

*Merry Christmas,  
Mama*



**Albert T. Viola**

Based on the short story "Merry Folk" by Hermann Sudermann

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# Merry Christmas, Mama

**CHRISTMAS.** An 1890s Swedish family takes great pains to keep the spirit of Christmas alive even though they are still grieving from the loss of the family's matriarch, Mama.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 20 minutes.



## About the Author

Hermann Sudermann (1857-1928) was born in East Prussia and was the son of a poor Mennonite brewer. Sudermann eventually moved to Berlin where he worked as a tutor and later a journalist. A playwright and author of several novels and short stories, he is best known for his play *The Honor* (1889). Though Sudermann's plays are considered representative of German naturalism in that they present a pessimistic view of man as helpless against the forces of nature, some critics point out that there also exists an occasional gleam of optimism as even the most oppressed characters can, at times, succeed through efforts of sheer will.

## Characters

(2 M, 4 F)

**PAPA:** 40, warm, handsome man with a mustache; wears a smoking jacket, suit pants, shirt, bowtie, and a pair of black patent-leather shoes.

**ALEXANDRA:** 16, pretty, plump bright-eyed girl with a shy manner, a timid voice, and a peaceful expression; fair complexion, large eyes, and brown hair; wears a white confirmation dress with blue ribbons and a black apron.

**SAMANTHA:** 13, pale, slender, and carries herself like a young lady mindful of her manners; has blue eyes and blonde hair that curls at her shoulders.

**EMMA:** 14, quick, outgoing tomboy of the family; slender with chestnut-brown hair.

**GRANDPAPA:** 65, grey-haired professor; wears a turn-of-the-century black suit with vest, and a solemn long coat.

**MARISA:** 30, housekeeper; tall, thin with sharp gray eyes and crooked, scarred hands; has long thick hair pulled back and bundled in a net.

## Set

1890, Christmas Day. A typical living room in a Swedish home. There is a loveseat, two straight-back sitting chairs, a dinner table with eight chairs, a piano, and a fully decorated, slightly tilted Christmas tree.

## Props

Loveseat	Paper
2 Straight-back sitting chairs	Wrapped Christmas presents
Dinner table	Wooden bird cage
8 Chairs	Colorful stuffed bird
Piano	Black apron
Piano bench	Cane
Desk with drawer	Handkerchief
Decorated Christmas tree	Dark-covered book
Ladder	Flowerpot filled with violets
Christmas decorations, ornaments	Brown knit sweater
Christmas tree lights	Pitch pipe
7 Dinner place settings	Assorted Christmas candies, cookies
Shiny combination lock	Pocket watch
Key for lock	Keys
Flower vase	

## Sound Effects

Slow echoing tone

Christmas is a time  
For love and fun,  
Mom's baked apples  
Topped with cinnamon  
Sleigh rides  
Cider  
And some mistletoe  
Sitting by the fire  
Like an Eskimo  
Christmas is a time to care  
Christmas is a time to share  
Christmas is a day so rare  
Just like you, Mom  
Because your love is everywhere  
Merry Christmas, Mama.

## Merry Christmas, Mama

*(AT RISE: 1890, Christmas Day. A typical living room in a Swedish home. Alexandra is on a ladder putting the finishing touches on the Christmas tree. The Christmas tree is tilted heavily forward because the side that is turned to the wall doesn't have enough decorations to keep the equilibrium. Papa looks at the tree from the far corner of the room.)*

PAPA: *(Indicating tree.)* Alexandra, what would your mother say if she saw this?

ALEXANDRA: What's wrong with it?

PAPA: What's wrong with it?

ALEXANDRA: Yes.

PAPA: Come here, sweetheart. *(Alexandra climbs down the ladder and goes to Papa. She stands facing him.)* You know your mother is a perfectionist, right?

ALEXANDRA: Yes, Papa.

PAPA: And your mother does not like carelessness, right? Turn around. *(Alexandra turns around and stares at the Christmas tree. Papa puts his hands gently on her shoulder.)* If the tree falls over Alexandra, think how awful we would all feel.

ALEXANDRA: I can fix that! *(Alexandra runs to the Christmas tree. She climbs up the ladder once more, stretches her arms forth as far as possible, and hangs more decorations on the back side of the tree so that it can stand straight and proud.)* Turn on the lights, Daddy.

*(Papa plugs in the Christmas lights. Alexandra climbs down the ladder and rushes to Papa's side to look at the lit Christmas tree.)*

PAPA: Perfect! It's beautiful, sweetheart!

*(Alexandra hugs Papa with joy.)*

ALEXANDRA: Thank you, Daddy.

*(Papa turns toward the dining table. The table is set with Christmas candies and goodies and each of the seven place setting has a present on it.)*

PAPA: All right, now we will look through the presents.  
Which one is your mother's plate?

*(Alexandra runs to the end of the dining table.)*

ALEXANDRA: *(Indicating Mother's plate.)* This one. *(She runs to the other end of the table. Indicating Papa's plate.)* This one is yours.

PAPA: It is a good thing you put so many Christmas candies on it. You know she always loves to have something to give away. *(Papa picks up a brand new lock and looks at it carefully. He opens it with a key and closes it. He opens it again and closes it once more. He places it back next to Mother's plate. He picks up a flower vase and looks at it.)* What's this?

ALEXANDRA: The flower vase I made for her in my ceramic class. It's only for roses.

PAPA: It is a precious gift, Alexandra. She'll love the colors.  
They are happy colors.

ALEXANDRA: They were burned in, Daddy, and will stand any kind of weather.

PAPA: What the girls have made for Mama they can bring her themselves. Have you put down the presents from her?

*(Alexandra unfolds a piece of paper.)*

ALEXANDRA: *(Reads.)* Emma is getting a new rod and reel and a red-cross ten-bladed knife. Samantha is getting a tumbler and rock polishing set and a tall ship in a bottle model kit.

PAPA: Do you think she can handle that?

ALEXANDRA: Mama said that's something she has always wanted.

PAPA: It will make an impression nevertheless.

ALEXANDRA: *(Unable to contain herself. Stage whisper.)*

Daddy, can I tell you a secret, Daddy?

PAPA: I love secrets!

ALEXANDRA: Mama has something special for you, too.

PAPA: *(With great interest.)* What is it?

ALEXANDER: You have to promise not to tell anyone.

PAPA: Not a soul.

ALEXANDER: Cross your heart and hope to die?

PAPA: Cross my heart and hope to die. *(He crosses his heart.)*

ALEXANDER: Okay. Close your eyes.

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**