



By

Mike Anderson

## SYNOPSIS

Mr. Jolly is possibly the oldest, and without a doubt, the meanest man in town. In fact, his reputation is so bad that his very name has become synonymous with things that go bump in the night. But while the rest of the world does everything they can to avoid their most infamous patron, young Rob Patchett is looking for a chance to settle the score with his ancient nemesis once and for all. Opportunity finally seems to come knocking one dark Halloween night until a prank turns into catastrophe and Rob and his friends suddenly find themselves thrust straight into the middle of Mr. Jolly's lonely world. As desperate as things seem, God has a plan—and a sense of humor, as four teenagers and a bitter old man experience a Christmas season none of them could ever have imagined, and one that forever changes their lives.

## CHARACTERS

Mr. Jolly - A man grown so bitter over the years that the whole town is now terrified of him.

Rob Patchett - A normally upstanding teenager who lets his “past” with his neighbor lead him astray.

George Gailey - Rob's best friend since the first grade; his wit is almost as big as his mouth.

Della Walker - Rob's girlfriend; she's almost as devoted to Rob as she is to God.

Mary Patchett - Rob's younger sister; her heart is big enough to thaw icebergs.

Officer “Bert” Bertram - The Police Officer who believes that if you're going to serve your community, you need to serve God first.

Judge Henry Gower - The local judge who'd would rather be golfing.

Ms. Clarice Cornelius - County Assessor Agent; part of her duties may include having to evict the meanest man in town.

Mr. Ed Thomas - The lawyer who represents the boys when they get their day in court.

Extras - bailiff, kids in police line-up, carolers.

Choir - anything from a full orchestra to Sunday School singers will do.

Dialog read through = Approximately 75 minutes  
Musical numbers = Approximately 36 minutes

**Copyright (c) 2015, 2023**  
**Mike Anderson**

*This play is available for use free of charge under the Creative Commons CC BY-ND license, the key element being that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, and that only through His grace can we be saved.*

*If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at [actsninefive@gmail.com](mailto:actsninefive@gmail.com).*

*Lastly, any feedback would be appreciated and will be used to help with the development of future projects.  
May God bless you and yours,*

**Mike A**

**ACT I**

**SCENE 1: Trick or Treat?**

(SETTING: Center stage, under the spotlight.)

*ROB is wearing a Halloween mask flipped up on top of his head and is holding a pillowcase stuffed with toilet paper rolls and shaving cream.*

*ENTER GEORGE, who also has a mask on top of his head and he is carrying a box of tissue paper.)*

**ROB**

It's about time, George. Where have you been...and what's that in your hand?

**GEORGE**

Sorry, Rob, Mom made me stay and hand out candy to the trick-or-treaters.

*(He holds up the tissue box.)*

This...is tissue paper...just like you told me to bring!

**ROB**

I said to bring T-P...as in, we're going to toilet paper a house...not wipe its nose.

**GEORGE**

Sooooorry...why can't we just knock on doors and get candy like everybody else?

**ROB**

Because we're in high school...not preschool.

*(He pulls out shaving cream and a toilet paper roll.)*

Never mind, just take these and let's get going.

**GEORGE**

Fine, who's the victim?

**ROB**

That's the best part. We're hitting old man Jolly's place!

**GEORGE**

What...are you insane?

*(He takes a deep sigh and starts talking to himself.)*

What a dumb question, of course he's insane!

*(To ROB.)*

Can't we just play tag in the freeway, or something safe like that?

**ROB**

Settle down, Georgie Boy, we're playing a prank on an eighty year old man not Jack-the-Ripper.

**GEORGE**

Right. Jack's not here. Even he knows better than to mess with old man Jolly!

**ROB**

Did you catch the eighty year old man part?

**GEORGE**

*(He throws his hands up in exasperation.)*

Have you forgotten what happened the last time you were on Mr. Jolly's property?

**ROB**

We're not going to talk about that.

*(Beat.)*

But that's exactly why we're doing this.

**GEORGE**

Rob, you've heard the stories...he kidnaps babies and eats stray cats and dogs for breakfast, lunch and dinner...

*(He scratches his head.)*

Or is it the other way around?

**ROB**

Never mind. Go find Mary and Della, they're having a fingernail painting party tonight...I'll bet they have a nice shade of yellow for you.

*(ROB turns and starts to leave.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He gives a big sigh.)*

Wait up...I'm coming with you.

**ROB**

*(He stops and looks back.)*

Are you sure, the boogie man might get us?

**GEORGE**

He probably will, but I can't let my best friend be a complete idiot all by himself.

**ROB**

*(He slaps GEORGE on back.)*

That's more like it. Besides...what's the worst thing that could happen?

*(The lights go down and come back up almost immediately.)*

*SETTING: Center Stage under the spotlight.*

*ROB and GEORGE standing side by side with worried expressions.*

*OFFICER BERT is behind them with a hand on each of their shoulders. The lights go back down.)*

*(SETTING: makeshift court room at center stage under the spotlights.)*

*ROB and GEORGE are standing together facing JUDGE GOWER. OFFICER BERT is nearby looking on.)*

**JUDGE GOWER**

For trespassing, malicious vandalism and being a general nuisance, I sentence each of you to one hundred hours of community service.

**ROB**

I object! That's outrageous. All we did was toilet paper a house!

**JUDGE GOWER**

Fine, make it Two hundred hours...and an extra fifty thrown in for contempt of court.

*(ROB starts to object again but GEORGE reaches over and clamps a hand over his mouth.)*

**OFFICER BERT**

*(He leans in and stage whispers.)*  
Judge Gower's house got hit on Halloween too.

**JUDGE GOWER**

You can work it off fixing up the property you vandalized.

*(GEORGE starts to object, but ROB clamps a hand over his mouth.)*



*The lights go down.)*

## **SCENE 2: Off to Work We Go**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's front porch.*

*The porch is in VERY bad shape and the yard is littered with all kinds of junk.*

*The lights come up to reveal OFFICER BERT, MS. CORNELIUS (holding a folder), ROB, and GEORGE standing at the edge of the stage before going up to the door.)*

### **GEORGE**

*(Glares at Rob, says with sarcasm.)*  
What's the worst that could happen?

### **OFFICER BERT**

Alright, let me do the talking, I've had a lot of experience dealing with Mr. Jolly over the years.

### **GEORGE**

Good plan. I'll just wait in the car.

*(OFFICER BERT gives GEORGE a look, while ROB grabs his arm. OFFICER BERT then leads the group up on the porch and knocks on the door. There is no answer so he knocks again; this repeats several times.)*

**GEORGE**

Too bad. We'll just have to come back another day.

*(He starts to walk off. ROB grabs GEORGE'S arm again.)*

**OFFICER BERT**

Mr. Jolly, I know you're in there. I've got the boys with me to start their community service. And Ms. Cornelius is here too...from the County Assessor's Office. She'll explain what needs to be done to get your house into code...so you don't get evicted.

*(The door jerks open and MR. JOLLY hobbles out, screaming mad.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

Give a fellow a badge and a gun and he thinks he's king of the world. Well, I won't stand for it...this is police brutality...that's what it is! And you, young lady, you ought to be ashamed, trying to throw an old man out on the street in the middle of winter.

*(He raises his cane at her.)*

Why, if you weren't a woman...

**MS. CORNELIUS**

*(She frowns at OFFICER BERT.)*

I'm not here to evict you, Mr. Jolly.

*(She opens her folder and takes out a paper which she cautiously holds out.)*  
What I do have is a list of the standards the county requires for all home owners.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He snatches it out of her hand.)*  
What kind of communist nonsense is this?

*(He reads for a moment.)*  
What business is it of yours if I have dandelions in my yard? I happen to like dandelions!

**MS. CORNELIUS**

These aren't my standards, Mr. Jolly, they're the county's. My job is to help people like you meet them.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He thrusts the paper back at her.)*  
I don't want your help. Go meddle in someone else's business.

**MS. CORNELIUS**

*(She ignores the paper and patiently explains.)*  
You have sixty days to be in compliance with those standards...or I'm afraid I will have to serve you an eviction notice.

**MR. JOLLY**

Hmmp...whatever you say, comrade.

*(He holds the paper out toward ROB and  
GEORGE.)*

Here you go, boys, you heard the lady,  
you better get busy. According to  
this paper you've got a lot of work to  
do.

*(ROB and GEORGE look at him with  
surprise.*

*The lights go down.)*

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's front porch.*

*The lights come up to reveal ROB and George alone on the porch. Mr. Jolly is inside, circumspectly looking out the window and eavesdropping on them.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He checks his watch.)*

Well, we've been here fifteen minutes now, soooo...that leaves...two hundred, forty-nine hours and forty-five...no, make that forty-four minutes to go.

*(He looks at ROB.)*

Unless...do you think the ride in the police car on the way over here counts?

**ROB**

*(He had been studying paper, then looks around.)*

I wouldn't worry about it, if we had two hundred and fifty years we still wouldn't get this dump to meet these standards.

**GEORGE**

What's to worry? We're just standing here on the porch of an evil old man who hates us...he's probably down in his cellar right now digging two shallow graves.

**ROB**

Maybe we should focus first on cleaning up all the junk. What do you think?

**GEORGE**

What do I think? Well gosh, Rob...now that you've finally asked, I think that if I had a time machine I'd go back to the first grade and unfriend you.

**ROB**

*(He goes back to studying the paper.)*  
You're not helping. Go knock on the door and see if Mr. Jolly has any trash bags we can use.

**GEORGE**

*(He gives ROB a look of disbelief.)*  
Sure, I could do that...just give me a minute to write out my last will and testament first.

**ROB**

I don't like this anymore than you do, George, but we made a mistake, now we have to deal with the consequences.

**GEORGE**

We made a mistake?

*(Beat.)*

My only mistake was listening to you when you should have been listening to me.

**ROB**

Fine...you're right. I'm sorry and I'm listening now. So, what do you think we should do?

**GEORGE**

*(He puts a hand on his chin and slowly looks around.)*

Welllllll...hmmmm. How about we focus on cleaning up all the junk around here first...

*(He gets a big, fakey smile.)*

...after you go knock on the door to see if Mr. Jolly has any trash bags?

*(ROB laughs and goes to knock on the door. Through the window we see MR. JOLLY grumble to himself as he ambles over to open the door.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

You're here to work not to bother me...what do you want?

**ROB**

We need somewhere to put all this trash. Do you have any garbage bags we could use?

**MR. JOLLY**

Nope. Why anyone would pay good money for something that's going to be thrown away is beyond me.



**ROB**

*(He just looks at him, then slowly waves his hand across the stage.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He shakes his head, points his cane.)*  
There's a can around the back of the house.

*(ROB stalks off stage. GEORGE watches him go, then notices MR. JOLLY glaring at him. MR. JOLLY gives him a big toothy smile and GEORGE runs off stage. The BOYS reappear lugging a heavy metal garbage can. ROB removes the lid to find that it's already filled to the top. ROB turns and gives MR. JOLLY an angry look.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

The trash man comes day after tomorrow.

**ROB**

Well what are we supposed to do until then?

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He points with his cane off stage and smiles.)*

The dump's that way...only about three miles from here.

**GEORGE**

*(He checks his watch.)*

Two hundred forty-nine hours and  
thirty-five minutes to go.

### **SCENE 3: A Matter of Perspective**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's front porch.*

*The trash has been cleaned up and the BOYS are busy not working on repairing the porch. ROB is studying the "standards" paper and GEORGE is lying on his back studying the sky.*

*ENTER DELLA and MARY chatting as they walk on stage.)*

**MARY**

*(She stops walking to look around.)*  
I thought you guys were fixing this place up?

*(ROB and GEORGE look at each other in disbelief then back at her with irritation.)*

**ROB**

Thanks, Sis, that's real encouraging.

**MARY**

I'm sorry. You've been coming over here for a week now, but this place still looks like a disaster. Have you been working inside?

**ROB**

*(He turns to GEORGE.)*

Can you believe she's thinking about trying out for cheerleader?

**GEORGE**

*(Shrugs.)*

In this dark and dismal world I now live in, a cheer-stealer seems almost fitting. How about you, Della, do you have any heart-wrenching words of discouragement to spare?

*(MR. JOLLY shows up at the window to eavesdrop once the talking starts.)*

**DELLA**

Oh come on, George. You get to help out a lonely old man in his time of need. That's a blessing!

**GEORGE**

*(Turns to ROB.)*

Did you have any idea that she was such a hopeless optimist before you asked her out?

**ROB**

Yeah...but she makes great chocolate chip cookies.

**GEORGE**

And yet, here she is empty-handed.

**DELLA**

Hardly empty-handed; in fact Mary and I brought you a gift. One that it

seems you're both in desperate need of.

*(Both BOYS look at her expectantly.)*

**DELLA**

A new perspective!

**ROB**

Excuse me?

**GEORGE**

*(He smacks his lips disappointingly.)*  
Somehow I feel cheated.

**DELLA**

Hear me out. Ever since you two started this, you've both been almost impossible to live with...

**GEORGE**

*(He throws his arms in the air.)*  
THERE'S THE GLOOM AND DOOM!

**ROB**

Gee, I wonder why? We're just wasting our youth on an old geezer that hates everything in life, especially us!

**DELLA**

But that's just it. This isn't a punishment, it's a gift.

**ROB**

I don't remember Judge Gower using the word gift.

**DELLA**

Oh, come on, in all the time you've been here...

**ROB**

George?

**GEORGE**

*(He looks at his watch.)*

Twenty-nine hours, twelve minutes and thirty-two seconds of gloom, despair and misery...and counting.

**DELLA**

In all that time you haven't done anything that's fun?

**ROB**

Fun...fun? Well, let me see...I spend my days digging through piles of old junk waiting for Mr. Jolly to come out and remind me of how pathetic I am. Oh, and because I'm here instead of working at my real job...I'm broke too!

**DELLA**

Well, there you go, you proved my point.

*(EVERYONE, including MR. JOLLY in the window looks at DELLA like she's crazy.)*

**DELLA**

What I hear is that you and George get to sort through some cool old antiques...what great guy-time. And...Mr. Jolly likes having you two around so much that he can't stop coming out to visit with you.

**GEORGE**

Wow! I think we may have just witnessed the single most optimistic moment in history.

**DELLA**

Come on now, you have to see what I'm getting at.

**ROB**

Talk's cheap. You'd be singing a different tune if you were here instead of hanging out at the mall all day.

**DELLA**

Okay, fair enough.  
*(She grabs the paper from ROB'S hand.)*

**GEORGE**

Are you seriously thinking about joining our little funfest?

**DELLA**

Joining you? No way...get out of the way, boys, because here comes the Della express.



## **SCENE 4: Work, Work, Work**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's front porch. The place looks very neat and tidy other than there being tools scattered about, as well as paint cans and equipment.*

*DELLA, MARY, ROB and GEORGE are all wearing work clothes. DELLA and MARY are getting ready to paint, while ROB is studying his "standards" paper and eating a donut. George is just eating a donut. Mr. Jolly is at his eavesdropping spot.)*

### **DELLA**

*(She looks at the BOYS and frowns.)*  
Okay fellas, we're burning daylight here...

### **GEORGE**

Work, work, work...you know Della, between school and slaving away here in Jollyland, we're putting in sixteen hour days.

### **DELLA**

Wow, your backside must get pretty sore, sitting around for that long.

**GEORGE**

*(TO ROB.)*

Do I have your permission to ignore little miss energizer bunny here until I'm finished with breakfast?

**ROB**

*(He doesn't look up from the paper.)*  
Sure, whatever.

**DELLA**

We had burritos for breakfast. That thing in your hand is nothing but an unhealthy excuse for being lazy.

*(She says to ROB.)*

And you...don't you want to get this porch painted?

**ROB**

Nope.

*(He holds the paper out toward DELLA.)*  
It's not on the list. As long as the porch is in good repair...

*(He holds up his other hand.)*

...and I've got the blisters to prove that it is, then we're good to go.

**DELLA**

Do you really think this porch looks fine the way it is?

**ROB**

*(He waves the paper at DELLA.)*  
I don't care.

**DELLA**

And I don't care what that silly paper says. If this was your house you'd want it painted, wouldn't you?

**ROB**

But it's not, and it's obvious that Mr. Jolly doesn't care. So why should I?

**MARY**

Rob, are you sure you aren't just still upset about what happened...

**ROB**

*(He thrusts out a silencing hand.)*  
Zip it! We're not going there!

**DELLA**

Going where, what are you talking about?

**MARY**

When Rob was seven, Mr. Jolly...

**ROB**

Mary! We-Are-Not-Talking-About-This!

**MARY**

Sorry! But I'm sure Della would understand...

**DELLA**

Understand what?

**ROB**

The only thing she needs to understand is that Mr. Jolly is a mean old man who doesn't care about anyone or anything...especially his dilapidated porch.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He drops his head dejectedly and walks away.)*

**DELLA**

*(She ponders then says to Rob.)*  
Well, if you won't do it for Mr. Jolly...would you do it for God?

**ROB**

God wants me to paint Jolly's porch?

**DELLA**

He wants you to work heartily at all that you do.

**GEORGE**

Are you sure that's not work...hardly?

**DELLA**

And to love your neighbor as yourself.

**GEORGE**

I'm so glad I live six blocks away.

*(DELLA frowns at GEORGE while MARY walks over shove a donut in GEORGE's mouth.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He mumbles through the donut.)*  
Hank Hou...

**ROB**

Why does it suddenly seems like I'm dating Pastor Whitfield?

**DELLA**

If you'd like, I could see if he has time to come over and give you a second opinion.

**ROB**

*(He sighs.)*  
Just give me a stupid paintbrush and let's get this over with.

**DELLA**

*(She punches ROB on the arm.)*  
That's my big strong boyfriend.

**GEORGE**

*(He makes a face.)*  
Eeeewww, knock off the mushy stuff.

**DELLA**

*(Her answer is to hold out a paintbrush.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He rolls his eyes, then looks off stage and smiles.)*  
Yeah...saved by the Bert.

*(ENTER OFFICER BERT.  
He approaches with a mostly  
eaten donut in hand.)*

**OFFICER BERT**

Good morning everyone, I just stopped  
by to see how it's going.

*(He looks around and nods.)*

Wow, you've all been working hard. I  
can't believe it's the same place.

**GEORGE**

Yeah, well, it turns out it's all  
really just a labor of love.

*(He gives DELLA a big smile, then  
notices OFFICER BERT'S now empty  
fingers.)*

Would you like another fat and lazy  
pill, Officer Bert?

**OFFICER BERT**

Is that a cop crack, George?

**GEORGE**

Ahhhh, I don't think so...

**OFFICER BERT**

*(He looks at DELLA with a big smile.)*  
How are you today, Della?

**DELLA**

I'm great, thanks, how about you?

**OFFICER BERT**

I couldn't be better...and how's your mom doing?

**DELLA**

She's good, a little stressed. She has a job interview on Wednesday.

**GEORGE**

My folks are fine too, thanks for asking.

**OFFICER BERT**

You be sure and let her know I'll be praying for her interview to go well.

**DELLA**

Thanks, I'll do that.

**OFFICER BERT**

*(He looks around again.)*

So, what are you getting ready to paint?

**ROB**

The porch...

**DELLA**

The house...

*(ROB, GEORGE and MARY all give DELLA looks of disbelief. DELLA looks back at them and smiles.)*

**DELLA**

We're starting with the porch...then we'll see how it goes from there.

**OFFICER BERT**

I'm really impressed, Della, but you realize that that the hours you girls are putting in doesn't count toward Rob and George's community service commitment.

**DELLA**

We know. Mary and I are just happy we can help out.

**MARY**

*(She looks at DELLA with disbelief again.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He sighs forlornly.)*  
It's a labor of love.

*(The lights go down.)*



**ACT II**

**SCENE 5: Make Yourself at  
Home**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's living room. There needs to be a "front door" on one side of the stage, a "hallway" out of the back of the stage, and a "staircase" on the other side of the stage where MR. JOLLY can continue his eavesdropping. The place is filled to overflowing with piles and piles of old newspapers, books, and various things from his past. MR. JOLLY is sitting in a rocking chair reading. SFX: Soft knock at door.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He frowns and goes back to reading.)*

*(SFX: Louder knocking.)*

*MR. JOLLY again frowns and ignores. This repeats several times.)*

**ROB**

*(OFFSTAGE: He shouts.)*

**MR. JOLLY, WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE,  
COME OPEN THE DOOR.**

**MR. JOLLY**

GO AWAY!

**DELLA AND MARY**

*(They call out in unison.)*

Please, Mr. Jolly...

**MR. JOLLY**

AND TAKE THOSE NOISY GIRLS WITH YOU!

**ROB**

Mr. Jolly, if you don't come open this door, I'm going to put and open house for sale sign in your front yard and you can spend all weekend yelling at people to go away.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(Slams down newspaper, marches over to jerk open the door.)*

You do that and I'll call that copper, Bertram, on you...again!

**ROB**

*(He gets a big smile.)*

I was just kidding.

*(MR. JOLLY starts to close the door when DELLA barges past him, dragging a reluctant MARY by the hand. MR. JOLLY falls back in surprise and ROB and GEORGE stroll inside too.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

What do you think you're doing, barging into my house? This is trespassing!

**ROB**

Technically it's not...you opened the door, and the judge says we need to put in a full two hundred and fifty hours.

**MR. JOLLY**

That isn't up yet? It seems like you've been here annoying me forever.

**ROB**

G-e-o-r-g-e!

**GEORGE**

*(He glances at watch.)*

One hundred, twelve hours and sixteen minutes to go before the sweet smell of freedom waifs through our nostrils once more.

**MR. JOLLY**

Well then, get to it and quit bothering me.

*(Beat.)*

Isn't there something else you can do outside?

**DELLA**

I'm happy to report that it's all done. The lawn is immaculate, the porch is repaired and we painted everything that wasn't moving.

**GEORGE**

*(He looks his hands and sighs.)*  
And at least one thing that was.

**MARY**

Everything looks so nice, I think you could win house of the month!

**MR. JOLLY**

I better not! I've got enough problems without a bunch of busybodies coming around snooping and taking pictures. I hate things like that!

*(MARY looks dejected but MR. JOLLY just keeps glaring at her.)*

**DELLA**

Well, let's not worry about any of that right now.  
*(She looks around then picks up a pile of newspapers.)*  
This looks like a good place to start. Rob, we're going to need more trash bags.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He becomes shocked and outraged.)*

Get your grubby mitts off my stuff,  
girl!

*(Everything stops for a moment as the KIDS all look worriedly at MR. JOLLY. Then DELLA'S expression noticeably changes to one of stubborn determination as she slowly sets the newspapers back down and turns to face MR. JOLLY with her hands on her hips.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He plops down on the couch, and looks expectantly at MR. JOLLY and DELLA.)*  
Oh, this is going to be goooood.

**DELLA**

Mr. Jolly...sir; respectfully, the reason my mitts are grubby...  
*(She holds up her hands.)*  
...and calloused, cracked and bleeding is because I already have been putting them on your stuff.

**ROB**

*(He holds up the "standards" list.)*  
This says we have to make the inside livable too.

**MR. JOLLY**

It's been livable just like this for the past fifty years! Besides...  
*(He points at GEORGE with his cane.)*

The judge ordered you two to help me.  
He didn't say anything about these  
noisy girls.

**MARY**

Oh!

**DELLA**

Be careful what you ask for.

*(She speaks to GEORGE.)*

George, show him what would happen the  
moment we leave.

**GEORGE**

*(He immediately flops back on the  
couch with his hands behind his head  
and his feet propped up on the coffee  
table, looking off into space.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He waves a hand in disgust.)*

Fine. Then I guess you might as well  
just make yourself right at home.

*(He meanders offstage muttering.)*

Kids have no respect these days...used  
to be that a man's home was his  
castle...invasion of privacy that's  
what this is...know-it-all girl,  
thinks she's so smart.

## **SCENE 6: Rabid Teddy Bear.**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's living room.)*

*This scene picks up almost immediately after the last. The four TEENS are still looking around sizing things up. MR. JOLLY is off stage.)*

**ROB**

What a miserable mess.

**MARY**

He's not that bad. I think it's mostly just a big bluff.

**ROB**

What are you talking about?

**MARY**

Mr. Jolly...what are you talking about?

**ROB**

*(He motions all around.)*

This!

*(He looks back at MARY, shocked.)*

You really think that's fake hate he's putting out?

**GEORGE**

*(He puts a hand on MARY'S forehead.)*  
She doesn't feel feverish. Maybe she's just the worst judge of human character...EVER!

**MARY**

*(She slaps GEORGE'S hand away and glares at ROB.)*  
How would you act if everyone treated you like you treat him?

**DELLA**

She has a point, Rob. We're not here because you two were caught delivering cookies to him.

**GEORGE**

Seriously, you can't blame this on Rob. My Uncle Nick says mean and nasty weren't even words until Mr. Jolly came along.

**MARY**

See, that's exactly what I'm talking about. George, how do you expect Mr. Jolly to act when you go around spreading horrible rumors like that about him?

**GEORGE**

Me...? I was just repeating what my uncle said...

*(He stops and thinks.)*

How about we go back to blaming Rob?



**MARY**

*(Looks from GEORGE to ROB.)*

Both of you owe that poor old man an apology.

**ROB**

I owe him an apology?

**MARY**

Not for when he...

**ROB**

*(He quickly holds up a hand.)*

**MARY**

...not for what happened before. But for what happened on Halloween...yes.

**ROB**

It's not enough that he's practically getting a brand new house out of all of this?

**DELLA**

The judge said you have to do that. I think it would mean a lot more to Mr. Jolly just to hear you say you're sorry.

**ROB**

Well, I'll tell you what I think...I think that for once George is right...Mr. Jolly is a jerk and he's never going to change.

**GEORGE**

*(He smiles with satisfaction, then looks offended.)*

**MARY**

Well I think he's really just a big old teddy bear. One who just needs a hug and a little bit of love.

**GEORGE**

*(He ponders aloud.)*

A teddy...hmmm...maybe a really, really grumpy teddy bear...with rabies, and a wicked bad toothache.

*(SFX: door closing loudly.*

*ENTER: MR. JOLLY.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He's muttering as he enters and walks past MARY.)*

No privacy...a man can't even take a nap in his own living room...

*(He glares at the TEENS.)*

You're still here? You realize I was being sarcastic when I told you to make yourselves at home, don't you?

*(MARY rushes up and throws her arms around MR. JOLLY and gives him a big hug. MR. JOLLY immediately pulls free and jumps back looking aghast.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(Breathing heavily, he holds his chest with one hand, and shakes his cane at MARY with the other.)*

What do you think you're doing, you wretched girl?

**MARY**

I was giving you a hug...I thought you looked like you needed one.

**MR. JOLLY**

Did it look like I needed a heart attack too?

*(He shakes his finger at MARY.)*

You can't just go around grabbing people like that. Didn't your mother teach you any manners?

**MARY**

My mother taught me to be nice to people, and that's what I was trying to do.

*(She gives MR. JOLLY a stern look.)*

What did your mother teach you?

**MR. JOLLY**

One thing she taught me was that children were to be seen and not heard...but I'm not real fond of the seeing part either.

**MARY**

Did she ever mention that if you can't say something nice, then you shouldn't say anything at all?

**MR. JOLLY**

Like you're doing now?

**MARY**

I'm trying. But you're so grumpy, you act like you hate everything.

**MR. JOLLY**

Well maybe I do.

**MARY**

I don't believe that. It's almost thanksgiving. There must be something you're grateful for.

**MR. JOLLY**

Can't think of a single thing.

**MARY**

What about a big turkey dinner?

**MR. JOLLY**

I hate turkey...gives me gas.

**MARY**

What about the parades... all the beautiful floats and happy, smiling people.

**MR. JOLLY**

Waste of time and money, and way too much noise...hate 'em.

**MARY**

Football games?

**MR. JOLLY**

Grown men dressed up in tights playing a kid's game. They should get a real job...hate 'em.

**MARY**

The first snow of the year, so pretty and white and fresh?

**MR. JOLLY**

Slick roads, slush and shoveling...hate it all.

**MARY**

Okay...

*(She mimes pushing up her sleeves.)*  
...you can't hate newborn babies.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He folds his hands over his cane and smiles.)*  
Noisy and smelly...hate the little buggers.

**MARY**

Puppies and kittens?

**MR. JOLLY**

Just babies with sharp teeth and hair...hate 'em more.

**MARY**

April Showers?

**MR. JOLLY**

Bring May flowers...I have allergies...hate 'em.

(The exchange between MARY and MR. JOLLY becomes rapid fire at this point.)

MARY: Sunshine?

MR. JOLLY: Sunburn...hate it.

MARY: A bride on her wedding day?

MR. JOLLY: Money pit and mayhem...hate 'em.

MARY: A beautiful smile?

MR. JOLLY: Braces and bills...hate 'em.

MARY: A pleasant conversation?

MR. JOLLY: Nothing but noise...hate it.

MARY: Laughter?

MR. JOLLY: Louder noise...hate it more!)

**MARY**

*(She pauses and ponders, then suggests pleadingly.)*

A double decker hot fudge Sunday with extra whipped cream and nuts?

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He scratches his chin and considers.)*

With one of those big red Marciano  
cherries on top?

**MARY**

YES!

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He shakes his head and smiles.)*

Hate them too.

*(MARY and MR. JOLLY continue  
their battle of words with a  
musical chant.)*

You love it  
I hate it  
You can't  
But I do  
You just won't admit it  
According to you  
I just don't believe it  
Believe it, it's true  
I don't care what you say  
I don't care if you do

Kittens and puppies, and cookies and cream  
Singing and dancing, and flowers in spring  
Laughing and loving, and chasing your dreams  
Sunshine and showers  
And everything in between  
You can't hate all these things

Like it or not, I hate the whole lot  
All that you've said and all that I've got  
A Kitten's cat, a baby's a brat,  
You say it's this, I say it's that  
I hate it, I hate it, I hate, I say,  
More and more and more each day

You love it  
I hate it  
You can't  
But I do  
You just won't admit it  
According to you  
I just don't believe it  
Believe it, it's true  
I don't care what you say  
I don't care if you do

A day full of promise, a day full of cheer  
Friends come to visit, just to be near  
Talking and sharing, hugging and caring  
Lifting up hands  
For the burdens we're bearing  
You can't hate all these things

Believe it or not, I hate friends a lot  
They just come around to take what you've got  
Your cupboards bare, there's a mess everywhere  
The longer they stay, the more in the way  
They take and they take and they take and they take  
More and more and more each day

You love it  
I hate it  
You can't  
But I do  
You just won't admit it  
According to you  
I just don't believe it  
Believe it, it's true  
I don't care what you say  
I don't care if you do

Mom's apple pie and June baseball games  
Laughter and loved ones calling our names  
Recalling sweet things we'll always hold dear  
Precious reminders year after year  
Pictures of pastimes and all that they mean  
You can't hate all these things

Like it or not, I hate just the thought  
You say remember, I'd rather not  
Pictures bring pain, memories the same  
Yesterday's over and nothing was gained  
I hate it, I hate it, I hate, I say  
And I get up each morning just to wish the day away



*(MR. JOLLY gets a very satisfied smile and EXITS.)*

**GEORGE**

WOW! That's quite a teddy bear you've got there, Mary.

**MARY**

*(She lets out a deep sigh.)*  
He just needs a few more hugs!

*(EVERYONE looks at MARY in dismay.)*

## **SCENE 7: Just Junk**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's living room. The place looks better, but is still messy. ROB, DELLA and MARY are sorting things. ENTER: GEORGE carrying a box.)*

**GEORGE**

More trash...where do you want it?

**DELLA**

*(She points without looking up.)*  
Put it over there, George, then help us sort, please.

**GEORGE**

Sort what...it's all junk.

**MARY**

*(She rushes at GEORGE with open arms.)*  
Oh, poor Georgie Porgie, is he all sad and gloomy?

**GEORGE**

*(He jumps back and grabs a curtain rod like it's a cane.)*  
Keep your grubby mitts to yourself, girl...don't be pawing me...I HATE IT!

*(MR. JOLLY appears on the stairs and starts eavesdropping.)*

**ROB**

Stop goofing around or we're never going to get out of here.

**GEORGE**

If by never, you mean...

*(He checks his watch.)*

...seventy-eight hours and...fifty-four minutes, you'd be correct.

**ROB**

Yeah, but in Jolly years that's like seventy-eight lifetimes.

**MARY**

*(She moves toward ROB with open arms.)*

Oh, does poor Robbie Wobbie need a hug?

**ROB**

*(He grabs the nearest object.)*

I will hit you...it's part of the big brother oath I took when you were born.

**DELLA**

Now who's goofing off?

**GEORGE**

You just can't get good help these days.

*(EVERYONE starts sorting. DELLA starts humming/singing Jingle Bells.)*

**ROB**

Oh, come one, I'm still eating Thanksgiving leftovers and you're starting on Christmas carols already?

**DELLA**

Please keep your bah humbugs to yourself, Mr. Scrooge.

**ROB**

Sorry, I'm not qualified for such an esteemed title...not while I'm standing under Mr. Jolly's roof.

**GEORGE**

Touché, old boy.

*(He pulls an old baseball out of his box.)*

What have we here?

*(He studies the ball.)*

What pile would a baseball autographed by Yogi Berra go in?

**MARY**

You found a baseball signed by a cartoon character?

**GEORGE**

Foolish girl...Yogi Berra was a member of the New York Yankee's who was so famous that they named a cartoon character after him.

*(Beat.)*

You have heard of America's favorite pastime, haven't you?

*(GEORGE holds up the ball with one hand and acts like he's going to hit it with a bat with the other, then begins to sing.*

GEORGE	Take me out to the ball game,
MARY <i>(Speaking)</i>	I'd rather go shopping thanks
GEORGE	Take me out with the crowd;
MARY <i>(Speaking)</i>	Crowded shopping malls are okay too
GEORGE	Just buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jacks,
MARY <i>(Singing)</i>	<i>(She shakes her head)</i> Neither of those are on my shopping list, Mack
GEORGE	Let me root, root, root for the home team,
MARY <i>(Singing)</i>	A day at the mall is a dream
GEORGE	<i>(Shakes head and corrects MARY)</i> If they don't win, it's a shame. For it's one, two, three strikes, you're out,
MARY <i>(Singing)</i>	Twenty-five, fifty, seventy-five percent off
GEORGE	<i>(Adamantly)</i> At the old ball game!
MARY <i>(Singing)</i>	<i>(Matching GEORGE'S fervor)</i> At the new mall game!

**ROB**

*(He walks over and takes the ball.)*  
Too cool...

*(He points to ball.)*  
...look at this scuff mark, I'll bet  
this is a ball Yogi hit foul.

**GEORGE**

You never know, it might have been a homer.

**ROB**

Either way, it really is awesome!

**GEORGE**

You know what's even more awesome...the '56 Chevy Bel Air parked out in the garage.

*(He rubs his eyes.)*

It's so fine, it hurt my eyes to look at it.

**ROB**

*(He says bitterly.)*

Yeah, I know...it looks even better parked on my bike.

**GEORGE**

*(He wags a finger at ROB.)*

I didn't think we were supposed to talk about such things?

**ROB**

We're NOT!

**MARY**

You two can keep your old baseball, and your car...

*(She holds up a mirror and hairbrush.)*

...look what I found.

**GEORGE**

What a relief. I've been meaning to talk to you about your grooming habits, Mary...I just couldn't find the right time to bring it up.

**MARY**

Ha-ha, very funny. Rob will you please see if that baseball fits in George's mouth?

**DELLA**

I have you all topped...  
*(She opens a music box she's holding.)*  
I found this earlier. Isn't it just exquisite?

*(MR. JOLLY, who had been listening with interest, races down the stairs and into the room.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

What's going on here?

*(EVERYONE freezes and looks at him with shocked and guilty faces.)*

**MARY**

We were just admiring some of the wonderful things you have.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He points his cane.)*

You weren't doing any such thing! I heard what you said...it's all just junk!

**DELLA**

Mr. Jolly, we weren't trying to be disrespectful. We probably said some things we shouldn't have, but...

**MR. JOLLY**

There's no probably about it, young lady! You shouldn't even be here in the first place.

*(He's so flustered he's shaking.)*

Shut that thing up And DON'T TOUCH IT EVER AGAIN!

**ROB**

*(He was shocked, then gets angry.)*

That's enough, Mr. Jolly! Della didn't do anything wrong.

*(He takes a deep breath.)*

Why do you always have to hurt people when all they're trying to do is help you?

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He glares at ROB until the last sentence, then he drops his eyes and looks away.)*

Fine, do whatever you want...it's like you said, it's all just junk anyway.



*(MR. JOLLY EXITS up the stairs.  
EVERYONE watches him go and just  
stands there for a while.)*

**DELLA**

*(She moves to ROB and takes his arm.)*  
Rob, I really appreciate you're  
wanting to protect me.

**ROB**

But...?

**DELLA**

I don't think he really meant anything  
he said. He's just hurting and took  
it out on us.

**MARY**

Della's right, I think you almost made  
him cry, Rob.

**GEORGE**

The boogie man can cry?

**DELLA**

I think we stumbled on some of the  
things that remind Mr. Jolly of his  
wife and son. Some wounds never heal.

*(ROB, GEORGE and MARY all look at  
DELLA with astounded expressions.)*

**GEORGE**

The boogie man cries...and has a  
family?

**MARY**

I've never heard anything about Mr. Jolly even being married before.

**ROB**

Where'd you get the idea he had a wife and son?

**DELLA**

I'm sorry, I thought you all knew. I mean, you've lived here your whole lives and I just moved here last year.

*(Pause.)*

Officer Bert mentioned it the last time day he stopped by our house.

**GEORGE**

Ooooh, Officer Bert mentioned it...  
*(He looks at ROB and MARY knowingly.)*  
...well that certainly explains everything.

**DELLA**

George, what in the world are you talking about?

**GEORGE**

Hey, who can blame the guy...if he's trying out for the part to be Della's new daddy, more power to him.

**DELLA**

What...?

*(She then asks with total dismay.)*  
You're saying he likes my mom?

**GEORGE**

Hellooooo...you don't see him stopping by any of the rest of our houses every other day.

*(He scratches his chin thoughtfully.)*

Then again, maybe he just truly admires the pretty flowers planted in front of your place.

*(He considers, then shakes his head.)*

Nope, the jury's in...he's totally bonkers about your mom.

**DELLA**

Nooo...we go to the same church and he just knows that my mom, being single, sometimes needs a helping hand.

**GEORGE**

And what a coincidence...he's single too. But hey, bonus if he's willing to give you a peek inside his secret police files.

**DELLA**

That's not what happened. We were talking about how things were going here and I mentioned that I wished I knew how to pray for Mr. Jolly. That's when Officer Bert told me that years ago both his wife and baby boy had died during childbirth, and that Mr. Jolly's never really gotten over it.

**GEORGE**

Well, that is sad...and I do feel bad for the old guy...but, Constable Bert still has a thing for your mumsy.

*(He waves at ROB and MARY.)*

Ask them if you don't believe me.

*(DELLA looks at ROB and MARY. ROB holds up his hands cluelessly, but MARY gets a big smile and nods.)*

**MARY**

Isn't it great?

**DELLA**

*(She's speechless for a moment.)*

Ah...I think I'm going to go home now. Maybe I'll feel better if I have a bowl of ice cream...or maybe the whole gallon.

*(She starts to walk off stage.)*

**GEORGE**

Hey...while you're at it, could you make some of those famous chocolate chip cookies of yours?

## **SCENE 8: Melting Icebergs**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's living room. The room is basically the same as the last scene.*

*MR. JOLLY is sitting in his chair reading the paper.*

*SFX: Long and loud knocking at the door.)*

### **OFFICER BERT**

*(Offstage, he yells.)*

Mr. Jolly, it's Officer Bert, please answer the door.

### **MR. JOLLY**

*(Irritated, he goes to the door.)*

What did I do now? Did old lady Grimes call you because I took a hose to that wretched cat of hers?

### **OFFICER BERT**

No, I just came to talk to you for a minute, Mr. Jolly

### **MR. JOLLY**

Fine...better you than those noisy kids.

*(He leads the way back into the room and sits back down.)*

### **OFFICER BERT**

Did you really spray the cat when it's so cold outside?

**MR. JOLLY**

Nooooo...that fat fur ball turns into a calico blur the moment he glimpses a hose in my hand.

*(Pause.)*

But the next time he tries to fertilize the flowers those girls planted, I will turn him into a cat sickle.

**OFFICER BERT**

Yes, well...speaking of those girls...they're the reason I'm here.

**MR. JOLLY**

I should have known.

*(He points a finger at OFFICER BERT.)*  
You'd yell at them too if you were me.

**OFFICER BERT**

Della didn't say anything about that. What did they do?

**MR. JOLLY**

You've seen them. They never stop talking, and they're forever poking their noses into my business and touching my things.

*(He does more finger shaking.)*

That girl, Mary, she's the clingiest thing. And Della, she's always blathering on about the Bible and trying to drag me off to church. And don't get me started about those lazy boys.

**OFFICER BERT**

I see. I guess it's a good thing I came by then.

*(Beat.)*

After talking with Della and now, hearing this, I think maybe we should commute the rest of the boy's sentence.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He's startled.)*

Are those worthless kids trying to get out of paying their dues?

**OFFICER BERT**

Not at all. Mr. Jolly, this was meant to help you out, not to a big burden for you. I think it's best for everyone if we just end it now.

**MR. JOLLY**

You mean right now? So, that's it? They wouldn't be coming around anymore to bother me...ever again?

**OFFICER BERT**

All true.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He speaks without conviction.)*

Well, that would be Christmas come early, wouldn't it.

**OFFICER BERT**

*(He starts toward the door.)*

I'll tell the kids to stay away and not to trouble you any longer.

**MR. JOLLY**

You do that.

*(He looks up at the ceiling with a sad expression. Then calls out as OFFICER BERT opens the door.)*

But what about Judge Gower? He sentenced them to two hundred and fifty hours...each. I don't know much they've got to go...if George was here, he could tell you, that boy's got a knack for numbers...but I'll bet they're a long ways from that.

*(Beat.)*

And kids today, they've got it too easy...they need some accountability.

**OFFICER BERT**

*(He gets a knowing smile.)*

Well, if you're sure. Then I guess we'll leave things the way they are for now.

*(MR. JOLLY nods and OFFICER BERT Steps through the door.)*

You have a good day, Mr. Jolly.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He calls out as the door is closing.)*

Fat chance of that...those pesky kids will be here to ruin it anytime now...you should really think about



giving me a public service medal or something, you know!

*(He gets a little smile as the lights go down.)*

*(The lights come back up. MR. JOLLY is standing in the living room holding the music box and looking at it reverently.*

*SFX: Knock at the door.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He hurriedly puts down the music box and calls out.)*

Come in.

*(The door opens and the four TEENS ENTER. DELLA, leading the way, walks to the nearest pile and gets to work. ROB and GEORGE saunter in and take up positions near the piles furthest from MR. JOLLY. MARY hurries in past MR. JOLLY, then doubles back behind him to sneak in a quick hug.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He jumps and yells at MARY.)*

Stop that, you no good, worthless girl! It's bad enough the day's half gone without wasting time on such nonsense.

**MARY**

Oh, admit it, you like getting hugs.

**MR. JOLLY**

I'll admit I hate it. I can't think of anything I hate more.

*(He frowns at EVERYONE.)*

Where have you been all day?

**ROB**

What do you care, I didn't think you liked us being here?

**MR. JOLLY**

I don't want you to skip out on paying your debt to society.

**ROB**

Right...we certainly wouldn't want that to happen.

*(He starts to work then stops and glares.)*

I don't remember the judge saying anything about you standing around watching while I pay off my debt!

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He grimaces, but turns to leave.)*

**DELLA**

I'm sorry we're late, Mr. Jolly. We'll work extra hard to make up for it.

**MR. JOLLY**

Well, see that you do.

*(He pauses at the foot of the stairs.)*

It's alright if you want to play the music box while you work.

*(EXIT MR. JOLLY up the stairs, but he pauses there to eavesdrop. The TEENS look after him, stunned by his comment.)*

**GEORGE**

Mr. Jolly, being nice...I must be dreaming.

*(He reaches over, pinches MARY'S arm.)*

**MARY**

OUCH!

**GEORGE**

Nope, not dreaming.

**MARY**

You're supposed to pinch yourself if you think you're dreaming.

**GEORGE**

What fun would that be?

**ROB**

You call that acting nice?

**GEORGE**

For Mr. Jolly, yeah, I think so.  
I guess even icebergs melt.

**ROB**

Yeah, well, I don't believe in global warming.

**DELLA**

Don't be such a Mr. Grumpypants. George is right, Mr. Jolly's thawing and it's our job to keep warming up his heart.

**MARY**

I agree, at this rate we should have him handing out hugs by Christmas.

**ROB**

You're both as crazy as he his.  
*(He speaks adamantly to DELLA.)*  
He didn't even apologize!

**DELLA**

*(She picks up the music box and opens it to let it play.)*  
I think he did.  
*(She listens to the music for a minute.)*  
But speaking of apologies...you still haven't told Mr. Jolly you're sorry for what happened on Halloween.

**ROB**

*(He mimics DELLA by making a show of opening up a cardboard box.)*  
I think I did.

ACT III

**SCENE 9: The Spirit of  
Christmas.**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's living room. The place looks good and the TEENAGERS are in the middle of decorating for Christmas. The scene begins with DELLA and MARY beginning to hum along with the background music. They break into song on the second stanza.)*

Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree!  
Thy leaves are so unchanging  
Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,  
Thy leaves are so unchanging

Not only green when summer's here,  
But also when it's cold and drear.  
Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,  
Thy leaves are so unchanging!

Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,  
Such pleasure do you bring me!  
Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,  
Such pleasure do you bring me!

For every year this Christmas tree,  
Brings to us such joy and glee.  
Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,  
Such pleasure do you bring me!

*(Once the music and singing stops,  
GEORGE starts singing a cappella.)*

Oh Christmas tree, oh Christmas tree  
How ugly are your branches  
Such a horrid green, and they stink  
Your needles fall off, so I have to sweep  
Oh Christmas tree, oh Christmas tree  
Could you be any grosser, what are the chances

*(GEORGE finishes singing and looks at DELLA and MARY, who are looking back at him shocked and speechless.)*

**GEORGE**

What can I say, I've got a knack for rhyming.

*(DELLA gives GEORGE a disapproving look. MARY picks up a nearby cookie and walks over to GEORGE. GEORGE opens his mouth wide and MARY shoves the whole cookie inside.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He mumbles through the cookie.)*  
Hank Hou...

*(ENTER MR. JOLLY down the stairs.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

What's all the racket?  
*(He looks around with shock.)*  
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY HOUSE?

**ROB**

I told you he wouldn't like it.

**DELLA**

To your house, nothing...but we're trying to bring the spirit of Christmas into your home.

**MARY**

*(She runs over and throws her arms around MR. JOLLY.)*

Isn't it wonderful!

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He frowns, hugs back before gently pushing her away.)*

It's a waste of time and tinsel is what it is.

*(He waves around the room.)*

You just got this place all cleaned up and now look at it.

**DELLA**

*(She looks around, nods her head.)*

He's right, we've got work to do, people...more bulbs, bows and tinsel. Hop to it everyone.

*(She picks up a wreath and hands it to MR. JOLLY.)*

Make yourself useful and hang this up somewhere, please.

**MR. JOLLY**

I most certainly will not!

No good, pushy girl, always bossing me around...

*(Mr. JOLLY tosses the wreath down on the couch, but after a minute he picks it back up and goes to hang it on the door. The TEENS start singing as they decorate again while MR. JOLLY sits down in his chair, pretending to dislike everything they're doing.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

At least you're not singing anymore...especially you, George. Why can't I be hard of hearing like most people my age?

**DELLA**

Speaking of singing...we're leaving in a few minutes to go. We'd love for you to join us, Mr. Jolly.

**MR. JOLLY**

No thank you. I'd rather try and eat a piece of Mrs. Grime's fruit cake.

*(He shakes head.)*

I'll just stay here and enjoy the peace and quiet, which is in short supply these days.

**DELLA**

It won't be quiet for long...we're starting just down the street...

*(She points stage front.)*

...we'll be right outside that window before you know it.



**MR. JOLLY**

Hmmmp...well I just might have to talk to Officer Bertram about that.

**DELLA**

That won't be hard to do...he's one of our carolers.

**GEORGE**

Where forth goeth Della's mom...so forth goeth Officer Bert.

**DELLA**

George, make yourself useful and tell me how long we've got before we need to leave.

**GEORGE**

*(He looks at his watch.)*

We need to leave in...now...

*(He does a double take.)*

Well, would you look at that...ladies and gentlemen, as of ten minutes ago, our two hundred and fifty-hours of community service is complete...FREEEEEDOM!

*(EVERYONE gets startled expressions as the news sets in.)*

**DELLA**

That's wonderful, but we need to get going. Come on, guys, we don't want to be late.

*(The TEENS bustle around, putting on coats and hats, then rush toward the door. As MARY swoops past MR. JOLLY, he puts out an arm for her to hug him, but she doesn't notice and rushes to the door. The TEENS exit, calling out hasty goodbyes. MR. JOLLY walks forward, as if watching them out the window, and lifts his hand to wave with a troubled expression on his face.)*

*(Consider having portions of your Sunday School or School Choir programs perform here, playing the part of the carolers outside of Mr. Jolly's window. Alternately, have the play choir come out to center stage to sing some carols. The three carols listed below are only suggestions.*

***Away in a Manger, Approx. 2:00; I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day, Approx. 3:00; Silent Night, Approx. 3:00)***

**Away in a Manger**, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,  
The little lord Jesus asleep on the hay.  
The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky.  
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care  
And take us to Heaven to live with Thee there.

**I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day**

Their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet the words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along the unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:  
"There is no peace on earth," I said,  
"For hate is strong and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good will to men."

Till, ringing singing, on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,  
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

**Silent Night**, holy night  
All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child  
Holy Infant so tender and mild  
Sleep in heavenly peace  
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night  
Shepherds quake at the sight  
Glories stream from heaven afar  
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia  
Christ, the Savior is born  
Christ, the Savior is born

Silent night, holy night  
Son of God love's pure light  
Radiant beams from thy holy face  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord at thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

Silent night, holy night  
All is calm and all is bright  
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child  
Holy Infant so tender and mild  
Sleep in heavenly peace  
Sleep in heavenly peace

**SCENE 10: Unfinished  
Business.**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's living room. Everything is basically the same as the last scene. MR. JOLLY is sitting in his chair studying the Baby Jesus from the nativity scene.)*

*(SFX: Knock at the door.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He quickly hides the figurine and calls out grumpily.)*

Come in.

*(ENTER MS. CORNELIUS. She comes through the door and approaches MR. JOLLY.)*

**MS. CORNELIUS**

*(She smiles nervously.)*

Good morning, Mr. Jolly.

**MR. JOLLY**

Oh, it's you.

**MS. CORNELIUS**

So you remember me?

**MR. JOLLY**

How could I forget...you're the one who's going to throw me out of my own house.

**MS. CORNELIUS**

Not anymore I'm not. I just finished my inspection outside and I have to tell you, it looks amazing...

*(She sweeps a hand around the room.)*  
...and the same goes for in here...and so festive too!

**MR. JOLLY**

That's one word for it.

**MS. CORNELIUS**

*(She's anxious to leave.)*

Well, you have a Merry Christmas, Mr. Jolly. I won't be bothering you anymore.

**MR. JOLLY**

That's good news, I hadn't found a cardboard box big enough to move into yet.

**MS. CORNELIUS**

*(She just smiles and hurries toward the door.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He watches her get to the door then calls out.)*

Miss...

**MS. CORNELIUS**

*(She turns back with trepidation.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

Thanks for what you said. But, really, it was those four kids that did it all.

*(Beat.)*

Anyway, Merry Christmas to you too...and I hope you have a nice day.

**MS. CORNELIUS**

Thank you, Mr. Jolly...

*(She gets a troubled smile.)*

I have to confess, I was worried about coming here, and...well, I'm glad I did.

*(She shakes her head and sighs.)*

As far as the rest of my day goes, I doubt it will be good with what I have to do next.

**MR. JOLLY**

Why, what's the matter?

**MS. CORNELIUS**

I'm afraid I do have to help evict someone today. There's a woman a few blocks down from here who hasn't been able to pay her mortgage. The bank's going to foreclose so our office has to do an assessment before they auction off her house.

**MR. JOLLY**

In the middle of winter...and right before Christmas?

**MS. CORNELIUS**

I know, it seems heartless.

**MR. JOLLY**

That's because it is!

**MS. CORNELIUS**

It is. But at least she and her daughter will have until spring to find a new place. The law won't allow the eviction to go through until then.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He shakes his head, then asks intently.)*

Wait a minute...what's this woman's name?

**MS. CORNELIUS**

I'm sorry, Mr. Jolly, there are confidentiality rules...

**MR. JOLLY**

It's the Walker's isn't it...Della and her mom? Well, let me tell you, that poor lady has been doing everything she can to make ends meet.

**MS. CORNELIUS**

*(She can't hide her surprise.)*

How did you know?

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He waves a hand.)*

You've never lived around retired people before, have you? A gnat couldn't fly through this neighborhood without old lady Grimes and me knowing about it.

**MS. CORNELIUS**

Well, I'd appreciate it if we could keep this just between the two of us...including Mrs. Grimes?

**MR. JOLLY**

Don't worry, my lips are sealed.

*(He scratches his chin.)*

Say, what's the name of this bank that hands out eviction notices instead of Christmas cards?

**MS. CORNELIUS**

If I told you that, Mr. Jolly, I could lose my job.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He considers for a moment.)*

Then how about you help me with something else? I've been looking for a new bank myself, do you think you could recommend one?



**MS. CORNELIUS**

*(She considers for a minute, smiles.)*  
Several good ones that come to mind...but I'd avoid the Bedford First Federal Bank if I were you. They just don't seem to take quite as much of a personal interest in their clients as some of the others.

**MR. JOLLY**

Thank you, ma'am. I'm sorry for what you've got to do...but I'm glad it's you doing it.

**MS. CORNELIUS**

Thank you, Mr. Jolly, that means a lot. You have a Merry Christmas, sir.

*(EXIT MS CORNELIUS. MR. JOLLY looks thoughtfully after her. The lights go down.)*

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's living room. Everything is basically the same as the last scene. MR. JOLLY is back in his chair reading the paper.)*

*(SFX: Knock at the door.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He calls out irritably.)*  
Go away, no one's home!

*(The door opens and the TEENS storm in, with ROB coming last and moving over to one side where he stands moping.)*

**DELLA**

Hello, Mr. Jolly, how are you today?

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He stands and fights back a smile.)*  
Invaded...I thought I was done putting up with you wretched kids.

**MARY**

*(She goes and gives him a hug.)*  
Nope, we've got unfinished business.  
This house is only mostly decorated.

**MR. JOLLY**

Stop that, you no good, worthless girl.

*(He pats her on the back.)*  
What more needs done...do you want me to wear a big red bow on my head?

**DELLA**

Hmmmm...maybe just a red Santa hat.  
Can you grow a beard?

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He waves a hand dismissively and sits back down. As he does, he notices ROB and gets a concerned look.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He reacts to MR. JOLLY.)*

Don't worry about him, he's just pouting.

*(He stage whispers conspiratorially.)*

He has to take Della to the Christmas Pageant in his mom's minivan.

**ROB**

Hey...who designated you to be the local newscaster, loudmouth?

**GEORGE**

See what I mean...he's been like this for two days now.

**ROB**

I am NOT mad about having to drive my mom's minivan...

**GEORGE**

Obviously.

**ROB**

I shouldn't have to borrow a car. I should have one of my own by now!

**DELLA**

Rob's been saving up to buy a car, but he had to quit his job recently...

**ROB**

More like I got FIRED! My boss couldn't understand why I was never at work. He's more concerned with customer service than community service...imagine that.

**GEORGE**

OKAYYYY...how about those Yankees?

**ROB**

Yeah, let's change the subject...and do whatever we need to do to get out of here.

*(The TEENS get busy decorating. DELLA and MARY start singing/humming Christmas carols. MR. JOLLY looks thoughtful. A short time passes like this.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He asks George.)*

What's a Christmas Pageant?

**GEORGE**

*(He makes a face.)*

It's afancy-schmancy dinner and dancing thingamajigger where everybody usually ends up standing around looking at each other.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He nods and asks MARY.)*

Are you going?

**MARY**

*(She speaks uncomfortably.)*  
Uh...nooo.

**MR. JOLLY**

Why not?

**MARY**

Uhhhh...well...

**GEORGE**

Maybe no one asked her to go.

**DELLA**

NO...she was asked...by several boys.

**MR. JOLLY**

Then why aren't you going...girls usually like things like that.

**DELLA**

*(She nods at GEORGE who is looking cluelessly at MARY.)*  
Because the right boy hasn't asked her!

**MARY**

*(She interjects urgently.)*  
How ABOUT THOSE YANKEE'S...Della?

**DELLA**

I'm sorry, I'm just tired of it.

**MARY**

Well...I think I need to go freshen up.

*(She starts to EXIT center stage.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He speaks lightly, still clueless.)*  
Is it even legal for you girls to do that by yourselves?

**MARY**

*(She rounds on him.)*  
George...now, is not the time!  
*(She stomps off and EXITS.)*

**GEORGE**

What did I do?

**MR. JOLLY**

It's what you didn't do, boy.

**GEORGE**

Huh..?

**MR. JOLLY**

You need to ask that girl to go to this party with you.

**GEORGE**

What...?

*(GEORGE looks from MR. JOLLY to DELLA, who both nod decisively, then he stands and ponders while the*

*OTHERS watch him sort through his thoughts.*

*ENTER MARY, who comes back on stage humming happily as she starts decorating again. After a moment she notices that she's the only one working and looks around at the OTHERS curiously.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He asks MARY with disbelief.)*  
You want me to take you to the Christmas pageant?

**MARY**

*(She turns and glares at DELLA.)*

**DELLA**

Don't look at me...

**MARY**

*(She shifts glare to ROB who just shakes his head. She then turns to look questioningly at MR. JOLLY.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

The boy needed to know.

**GEORGE**

So you do?

**MARY**

George, why do you think I hang out with you guys all the time?

**GEORGE**

Ahh...because Rob's you brother and Della's your best friend?

**MARY**

Sure...every teenage girl's dream is to tag along behind her big brother.

*(She shakes her head.)*

And Della hardly knows I'm alive when Rob's around.

**GEORGE**

Okay...then why?

**MARY**

*(She just stands there looking at GEORGE with disbelief.)*

**GEORGE**

*(He looks back at MARY and his expression slowly changes as the truth dawns on him, going from confused to totally shocked. He ends up with his head tilted completely over to one side with his mouth hanging open as he stares vacantly out into space.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

I wouldn't have thought it possible, but I do believe the boy's been struck speechless.

*(He snaps his fingers until GEORGE looks over at him.)*

George, nod if you can hear me, son.



**GEORGE**

*(He slowly gives a nod.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

Good boy! Now, do you want to take this no good, worthless girl to this Christmas shindig?

**GEORGE**

*(After a moment, he nods again.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(Speaking to MARY.)*

I'm not sure what you see in the boy, but there you go.

**MARY**

*(She smiles at GEORGE.)*

Thank you, Mr. Jolly.

**GEORGE**

*(He springs to life, looking  
panicked.)*

OH NO! The Christmas pageant is formal! What am I going to do...I don't even own a tie!

**MR. JOLLY**

Wait right here, I'll be right back.  
*(He jumps up and hurries up the stairs.)*

**ROB**

I've had about enough of this, let's get out of here.

**DELLA**

What? We can't leave now...

*(She points up the stairs.)*

**ROB**

There's nothing that old man has that any of us need!

**DELLA**

Rob, can't you see that he's really trying to help...give him a chance.

*(MR. JOLLY comes hustling down the stairs holding a suit on a hanger, but pulls up short of being visible to the TEENS when he hears ROB and DELLA arguing.)*

**ROB**

He had his chance and people don't change. Deep down he's still just as mean and nasty as he's always been.

**DELLA**

You're wrong...the Holy Spirit...God's saving grace can take any life, no matter how broken, and make it whole again.

**ROB**

Yeah well, if Old Man Jolly's got the Holy Spirit, then I'm John the Baptist.

**DELLA**

I know he ran over your bicycle, but that was a long time ago...

**ROB**

*(He angrily looks away.)*

**MARY**

Della, it was more than that. It was what he said afterwards.

**ROB**

MARY!

**DELLA**

*(She asks ROB.)*

What did he say?

*(ROB won't even look at her.)*

Rob, I think at this point I have a right to know!

**ROB**

Fine, I'll tell you. After he ran over my bike, he told me that he thought it was a shame.

*(He gives MARY a hard look.)*

And that's the truth!

*(ROB storms out of the house, EXITS through the front door.)*

**DELLA**

But that sounds almost like an apology?

*(She asks MARY.)*

Why can't he just let it go and forgive?

*(MR. JOLLY comes down the stairs slowly and joins the group.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

Because that's not all I said...

*(Pause, EVERYONE looks at MR. JOLLY.)*

He was up on the front porch knocking on the door wanting to sell me some magazines...

*(Pause.)*

He was always coming by trying to sell me something, or wanting to rake my leaves...or things like that. It didn't matter how many times I yelled at him, he'd always come back. But this time I wasn't in the house...I was in my car, backing it out of the garage, only he'd parked his bike in the driveway...

*(Emotional pause.)*

...I'd been drinking...I drank a lot back then...

*(He shakes his head.)*

...but never again, not since that day. When I felt the tires go over that bicycle, I slammed on the brakes and jumped out to see what it was,

and...I saw the bike, but I couldn't see him anywhere...

*(Pause.)*

...I was so afraid that I'd...but then he came running up. He looked at his bike under the car and told me..."It's okay, Mr. Jolly, it's just a bicycle, I can get another one."

*(He had been looking down, now he looks up.)*

I was so upset...mad about what could have happened...mad that he'd parked his bike there when I'd told so often to just leave me alone, that I said it...

*(Pause.)*

I told him... "it's a shame you weren't on it."

*(MR. JOLLY turns to walk dejectedly back up the stairs while the TEENS look after him in shock.)*

**SCENE 11: The Greatest Gift.**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's living room. The room is as we last saw it. MR. JOLLY is sitting in his chair, staring out into space, with his newspaper lying forgotten in his lap.)*

*(SFX: knock at the door.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He looks over with confusion.)*  
Who is it?

*(The door opens and DELLA, MARY and GEORGE rush in, each carrying a present.)*

**DELLA**

It's just Santa's elves, out spreading Christmas cheer.

**GEORGE**

It's true...I usually like to spread something else around, but I've been put on probation.

**MARY**

*(Standing beside him, she gives GEORGE a not so gentle elbow, while she keeps smiling broadly.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

So have I been completely cast aside  
for this young whippersnapper?

**MARY**

Of course not...

*(Quickly, but carefully, she hands her  
package to GEORGE and rushes over to  
give MR. JOLLY a hug.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He gently hugs MARY back.)*

You no good, worthless girl...

*(He gives GEORGE a hard look.)*

And YOU...you treat her right or you  
just might find out that some of those  
stories you've heard about me are  
true!

**GEORGE**

*(He laughs nervously.)*

Ha-ha...I'll keep that in mind, Mr.  
Jolly.

**MR. JOLLY**

Three elves...but no Santa?

**DELLA**

I'm afraid not...ah...

**MR. JOLLY**

It's okay, I understand.

**MARY**

*(She grabs her present.)*

But the three of us brought enough Christmas joy to fill up the whole town!

**MR. JOLLY**

It's Christmas Eve, you should be home with your families.

**DELLA**

We will be, but Christmas is about giving to everyone you love.

**GEORGE**

Let me go first.

*(He rushes up and holds out a BIG wrapped box.)*

I got you a B-I-G present, Mr. Jolly!

**MR. JOLLY**

I can see that...

*(He cautiously takes the package, then gives GEORGE a look when he finds that it's as light as a feather.)*

You didn't give me some of that hot air you're always blowing around, did you, George?

**GEORGE**

*(He pretends to be offended.)*

I told you...

*(He rubs where MARY elbowed him.)*

...I'm reformed.



**MR. JOLLY**

*(He opens the present and takes out a single sheet of paper. He digs his glasses out of his pocket.)*

**GEORGE**

It's a full free year of George Gailey's Complete Lawn Care Service. I'll be here every week to mow, bag and drag. And it covers fall leaf removal too, satisfaction guaranteed!

**MR. JOLLY**

Hmmm...so every week I not only have to listen to your yammering, but a noisy lawn mower too?

**GEORGE**

Absolutely, you have my word on it!

**MARY**

And Della and I have subcontracted to take care of your flower garden.

**MR. JOLLY**

Thank you, George, this is truly a very big present.

**MARY**

I'm next!

*(She carefully sets her present at MR. Jolly's feet.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He eyes the present suspiciously.)*  
Why are there holes in this box?

**MARY**

*(She claps her hands with excitement.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He opens the box.)*  
What's this? A puppy? I hate puppies!

**MARY**

I know...isn't she great?

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He holds PUPPY up to study her.)*  
She just looks kind of pathetic  
and...hairy, if you ask me.

**MARY**

Her full name is No Good Worthless  
Girl, but I call her Goody for short.

**MR. JOLLY**

That seems to suit her.

**MARY**

I'll keep coming over to annoy you in  
person, but when I'm not here, Goody  
should be able to fill in for me.

**MR. JOLLY**

I've no doubt about that.  
*(He settles GOODY on his lap and  
starts to pet her.)*

**MARY**

So you'll keep her?

**MR. JOLLY**

I'll probably just take her to the pound...or maybe make a rug out of her...she is kind of soft.

**MARY**

Mr. Jolly!

**MR. JOLLY**

Thank you, Mary.

**DELLA**

My turn.

*(MARY takes the PUPPY to free MR. JOLLY'S hands. MR. JOLLY takes the present from DELLA and begins to open it.)*

**DELLA**

*(She talks while MR. JOLLY opens the present.)*

I know how hard your life's been and I wanted to give you something that would take all that hurt away. I can't do that...but Jesus can. He came on Christmas so He could live and die for us, and wipe away every tear. That won't happen if we don't let him. I want you to know about His healing love so much...

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He pulls a Bible out of the box.)*

**DELLA**

*(Continues.)*

...so I got you a Bible. And I'm hoping that you'll read it, and that we can talk about it together.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He's focused on the Bible while DELLA talks, then looks up when she finishes and speaks solemnly.)*

I was never much of a reader, except for the newspaper, but...I'll read this, Della...I will.

*(There is a short period of joyful fellowship.)*

*SFX: knock at the door. EVERYONE looks over with surprise. GEORGE goes to the door and opens it.)*

**GEORGE**

Well, I'll be...it's Santa.

*(ENTER ROB. He gives GEORGE an odd look and seems hesitant to even be there. ROB approaches MR. JOLLY.)*

**ROB**

Sorry I'm late...

*(He takes a deep breath.)*

Mr. Jolly, I almost didn't come here tonight, but it's not for the reason

that you're probably thinking.  
Everyone else came up with great gifts  
to give you. I should be the one  
giving you the most and I couldn't  
think of anything.

*(Beat.)*

So, I just wanted you to know that I'm  
sorry...sorry for treating you so  
horribly...and I don't mean for just  
the last couple of months either...I'm  
talking about the last ten years.

*(He takes another deep breath.)*

*(He smiles.)*

I know you didn't really mean what you  
said that day on your driveway. If  
you're still feeling bad about it, I  
don't want you to anymore. I forgive  
you and I hope you can forgive me.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He's blinking back tears, he nods.)*  
I'd like that.

**ROB**

*(He lets out a relieved sigh.)*  
Thank you...I'm sorry I couldn't think  
of a present to give you.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He reaches out to grip ROB'S arm.)*  
Son, you could have searched the world  
over without finding a greater gift  
than the one you just gave me.

## **SCENE 12: A Jolly Christmas.**

*(SETTING: Mr. Jolly's living room. The room is as we last saw it. MR. JOLLY is down on the floor, like a little kid, playing with GOODY.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(Singing to GOODY.)*

This old man, he played two,  
He played knick-knack on his shoe; *(He raps his shoe)*  
With a knick-knack paddywhack,  
Give the dog a bone,  
*(He gives GOODY a piece of dog biscuit)*  
This old man came rolling home.

This old man, he played three,  
He played knick-knack on my knee; *(He raps his knee and groans)*  
With a...

*(SFX: knock at the door in rhythm with the song; rap, rap...rap, rap, rap.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He looks up with a perplexed expression then speaks to GOODY.)*  
Now who could that be?

*(SFX: LOUDER knock at the door.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He tries to get up fast but can't,  
then he calls out impatiently.)*  
Come in already!

*(The door opens. ENTER OFFICER BERT,  
he's not in uniform, and he's wearing  
a Santa hat on his head, and carrying  
a bag filled with presents.  
OFFICER BERT sees MR. JOLLY  
struggling to get up and rushes to  
his side.)*

**OFFICER BERT**

Are you alright?

**MR. JOLLY**

I'm just fine!  
*(He let's OFFICER BERT help him to his  
feet, then slaps his hands away like  
he never needed the help.)*  
I was just picking up my glasses...  
*(He holds out GOODY.)*  
...this worthless dog made me drop  
them!

**OFFICER BERT**

*(He looks at GOODY, then cranes his  
neck around to look at the Bible where  
the glasses are lying.)*  
Okayyyyyy...

**MR. JOLLY**

Never mind that. How come you're back so soon? Did you finish the errand I sent you on already?

**OFFICER BERT**

No. I decided not to do it.

*(He holds the bag of presents out.)*

I decided you need to do it yourself.

**MR. JOLLY**

What? I don't have time to go traipsing all over town...

**OFFICER BERT**

But I do...on Christmas day?

**MR. JOLLY**

You're a public servant...that's what I pay tax dollars for.

**OFFICER BERT**

I'm pretty sure my job description doesn't say anything about playing Santa Clause or being a delivery boy.

**MR. JOLLY**

Weren't you going to be spending the day with Della and her mother anyway?

**OFFICER BERT**

Even if I was...



**MR. JOLLY**

Officer Bertram, I don't want to go barging in on all those folk's holiday...

**OFFICER BERT**

That, I can help with...

*(OFFICER BERT gives the bag to MR. JOLLY and hurries back to open the door. All four TEENS rush in calling out "Merry Christmas".)*

**MR. JOLLY**

What...? It's Christmas, you're supposed to be home opening presents.

**DELLA**

Actually, we've already done that...

*(She can hardly contain herself.)*

Oh, Mr. Jolly, I have the best news...I didn't tell you, but we were going to lose our house because we couldn't make the payments...

*(She gets choked up.)*

...we don't know who, but someone paid off our whole mortgage!

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He acts surprised.)*

Oh my!

**DELLA**

I still can't believe it...we got a house for Christmas.

*(Beat.)*

I hope God blesses whoever did it as much as He blessed my mom and me.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(Nodding, he says with confidence.)*

I'm sure He did, Della.

**DELLA**

So, that's where we were, over at my house celebrating. when Office Bert showed up and told us what you asked him to do. Then we decided to all come here instead.

**OFFICER BERT**

*(He holds the Santa hat out.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

I'm not going to wear that...I'd look like an idiot!

*(OFFICER BERT sighs and shakes his head. GEORGE takes the hat, puts it on, and smiles big. MR. JOLLY goes and sits in his chair, while EVERYONE ELSE follows and sits on the ground near him. MARY will hold GOODY at first and will have to pass GOODY off when it's her turn to open her present.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He pulls out the biggest package.)*  
Here you go, George...Merry Christmas.

**GEORGE**

*(He takes the present, shakes it, then tears it open only to find LOTS of tissue paper. He looks at MR. JOLLY quizzically.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

Keep digging, boy.

**GEORGE**

*(He starts flinging tissue paper everywhere, then eventually stops and gets wide-eyed.)*  
Oh, WOW! This is a B-I-G present!  
*(He holds up the Yogi baseball.)*  
Thank you so much, Mr. Jolly! Tell me, Mr. Jolly, was it a home run?

**MR. JOLLY**

You bet it was. One of the first one's Yogi ever hit...it was the summer of '47. Our family took a trip to New York City, and Dad took me to my first ballgame. We had great seats, just a couple of rows up in the right field bleachers.

*(He laughs.)*

Yogi hit that thing on a rope and it probably would have smacked me right between the eyes...

*(He points and crosses his eyes.)*  
...if Dad hadn't stuck his hand out  
and caught it.

**GEORGE**

That's so awesome!

*(EVERYONE nods agreement.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

I always wanted to tell that story to  
my son...

*(He sighs.)*

That's not how things worked out, but  
George, I'd be honored if someday,  
you'd pass that story, and the ball,  
on to your son.

**GEORGE**

I will, I promise.

**MR. JOLLY**

Okay...who's next...

*(He pulls out another package and  
looks at the tag.)*

Hmmm...this says it's for a no good,  
worthless girl...

*(He looks at GOODY.)*

I thought I already gave you your  
present?

**MARY**

*(She reaches out and takes the  
present.)*

Give me that!

*(She opens the present and pulls out  
the beauty set.)*  
Oh, my, I don't know what to say...

**MR. JOLLY**

I bought those for my wife on our  
first anniversary...

*(He reflects for a moment, then looks  
back at MARY.)*

She had such beautiful hair...just  
like you, Mary. I know she'd be happy  
to know that you've got them now.

**MARY**

*(She gets up and hugs MR. JOLLY.)*  
Thank you so much, Mr. Jolly, I loved  
them when I first saw them, and I love  
them even more now.

**MR. JOLLY**

I don't think this is quite empty  
yet...let's see...

*(He pulls out another present and  
hands it to DELLA.)*

Merry Christmas, Della.

**DELLA**

*(She opens the present, takes out the  
music box and gets a look of wonder.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

That...is the first thing my wife  
bought when she found out she was  
going to have our son...

*(He smiles.)*

...she planned to play it for the baby as she rocked him to sleep...

*(He shakes his head.)*

I bet I listened to that thing every day for nine months...but I hadn't heard that little tune for over fifty years, not until you played it the other day, Della.

**DELLA**

Oh, I'm so sorry, Mr. Jolly, I didn't know!

**MR. JOLLY**

Don't you dare be...the second that music started, I saw my Susan's face in front of me as plain as if she was really standing there.

*(Pause.)*

It hurt, but only because I'd buried her memory so deep, for so long. That's no way to live...and I won't do it anymore.

**DELLA**

Mr. Jolly, I love it, but I don't want to take it from you.

**MR. JOLLY**

I insist. You get the music box, but I'll keep the memories. Besides...

*(He points to the music box.)*

...that was intended for a young woman with her whole life in front of her, not some crotchety, old man.

**DELLA**

You're sure...?

**MR. JOLLY**

I am...and maybe sometimes you'll hum that tune for me while you and Mary are working in the flower garden.

**DELLA**

I promise I will.

*(She gets up and gives MR. JOLLY a hug.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(The bag looks empty but he digs round until he pulls out a very small package, which he holds out to ROB.)*

**ROB**

*(He's very surprised.)*

Ah, I thought we already exchanged gifts, Mr. Jolly.

**MR. JOLLY**

That might be, but I still want you to have this.

**ROB**

*(He takes the present, opens the lid and looks even more puzzled. He lifts up a key ring and looks at it curiously.)*

**GEORGE**

The Bel Air! Dude, he gave you the car!

**ROB**

*(Speechlessly, he looks at MR. JOLLY.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

Yep, she's all yours...good as the day I bought her off the showroom floor, and all original too...

*(He says a little hesitantly.)*

...except for the mirrors...the stock ones didn't let you see behind you good enough...I replaced those ten years ago.

**ROB**

Mr. Jolly...there's no way, I can't accept this...

**MR. JOLLY**

Too late, I've already signed the title over to you. It's right there in the box.

**ROB**

But...

**MR. JOLLY**

No buts about it. I'm too old to drive anymore anyway. And besides that...

*(He points to DELLA.)*



...you can't be chauffeuring that pretty girl of yours around in a minivan...I won't have it! She deserves to ride in style, in a wicked bad car, like that Bel Air.

*(He looks at GEORGE.)*

Did I get that right, George?

**GEORGE**

*(He looks dumbfounded.)*

I think you're wicked bad right, Mr. Jolly.

**MR. JOLLY**

So there, it's settled.

**ROB**

Mr. Jolly, I...I don't know what to say.

**MR. JOLLY**

Merry Christmas will do just fine, Rob.

**ROB**

Merry Christmas...and THANK YOU!

*(Pause.)*

And, anytime...I mean anytime, you need to go somewhere...even if it's just for a drive...you just give me a call, sir.

**MR. JOLLY**

I'd like that very much, son.

*(He looks around at EVERYONE.)*

Alright, you've all wasted enough of the day here...

*(He waves his arms.)*

You've got more celebrating to do, so get to it.

**DELLA**

Come with us, Mr. Jolly. We're going back to my house and we're going to read the Christmas story.

*(EVERYONE persuades MR. JOLLY to go.)*

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He looks at his Bible.)*

Well, that would give me a chance to use my new Bible.

*(He points at GOODY and asks DELLA.)*

But what about Goody?

**DELLA**

I think both she and our no good, worthless dog would love it.

**ROB**

There you go, it's settled.

**MR. JOLLY**

*(He grabs his Bible and asks ROB.)*

Can we take your car, it's all gassed up and ready to go?

**ROB**

You bet we can!

**GEORGE**

Shot gun!

**MARY**

*(She reaches over and smacks GEORGE.)*

**GEORGE**

Ouch! I was only kidding...this being reformed sucks.

*(He speaks to MR. JOLLY.)*

I really was joking, Mr. Jolly, you get the front seat.

**MR. JOLLY**

Too late, boy...I'm riding in the back with the ladies.

*(He stands up to go, then hesitates.)*  
But before we go...could we maybe sing some of those Christmas carols I hate so much?

*(EVERYONE agrees enthusiastically and gathers at center stage to sing. The entire cast joins in for the final song.)*

Joy to the World, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And Heaven and nature sing,  
And Heaven and nature sing,  
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

**THE END**