



Holidazed *November 18-December 28*

BY MARC ACITO & C.S. WHITCOMB

DIRECTED BY JON KRETZU

CHARACTERS

Julia	Padre
Gabe	Olivia
Nicholas	Evan
Luna	Wils
Scott	Gremlins
Mom	Punk

Suitable Content-High School and Adult. Mature themes.

SYNOPSIS

Julia, a mother of three, meets Lulu, a homeless, pagan, possibly pregnant teenage girl and welcomes her into her home, just in time for the stressful holiday season. Julia attempts to help Lulu while trying to balance the demands of her children and husband. Though her husband disapproves of the new family addition, the ghost of her dead mother is encouraging, and her children just want to make sure they still get to go trick or treating and that there will be presents under the tree on Christmas morning. A comedic Halloween-Thanksgiving-Christmas take on *It's a Wonderful Life* by Oregon Book Award Winner Marc Acito, author of the best-selling novel *How I Paid For College*, and C.S. Whitcomb.

BIOGRAPHY

Holidazed was created by local writers, Marc Acito and C.S. Whitcomb.

Marc Acito's comic debut novel, *How I Paid for College: A Novel of Sex, Theft, Friendship and Musical Theater* won the Oregon Book Awards' Ken Kesey Award and made the American Library Association's Top Ten Teen Book List. It was also selected as an Editors' Choice by *The New York Times*, has been optioned for film by Columbia Pictures and is translated into five languages the author cannot read. Wicked composer and lyricist Stephen Schwartz called Acito's recent follow-up *Attack of the Theater People* "the kind of book where you read passages to friends and they laugh too," a sentiment with which Acito agrees. A former opera

singer, he is now a regular commentator on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and blogs at marcacito.com about his Quixotic quest to do something new every day. He owes his entire success to his endlessly patient partner Floyd Sklaver.

C.S. Whitcomb has written roles for Jason Robards, Kevin Spacey, Ellen Burstyn, Anjelica Huston, and Gena Rowlands. Among her favorite works for television are *Buffalo Girls*, *I Know My First Name is Steven* and *Mark Twain and Me*. She has written two popular books on screenwriting. Her play *The Book of John* was part of Portland Center Stage's JAW West new play festival in 2007. Looking-Glass, co-authored with Michael Sutton, was produced commercially Off Broadway in 1982. She has been nominated for the Emmy, Cable Ace, Edgar Allan Poe, Humanitas, and Writers Guild of America awards. She and her writing partner Marc Acito are hosting a 16 day, trans-Atlantic writing cruise in April. For more on C.S. Whitcomb visit cynthiawhitcomb.com. She is thrilled to be back home in the theatre.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Halloween

The custom of Halloween was brought to America in the 1840's by Irish immigrants feeling their country's potato famine. The custom of trick-or-treating, however, is thought to have originated with a ninth-century European custom called souling. On November 2, All Souls Day, people would walk from village to village begging for "soul cakes", made out of square pieces

of bread with currants. The more soul cakes the beggars would receive, the more prayers they would promise to say on behalf of the dead relatives of the donors. According to the Celts, on October 31, the last day of summer, the spirits of those who had died throughout the preceding year would come back. So, on the night of October 31, villagers would dress up in all manner of ghoulish costumes and noisily parade around the neighborhood in order to frighten away the spirits.

Christmas

Many of the customs of Christmas originated in Europe long before anyone had heard of Jesus Christ. Though no one knows for sure when Jesus was born, most historians agree that it is unlikely he was born in December. The Bible records villagers tending their sheep in the fields on the night Jesus was born, which they would not have done on a cold Judean winter night. So why do we celebrate Christ's birthday as Christmas on December 25th? The answer lies in the pagan origins of Christmas. In ancient Babylon, the feast of the Son of Isis (Goddess of Nature) was celebrated on December 25. Raucous partying, gluttonous eating and drinking, and gift-giving were traditions of the feast. In Rome, the Winter Solstice was celebrated many years before the birth of Christ. The Romans called their winter holiday Saturnalia, honoring Saturn, the God of Agriculture. The pagans of Northern Europe celebrated their own Winter Solstice known as Yule. Yule was symbolic of the Pagan Sun God, Mithras, and it was observed on the shortest day of the year. The word Yule means "wheel", a pagan symbol of the sun, and huge Yule logs were burned, in honor of the sun. The tree is one symbol that unites almost all of the Northern European winter solstices. Live evergreen trees were brought into homes during the harsh winters as a reminder to inhabitants that their crops would grow again. In 350, Pope Julius I declared that Christ's birth would be celebrated on December 25. Christmas as we know it today, most historians agree, began in Germany. The earliest record of an evergreen being decorated in a Christian celebration was in 1521 in the Alsace region of Germany, though this remains a point of controversy today in some fundamentalist sects.

QUOTATIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Lulu: Halloween. It's the only one they haven't totally destroyed. Christmas, forget about it. The cute chubby Santa with his nose full of jelly ringing a bell in your face in every parking lot?

It's the Hallmark conspiracy to sell us on feeling all sappy about the perfect functional families that eight-four percent of us never had.

Mom: I want to know why you have a hundred and fourteen things on your to do list and Scott only has four: come home from work, put on his sweats, drink a beer and forward funny emails to his friends.

Julia: She was hungry. Pregnant, I thought. All I had was a bag of Snickers. I found myself face to face with Little Orphan Annie and, I know this sounds ridiculous, but now it was personal. She was The Homeless. Or The Teenage Pregnancy Problem. She was Lulu, this sixteen-year-old kid with a fork in her hair. She was cold and hungry and she needed a mother, and guess what, I am a mother. This I know how to do.

Lulu: I'm not going back there. Christmas morning you wake up and get, like, one gift, and then sit there watching their real kids open a toy store.

Clerk: No loitering is company policy. I get you people coming in here every night and every night I have to call the police. You need to buy something or leave ... You are all criminals. Drug dealers, junkies, winos, weirdos, perverts and panhandlers of every description.

VOCABULARY

The Words of the Play

Aura—a force that is said to surround all people and objects, discernible, often as a bright glow, only to people of unusual psychic sensitivity

Demigod—a mythological being who is half human and half god or a god regarded as minor in a hierarchy of other gods

Diana—in Roman mythology, the goddess of hunting, virginity and the Moon.

Dickensian—relating to the writings of Charles Dickens

Hermes—in Greek mythology, the messenger of the gods and a son of Zeus

Karmic—regarding the Hindu and Buddhist philosophy according to which the quality of people’s current and future lives is determined by their behavior in this and in previous lives

Match girl—based on Hans Christian Andersen’s tale about a poor young girl with a burning desire to find comfort and happiness in her life. Desperate to keep warm, the girl lights the matches she sells, and envisions a very different life for herself in the fiery flames filled with images of loving relatives, bountiful food, and a place to call home.

Marinate—to soak food in a liquid or paste made with ingredients such as vinegar, wine, oil, spices, and herbs to give extra flavor and tenderness before cooking

Nymph—a minor goddess or spirit of nature in mythology, inhabiting areas of natural beauty such as woods, mountains, and rivers and traditionally regarded as a beautiful young woman

Pagan—somebody who does not follow one of the world’s main religions, especially somebody who is not a Christian, Muslim, or Jew, and often a follower of an ancient polytheistic or pantheistic religion

Pan—in Greek mythology, the god of nature, pastures, flocks, and forests, believed to have a human torso and head, and the hind legs, ears, and horns of a goat

Solstice—either of the times when the sun is furthest from the equator, on or about June 21 or December 21

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before Viewing

Exploring Holidays and Rituals

1. What holidays are celebrated in your family? What family, cultural or religious traditions are associated with these holidays? Are there particular aspects of these traditions that you particularly enjoy or dislike?

Discuss some of the similarities and differences in the ways different families celebrate the same holiday.

2. Discuss some of the holidays celebrated by people of different cultures and religions. What are some of their traditions and how do they compare or contrast with the holidays you celebrate?

Thinking about Homelessness

1. What preconceived notions do people have about the homeless? Create a chart listing common stereotypes or assumptions people make about homeless people. You may want to consider the following:

- A) Who homeless people are
- B) Why people become homeless
- C) How people react to the homeless
- D) Why people remain homeless
- E) Behavioral characteristics of people who are homeless
- F) How many people in the U.S. are homeless?

After Viewing

1. Julia describes her family’s holiday traditions in her recipe monologues to the audience. What do these recipes reveal? What other functions do they serve?

2. Why doesn’t Julia throw Lulu out when she discovers she isn’t really pregnant? How would you have reacted in that situation?

3. Compare and contrast Scott and Julia’s perspective of having a homeless teenager stay with them. How do their perspectives cause a strain in their relationship? Do you agree or disagree with each parent’s response? Whose rationale do you most identify with and why?

4. Why do you think Lulu keeps Padre’s presence a secret from the rest of the family?

5. How does Lulu break/strengthen stereotypes about the homeless? Padre? The mugger? What other stereotypes are present about other people/groups?

6. The shopkeeper makes the assumption that Julia is a homeless person when she asks to use his phone on Christmas Eve despite the fact that she is well-dressed and has explained her situation. Why doesn’t he believe her story? Why doesn’t the police officer? What does this imply about people’s perceptions of the homeless?

ARTISTS REP

Educator Resource Kit

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7. Olivia tells her mother that a boogeyman named Padre is living under the bed, and everyone in the family assumes that Padre is a figment of Olivia's imagination. Why doesn't this phase Scott or Julia? Does this imply anything about the parents' relationship with their children?

8. Although Lulu doesn't reveal much about her previous living situations, she says he has lived with different families. Why do you believe she and Padre choose the cold streets when they have the option of returning to their foster parents?

9. Compare and contrast the different constructs of family throughout the play. What are the issues each one struggles with? What aspects of the other families does each character envy?

10. Why is there such concern over Wils' comment about pagan gods at school? What does this reveal about society's reaction to other religious views, particularly pagan beliefs? In what ways does it seem appropriate that Lulu is drawn to paganism?

EXTENSIONS

1. **Recipe for Fun:** Julia provided a mock "recipe" to illustrate what it was like spending various holidays with her family. Create your own recipe for a holiday celebration or event. It can be humorous, serious, or both.

2. **Holiday Bazaar:** Break into groups to further explore holidays celebrated by other cultures and religions. Present your research to the other groups. You may want to include food samples, historical background, costumes, artwork, music, dances, or decorations in your presentation.

3. **Mythbusters:** Research statistics and information about homeless youth or pagan history. How does your data compare with common stereotypes or assumptions? Does it change your perspectives?

5. **Give the gift of You:** Volunteer/donate to help the homeless in your area.

PORTLAND AREA ORGANIZATIONS IN NEED OF VOLUNTEERS FOR WORKING WITH THE HOMELESS

Transition Services, Inc.

http://www.tprojects.org/volunteer.html?gclid=CJ_iqI2JtJUCF-SahiQodI2QxRQ

Portland Homeless Connect

<http://www.portlandonline.com/BHCD/index.cfm?c=43395>

Outside In (homeless youth)

<http://www.outsidein.org/volunteer.htm>

JOIN

Connecting the Street to a Home
www.joinpdx.com

Union Gospel Mission

<http://www.ugmportland.org/>

YWCA

<http://www.ywca.org/site/pp.asp?c=9oILKWMCF&b=108146>

Find Additional Organizations in the the Portland-Vancouver, OR-WA Metro Area in Homeless & Housing

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/search/orgs.jsp?r=msa&categories=7&l=98687%2C+>

Volunteer Match: Find volunteer needs in your area
www.volunteermatch.org

More Information on Homelessness in America: National Coalition for the Homeless

Website: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>
Fact Sheets: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts.html>

Includes descriptions, statistics, resources and more on topics such as: who they are, why they are homeless, myths/stereotypes about the homeless, youth homelessness, etc.