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## **Pizza for Christmas**

### **MAIN CHARACTERS:**

Paul Payne: Pizza delivery guy

Nick Payne: Paul's father

Shirley Payne: Paul's mother

Joe Grace: man who sees opportunity to share Christ with Paul

Mari Grace: woman who wants to nurture Paul

## Scene One

*Scene opens with a door bell ringing. Lights come up on the Grace's living room. Paul is standing at the door delivering pizza to the Graces. Mari Grace answers the door. Christmas music is playing in the background.*

PAUL: Hello ma'am. I have a medium half pineapple and half pepperoni. That will be \$8.00.

MARI: Oh, yes, let me get you some money, son, why don't you come on in?

PAUL: I really shouldn't ma'am. I am on the clock.

MARI: Oh, nonsense! I need to go into the next room to get your money and there is no reason for you to wait outside.

PAUL: Well, okay,

*Paul looks around the room and notices the Christmas tree with gifts, a guitar leaned in the corner and an open Bible on the table. There is also a picture of a man in uniform on the table as well.*

*Joe walks into the room*

JOE: I thought I smelled pizza. Hello, I am Joe Grace. *(extends his hand to shake Paul's)*

PAUL: *(tentatively shaking hands)* Hey, I'm Paul, your wife went to get the money for the pizza.

JOE: Yes, I passed her in the hall and thought I would come in and see if I could beat her to the first piece.

PAUL: You sure do have a nice Christmas tree.

JOE: My wife gets all the praise. We love this time of year and she goes all out when it comes to decorating. Do you like Christmas, Paul?

PAUL: Yeah, I guess. I mean, it's just another day right?

JOE: Oh, it's not just another day. It is THE day.

PAUL: Yeah, it's the day alright. It's the day everyone complains because they didn't get the presents they wanted. Believe me, my family is bad enough without adding another reason to fight.

*MARI walks in just as Joe was going to reply*

JOE: Well, that's...

MARI: Here you go young man, I am sorry you had to wait.

*Mari gives money to Paul. Paul gives pizza to Joe.*

PAUL: Thanks ma'am. Y'all enjoy the pizza.

*Paul leaves*

MARI: He seemed like a nice young man.

JOE: Yes, yes he did, but something tells me all may not be right in Paul's world.

MARI: Paul? Is that his name?

JOE: Yes, and I am not sure he knows the true meaning of Christmas, but I think he would like to learn.

MARI: What makes you say that?

JOE: Well, when I came into the room, he was looking at your Bible and he even mentioned we have a nice Christmas tree.

MARI: Well of course, we have a nice tree, we have 40 years of decorations on it.

JOE: There was something about him that struck a chord. He just didn't seem very happy.

MARI: You have that look in your eye again.

JOE: What look?

MARI: You know the look, the one that says you have a new project.

JOE: Project?

MARI: You know, let's get to know the boy and see if we need to "help" him in any way.

JOE: Is that a bad thing?

MARI: No, it's a very good thing. I'm just glad I like pizza.

JOE: Why?

MARI: I think we are going to be eating a lot of it.

*Lights go down on Grace's living room.*

*Transition Music*

## Scene 2

*Paul enters kitchen coming home from work with a pizza. His dad is at the table chewing on a cigar and drinking.*

PAUL: Hey Pop, here's a pizza.

NICK: What'd you bring this home for?

PAUL: My boss sent it home for all the extra time I have been putting in due to the holidays.

NICK: That's crazy. What's pizza got to do with the holidays? Whoever heard of stuffing the Christmas pizza?

*Shirley Payne comes into the room in a scruffy bathrobe and curlers.*

PAUL: Hey Mom.

SHIRLEY: *(pointing at pizza box)* What's that?

NICK: It's a new car you moron. Good grief, the kid works at a pizza joint and comes home with a big, square skinny box and you have to ask what it is.

PAUL: It's okay, Dad, I think she meant what kind it is.

SHIRLEY: That's exactly what I meant, Mr. I Hate Everything and Everybody. Why don't you go somewhere else and take up space. All you're doing here is using up the oxygen.

NICK: Maybe I will...*(gets up and storms out of the house)*

SHIRLEY: Fine! *(grabs a piece of pizza and storms out of the room)*

PAUL: *(sits down at table dejected)* Yeah, it's all fine. Merry Stinking Christmas.

*Lights go down on kitchen*

*Transition Music*

### Scene 3

*Doorbell rings and lights come up on the living room. Paul is delivering another pizza to the Graces who are sitting in their living room. This time Joe answers the door.*

PAUL: Hello, sir, I have a medium half pineapple, half pepperoni here for you. That will be \$8.00.

JOE: *(taking Paul's arm and pulling him into the house)* Great, Honey, the pizza is here.

MARI: Come on in and I will get your money. *(she leaves the room)*

PAUL: I really shouldn't come in. I am on the clock.

JOE: Paul isn't it? *(extending his hand to shake Paul's)*

PAUL: Yes sir.

JOE: I am Joe Grace and that was my wife, Mari. You've been in our house before and I am sure your boss will not mind you taking a few minutes. He might even consider it great customer service, don't you think?

PAUL: Well...I guess so.

*Paul walks in and looks around the room and pays particular attention to the guitar.*

JOE: Are you in school, Paul?

PAUL: Yes, I am going to junior college while I try to work to save enough to transfer to State.

JOE: Have you decided on a major?

PAUL: Not yet. I guess I'm still trying to figure it out. - Do you play the guitar?

*Joe walks over and picks up the guitar and starts playing something classical.*

JOE: Yes, I enjoy picking at it more than anything. Do you like classical guitar?

PAUL: Yeah, I listen to the classic rock station mostly. I love Stevie Ray Vaughn.

*Joe smiles at the misunderstanding and then hits a couple of "Stevie" chords.*

PAUL: Wow!

*Mari comes back into the room and hands Paul the money*

MARI: Paul, can I get you something warm to drink like a cup of hot chocolate?

PAUL: No ma'am, I really can't stay, I am on the clock.

MARI: Oh, five minutes won't hurt, now you sit down right there (*pushes Paul into a chair*) and I will be back in a flash.

JOE: You might as well make yourself comfortable. Mari isn't going to let you get away without something. It is her gift.

PAUL: Gift?

JOE: Yes, her spiritual gift.

PAUL: Oh...Did you give it to her.

JOE: (*laughing*) No, it is a gift from God and God gave Mari the gift of Hospitality or Helps, I forget which one if I haven't studied them in a while.

PAUL: (*raising eyebrows and looking skeptical*) Okay, if you say so. Who is the guy in the uniform? (*pointing at the picture on the table*)

JOE: That's our son, Joey, or Joseph, Jr.

PAUL: What branch of the military is he in?

JOE: He was in the army when that was taken. He was stationed in North Carolina at the time, and was killed in a car accident on his way home for Christmas about 15 years ago.

PAUL: Oh, man, sorry.

JOE: That's fine; he is in a much better place, even though we still miss him, but we will always have great memories of him.

*Play 1 minute video of the Graces as a younger couple with a small child.*

PAUL: Better place?

JOE: Oh, yes. He is in the BEST place. He's in heaven and there is no better place, although sometimes I am selfish and wish he was still here.

PAUL: Ummm...

JOE: Do you and your family go to church anywhere, Paul?

*Mari walks back into the room carrying a mug and a plate of cookies.*

MARI: Here's your hot chocolate and I also brought you some of my homemade sugar cookies.

PAUL: No, My Mom and Dad never really got into all the religious stuff. My Dad always said the only thing you can really believe in is what you see right in front of you and then you only need to believe half of it. Of course, he was looking at a half empty bottle of whiskey at the time.

MARI: That's too bad. He's missing out on the greatest gift a person can receive.

PAUL: If you are talking about some kind of spiritual gift, it would be totally wasted on my old man.

JOE: Oh it isn't A spiritual gift. We are talking about THE gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. You know Christmas is the celebration of His birth.

PAUL: I've heard something about it on TV or somewhere. I guess I just don't understand the importance of a baby. *(glancing at his watch and jumping up to leave)* Oh, I really have to go, my boss is going to be wondering where I am.

JOE: Come by anytime, Paul. We love the company.

MARI: Here take these cookies with you *(shoves the cookies into Paul's hand)*

PAUL: Wow, thanks, Mrs. Grace.

*Paul hurries out the door.*

MARI: Well, that was a nice visit.

JOE: Yes, it sure was. I think he is just a young man needing attention and of course love.

MARI: He sure seems receptive to conversation anyway and he has such good manners. I wonder what his home life is really like.

JOE: From all indications it isn't good and I really think we can make a difference in this boy's life. It may take three pizzas per week for a couple of weeks, but I bet we can break through.

*Lights go down on living room.*

*Mari's Solo – "Do They See Jesus In Me? – Live (continue 30 seconds after end of song)*

#### Scene 4

*Scene opens with Paul delivering another pizza to the Graces. A period of a couple of weeks have passed during which time he has made several deliveries and gotten to know them much better*

*Paul rings the doorbell and Mari answers.*

PAUL: Hey, Mrs. G. I have your pizza here - a medium half pepperoni and half pineapple. That will be \$8.00.

MARI: Hello, Paul. Come on in.

PAUL: I really shouldn't...

MARI: *(pulling Paul through the door)* You should know by now that I am not going to take "no" for an answer. Now, you wait right here and I will go get your money.

PAUL: Okay.

*Paul pulls out his cell phone and takes a picture of their living room getting a close up of the picture of their son. He hears foot steps and quickly puts up his phone.*

*Joe enters the living room.*

JOE: Hi, Paul. *(extending his hand to shake Paul's)* Come on in, I know this is your last delivery. When I called the order in, they said you were getting off at 7:00 tonight and I'm sure they won't mind you visiting for a while.

MARI: *(gives Paul money and takes pizza)* I have cookies and hot chocolate.

PAUL: *(smiling)* You always seem to have cookies when I deliver. If I didn't know better I'd think you planned it.

MARI: I always make cookies during this season. You never know who might be dropping by...

*(Mari walks out of the room with pizza)*

JOE: *(waving Paul into a chair)* You should know by now that you are not going to get away without cookies and hot chocolate. You've been by here enough in the last few weeks that Mari has become quite attached to you.

PAUL: Yeah, I bet I have been over here six times in the last two weeks. But I don't mind coming here. You all are nice and I never knew any old people that ate as much pizza as you guys do.

*(Joe throws head back and laughs loudly)*

PAUL: *(realizing he said something wrong)* Oh, gee sorry, Mr. G. I didn't mean to call you old or anything, I mean, well you are OLDER and I mean, well...uh...

JOE: That's quite alright Paul. I know how old I am, don't worry about it.

*Mari walks back into the room and puts cookies on the table and then goes to sit with Joe.*

MARI: Who's old?

PAUL: *(groans and buries his face in his hands still embarrassed)* I just meant that you guys are the coolest elderly people I have ever known.

MARI: *(laughing)* I think I liked old better, elderly sounds so stuffy, and besides, compared to you, we are old.

JOE: Yeah, but don't count us out yet, we still have some moves left. *(grabs Mari's hand and twirls her around as if on a dance floor)*

MARI: *(laughing and looking at Paul who is smiling)* Paul, you will have to forgive him, he tends to get a little carried away during the holiday season.

PAUL: Yeah, I noticed, but that's okay. I guess I just still don't get it like you all do, but whatever makes you happy.

JOE: Have you ever heard the Christmas Story Paul.

PAUL: Yeah, I used to catch that movie each year when the Christmas movies come on TV.

JOE: Well, that's not what...

PAUL: My favorite part was when Ralphie's friend, got his tongue stuck to the flag pole on the play ground. I haven't watched it since my dad heard me laughing and tricked me into sticking my tongue to our car bumper. It just wasn't as funny anymore.

MARI: *(visibly upset)* That's just awful! Why did he trick you like that?

PAUL: That's just my dad. There's not a lot of laughter around my house, and when he hears it, he thinks it is up to him to stop it. I think he is much more comfortable with yelling and arguing. It's just his way.

MARI: Well, I don't...

JOE: (*laying his hand on Mari's arm*) I wasn't talking about the movie *A Christmas Story*, I was talking about the true Christmas Story.

PAUL: I've just heard bits of it. There is something about a baby and some gold, but I don't really know anything else.

MARI: It is the most beautiful story on the earth and the true reason behind the celebration.

JOE: It all starts with this couple who were engaged to be married over 2,000 years ago. Their names were Joseph and Mary.

MARI: An angel came and told Mary she was expecting the Lord's child.

PAUL: Whoa, I bet Joseph didn't believe her. That happened with my sister, her boyfriend didn't believe her when she told him she was pregnant either. He claimed it wasn't his.

JOE: Well, this baby really wasn't Joseph's biological child. It was a miracle sent from God.

PAUL: Why would that happen, couldn't Joseph have his own kids? I guess they didn't do adoptions back then, huh?

MARI: This baby had a purpose! And it all started in a manger since there was no room for them in the inn.

PAUL: Why, didn't they make reservations?

JOE: (*getting frustrated and looking at Mari*) I don't think this approach is working.

PAUL: (*glancing at his watch*) Wow, I really need to go. It's after seven and I haven't even clocked out.

MARI: I have an idea. Why don't you come over on Christmas Eve and eat dinner with us?

JOE: That's a great idea. There are only the two of us and we would love to have the company. Anyway, we always read the Christmas Story on Christmas Eve and I think you will like it.

PAUL: Well, I don't know...

MARI: I promise it won't be pizza. I am making a true Christmas feast with all the trimmings! Please say you can come.

JOE: Unless of course, your family has something planned for that night.

PAUL: Are you kidding? I doubt my family will even realize it is Christmas Eve.

JOE: Do you have to work that night?

PAUL: No, my boss is closing at 5:00 that night and doesn't reopen until the day after Christmas. But, ...

MARI: Great! It's a date then. I will expect you for dinner at 6:00 and come hungry!

PAUL: Well I guess it will be okay, you all are pretty cool.

JOE: For old people?

PAUL: Naw, you're just pretty cool.

*Paul leaves*

JOE: Christmas Eve was a great idea.

MARI: We have got to find a way to communicate the Christmas story so that he will understand it.

JOE: We just need to modernize it some. I know it happens, but it is hard to believe that a 19 year old has never been in church and doesn't understand the basics.

*Lights go down on living room*

*Choir Song – "Desired of All the Nations" - DVD*

## Scene 5

*Paul walks in and his parents are sitting at the table*

PAUL: Hey Pop, hey Mom

*Nick grunts*

SHIRLEY: How was your day dear?

PAUL: *(sitting down at the table)* It was great.

NICK: Great? What was so great about it, all you do is deliver pizza?

SHIRLEY: Leave the kid alone Nick...

NICK: Whatever!

PAUL: By the way Mom, I won't be home Christmas Eve, the Graces invited me over for a Christmas Eve dinner.

SHIRLEY: That's nice...

NICK: Christmas Eve dinner? Why in the world would they invite you over for Christmas Eve dinner? What did you do for them? You aren't "dealing" are you?

PAUL: No, pop, I am not dealing. Why would you think that? They are just great people, who are alone on Christmas Eve and invited me over. It's not like I'm going to be missing anything around here.

NICK: *(jumping up from the table)* What is that supposed to mean?

SHIRLEY: Nick, calm down!

NICK: *(yelling)* Don't tell me to calm down woman! I think your precious son just hinted that he doesn't like being around us.

PAUL: *(yelling back)* I won't just hint, I will say it out loud. I don't like being in this dump with you and I have a chance to have a good Christmas Eve meal without a lot of yelling and I am going to take it.

*Paul storms out*

NICK: Well Shirley, there goes your golden child.

SHIRLEY: I think he is wonderful and I think he should take the chance. I don't like being here with you either, but I made that choice long ago!

*Shirley storms out and Nick sits back down at the table with his bottle.*

NICK: That's fine. I don't like being around you all either!

*Transition Music*

## Scene 6

*Scene opens in Payne's kitchen with Shirley sitting at the table alone drinking coffee and eating donuts. Paul walks in as he is leaving for work.*

PAUL: Hey Mom, I'm off to work

SHIRLEY: *(sounding forlorn)* Okay.

PAUL: What's wrong, Mom?

SHIRLEY: Nothing is wrong.

PAUL: Did the old man do something stupid again?

SHIRLEY: Paul, you really shouldn't talk about him like that, he is your father.

PAUL: Yeah, too bad, I couldn't choose another dad. Mom, I wish you could meet the Graces. They are the coolest old people I have ever met and Mr. G plays the guitar and Mrs. G makes the BEST cookies and hot chocolate from scratch! I didn't even know you could make hot chocolate from scratch. And Mr. G. shakes my hand every time I make a delivery just like I was a man.

SHIRLEY: Mr. G? Mrs. G.?

PAUL: Yeah, they said I was being too formal to keep calling them Mr. and Mrs. Grace, and they are too old for me to call them Joe and Mari.

SHIRLEY: Well, I guess you are getting to know these people.

*Paul walks over to his Mom and hugs her*

PAUL: Don't worry, Mom. You'll always be "Mom."

*Nick walks into the room*

NICK: Well, isn't this a touching scene? The mother and her baby...

SHIRLEY: *(sarcastically)* Yeah and in walks Mr. Wonderful.

NICK: Watch it woman. You don't know how good you got it!

SHIRLEY: Oh, yes I do How could I forget and you keep reminding me every time you open your mouth..

PAUL: Guys, don't start! It's Christmas Eve.

NICK: So, it's just another day. Don't go thinking you're better just because you have a job and have met some hoity toity people.

PAUL: The Graces are not hoity toity and I AM going to be better. I'm not going to live in this place forever and I want to make something out of my life.

NICK: *(laughing)* The only thing you are going to make is trouble. That's all you've ever made.

SHIRLEY: Lay off Nick!

PAUL: *(grabbing a donut)* You know what, I already am better because I refuse to hang around and listen to this...bye, Mom, don't forget I won't be home until late, I am going to the Graces after work.

*Paul leaves*

NICK: *(yelling out the door)* That's right, just go to your high falutin Christmas Eve dinner....

*Lights go down on kitchen*

*Transition Music*

