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PREVIEW



You Want Change for That Quarter?

By George Halitzka

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**You Want
Change for
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Cast of Characters

LAURA, a newlywed with spending issues

GEORGE, her longsuffering husband

KRISTA, who's collecting donations for charity

VINCE, a father who's trying to teach his daughter about giving

AMBER, his daughter, who doesn't want to learn the lesson

CATHY, a college student who's stressed over finances

ART, a preacher who's a few verses short of a Bible

Setting

This weekend at your strip mall

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You Want Change for That Quarter?

(Outside a busy strip mall, KRISTA is frozen beside a table containing a large sign soliciting charitable donations and a collection can. All around her are various SHOPPERS we'll meet later. Like KRISTA, they are frozen in poses indicative of their characters. As we hear tinny music over the loudspeakers, everyone unfreezes and goes their separate ways. GEORGE and LAURA, a newlywed couple, begin to cross the stage. GEORGE is staggering under the weight of too many shopping bags and gift boxes. LAURA is walking briskly along with nothing in her hands as she directs a nonstop monologue towards her beleaguered husband.)

LAURA: . . . And forget Aunt Selma; she got me socks for my birthday! Socks! They weren't even Abercrombie, some Walmart special . . . could you believe it? *(No response.)* Could you believe it, Georgie? *(She glances backwards her struggling husband.)* What's taking so long?

(GEORGE is trying to say something through the shopping bag in his mouth. He spits it out.)

GEORGE: Laura, Sugar Cookie . . . do we have to finish Christmas shopping in [Current Month]?

LAURA: Now, Georgie, you know the early bird gets the fall clearance. Let me help. *(With total sincerity, LAURA takes a tiny bag off the top of the stack and keeps walking. GEORGE staggers over to a nearby bench where he drops his load.)* You're keeping track of this, right? You know what happens when I see a sale . . . thank God for home equity! *(a sudden thought)* Oh . . . what are we doing for your mother? I thought maybe a new vacuum, but the woman already rides a broomstick . . . and Aunt Mildred! What do you get for the Cat Lady? *(an inspiration)* Carpet deodorizer! *(looking behind her)* Are you coming, Georgie-Porgie?

GEORGE: Why don't I wait here, Cream Puff?

LAURA: Whatever your little heart desires. Hold that.

(She shoves the one bag she is carrying into his mouth and walks away. After spitting out the bag – again – GEORGE is left to think dark thoughts about his

blushing bride.)

GEORGE: When they said marriage was like a second job, I didn't think I'd be a baggage handler.

(VINCE and AMBER enter. VINCE is carrying a couple of bags from the less-expensive stores in the mall. AMBER is busy dropping hints.)

AMBER: Dad! Are you listening?

VINCE: Ever since we got here.

AMBER: Do you know what *everybody* in my class does on weekends?

VINCE: Makes Dad take them shopping?

AMBER: No, they play X Box! I found a refurb for two seventy-five.

VINCE: What am I, the Birthday Fairy?

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

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

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

VINCE: Tell her what?

AMBER: About the X Box! *(VINCE heads towards KRISTA'S donation table.)* Where are you going?

VINCE *(dropping something into the can):* God bless!

KRISTA: Thank you, sir!

AMBER: That was X Box money!

VINCE: Do you remember last year when I was on layoff? *(AMBER shrugs reluctantly.)* People helped us get school clothes for you and Jason. We have a little extra now, so I want to say "thank you."

AMBER: Nothing says grateful like video games for your daughter.

VINCE *(with a sigh):* Wait and see, Amber.

(VINCE and AMBER exit. AMBER is still whining ad lib. GEORGE speaks

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confidentially to KRISTA.)

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

(CATHY, a stressed-out college student, enters. She's performing some complex calculations on her phone.)

CATHY: So if I eat Ramen all week, I'll have 39 dollars . . . but that stupid parking ticket is 30 bucks. Just enough for milk and cereal . . . ohhh, I forgot about the Stats book for midterms. I haven't given blood lately . . . *(In her rush, she doesn't see the donation table – or KRISTA. CATHY runs right into the poor girl and knocks her down.)* I'm so sorry! I mean, I'm *really* sorry! I mean, I can't tell you how bad I feel –

KRISTA *(starting to get up):* It's okay . . .

CATHY *(pushing her back down):* Are you sure? You aren't going to sue me . . . I only have money for Ramen!

KRISTA: Have you tried decaf?

CATHY *(looking down at the calculation on her phone):* Coffee! I forgot coffee! *(Glancing up at KRISTA'S table, she suddenly gasps.)* You're one of those charity people! I *always* give you something, but I don't have . . . *(CATHY thrusts her phone at KRISTA with a gesture of martyrdom.)* Take my phone instead. *(KRISTA pushes the phone back at CATHY.)* Okay . . . take my number. *(She picks up a flier from the donation table and scribbles something on the back.)* Call me next month and I'll give you fifty bucks, plus interest 'cause I forgot. *(She drops to her knees.)* Please forgive me! A homeless person will catch pneumonia and lose hope and kill herself by a dumpster because I was greedy. How could I forget?

(CATHY sticks her phone number in the donation can, then starts to exit.)

KRISTA: Um . . . God bless you?

CATHY: You're just trying to make me feel bad! *(rolling up her sleeve)* Blood bank, here I come.

(CATHY exits. GEORGE shakes his head and speaks to KRISTA again.)

GEORGE: Forgot to budget for charity? Some people aren't thankful for what they've got.

(REVEREND ARTHUR P. HUMBUGG – we'll call him ART – enters. Carrying an enormous Bible, he approaches KRISTA.)

ART: Prr-aaaise God for young people like you who help the less fortunate! As the Lord's *Hooooly* Book tells us in Second Opinions, the third chapter and the sixth verse, "It is more blessed to give than to cast the first stone." Well done my *gooooood* and faithful servant, sayeth The Most Right Reverand Arthur P. Humbugg the Third!

KRISTA: Thanks . . . Reverend.

ART: Don't thank *me*, young lady. Our Heavenly Father has blessed me abundantly that I may give to your *woorthy* cause! *(He pulls out his wallet and counts five crisp bills with a flourish.)* Would *five hundred dollars* help those in need?

KRISTA: Of course, Reverand! Anything you can give –

ART: Say no more, young lady! As the *Gooooood* Book says, "Whatever ye do unto the least of these my brethren, ye do it with five loaves and three fishes." God has given me so much so that I may help those with so little.

(As he says "with so little," he indicates KRISTA. She's a bit taken aback.)

KRISTA: God bless you, Reverend.

ART *(laying a hand on KRISTA's forehead):* May *Goood* shine His light upon thee!

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

GEORGE: Is it just me, or is he a few verses short of a Bible?

(At long last, LAURA returns! She comes over to GEORGE'S bench carrying one more shopping bag. She sneaks up behind GEORGE and puts her hands over his eyes.)

LAURA: Guess who!

GEORGE *(through gritted teeth):* Don't do that, Love Muffin . . .

LAURA: I found the *perfect* present for your mother!

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

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END OF FREE PREVIEW

The ending of the play has been omitted from this preview. Purchase a full copy of the script and license performance rights at dramabygeorge.com/store.

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