

The Cat Lady Christmas

Allison Engel & Margaret Engel





ArtAge supplies books, plays, and materials to older performers around the world. Directors and actors have come to rely on our 30+ years of experience in the field to help them find useful materials and information that makes their productions stimulating, fun, and entertaining.

ArtAge's unique program has been featured in *Wall Street Journal*, *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *American Theatre*, *Time Magazine*, *Modern Maturity*, on CNN, NBC, and in many other media sources.

ArtAge is more than a catalog. We also supply information, news, and trends on our top-rated website, www.seniortheatre.com. We stay in touch with the field with our very popular e-newsletter, *Senior Theatre Online*. Our President, Bonnie Vorenberg, is asked to speak at conferences and present workshops that supplement her writing and consulting efforts. We're here to help you be successful in Senior Theatre!

We help older performers fulfill their theatrical dreams!

ArtAge Publications
Bonnie L. Vorenberg, President
PO Box 19955
Portland OR 97280
503-246-3000 or 800-858-4998
bonniev@seniortheatre.com
www.seniortheatre.com

NOTICE

Copyright: This play is fully protected under the Copyright Laws of the United States of America, Canada, and all other countries of the Universal Copyright Convention.

The laws are specific regarding the piracy of copyrighted materials. Sharing the material with other organizations or persons is prohibited. Unlawful use of a playwright's work deprives the creator of his or her rightful income.

Cast Copies: Performance cast copies are required for each actor, director, stage manager, lighting and sound crew leader.

Changes to Script: Plays must be performed as written. Any alterations, additions, or deletions to the text must be approved.

Permission to Film: You do not have permission to film, record, or distribute the play in any medium. You are also not allowed to post on electronic services such as, but not limited to, YouTube. Exceptions must be granted by written permission from the publisher.

Royalty: Royalties are due when you perform the play for any audience, paying or non-paying, professional or amateur. This includes readings, cuttings, scenes, and excerpts.

The royalty for amateur productions of this show is posted online. It is payable two weeks prior to your production. Contact us for professional rates or other questions. Royalty fees are subject to change.

Insert the following paragraph in your programs:

Performed with special permission from ArtAge Publications' Senior Theatre Resource Center at 800-858-4998, www.seniortheatre.com.

The Cat Lady Christmas © 2019 by Allison Engel and Margaret Engel

THE CAT LADY CHRISTMAS

By Allison Engel and Margaret Engel

CAST

ANNOUNCER/ENGINEER: At radio station KKAT

FOLEY ARTIST: Sound effects operator for radio station KKAT

Five voice actors:

CORLY: An interior designer in her early sixties.

MEREDITH McGUANE: Corly's flamboyant cousin, mid-seventies.

DANA: An actress and Corly's best friend, early sixties.

CLIFF: A just-retired software entrepreneur, mid-sixties.

MITCH: A charming allergist in his mid-sixties.

Place

Large studio of radio station KKAT.

Time

The present. Shortly before Christmas.

THE CAT LADY CHRISTMAS

Setting: Five standing microphones are arranged in a semicircle. A table with sound effects instruments is to one side, and the Foley Artist sits there. On the other side is a sound board where the Announcer/Engineer sits. There is an "On Air" sign on the wall that lights up. A decorated Christmas tree is in the back, to provide holiday atmosphere. The female actors wear holiday themed skirts or pants. The male actors wear sweaters and slacks appropriate for Christmas.

At Rise: The actors casually ready themselves for a broadcast. They greet each other and the Announcer/Engineer and Foley Artist, flip through their scripts, look at the ornaments on the tree, etc. The Announcer/Engineer and Foley artist take their seats.

ANNOUNCER/ENGINEER: Places, everyone. Two minutes 'til air time. Two minutes 'til air time.

(The actors line up, each in front of a microphone.)

ANNOUNCER/ENGINEER: Five, four, three, two...

SOUND: Call letter jingle identifying "Radio KKAT, Theatre of the Air"

ANNOUNCER/ENGINEER: Welcome to today's holiday offering, the radio play "The Cat Lady Christmas." Let's meet our cast of actors.

(As the Announcer/Engineer says their names, the Actors smile, bow and interact with each other.)

ANNOUNCER/ENGINEER: In order of appearance, playing Corly is *(give actual name of Female Actor)*, playing Cousin Meredith is *(give actual name of Female Actor)*, playing Dana is *(give actual name of Female Actor)*, playing Cliff is *(give actual name of Male Actor)*, and playing Mitch is *(give actual name of Male Actor)*.

And now, "The Cat Lady Christmas."

SOUND: Doorbell buzzes twice

CORLY: Cousin Meredith? Cousin Meredith? It's Corly.

SOUND: Door knocking, several times

CORLY: Meredith? It's Corly. With the greens for your mantle. (*No answer.*)

SOUND: Armload of branches and greens hitting the floor

CORLY: I've got your key here somewhere.

SOUND: Key in lock and door opening

CORLY: Meredith! What's wrong! Oh geez, oh, geez.

SOUND: Running footsteps

MEREDITH: I'm fine. Everything's good.

CORLY: So why are you all dressed up and lying on your back on the floor?

MEREDITH: I'm dressed up because I was at bridge club. I'm lying on my back because of my blasted vape pen. It rolled down behind the radiator, and I'm trying to get it out. Such a wicked thing it is. Been rolling just out of my reach for ten minutes.

CORLY: I thought you had a heart attack or something. You about gave me a heart attack.

MEREDITH: You don't happen to have a wad of duct tape on you, do you? I can stick it on the end of this ruler and...

CORLY: Well, of course I do. An interior decorator doing Christmas decor comes prepared. Please get up. I'll get it.

MEREDITH: Bless you, dear. (*pause*) There, vertical again. What a lovely bunch of greens you brought. (*sniffs*) It smells like an alpine forest. And did you bring the mistletoe?

CORLY: Yes, three little bags full. You planning a wild party?

MEREDITH: You never know, dear. As the Boy Scouts say, "Be Prepared." Two bags will be plenty. You keep one for yourself.

CORLY: Not needed.

MEREDITH: What? No news on the romance front? You should be making up for lost time now that Mr. Narcissist is out of the picture.

CORLY: Don't want to talk about it.

MEREDITH: You think that's going to satisfy me? Spill the beans to your cousin.

CORLY: There's literally nothing to report. Really. I've been decorating houses nonstop since before Thanksgiving. I'll think about it after New Year's. (*grunts*) Yes, got it! Here's your vape-y thing.

MEREDITH: You're the best. Stay for a snack?

CORLY: Thanks, but no. On my way over to Dana's to put the finishing touches on her place before the weather gets worse.

MEREDITH: Well, Merry Christmas, darling. And take that bag of mistletoe. Here, I'll just tuck it in your purse.

SOUND: Kiss

SOUND: Door shutting

SOUND: Different doorbell buzz

DANA: C'mon in. It's open.

SOUND: Vocal version of "All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth"

CORLY: Odd playlist, Dana. What's next, "Alvin and the Chipmunks?"

SOUND: "All I Want for Christmas" turned off

DANA: That doesn't put you in the Christmas spirit? I love those corny old songs. They remind me of all the corny old productions I've been in over the years.

SOUND: Music being turned back on. "All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth" plays again, but softer.

CORLY: OK, it's your apartment, and your holiday vibe.

DANA: That's right, and you totally have captured that vibe. Thank you so much, Corly, for my Santa cats tree. Where DID you find those kitty lights? And the red and green paw prints marching over the door, the yarn balls on the coffee table, everything. It's the best Christmas present ever. A fully decorated place and all I did was sit here, drink hot cider, and watch my best friend do all the work. And, now, special delivery of greens for the mantle. Oooh, that smell!

CORLY: I love doing it. Ms. Decorating Diva, that's me.

DANA: No, really. You've outdone yourself. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." The Best of John Keats, Long Wharf Playhouse. Or was that at Theater in the Round in Dubuque? Oh, who cares. One of them that was smart enough to hire me. And look, both Ziggy and Marley are already curled up on the tree skirt, right next to their names that you embroidered on it.

CORLY: Did you notice I put their outlines on it, too? Sort of like the chalk outlines at a crime scene.

DANA: That's your clever way of pointing out they sleep all the time. Remember when they were little, and we couldn't keep them from climbing up the tree? Lots of broken ornaments in their past. Now, they are furniture cats.

CORLY: I love those two. You're so lucky to still have them.

DANA: Oh, so sorry. Your first Christmas without Miss Maisie has got to be tough.

CORLY: I do miss my fur baby. Sixteen good years, and then four terrible months of pills and shots and her too sick to eat. I wouldn't want her back to go through that again. And now I can honestly answer "No" to the "Do You Have Pets" question on Match.

DANA: No question there are a lot of cat-phobic men out there. They envision you in a chenille housecoat emptying 47 litter boxes. But, wow. You actually joined. I can't believe your shy self is out in the digital dating world.

CORLY: Only because you forced me.

DANA: What else could I do, after the world's worst boyfriend ghosted you. "Nothing will come of nothing." *King Lear*, Act I, Scene 3.

CORLY: Well, there has been a little activity.

DANA: What! You've been holding out.

CORLY: His name is Mitch.

(Dana shrieks.)

CORLY: Calm down. He's a doctor. An allergist. And we've gone out twice. Coffee at the botanical garden café—

DANA: Ooh, nice.

CORLY: And dinner and a movie at the Film Forum.

DANA: Even better. What's he like?

CORLY: He's into old movies, loves Thai food and, you'll like this, he volunteers every year on those medical ships run by Project Hope. Don't they do partnerships with your Habitat group sometimes?

DANA: No, I don't think so, but he sounds great. Handsome?

CORLY: Yeah, in a professional kind of way. He's sort of anti-pet, though. He says he personally likes them, but he sees the agony they cause his patients. He seems very concerned about others.

DANA: Well, that would be an improvement.

CORLY: His Christmas present to me is making us dinner at my house tonight.

DANA: A doctor who cooks. This is very, very promising. So, what are you still doing here? Go home and get ready. I know you leave decorating your house for last, after every client's home is done. Give me details later. Wait, I almost forgot your present. Since you already have your two front teeth, I got you the very thing I know you want. Here, open this.

SOUND: Package being ripped open

CORLY: Is it real? It's not breathing.

DANA: It's the most realistic fake cat ever made. When you scratch it under its chin, it purrs. And see what happens when you itch its head.

SOUND: Two meows

(The actress playing Corly actually opens a package, revealing a plush realistic-looking sleeping orange cat. Its meows are voiced by the Foley Artist.)

CORLY: That's adorable. And it's an orange tiger. Just like Maisie. Thank you. You're the best best friend.

DANA: I know. You'd better get ready for Mitch. "Opportunity is not a lengthy visitor" *Into the Woods*, Kenley Playhouse.

SOUND: Phone ringtone: "There's No Business Like Show Business"

DANA: Wait a sec. Gotta take this. My agent. *(into phone)* It's Dana! *(pause)* And Merry Christmas to you! *(pause)* That's always good news. Yes, I accept. *(pause)* You mean now? Like today, right this minute now? *(pause)* Oh, man. I think I could do it—gotta check something. I'll call you back in five minutes. Bye.

Sunset Cruise Line called and wants me to fill in as Mrs. Cratchit in *A Christmas Carol* 'cuz a cast member booked a TV pilot. And then they want me to stay on the boat and be in its Broadway revue for the next six weeks. Union scale! Only problem is the boat docks in Miami tomorrow morning, so I have to take a red-eye tonight.

CORLY: You can do that. I'll help you pack.

DANA: The issue is Ziggy and Marley. You have to reserve at the cat hotel weeks before the holidays, and I don't trust them here alone with someone coming in to feed them. Remember the weekend they figured out how to turn on the bathroom faucet and I got that \$380 water bill? I know this is a lot to ask—especially since you just told me Mitch hates cats—but could you possibly keep them until after the holidays, and then take them to the Paw Palace?

CORLY: Of course. Ziggy and Marley can snooze in my office when Mitch comes for dinner. I'll shut the door and he won't even know they're there.

DANA: And if he hears a meow, just point to your new fake Maisie cat. I knew there was a reason Amazon put that ad on my Facebook feed.

CORLY: You pack. I'll get the cats.

SOUND: "All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth"

SOUND: Adult cats meowing

(One Actor helps the Foley Artist with these meows)

SOUND: Cat carriers shutting

SOUND: Door shutting

SOUND: Adult cats meowing

CORLY: Get it out of your systems, Ziggy and Marley. In about four hours, you'll need to be quiet as mice. Right now, you can watch me trim one more tree.

SOUND: Boxes opening, strands of lights rattling

SOUND: Doorbell

SOUND: Door opening

MEREDITH: Corly, darling!

CORLY: Cousin Meredith! What's up? Come in.

MEREDITH: Can't stay. I'm just buzzing in on my way to the airport. My dear friend Arny broke his leg in two places skiing. He was helpless in the food and homemaking departments before, but now, he would be stuck in a Barcalounger eating nothing but chips and salsa for weeks if I didn't show up.

CORLY: That's terrible. Can I help in any way?

MEREDITH: Well, of course, dear. That's why I'm here. My foster kitties from City Paws Rescue need some looking after while I'm gone. Luckily, I only have three at the

moment. Last week, I had a litter of six! Just look at these sweet faces: two tuxie cats and a calico. All little boys: Larry, Curly and Moe.

SOUND: Banging of a cat carrier

SOUND: Kittens meowing furiously

(Two Actors help the Foley Artist with these meows)

CORLY: *(hesitantly)* They're adorable. But I don't think...

MEREDITH: I don't think...they'll be any trouble. See, I already knew what you were going to say. After losing dear Maisie, these little fur balls will liven up your Christmas. Must run. See how hard it's snowing now? I'll be crawling behind a snowplow to the airport. Should be back in a week. There's cat food in this bag, along with a very special bottle of French wine as a thank-you. It's from my late husband's cellar. Has been aging forever. Enjoy!

SOUND: Door slamming

CORLY: Hi, Larry, Hi Curly, Hi, little Moe. *(Sighs)* What am I going to do with you tonight?

SOUND: "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!" sung by Dean Martin

CORLY: Well, Ziggy and Marley, what do you think of this tree? Best one yet, right? Sorry, guys, you are going to have to move to the office soon. And, guess what, you'll have three litter box mates for the night: Larry, Curly and Moe. Maybe you can show them how to be calm, sleepy, quiet cats.

SOUND: Doorbell

CORLY: Yikes! That can't be Mitch! He's half an hour early.

SOUND: Door opening

CORLY: Yes?

CLIFF: Hi. I'm Cliff Thompson, a volunteer at City Paws Rescue.

CORLY: Are you here to pick up Larry, Curly, and Moe?

CLIFF: No. I'm here to drop off Dewey, Cheatum, and Howe.

CORLY: Is that a joke?

CLIFF: No. Well it is, but these three kittens aren't.

CORLY: Three kittens?

SOUND: Kittens meowing

(Two Actors help Foley Artist out with these meows)

CLIFF: Yes, in this carrier. I'm dropping off kittens at the homes of our regular fosters. There's flooding expected in Philadelphia, and the City Paws Rescue there is moving all its animals temporarily to its other shelters. We're slammed. You didn't get the email? Are you Meredith McGuane?

CORLY: No, I'm Corly. Meredith's my cousin. She's the foster. I would think you would know her at City Paws. You don't tend to forget Cousin Meredith.

CLIFF: I'm new there. And this is the address they gave me for her.

CORLY: She must have left my address because she already dropped off three kittens here. Just a little bit ago on her way to the airport. I'm all kittened up, sorry.

CLIFF: It would just be for a few days. We are having trouble finding homes, it being so close to Christmas and all. It's a true emergency. *(beat)* And from what I can see of your place, this would be cat heaven. Holy snowflakes, what cool decorations! Are you an artist or something?

CORLY: Or something.

CLIFF: Well, I'd call you an artist. This place looks like Norman Rockwell should have painted it. Adding in five cats, of course.

CORLY: *(softening)* That's sweet. I'm really, really sorry, but I can't. I've got company coming in about twenty-five minutes and I still have to get myself ready.

CLIFF: Are you kidding? You look absolutely perfect—I mean—ready—to me. Don't you want one peek at this little furry trio?

SOUND: Kittens meowing.

(Two Actors help Foley Artist out with these meows)

CORLY: That's OK. I can hear them. I'm sorry, I really am. You'll have to try someone else.

SOUND: Door shutting

CORLY: Ziggy and Marley, am I a horrible person? I hated saying no to that guy. C'mon now, I'm taking you to a new spot for you to sleep: my office. You'll love it. Ziggy, you first.

SOUND: Corly's footsteps

SOUND: Office door opening

SOUND: Faint kitten meows

(Two Actors help Foley Artist out with these meows)

SOUND: Office door shutting

CORLY: Now, you Marley. Ooof, you weigh a ton.

SOUND: Corly's footsteps

SOUND: Office door opening

SOUND: Faint kitten meows

(Two Actors help Foley Artist out with these meows)

CORLY: O.K. cats, please get along. And please be quiet.

SOUND: Office door shutting

CORLY: *(thinking out loud)* Music. Music. Need some good background music.

SOUND: Jazzy renditions of Christmas carols

SOUND: Doorbell

SOUND: Door opening

CORLY: Mitch!

CLIFF: It's Cliff.

CORLY: Why are you back?

CLIFF: Got a little problem. I got about a quarter-mile down your road and my van slid into the ditch. This snow is nearly a whiteout, and it's coming on top of ice. Looks like the snowplows haven't made it to the country roads.

CORLY: Yeah, we're usually last on the list.

CLIFF: It's stuck. I called Triple A, and they said it could be up to five hours before anybody could get to me. There is a plethora of pileups on I-80, it seems. What can you do?

CORLY: Five HOURS?

CLIFF: It's pretty cold out here.

CORLY: My dinner guest is coming any minute.

CLIFF: Oh, I won't bother you for dinner. Just some place indoors with these tiny adorable kittens to wait for the tow.

CORLY: *(Long pause)* Can you keep quiet—maybe listen to headphones—in my office until Triple A arrives?

CLIFF: We'll be like the mice that didn't stir. Very quiet. You and your guest won't even know we're there. But, um, we're not exactly alone.

CORLY: What do you mean?

CLIFF: I mean I've got four other cats to deliver. Can't leave them out there in the van.

CORLY: You want to bring seven cats into my house?

CLIFF: Well, technically four cats and three kittens.

CORLY: How did I become everyone's emergency shelter? All right. Come in. You'd better be a good referee because you've got company. Five other cats landed earlier today.

SOUND: Metal carriers clanging.

SOUND: Kittens meowing

(Two Actors help Foley Artist out with these meows)

SOUND: Door closing

SOUND: CLIFF's footsteps going down snowy stairs

CLIFF: *(calling at a distance)* I'll be back with the other four.

CORLY: *(calling)* Please hurry.

SOUND: CLIFF's footsteps going up snowy stairs

SOUND: Metal cat carriers clanging

SOUND: Doorbell

SOUND: Door opening

CLIFF: We're back.

CORLY: Quick. This way to the office.

SOUND: Clanging cat carriers

SOUND: Loud meows from adult cats

(Three Actors help Foley Artist out with these meows.)

CLIFF: Meet Parsnip, Turnip, Rutabaga, and Carrot. Parsnip's the calico, Turnip's...

CORLY: Have to skip the formalities. No time. My cousin's three kittens are in that zip up play pen and those two black lumps are Ziggy and Marley. They won't bother your crew. Here are the food dishes and water. There's a litter box under the chair. Here's a Diet Coke and a microwaved burrito for you. Sorry, all I had on short notice. There's the bathroom. Please keep the door to the kitchen shut. My guest hates cats. I think he's allergic.

CLIFF: Not a dealbreaker for you, huh?

CORLY: Excuse me? Look, please, please keep everyone quiet.

CLIFF: Aye, aye. And thanks.

SOUND: Office door closing

SOUND: Plates and silverware being set on a table

CLIFF: Hey little Larry kitty, you want a chin scratch? I'm just cracking the door a little. See your cat mom running around making everything perfect? What a pretty table, huh?

SOUND: Doorbell

CORLY: On my way!

SOUND: Corly's footsteps to door

SOUND: Door opening

SOUND: Stomping of boots

SOUND: Rustling of bags

CORLY: Hi. White Christmas for sure. Let me brush off that snow. So glad you're here.

MITCH: Whrew. It is really coming down out there. What a Christmas Eve. The roads are still O.K. in town, but out here it's like an ice rink. Saw a van in the ditch not far from here.

CORLY: Ummm. But you braved the drifts.

SOUND: Brief kiss.

CORLY: Something smells really wonderful under that foil. What is it?

MITCH: It's a surprise, but I have to admit I'm pretty pleased with myself. Just point me in the direction of your oven. It needs a few minutes to reheat.

CORLY: It's that-away. I'll hang up your coat.

SOUND: Footsteps as Corly walks to the closet.

CLIFF: (*whispers*) Hey. Larry, check this out. Mitch guy is heisting that bottle of wine from the gift bag on your mom's counter. He just put it in his bag. Oh, and now he's replacing it with the bottle he brought. Some gentleman caller.

CORLY: Let me get a fire going and you can tell me about your day.

SOUND: Logs being placed in fireplace

SOUND: Match being struck

SOUND: Fire crackling

SOUND: Mitch's footsteps to fireplace

MITCH: Festive decor in here. You really are a professional. Very cozy. Here, have an hors d'oeuvre. Homemade cheese straws.

CORLY: Mmmmm. I'm impressed. Puff pastry! That's beyond my baking expertise.

MITCH: It's easy, trust me. During my residency in San Francisco, I lived near a Cordon Bleu cooking school, and I took pastry classes to relax.

CORLY: I'm even more impressed.

MITCH: Hey, what's that sleeping on your couch? You said you didn't have pets.

CORLY: Oh, that's a furry fake. I got it this afternoon from my friend Dana as a Christmas present. Incredibly real, isn't it?

MITCH: Almost too real. Think I'm gonna sneeze. Mind if I move it?

SOUND: Strong meow from the office

MITCH: What's that?

CORLY: *(quickly)* Did you touch the "meow" button? See, when you scratch between its ears, listen.

SOUND: A very different meow than before

MITCH: And are there more of these furry imposters around the house?

CORLY: *(forced laugh)* Oh, yes. All over.

End of FreeRead

You can tell that the show is quite wonderful! Order your copy to read the complete script.