt uncomfortable with all the stardom and adulation and the dollars that come with it.

I think you would have been “different.” And I think we, as a society, need “different.” Now we get Mega Concerts, instant heroes, the NFL, and March Madness, as if any of that actually matters.

But, John, we killed you, the same way we killed Jesus, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Ghandi, and so many others who seemed to be trying to do the right thing.

Seems like the lunatics win in this world. It seems that guns can silence words. Even the Beautiful words. Imagine

And, so, it is Christmas, and what have I done?

Not a lot, really. Just enough, maybe. Not enough, probably.

My father’s last words to me, as he lay on his deathbed were “I could have done more.” I think he was trying to tell me to pay attention to the smaller folks, the ones with more immediate needs and over-tip a waitress, buy a meal for a stranger, give money to a student in need, and things like that.

I have done that. I suppose I could do more, but why? How does it change anything when lunatics run the world?

That is a question for the ages, I suppose.

You gave it your best, and you know the answer to life's biggest question., I know my time is coming when I, too, leave this earthly body for parts unknown. .

And so it is Christmas, and what have I done?

For the life of me, I don't know. What I do know is that each day is a gift, and that each of us is a miracle, and that we should enjoy it

Happy Christmas John. You too, George.

ACT 2 SCENE 1 PART 2

YW, YM, and MADDIE are hurriedly preparing for a trip to Seattle. Several sets of luggage are in plain sight and two are closed and ready to go, Wendy's is open and she is trying to cram boots into a piece of luggage where they obviously will not fit.

YW

Ooomph,,, ahhhh..Why. Won't This Fit?

MADDIE

Mom, why are you so cheap? We can pay a few dollars and do two pieces of luggage?

YW

Maddie, are you really a Bradford? We don't spend a nickle on anything ever.

MADDIE

I know (rolls her eyes) But how many pieces of luggage have we broken (Maddie's cell phone goes off and she hurries off stage to answer it. YM and YW look at each other and smile

YM

Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

YW

She sure has been on her cell a lot!

YM (giddily)

I think she's got a boyfriend!

YW

Me too. She has been texting and smiling and whispering a lot! It must be love!!!

YM

I hope it's that kid from Butler! I heard he is a pharmacist!!!

YW

Woo hoo! This is so exciting!

MADDIE re-enters room and notices YM and YW looking at her with expectation. She looks at them quizzically and tries to go back to packing but YM and YW follow her closely. Every time she turns around, her parents are right there

YM and YW (together)

Well?

MADDIE

Well? What?

YM

Who is he?

MADDIE

Who is who?

YM

The guy on the phone? Who is he?

MADDIE (looking suddenly distressed)

Ummm Nobody!

YM

It must be somebody! We have never seen you light up like a Christmas Tree before!

YW

Yeah! We have never seen you so happy dear

MADDIE

I'm telling you it's nobody

YM

And we are telling you it must be somebody and we are dying to know

YW

Yeah! We are dying to know. You have been texting every two minutes since you got home. Please please please tell us who it is> We are so excited

MADDIE (now very defensive)

I'm telling you, it's nobody and this is why I never come home from college....All these questions!

YM

But Maddie we are your parents. We just want to know who the guy is!

MADDIE

And what if I told you it's not a guy

YM

Then I would say, you are gay!

MADDIE

Bingo!

Stage goes black except for a spotlight on Maddie who walks forward toward the audience as the parents halt in their position MARK and WENDY watch from just outside the spotlight

MADDIE

Yep, that's how it happened. It definitely wasn't how I thought it would happen. I had this whole scenario planned out in my head like we would be sitting down over dinner and I would gently tell them how much I love them and how excited I was to come out. But, as you can see, that's not what happened. I guess I had built up so much fear and false expectations that it just exploded. Being gay had been my best kept secret since I started heading that way in seventh grade. I had always sensed that something was not quite right when I was younger, but when you

are 10, how do you know what you are supposed to feel, anyway. But in seventh grade, most of my friends were boy crazy and I just didn't get it. When I was bored at home I found myself wandering around the Internet and found myself drawn to the gay chat rooms and eventually to the porn sites and that led to my choosing the lifestyle. But I did not want to be gay at first. It wasn't something my parents talked about, but everyone in my immediate and extended family was straight and so I felt I was the odd one. I tried and I tried and I tried to be straight. I went to both proms in high school, had a few dates with a nice guy in college but after each encounter with them I would finish the night off in my fantasy world of gay porn. I kept it hidden pretty well until I went to college and I was free to experiment. My roommate and I rarely talked and she went home on weekends. That allowed me to experiment at night and so I did. My first girlfriend, the one I was dating when I outted myself, was a bit of a controlling brute and took advantage of my insecurities to control me. So, imagine this. Me, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Straight-as-an-arrow, duking it out in a drunken rage in the streets of a major city with my girlfriend. Yep, that was me. Just a few weeks ago. So, maybe that is why I told them the way I did. But, it is what it is. Now, we see what happens, I suppose they are as confused as I am. This is going to be one long-ass vacation. I'm trying to make up with my girlfriend. Yep, the one I fought with. She won't leave me alone.

MADDY returns to the scene behind her. YW comes to the front

YW

Wow, was THAT a surprise, huh? I don't believe Maddie is gay for a second. Not a single second. Her dad and I go to church every week and we have made sure she hangs around with good kids. We got her involved in all kinds of stuff to keep her out of trouble. True, she has struggled with dyslexia and was diagnosed with ADHD, but we have tried to help her work through that. She is always happy and loves her sister and brother and no one in my family has ever been gay and only one in Mark's family is so I don't believe this for one second. I think if we take her to a good psychologist he can talk her out of it. How can she have kids if she is gay? That just isn't natural. This is NOT possible and we will do whatever we have to do to bring her back. I don't understand how this could happen. We are a good Christian family and right there in the Bible it says being gay is not normal and I want my family to be normal. Yes I know some other kids in the neighborhood are gay but that is their issue, not ours. I mean, come ON Maddie, you are not gay. Someone is telling you that you are, but I am your mom and I am telling you this. YOU ARE NOT GAY! Snap out of it. Geez

YW retreats into the background YM steps forward

YM

Wow, was THAT a surprise, huh? Kind of the old smackeroo when you are not expecting it. I mean, why would she say she was gay if she wasn't? She has always been a secret holder, I remember the time we were at a hotel and Wendy and I were gone and Maddie ordered a porno film for the room and didn't know they would bill us. Well, they did and Maddie denied everything but eventually confessed. We all had a laugh about it later. Maybe we should have paid more attention but she, like me, is a third born and spent most of her life being schlepped around to whatever her brother and sister were doing. We were in pack mode and Maddie just kind of went along. Maybe we should have paid more attention, though. She never really had many friends and we thought that was because she was an athlete and that took all her time. So today we were just looking forward to spending a few days with our daughter and now we have to deal with this? I mean what does it mean to be gay? Do they dress differently. Do they eat different food? Do they like dogs more than cats? All these questions I never even thought about. Yeah, I know some other people who have gay kids, but that is them, not us. We are great parents, or at least that's what we are told. We must have done something wrong. But I don't know what it is. Maybe we fed her too much sugar...or maybe too much time on her cell phone has affected her brain...I mean there has to be something we did

wrong to make her gay. I know I don't have a gay bone in my body So it must have been something we did. That being said, I think we try to make it through the vacation and have fun. I think we can do that.

(YM retreats into the background as WENDY emerges)

Spoiler Alert: It is now 10 years later and Maddie is successful and married to Vanessa, who is the love of her life. Together they own four dogs and two homes and a Camper Van. Vanessa is a great match for Maddie and I could not be happier for her. As you can tell, when Maddie told us she was gay, it was like getting punched in the stomach. It took me a while to digest what happened and it only started hitting home when Maddie left the vacation we went on five days before it was supposed to end, saying she had exams to study for. She wasn't taking classes at the time, so go figure. I will admit that for about six months I researched the Internet to see how we could fix her. I mean, look at her. She is a stunning beauty with a laugh that lights up the room and a sense of empathy that surpasses anyone I have ever met. How could she be gay? About a year after she came out to us, I finally accepted the new reality. As for my initial reaction, it was what it was. I later told Maddie that she had known she was gay for 10 years or so, and that it was a total surprise to Mark and I. Plus, I tend to be a research person and I read and read and read and then read some more but I soon realized that Maddie, like everyone else, is a valuable child of God. Being gay is a feature that God gave Maddie. It is not a flaw. She is a very special person and I love her as much as any mom loves her daughter. Now when Mark and I watch movies and there is a "coming out" we can pretty much relate to it and tell if the people who wrote the scene or acted in it actually lived through it. There is a lot of "stuff" that Maddie and Mark and I had to deal with. In the end, I think it made our family better. There were some rough waters, but in the end, it is still all about family. My family . Our family.

WENDY walks off stage and MARK enters.

MARK

Well, that was a fast ten years and Wendy is right, there were a few tough waters but right now, all is good and all of us have learned the world is not predictable. After the initial shock , I just had to go through something that I called grief. As a dad, I hoped that all three of my kids would have a predictable life with happy spouses and happy grandkids and the white picket fence. I am pretty sure it s the same thing my parents wanted for me. But life is messy whether you are straight or gay or anything in-between and there is room in this world for everyone. So, when Maddie came out, I had to allow MY expectations of her life to die. There would be no traditional grandchildren. There may be grandchildren, but the biology just doesn't work in the traditional way. You know what I mean? The other major thing I learned as a parent was that when your kid becomes part of a couple, you need to step out. Step out. Just step the hell out. It isn't easy to do. But if you want them to be happy, you have to realize it is their life, not yours, and that they need to screw up and have successes just like you did. Once I did that, I saw that Maddie and her wife had the same relationship issues that my two other kids had. There really is no difference. Gay, straight, black, white, tall, short, Christian, Islamic, it just doesn't matter. It is the same stuff. Relationships are exciting, exasperating, annoying, thrilling, happy, sad, all those things and sometimes all those things at once. So, to be honest, having a gay daughter is no different than having a straight daughter. You can't help who you love, you can only try to be a nice person. And I want to thank Maddie for teaching me that .

MARK leaves and an older looking MADDIE returns

MADDIE

Well, it wasn't easy. And it took us all a while. In fact my being gay wasn't mentioned in the Christmas letter that year. A year later it did make it, not that it mattered. Vanessa was labeled my "partner" and a year later when we

eloped to Mexico to avoid the “Big Wedding” thing, it was featured more. My mom has been wonderful because she is, well, my mom.

You know the saying that women say 30,000 words a day? My mom goes 60, easily. But once she understood herself, we have become good friends. Boundaries are still important to Vanessa and I but I feel loved, something I was not sure about 10 years ago. When I was a teenager, I used to love going out to breakfast with my dad and there were a couple of times where I almost told him I was gay, but chickened out. These days it is logistically impossible to get away to breakfast with him, and so we don’t get much past the surface chat anymore. I’m not sure we ever will, but to be honest and not sound crass, I am just not sure “in-depth” is all that necessary, anyway. He knows I love him. I know he loves me...why make a big deal about it. In the final analysis, I am not sure that the whole coming out thing could have been handled much differently. It is easy to look back and see errors, but in real life as they say “stuff happens. I won’t lie, my life continues to be challenging and lots of bumps, but as I watch my family and friends, they have lots of bumps too. I think I see being gay as normal now. I am lucky to have Vanessa in my life and I am lucky that my parents and siblings are there for me too. Then again, I am there for them, and that is all that really matters.

END OF ACT 2 SCENE1 PART 2

ACT 2 SCENE 2 PART 1

Two stools are place at the front of the stage . MARK enters stage left and YM enters stage right. At first they check their cell phones and ignore each other. Finally YM breaks the silence

YM (waves shyly)

Hey

MARK (no wave)

Hey

YM

So, umm, my name is Mark. What’s yours

MARK

That’s funny. My name is Mark as well (smiles at the audience)

YM

Cool (both go back to looking at their cell)

YM

Mark what?

MARK

Excuse me?

YM

If I may ask, what is your last name?

MARK

Oh, it’s Bradford....Mark Bradford

YM

Wait a minute..You’re Mark Bradford and I’m Mark Bradford

MARK

Yep! But wait, there’s more !

YM

What more could there be?

MARK

Well, for one, we are the same person

YM

(long pause)

The....Same...Person?

MARK (looks at audience and gives the "crazy" signal)

MARK

Yep I am you in about 20 years

YM

How do you know that? Is this heaven or something?

MARK

It's something OK

YM

Am I having a dream?

MARK

Nope.

YM

Then what? ?

MARK

Mark? Take a deep breath...and look out there. (points to the audience)

YM (surprised)

What? That looks like an audience! Yeah, what are they doing here? (gets up and looks over the crowd)

MARK

That IS an audience.

YW

What, Why?

MARK

Because you are in a play. You know, like "Death of a Salesman" or "Our Town." We couldn't afford to make it a musical, so here we are.

YM (staring in wonderment at the audience)

Geez, a real play? With a script and everything?

MARK

(pulls out script) Yep, got it right here.

YM (still staring at the audience)

But why would anyone come to a show like this? I mean I'm not famous or anything

MARK

I don't know why they are here either. But I think it might be because they like to laugh and maybe cry a little bit. I think people go to plays to try to make sense of their own lives. Or maybe learn something new. Maybe it is just something to do on a Friday night since network TV has gone to pot.

YM

You can say that again. (Pause) So what's the point of all this?

MARK

Well, we have a few more scenes to go, but in this scene, you are supposed to be surprised to see the future you and you should have questions

YM

So, you are me in 20 years or so?

MARK

Yep

YM

Ugh How did I get so fat?

MARK

Macri's doughnuts every Saturday morning. Peanut M&M's by the handful. Maybe a few too many beers

YM

Is there anyway I can avoid looking like you? I mean ugh

MARK

Well, I suppose you can eat broccoli and asparagus and all that green stuff Wendy tries to feed you. The stuff you secretly pour down the garbage disposal. Then you would have to run 4-5 miles a day. join a health club. You know, actually work at it.

YM

No, thanks, I think I'll just get fat. I love doughnuts.

MARK

Yep, God told me he could have made doughnuts healthy, but he was in a bad mood so he didn't

YM

Wait! You talked to God

MARK

Yes we did, remember you are me and we are all together

YM

How did you do that?

MARK

Well, it wasn't hard...I wrote the play and there it was.

YM

Damn, I keep forgetting. This is all just made up.

MARK

Yes...Based loosely on reality, but all made up

YM

So, you are not real?

MARK

Nope, I'm an actor. You aren't real either (YM begins feeling his body, making sure he is real)

YM

I am too, real

MARK

Well then, what's your name?

YM

I'm (insert real name)

MARK

Exactly.

YM

So if this is not real, then why are people here?

MARK

Because most folks in the world face the same issues. The world is very confusing for everyone at all ages. Old, young, rich, poor, black, white. So we come to see art and music and drama as a way of trying to figure things out.

The problem is, drama and art and music seem to add to the confusion.

YM

So, you are saying that these people in the audience are here to get more confused?

MARK

Yep

YM (looks out at audience)

Well from the looks of them, we are doing a great job.

MARK (looks out at audience)

Yep, I'd say so too. But we gotta get out of here. I hear Wendy's car and I don't want her to give me a bunch of chores to do.

YM

Me either....But I need to ask a ...

MARK

You are doing fine. Things turn out great. Got to go!

YM and MARK run offstage

Three Seconds later WENDY and YW burst onto the stage

YW and WENDY look at each other for two seconds

BOTH

Wendy! (they hug each other and then stop and look at each other again)

BOTH

Wendy!! (They hug again, suddenly they both stop, look at the audience wide eyed)

YW

Who are they?

WENDY

Looks like an audience?

YW

Why are they here?

WENDY

I don't know, but who cares? (They hug again)

YW

So, I have a bunch of questions

WENDY

The kids turn out all right. All three find partners and live well.

YW

How did you know I was going to ask that?

WENDY

Because I am you! Silly question

YW

And...

WENDY

Yes, Mark and I are still together

YW

How did you know?

WENDY

Because...

YW

I get it...I get it...God I really am annoying, aren't I? Do I ever start liking donuts?

WENDY

Never

YW

Does Mark ever eat broccoli ?

WENDY

Never, eventually you give up trying

YW

Does he ever quit farting? God it about kills me

WENDY

Let's just say I still use the fan when we are in bed, and it isn't because I am too warm.

YW

Ugh, But seriously, any advice. I mean this relationship stuff is hard.

WENDY (nods her head)

Eventually it gets easier. Listen, you may want to sit down for this. (YW takes a seat near WENDY) In the long run, there are three main ingredients to a happy marriage . The first is respect . Mark and us have always respected each other and that got us through the easy stuff. The next is commitment, and that gets us through the tougher stuff. Never, ever say the word divorce. And the third is dependability. When all else fails, it is important to have someone who will always pick you up at the airport...or sit with you in the emergency room.

YW

Well, Mark is all that....but what about love, you didn't mention love

WENDY (laughs)

My dear, that IS love. The reality shows and dating shows you watch are totally senseless. When it comes down to it, love takes a back seat to the other three. Prepare to be hurt, and prepare to do a little hurting. Relationships are still two people, Two totally different human beings, and one is fueled by testosterone, and the other by estrogen. I think God has a tremendous sense of humor because there is no way a relationship should ever form between a woman and a man let alone work. But it does. By the way, that crap in the wedding ceremony that says two become one? My guess is that was probably written by a monk.

YW (laughs)

I'm starting to figure that out. But, before we go, tell me what you have learned that is your absolute truth.

Something I will come to understand.

WENDY

That's easy. You will figure out that life is made up of zillions of miracles. Think about this, imagine how many cells in your body have to work perfectly every single microsecond just for you to breathe. Or see, or hear, let alone walk and run and jump. Zillions and Zillions of miracles that we don't even think about every single second of every single day. Human beings, every animal, and even trees and grass are miracles, given to us for free by either nature or God. We are the recipients of this huge free gift. Every single one of us, yet we choose to focus on the negative. We are either too fat, too thin, too tall, too short, too whatever. Just watch anything on TV. Commercials tell us we are not good enough unless we use their product. It's all over the place..I wish more people saw it happening, but we don't. So many people mimic what they see. .

YW

Wow, I never thought about it like that.

WENDY

And you have the chance to battle that. And here is the reason. You have chosen and are lucky enough to hold the best title in life anyone can hold. Not every woman wants to, or is capable of having that title but you have chosen to do so. You are MOM. And to your three kids, you will always be MOM. When you go back from this silly stage we are on right now you get to be MOM. , Go spend your days loving your kids, and embrace the zillions of miracles that occur without you even asking for them. Go back and be MOM, for that, above all others, is the best tile you will ever have

YW

But does being a mom means you are exhausted ALL.THE.TIME? When do I get a vacation?

WENDY (laughs)

Well, I know that this is going to sound mean or scare you, but some moms never get a vacation. If you surround yourself with your children's needs, even after they leave home, you never get a vacation. However, there will come a point where you make that choice. At some point, you get to live your own life again and you hit a stride that you are comfortable with. You will do that when your time is right

YW

And then what?

WENDY

Then, if you choose to, you rediscover yourself with all your changes and rediscover Mark with all his changes and you enter a new stage. It is either very hard to do or very easy. And each experience will be different for you. We become adults, make our decisions not knowing what the outcome will be, and we live with mistakes and successes, pretty much in equal measure. As the kids grow older, you are going to want to fix things for them, but usually that just makes things worse. So tread lightly. And, as one of our favorite songs goes, Let It Be.

YW (pauses)

How about, it don't matter to me? .

WENDY

Ahh a David Gates and Bread musical reference. Gotta love that. But you got the idea. You control you. Let others control themselves.

YW (Gets up and stretches)

I think I'm waking up. Was this all a dream?

WENDY (gets up and hugs YW)

No dear, This is a play. See those people out there?

YW

Yikes. I'm not even a Bradford then?

WENDY

No.

YW

Thank God

WENDY

You and me both.

End of Scene 3

ACT 2 SCENE 4 PART 1

MARK and WENDY sit together reading the Christmas Letter

MARK

Here is the one we wrote about COVID. We were really lucky that COVID never made either of us sick.

WENDY

Remember I had to work and we had that scare and you slept downstairs and we wore masks and all that stuff?

MARK

Yeah, and then we got tired of it and just started doing things we normally did. Heck, we travelled all over. Motels were cheap, Mount Rushmore was practically deserted, we stayed in cabins that would normally be full. We learned to work around it, I think.

WENDY

Yeah, we started going to parks in our area we had never gone to just to get out of the house. You played a lot of golf. We were lucky to be at a place in our lives where it was more of a minor inconvenience than anything. We couldn't go to restaurants but as long as we had those masks we were OK.

MARK

I do recall that it practically killed off our church. We were using the computer to chat with our friends and watch the services. So there were consequences. But somehow, we made it. Heck we travelled all the way to South Dakota, then turned around and went to the East Coast and everyone thought we were crazy

WENDY

And we thought everyone else was crazy

MARK

I think that ended up being the point of COVID. Everyone thought everyone else was crazy.

ACT 2 SCENE 4 PART 2

YW is sitting at the table without her mask on. YM enters, takes off his mask and tries to kiss her. She pushes him away.

YW

Not without a mask, mister. You know the rules.

YM

Whose rules?

YW

CNN's rules

YM

CNN? They make rules?

YW

Well either they do or FoxNews does.

YM

Wasn't FoxNews the one that said we should follow President Trump's advice and inject bleach into our veins?

YW

That's why I follow CNN's Rules.

YM

Isn't CNN the one that said we should all hunker down in our homes and don't go anywhere and stay tuned for further information so we would watch their advertisements?

YW

Maybe, but FOXnews just blames Obama for it.

YM

Funny, CNN blames Trump

YW

Fox says that if we had invaded China during right after we pulled out of Afghanistan none of this would have happened.

YM (Sneezes)

Oh My God! Quick! Google "coughing with COVID! Hurry!

YW frantically looks at her computer

YW

Put your mask on fast

Both frantically run around looking for their masks. They put them on and start talking indecipherable words through their masks for about 30 seconds>

YM (pulls off his mask)

What did you say?

YW pulls hers off

I'm not talking to you without your mask on

They continue to shout and gesture at each other through the masks. The words are indecipherable.

YM finally pulls his mask off

This is crazy Wendy

YW (removes her)

FoxNews will tell us if this is crazy or not

YM

No, CNN will

YW

Fox!

YM

CNN!

YW

Fox!

YM Moves closer)

CNN!

yw

(Moves closer)

Fox!

They meet in the middle, throw the masks in the air, and kiss

End of Act 2, Scene 4, Part 2

ACT 2 SCENE 5 PART 1

Stage Opens to Mark and Wendy sitting on the bed, On the other side YM and YW are also sitting on the bed. All are wearing Purdue T shirts. MARK and YM have identical T shirts and WENDY and YW have identical T shirts. YW is visibly pregnant. Wendy is reading the Christmas Letter book

WENDY

Well, that was certainly a fun one to read. The year Glen was born changed our life.

MARK

Yeah, it certainly did .I remember you were so calm and I was totally oblivious to what was about to happen. I guess that is one of my “features,” being oblivious.

WENDY

I wonder what we talked about. You know, before Our first child was born?

YW

I can’t believe in a couple of months that we will have a baby!. I wonder if it will be a boy or girl?

YM

I just hope it is healthy. (Gives YW a hug) Here we go, I guess. From being kids ourselves to being parents. It seems like it will last forever, but it’s only 21 years. 21 Years. 21 Years

(All four get up and join hands at center stage)

WENDY

But it went by so fast!

YW

How will I handle it. A fulltime job AND a child?

MARK

Three kids! How did we do it?

YM

What if I lose my job?

WENDY

I changed jobs six times and you got fired twice. How did we do that?

YW

What if our child gets sick? How will we handle childcare?

MARK

And the kids were getting sick all the time! Somehow we managed the child care. I don’t remember how?

YM

I will lose all my friends and can’t play sports anymore

WENDY

How did we ever keep our friends. I know I had to do my workout or I would go totally insane. I don’t know how we did it!

YW

But what about seeing my parents? How can we possibly take children to Florida on a plane?

MARK

Somehow we were able to take really good vacations and see your parents in Florida. I can’t believe we got them on the plane and off. All that baggage

YM

We will need a new house! How can we possibly afford a new house?

WENDY

I remember that all I wanted in our new house was a basement. A basement was a big deal because I wanted lots of storage. Of course, we bought a house we could afford without a basement.

YW

We absolutely have to have a basement. And a huge garage, and a big kitchen, and four bedrooms just in case.

MARK

Thank God we didn’t get a basement. We would have been packrats. What we bought was a neighborhood.. A wonderful kid-friendly neighborhood.

YM

Gosh, if we move, I'm going to have to make new friends...ugh...and all that new furniture ? How can we possibly afford it?

WENDY

Remember that when we moved in, we left three rooms empty because we had no furniture? Then all those things started going on. Roof leaked, pipes burst, lawnmower broke...all that stuff...How did we do it?

YW

Wait, I'm going to be a mom and work fulltime? I thought I was going to be happy and carefree! Where am I going to find the time? Where am I going to find the energy

MARK

Gosh, there were some hard days. Thank God for cell phones. And Thank God for reliable babysitters. Still, remember the day we left Maddie at a soccer game because you thought I had her? We sat home for 15 minutes before we realized we had left her there.

YM

I want to be someone important. I want to start my own business. I want to write for Sports Illustrated

WENDY

Mark, you know you are very important to us. How you and I kept it all together is a testament to commitment.

Either that or some kind of crazy.

YW

I wonder if we have what it takes to stay together. Look at all the folks getting divorced. I'm scared.

MARK

I was so scared

YM

I'm scared too

WENDY

I think we were all scared, But we had each other

YW

All we have is each other

MARK

That was about all we had, each other

YM

At least we have each other, Wendy. And I'm not leaving.

WENDY

And we never left

YW

I'm not leaving

MARK

Neither of us were ever going to leave

YM

We will have to rely on each other

WENDY

We relied on each other.

YW

We have to stay committed to each other

MARK

Somehow we stayed committed to each other

YM

Why did we start writing that Christmas letter anyway, Wendy?

WENDY

That Christmas letter sure is funny, but so much of it is true. And I think it reminds us....

YW

I think you and I need a reminder of what it's all about, so I think we need to write it down, don't you?

MARK

I am so glad we wrote this stuff down.

YM

Is this what love is?

WENDY

That's what love is

YW

It must be what love is.

MARK

That is what love is.

YM (puts his hand on YW's tummy)

Well, come on little one, our lives await.

WENDY

It's time to go Mark, the audience looks like It's getting tired

YW

Yes, come on little one, it's Go time.

MARK

Yeah I suppose we should end this thing. I think we made our point.

(All turn to go, WENDY stops)

WENDY

So what exactly was the point.

MARK

Every family has its own thing, I think. And that thing helps define the family. In our case, our thing was the Christmas letter. In other families it is something else. It might be Thanksgiving at Grandma's, or it might be Uncle Joe's goofy jokes, or summers at a cottage, or maybe Sundays in church. But if you are lucky it is all about love.

WENDY

So what are you saying?

MARK

Don't you see? This isn't a Christmas letter, It's a love story. Something we can read and re-read and feel love again. I think that to feel loved and to give it back to each other is what life is all about.

WENDY

I know.

MARK

It's time to go. Maybe we can beat the traffic this time.

Background song as they exit (and, in the end, the love you take, is equal to the love you make)

END of SHOW

(Oh Blah dee, oh blah dah) Applause as Oh bla dee, oh blah dah plays)

