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HAPPY HOLIDAYS$

A Humorous Take on the Holiday Spirits

by

J.C. Svec

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS$
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CHARACTERS:

Five women. They’re young, attractive, marketing geniuses and they comprise the Council for the Achievement of Successful Holidays (C.A.S.H.). They meet once a year to exchange strategies, share ideas, celebrate good fortunes and support each other in executing the age old holiday traditions of materialism, commercialism, capitalism and greed. For decades, these five women have co-existed in Madison Avenue bliss, working in harmony to manipulate and deceive the public... until now.

HOLLY/CHRISTMAS. An attractive personification of the holiday. Serious, professional and “in charge”. Despite her extreme wealth and popularity, she is still “one of the girls”.

BUNNY/EASTER. Although a powerful commercial force, the attractive “Bunny” comes across as a bit flighty and less serious.

SAM/THE FOURTH OF JULY. A strong entity who realizes she’s nowhere near the powerhouse stature of the other holidays because of a limited, national position.

JACQUELINE/HALLOWEEN. After a complete and stunning physical and emotional makeover, this once back-seat relegated holiday has transformed into a slick force to be reckoned with.

TOMMI/THANKSGIVING. The quintessential American holiday that presents herself as shabby and overshadowed; no longer of any relevance.

SETTING:

A Saturday night in the middle of November; the annual meeting of the Council for the Achievement of Successful Holidays (C.A.S.H.). This year, unlike some of the more extravagant and upscale venues of the past years, the meeting is being held at The General Pulaski Room in the Benjamin Franklin Inn just off a busy New Jersey highway.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

HAPPY HOLIDAYS can be performed as easily in a black box setting with minimal set pieces as with a fully designed stage setting. The women need not be young but should be approximately the same age with the exception of Tommi, who may be older than the others or merely portrayed as tired and worn-out; a holiday that has seen better days.
HAPPY HOLIDAYS
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SCENE: A Saturday night in the middle of November; The General Pulaski Room in the Benjamin Franklin Inn just off a busy New Jersey highway. A paper tablecloth and cheap Thanksgiving decorations cover a rectangular folding table that contains an embarrassingly cheap, unappetizing and unappealing buffet of finger sandwiches, potato chips, cookies, cans of soda and punch. Taped to the front of the table is a sign that reads “Welcome Holidays”. Several folding chairs sit randomly around the room in front of the table.

AT RISE: HOLLY, slim, attractive, young and exquisitely dressed in a red outfit pre-occupies herself with a cell phone conversation. Her make-up, accessories and clothes denote status and wealth. HOLLY pays no attention to the environment as she saunters into the room.

HOLLY
(Adamant) No, absolutely not. (Pause) Because, I say so. (Pause) Oh, do not give me that crap.

(BUNNY, dressed in a matching, form-fitting pastel skirt and jacket, is an equally attractive woman of approximately the same age and economic standing who follows HOLLY into the room. Also, on a phone, she, too, is oblivious to her surroundings.)

BUNNY
No, no, no, no, no. (Pause) Hel-lo-oh. NO!

HOLLY
Yes, I realize the names don’t reflect today’s cultural spectrum.

BUNNY
You’re right. I don’t like the idea.

HOLLY
Because I don’t like the idea.

(HOLLY and BUNNY finally acknowledge each other as they listen halfheartedly to the individuals on the line.)

BUNNY AND HOLLY
You’ve got to be kidding.

BUNNY AND HOLLY, Continues
I’ll call you back.

(HOLLY and BUNNY each take a cleansing breath, turn to each other with open arms and hug.)
Has it been a year already?

Almost to the day.

Let me look at you.

*BUNNY steps back and shows off her figure and outfit.*

*HOLLY, Continues*

Very nice.  Very, very nice.

Now, you.

*HOLLY, with the flair and panache of a runway model, shows off her attributes.*

Do you even remember buying off the rack?

God forbid... that would mean...

*HOLLY AND BUNNY*  
Re-tail!

*HOLLY and BUNNY have a good laugh at the thought.  BUNNY holds up her cell phone.*

Care to share your pain?

My so-called support staff.

*Resolute* Interns?

The lesser of the evils.  It’s always hit or miss with them.

They’re hungry, ambitious and aim to please.

And, they come cheap.
BUNNY
Experience is everything. On the job training is invaluable. You know it and I know it, so why don’t they know it?

HOLLY
You have to be so careful. You pay them nothing and sometimes... you get nothing.

BUNNY
And sometimes you pay your people and get—

HOLLY
Nothing. You’re absolutely right.

BUNNY
It gets worse every year.

HOLLY
Thank goodness, I can do this job in my sleep. Do you believe they suggested changing Rudolph's name?

BUNNY
You’re kidding?

HOLLY
No. They’re dead serious.

BUNNY
To what?

HOLLY
Run Rudy R.N.R.

BUNNY
R.N.R.?

HOLLY

BUNNY
Ahh. (Sings) Run Rudy R.N.R. ... the most famous reindeer of all.

HOLLY
Might as well change it to Jerry.

BUNNY
Might as well.
HOLLY
That song has been a cash cow for me over the years and they want me to consider changing the character’s name.

BUNNY
I totally understand. Can you imagine “Here comes Taji Cotton tail?”

HOLLY
It’s a strange world in which we live.

(HOLLY points to BUNNY’S phone.)

HOLLY, Continues
What’s your problem?

BUNNY
Cream filled chocolate crucifixes.

HOLLY
Ouch.

BUNNY
I’ve had to walk a fine line all these years between...

HOLLY
The holy—

BUNNY
And not holy.

HOLLY
Remember that whole ‘put the C-H-R-I-S-T back in Christmas movement?’

BUNNY
You’re counter moves were pure genius.

HOLLY
Most of the credit has to go to the good people at Hallmark and Coca-Cola.

BUNNY
Don’t be modest, behind every great idea...

(HOLLY brushes off the compliment and ponders the new idea.)

HOLLY
Cream filled crucifixes. It hasn’t been done.
BUNNY
Holly, I can’t have toddlers biting Jesus’ head off the cross on Easter morning.

HOLLY
Good point.

(HOLLY fights back a question.)

BUNNY
What?

HOLLY
Nothing.

BUNNY
No, go ahead.

HOLLY
I was just wondering...

BUNNY
Yes...

HOLLY
Never mind... nothing.

BUNNY
Don’t do that. I trust your judgment, Holly. If I’m making a mistake here...

HOLLY
I was just wondering... what flavor cream?

BUNNY
If I was to tell you butterscotch...

HOLLY
Butterscotch cream.

BUNNY
They tell me it’s making a comeback.

HOLLY
I gave up on butterscotch years ago.

BUNNY
I know you did.
Your idea?

HOLLY

The reintroducing butterscotch part, yes.

BUNNY

A daring attempt, I’ll say that.

HOLLY

Thank you.

BUNNY

(HOLLY awkwardly makes a cross with her fingers.)

HOLLY

The...um... white, milk, or dark chocolate?

(Thrown by the question, BUNNY quickly presses the buttons on her cell phone.)

BUNNY

(Anxious) Answer.

(Immediately composes herself before speaking into the phone.)

BUNNY, Continues

What kind of chocolate? (To HOLLY) Milk.

BUNNY

Butterscotch?

HOLLY

Butterscotch.

BUNNY

Cream?

HOLLY

Butterscotch cream.

BUNNY

(HOLLY paces in thought.)

HOLLY

Butterscotch cream and milk chocolate. Nope, I don’t see it.

BUNNY

Phew!

(HOLLY points to BUNNY’S phone and turns her attention to her surroundings.)
BUNNY, Continues
(Recovers; into phone) Milk chocolate, what are you thinking? (Ends conversation) That settles that.

HOLLY
(Looks around) Oh my God.

(BUNNY hangs up and comprehends HOLLY’S reaction.)

BUNNY
(Peruses the room) Oh. Is this a joke?

HOLLY
I don’t think so.

BUNNY
Serves me right for not paying more attention to where I’m going.

(HOLLY and BUNNY walk the perimeter of the room eventually meeting behind the buffet table. BUNNY pokes at the sandwiches with the antenna of her cell phone. HOLLY picks up a chip.)

HOLLY
I wouldn’t endorse this stuff, let alone—

BUNNY
Don’t even suggest it.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Holly? Bunny?

HOLLY
In here.

(SAMANTHA, SAM, another smartly attired woman with flowing, long hair, cautiously enters the room. Her dark blue outfit is accessorized with a red scarf and white pocketbook. She moves directly to HOLLY and BUNNY. They all exchange hugs and kisses.)

SAM
The Benjamin Franklin Inn?

BUNNY
Welcome to the Garden State.

SAM
We’re meeting at the Benjamin Franklin Inn?

(Not waiting for an answer, SAM exits and immediately returns.)
SAM, Continues

The General Pulaski Room?

HOLLY
She probably made the arrangements by phone and doesn’t realize—

SAM
Don’t defend her, Holly.

HOLLY
I’m not defending her. I’m just saying that she may not know—

SAM
The Benjamin Franklin Inn, Holly? We’re a stone’s throw from The Plaza. The Pierre. The Four Seasons would have been cliché but at least it would have had some class. Did you meet the old guy at the front desk? I think it was ol’ Ben Franklin himself.

(SAM examines her right hand.)

SAM, Continues
Does anyone have any hand sanitizer?

(BUNNY pulls a bottle from her purse.)

BUNNY
Here.

(SAM stretches to look at the food.)

SAM
Food, I’m starving.

BUNNY
(To HOLLY) This should be interesting.

(SAM’S enthusiasm quickly disappears.)

SAM
What is this?

BUNNY
That’s the buffet.

SAM
Where’s the shrimp? Where’s the white fish? Where’s the food?

BUNNY
You’re looking at it.
HOLLY
You both know how hard it’s been for Tommi.

(SAM uses a plastic fork to examine the sandwiches. She pokes and shuffles through the pile of white bread quarters.)

SAM
This is pathetic.

(SAM holds up a sandwich.)

SAM, Continues
There’s only meat in the top layer.

(SAM carefully sniffs the sandwich.)

SAM, Continues
I think it’s Spam.

(SAM drops the food back onto the platter and looks around the room.)

SAM, Continues
Is Tommi even here?

HOLLY
No.

BUNNY
Didn’t you offer to host again this year?

HOLLY
I offered.

BUNNY
She’s got her pride I guess.

SAM
That’s fine but... this is embarrassing.

HOLLY
She’s taken quite a few hits in recent years.

SAM
We’ve all had our ups and downs.

(The women each refer to the others with their examples.)
BUNNY

(To SAM) Wars.

SAM

(To BUNNY) The Egg Beater lawsuits of ’77, 81 and ‘99.

BUNNY

(To SAM) The National Miss Firecracker Competitions.

(BUNNY and SAM gang up on HOLLY.)

SAM

(To HOLLY) The Grinch.

BUNNY

(To HOLLY) Aluminum trees.

SAM

(To HOLLY) Atheism, warm winters, depressions, inflation, that whole pagan scandal, the Yule counter-culture thing... and don’t forget the Mall Santa Wars of the early eighties. Through everything, we’ve prevailed.

HOLLY
Take it easy girls. Just remember, we have more experience. We’re bigger. She’s only national.

BUNNY
Sam’s only national, too. Look at what she accomplishes every year.

HOLLY
The whole point of the Council for the Achievement of Successful Holidays is to help support the smaller holidays.

SAM
Holly, Tommi’s on that Council that helps support the smaller holidays.

BUNNY
Sam’s right. Sure, if it wasn’t for Sam’s initiative and drive she might just be another small market holiday, like Grandparent’s Day and Flag Day.

SAM
Or worse.

HOLLY
Like what?
SAM
Remember what happened to the twins that were in charge of Washington’s and Lincoln’s Birthdays?

BUNNY
They got lazy. Thought they didn’t need to work anymore.

SAM
Thought the holiday was a given and what happened....

BUNNY
Poof... outside corporate takeover in the morning and President’s Day in the afternoon. We’ll never get that income back.

SAM
And how about Labor Day?

BUNNY
Great idea, but tell that to ‘retail America’. It’s a faux holiday. Just another day off to shop. Not that there’s anything wrong with shopping.

SAM
Super Bowl Sunday is more of a holiday.

BUNNY
Now there’s a day I’d like to see us bring into the fold.

SAM
I’m the first one to count my blessings and thank the fates for Independence Day being in the middle of summer.

HOLLY
That was your good luck. Tommi’s stuck between two huge holiday seasons.

SAM
Yes, that is my good luck. That doesn’t mean I’m not constantly looking over my shoulder at Father’s Day or worrying about August 1st.

HOLLY
What’s August 1st?

SAM
Nothing... yet. But, what if?

HOLLY
What if what... someone initiates a Celebrate Summer Day?

(The three women all imagine the possibilities before SAM comes to her senses.)
SAM

See!

HOLLY
But don’t you think we’re a little to blame for what’s happened to Tommi? We expand our seasons every year.

SAM
Because we can. There’s always going to be the major holidays and then everyone else. Representatives of every American celebrated holiday, big or small, no matter what their history or affiliation agreed to a council and voted on who would sit on that council.

HOLLY
They did so out of self-preservation.

BUNNY
They did so because they knew it was a win-win situation.

And still is for almost everyone.

BUNNY
And has been for a long time.

HOLLY
Because we introduced revenue sharing. They all get a percentage of what the Council makes. (Pause) What do you mean almost everyone?

SAM
Holly, that percentage is a set, yearly percentage. Which means if one of us—

Or more than one—

BUNNY
Doesn’t pull her share, it comes out of the others’ pockets.

BUNNY
Maybe it is unfair with the Halloween and Christmas seasons escalating.

SAM
Maybe Tommi’s window of opportunity has shrunk and the situation is irreversible.

BUNNY
And maybe it was a mistake to assume she could handle the council position to begin with.
HOLLY
What are you two getting at?

BUNNY
Sam and I have talked it over, Holly.

SAM
We’re tired of pulling her weight.

BUNNY
We need to make a change and you know it.

(HOLLY acknowledges the point.)

BUNNY, Continues
Holly, she blew it. She was dealt a pat hand and she folded. She’s never fulfilled her promise and as a result, well, you’ve seen the results.

HOLLY
But she’s a selected, permanent member of the Council.

BUNNY
Which meant more information, more opportunities and more advantages.

SAM
We’ve already talked to the other holidays. A unanimous vote from the rest of the Council and she’s out.

HOLLY
And?

SAM
They’ll support the recommendation and our vote.

HOLLY
Of course, they will. Do you have someone lined up to replace her?

BUNNY
Yes.

HOLLY
Do they understand the financial responsibilities? Are they willing to put themselves on the line?

BUNNY
Yes.
Valentine’s Day?

HOLLY

Um-hmm.

SAM

Only logical.

BUNNY

It’s just...

HOLLY

Just what?

BUNNY

I feel bad, okay.

HOLLY

Because our holidays are thriving?

SAM

That’s not our fault, Holly.

BUNNY

Maybe not yours, or even yours Sam, but—

HOLLY

Certainly not yours. This is business. Each of us has worked very hard to get to where we are. I’m not about to feel guilty for my success with Independence Day. Nor should you with Christmas or Bunny with Easter. I’ve sold a lot of red, white and blue to insure my position on this council.

SAM

To be perfectly honest, I haven’t seen Jackie work very hard of late.

HOLLY

Holly, Jackie wrote the book on the successful holiday season. She’s a legend.

SAM

If she chooses, she can afford to rest on her laurels and accomplishments.

BUNNY

Jackie’s reputation alone is an inspiration to us all.

SAM

She’s been in business longer than any of us and, just by what she’s done in the past, Halloween gets bigger every year.
SAM
It’s true, when people were spiking candy and planting razor blades in apples, she stuck to traditions and fought back with everything she could.

BUNNY
Who else could succeed at having the entire world celebrating all that’s dark in the universe? She’s been around for... for forever, and she’s still a model of success.

SAM
The latex mask alone puts her at the top of my worship list.

HOLLY
It was revolutionary. (Pause) How about the mall specialty stores?

SAM
Meeting the needs of the consumer head-on.

BUNNY
And then continuing with everything from movies to cereals.

HOLLY
Re-introducing arts and crafts merchandising for the tried and true do-it-yourselfers was a stroke of genius.

BUNNY
Imagine, having the chutzpah to go back to a holiday’s roots to bring it up-to-date.

HOLLY
There’s no question we all owe her. I also know she won’t easily turn her back on any one of us... no matter what the circumstances.

BUNNY
Then we’ll have to convince her.

HOLLY
She’s loyal. I’ve known her a lot longer than you two have. Almost from the very beginning, actually.

SAM
But, I also believe she’s a smart business person.

BUNNY
(To HOLLY) Don’t get soft on us, kid.

HOLLY
(Agreeing) Tommi stays a minor holiday.
Of course.

(Clarifies) Jackie has to vote on it. Unanimous or nothing.

We understand.

Hey, where is Jackie by the way?

Oops, I didn’t get a chance to tell you before. (Pause) She may not be coming.

Why not?

There was a conflict. She mentioned someone representing her this year.

(SAM playfully starts for the exit.)

Anyone interested in sharing a car into the city?

I am.

Very funny.

These meetings are bogus anyway. They have been for years.

We only come because the charter demands it. And, now, without Jackie, we can’t—

Can’t what.

(JACQUELINE, JACKIE, a very sexy, younger appearing woman than the others, sweeps into the room. Her hair is exotic and her clothes and make-up are indicative of a Gothic, Halloween character. Her attitude is vibrant and upbeat as the girls ad lib reactions to a surprisingly “changed” woman.)

Unbelievable.
SAM
You look incredible.

JACQUELINE
I feel incredible. Good for another generation or two, wouldn’t you say?

SAM
At least two.

(JAM refers to JACQUELINE’S outfit)

BUNNY
So… that’s the new representation?

JACQUELINE
In the flesh.

HOLLY
Jackie, what have you done with yourself?

JACQUELINE
Ah, ah, ah… it’s Jacqueline not Jackie.

HOLLY
A new name for, what is obviously, a new person.

(JACQUELINE struts her new look around the stage eventually finishing at the buffet table.)

JACQUELINE
You like?

(The women exchange looks and respond in unison.)

ALL
We like. We like.

JACQUELINE
I needed a change. Desperately needed a change. Nothing too drastic. A nip here, a tuck there.

(JACQUELINE looks at the food selection.)

JACQUELINE, Continues
What is this?

(JACQUELINE quickly disregards the buffet and moves to the center of the room.)
JACQUELINE, Continues
And the clothes? Quick... three comments each, I won’t accept anything less.

SAM

JACQUELINE
Gooood. Bunny?

BUNNY

JACQUELINE
Nicely done. Holly... don’t let me down.

HOLLY
Awe-inspiring. Prodigious.
(The women anxiously await a third response.)

HOLLY, Continues
Deceptive.

BUNNY
Holly?

SAM
(To JACQUELINE) She’s kidding. (to HOLLY) You are kidding, aren’t you?

HOLLY
(Directly to JACQUELINE) No, I’m not.
(Silence.)

JACQUELINE
That’s my girl. (To BUNNY and SAM) That’s my girl. (To HOLLY) Not buying it, huh?

HOLLY
You taught me better.

(JACQUELINE holds her three cohorts in suspense.)

SAM
So, what’s going on?

JACQUELINE
We should wait until we’re all here.
SAM
She’s on to something big.

BUNNY
Again.

(JACQUELINE finishes looking around.)

JACQUELINE
Where’s Tommi? Does she know what a dump this place is?

SAM
I guess she decided not to show.

HOLLY
Yet.

(JACQUELINE further examines the room.)

JACQUELINE
(Serious) She’s slipping. (To HOLLY) We should have let you host, taken some of the pressure off. It’s going to be another tough year.

SAM
Actually, we were just discussing—

BUNNY
(Whispers to SAM) Not now.

JACQUELINE
I guess this is the best she can do right now. (To HOLLY) Is this the best she can do?

HOLLY
Apparently so.

(BUNNY and SAM press for disclosure.)

BUNNY
Look, this is Tommi’s busy season. We can fill her in when she gets here.

SAM
That’s right.

JACQUELINE
Holly, what’s your opinion?
HOLLY
It’s your announcement.

JACQUELINE
(To SAM and BUNNY) Positive you two don’t want to wait for Tommi?

BUNNY AND HOLLY
Positive.

(JACQUELINE acknowledges their disregard for TOMMI.)

JACQUELINE
Did I interrupt something when I came in?

(Silence.)

HOLLY
(Covers) You tell us your news first, then we’ll tell you ours.

JACQUELINE
(Excited) Fair enough. Get comfortable ladies.

(JACQUELINE and the others get comfortable in their environment.)

JACQUELINE, Continues
(Sings) Candy coated popcorn, peanuts and a prize...

(JACQUELINE looks for one of the girls to finish the jingle.)

JACQUELINE, Continues
That’s what you get—

BUNNY
Cracker Jacks.

JACQUELINE
Cracker Jack, not Jacks. No “s”.

BUNNY
Sorry.

JACQUELINE
Everybody makes that mistake. (Emphatic) I want to put the peanuts back in Cracker Jack.

(HOLLY, BUNNY and SAM’S reactions range from stunned to appeasing.)

JACQUELINE, Continues
And the prize too.
Okay then.

Don’t Cracker Jacks... Jack still have peanuts.

I don’t think Jacqueline is actually talking about Cracker Jack. (To JACQUELINE) Are you?

Can’t put one past you.

I’m lost.

(To JACQUELINE) Maybe you should start at the beginning for those of us less enlightened.

Cracker Jack used to be so much fun. Licking the sticky caramel off your fingers and wondering how many peanuts there’d be. Anticipating when you’d get to the prize, knowing it was always at the bottom of the box.

I’d say your fondness for the treat has been shared by everyone.

Have you had them recently?

No.

Sam?

(SAM shakes her head in response.)

Bunny?

Shared by almost everyone.

They’re not the same. All the prizes are these silly paper tricks and brain teasers. The boxes are only half full and there’s only an average of five peanuts in each box.
SAM

That’s it?

JACQUELINE

Five.

HOLLY

I assume your reaction to these injustices was not to send a letter to the CEO.

(JACQUELINE cracks a sly smile.)

BUNNY

That look hasn’t changed.

SAM

You bought the company?

(Silence.)

SAM, Continues

Well, did you?

(JACQUELINE’S coy avoidance of the question only raises the interest of the other women.)

BUNNY

(Refers to JACQUELINE) Buying the company is too easy. (To JACQUELINE) You’ve developed a competitive business strategy?

(JACQUELINE’S smile and posture are her answer.)

SAM

(Excited) That settles it, I’m buying an SUV. Maybe two. Expensive ones.

(BUNNY clasps her hands and addresses the heavens.)

BUNNY

Thank you, thank you and thank you.

JACQUELINE

Don’t count your shares yet.

HOLLY

It’s true?

JACQUELINE

Holly, this idea will open up endless possibilities for all of us.

(JACQUELINE calls the girls around her.)
JACQUELINE, Continues

Ready... Trick and Treats.

BUNNY

Yeah, trick or treat.

JACQUELINE

You weren’t listening. Trick and Treats. A six ounce bag. Inside is an assortment of the most popular candies. And a toy. Mini-monsters, rub on tattoos... maybe magic tricks. No bag the same. A different trick and treat with every purchase.

(JACQUELINE strikes a selling pose.)

JACQUELINE, Continues

And who would make a better spokesperson for Jacqueline’s Halloween Trick and Treats than...

BUNNY AND SAM

Jacqueline.

JACQUELINE

M&M Mars has already signed on the dotted line and I have a verbal agreement with Hershey. The toy companies are submitting proposals as we speak. This will be huge for us, ladies.

HOLLY

Do you realize what you’re doing?

SAM

Sure she does. Once again she’s laying the groundwork for all of us to make a lot of money.

BUNNY

And this is a problem, why?

HOLLY

It’s not just that, Sam. It’s a lot more than that. There are huge ramifications to what Jacqueline’s proposing. (To JACQUELINE) Tell them.

(JACQUELINE walks away from the group.)

BUNNY

What’s going on here?

SAM

Oh shit!
(Still lost) What?

BUNNY

SAM

This is it. This-is-it! You’re doing it. Right here and now, holiday history is about to be made.

BUNNY

What?

HOLLY

She’s taking Halloween to a year-round status.

(BUNNY lets out a huge gasp.)

JACQUELINE

It’s not as if you all haven’t already done the same... to some degree.

HOLLY

Isolated instances.

JACQUELINE

Yes, isolated instances. Christmas shops in July... open for business, church every day... for something. Flags flying outside every house. Now is the time ladies. The market is right and the consumers are ripe. Food products are the way to go. We can all do it.

BUNNY

In the public eye, three hundred and sixty five days a year. Wow.

JACQUELINE

Tricks and Treats will be only the first step. I blaze the trail and work out the kinks. Now, there’ll be a lot of mistakes, initially. Costly mistakes.

SAM

Understandable.

JACQUELINE

It’ll take time.

BUNNY

Obviously.

SAM

It’s a huge undertaking.

JACQUELINE

I’m going to need you’re help. Can I count on your support?
SAM
Sure.

BUNNY
I’m in.

JACQUELINE
Holly?

HOLLY
Of course.

JACQUELINE
That leaves Tommi.

(TOMMI explodes into the room and attempts to catch her breath. She is dressed in orange and brown with a stuffed, fleece turkey tied to the top of her head. Her outfit is soiled, stained and torn in several locations. HOLLY, SAM and BUNNY stare in amazement while JACQUELINE turns away, obviously shocked by TOMMI’S arrival. Ignoring the women, she drags herself through the room to the buffet table, and proceeds to devour a number of finger sandwiches. She pours herself a cup of very flat soda and sits in the chair closest to the table. TOMMI downs the soda and flings the cup onto the table. She stares past the girls as she addresses them.)

TOMMI
(Emotionless) Sorry, I’m late. Welcome to the annual gathering of the Council for the Achievement of Successful Holidays. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And then he said, ‘Doc Holiday?’ and shot him. Ha, ha, ha. Role call, reading of the minutes, old business, any new business... blah, blah, blah. If there are no questions, meeting adjourned, see you all next year…

(TOMMI looks at the buffet and fights back her tears.)

TOMMI, Continues
Please enjoy dinner.

TOMMI returns to the table, grabs a handful of sandwiches and bolts out of the room. BUNNY, SAM and HOLLY quickly realize that she might not return and rush to retrieve her as JACQUELINE slides a chair to the furthest area of the room and sits. Lead by SAM and BUNNY, HOLLY escorts TOMMI back into the room and to another chair.

HOLLY
(To TOMMI) What happened to you?

BUNNY
And where have you been?

(Silence.)
BUNNY, continues
Tommi, you owe us an explanation.

SAM

Especially for the buffet.

(Silence. TOMMI remains in her comatose state.)

TOMMI
(Sings) A turkey sat on a backyard fence and he sang this sad, sad song. Thanksgiving Day is coming, gobble, gobble, gobble and... and... and... Thanksgiving Day is coming, gobble, gobble, gobble, gobble and... (Pause) Thanksgiving Day is coming, gobble, gobble, gobble, gobble, gobble and... and...

(TOMMI finally comes to her senses.)

TOMMI, Continues
I can’t remember the words.

Holly
That’s all right sweetheart.

TOMMI
I need a drink.

SAM
Don’t we all.

Holly
(Instructs) Sam.

(HOLLY motions to the soda on the table.)

HOLLY, Continues
Get her something.

TOMMI
From her.

(TOMMI points to BUNNY instigating chuckles from all.)

BUNNY
Sam’s right at the table.

TOMMI
You know what I want.
Oh fine.

(BUNNY pulls a flask from her pocketbook and hands it to TOMMI who takes several swigs, the last one good to the last drop.)

I can’t do this any more. Not like this.

Are you saying you want out?

No!

(TOMMI looks at her unsympathetic associates.)

Do you want me out?

(TOMMI, Continues)

Oh shut up. Do you know why I’m late tonight? Of course you don’t. Do you care? Of course you don’t. Well you’re going to hear it anyway. I was making a personal appearance at the American Legion Hall in Big Lake, Minnesota. They’re world renown for the size of their turkeys up there. The friends of Big Russell Utegarth were throwing him a retirement party Wednesday night. Seems that Big Russell had the largest turkey farm in the state and is a leading connoisseur on the preparation of America’s bird. Know what his company motto is? ‘We breed ‘em, we kill ‘em, we cook ‘em. To order.’ Big Russell came up with it himself. Pretty clever, huh? Ask anybody within a hundred miles of Big Lake about Big Russell and that’s how they’ll describe him. He breeds ‘em, he kills ‘em and he cooks ‘em. After the third keg got tapped, I guess I started looking like one last challenge to Big Russell. Anyway, the party got a little out of hand from that point on.

Did they hurt you?

No, but if I hadn’t worked my way out of the tablecloth sack they bagged me with, it probably would have gotten a lot uglier.

Tablecloth sack?

While Big Russell was chasing me, his buddies managed to skewer together a sack made of tablecloths. Quite creative, wouldn’t you say?
HOLLY
You said Wednesday night?

TOMMI
Um-hmm.

BUNNY
Tommi, it’s Saturday. Where have you been for three days?

TOMMI
On a Greyhound, when you leave the driving to them, they pretty much control your destiny along with the road and arbitrary departure and arrival times. God only knows what gate you board at and he’s not about to share it with you.

SAM
You took a bus from Minnesota?

TOMMI
They’re called coaches. Anyway, I’m told turkeys can’t fly.

(TOMMI halfheartedly laughs at her own joke.)

HOLLY
Are these the clothes you traveled in?

TOMMI
No. Only the trip home.

BUNNY
(To SAM) Do we dare ask?

TOMMI
(To BUNNY) Oh, go ahead, ask.

BUNNY
What happened to your clothes?

TOMMI
(Relaxed) Well, in my haste to avoid a stuffing and roasting—

HOLLY
What?

TOMMI
Stuffing and roasting. That’s what people do to turkeys, you know.

(TOMMI finally locks her eyes on JACQUELINE.)
TOMMI, Continues

Who’s that?

HOLLY

Jacqueline. Jackie.

TOMMI

No, it’s not.

JACQUELINE

(Stands) Yes, it is.

(TOMMI walks over for a careful examination. She scrutinizes every inch of JACQUELINE ending her inspection with a long, deep gaze into JACQUELINE’S eyes. TOMMI finally accepts the fact and backs off with a frightened look and distressed attitude. She addresses the girls as if they are alone.)

TOMMI

That’s not what Jackie looks like.

BUNNY

It is now.

TOMMI

(Confused, to JACQUELINE) What are you up to?

BUNNY

(Defensive) What makes you think she’s up to anything?

SAM

Yeah?

TOMMI

Because Minnesota was her suggestion.

(JACQUELINE laughs off the suggestion.)

JACQUELINE

And I dreamt up North and South Dakota.

SAM

Ohio was my idea.

JACQUELINE

(Maneuvers) You’re delirious dear. You need to get some rest.
(To TOMMI) What do you say we get you cleaned up?

BUNNY
That’s a great idea. I’ll run out and get you some clothes.

HOLLY
And then we’ll all go out and get a nice meal. My treat.

TOMMI
There’s plenty here.

BUNNY
Holly means edible food, darlin’.

TOMMI
I ate it.

(TOMMI examines the contents of the buffet.)

TOMMI, Continues
It’s not that bad.

(TOMMI holds up one of the finger sandwiches.)

SAM
It depends, is that one with or without the meat.

TOMMI
Don’t they all have meat?

SAM
See for yourself.

(TOMMI checks the sandwich, then several more on the tray.)

TOMMI
Ah, geez. Our meeting? What about our meeting?

SAM
Is there really a need for one?

TOMMI
Well...?

(TOMMI’S search for support is futile.)
Hey, do you hear that?

Hear what?

(Cries) The final nail being driven into my coffin.

(HOLLY and BUNNY join forces to console TOMMI.)

(To JACQUELINE) We’re in for a long night aren’t we?

(JACQUELINE simply nods in agreement. TOMMI’S crying climaxes with a deep sigh.)

I feel like the ninety year-old aunt somebody has to pick up from the nursing home for family get-togethers.

That’s not true.

Of course not.

(SAM remains silent until looks from HOLLY and BUNNY force a comment.)

Pish-posh.

Be honest, I’m a huge inconvenience.

(Silence.)

I knew it.

Tommi, you’re extremely important.

As if it wouldn’t be better for Halloween and Christmas to just run back to back? I dare you and Jackie, sorry, Jacqueline to stand there and tell me right to my face that it wouldn’t be easier and more profitable.
SAM

Yeah, tell her.

(HOLLY looks to JACQUELINE for guidance that never comes, and Bunny who turns away.)

HOLLY

Well, it wouldn’t. You’re important to the American people. They need you. You’re a transition from one holiday season to the next. You provide a respite.

TOMMI

You mean I’m ‘down time’?

HOLLY

That’s not the way I meant it.

TOMMI

Well, how did you mean it?

HOLLY

You’re a welcome break to all the commercialism and materialism in the country, especially because of what you represent.

SAM

(To BUNNY) Is materialism a word?

(BUNNY shrugs her shoulders.)

TOMMI

No one really gives Thanksgiving any consideration these days. It’s an afterthought. Not a season or even a holiday to most people. It’s a sponsored parade, a few football games and a fifteen minute dinner that takes, on average, six hours and twenty-seven minutes to prepare. High schools have canceled their traditional morning football games by the scores and malls and department stores are open. Making gravy from drippings has become a lost art. Name one television station still airing “March of the Wooden Soldiers.” I love Laurel and Hardy. The traditional, holiday food puts everyone to sleep, naturally, so after dinner conversation translates to discussing what movie to go to in order to get out of the house and stay awake. God forbid families sit around the dinner table and talk over dessert. Shelf space in the stores is relegated to an area behind the Halloween close-outs and sale items. My biggest seller is a pin-the-hat-on-the-turkey game, two dollars and ninety-five cents plus handling through the Oriental Trading Company, who, by the way has reduced my catalogue space to three pages in their Halloween Issue. I used to sell a lot of those little boy and girl pilgrim candles but when they burned down to the neck they’d give little kids nightmares.

(TOMMI starts to unsuccessfully fight back her tears.)
TOMMI, Continues
The only real thanks given on Thanksgiving are by the retailers because their biggest day of the year is the day after Thanksgiving. You have no idea what it’s like living with the ‘day after’ being bigger than the ‘day of.’

(HOLLY tries to calm TOMMI. After several moments SAM chooses to ignore the situation.)

SAM
I know a great Brazilian Steakhouse... Gaucho’s Todo Carné. It has a dozen different types of meat.

BUNNY
What’s todo carné mean?

SAM
I don’t know, a whole lot of beef, or something. It’s all you can eat.

BUNNY
Really, all you can eat? That must get expensive?

SAM
It’s a buffet, one set price. Where have you been? Buffets will be to the twenty-first century what fast food restaurants were to the twentieth.

BUNNY
I have to get out amongst the people more.

SAM
(To JACQUELINE) Sounds as if it’s one of your ideas.

HOLLY
Will you two please stop it.

(Silence.)

JACQUELINE
(Quick) How do you know it isn’t?

SAM
You’re kidding?

(JACQUELINE initially relates her story directly to TOMMI)

JACQUELINE
I’m here in Jersey one night having dinner at my favorite Chinese restaurant. Over in Belleville. Great spare ribs at this place. Anyway, Mr. Wong, the owner, starts complaining about how he not only can’t find good waiters, but the people he has working for him have no work ethic. He’s got complaining customers waiting for tables in a half full restaurant. He
JACQUELINE, *Continued*

comes over to my booth, leans in to me and whispers a comment that he should make them get their own food. I said, ‘Wong, that’s exactly what you should do.’ By the time I’m served my fortune cookie, I’ve got the All You Can Eat Buffet idea completely laid out and Wong is on the phone telling his relatives who have restaurants all over the tri-state area about the idea. The rest, as we say, is history.

SAM

And you just gave the idea away?

JACQUELINE

What can I say, the place had great ribs.

BUNNY

Copyrights and registration. That’s where the money is. Perpetual ‘cha-ching, cha-ching.’

SAM

But, my God, the cost for a legal staff.

BUNNY

*(Flippant)* It’s worth it. The money I make on the Easter Bunny tie-in, alone, pays for it.

JACQUELINE

Tell them what your real money-maker is.

BUNNY

No, let it go.

JACQUELINE

Don’t be embarrassed.

SAM

Yeah, don’t be embarrassed.

BUNNY

Crosses.

SAM

As in the religious icon?

BUNNY

One in the same.

SAM

You should fill them with cream.

BUNNY

Don’t you think that’s a little sacrilegious?
Hey, most of what you all do is.

(There is a moment of realization and agreement.)

I thought I’d make a mint after I registered the reindeer names.

(Surprised) And you haven’t?

Except for a female heavy metal band, nothing to speak of.

What about Cupid?

Joint ownership, shared profits.

Smart.

We thought so. Who needed a long, drawn out court battle?

I clean up on the stars and stripes motif.

You should. It’s plastered all over everything right now.

I’m being sued.

(The women turn their attentions to TOMMI.)

Did you say something?

(Loud) I said, I’m being sued.

By whom.
TOMMI
You name it. The Daughters of the American Revolution, The Plymouth Rock Society, The
Friends of John Smith, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts... and that’s just for starters.
(Pause) The Indian nation.

BUNNY
Which one?

TOMMI
All of them. It’s a class action suit.

(TOMMI responds with a deep sigh, aware that the women have nothing to say.)

SAM
Tommi, business is business.

TOMMI
I know, I know.

(Silence.)

HOLLY
Hey, I thought we were going to get you cleaned up?

(HOLLY directs TOMMI out of the room.)

TOMMI
(Submissive) Okay.

HOLLY
(To ALL) I’ll be right back.

(SAM, BUNNY and JACQUELINE mill around the room. SAM plays with the chips.)

BUNNY
Bet you didn’t know you could bend a potato chip.

SAM
Let me see.

(BUNNY demonstrates her new found skill.)

SAM, Continues
Cool.

(SAM and BUNNY find a quiet moment together.)
Without Jackie we can’t do what we want to do.

(SAM and BUNNY glare at JACQUELINE.)

We can’t just say we want Tommi out.

I’ll just, carefully, approach the subject.

Ball’s in your court then.

Without Jackie you can’t... what?

(SAM and BUNNY snap to attention.)

That’s not what—

It’s a small room.

All right, we can’t—

Maybe we should wait for Holly to get back.

(HOLLY enters.)

Holly’s back. Are you discussing Tommi?

We were about to.

Was she the topic of discussion before I arrived?

We were discussing—

Yes, she was.
JACQUELINE
And was her eviction part of that discussion?

HOLLY
We hadn’t really gotten to…

SAM
Holly! Yes, it was.

JACQUELINE
You discussed her inadequacy, her lack of effort...

HOLLY
We can’t do this to her now.

BUNNY
We agreed she’s no longer a viable member of the Council.

SAM
(To JACQUELINE) Obviously, we don’t need to plead our case to you. Your vote will make it unanimous.

HOLLY
Let’s steam roll her why don’t we?

BUNNY
Holly, we agreed earlier.

HOLLY
We agreed on how bad the situation had become. We agreed on Tommi’s performance.

BUNNY
You mean lack of.

SAM
We told you everyone else was in agreement. You even requested that Tommi remain as a minor holiday.

JACQUELINE
(To HOLLY) Is what she’s saying true?

HOLLY
I said you had to vote and that it was unanimous or nothing.

JACQUELINE
Well of course it has to be unanimous.
HOLLY
But then no bargaining, no lobbying for another vote. We drop it. For good.

SAM
You never said that.

HOLLY
Well, I’m saying it now. I also said you wouldn’t turn your back on a member of the Council. That we’d have to convince you.

JACQUELINE
There’s something to be said for loyalty.

SAM
You said yourself she was slipping. You heard what Tommi said tonight. She may not want out but she’s also resigned to being ‘out.’ It’s a cut and dry situation if you ask me.

HOLLY
Well no one asked you. Tell me you also didn’t hear how hard it’s been for her. Jesus, she’s in litigation with the entire country.

SAM
Holly, wake up and smell the stuffing, it’s over. We need to cut our loses, and cut them now.

HOLLY
Bunny?

BUNNY
I’m sorry Holly, but enough is enough.

SAM
I make a motion for a vote.

BUNNY
I second the motion.

SAM
(To HOLLY) You know we don’t have a choice. (Pause) Discussion?

(HOLLY turns to JACQUELINE who in turn shakes her head in disbelief at BUNNY and SAM.)

JACQUELINE
Holly, give me a minute with these two and then send Tommi in.

HOLLY
Thank you. (To SAM and BUNNY) To do this to her now is wrong.
(HOLLY exits.)

JACQUELINE

(TO SAM and BUNNY) Sit down.

(SAM and BUNNY stand motionless.)

JACQUELINE, Continues

(Pleads) Sit down, please.

(SAM and BUNNY each reluctantly claim a chair.)

SAM

Jacqueline, we mean no disrespect.

JACQUELINE

You’ve talked to the other holidays?

SAM

Yes.

JACQUELINE

And they’re in favor of this vote?

SAM

They’re in favor of a change.

BUNNY

They’re trusting us to do whatever is in their best interest.

JACQUELINE

And someone is lined up to replace Tommi on the Council?

BUNNY

Valentine’s Day has expressed interest.

JACQUELINE

That would work. Valerie has that whole Cupid, love thing working for her, but she’d have to expand... it might work, though.

SAM

She has some really good ideas.

BUNNY

She’ll put in a major effort, we’re sure of it.

(JACQUELINE paces the room.)
JACQUELINE
Trick and Treats was my first new idea in quite some time, wouldn’t you agree?

(Silence.)

JACQUELINE, Continues
Wouldn’t you?

BUNNY
Yes, but—

JACQUELINE
But what?

BUNNY
All of your ideas are still producing revenue. All of them. Their inherent design enables, encourages growth and expansion.

SAM
One of your basic ideas begets dozens more over the course of years.

BUNNY
Decades.

SAM
Centuries.

JACQUELINE
So, I guess I have nothing to worry about?

SAM
Of course not.

JACQUELINE
(Sarcastic) Thank you very much.

SAM
Voting you out was never an idea, obviously, therefore, never an option.

JACQUELINE
Not because of me, but because my books are never in the red.

SAM
We are a business partnership, not a family.

JACQUELINE
Address my question, is it solely because of my gross income and profit margins?
(Without hesitation) Yes.

JACQUELINE

And you’d act the same way if it was Holly?

BUNNY

Like that would ever happen.

(TOMMI, her face clean and hair brushed appears at the door. She sports a simple layer of make-up and an oversized tee-shirt from the hotel gift shop.)

JACQUELINE

Ah, you’re timing is perfect.

TOMMI

(Humble) Hi, guys.

(Embarrassed by the situation, SAM and BUNNY barely acknowledge TOMMI.)

TOMMI, Continues

I guess this is when I get told to clean out my locker.

JACQUELINE

This is when you get to tell your side of the story.

(SAM and BUNNY throw each other a side glance.)

TOMMI

(Confirms) My side of the story?

JACQUELINE

(Nods) Your side of the story. The entire story.

(With a new control, TOMMI throws the turkey hat into BUNNY’S chest.)

TOMMI

Jackie, time to relax.

(JACQUELINE occupies the last chair.)

SAM

What’s happening here?

TOMMI

In due time, Sam. First things first. Baby steps, okay?
Sure.

(To BUNNY) You okay with that?

Whatever you say.

Good. By the way, the buffet... my idea. ‘Take all you want but eat all you take.’

(Refers to JACQUELINE) Why let her take credit if it was—

If... if?

Since it’s your idea, why let her take the credit?

I like the way she tells the story. That whole Cracker Jack tie-in is such a hoot. And now, Jacqueline’s Tricks and Treats, also mine. The upcoming food line is ours though. Monster Mashed Potatoes, pumpkin flavored popcorn, Halloweiners and Beans. Together, we’re loaded with ideas. Have been for generations. Glow in the dark costumes and accessories, Halloween flashlight necklaces, foam monster masks, wax bottles, strobe lights, smoking cauldrons, fog machines, sounds of terror CD’s... a new image...

Together we’ve been keeping the holiday up-to-date, and popular for a long, long time.

Wax bottles? (To SAM) I love those things.

(SAM brushes off BUNNY and her comment.)

(To TOMMI) And in the process, destroy Thanksgiving?

We haven’t destroyed Thanksgiving... just let it take a back seat for a while.

I’m assuming you have a perfectly logical explanation.

What was it you said before… business is business?
JACQUELINE
I realized years ago that Thanksgiving was never going to be the lucrative enterprise we all had hoped it would be. But we were stuck with it.

TOMMI
No matter how many ideas I developed, no matter how much effort I put in, no way, no how was the Thanksgiving season going to pay off. Not just for me but for all of us.

JACQUELINE
Why go through a depository of bandages when you can just stop the bleeding?

TOMMI
So, we agreed on a merger.

BUNNY
You can’t do that. *(To SAM)* Can they do that?

*(SAM remains silent.)*

JACQUELINE
We did. With an infusion of Tommi’s new Halloween ideas...

TOMMI
And Jacqueline’s reputation... well, our success has been obvious. You see what we’ve accomplished.

SAM
But with every merger comes concessions.

TOMMI
Of course. We wheeled and dealed, but we were able to hammer out a mutually beneficial arrangement.

SAM
Which was?

TOMMI
A four point plan. One, undermine Thanksgiving to virtually the point of no return.

BUNNY
Well, there you succeeded.

JACQUELINE
Two, we market Halloween on a year round basis.
SAM
Three?

TOMMI
Allow Holly to build and expand Christmas to the point of self-sufficiency.

JACQUELINE
To the point where it can run on it’s own with only limited management demands.

TOMMI
A part-time job, say, a less involved holiday representative could perform.

SAM
And Christmas is the trade-off for you assuming that post.

TOMMI
Not so much Christmas itself, but...

SAM
Holly.

TOMMI
Yes.

JACQUELINE
Four. Inject Thanksgiving with new strategies allowing Tommi and I to run it, Halloween and Christmas.

SAM
What happens to Holly?

(JACQUELINE and TOMMI exchange looks.)

JACQUELINE
One always should assume they can be replaced.

TOMMI
Or eliminated.

BUNNY
What happens to us?

TOMMI
You both retain your positions.

BUNNY
How do we know we’re not next.
JACQUELINE
Revenue from the rest of the calendar year. We need your holidays and we need your expertise in handling them. Bunny, we’re not looking for world domination... we’re just greedy. And besides, would Jackie and I have agreed on a ten per cent slice for you both if we didn’t value your leadership and position on the council.

SAM
What happens next?

TOMMI
A vote.

(HOLLY enters and acknowledges SAM, BUNNY and JACQUELINE. She walks directly to TOMMI who has reverted back to the meek character she had been portraying.)

HOLLY
Are you okay?

(TOMMI “manages” a nod.)

JACQUELINE
We feel that a mutually fair and equitable arrangement has been agreed on.

HOLLY
(Unknowing) I guess I should have come back sooner.

JACQUELINE
I think things just happened to work themselves out without needing much discussion or deliberation.

HOLLY
(To SAM and BUNNY) And everyone’s in agreement?

(SAM and BUNNY stand, each taking a moment before answering.)

SAM
Yes, Holly, in agreement.

BUNNY
It’s in everyone’s best interest.

HOLLY
(To TOMMI) They’ve assured you’ll be taken care of properly?

TOMMI
Better than you could have ever imagined.
HOLLY
I’m sorry about this.

TOMMI
Oh, me too.

BUNNY
Let’s get this over.

SAM
Just cut to the chase.

JACQUELINE
Very well. I move this Council vote on the expulsion of... Tommi.

(HOLLY looks to TOMMI as JACQUELINE turns to SAM and BUNNY. JACQUELINE winks.)

SAM
I second the motion.

JACQUELINE
All those in favor?

(HOLLY affectionately hugs TOMMI before raising her hand. It takes a moment before HOLLY realizes she stands alone on the vote.)

JACQUELINE, Continues
All those opposed?

(SAM, BUNNY and, finally, with dramatic flair, JACQUELINE each raise a hand.)

HOLLY
What’s going on?

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

SET/PROPS LIST NEXT PAGE
Set/Props List

Table
Chairs
Tablecloth
Thanksgiving Decorations
Platter of Finger Sandwiches
Plate of Cookies
Bowl of Potato Chips
Plastic Utencils
Plastic Cups
Cans of Soda
“Welcome Holidays” Banner
Cell Phone (Holly)
Cell Phone (Bunny)
Hand Sanitizer (Bunny)
Flask (Bunny)
Handbags (All but Tommi)