

UNLESS CHRISTIANS

by

J.A. MacAbee

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This play was inspired by a recent blog article I read entitled "I'm a Christian, Unless You're Gay." There have been various reactions and responses to the article, but the main underlying theme of them all is an agreement that all people deserve to be loved, whether you agree with various life choices or not. I hope this theme reigns through in each and every performance given.

PENNY is a real woman, not the stereotypical fundamentalist shell that is so often portrayed. There is real depth, genuine concern, confusion, and heart-ache that she feels in this play. She is multi-dimensional. Represent her as such.

The performance can have as many or as few set pieces as the director chooses. Scenery is nice, but the ultimate important is the characters and their relationship.

My hope and prayer is that this play is used to make those who see it more aware of our natural tendencies to segregate others when we do not know communities of individuals personally. Ultimately, may this play be used to instill a desire in the viewer to befriend others outside the safe and comfortable community of homogenous friends, family, and neighbors. We grow as individuals when we listen to those with opinions dissimilar to our own.

Enjoy and Break a leg!

CHARACTERS

PENNY

DAVID

YOUNG DAVID

VARIOUS OFFSTAGE REPORTERS

SETTING

Present day in small midwest town

UNLESS CHRISTIANS

(Lights rise slightly. The sound of a news broadcast fills the barren stage, as voiceovers of report after report is given)

REPORTER #1: Welcome and good afternoon. I'm here in front of today's Kansas City's Gay Pride Parade, where there are many smiles and yet many scowls, as the Westover Baptist Church is yet again picketing another event –

REPORTER #2: Tensions continue to grow between those of the community and the Westover Baptist Church as signs with hateful slogans continue to color the community –

REPORTER #3: Yet again, the Westover Baptist Church is picketing at the funeral of a fallen soldier, thanking God that this man can no longer take up arms –

(Voiceover reports begin to quicken and overlap)

REPORTER #4: Even children of these individuals carry around the signs, some as young as 3 years old –

REPORTER #1: Their message is to let the world know that God does not approve of the lifestyle these people are choosing to live –

REPORTER #2: The families of the fallen are not able to mourn without hearing the yells from across the cemetery –

REPORTER #3: It's the New Crusade, according to those in the church, to heavily-handedly let the world know of their sins –

REPORTER #4: Some question if this is the revolution Jesus intended to start –

REPORTER #1: The church stood outside of an abortion clinic today, damning any person to come and go as a murderer –

REPORTER #2: Adulterer –

REPORTER #3: Fornicator –

REPORTER #4: Enemy of God –

REPORTER #1: Wicked –

REPORTER #2: Damned –

REPORTER #3: Faggot.

REPORTER #4: We can only wonder when the hate will cease...

(Penny walks briskly to the center stage. She smiles kindly at the audience.)

PENNY: Hello. Sorry. I was just listening to the news. Our church is making headlines again, which is always wonderful to help get the word of God out! Protests we've found to be one of the greatest ways to raise awareness for what

God is saying. “You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free!” *(beat)* I’m sorry again. Where are my manners? My name is Penny Richards, and it is lovely to be with you all today. I am happily married to my husband, George, whom I met at our Christian College at one of those speed dating events. I know – typical. And of course, we fell in love... When did I know he was the one? The second week of freshman year. *(beat)* No, I did not just go there to get my MRS. Degree. I have my Bachelors in Fine Arts, but yes, I do not work. George provides the Richards family with our necessary income, working as a math teacher at the Christian school our son attends. He’s a wonderful teacher, and for that matter, we have a wonderful boy. Our greatest blessing from God is our son, David. When we named him after the great King of Israel, we knew he was destined for great things. He’s at the top of his 9th grade class, is a great soccer player, star of the theater program, and is on student council *and* is running for student government next year. Yes, we are indeed proud. I remember when he was born like it was yesterday. The doctor put him into my arms, and I knew that he was the most beautiful creation God could have given me and my husband. We couldn’t have asked for anything more in this world. And apparently for God, one was enough, as George and I haven’t seemed to be able to get pregnant again. *(beat)* We claim God took the greatness of a few normal children and placed all of it into one boy – our little Davey.

(A young boy walks onto the stage and interrupts)

YOUNG DAVID: Mom?

PENNY: Yes, Davey?

YOUNG DAVID: I’m finished with my Bible memorization.

PENNY: *(to audience)* Even from a young age he was always the best student. *(to YOUNG DAVID)* Good, honey! Can I hear it?

YOUNG DAVID: 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10. “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

PENNY: That’s wonderful, baby!

YOUNG DAVID: What does it mean?

PENNY: It means that the bad people who don’t love God don’t go to heaven.

YOUNG DAVID: Will I go to heaven?

PENNY: Are you going to do anything bad?

YOUNG DAVID: No.

PENNY: Then you have nothing to fear. *(she kisses him on the forehead)* Just keep listening to mommy and daddy and God’s Word.

YOUNG DAVID: Okay!

PENNY: I love you, Davey.

YOUNG DAVID: I love you too, mommy!

(YOUNG DAVID runs off the stage)

PENNY: *(beat)* He's a sweet boy, isn't he? We're glad to see how he's progressed so well. We homeschooled him from his early years. We didn't want his young mind being tainted by the destructive ideas of modern public schools, and we are proud to say we think he's grown even more because of our decision. He's always been a very inquisitive young man.

(YOUNG DAVID walks on stage again with a small chalk board)

YOUNG DAVID: Mommy, I think I can prove the theory of relativity incorrect!
(shows his chalkboard filled with mathematical equations)

PENNY: *(to audience)* I can always imagine, can't I?

YOUNG DAVID: Mommy, where does cheese come from?

PENNY: *(acknowledging audience, but to YOUNG DAVID)* Cows. From their milk.

YOUNG DAVID: Oh... How do birds fly?

PENNY: God made them that way.

YOUNG DAVID: Can cows fly?

PENNY: No.

YOUNG DAVID: Can I fly?

PENNY: When you're in heaven.

YOUNG DAVID: Where's heaven?

PENNY: Somewhere up there.

YOUNG DAVID: In the stars?

PENNY: No, not in the stars.

YOUNG DAVID: What are stars?

PENNY: They're giant fireballs in the sky.

YOUNG DAVID: How many are there?

PENNY: More than we can count. Only God knows.

YOUNG DAVID: Is that how the lights in the ceiling work?

PENNY: Those are light bulbs; and no, that's electricity.

YOUNG DAVID: What's electricicity?

PENNY: *(laughing)* You are full of questions today, mister!

YOUNG DAVID: I wanna know!

PENNY: *(smiles)* Electricity is basically a power current that makes things work.

YOUNG DAVID: Like me?

PENNY: No, not like you.

YOUNG DAVID: Like what?

PENNY: Like the TV, the car, and the house lights.

YOUNG DAVID: Oh. *(beat)* Where do babies come from?

PENNY: *(taken aback)* Well, God gives mommy's and daddy's everywhere babies to take care of.

YOUNG DAVID: Can I be a daddy?

PENNY: You can once you find that special girl that God has picked out for you.

YOUNG DAVID: Can we do it tomorrow?

PENNY: No, baby. In due time. *(prying)* Is there maybe someone in your Sunday school class you have a little crush on?

YOUNG DAVID: No.

PENNY: What's her name?

YOUNG DAVID: I don't know.

PENNY: *(prodding)* Davey... Come on...

YOUNG DAVID: I don't know!

PENNY: Well, when you're ready to tell me who it is, I'll be right here.

YOUNG DAVID: *(beat)* Okay!

(YOUNG DAVID runs off stage)

PENNY: The funny thing is each day he grows, he looks even more like his father. His voice has already begun to change, and now he *sounds* just like his father.

(DAVID comes out on stage as light comes on a desk. He sits down and begins to read a book). We put him at a Christian school this year to begin 9th grade, and he fit in right away. All the teachers praised him for his work ethic, obedience, and his respect of authority. We know he's going to make a great priest one day in the church. Father Francis practically has already given him the keys. He has a great zeal for Westover and its message.

(PENNY walks over to DAVID)

PENNY: David, how's it going?

DAVID: *(not looking up from his book)* Good, ma'am.

PENNY: You coming down for dinner in a bit?

DAVID: Yes, ma'am.

PENNY: Got some homework there?

DAVID: English.

PENNY: What are you reading?

DAVID: The Scarlett Letter.

PENNY: What?? They're letting you read that?

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PENNY: You wanted to talk to me?

DAVID: Yeah! *(beat)* I was given this assignment today. We're supposed to read this article for English class and write a 500 word essay on our thoughts about it. I read it, and I kind of wanted to know what you thought about it.

(DAVID hands the papers to PENNY)

PENNY: Sure! Is it on that new article about the truth of Noah's arc? I found that fascinating.

DAVID: No, it's... it's called "I'm a Christian, Unless You're Gay."

PENNY: *(beat)* So it's about making sure we're not friends with the gays, correct?

DAVID: *(beat)* No, actually. It's about... well, loving people no matter the –

PENNY: *(scanning the article)* This thing is chalk-full of lies, David! We can't tell people how to live? Sinning is okay? "God loves gays"??? What is this, David? Is this some sort of joke?

DAVID: No, mom. He gave it to us as an assignment.

PENNY: *(fuming)* This is the same teacher that had you read that other questionable material, isn't it?

DAVID: Mom, can we just talk about the article?

PENNY: There will be no more discussion of this piece of garbage. It's going in the trash where garbage belongs and I'm calling your school to let them know the wake of destruction this teacher is causing to all the school and the community.
(she goes to the phone)

DAVID: *(persistent)* Mom, can't we just talk about it?!

PENNY: You will not mention this, nor think about this again. Understood??

(DAVID is unresponsive) Now go to your room.

(DAVID stands there, looking lost as to what to do)

PENNY: *(on her phone; angrily)* Hello, this is Mrs. Penny Richards calling in regards to my son David's English Teacher.

DAVID: Mom, put the phone down.

PENNY: He is giving out immoral, unchristian teachings in his classroom material –

DAVID: Mom, stop.

PENNY: - and I demand you remove him from his post at teacher at the school.

DAVID: Mom, STOP!

PENNY: My husband, George Richards, I'm sure will be in agreement with me –

DAVID: PUT THE PHONE DOWN!

PENNY: - in saying that his views are dangerous and poisoning to the minds of these young impressionable –

(DAVID takes the phone from his mother, closes it, and throws it against the wall. Silence fills the room, as PENNY is both shocked, appalled, and angered at her son's actions)

PENNY: You are grounded, young man.

DAVID: *(pleading)* Will you just listen to me for once?

PENNY: I'll listen to you when you start behaving.

DAVID: No you won't. You *never* do. It's always your way or the high way.

PENNY: It is not!

DAVID: It is too! I never get a word in!

PENNY: The devil is poisoning your mind, David!

DAVID: *God is opening* my mind, mom!

PENNY: I have never been more disappointed with you in my life.

DAVID: I don't care! I'm sick of living under a rock! I want to be free!

PENNY: You are free!

DAVID: I'm not free!

PENNY: The scripture says, "It is for freedom that Christ –

DAVID: Mom.

PENNY: has set us free –

DAVID: Stop it.

PENNY: Stand firm then -

DAVID: This isn't freedom.

PENNY: and do not let yourselves -

DAVID: This is slavery –

PENNY: be burden again by -

DAVID: and I want to be free!

PENNY: a yoke of slavery!

DAVID: Mom, I want to be free!

PENNY: You are free!

DAVID: I'M GAY, MOM! *(the room goes silent for a very long time)* And until I just said that I hadn't felt free for a very, very long time.

PENNY: *(beat)* I don't understand.

DAVID: I don't understand either, mom. I don't know whether these feelings are wrong, right, a sin, or what have you. All I know is that I've felt alone for so long. I've had days where I wanted to just kill myself. I've been disgusted with myself. I've hurt myself. I've prayed. I've cried myself to sleep. I've looked at pornography in an attempt to make myself lust after girls. *(beat)* Mom, I can't do it anymore. I don't want to. You're always talking about how evil gay people are.

Well mom, what does that make me? (*beat*) I never wanted this. I never asked for this. This is a burden I did not choose to bear. I don't want to hide anymore. I want to believe God loves me, no matter what I am, who I am, how messed up I am, or who I'm attracted to. I want to be loved. I want to be accepted. I just want to be *free*.

PENNY: (*lashing out*) You are free!

DAVID: I'm not free!

PENNY: This... this can't be happening.

DAVID: Mom, it is.

PENNY: You can't be gay.

DAVID: Mom, I am.

PENNY: I've raised you too well for you to be gay.

DAVID: Mom, I don't know why, but it is the way it is.

PENNY: I'm not going to stand here and let you choose this lifestyle.

DAVID: Mom! Look at me! I'm still your son. The same one you loved 5 minutes ago. Please.

PENNY: It's that damn teacher and that damn article that's gotten to your head.

DAVID: Mom, it's not. I've felt like this for a while.

PENNY: You need to stop being gay right now.

DAVID: Mom, look at me!

PENNY: God would not give me a gay son.

DAVID! Mom! Look at me! (*she finally looks up into DAVID's eyes*) I'm still your son. I'm still the same kid, who is confused and alone, and I need you. Please.

(*PENNY turns away from looking at DAVID*)

DAVID: Mom, you and your friends seem to preach loving people, unless we find out they like men, or they like women, or they're a different religion, or unless they have piercings or tattoos, or unless they don't have conservative political views, or unless they drink too much, or they smoke, or they live with their girlfriend, or anything else. Mom, I'm tired of being an "Unless" Christian. You've taken me to church my entire life where they seem to preach love, but all I've ever known you to do is hate. I mean, didn't Jesus befriend and love all those people? I don't know what's right or what's wrong, but mom, I don't think that should affect how we love people. I'm sick of hiding and sick of hating. And I want you to know whatever you say next, I will always love you; no matter if you love me. Love is deserved, even to the undeserving.

(*Silence*)

PENNY: Get out of my house.

DAVID: Mom?

PENNY: I can't have you in here.

DAVID: Mom...

PENNY: You are breaking the law that God has given me by choosing this lifestyle.

DAVID: Mom, I'm your son.

PENNY: And you're making me make a decision I don't want to make.

DAVID: Mom, look at me.

PENNY: Stop it.

DAVID: *(beginning to tear up)* Mom, I love you.

PENNY: *(closing her eyes)* Go away.

DAVID: Mom, please.

PENNY: Satan away!

DAVID: Mom, stop it!

PENNY: Get out of my house!

DAVID: Mom! *(PENNY opens her eyes and looks at DAVID)* I need you. Please.

(PENNY stares at DAVID for a very long time. PENNY begins to tear up, turning into a sobbing fit. She embraces DAVID passionately, and he reciprocates. They both hug and cry for a time together)

PENNY: My baby...

DAVID: I'm here, mom.

PENNY: I don't understand.

DAVID: I don't understand either.

PENNY: How did this happen?

DAVID: I don't know.

PENNY: Was I not a good mother?

DAVID: No! No! You're a great mom.

PENNY: *(beat)* I had no idea.

DAVID: *(beat)* I was so scared to tell you.

PENNY: I'm so confused.

DAVID: I am too.

PENNY: *(looks him in the eye, and takes a moment before she speaks)* You are my son. I don't know about this... all this... but I do know that I do I love you. And I always will.

DAVID: *(smiling)* I love you, mom.

PENNY: I love you too, Davey.

(Lights fade. PENNY steps back into the spotlight, alone. The sound of previous news reports echo quietly in the background as PENNY begins to speak)

PENNY: My baby isn't perfect. None of us are. I don't know why God made him this way. I don't know if its genetic or a product of his environment. I don't know if it can be reversed. I don't know if it should be reversed... I'm not sure of many things it seems these days... The fact of the matter is I loved him for 15 years, and that's not about to change. I still don't understand it all, but perhaps God did this because he wanted to change the way this town works – how we view people who are different than us. Starting with this mother. *(beat)* My son is beautiful, and as he faces all sorts of trials and tribulations in the upcoming months and years, I look forward to standing right beside him, because I love him, unconditionally.

(The radio broadcast should end with Reporter #4 before PENNY's last line)

REPORTER #4: But the question on everyone's mind is when will the hate will stop?

PENNY: My name is Penny Richards, and I am proud to say I am *not* an Unless Christian.

(Lights fade to blackout)

End of Play

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

From his days of being a wee lad, Mr. J.A. MacAbee grew up under the bright sun of tropical Florida. He grew up believing he would be the heir-apparent to one Mr. Michael Jeffrey Jordan. However, as he matured, a shorter stature and limited lateral quickness undercut this dream to the point where he needed to reevaluate his future dramatically. Ironically, it was in drama he found a new passion. Since, he has been actively involved in drama, creative writing, and especially competitive speech (or forensics). Currently, J.A. is high school teaching and working towards his Masters in Divinity. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

UNLESS CHRISTIANS

by J.A. MacAbee

GENRE: DRAMA (One-Act)

CAST: 1 Male, 1 Female

SUMMARY:

PENNY RICHARDS lives in a small midwestern town rooted in fundamentalist Christianity. Her son, DAVID, is the crown-jewel of their family. He is intelligent, hard-working, and always on his best behavior. However, as DAVID grows and begins to question family practices, a secret is revealed, forcing PENNY to make a daunting decision. UNLESS CHRISTIANS is a play about listening, overcoming fears, braving uncharted territory, and the meaning of unconditional love.

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