

A Charlie Brown Christmas

By Charles M. Schulz

Narrator: It was finally Christmastime, the best time of the year. The houses were strung with tiny colored lights, their windows shining with warm yellow glow only Christmas could bring. The scents of pine needles and hot cocoa mingled together, wafting through the air, and the sweet sounds of Christmas carols could be heard in the distance.

Fluffy white snowflakes tumbled from the sky onto a group of joyful children as they sang and laughed, skating on the frozen pond in town. Everyone was happy and full of holiday cheer. That is, everyone except for Charlie Brown.

Charlie: (to Linus) I think there must be something wrong with me. I just don't understand Christmas, I guess. I might be getting presents and sending Christmas cards and decorating trees and all that, but I'm still not happy. I don't feel the way I'm supposed to feel.

Linus: Charlie Brown, you are the only person I know who can take a wonderful season like Christmas and turn it into a problem. Maybe Lucy is right. Of all of the Charlie Browns in the world, you are the Charlie Brownest.

Charlie walks through the snow, thoughtfully. Goes to his mailbox, pokes head inside. Looks disappointed because it is empty.

Charlie: Rats! (sad). Nobody sent me a Christmas card today. I know nobody likes me. Why do we have to have a holiday season to emphasize it?

Violet enters. Reading a Christmas card.

Charlie: Thanks for the Christmas card you sent me Violet (sarcastic).

Violet: I didn't send you a Christmas card!

Charlie grumpily shoves his hands into pockets, makes face.

Charlie: Don't you know sarcasm when you hear it?

Walks down street, observing happy friends playing in the snow.
Narrator: Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves, but Charlie Brown was still sad.

Charlie sits in front of Lucy's psychiatric booth.

Charlie: I am in sad shape...

Lucy: (interrupts) Hold up there Charlie Brown! I need 5 cents from you for my kind of advice!

Charlie reaches in pocket, drops a nickel in her money can.

Lucy: Boy, I love the beautiful sound of cold, hard, cash, that beautiful, beautiful sound. Nickels, nickels, nickels. That beautiful sound of plunking nickels.
Now what seems to be your trouble?

Charlie: I know I should be happy during Christmas, but I can't seem to manage it.

Lucy: (proudly) Well, as they say on TV, "the mere fact that you realize you need help indicates that you are not too far gone." I think we better pinpoint your fears. If we can find out what you're afraid of, we can label it.
Are you afraid of responsibility? If you are, then you have hypengyophobia.
How 'bout cats? If you're afraid of cats, you have ailurophasia.
Are you afraid of staircases? If you are, then you have climachaphobia.
Maybe you have thalassophobia. This is a fear of the ocean.
Or gephyrobia, which is the fear of crossing bridges.
Or maybe you have pantophobia. Do you think you have pantophobia?

Charlie: What's pantophobia?

Lucy: The fear of everything.

Charlie: That's it!
Actually Lucy, my trouble is Christmas. I just don't understand it. Instead of feeling happy, I feel sort of let down.

Lucy comes out from behind booth.

Lucy: You need involvement. You need to get involved in some real Christmas project. How would you like to be the director of our Christmas play?

Charlie: me? You want *me* to be the director of the Christmas play?

Lucy: Sure Charlie Brown, we need a director. We've got a Shepard, a musician, animals, everyone we need. We've even got a Christmas Queen.

Narrator: Charlie Brown hesitated. What did he know about how to properly direct a Christmas play?

Lucy: Don't worry; I'll be there to help you.

Narrator: Charlie Brown thought for a moment. Maybe he did need to get involved with a holiday project in order to feel better about things. Lucy's confidence was almost contagious. Besides, he couldn't let everyone down. They needed him. Figuring we had nothing to lose, Charlie Brown agreed to meet Lucy and the rest of the cast later at the auditorium.

Lucy: incidentally, I know how you feel about all this Christmas business, getting depressed and all that. It happens to me every year. I never get what I really want. I always get a lot of stupid toys, or a bicycle, or clothes, or something like that.

Charlie: What is it you want?

Lucy: Real Estate.

Snoopy enters, hauling a large brown box overflowing with colorful holiday lights, etc.

Charlie follows Snoopy to his house while Snoopy creates a large roof display.

Charlie: What's going on here?

Snoopy grins, hands Charlie a flyer.

Narrator: FIND THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS. WIN MONEY, MONEY, MONEY! SPECTACULAR! SUPER-COLOSSAL! NEIGHBORHOOD CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND DISPLAY CONTEST.

Charlie looks into sky with dismay.

Narrator: Even his very own dog had gone commercial. The thought of the contest made Charlie Brown feel positively sick. Was money all anyone cared about? Charlie Brown couldn't stand it.

*Charlie throws flyer in air, walks away.
Sally enters.*

Sally: I've been looking for you, big brother. Will you please write a letter to Santa clause for me? You write it, and I'll tell you what I want to say.

Narrator: Charlie was in a hurry to get to the school auditorium on time to play rehearsal, but he couldn't say no to his sister.

Charlie takes pen, clipboard from Sally.

Charlie: Okay, shoot.

Sally: I have been extra good this year, so I have a long list of presents that I want.

Charlie: (sighs) Oh, brother.

Sally: Please note the size and color of each item, and send as many as possible. If it seems too complicated, make it easy on yourself: just send money. How 'bout tens and twenties?

Narrator: Charlie Brown was dismayed, even his baby sister had become greedy. Writing a letter to Santa Claus was one thing, but demanding cash from him was just absurd.

Charlie rushes off to auditorium. Arrives; all of the kids are on stage already.

Walks to directors chair, begins to speak. Realizes everyone is fooling around, not paying attention. Picks up megaphone.

Charlie: (yelling) Alright, stop the music! We're going to do this play, and we're going to do it right!

Lucy picks up scripts.

Lucy: Alright, I'm here to assign roles. Frieda, you're playing the innkeeper's wife. Pig Pen, you're the innkeeper. And Sherm, you're the Shepard.

Narrator: Snoopy was delighted to play the roles of all the different animals. From sheep, to cow, to penguin.

Lucy goes to Linus, hands him a script.

Lucy: Memorize these lines, so you can recite them on cue.

Linus hugs blanket tight

Linus: This is ridiculous! I can't memorize something like this so quickly! Why should I be put through such agony? Give me one good reason why I should have to memorize this!

Lucy mechanically makes fist.

Lucy: I'll give you five good reasons: One, two, three, four, five!

Linus: Those are good reasons. Christmas is not only getting too commercial, it's getting too dangerous.

Lucy frowns

Lucy: And get rid of that stupid blanket! What's a Christmas Shepard going to look like holding a stupid blanket like that?

Charlie: Alright! Lets have it quiet! Places everybody. Schroeder set the mood for the first scene.

Schroeder begins to play piano. Cast dances.

Charlie: Cut! Cut! It's all wrong! Lets rehearse another scene instead.

Narrator: No one seemed to be able to concentrate.

Frieda: Pig Pen's dust was ruining the style of my naturally curly hair!

Sally watches Linus intently, rests head on shoulder occasionally.

Sally: Isn't he the cutest thing?

Lucy (with snoopy): We want a lunch break!

Charlie: Good Grief... There's no time for foolishness. Lets take it from the top again!

Schroeder plays piano. Everyone dances.

Lucy (to Charlie): What's the matter? Don't you think it's great?

Charlie shakes head.

Lucy: look, let's face it. We all know that Christmas is a big commercial racket. It's ruined by a big eastern syndicate, ya know.

Charlie: Well, this is one play that's not going to be commercial. What our play needs is the proper Christmas mood. We need a Christmas tree.

Lucy claps with excitement.

Lucy: Hey, perhaps a tree. A great big shiny aluminum Christmas tree! That's it! Get the biggest aluminum tree you can find. Maybe paint it pink!

Narrator: Charlie Brown left Lucy in charge of rehearsal, and set out with Linus to find the perfect tree for their play.

Charlie and Linus enter tree lot. Go to small green pine tree, on a simple wooden stand.

Linus: Gee, I didn't know they still made wooden Christmas trees.

Charlie: This one seems to need a home.

Linus: I don't know, remember what Lucy said? This doesn't seem to fit the modern spirit.

Charlie: I don't care! We'll decorate it, and it will be just right for our play. Besides, I think it needs me.

Charlie and Linus return to auditorium, place tree on piano.

Charlie: We're back!

Children gather around piano.

Violet: Boy, are you stupid Charlie Brown. You were supposed to get a good tree. Can't you even tell a good tree from a poor tree?

Patti: (sighs) You're hopeless Charlie Brown.

Lucy: You've been dumb before, but this time you bit it.

*Children laugh, exit. Charlie is alone by piano.
Linus approaches.*

Charlie: I guess you were right Linus; I shouldn't have picked this little tree. Everything I do turns into a disaster. I guess I don't really know what Christmas is about. Isn't there anyone who understands what Christmas is all about?

Linus: Sure, I can tell you what Christmas is all about.

Linus goes to center stage, spotlight.

Linus: "And there were in the same country Shepards abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, 'fear not, for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in the manger.' And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, good will toward men.'"

Linus picks up blanket, walks back to piano.

Linus: That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.

Silence.

Charlie picks up tree, smiles. Walks outside, stares at sky.

Charlie (to self): Linus is right; I won't let all this commercialism ruin my Christmas. I'll take this little tree home, and I'll decorate it, and I'll show them it really will work in our play.

Walks home, finds Snoopy's doghouse with prize on it. Grabs ornament from house, puts on tree. Tree bends, Charlie is sad.

Charlie: I killed it! Everything I touch gets ruined!

Walks away from tree, slouching. Others circle tree. Linus straitens the branch.

Linus: I never thought it was such a bad little tree. It's not bad at all, really. Maybe it just needs a little love.

Children look at doghouse, tree. Take doghouse decorations, put on tree.

Lucy: Charlie Brown is a blockhead, but he did get a nice tree.

Children circle tree, hum "O little town of Bethlehem". Charlie enters.

Charlie: What's going on here?

Everyone: Merry Christmas Charlie Brown!

Charlie looks at tree, smiles.

Narrator: His little tree that no one had wanted, and he could hardly believe his eyes. His friends' efforts had transformed it into something truly special. And everyone sang:

Everyone:

*Hark, the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king!
Peace on Earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations rise!
Join the triumph of the skies!
With angelic host proclaim: Christ is born in Bethlehem.
Hark, the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king.*

Narrator: Surrounded by his friends, Charlie Brown realized Linus had been right about the true meaning of Christmas. This was the Christmas spirit he had been looking for all along. At last, the season seemed 100 times brighter. And for Charlie Brown, it was truly the merriest Christmas ever.