

I KNOW THIS FOR SURE

By Peggy Welch Mershon

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Sarah, a student at a girls' prep school, isn't going home for Christmas. Her boyfriend's dumped her, her grades have bombed, and being at home with her alcoholic stepfather is unendurable. Sarah's friends, Jennie and Tracy, try to talk her into leaving with them, but Sarah has a different trip in mind, a permanent one where she won't feel sad anymore. Then Miranda, a hippie vision from the '60s, drops in. Her message is infused with humor but unmistakable: there's no makeup exam for suicide. Finally, desperately she tells Sarah, "I know this for sure: you've got a great future ahead of you." A compelling, powerful play.

Playing time: 20-25 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 w)

SARAH: Resident student at a girls' prep school.

JENNIE: Her roommate.

TRACY: Another student in the same dormitory.

MIRANDA: A visitor.

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TIME: The present, early afternoon, just before Christmas break.

COSTUMES: Sarah, Jennie and Tracy wear contemporary, stylish clothing. Miranda wears 1960s hippie clothing.

SETTING: A dormitory bedroom shared by two teen-age girls. Desk DS with telephone. Two beds UPS. Window in USC wall. Open suitcase partially filled on one bed. Closed suitcase and coat on the other. Door to hallway SR. Additional decorations may be as realistic and detailed as desired.

PROPERTIES: Telephone, two suitcases, coat, assortment of loose clothing, key on a long chain, prop pistol.

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(AT RISE: SARAH sits at the desk, talking on the telephone. She is dressed in winter clothing appropriate for an airplane trip.)

SARAH: *(Trying to sound reasonable.)* I'm SURE, Mother. I really DO want to spend Christmas at Jenny's house. Her parents do to want me there. You know that. You talked with her mother. *(Pause for response.)* Yes, I KNOW it'll be the first time I'll be away from home for the holidays, but there's a first time for everything, Mother. We're going skiing! And, face it, mother, Vermont's a lot better for skiing than Virginia. *(Pause, getting a little more impatient.)* Yes, I have enough money. *(Pause.)* Yes, that's all I wanted this year. I hope you'll like your presents. I'll call Christmas Eve. *(Pause, looks disgusted.)* OK, sure, wish George a Merry Christmas, too. *(Pause, now openly irritated.)* No, Mother, my stepfather has NOTHING to do with this! I have to go now, Mother. Jenny's parents are here already. The dorm's almost empty. *(Pause, voice gets quivery.)* I will, Mother. Good-bye. And thanks ... for letting me go.

(SARAH hangs up the phone almost reluctantly and sits looking at it. She wipes a tear from her eyes and gets up to put a couple more articles of clothing into her open suitcase. JENNIE, dressed informally but stylishly, breezes through the door SR. She grabs her coat and suitcase.)

JENNIE: *(Brightly, a natural optimist.)* Sarah, I still don't understand why you changed your mind at the last minute about coming to Vermont with us. Mom and Dad were planning on it, and God knows you've said often enough you don't want to go home! That stepfather of yours sounds like a real jerk!

SARAH: I'll be fine, Jennie. I just talked to my mother, and she says he isn't drinking so much ...

JENNIE: *(Interrupting.)* It's Christmas! Everybody drinks at Christmas! 'Tis the season to be tipsy! *(Finally sees SHE'S not cheering SARAH up.)* Well, anyway, just stay away from him. Go to parties. Visit old friends. Did Scott call you back?

SARAH: *(Forlornly.)* No.

JENNIE: *(Getting exasperated.)* Another jerk, then! Guys who break up just before the holidays are just trying to avoid buying you a present! He probably really still likes you and will come crawling back for New Years. He's just cheap!

SARAH: No, that's not Scott's primary problem. But I'd rather have him be cheap than a cheat. We haven't seen very much of each other since I went away to school this year. You know, I told him not to miss out on any of the fun. I just didn't expect the fun to be a cheerleader named Candy.

JENNIE/SARAH: *(Making the same face they've done before and as if nobody who was worth anything would have this dumb name.)* Eeeyouu!

SARAH: Yeah, now look who's being treated to HIS Christmas cheer!

JENNIE: Well, I still say it's a pretty CHEAP trick. *(Still trying to be sympathetic but getting distracted.)* Listen. I gotta go. Please don't let old rotten Scott ruin your holidays like he ruined your exams. Have you told your mom about the grades yet? *(Moving toward the door.)*

SARAH: *(Following HER as if escorting a visitor out.)* I'll tell her. I'll make all sorts of promises to work harder next semester. She'll probably just say I messed up 'cause I didn't want to go away to school in the first place, but I had no choice - not with George there - no choice at all.

JENNIE: So now you're returning to the nuthouse for Christmas. I worry about you, girl. You've been too quiet lately. *(Torn between HER concern for SARAH and her desire to get away from the gloom.)*

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SARAH: *(Makes a move to push HER out the door.)*
Everything's going to turn out fine. Really! You gotta go.
Have a wonderful time skiing. I'll call you from Virginia. I
have to finish packing before the airport limo gets here.

JENNIE: *(Gives HER a last worried look, then hugs her.)*
Merry Christmas, Sarah! *(Exits SR with luggage, coat.)*

(SARAH'S smile remains frozen on her face until JENNIE leaves, then quickly disappears. Her shoulders sag and she turns wearily and looks at her half-filled suitcase. She picks it up and slowly turns it over so that its contents fall out on the bed and floor. Kicking some out of the way, she returns to the desk and sits down again. She pulls out a key hidden on a chain around her neck and opens one of the desk drawers. She peers inside.)

TRACY: *(Yelling from SR.)* Sarah!

(SARAH jumps and slams the drawer shut. TRACY races in, dressed expensively in the very latest style.)

TRACY: *(Definitely in a hurry.)* God, Sarah, do you realize we are the very last ones here? I cannot believe that half-witted brother of mine is so late! *(Hustles USC to the window. SARAH looks relieved her secret hasn't been discovered.)* Let me look out your window. You've got such a great view of the front driveway.

SARAH: *(Quietly.)* Has Miss Keller gone, too?

TRACY: *(Taking a second to realize SHE'S been spoken to.)* What? Yeah, old Killer Keller had to catch a bus. Would you believe a bus?! *(Turns HER attention back to the window.)* C'mon, Jimmy! *(Glances at SARAH and takes a stab at politeness.)* Your ride coming soon?

SARAH: *(Taking a stab at cheerfulness.)* Oh, any time now. My flight's not till 6, so I'd rather wait here, actually, than at the airport.

TRACY: *(Throws one last look out the window and turns to SARAH.)* You KNOW you could have hitched a ride with us, don't you?

End of Freeview

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