



SECOND CHRISTMAS
BY
DAVE PROCTOR

Extract

A SMITH SCRIPT

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Second Christmas

A Play by

Dave Proctor.

Characters

Peter	Male approximately 50 years
Minister	Male. A politician
PPS	Female, Aged 50 plus
Banker 1)	Sex not specified, but one should be fatter.
Banker 2)	“
Banker 3)	“
Socialist Professor	A Scruffy man
Cambridge Don	An ageing tweedy gentleman
Travel industry Rep	Sex not specified.
Banking Union Rep.	A woman
Currency firm Rep	Sex not specified.
Civil Servant 1	A boring suited man
Civil Servant 2	“
Secretary	Sex not specified.
New Minister	Sex not specified.

Run time Approximately 1 hour 15 minutes.

Second Christmas

All the action, except where specified takes place in a large Government office. Furnished with a desk and the appropriate number of chairs.

Act One

All the characters are in the Minister's Office (except the New Minister). All are seated for a brainstorming session.

Minister

“Good morning everyone

The purpose of this session is to get some ideas on boosting spending here in the UK.

Too much of people's money is either being saved, invested or is going abroad and being spent there.

We really need to kick start the economy, to get things moving, get people spending.

We have here today, some of the brightest financial minds in the Country. They are from various spheres of the financial world and we need some positive ideas to promote spending in this country.

This is a brainstorming session, so you can be as radical or open as you want.

This really is an open session.”

All the members of the meeting then stand perfectly still (basically a freeze frame) whilst Peter wanders around talking to the audience while he identifies each person in turn.

Peter If these are the brightest minds in finance, then God help this poor Country of ours. What a shower.

“First there’s the Minister. Richard Dykes-Hawkins. A man promoted to be Chief Secretary to the Treasury. A position everyone agrees is way beyond his ability.

Now the Americans have a name for a person like him. He’s known as a Post-Turtle.

Now a post turtle is when you’re walking down a country lane and you come across a turtle on top of a post.

Now you know that poor creature didn't get there by himself or by his own efforts.

He doesn't belong there.

He doesn't know what to do while he's up there, and you just want to help the poor stupid thing get down, without him hurting himself.”

“Oh and then there’s his Parliamentary Private Secretary, now a PPS as they are known, is the Minister’s assistant.

Now this one is a gruff cigarette-smoking woman, who swears and drinks real ale.

But be careful of her, she will verbally annihilate anyone who she thinks is an idiot, which unfortunately is virtually everyone who disagrees with her rather forthright views.

Mind you, I think she's great.

She's always good entertainment especially when she's on one of those television political shows, like Question Time.

Last time she was on, she actually threatened to beat up the shadow Foreign Secretary and I have to say, I would have had a tenner on the PPS to win."

"There are two Civil Servants. Huh!

They look like Civil servants.

They act like civil servants

and like most Civil Servants I know, they have the charisma of valium."

"Then there are the three jovial bankers, all rich beyond belief, having been fortunate enough to join their industry at the right time, so of course, they are happy little bankers.

Why wouldn't they be, on their salaries."

"Right here, we have two Academics; Firstly, the scruffy one is a Socialist from the London School of Economics. Generally known by the nickname of Castro by his students, he makes Trotsky look like a Conservative.

Oh and then he is here with his opposite, an old school fusty Cambridge Don, who thinks Jacob Rees-Mogg is a trendy young liberal.”

“Over there, is a person from the banking industry union; someone who speaks on behalf of the Tourism Industry from a financial perspective, and somebody from a currency trading firm.”

“Apart from the Secretary from the Department, who’s here to take notes the only other person at this meeting is me, Peter Styles.

I was, for some reason, deputed by my boss to represent the Insurance Industry.

I suspect that my being detailed to attend this meeting had something to do with this meeting coinciding with a really good corporate golf day, hosted by one of the Directors of a national Insurance company and guess what, my boss is rather fond of playing golf, which, incidentally, he manages to do, at least three weekdays, every week.”

“Still back to the meeting.”

The characters come back to life.

Socialist Prof. “I’ll go first. We should increase the minimum wage to fifteen pounds an hour, give more spending power to the people.”

First Banker “Hogwash. If I paid my staff more, my shareholders and I would be left with less to spend.

All that would do for the economy would be to boost the profits of the beer and cigarette companies, and most of them are American.”

The other bankers both nod in agreement.

Banking Union Rep “We could reduce taxes, give everyone a boost in their earnings, so they had more to spend.”

Minister “Then the UK would have less to spend on Social Services and Health.

No that would not work and to be honest, the British people, i.e. our voters, have expressed the opinion that they don't mind paying taxes if the money is well spent.”

Currency trader “We could develop a bigger National Lottery, you know, like the one they have in Spain. I think they call the really big one ‘El Gordo’ - the fat one.”

Said, staring directly at the largest and fattest of the three jovial bankers.

“They reckon that every Spaniard spends an average of seventy euros on just that one draw!”

PPS “I am not sure. The Government is not too keen on gambling at the moment, particularly following the Copson Affair.”

Everyone nods sagely.

Freeze frame again. Peter stands to address the audience.

Peter “Perhaps, I should explain, that the Copson Affair was where Sir Brian Copson, the Attorney General, was nicked by the Fraud Squad, after he had syphoned off his election expenses, together with a load of other money, said to be bribes, arising from some very dubious deals involving Government contracts.

He then placed the lot on three-legged horses.

They reckon that he lost the treasury some fifteen million quid.

I bet his bookies loved him!”

“Well I am sure you understand, it was all a bit embarrassing for the Government, given that they had just claimed that they were the party of law and order and this was their chief lawman getting hoisted.”

Unfreeze.

Tourism Rep “*We should immediately abolish the draconian diktat that parents are not allowed to take their children out of school during term time. This would give the holiday industry a real boost.*”

PPS “Two things wrong with that idea. Firstly, the Education Secretary would not agree, he is very much a disciplinarian and a traditionalist and secondly, it would mainly benefit overseas airlines and hotels in some lovely far-flung places.

No, as it is, your people hike the prices so people cannot really afford to go abroad during school holidays, so they stay in the UK. This policy actually benefits us - so that's a non-starter."

Jolly Banker 2 "What about an interest rate cut?"

Minister "Actually, I've already asked the Governor of the Bank of England if that was possible. Let's just say that he did not think it was a good idea and no, I will not tell you what he called me, but it was something very rude and impolite."

Jolly Banker 2 "But surely it would benefit the economy, people are more likely to spend, less likely to save. End of problem."

Minister "Well you can argue the point with the Governor when you see him and I am sure you will let me know if he gives in."

The room goes quiet.

Peter "What we need is a second Christmas, two Christmases a year."

Everyone turns to face Peter.

Minister "Carry on."

Peter "Err um, well if you look at it - People spend loads of money on, well, everything, food, booze, parties, presents at Christmas.

Not too many want to go abroad, they want to spend time with their families.

Why even the expats want to come home to see their families. So perhaps we need a second Christmas.”

Civil Servant 1 “But our Lord Jesus Christ can only have one birthday a year, and that is on Christmas day.”

PPS “And Father Christmas only comes once a year.
Christmas, to most people, has bugger all to do with religion, it’s more about getting out of your skull, filling your face and greedy bloody kids.
With a load of tinsel, crappy songs and other tat thrown in to boot.
Come on, let’s hear what he has to say.”

Minister “Well I have to admit, there is a great obligation to spend, spend, spend at Christmas and it really does wonders for the economy and the mood of the people.”

Civil Servant 1 “But we can’t just invent a day, call it a second Christmas and then tell people to spend a shed load of money on it, not without reason.”

Minister “Why not? I am sure we could manage it, and of course, we could do it better than the real Christmas, we could make it a more universal day. I mean, when you think about it, Christmas is a Christian festival and is not celebrated by other religions, as such.

“No, no, I like the idea of a new, modern celebration. But I believe we must make it more relevant to today’s inclusive society.

You cannot just rely on religion and myths built up over the centuries to create a day that is appropriate to today’s modern cosmopolitan Society.”

The group all nod.

Minister “So what event should we celebrate? Any ideas?”

Jovial Banker 2 “Saint George’s Day.”

Minister “No, too racist and I cannot see the Scots, the Northern Irish nor the Welsh, being too happy. You try getting some Glaswegian to sing Jerusalem, you’ll find out what I mean.”

Jovial Banker 1 “Trafalgar day.”

Minister “Good Lord, no way, that would completely totally and utterly destroy all relations with the French.”

Union person “American Independence Day.”

Minister “What! We celebrate getting rid of them. No, I don’t think so.”

Socialist Professor “International Workers Day.”

Minister “Sorry, I am not sure if you’re actually aware, but that’s already a Bank Holiday.

I think we really need to create a new celebratory day, to show the people we care. I am sure that people would be happier if we gave them an extra day off.”

Socialist Professor “You’re more concerned with your bloody ratings than the people.”

The Minister glares at the Professor.

Civil Servant 2 “Halloween?”

Minister “No, too close to Christmas. Likewise, it cannot be in March or April. Too close to Easter.”

Minister turns to Socialist Professor.

“They already get two days off then, you know.

And it cannot be in May, two bank holidays in that month, as well. It cannot be late July or August, schools are off for the summer holidays and people take their holidays then and it cannot be close to Christmas. So what are we left with?”

PPS “Well, realistically I suppose the best months would be June, early July or September, possibly early October.”

Minister "Mmm, so what can we celebrate during those months?"

Union rep "Summer Solstice?"

Minister "Sorry, that's already been appropriated by the pagans and the hippies. Anyway, it's not enough of a thing to get everyone worked up about."

They all nod again.

Minister "Any other ideas?"

Cambridge Don "Well what about a National day of Culture? We could hold poetry festivals, operas, concertos, book readings and what have you. Now that's something we could all get behind, Why I certainly would."

Minister "To most of my voters, their idea of culture is a token posh bird being on Love Island and the only poetry they've ever heard begins... 'There was a young lady from Ealing'.

Sorry, but I actually would like to gain votes, not lose them."

Tourism Rep "What about Harvest festival? Develop it as a time for giving thanks and giving presents and all that."

PPS "Personally it doesn't exactly fill me with enthusiasm. I tell you what

let's have a break now for coffee. Give it some thought and we'll meet back here in half an hour OK?"

Lights down

Break