

The Night Before The Night Before Christmas

A Christmas Comedy

by

Cricket Daniel

DIRECTOR PREVIEW
NOT LICENSED

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SYNOPSIS:

Lou has wrestled with a big ball of tangled Christmas lights for the last time! He is grabbing the sunblock, his Elvis in Paradise Hawaiian album and his wife Carol, and hopping on the Pineapple Express! Escaping New Jersey, the freezing cold, his nutty family and most of all... The Holidays, is exactly what Lou plans to do. However, a freak snowstorm leaves the couple stranded in the airport and their dream of sipping Pina Coladas on the beach is in peril. Will a couple of unexpected characters help restore Lou's Christmas Spirit in the St. Nick of time?

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Lou (50-60's): Husband and father who is losing his Christmas Spirit.

Carol (50-60's): Lou's fun-loving wife.

Pia (30-40's): Lou and Carol's daughter.

Mona (50's): Lou's kooky younger sister.

Rudy (any age): Festive and adorable Spirit Airlines gate attendant.

Nick (any age): Bartender/Santa at Spirit Airlines

Modern Day. Set in New Jersey.

ACT I

SCENE 1

LOU AND CAROL'S HOUSE - DEC. 16

ENTER LOU humming Christmas tunes. He goes up to Advent Calendar, opens a flap, grabs candy inside, pops it into his mouth. As he crosses in front of window, something catches his eye. He peers out and quickly grabs binoculars, conveniently sitting nearby on table, and continues to look through window.

LOU

What the heck! I don't believe it. Carol! Son of a Nutcracker. Carol!

CAROL, Lou's wife, rushes into room.

CAROL

Lou? What's wrong?

LOU

What's today?

CAROL

What's today? That's what you're screaming about? I thought you were having a heart attack for Pete's sake!

LOU

I'm about to.

CAROL

And, you nearly gave *me* a heart attack. My heart can't take this.

LOU

Well, then this is going to kill you. What's today?

CAROL

Wednesday.

LOU

No, the date?

CAROL

The 16th. So far, this is not killing me. I think my heart can handle that today is December 16th. Now, if you told me that Paul Newman died, that would kill me.

LOU

Paul Newman died. And up go the lights!

CAROL

What!?

LOU

Yep, Newman is dead.

CAROL

When did that happen? Today? Lou, I don't like this game you're playing. Is that what you called me in here for? To tell me that my Hollywood crush is dead? Oh my God, my heart can't take this!

LOU

No. Here, take a look.

CAROL

(looks through binoculars)

What am I looking for?

LOU

You don't see it?

CAROL

The grey cat? Yeah. So. What about it?

LOU

Not the damn cat.

CAROL

Then what? I'm in the middle of making my Christmas pies and I just found out that Paul Neman is dead. I'm not in the mood!

LOU

No, here. Take another look.

CAROL

Oh my God. Now I see it! I don't believe it!

LOU

Me neither. I'm going to...

CAROL

(interrupting)

Bettye got a new car! I drive around in a 1998 Volvo and Bettye gets a new car! You were right, this could kill me!

LOU

No! Look over at the Hall's house.

CAROL

I see Gary.

LOU

And..what's he doing?

CAROL

Hanging up Christmas lights.

LOU

Exactly! Nine days before Christmas!

CAROL

So what?

LOU picks up a letter.

CAROL

(Under her breath)

Here we go again.

LOU

(reading letter aloud)

Dear Neighbor. That's us! Due to high electric bills --

CAROL

(interrupting)

And, that's us.

LOU

(continuing)

Neighbor discourse and several panic attacks in recent years, the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Association is requiring all homeowners to refrain from putting up exterior Christmas lights and decorations until one week --one week, before Christmas. Judging will take place on Christmas Eve. Good luck and Merry Christmas.

CAROL

It *is* the week before Christmas.

LOU

No. You just said it yourself. Today is December 16th.

LOU starts to count out loud on his fingers.

LOU

17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

Wiggles nine fingers in the air.

CAROL

Congratulations. You can count.

LOU

Nine days!

CAROL

Yes, I know. I can also count. Only, I don't need to use my fingers to do it.

LOU

The letter says one week before Christmas! They're cheating!

CAROL

Who cares.

LOU

We care!

CAROL

Oh Lou, why do you put yourself through this every year. Last Christmas you spent over two hundred dollars on that stupid spray snow stuff. We don't need to spend that kind of money on fake snow, we live in New Jersey!

LOU

All that damn Global Warming talk got me nervous. I couldn't risk it. And now they're predicting no snow for this Christmas, too. I'm gonna need to go out and buy that snow stuff again.

CAROL

You spend all this money decorating the house every year, yet you say we can't afford to go on vacation.

LOU

You know how I feel about vacations. Besides, Christmas light displays are the freestyle rap battles of the suburbs. And we're gonna win this battle, yo!

CAROL

Rap battle? That's it, I'm cancelling MTV.

LOU

This is so typical of the Halls. They wanna be us!

CAROL

I assure you, nobody wants to be us.

LOU

Remember when they painted the trim on their house white? Right after we painted our trim white. And guess who bought a hot tub after we bought a hot tub?

CAROL

The Halls.

LOU

That's right, the Hall's!

Lou grabs the binoculars. Both peering through them.

LOU

I bet they're watching our every move.

CAROL

What kind of person would spy on their neighbors like that?

LOU

Sickos.

CAROL

I agree! So, go out there and tell Gary he's breaking the rules.

LOU

Oh no. Two can play this little reindeer game. Okay, we need to hurry. Help me get the Christmas boxes down from the attic. We're going to start decorating--right now!

CAROL

I'm not going into the attic right now. I've gotta finish my pies.

LOU

Fine. I'll get the boxes. When you're done, go down to the tree lot. We may as well start all the decorating, including the tree. Just get the biggest one there. I'll put the rope and the tarp in your car.

CAROL

Can't we just put this off until tomorrow? I've got so many things to do today.

LOU

What if Jesus had said "I think I'll just rise on the fourth day. I've got so many things to do on the third day."

CAROL

Are you seriously comparing this to the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

LOU

I'm just saying, what would Jesus do?

CAROL

You're right Lou. Jesus would definitely break the neighborhood association rules and start decorating the house early --just to keep up with the Halls.

LOU

That's the Christmas spirit!

CAROL

That's not spirit, that's sarcasm.

LOU

Well, I like it. This is the year we win the Clinton Hill Ho Ho Holiday Lights and Magic trophy! Let's do this!

LIGHTS OUT.

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ACT I

SCENE TWO - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

LOU, wearing a Santa hat, is sitting in his living room, surrounded by boxes marked “X-mas Tree Lights” “X-mas Exterior” and “Pia’s X-mas Box”. Christmas music is playing in background. LOU empties contents of the boxes and “memories/voice overs” are heard as he takes out each item.

LOU opens Pia’s box. Takes out ornament.

LOU (V.O.)

Pia, look what Daddy bought you today. It’s your very first Christmas ornament. It’s a Philadelphia Phillies ornament. The best baseball team in the National League.

CAROL (V.O.)

Lou, she’s only eight months old; she doesn’t know who the Phillies are.

LOU (V.O.)

Of course she does. She’s daddy’s little girl.

CAROL (V.O.)

She looks like a Yankee’s fan to me.

LOU (V.O.)

Watch it, Carol!

LOU takes a Santa Suit out of the box.

YOUNG PIA (V.O.)

Look Mommy, it’s Santa!

LOU (V.O.)

Ho Ho Ho! And what does little Pia want for Christmas?

YOUNG PIA (V.O.)

I want my very own medical kit. With a tetherscope, that lets me listen to your heart.

LOU (V.O.)

Are you going to be a doctor when you grow up?

YOUNG PIA (V.O.)

Yes, Santa.

LOU (V.O.)

Ho, Ho, Ho. Good girl. And what does your mother want for Christmas?

CAROL (V.O.)

All I want is to have my family together and to spend every Christmas in our home.

LOU (V.O.)

We will. I promise.

YOUNG PIA (V.O.)

Hey! No kissing my Mommy, Santa!

LOU takes out an Angel tree topper.

YOUNG PIA (V.O.)

Higher Daddy! Lift me up higher! Look Mommy, I put the angel on the tree.

LOU (V.O.)

You will always be Daddy's little angel, Pia.

BACK TO PRESENT

Enter PIA, through front door, screaming into her cell phone.

PIA

Fuck you! *(Can use "F You" or Screw You" if you want to be more family friendly)*

LOU

Pia!

PIA

(ends call)

Sorry Dad, but Robert was supposed to take Lindy this weekend. I already made plans and can't change them. Not to mention, he's over three months behind on child support. So there goes Christmas this year. Hope you and Mom weren't expecting presents.

LOU

Your mother and I can take Lindy this weekend.

PIA

Trust me Dad, you don't want her. She's fifteen going on thirty and is a total bitch. And as if things couldn't get worse, we've cycled up. It's a recipe for disaster. So what's wrong?

LOU

The Hall's started putting up their Christmas decorations!

PIA

No dad, I was talking about your phone call.

LOU

(starts to whisper)

Yeah. Gary Hall is decorating his house right now. Didn't you notice when you pulled up? He's cheating.

PIA

(also starts to whisper)

That's the emergency?

LOU

I took the Christmas boxes down. Mom's out getting the tree. I need help getting Santa's sleigh on the roof.

PIA

You said to get over here immediately-- and why are we whispering?

LOU

Because, it's an all--*(stops whispering)* It's an "all hands on deck" situation, Pia!

PIA

You were frantic and slurring your words. I thought you were having a stroke.

LOU

If we work non-stop, we should be able to have the entire exterior lit up like Santa's Village by-- Friday.

PIA

Are you serious? Dad, I had to have someone cover my shift.

LOU

Calm down. You're a waitress.

PIA

What?

LOU

Look sweetie, here's the angel. Wanna put it on top of the tree when Mom gets home?

PIA

(sighs)

Sure. May as well, I'm here, aren't I. But you seriously need to take this whole Christmas thing down a notch.

LOU takes out a big ball of tangled Xmas lights.

LOU

I don't know how these get tangled up into a big ball like this every year. This is a nightmare.

PIA

Speaking of nightmare. Dad, there's something I've been wanting to tell you.

LOU

(untangling lights)

This is the last year I let your mother put away the lights.

PIA

Dad.

LOU

This could take over an hour. We don't have that kind of time!

PIA

Dad!

LOU

What!?

PIA

So, I wanted to let you know that Lindy and I will be-- a little late on Christmas Eve.

LOU

How late?

PIA

Like, around nine-ish.

LOU

Why?

PIA

She has a school thing and I have a girl thing.

LOU

On Christmas Eve?

PIA

We'll be here, just not for dinner.

LOU

Pia, you know I make my prime rib every Christmas Eve. And, I've already ordered the meat!

PIA

And that's another thing...Lindy is a vegetarian now. So she can't eat any of it anyway.

LOU

A vegetarian! Who is she running around with these days - hippies? Is she on drugs, too?

PIA

No! Of course she's not on drugs. She just doesn't eat meat.

LOU

Well, I don't know what's worse. And who doesn't eat meat? What the hell is going on with my one and only granddaughter?

PIA

Her boyfriend is a vegetarian, so you know. I give it three months.

LOU

The boyfriend or her being a vegetarian?

PIA

Hopefully both. She'll be single and eating ham by Good Friday, I'm sure of it.

LOU

It's not healthy, this no eating meat nonsense. It's why we have teeth! And, why can't you be here on Christmas Eve? What's this girl thing?

PIA

Us ex-wives are getting together for drinks. None of us wanted to face our first Christmas alone.

LOU

You won't be alone. You'll be with us. And what about Christmas Caroling? If you don't get here until nine, you'll miss it.

PIA

Dad, it's no big deal.

LOU

It is a big deal! The neighbors expect us every year.

PIA

I seriously doubt the neighbors will even notice that I'm not there.

LOU

Of course they will, you're my soprano! We need you for the Fa La La La La's.

Enter CAROL.

CAROL

I'm back! Pia darling, what are you doing here?

PIA

Dad called. He was practically having a stroke, so I rushed right over.

CAROL

I thought he was having a heart attack earlier. The sight of one ten foot tall Santa on the Hall's lawn, threw him into a frenzy.

LOU

Oh my God! Did you really see a ten foot tall Santa? I swear, I'm gonna deck the Hall's!

Lou runs to window with binoculars.

PIA

Deck the halls. Nice Christmas pun, Dad.

CAROL

He can't help himself.

LOU

(looking through binoculars)

I don't see anything.

PIA

This is exactly what he used to do when I would get home from my dates.

LOU

That's because you would just sit there parked in our driveway. What's my little girl doing in a car that long with a boy, anyway? Never mind, I don't think I wanna know. Carol, where did you see this ten foot Santa?

CAROL

I never saw a ten foot Santa. I was just kidding.

LOU

This is no time for jokes!

PIA

Yeah Mom, Tis NOT the season to be jolly! Christmas Pun?

LOU

Well? What did you end up getting? Douglas Fir? Noble? White Spruce?

CAROL

Something like that.

LOU

Did you get a big one?

CAROL

Yeah. It's in the car.

LOU

In the car? How on earth did the guy fit it into your car?

CAROL

He just kind of slid it in.

LOU

Carol. All the limbs are probably bent!

LOU exits.

CAROL

Where's Lindy?

PIA

Who knows. Probably with her loser boyfriend.

CAROL

Did you tell Daddy?

PIA

Oh yeah, he freaked. "But I already ordered all of the meat!"

CAROL

Well, honey, what did you expect? Christmas is his favorite holiday.

PIA

I know. But...

CAROL

Look, Daddy and your Aunt Mona never had Christmas' as children. Their Mother--

PIA

I know, I know. Their mother died when they were young and Grandpa worked two jobs just to put food on the table. And Daddy promised himself that when he grew up and had a family of his own, he would give them the Christmas' he never had as a child. Okay, now I feel bad.

CAROL

Good. That was the point.

Enter LOU dragging a big box behind him.

LOU

Carol! What the hell is this?

CAROL

The tree.

LOU

This is not a Christmas tree. This is an artificial tree! What happened?

PIA

(to Carol)

Really? You make me feel bad about Christmas Eve and my vegetarian kid, knowing you had a plastic Christmas tree in your trunk!

CAROL

Can you believe Pia and Lindy won't be here on Christmas Eve? And you already ordered all of the meat.

PIA

Mom!

LOU

Carol! Didn't you go see Ralph at the tree lot, like I told you to do?

CAROL

Of course. There weren't any trees left. They were completely sold out. They're closed for the season.

LOU

Why didn't you go to another tree lot?

CAROL

Ralph said not to bother. All of the Christmas tree lots are sold out. Between the drought out west and the floods up north, they were only able to order half the inventory this year.

LOU

Damn you Mother Nature! Then we'll just have to go into the City.

CAROL

We are not driving all the way to New York for a Christmas Tree, Lou!

PIA

If Mom won't go, I'll go with you Dad. I would hate to have your Christmas ruined. Especially since you never had Christmas' growing up.

CAROL

Besides, it's not just New Jersey. All of the surrounding states are the same way. Ralph said you won't be able to get a tree anywhere.

LOU

It's anti-American having a fake Christmas tree!

CAROL

The man at the department store said this tree is their number one seller due to its high quality and stunning realism. We were lucky to get it. They were selling like Fruit Cakes. Ah ha! Christmas pun!

PIA

Bad pun, Mom. Nobody likes Fruit Cake.

LOU

High quality and stunning realism! It's plastic!

PIA

Yep. That's what it says right here on the box. So, it's either a Christmas Tree or a Kardashian. But we won't know for sure, until we open it. Let's open it!

CAROL

He said its the same tree that they use on Kelly and Michael.

PIA

Kelly and, well, just Kelly now. (*Insert new co-host once selected*).

LOU

Who the hell are all of these people you're talking about? And what do any of them have to do with the fact that I have a fake Christmas tree sitting in my house right now?

PIA

Well, if TV talk shows are using fake trees, then it can't be that anti-American, Dad. I mean, nothing screams America like bratty celebrities and ambush makeovers.

LOU

Gary Hall is erecting the freakin' North Pole in his front yard as we speak. Against the neighborhood association rules, I might add. I've got twenty two pounds of prime rib on order, that apparently nobody is going to eat because Pia has plans on Christmas Eve and my granddaughter no longer eats meat. Not to mention the two of 'em are cycling with each other --

CAROL

Did you buy a bike, Pia?

LOU

And now, you expect us to have a fake Christmas Tree from a department store this year? What's next?

Enter MONA Lou's Sister, holding a Menorah.

MONA

Happy Hanukkah!

CAROL

Well, that answers that.

PIA

Hi Aunt Mona. You're just in time.

MONA

For what?

PIA

My dad is totally losing it.

CAROL

Your father is not losing it.

PIA

What is that Aunt Mona?

MONA

It's a Menorah. My latest boyfriend is Jewish. I just can't wait for all of you to meet Solomon. I hope you don't mind having potato Latke's and playing spin the dreidel this Christmas Eve, big brother?

LOU, hyperventilating, grabs ball of tangled Christmas Lights and walks out the front door.

CAROL

I was wrong. He's losing it...

MONA

What's wrong with him?

CAROL

I can't be certain. I've only seen him like this one other time.

MONA

When was that?

CAROL

When we found out I was pregnant with Pia.

PIA

Well, I feel great!

CAROL

In his defense darling, we were going to the ER thinking I had food poisoning. I had eaten some under cooked chicken at your Aunt JoAnn's. I tried to tell her that the chicken was pink, but she wouldn't listen. She was so concerned about the chicken drying out...

PIA

Mom, can we just get back to the part where Dad freaked when he heard you were having me!

CAROL

Oh, that's right. Anyway, there I was throwing up like crazy, so your father took me to the emergency room. We had to wait for over an hour. Can you believe it? I had to sit there, in the waiting room holding a bucket!

MONA

Horrible. Just horrible. The same thing happened to me when I went to the ER because I got a YoYo stuck up my...well, that's not important right now. But that's where I met Creeper. Remember Creeper? Such a sweetheart. I really did love that one. But when you're on the lamb, you can't stay in one place for very long. I hear he's living in Alaska.

PIA

Hello. I was almost flushed down a drain! Go on, Mom.

CAROL

Oh Pia. You were never going to be flushed down a drain. We would have put you up for adoption.

MONA

I would have adopted you, Pia. And we could have been just like those mother daughter movies that I watch on Lifetime. Borrowing each others clothes and going on roadtrips across the country. Except, I wouldn't be running from the law and you wouldn't have been sexually abused by my live in boyfriend.

PIA

(pointing fingers to herself)

And... we're here.

CAROL

Anyway, there we were sitting in the ER; Daddy and I thinking I had food poisoning. When you think you have food poisoning and the doctor informs you that you are actually three months along, it can throw you for a loop.

PIA

Being thrown for a loop I understand. But saying that dad reacted like ...

Frantic noise is heard outside and then a ball/body of Christmas Lights fly past the window.

MONA

What the heck was that?

Mona rushes to the window.

MONA

(gasps)

It's Lou. He's lifeless on the lawn! I think he's dead.

Carol rushes to the door.

CAROL

Oh God. Pia, help me!

Pia and Carol rush out door to get Lou. Mona grabs binoculars and peers out window.

MONA

Wait! Nope, I was wrong. I see a green Christmas light on his chest moving up and down. He's breathing! He's getting up! Here he is!

LOU, CAROL and PIA enter. Lou is tangled in Christmas Lights, shaking and mumbling.

CAROL

That's what you get for going outside with hardly any clothes on? It's freezing out there!

MONA

(to Pia)

Help me spin your dad out of these stupid lights, will ya?

Mona and Pia start to spin Lou around, untangling lights as they go.

CAROL

My God, you're shaking like a leaf.

Lou still mumbling and shaking

PIA

His lips are blue.

MONA

That's Yiddish! He's talking the Yiddish! Lou, do you want me to go make you a nice hot bowl of the Matzo Ball Soup?

PIA

You're not helping Aunt Mona. Maybe he thinks your pregnant. Dad! Mom's not pregnant. No need to go all crazy.

CAROL

Stop that! Lou? Lou honey, what's the matter? Did you hit your head? What's today? Do you remember?

MONA

Hell, I don't even know what today is.

CAROL

December 16th. Remember? Lou?

MONA

Is today December 16th? I think it's the first day of Hanukkah!

PIA

Aunt Mona, we're Catholic. And so are you.

MONA

It's the Jewish Festival of Lights. Doesn't that sound fun? Do us Catholics have anything fun like that?

PIA

Yes, we have Christmas.

MONA

I've gotta get Solomon a gift. What do you get your Jewish boyfriend of two weeks for Hanukkah?

CAROL

Cologne.