

Nightmare before Christmas

A Light-hearted Playlet

By John Gledhill

Cast

Narrator

Percy – A miscreant parent who never stops grumbling and who drinks too much

Kate – His long-suffering wife who is running out of suitable insults to keep her wayward husband in check

Shop Assistant – A rather brusque young lady

Dave – Another miscreant parent rather like Percy

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Narrator: The huge build-up starts in September immediately after the summer holidays. The shops are cluttered with posters declaring that there are only ten weeks to Christmas and that you should start Christmas shopping NOW. Foreign guests wonder what marvellous celebrations must be taking place on Christmas Day in England. Alas, they are usually disappointed. Christmas Day in England is just like any other day of the year - every one eats a lot, goes to the pub and watches television. It is just that they do it even more so over Christmas than at other times of the year.

In the Living Room

Percy and Kate

Percy: It's outrageous, absurd, sheer madness!

Kate: What on earth are you harping on about now?

Percy: I'll tell you what I'm harping on about. I just popped into Fresco's for a cheapo six pack of Harpo's extra-poor lager and I was bombarded, literally bombarded, with posters screaming at me that we should start Christmas shopping now. My specially cultivated Ibiza lobster pink sunburn is still peeling and I'm supposed to be thinking about Christmas.

Kate: Well, as I learnt in our Holgate Methodist Girl Guide troop – be prepared!

Percy: Be prepared! We might as well prepare for Armageddon. Oh no, that's a bad example. The end of the world is due on the Friday before Christmas, I believe, but don't people know that there are all sorts of important celebrations before Christmas.

Kate: Such as?

Percy: Well, there's the village harvest festival in two weeks' time. Then there's Halloween, All Souls' and All Saints' Day, Bonfire Night, Remembrance Sunday and Advent – I could go on.

Kate: Please don't. You're always going on about something or other.

Percy: I'll make a stand. I'm not doing any Christmas shopping until the very last week before Christmas.

End of Scene

Narrator: Let us start with Christmas Eve. There is the last frantic rush to buy the cranberry sauce for the turkey and the last mince pies you had forgotten as well as a host of other such items. The supermarkets are so full that it seems that every one else has forgotten as well.

Christmas Eve

In the Supermarket

Percy and the Sales Assistant

Percy: Excuse me, madam, but could you possibly tell me where I can purchase a vegetarian fat-based Christmas pudding in this emporium?

Sales Assistant: Eh? You what?

Percy: Where are the Christmas puddings, please?

Sales Assistant: Christmas puddings? You must be joking. They were sold out ages ago.

Percy: What about cranberry sauce?

Sales Assistant: Sold out.

Percy: Mince pies?

Sales Assistant: (*Laughing derisively*) Sold out..

Percy: Christmas crackers?

Sales Assistant: (*Screaming furiously and holding a cracker in her hand in a threatening manner*) This is the last one left. YOU must be crackers to expect Christmas crackers at Christmas. We're now stocking up for our Easter selection and we're busy preparing for our summer holiday display in our clothes section.

End of Scene

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