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Have Yourself a *Crazy* Little Christmas

A Holiday Comedy for the Entire Family by
Collin Andrulonis

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Have Yourself a Crazy Little Christmas

by Collin Andrulonis

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

MOLLY (F); *mid-30s, pretty, a Supermom with a bit of a perfectionist attitude*

GRANT (M); *mid to late-30s, Molly's husband, laid back most of the time*

JONATHAN (M); *11-12, Grant and Molly's son, a skateboarder*

HEATHER-JANE (F); *9-10, Grant and Molly's daughter, wise beyond her years*

IVY (F); *6-7, Grant and Molly's daughter, a bit of a brat*

EVELYN (F); *mid-60s, Molly's mother, a sweet grandmotherly type*

NANA ROSE (F); *mid-80s, Evelyn's mother-in-law, speaks with final authority*

HARVY (M); *early-70s, Grant's father, a kid at heart*

CAROLYN (F); *mid-60s, Grant's mother, controlling and judgmental*

LEE ANN (F); *mid-30s, Grant's ex-fiancé, beautiful and flirty*

LIZ (F); *13-14, Lee Ann's daughter, the gothic type with a dry wit*

MAXWELL (M); *11-12, Jonathan's nemesis, a big bully*

KIDS (M-F); *7 (or more) neighborhood carolers*

BROOKE

GABRIELLA

TY

ELAINE

TIMOTHY

STEVEN

DINA

SETTING:

Grant & Molly's home; Christmas Eve, 1997

The premier of *HAVE YOURSELF A CRAZY LITTLE CHRISTMAS* was produced by the Chickasha Community Theatre in December, 2014. It was directed by Cheryl Critchfield and assistant directed by Callison Coburn. The cast was as follows:

MOLLY.....	Diane Littlejohn	LIZ.....	Jordan Wallace
GRANT.....	Dan Andrulonis	MAXWELL.....	Gianni Mauta
JONATHAN.....	Orry Stapp	BROOKE.....	Lillian Lessor
HEATHER-JANE....	Kyah Alexander	GABRIELLA.....	Nadia Kirby
IVY.....	Avery Jones	TY.....	Cooper Musgrave
EVELYN.....	Carolyn Howard	ELAINE.....	Reese Mathis
NANA ROSE.....	Frances Reding	TIMOTHY.....	Kaden Wallace
HARVY.....	Bill Ohl	STEVEN.....	Charlie Littlejohn, Jr.
CAROLYN.....	Kristy Jarnagin	DINA.....	Madison Prinzo
LEE ANN.....	Shannan Bilyeau		

HAVE YOURSELF A CRAZY LITTLE CHRISTMAS was first presented as a workshop reading on June 8, 2013. It was directed by Collin Andrulonis and assistant directed by Cheryl Critchfield. The cast was as follows:

MOLLY.....	Amy Loggins	LIZ.....	Talley Noland
GRANT.....	Dan Andrulonis	MAXWELL... ..	Tim Hammons
JONATHAN.....	Joshua Whitfield	BROOKE.....	Jessica Whitfield
HEATHER-JANE....	Madelyn Noland	GABRIELLA.....	Meredith Noland
IVY.....	Olivia Noland	TY.....	Bill Ohl
EVELYN.....	Cindy Andrulonis	ELAINE.....	Meredith Noland
NANA ROSE.....	Frances Reding	TIMOTHY.....	Talley Noland
HARVY.....	Bill Ohl	STEVEN.....	Meredith Noland
CAROLYN.....	Kristy Jarnagin	DINA.....	Frances Reding
LEE ANN.....	Talley Noland		

Have Yourself a Crazy Little Christmas

by Collin Andrulonis

THE PLAY

AT RISE: **MOLLY**, a pretty woman in her mid-30s, enters in a **SPOTLIGHT**. She speaks directly to the audience.

MOLLY

Happy holidays, friends and family! Here's hoping this newsletter finds you and yours having the happiest of New Years! Christmas at the Crowder household was... (*Searching for the word*) ...interesting...to say the least...as I'm sure you can tell from this year's family picture.

The LIGHTS FLASH and reveal the home of GRANT and MOLLY. Upstage is a staircase and a second floor landing that leads offstage to the rest of the house. The banister is beautifully decorated with Christmas garland, lights, and bows. Downstage left is a swinging door that leads offstage to the kitchen. Downstage right is the front entry to the home. A perfectly trimmed Christmas tree stands upstage in front of a window, outside of which is falling snow. There is a sofa, end table, coffee table, and recliner in the center of the house. The characters are frozen in a tableau that depicts the following scene:

NANA ROSE is standing on the coffee table with her arms extended over her head. CAROLYN stands off to one side with mashed potatoes covering her head and face. HARVY stands upstage holding two crying children, HEATHER-JANE and IVY. GRANT and LIZ stand off to the other side of the stage breaking up a fight between JONATHAN and MAXWELL. A large group of KIDS stands cheering them on. EVELYN stands on the second floor landing holding a large, cooked turkey with a tail. LEE ANN stands downstage holding a slinky negligee.

MOLLY, *Continued*

Yes, that is my family on Christmas Eve. Yes, that is my mother on the landing, holding a turkey, and yes, that turkey has a tail. Yes, that is my husband breaking up a fight between my son and another neighborhood boy. Yes, those are my two daughters crying, and yes my mother-in-law is covered in mashed potatoes, and yes that is my eighty-four year old grandmother dancing on the coffee table. And I am nowhere to be found. Because you see, friends, this was my first Christmas in charge, and to understand why there's a strange woman holding my favorite negligee in this picture...well...I guess I'll just have to start at the very beginning.

BLACKOUT. A group of eight KIDS enter in A POOL OF LIGHT. They wear coats, gloves, hats, scarves, etc. The KIDS are MAXWELL, a large boy of about twelve, BROOKE, GABRIELLA, TY, ELAINE, TIMOTHY, STEVEN, and DINA.

KIDS, *Singing*

We wish you a merry Christmas!
We wish you a merry Christmas!
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year!

Glad tidings we bring
To you and your kin.
Glad tidings for Christmas
And a happy New Year!

Now bring us some figgy pudding!
Now bring us some figgy pudding!
Now bring us some figgy pudding
And a cup of good cheer!

The KIDS exit as they continue singing as the LIGHTS FADE OUT. The LIGHTS RISE to reveal the same house from before, but several hours before the disastrous "picture" was taken. It is just past five o'clock in the evening. The house is calm and quiet. GRANT lies on the sofa watching television. We hear the song, "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch" coming from the television. The doorbell rings. GRANT does not budge. After a moment, it rings again.

MOLLY

(Calling from offstage) Honey, can you get that? *(No response; the doorbell rings again)* Grant! The door! *(No response; poking her head in from the kitchen)* Hey! Grinch-boy! A little help here? *(The doorbell rings again)*

GRANT

Aw, honey, come on. This is my favorite part! His heart's about to grow three sizes!

MOLLY

It ends the same way every year, honey. He returns all the presents and he carves the roast beast. *(The doorbell rings again; giving up)* Oh, don't move, God forbid. *(Passing by him and handing him a bowl of whole potatoes)* Here. Make yourself useful. Peel some veggies while you veg.

GRANT

(Sitting up and taking the bowl) Sure, hon.

GRANT begins to mindlessly peel to potatoes while MOLLY, who is clearly a little on edge, crosses to the front door and opens it. The caroling KIDS are standing outside.

KIDS, *Singing*

Oh, the weather outside is frightful.
But the fire is so delightful.
And since we've no place to go...
Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!

When we finally kiss goodnight,
How I will hate going out in the storm.
But if you really hold me tight,
All the way home I'll be warm!

Well, the fire is slowly dying.
My dear is still goodbye-ing.
But as long as you love me so...
Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!

MOLLY

(Applauding) Yay!

BROOKE

Good evening, Mrs. Crowder.

MOLLY

Good evening, children. *(Calling)* Grant! Come here!

GRANT

(Remaining glued to the television) Peeling!

GABRIELLA

We're raising money for our school's choir trip to Denver this spring.

MOLLY

Well, how wonderful.

TY

Would you like to sponsor us on our "Sing-A-Thon?"

MOLLY

Um... *(Calling)* ...Grant?!

GRANT

Peeling!

MOLLY

(Rolling her eyes in GRANT's direction) Um...sure, kids. How's it work?

MAXWELL

You make a pledge...

DINA

...and as we walk through the neighborhood tonight, every time we ring your doorbell, we'll sing you a carol...

MAXWELL

...and you pay us!

TIMOTHY

We even take requests!

MOLLY

How cute! How does one dollar per lap sound?

MAXWELL

Not as good as five.

ELAINE

Shut up, Max! *(To MOLLY)* That sounds great, Mrs. Crowder.

STEVEN

Thanks, Mrs. C! Be back soon!

MOLLY

Bye, kids!

The KIDS exit and MOLLY closes the door. She turns to GRANT and stares. There is a long, awkward silence.

GRANT

(Feeling her stare, he turns to see her) Someone at the door?

MOLLY

Yes, someone was at the door! Honestly, Grant, can't you unglue yourself from that stupid TV for five minutes to help me?

GRANT

I helped! Here! *(Handing her the bowl of peeled potatoes)* All the potatoes are peeled. *(MOLLY takes the bowl)* Who was it?

MOLLY

Some of the neighbor kids. They're raising money for some...school thing. We're supposed to give them a dollar every time they come by.

MOLLY places the bowl of potatoes on the end table. There is a commotion coming from upstairs.

IVY

(Yelling) Put him down, Heather-Jane! You're going to hurt him!

MOLLY

Oh, great! Remind me to thank your mother for getting Ivy that stupid ferret for her birthday. Will you go upstairs and make sure the kids aren't destroying the playroom...or each other?

GRANT

Molly, honey, why are you so stressed? This is just a normal Christmas Eve dinner...just like the other fourteen we've had since we've been married.

MOLLY

Are you kidding me right now? *Normal?* Grant, this is the first Christmas Eve dinner since my father died. This is the first time it's ever been at our house. This is the first time *I'm* in charge of the turkey, and *I'm* in charge of the mashed potatoes, *I'm* in charge of the blueberry-banana pie, and *I'm* in charge of everyone's Christmas Eve gift. This is the most *not* normal Christmas Eve dinner we've ever had, and everyone is just waiting to see it go horribly wrong...especially *your* mother!

GRANT

(Gently) Molly, my mother loves you and you know that.

MOLLY

No, Grant...your mother loves nickel slots and *General Hospital*. She tolerates me.

JONATHAN

(Calling from upstairs) Mom! You better get in there!

GRANT

I'll go. *(Hugging her)* It's going to be perfect. Breathe.

MOLLY

(Taking a deep breath) Thanks, honey. You're pretty sweet when you wanna be.

GRANT kisses MOLLY's forehead and starts upstairs as she heads for the kitchen.

MOLLY

(Stopping) Oh, Grant! Did you pick up Jonathan's present today? The ant farm?

GRANT

They were out of ant farms, honey.

MOLLY

Perfect. He'll be the only one without a gift to open tonight.

GRANT

No, don't worry. I got him something else. Something he really wanted.

GRANT starts quickly up the stairs.

MOLLY

(Calling after him) Not that sling shot! Grant! You know how I feel about those things...he's gonna shoot his eye out!

GRANT

(Exiting upstairs) Honey, it's not like it's a Red Ryder B.B. Gun!

MOLLY

(Giving up) Very funny! *(Picking up the bowl of potatoes)* Okay. Time to boil. What a glamorous life I lead.

MOLLY exits to the kitchen as JONATHAN enters upstairs. He has a black eye.

JONATHAN

Psst! Dad!

GRANT

Yeah? (*Noticing the injury*) Jonathan! What happened?

JONATHAN

Shh! I don't want mom to hear.

GRANT

You haven't told her about that black eye?

JONATHAN

No way! I ran right upstairs when I got home today. If she sees this thing she's gonna freak out! I'll be banned from the skate-park for life!

GRANT

We've got to tell her, sport. The sooner the better. Before the whole family gets here.

JONATHAN

Maxwell Lawrence is such a bully! No one likes him!

GRANT

Be that as it may, you know you're not supposed to be fighting.

MOLLY enters from the kitchen, unseen by GRANT and JONATHAN.

JONATHAN

I didn't fight! He told me to get off the vert ramp 'cause he wanted to use it. I told him no. He called me a mama's boy. I told him his mama was so dumb she thought Fleetwood Mac was a new hamburger at McDonald's. And then he hit me.

GRANT

(*Trying not to burst out laughing*) Okay...that's pretty funny. But you're not going to be able to hide that black eye from your mother.

MOLLY

Black eye?

JONATHAN

Oh, great. Mom...it's nothing. See?

MOLLY

(*Inspecting his eye*) Jonathan, this looks terrible. What happened?

JONATHAN

Just this stupid kid at the skate-park, Mom.

MOLLY

Well, tell me who. I think I may need to have a little chat with his mother.

GRANT

He's fine, Molly. This is something that all boys go through at some point in their lives. The last thing he needs is his Mommy getting involved.

MOLLY

This is going to look terrible for the family pictures.

JONATHAN

Who cares?

MOLLY

That picture goes on our annual newsletter!

GRANT

All right. Just put a caption that says something like, "Our Christmas was a knockout!"

MOLLY

This is serious, Grant. *(The doorbell rings)* Oh, gosh. Is it time already? Jonathan, go upstairs and run a comb through your hair. *(JONATHAN runs off up the stairs)* And tell your sisters to lock that stupid ferret in its cage and to put their shoes on! *(GRANT heads for the front door)* Wait! Honey, before this starts, can I count on you to stand behind me? No matter what happens? No matter what your mother does...or says?

GRANT

You got it, hon.

GRANT opens the front door to reveal EVELYN, MOLLY's mother, who is pushing NANA ROSE in a wheelchair.

GRANT

Hi, Evelyn! *(Hugging her)* You look absolutely beautiful.

EVELYN

Hello, Grant.

MOLLY

(Hugging EVELYN) Mother! Hi!

GRANT

(Kissing NANA ROSE on the cheek) Hi, Nana Rose. Merry Christmas!

MOLLY

How's she doing?

EVELYN

Not good. She hasn't spoken a single word since your father passed.

MOLLY

Well, that's understandable, Mother. I mean, Dad *was* her only son. Give her some time. (*Crossing to NANA ROSE*) Merry Christmas, Nana. (*Taking a recipe card from her pocket*) I made your famous blueberry-banana pie recipe. See?

EVELYN

Nothing works. I tried playing show tunes in the car all the way here. And you know how she could never resist belting out a classic tune by Ms. Ethel Merman or Ms. Barbara Streisand. But not one word!

MOLLY

(*Placing the recipe card on the coffee table*) Aw...poor thing. Nana Rose, I'm so glad you came. (*To EVELYN*) How are *you* holding up?

EVELYN

Oh, I'm doing fine, honey.

MOLLY

Really?

EVELYN

Yes! The first months without your father were hard, but I'm hanging in there. Guess what I did last week?

MOLLY

What?

EVELYN

Fixed a leaky faucet! All by myself!

MOLLY

Well, look at you!

EVELYN

I know! But I am so glad you offered to host Christmas this year, honey. A few too many old memories in my kitchen.

MOLLY embraces EVELYN. JONATHAN, HEATHER-JANE, and IVY enter and hurry down the stairs.

JONATHAN, HEATHER-JANE, and IVY

(*Overlapping*) Grandma! Nana!

The FAMILY exchanges lots of hugs & kisses.

EVELYN

Oh! My babies! Let Grandma look at you. Oh my goodness! Look how big you've all gotten!

HEATHER-JANE

Did you bring us presents, Grandma?

GRANT

Heather-Jane! Manners!

EVELYN

Not this year, baby. Your mother is in charge of the Christmas Eve gifts this year, remember?

HEATHER-JANE

Oh, yeah.

EVELYN

Have you been a good girl this year?

HEATHER-JANE

Pretty good.

EVELYN

Just pretty good? What does that mean?

IVY

She knows six cuss words!

MOLLY

Ivy, baby, come here. *(Pulling IVY aside)* Ivy, did you put the ferret up?

IVY

Mom, he has a name.

MOLLY

(Sighing) Right. Did you put Mr. Giggles up in his cage?

IVY

No. He wouldn't come out from under Heather-Jane's bed. When I tried to catch him, he hissed at me!

MOLLY

I do not want that thing loose in the house. Not today! Take your father upstairs and ask him to help you.

IVY

Okay.

IVY takes GRANT by the hand, whispers in his ear, and leads him up the stairs. Simultaneously, NANA ROSE begins coughing.

MOLLY

Heather-Jane, baby, why don't you go into the kitchen and get your Nana Rose a nice warm cup of cider?

HEATHER-JANE

(Exiting to the kitchen) Sure, Mom.

EVELYN

(Pulling JONATHAN onto her lap) And what about you, Jonathan? What did you ask for this year?

JONATHAN

Well, I asked for this really cool snowball slingshot, but I'm pretty sure Mom got me an ant farm.

EVELYN

You never know what Santa might bring in the morning! *(Noticing his eye)* Oh my goodness, baby, what happened to your eye?

JONATHAN

Maxwell Lawrence.

HEATHER-JANE screams from the kitchen and then runs onstage.

MOLLY

What's wrong?

HEATHER-JANE

Mr. Giggles jumped out of the cabinet and scared me!

MOLLY

Where is he now?

HEATHER-JANE

Still in there, I guess! He ran and hid!

MOLLY

(Calling) Grant! He's in the kitchen!

Who's in the kitchen?
EVELYN

No one, Mother. Grant!
MOLLY

GRANT
(Entering quickly from upstairs, followed by IVY) Coming!

Kitchen!
MOLLY

Don't hurt him, Daddy!
IVY

Don't hurt who?
EVELYN

*GRANT runs into the kitchen followed by IVY.
NANA ROSE coughs again.*

HEATHER-JANE
(Handing her a mug) Here's some cider, Nana Rose. I put it in Mom's favorite Christmas mug.

NANA ROSE sips and continues sipping periodically.

Isn't that nice, Ma?
EVELYN

There is a loud crash from the kitchen. MOLLY cringes. The doorbell rings. MOLLY answers it, revealing the caroling KIDS.

KIDS, *Singing*

Hark! The herald angels sing!
Glory to the newborn king!
Peace on earth and mercy mild.
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful all ye nations rise...

MAXWELL
Stop! *(The KIDS stop singing; seeing JONATHAN)* Crowder? You live here?

JONATHAN

Maxwell? What are you doing here?

MOLLY

This is the Maxwell responsible for your black eye?

MAXWELL

You should've heard what he said about my mama!

JONATHAN

You called me a mama's boy!

MAXWELL

You were hogging the vert ramp!

MOLLY

Boys! That's enough! (*Handing him a dollar bill*) Maxwell, here's your dollar. See you on the next lap.

BROOKE

Thanks, Mrs. Crowder.

The KIDS exit.

MOLLY

Bye-bye! (*Closing the door and turning to JONATHAN*) What did you say about his mama?

JONATHAN

Oh, you know...normal "yo mama" stuff.

MOLLY

Jonathan!

EVELYN

Oh, Molly! Chill out! Hey, listen to this one Jonathan. (*Approaching MOLLY*) Yo mama is so fat that when she steps on the scale it reads "one at a time please."

EVELYN and JONATHAN cackle.

JONATHAN

That's a good one, Grandma. I'll have to remember that one!

MOLLY

Yeah, that's a great thing to teach our children, Mother. And just for future reference, you should never tell a "yo mama" joke to your own daughter...kinda loses its meaning.

EVELYN becomes silent as she thinks about this. There is a crash sound in the kitchen. Shortly thereafter, GRANT enters with the hot pan of potatoes.

No sign of him, honey.

GRANT

No sign of who?

EVELYN

No one, Mother.

MOLLY

(Nearing tears) Mr. Giggles.

IVY

What was that crash?

MOLLY

Who's Mr. Giggles?

EVELYN

He was up on the pot rack, but he's just too fast.

GRANT

Our ferret.

HEATHER-JANE

But on the bright side, the potatoes are done boiling.

GRANT

Oh my God! It's loose in the house?

EVELYN

Can you mash them for me, honey?

MOLLY

(Starting back for the kitchen, with forced enthusiasm) Sure.

GRANT

But keep looking for...you-know-who.

MOLLY

Mr. Giggles?

EVELYN

MOLLY

I don't want to give your mother any more ammunition than she already has.

GRANT nods and then exits to the kitchen.

EVELYN

Molly, dear, can I help you with anything? Is the table all set?

MOLLY

I've got everything under control, Mother. The kitchen table is beautifully set with nine place settings. The blueberry-banana pie is chilling in the fridge as we speak. The turkey has about another half-hour to roast; the potatoes are being mashed lovingly by my husband. And all nine of us have a beautifully wrapped Christmas Eve present under the beautifully trimmed Christmas tree. I can do this. But thanks for the offer.

NANA ROSE coughs.

EVELYN

(Tipping the mug back) Drink, Ma, drink.

MOLLY

I'm sure when Grant's father gets here he'll be doing enough *drinking* for all of us.

EVELYN

Can you blame him? If I had to be married to Carolyn, I'd be nipping at the sauce too!

MOLLY

Mother, the kids.

EVELYN

Oh, they're not listening. Honestly, I don't know how you've put up with her for fourteen years, Molly. Carolyn Crowder is a twenty-three year old loudmouth in a sixty-three year old body. Which, by the way, I think has been nipped and tucked recently.

CAROLYN and HARVY burst through the front door, making a grand entrance.

CAROLYN

We're here!

HARVY

Ta-da!

EVELYN

Carolyn, dear! You look wonderful! Have you lost weight?

CAROLYN

Well, I've just been trying to watch what I eat. You know, get back in shape.

HARVY

Aw, Muffin, you've always been in shape. Round is a shape, right?

JONATHAN, HEATHER-JANE, & IVY

(Overlapping) Grandma! Grandpa!

*JONATHAN, HEATHER-JANE, & IVY
exchange lots of hugs & kisses with their
grandparents.*

HARVY

Hey, John-John. Look at that shiner! You been trying to fight off all the girls, huh? You got the Crowder curse?

JONATHAN

No. Just this stupid boy at the skate-park.

HARVY

Oh! Well, in that case, after dinner I'll take you out in the garage and teach you my old left hook. Did you know that your Grandpa was an amateur boxer during the Korean War?

JONATHAN

Yeah...I know, Grandpa.

CAROLYN

We *all* know!

MOLLY

(Hugging HARVY) Hi, Harvy.

HARVY

Hello, beautiful. Smells good in here.

MOLLY

I hope it tastes just as good. I don't want to disappoint Carolyn.

HARVY

Don't you worry about that, honey. I've been disappointing her for thirty-nine years. Where's my son?

MOLLY

(Calling) Grant! Your parents are here!

GRANT

(Yelling from the kitchen) Mashing!

MOLLY

He's in the kitchen. Why don't you go in and see him? There's cider.

HARVY

(Producing a flask) Ah! Perfect! I think I'll make mine a wee bit Irish! You want one?

MOLLY

(Laughing) Not yet! Ask me again in a few minutes!

HARVY exits into the kitchen.

MOLLY

(Hugging CAROLYN) Hi, Carolyn.

CAROLYN

Molly! Don't you look pretty?

MOLLY

Really? Well, thank you, Carolyn.

CAROLYN

Yes, doll! You've really gotten the hang of concealing those pesky bags under your eyes.

MOLLY

(Struggling to keep it together) What a...lovely...thing to say.

CAROLYN

And the house looks so festive! I can't think of a better way to spend Christmas Eve!

IVY

Grandma!

CAROLYN

Yes, my darling?

IVY

Heather-Jane learned six cuss words this year!

MOLLY

Ivy! Zip it! Heather-Jane, we'll talk later.

HEATHER-JANE

Thanks a lot, Ivy!

The doorbell rings.

CAROLYN

(Checking her watch) Is she here already?

MOLLY

Is *who* here already?

JONATHAN opens the front door. The caroling KIDS are there again.

KIDS, *Singing*

Jingle Bells!

MAXWELL, *Singing*

Your mom smells!

KIDS, *Singing*

Jingle all the way!

JONATHAN

(Calling) Mom!

MOLLY

(Tossing a dollar bill out the door) Go on, kids! Get outta here! And knock it off, Maxwell!
(Slamming the door shut and turning to the others) Um...Carolyn? What did you mean when you said, "Is she here already?" Who are you expecting?

CAROLYN

I invited a guest. That's not a problem, is it, dear?

MOLLY

Oh, no! Of course not! Why would that be a problem?

CAROLYN

Oh, good! Cause for a moment there, you looked as though you had seen a ghost. As if you had only planned for nine people. *(Laughing)* But as all good hostesses know, you should always expect the unexpected.

MOLLY

Right. *(Calling)* Grant!

There is another loud crash from the kitchen. HARVY and GRANT scream from offstage.

MOLLY

(Calling again) Grant!

GRANT

(Yelling from the kitchen) Mashing!

MOLLY

I think you'd better mash from the living room, honey. Your mother wants to see you!

GRANT enters with the bowl of mashed potatoes. HARVY follows closely behind with a mug of "Irish" cider. The mug looks dangerously close to NANA ROSE's mug.

HARVY

That was the biggest rat I ever saw!

MOLLY

That was Mr. Giggles...did you catch him?

HARVY

Catch him? I tried to smash him! Little rascal disappeared under the island.

MOLLY

Oh, God.

CAROLYN

Grant!

GRANT

Hi, Mom!

CAROLYN

(Kissing GRANT's cheek) Hi, darling! Oh! *You're* mashing the potatoes? How...progressive. *(GRANT nods)* Here, let mother help you.

GRANT

I can do it, Mom.

CAROLYN

Well of course you *can*, dear, but you really shouldn't *have* to.

CAROLYN takes the bowl and begins mashing. MOLLY pulls GRANT aside.

MOLLY

Honey, she's been here five minutes and she is already up to her old tricks! I swear...I'm going to snap!

GRANT

Calm down, Molls. You know how she can be.

MOLLY

We can't just dismiss her, Grant! She invited someone else here tonight, knowing good and well I have planned for nine people! Nine, Grant! I don't have a tenth place at the table! I don't have a tenth slice of pie! I don't have a tenth gift! (*Dawning on her*) The gift! Oh, God, the gift! We're going to have a guest in this house and I don't have a gift to give them!

GRANT

Okay, Molls. Breathe! Why don't you go baste the turkey and I'll take care of finding a gift for our special guest. Okay?

MOLLY

Okay. Thanks.

GRANT

Hey...a few more hours and then they're all gone.

MOLLY

(*Smiling, then turning to the others*) Going to baste the turkey. Be right back.

EVELYN

I'll give you a hand, dear.

MOLLY and EVELYN exit to the kitchen.

GRANT

Uh, kids?

HEATHER-JANE

(*Approaching GRANT*) Yeah, Dad?

GRANT

Come here. I need you guys to do me a big favor. Go upstairs to my bedroom. Open the bottom left drawer in my nightstand. There is a red t-shirt that plays the Chipmunk's Christmas song. Get it, then go to the hall closet, find an old gift bag, and wrap it up. Got it?

IVY

Got it, Dad.

HEATHER-JANE

Um...Dad? Why do you *have* that shirt?

GRANT

It was gag gift at the office.

JONATHAN

Who's the gift for?

GRANT

Don't ask questions. Just do it for Mom.

JONATHAN, HEATHER-JANE, and IVY exit up the stairs. GRANT approaches CAROLYN.

GRANT

So, Mom. Molly tells me you've invited a guest?

CAROLYN

Oh, yes, darling. I was doing some charity work last week...

HARVY

...and by that she means playing the nickel slots....

CAROLYN

...to win money for the less fortunate!

HARVY

In that case, give all the money to me! There's nobody less fortunate than the man who crawls into bed with you each night.

CAROLYN

(Ignoring HARVY) And anyways, you'll never guess who I ran into!

GRANT

Who?

CAROLYN

Lee Ann Ritter.

GRANT

(Becoming very serious) Lee Ann Ritter? Mom. Tell me you did not invite Lee Ann Ritter over here tonight?

HARVY

I told her she was nuts.

CAROLYN

Well, she was telling me about her recent divorce, and she mentioned how she had nowhere to go this holiday...and you know how I can always pick up on the pain and suffering of others.

HARVY

You pickin' up on anything right now?

GRANT

Mom, Lee Ann Ritter cannot come over here tonight. I have never told Molly about her.

CAROLYN

What's to tell? You dated Lee Ann long before Molly came into the picture.

GRANT

Yes, but Molly doesn't know that I was ever... *(Looking around, then whispering)* ...engaged before!

CAROLYN

Oh, well I'm sure that won't bother Molly. After all dear, it was nearly sixteen years ago!

GRANT

(Getting sick) Oh, this is bad. This is very bad.

HARVY

Want some Irish cider?

GRANT sinks into a chair as EVELYN enters with a plateful of gingerbread cookies.

EVELYN

Who wants gingerbread?

CAROLYN

(Placing the bowl of mashed potatoes on the coffee table) Cookies? Before dinner? *(Taking one)* How...unique!

HARVY stands and places his mug on the coffee table.

HARVY

I'll take one. Muffin?

CAROLYN

No. And you don't need one either. They're not on my diet!

HARVY

Grant?

GRANT

No, I've lost my appetite.

EVELYN

(Glancing out the window) Oh! Come quick, everyone! There's a baby deer out at the feeder!

HARVY

Oh! Where are the kids? *(Yelling)* Kids! Come see the deer!

CAROLYN

(Touching GRANT's shoulder) Grant, darling. Get rid of that hooch while your father's not looking!

GRANT

(Standing) Sure, Mom. *(Mistakenly picking up NANA ROSE's mug)* I'd hate for someone to actually have fun tonight.

CAROLYN goes to the window with EVELYN and HARVY. GRANT heads toward the kitchen as JONATHAN, HEATHER-JANE, and IVY enter from upstairs with a gift.

HEATHER-JANE

Dad! We got it!

IVY

We did it for Mom...just like you said!

GRANT

Thanks, baby. Put it under the tree with the others.

IVY places the gift under the Christmas tree.

HARVY

Kids, come quick. The mama deer just came over.

JONATHAN

Ooh, cool!

JONATHAN, HEATHER-JANE, and IVY go to the window. Just as GRANT is about to enter the kitchen, MOLLY enters with the turkey. She is crying hysterically.

MOLLY

(Through her tears) Oh...my...God...

GRANT

Oh! Honey! Don't cry! Look, it's just an old friend from back home that Mom invited.

MOLLY

I'm not crying about that!

GRANT

Oh. Well, are you still crying about Mr. Giggles? Cause trust me, he'll turn up.

MOLLY

That's why I'm crying...I just found him!

MOLLY turns the turkey around, revealing a long tail hanging out the back.

GRANT

Mr. Giggles?! (*MOLLY cries louder and nods*) Is he...? (*MOLLY cries even louder and nods again*) ...so we can't...? (*MOLLY shakes her head*)

MOLLY

What are we gonna do? I can't serve a ferret-stuffed turkey!

GRANT

No...no, you can't do that.

MOLLY

Grant, this is a nightmare!

GRANT

Okay. Here's what we'll do. I'll run down to Swanko's Deli, get one of those pre-cooked turkeys, we'll switch them out, and no one will know anything ever happened...except of course, Mr. Giggles.

MOLLY

(*Forcing a smile*) You're the best, honey. And I'll stay here and get to know your Mother's little guest.

GRANT

Oh! Honey! No! You know what? Better idea: *you* should go to the deli and *I'll* stay here. I don't wanna leave you alone with my mom.

MOLLY

But...

GRANT

...besides, Mr. Swanko always gives you a discount anyways.

MOLLY

All right. I'll be right back. Just keep everyone distracted, okay? (*Handing him the turkey*) Here, you take this.

MOLLY hurries toward the front door.

GRANT

Come on, Mr. Giggles.

GRANT exits into the kitchen with the turkey and the mug. NANA ROSE begins to cough, and EVELYN turns around from the window.

EVELYN

Drink, Ma, drink! *(Picking up the "Irish" cider and giving NANA ROSE a sip)* There ya go.

NANA ROSE holds the mug in her hands and continues to sip on it periodically.

MOLLY

(To the others) I'm stepping out for just a moment. If the carolers come by, will someone please give them a dollar?

HEATHER-JANE

Got it, Mom!

EVELYN

Everything okay, dear?

MOLLY

Yes, Mother. Just ran out of...creamer...for the coffee. Be right back!

MOLLY opens the front door revealing LEE ANN, a curvaceous woman in tight clothing.

MOLLY

Oh! Hello.

LEE ANN

Hello. Is this the Crowder residence?

MOLLY

Yes it is. And you are...?

CAROLYN

Lee Ann! Darling! Come in, come in! *(Calling to GRANT)* Grant!

LEE ANN

I hope I'm not too late. *(To MOLLY)* You must be Molly. I've heard so much about you from Carolyn.

MOLLY

(Laughing) Well, I hope you don't believe a word of it and will hear my side of things, too.

LEE ANN

Oh, stop! She says wonderful things about you...

MOLLY

...that's surprising...

LEE ANN

...but she never told me how pretty you were...

MOLLY

...that's not.

CAROLYN

Lee Ann, darling, sit right down here on the sofa with me and have a gingerbread cookie.
(Calling) Grant!

GRANT

Busy, Mom!

CAROLYN

Lee Ann is here!

GRANT rushes in from the kitchen.

GRANT

Lee Ann Ritter!

LEE ANN

Grant Crowder! I can't believe it! You still look wonderful! *(Running to hug GRANT)* How have you been, Granty-Poo?

MOLLY

Granty-Poo?

GRANT

(Seeing MOLLY) Uh...fine! Just fine. Have you met my beautiful, understanding, adoring wife, Molly?

MOLLY

Yes, we met.

GRANT

(Whispering to MOLLY) Honey, I thought you were going out for a turkey.

MOLLY

(Aside to GRANT) That was before I got a load of the caboose that just waddled in the front door. *(To LEE ANN)* So, Lee Ann...how do you and Grant know each other?

LEE ANN

Oh...Grant and I go way back.

CAROLYN

We're all adults here. Let's not beat around the bush. Molly, Lee Ann, at one time, was our little Granty's fi—

GRANT forcefully shoves CAROLYN's face in the bowl of mashed potatoes that is still on the coffee table. CAROLYN squeals.

CAROLYN

Grant Crowder! What is the matter with you?

HARVY

(Pointing and laughing) Ha ha! Look kids! A life-sized couch potato!

JONATHAN, HEATHER-JANE, & IVY cackle.

GRANT

Whoops! Sorry, Mom. *(Shoving CAROLYN through the kitchen door)* Better get in there and get cleaned up. *(Rushing MOLLY out the door)* Molls, honey, you'd better get going before Mr. Swanko closes up shop.

MOLLY

We'll talk when I get back. So glad to have you, Lee Ann.

MOLLY opens the door and the caroling KIDS are there.

KIDS. *Singing*

Deck the halls—

MOLLY

(Interrupting and throwing a dollar bill at them) Yeah, yeah. Whatever.

MOLLY slams the door and exits.

LEE ANN

Well, Granty-Poo, it looks like you have done pretty well for yourself.

GRANT

(Laughing nervously) Well...things have been pretty busy...down at the office...

LEE ANN

Sounds like you've been pretty successful.

GRANT

Yes...very sexsexful... *(Correcting himself)* ...successful!

LEE ANN

(Laughing) Oh, Granty! You haven't changed a bit!

IVY

(Running up to GRANT) Daddy! Will you play hide-and-seek with us and Grandpa?

LEE ANN

Hi! What's your name?

IVY

Ivy Michelle Crowder. Who are you? You're pretty.

LEE ANN

Well, that is so sweet, Ivy. I'm Lee Ann. Your Daddy and I used to be...friends...a long time ago.

IVY

Then you can play with us, too.

GRANT

Ivy, baby, give us five minutes, okay? Then I promise we'll play with you.

IVY

(Whining) Why is everything always five minutes?

GRANT

Ivy! Five minutes!

IVY

Okay. *(Turning to the others)* Five minutes, everybody!

HARVY

(Whining) Aww! Why is everything always five minutes?

LEE ANN

You have a beautiful family, Granty.

GRANT

Lee Ann, would you mind just calling me “Grant?”

LEE ANN

Oh, darnit! Was I being too forward? I knew my nerves were going to get the better of me!

GRANT

No, don’t worry about it. It’s just that...not everyone knows about our...history.

LEE ANN

Ah...gotcha! Listen, if you don’t want Molly to know that you and I used to be engaged, then she won’t hear it from me. I’m just looking forward to a nice evening with some old friends.

GRANT

(Breathing a sigh of relief) Thank you. But I think my mom is the one we have to worry about spilling the beans.

LEE ANN

(Laughing) You’re on your own with that one.

CAROLYN enters wiping her face with a rag.

CAROLYN

I don’t know what has gotten into you, Grant. Did you drink some of your father’s Irish cider?

NANA ROSE hiccups loudly.

EVELYN

Drink, Ma, drink! *(NANA ROSE sips)*

GRANT

I just wanted you to taste Molly’s mashed potatoes, Mom.

CAROLYN

Oh. Well in that case...they need more salt.

LIZ, a fourteen-year-old girl dressed in dark clothing, flings open the front door.

LIZ

Hello? Were you just gonna leave me out in the car all night? I could have frozen to death!

LEE ANN

Oh, gosh! Liz! I’m so sorry, baby! Everyone, this is Liz...my daughter!

GRANT

Daughter? I didn't realize she was coming...

LEE ANN

I'm sure I told your Mother that she would be with me tonight.

CAROLYN

Liz! Of course! I knew there was something I was forgetting!

LIZ

You said you'd come out and tell me when you had "broken the ice" and it was okay to come inside.

LEE ANN

The coast is clear, baby. Come in.

LIZ

Gee thanks.

GRANT

Hi, Liz. I'm Grant.

LIZ

Yeah...I heard all about you on the drive here.

GRANT

And these are my kids. This is Heather-Jane...

HEATHER-JANE

Hi!

GRANT

And Ivy.

IVY

Hello!

GRANT

And this is Jonathan.

JONATHAN

(Extending his hand, overcome by her beauty) Hello.

There is a long, awkward silence. JONATHAN holds LIZ's hand a little too long.

LIZ

Hi. Nice eye.

JONATHAN

Thanks. I got another one just like it.

GRANT

Liz, I hope you're hungry. We've got a big, juicy...turkey in the oven.

LIZ

(*To LEE ANN*) You didn't tell them?

LEE ANN

Not yet, baby.

EVELYN

Tell us what?

LEE ANN

Liz doesn't really...*do*...Christmas.

EVELYN

What exactly does that mean?

LIZ

I don't eat Christmas food. I don't sing Christmas carols. And I don't exchange Christmas gifts.

IVY

Are you nuts!?

GRANT

Ivy!

IVY

Sorry.

LIZ

No, it's okay. I'm just taking a stand against the commercialization of Christmas. I still believe in what it stands for. Just not what it has become.

JONATHAN

(*Whispering to HEATHER-JANE*) She is so hot.

HARVY

Hey! It's been five minutes! We gonna play hide-and-seek or what?

HEATHER-JANE & IVY

Yay!

CAROLYN

Harvy, you're worse than the kids!

GRANT

Okay, okay. Liz, you in?

LIZ

I...don't think so. *(Sitting on the sofa)* I'm just gonna sit here and write.

JONATHAN

Whatcha writing?

LIZ

Just a poem. For class.

JONATHAN

Oh, cool. I dabble a little in poetry myself.

HEATHER-JANE

(Giggling) Is that what you call your Dr. Seuss bed sheets? Dabbling in poetry?

LEE ANN

Liz? Remember what we talked about? You've got to try.

LIZ

(Sighing; feigning enthusiasm) It would be a pleasure to play with you.

JONATHAN

I'm gonna sit this one out. I got... *(Picking up a notepad from the coffee table)* ...I got something to do...

JONATHAN races upstairs.

HEATHER-JANE

Okay. Grown-ups verses kids.

IVY

Yay!

HEATHER-JANE

Grown-ups count. Kids hide.

HARVY

Aww! No fair!

IVY

Come on, Grandpa!

EVELYN

You wanna play, Ma? (*NANA ROSE hiccups*) Drink, Ma, drink.

HEATHER-JANE

Okay, split up and count to one hundred.

HARVY

One hundred?

IVY

Yes, Grandpa.

CAROLYN

All right. All right. (*Taking her place near the front door*) I'll stand here. That way no one tries to hide outside like last year.

CAROLYN stands near the front door and covers her eyes. HARVY sits at the base of the stairs, LEE ANN stands underneath the landing, and EVELYN stands just downstage of the kitchen door. They, too, cover their eyes. HEATHER-JANE, IVY, and LIZ begin to search for hiding places throughout the house. GRANT takes charge.

GRANT

Okay. Here we go, everybody. One, two, three...

HARVY, CAROLYN, EVELYN, & LEE ANN

(*Joining in*) ...four, five, six...

The counting continues as the kids scramble to hide. When the counting reaches sixteen, MOLLY opens the front door holding a beautifully cooked turkey. She stops when she sees CAROLYN standing right by the door. GRANT rushes toward her. He tries to reach around CAROLYN to take the turkey, but he cannot quite get the turkey without alerting her. GRANT signals for MOLLY to take the turkey to the back of the house. She understands and exits. The counting continues. At forty-two, MOLLY can be seen outside the house through the upstage window. While holding the turkey under

one arm, she begins to ascend the trellis. After a moment, MOLLY enters on the upstairs landing with the turkey. She begins to carefully descend the staircase. She stops a few stairs down when she realizes that HARVY is blocking her route. GRANT signals for her to toss the turkey over HARVY's head. MOLLY begins to swing the turkey to gain momentum. Just as she is about to release it, HARVY stands up, still covering his eyes. She stops just in time. GRANT signals MOLLY to go back up to the second-story landing. She does so. He then signals for her to toss the turkey over the railing. The counting is nearing the nineties. With a huge swing, MOLLY releases the turkey, sending it flying over the railing and over LEE ANN's head. GRANT dives over the sofa and catches it like a football.

HARVY, CAROLYN, & LEE ANN

...ninety-eight, ninety-nine...

GRANT rushes into the kitchen with the turkey and MOLLY hides behind the upstairs banister.

HARVY, CAROLYN, EVELYN, & LEE ANN

...one hundred. (*Opening their eyes*) Ready or not, here we come.

CAROLYN

Oh, dear, where could those children be? I think I see Liz...sitting right here in the middle of the floor.

LIZ

(*Dryly*) Oh, darn. You found me.

HARVY

And where's my little Ivy-Bear? Do I see her toesies behind that curtain?

HARVY whips back the curtain to reveal IVY, whom he scoops up in his arms. IVY laughs.

LEE ANN

And let me see. Heather-Jane...is the last one to find. Where did that little rascal get to?

IVY

She's under the coffee table.

HEATHER-JANE

(Coming out of hiding) Thanks a lot, Ivy. *(GRANT enters from the kitchen)* Dad, Ivy cheated!

GRANT tries to address the situation, but he is too out of breath to do so.

LEE ANN

(Pulling HEATHER-JANE aside) Let's cut her some slack, Heather-Jane. She's just younger and still has some rules to learn. You win that round cause we found you last.

HEATHER-JANE

(Smiling) Okay.

CAROLYN

You are so good with her. Such a good little mother. It's a shame that you and Grant had to break off your eng—

GRANT rushes forward, picks up the bowl of mashed potatoes and once again shoves it in CAROLYN's face. CAROLYN screams. HARVY laughs.

CAROLYN

Ahhh! What is wrong with you?

HARVY

(Laughing) God bless us, everyone!

GRANT

Nothing, Mom.

CAROLYN

Honestly! I don't know what's more insulting: a face-full of potatoes twice in one night or Molly's shocking inability to season them.

MOLLY makes a choking gesture in CAROLYN's direction, unseen by the others.

GRANT

Okay, let's keep the game going.

LIZ

(Putting in her I-pod earphones and lying on the sofa) I've had enough excitement for one day. I'm out.

HARVY

Grown-ups' turn to hide. You're going down, Ivy-Bear!

HEATHER-JANE

No! We get a redo! Ivy cheated last round.

HARVY

(Whining) Aw!

GRANT

Yes! I think a redo is a great idea, Dad. Do it for the kids.

HARVY

I guess.

GRANT

All right. Places everyone.

The adults grumble as they assume the same counting position as before. HEATHER-JANE and IVY search for places to hide. LIZ is now lost in her music.

HARVY, CAROLYN, EVELYN, & LEE ANN

One, two, three, four...

GRANT rushes into the kitchen as MOLLY pops up from her hiding place on the second floor landing. GRANT re-enters when the counting reaches seventeen, carrying the ferret-stuffed turkey. MOLLY descends the stairs and attempts to reach for the turkey over HARVY's head. It cannot be done. The counting is nearing the thirties. GRANT attempts to lift the heavy bird up to the landing, but he cannot get close enough because of LEE ANN. The counting is nearing the fifties. GRANT gets an idea. He places the turkey in NANA ROSE's lap and wheels her upstage. He then rushes to the Christmas tree, searching for JONATHAN's gift. He finds it, rips it open, and produces a large slingshot. He attaches one end of the slingshot to NANA ROSE's wheelchair and the other end to the banister. The counting is nearing the eighties. GRANT places the turkey in the sling, rears back, and launches the turkey up to the second floor landing. MOLLY catches it and runs offstage.

The counting is nearing the nineties. MOLLY is seen through the upstage window descending the ladder. GRANT returns NANA ROSE to her starting position, and disposes of the slingshot and wrapping paper just in time.

HARVY, CAROLYN, EVELYN, & LEE ANN
...ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred! Ready or not here we come!

EVELYN
Olly olly oxen free!

HARVY
I'm gonna get ya! I'm gonna get ya!

MOLLY
(Entering at the front door, out of breath) I'm back!

IVY
(Coming out of hiding) Mommy!

HEATHER-JANE
No, Ivy, we're not done!

HARVY
Great! I'm never gonna get a chance to hide!

EVELYN
Molly, honey, what took so long?

MOLLY
Huh? *(Thinking up a lie)* Oh...uh...I couldn't find a store that was open, so...we'll just have to have our coffee without cream.

EVELYN
That'll be fine, dear.

CAROLYN
Of course, darling. Black coffee is an excellent way to cleanse one's palette after a meal.

EVELYN
Is everything almost ready? It smells absolutely wonderful.

MOLLY
Almost, I think. Just need to pop the rolls in the oven. Wanna give me a hand?

EVELYN

Sure, dear.

LEE ANN

I can help with something. Can I make the coffee?

MOLLY

Oh, uh, okay. Come on, Lee Ann.

As MOLLY, LEE ANN, and EVELYN head to the kitchen, NANA ROSE hiccups.

ALL

(In unison) Drink, Ma, drink! *(NANA ROSE sips)*

HARVY

Girls, come here and let your old Grandpa tell you the story about his kindergarten Christmas pageant.

HARVY sits on the bottom step and HEATHER-JANE and IVY sit on his lap.

CAROLYN

Girls, don't believe a word your Grandpa says. This story changes every year! Little ears, Harvy!

CAROLYN joins them at the steps. HARVY begins to silently tell the girls a tall tale. GRANT gathers up the remains of the gift-wrapping and the slingshot and begins to re-wrap the gift. JONATHAN enters from upstairs, holding a note. He looks very nervous as he approaches LIZ, who is still on the sofa, lost in her music.

JONATHAN

Uh...Liz? *(She does not respond)* Liz, can I tell you something? *(Still nothing)* It's kind of important. *(No response)* Okay, I get it. You think I'm just some awkward kid. Well, here's...something...I wrote for you...if you wanna read it sometime...or not...just...whatever.

He places the note on the coffee table beside LIZ. He plops in the easy chair near NANA ROSE. GRANT finishes wrapping the gift and places it under the tree.

HARVY

...and I wanted so badly to play the role of the partridge in the pear tree, but imagine my surprise when I was cast the seventh lord a-leapin'!

HEATHER-JANE & IVY laugh.

GRANT

(Approaching JONATHAN) Hey, sport, you okay?

JONATHAN

(Sighing) Yeah.

GRANT

You sure? You wanna go outside and throw the football around?

JONATHAN

Not really...

GRANT

Ah, come on. We always have our best talks over the football. Come on...put your coat on.

JONATHAN reluctantly goes to the coat rack and begins to bundle up. LEE ANN pokes her head on from the kitchen.

LEE ANN

Grant, Molly said to have you find the blueberry-banana pie recipe she left in here. She's gonna let me steal it!

GRANT

(Scanning the room) Uh... *(Picking up JONATHAN's note by mistake)* I guess this is it right here.

LEE ANN

(Taking the note) Great. Thanks!

GRANT

And I'll have you know I put my own special touches on that recipe.

LEE ANN

Well, it's an honor!

LEE ANN unfolds the note and begins reading. The doorbell rings. JONATHAN opens the door, and the caroling KIDS are there.

KIDS, *Singing*

You better watch out, you better not cry
You better not pout I'm telling you why.
Santa Claus is coming to town!

JONATHAN

Get out of here, Maxwell.

MAXWELL

Not till you give me my dollar, Crowder.

JONATHAN

Make me, Maxwell!

MAXWELL

You wanna make your black eye one of a matching set?

GRANT

(Stepping in) Whoa, whoa, whoa, boys! *(Giving them a dollar bill)* Maxwell, here's your money. Let's make this the last lap, all right?

GABRIELLA

No, Mr. C! Please! We're not done yet!

TY

Nice going, Maxwell!

GRANT

All right, a couple more laps, but no more of this, you hear me? *(The KIDS nod)* Run along. *(The KIDS exit)* All right, sport, go grab your football and meet me outside, okay?

JONATHAN

(Sincerely) Thanks, Dad.

JONATHAN runs upstairs as GRANT bundles up and exits out the front door.

HARVY

...so there I am, I've got two of the three French hens stuffed down my tights, and one of the maids-a-milkin' is bawling her eyes out...

LEE ANN

Liz! Liz! *(Pulling out LIZ's earphones)* Liz!

LIZ

What!?

LEE ANN

Come here! (*Pulling LIZ downstage*) Look at this note Grant gave me! “You’re the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen. I’ve always gone for older women!” I’m two months older than him! (*Continuing*) “I can’t take my eyes off you. If you think we stand a chance together, let me know by...”

LIZ & LEE ANN, *Together*

“...by sitting in the chair to my left during dinner.”

LEE ANN

(*Continuing*) “Give me a chance. You won’t be disappointed.”

LIZ

(*Continuing*) “P.S. I can’t wait to introduce you to Mr. Giggles.” (*Her eyes grow wide*) Eww!

LEE ANN

Can you believe this? Grant wants to get back together with me! Here! In the middle of his home with all of his family here...this is just too much!

LIZ

What a creep! And I don’t even want to know *who* or *what* Mr. Giggles is.

JONATHAN runs down the stairs with his football and crosses slowly toward the front door.

JONATHAN

(*Strutting*) Whelp...guess I’ll go outside and toss the ol’ pigskin around with my old man.

LIZ

(*Ignoring JONATHAN*) You’re not actually thinking of getting back together with him, are you, Mom?

JONATHAN

Yep. Just us two men. Shootin’ the breeze and solvin’ problems.

LEE ANN

(*To LIZ*) No! I am completely over Grant. Besides, I could never tear apart a beautiful family like this.

JONATHAN

(*Opening the front door and backing out slowly*) Going now. Be right outside if ya need me. Just holler. Or...whatever. (*Exits*)

LEE ANN

Besides, honey, I'm happy with how things are going with just you and me. On our own.

LIZ

Me too, Mom.

LEE ANN

Listen, let me handle this, okay? If Molly gets wind of this, she'll be devastated.

MOLLY

(Popping in from the kitchen) Lee Ann! *(LEE ANN screams and hides the note behind her back)* Did you find that recipe?

LEE ANN

Um, no, sorry.

MOLLY

Where did I put that thing? Oh well, it'll turn up. Come on, girls! All hands on deck!

LEE ANN, LIZ, and MOLLY exit into the kitchen.

HARVY

..and that's the reason why, to this day, I can't look at a hard-boiled egg without breaking out in hives.

CAROLYN

You are such a mess! That story gets more far-fetched every time I hear it.

IVY

Hey, where did everybody go?

CAROLYN

Probably setting the table. I might ought to go in there and lend a hand. Harvey, why don't you and the girls get the gifts ready?

HARVY

You mean I get to play Santa this year?

CAROLYN

Yes, dear. You get to play Santa. *(Whispering to HEATHER-JANE)* You're in charge. Keep an eye on him.

CAROLYN exits to the kitchen.

HARVY

(Picking up a gift) Let's see. This one says "To Evelyn."

HEATHER-JANE

Let's put that one here. This is where Grandma always sits when she comes over for Easter.

IVY

(Picking up another gift) Here's yours, Grandpa.

HARVY

Put it right by the recliner. Oh, I hope it's a PlayStation.

HEATHER-JANE

(Picking up another gift) And here's one for Nana Rose. *(Placing it in NANA ROSE's lap)*
Merry Christmas, Nana Rose.

NANA ROSE hiccups and giggles a bit.

GRANT bursts in the front door, holding JONATHAN and MAXWELL by their shirt collars. MAXWELL's mouth is bleeding. Both boys are disheveled. The other caroling KIDS enter behind them in a loud, chaotic frenzy. The women rush in from the kitchen.

MOLLY

What is going on here?

GRANT

I'll tell ya what's going on. Your son finally had enough of Mr. Lawrence here, and the two of them went at it right on our front lawn.

HARVY

Atta boy, John-John!

CAROLYN slaps HARVY's arm.

JONATHAN

Mom, I couldn't take it anymore. He's being a jerk!

MOLLY

That's enough! Jonathan, at this house, when we have a problem, we don't fight, and you know that. Maxwell, I think you'd better wait here while I call your mother and have her come over to pick you up.

ELAINE

What about us? What about our sing-a-thon?

DINA

Yeah!

MOLLY

Kids, I think you can go on.

TIMOTHY

Not without Maxwell. He's our lead tenor!

MOLLY

I don't know what to tell you. I guess you can wait here till Maxwell's mom arrives, and then take it up with her. *(The KIDS moan)* In the meantime, just make yourselves at home, kids. We're about to have a family gift exchange.

GRANT

Molls, we can wait till everything's settled down a bit.

MOLLY

No! Our entire married life we have opened one present before Christmas Eve dinner and we are not breaking tradition! We are opening presents *right now!* Does anyone have a problem with that?

There is silence. After a moment, NANA ROSE hiccups and giggles a little louder.

MOLLY

Good. Now everyone find your gift.

LEE ANN

(Picking up her gift) Oh, how sweet of you to include me.

MOLLY

Grant, will you go into the kitchen and call Maxwell's mother? Her number is on the PTA flier on the fridge.

GRANT

(Starting toward the kitchen) Sure, honey.

MAXWELL

I'm dead!

MOLLY

Oh, and will you take the mashed potatoes as you go? They should probably be heated up.

GRANT picks up the bowl of mashed potatoes and continues toward the kitchen.

CAROLYN

Wow! I haven't felt this much tension in a room since the night Grant told Lee Ann that he couldn't go through with the wedding.

GRANT makes a mad dash toward CAROLYN and dumps the bowl of potatoes on her head, but he is just seconds too late. The news has been revealed.

MOLLY

The wedding? So you two were...

GRANT

Yes, honey, but you have to believe me. It was way before I met you, and I couldn't go through with it. I never loved her!

LIZ

Ha!

MOLLY

But you lied to me, Grant. You lied to me! I feel like such a fool! Everyone here has known this all along?!

LEE ANN

I'm so sorry, Molly. I would have never come tonight if I had known...

MOLLY

Oh, it's not your fault, Lee Ann.

GRANT

Molls, I was going to tell you. Just not now. I didn't want to ruin your perfect Christmas.

MOLLY

(Laughing) It's a little late for that. Lee Ann, you are our guest, so why don't you go ahead and open your gift.

LEE ANN

Oh, really, you guys didn't have to go through any trouble. I...

MOLLY

Oh, no trouble. Grant was in charge of your gift.

LEE ANN

I...well, I don't know...

MOLLY

Please. Go ahead. Let's see what my husband got for you.

LEE ANN begins to slowly remove the tissue paper from her gift sack. She reaches inside and pulls out a slinky, red negligee with white fur trim. She holds it up in front of her. There is silence, and then MOLLY begins to storm upstairs.

GRANT

Molly! I swear, that's not what was supposed to be in there! (*MOLLY is gone*) Ivy, what happened to the Chipmunks shirt you were supposed to wrap?

IVY

I thought that would be better. You said do it for Mom.

EVELYN

I think I'd better go check on her.

EVELYN starts upstairs.

GRANT

Don't bother, Evelyn. She always locks herself in the bathroom when she gets like this.

HEATHER-JANE

(Tearing up) Why did Mommy leave? Does this mean she is leaving forever? Is Lee Ann our new mommy?

HEATHER-JANE bursts into tears and HARVY scoops her up to console her.

HARVY

No, honey, no. Everything's going to be okay.

GRANT

Thanks a lot, Mom.

HARVY

I told her she's got a big mouth!

CAROLYN

Was it something I said?

LEE ANN

Grant, I think we'd better talk.

GRANT

It was a mistake, Lee Ann! That wasn't supposed to be your gift!

LEE ANN

Then what about the note?

GRANT

What note?

LEE ANN and GRANT begin a quiet conversation.

MAXWELL

(Approaching LIZ) Hey, sweet thing. I've never seen you in the neighborhood before.

LIZ

That's 'cause I don't live around here.

MAXWELL

You'll have to come back sometime. I'll take you to the skate-park.

JONATHAN

Lay off her, Maxwell. She's not interested in you!

MAXWELL

Crowder, I've had enough of you! Why don't we settle this once and for all? No daddies and no mommies! Just us!

EVELYN

(Yelling from offstage) Oh my God! *(Entering on the second floor landing with the ferret-stuffed turkey)* Look what I found in the clothes hamper!

IVY

Mr. Giggles?!

IVY bursts into tears like her sister.

HARVY

(Scooping her up in his other arm) It's okay, Ivy-Bear. Shhh! It's okay.

LIZ

Mr. Giggles? Mom! She said "Mr. Giggles!"

JONATHAN

(To MAXWELL) I hope you're ready for two hits: me hitting your face and you hitting the floor.

KIDS

Ooooooh!

MAXWELL

Too far, Crowder!

JONATHAN and MAXWELL begin shoving each other.

GRANT

I did not write this note!

LEE ANN

Oh, sure, Grant, just like you “accidentally” gave me this gift?

The shoving turns into an all-out fight. The other KIDS are rooting them on. GRANT rushes over to separate the fighting boys. GRANT pulls MAXWELL and LIZ pulls JONATHAN. The following lines are overlapping until GRANT yells.

JONATHAN

Don't touch me!

MAXWELL

Don't talk about my mama!

LIZ

Don't hurt him!

HARVY

Don't cry, girls.

GRANT

Everybody, stop! *(The room falls silent)* Don't do this!

NANA ROSE

(Singing, softly and slowly at first)

Don't tell me not to live, just sit and putter.
Life's candy and the sun's a ball of butter.
Don't bring around a cloud to rain on my parade.

EVELYN

Ma?

NANA ROSE

(Singing and standing up)

Don't tell me not to fly I've simply got to.
If someone takes a spill, it's me and not you.
Who told you you're allowed to rain on my parade?

GRANT

Careful, Nana Rose!

NANA ROSE

(Singing and climbing atop the coffee table)

Get ready for me, love 'cause I'm a comer.
I simply gotta march, my heart's a drummer.
Nobody, no, nobody is gonna rain on my parade!

On the big finish of the song, NANA ROSE raises her arms in the air. This is the tableau we saw in the beginning. NANA ROSE on the table, arms in the air; HARVY holding two crying children, IVY and HEATHER-JANE; CAROLYN with a head full of mashed potatoes; EVELYN on the landing holding a ferret-stuffed turkey; GRANT and LIZ separating a fight between MAXWELL and JONATHAN, while the other KIDS cheer them on; LEE ANN holding up the negligee.

EVELYN

(Descending the stairs) Ma! You're talking! Actually, you're singing! *(Calling)* Molly! Come quick!

NANA ROSE

Of course I'm talking. I just couldn't get everyone else to shut up long enough for me to get a word in. And I think that cider helped a little, too. *(She hiccups)*

HARVY

So that's where my Irish cider went!

MOLLY enters upstairs, unseen by the others.

NANA ROSE

Let me just clear up a few things. Harvy, no one wants to hear your loathsome Christmas pageant story any more, and I'm pretty sure it's all a lie anyway. Ivy, yes that was Mr. Giggles in that turkey. Pets come and pets go. Life goes on. Carolyn, you've got to be one of the most obnoxious women I've ever met, and if you can't recognize how lucky you are to have a daughter-in-law like Molly, well then you must also be one of the most ignorant. Lee Ann, Grant did not give you that hoochie-mama nighty, and he didn't write you that note! That note was meant for Liz, from young Jonathan. Jonathan, don't ever give up. You're a great young man, just like your father, and any girl would be lucky to be your girlfriend. Heather-Jane, your parents are going to be fine. The love those two have for each other is once in a lifetime, and nothing can tear them apart. Nothing. And Maxwell...yo mama is so ugly she stuck her head out a car window and got arrested for mooning.

The KIDS roar with laughter. MAXWELL bursts into tears and runs out of the house. The KIDS laugh and run after him.

NANA ROSE

Now. I think there are some apologies that need to be made. And they need to happen fast, cause I'm eighty-four years old and if I don't eat soon, you'll all be making some apologies to my bowel. Just a heads up.

LEE ANN

(Approaching GRANT) I'm sorry I didn't believe you, Grant. You've got a great family here. Thank you for having us. *(LEE ANN extends her hand to GRANT and they shake)* We should probably go.

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