

ACT ONE
Side #1 Hilda, Satch

AT RISE: SATCH is sitting on the couch, reading a newspaper. HILDA is behind the counter, as usual, going through some travel folders. A long resigned silence hangs over the room. Finally, SATCH lowers the newspaper.

SATCH. What time is it?

HILDA. December.

SATCH. Can you be a little more specific? Narrow it down a little for me, darlin'.

HILDA. It's time for you to get a watch.

SATCH. Got a watch. *(He holds up his wrist.)*

HILDA. Well, what time is it?

SATCH. It's... I asked you.

HILDA *(moves to SATCH)*. Satch, if you have a watch,

why're you asking me what time it is?

SATCH. I want to see if my watch is right.

HILDA. You're not going anywhere, you're not coming from anywhere, you're not expecting anybody and you're not clocking any horses. What difference does it make if your watch is right?

SATCH. 'Cause it's stopped.

HILDA. Then it's right.

SATCH. It says here that a man on the move always needs to know what time it is.

HILDA. Fine. When I see you move, I'll tell you what time it is.

SATCH. Merry Christmas to you, too.

HILDA (*shows a brochure to SATCH*). Lookie here, Satch. Australia. The land down under. They got kangaroos in Australia.

SATCH. You want a kangaroo?

HILDA. No...

SATCH. You never said nothing to me about wanting no kangaroo.

HILDA. I was just telling you...

SATCH. I done already got your Christmas present and I didn't get you no kangaroo.

HILDA. Satch!

SATCH. Fact, I don't knowe I could even find you a kangaroo.

HILDA. If you'll let me get a word in...

SATCH. Where do you get kangaroos, anyway? Wait! They got kangaroos in Australia! (*He smiles at this deduction.*)

HILDA (*after a pause*). Ever notice our conversation goes in circles?

SATCH. What time is it?

HILDA. Ohh! (*She crosses back to her counter.* SATCH gets off the couch and moves over to the radio.)

SATCH. You know, maybe we ought to put up some decorations around here.

HILDA. What kind of decorations?

SATCH. Well, let's just think on it some. Today is December twenty-third, tomorrow's Christmas Eve. Now, let's see here. What sort of decorations would you put up...

HILDA (*jumps in*). Shut up! (*SATCH shrugs and begins trying to tune in the old radio.*) And don't go thinking that thing up. You know it ain't worked in a year or more. I don't know why I don't just throw it out. (*A loud buzzing of static is heard from the radio.*)

SATCH. If we had some music around here, then maybe it might cheer up things a bit.

HILDA. What do you mean, cheer things up?
SATCH. You know, a couple of ho ho ho's, some tra la la's, deck a few boughs... (*HILDA moves to the radio and turns it off.*)

HILDA. I'll deck your bough!

SATCH. We don't know they're gonna shut down the station.

HILDA. Last week, we had two passengers come in and five leave.

SATCH. Well, we still got lots more people in town. (*HILDA crosses back to the counter.*) At that rate, it'll be at least three years before the town's empty. (*He smiles wickedly.*) Then we'll take over!

End Side #1

(*MAGGIE enters through the outside door.*)

MAGGIE (*bored*). Mail. (*She hands the mail to HILDA, who tosses it into a trash can next to the counter without looking at it.* MAGGIE stares into the trash can.)

HILDA (*to SATCH*). Used to be ten people working this place, well, you remember. Now, it's just me and you. And there ain't enough work for one, let alone two.

MAGGIE. I had to take a civil service test, a lie detector test, swear an oath and fork up a deposit on this uniform.

HILDA. What're you talking about?

MAGGIE. It occurs to me that I went to an awful lot of trouble just to deliver your trash.

SATCH (*moves to MAGGIE*). She's in a mood.

HILDA. I'm not in a mood!

MAGGIE. Where is it today?

SATCH. Australia. She hot for kangaroos.

HILDA. I'm not hot for... I just said they had kangaroos in Australia, that's all.

MAGGIE. Well, where else would you put them?

Several steps forward

HILDA (*shows a brochure to SATCH*). Looker here, Satch. Australia. The land down under. They got kangaroos in Australia.

SATCH. You want a kangaroo?

HILDA. No...

SATCH. You never said nothing to me about wanting no kangaroo.

HILDA. I was just telling you...

SATCH. I done already got your Christmas present and I didn't get you no kangaroo.

HILDA. Satch!

SATCH. Fact, I don't know I could even find you a kangaroo.

HILDA. If you'll let me get a word in...

SATCH. Where do you get kangaroos, anyway? Wait! They got kangaroos in Australia! (*He smiles at this deduction.*)

HILDA (*after a pause*). Even notice our conversation goes in circles?

SATCH. What time is it?

HILDA. Ohh! (*She crosses back to her counter. SATCH gets off the couch and moves over to the radio.*)

SATCH. You know, maybe we ought to put up some decorations around here.

HILDA. What kind of decorations?

SATCH. Well, let's just think on it some. Today is December twenty-third, tomorrow's Christmas Eve. Now, let's see here. What sort of decorations would you put up...

HILDA (*jumps in*). Shut up! (*SATCH starts and begins trying to tune in the old radio.*) And don't go strutting that thing up. You know it ain't worked in a year or more. I don't know why I don't just throw it out. (*A loud buzzing of static is heard from the radio.*)

SATCH. If we had some music around here, then maybe it might cheer up things a bit.

HILDA. What do you mean, cheer things up?

SATCH. You know, a couple of ho ho ho's, some tra la la's, deck a few boughs... (*HILDA moves to the radio and turns it off.*)

HILDA. I'll deck your bough!

SATCH. We don't know they're gonna shut down the station.

HILDA. Last week, we had two passengers come in and five leave.

SATCH. Well, we still got lots more people in town. (*HILDA crosses back to the counter.*) At that rate, it'll be at least three years before the town's empty. (*He smiles wickedly.*) Then we'll take over!

SIDE #2 START
(*MAGGIE enters through the outside door.*)
Maggie, Hilda, Satch

MAGGIE (*bored*). Mail. (*She hands the mail to HILDA, who tosses it into a trash can next to the counter without looking at it. MAGGIE stares into the trash can.*)

HILDA (*to SATCH*). Used to be ten people working this place, well, you remember. Now, it's just me and you. And there ain't enough work for one, let alone two.

MAGGIE. I had to take a civil service test, a lie detector test, swear an oath and fork up a deposit on this uniform.

HILDA. What're you talking about?

MAGGIE. It occurs to me that I went to an awful lot of trouble just to deliver your trash.

SATCH (*moves to MAGGIE*). She's in a mood.

HILDA. I'm not in a mood!

MAGGIE. Where is it today?

SATCH. Australia. She hot for kangaroos.

HILDA. I'm not hot for... I just said they had kangaroos in Australia, that's all.

MAGGIE. Well, where else would you put them?

SATCH. We could get you a possum. That's close to a kangaroo.

HILDA. Would you stop?

SATCH. They're both marsupials.

MAGGIE. What is a marsupial, anyway?

SATCH. A supial from Mam, I guess.

HILDA. (shows a brochure to MAGGIE). Look, Maggie, look at that countryside, isn't that gorgeous? And here. (She takes out another pamphlet.) Is that quaint?

MAGGIE. Where's that?

HILDA. Vienna.

MAGGIE. Yeah? (She looks at the brochure.)

SATCH. They got great food there.

HILDA. Now, what would you know about the food in Vienna?

SATCH. I've had Vienna sausages.

HILDA. Ahhh! (She crosses to the double door, opens one and looks out.)

SATCH. They come eight to a can, unless you get the camp-out size, which has about twenty five. (He looks at MAGGIE.) Well, they do.

MAGGIE. She's really got it bad this time.

SATCH. Yeah, I figure it's about time for the standard "the whole town's dying" speech.

MAGGIE. What time is it, anyway? (HILDA looks back, disgruntled, at MAGGIE.) Shut the door, will you? It's freezing in here.

HILDA. (shuts the door). There it is again. The whole town's dying and all you two can ask is what time is it?

SATCH. (memorized). I remember the old days...

HILDA. I remember the old days. People used to come here, thick as crowds can get, coming to town, going places, businessmen, salesmen, ladies with stacks of boxes eight

feet high. It took four porters just to handle one car. It was grander then, more genteel, more civilized.

SATCH. Back when Pop ran this place...

HILDA. Back when Papa ran this place, it was the hub of the city. This waiting room was full of laughter and cigar smoke. I know it may sound ridiculous but I miss that.

MAGGIE. Oh, if that's all you want... (She takes out a long cigar and starts to light it.)

HILDA. Will you go outside if you're gonna smoke that thing? (She moves back to MAGGIE.) And don't you have some more mail to deliver?

MAGGIE. (dryly). Naw, I always save this place for last. (She puts the cigar back in her pocket.) I so look forward to this happy time of the day. Why don't you put up some decorations in here? There's this thing called Christmas, a big seller in the East.

SATCH. (going along). Is that the one where they decorate a bush?

MAGGIE. A whole tree! They pluck one up and put it in one side of the room. (She crosses D of the long table.) Say, over here, and then put all sorts of tinsel and ornaments on it...

HILDA. Keep it up. (She moves behind the counter.)

MAGGIE. And then, up at the top of the thing, they put an angel.

End Side #2
(Just then, one of the double doors opens and LEO enters, carrying a satchel. Everyone turns and looks at him.)

HILDA. Where'd you come from?

LEO. Me?

HILDA. Naw, those three wise men who just came looking for a stable. Yeah, you.

SATCH (*moves to the radio*). And people trying to find other places to go to. People who spend all their time reading brochures of far-off lands.

HILDA. Ain't nothing wrong with that? (*Before SATCH can turn on the radio.*) And don't try turning on that old radio again, I told you it broke.

LEO (*moves to HILDA*). Ah, you have to look at things differently. You'd be surprised what a little imagination can do. And a little hope can do wonders.

HILDA. Hope? You picked the most hopeless place in the world to visit, Mister.

LEO (*hands her a card*). Tannenbaum. Leo Tannenbaum.

MAGGIE. Tannen...

LEO. Spelled just like the song.

HILDA. We all lost hope years ago. Ain't fashionable these days.

LEO. Wait, everyone has hope.

HILDA. Yeah, I hope someday to get outta here.

LEO. No, I'm talking about right here, right now. You have hope. (*To SATCH*.) And so do you. (*To MAGGIE*.) And you, too.

HILDA. I do?

LEO. Sure. (*He crosses to the radio.*) You said yourself this thing's broken, right? But you still keep it around. Why? I'll tell you why. You hope it'll start working. (*He moves to MAGGIE*.) You see people everyday when you give them their trail. And you're always on the lookout, waiting to see if you brought them good news. You hope to brighten their lives.

MAGGIE. That's right. How'd you know...?

LEO. Just judging your demeanor.

SATCH. But how about me?

LEO. Same thing with your watch. You hoped it wasn't really out of commission. That's why you wear it.

SATCH. I never thought about it like that.

HILDA (*moves to LEO*). I wasn't talking about a little hope, day-to-day piddling wishes, I was talking about dreams. Real dreams. Real aspirations.

LEO (*moves back to the radio*). All of which start out small in the beginning. All grand plans, all great visions, all began... with a little hope. (*He reaches over and turns on the radio. A Christmas song comes on very clearly—"Joy To The World"—followed by other Christmas songs. He turns to see the others staring at him. He moves away as the others move to the radio.*)

SATCH (*after a pause*). He's good.

HILDA. You're a salesman, ain't you?

LEO (*again, almost laughs*). Comes with the territory.

MAGGIE. How'd he do that?

SATCH. I don't know but there's something stranger about this stranger than most strangers we get in here.

HILDA. Will you two stop? That thing obviously has a short in it. If you turn it just right, if you jostle it a little, that's all it takes. (*She looks back at LEO*.) Right?

LEO (*wriggles his eyebrows*). You hope. (*He sits on the couch and opens his satchel.*)

Side 3

Start

(PENELope enters through the outside door.)

Hilda, Penelope, Maggie, Leo

PENELope. Hilda.

HILDA (*still dazed*). Hah?

PENELope. I have to print something about the depot here.

Is it shutting down or not? (*This breaks the mood. SATCH shrugs and picks up a push broom leaning against the table. He begins sweeping as HILDA moves back to the*

counter with MAGGIE. MAGGIE retrieves a brochure and looks at it. LEO takes out a ledger of some sort and begins to make notes.)

HILDA. Oh, you'd like that, wouldn't you? Anything for a story in that rag of yours.

PENELOPE. I don't want them to close it down.

HILDA. Yeah, sure.

PENELOPE. But the people have a right to know.

HILDA. Well, you can tell the people they know as much as we do.

PENELOPE (looks around). Brother, this place is bleak. You ever think of decorating it? (She sees LEO.) Saamy, wait just one minute. You've done something different with the place, all right. You installed a customer.

HILDA. Yeah, go bother him.

PENELOPE. Say, an interview might not be a bad idea.

MAGGIE (to HILDA). This ought to be good.

PENELOPE. A fresh slant, just the thing. (She crosses to LEO.) Excuse me?

LEO (looks up). Yes?

PENELOPE. I hope I'm not bothering you. I'm Penelope

Blaisedale, I run the newspaper, the...

LEO (finishes her sentence). The Holy Herald, yes, I know.

(He rises and removes his hat.) Please.

PENELOPE (taken aback). Uhm...why, thank you. (She sits, very lady-like, as the others watch disgustedly.)

HILDA (to MAGGIE). Innocent as a new laid egg.

LEO (sits). I've so enjoyed your paper. Your writing style is excellent. Particularly your article on the refurbishing of the dump ground.

HILDA. You write what you know about. (PENELOPE shoots HILDA a look and then turns back to LEO.)

PENELOPE. Oh, I think you're just being kind. You haven't really read any of my...

LEO. A little skepticism is healthy in the working press. (He takes a folded newspaper out of his satchel and hands it to PENELOPE.) Here you are. "Refuse We Can't Refuse."

PENELOPE (takes the paper). Well, I'll be...

LEO. Your imagery is right on the money. Just the right amount of crisp irony. A little irony works great, doesn't it? Just what a good newspaper needs.

PENELOPE. When you can get it. (She looks over at the others.) And when it's appreciated.

HILDA. I thought you said a little hope was all you needed. Now, it's a little irony just when the newspaper editor walks in.

LEO. Irony, isn't it? (He rises and moves DL.) You know, if you had a Christmas tree right here, it would sure brighten up the place.

MAGGIE (moves to LEO). Yeah, we were just talking about that. And I said this would be a good spot to put...a...tree. (She looks hard at LEO.)

LEO. Something wrong?

MAGGIE. That was before you got here, when I picked out this space, I...

LEO. Yes?

MAGGIE (not sure). Kinda like a coincidence, huh?

LEO. Kinda. I bet we could get one and have it up in no time. It would pick up the whole place.

HILDA (moves to him). Just a minute, I'm in charge here. I decide what goes up and what doesn't. (Everyone stops and looks at her.) Well, maybe a tree would look nice...about...(She looks the room over and ends up in the same place)...here.

SATCH. The executive mind at work.

Side #3 END

PENELOPE. Yeah.

MAGGIE. So you think he's some kind of bookkeeper.

PENELOPE. Wait. How'd you know?

MAGGIE (*flipping*). It's easy when you know what signs to look for.

Side #4 START
(MYRNA enters through the outside door, carrying several
clipped booklets of paper.)

Hilda, Satch,

Maggie, Penelope,

Myrna

HILDA. Oh, no. That's all I need.

MAGGIE. We having practice today?

MYRNA. We don't have any other choice. If we're all going caroling tonight...

HILDA. We're all *not* going caroling tonight. (*She crosses to the storage room and throws the broom inside.*)

SATCH (*offstage*). Ow!

HILDA. Sorry.

MYRNA. What do you mean, we not all going caroling? (*To MAGGIE.*) What does she mean, we're not all going caroling tonight?

HILDA. What's the point? I mean, what do we have to sing about?

MAGGIE. Oh, you got a real good attitude. I have this feeling you're going to be visited by three ghosts *retentat* soon.

MYRNA (*moves in front of the couch*). Well, a couple'a Christmas carols and you'll cheer right up. Come on. Everybody down here. (*PENELOPE and MAGGIE follow her and line up. MYRNA stands in front of them, acting as conductor.*) Hilda, come on now.

HILDA. I ain't up to it...really.

MYRNA. Now don't make us beg you.

MAGGIE. Come on, Hilda. We need a bass. (*HILDA glares at MAGGIE for a minute then, reluctantly, joins the group. MYRNA hands out the books.*)

PENELOPE. What're we going to try first?

MYRNA. Page eight. "The Twelve Days of Christmas." (*The others start thumbing through the books.*) No, no, don't look at the words.

MAGGIE. Well, what did you give us the books for, if we can't look at them?

MYRNA. I just think it'd be a good idea if we knew the words by heart. We'll have the books along in case we don't.

HILDA. Let's just say we don't and look at the books.

MYRNA. But suppose we *can't* look at the books?

HILDA. They're right here in front of us.

MYRNA. I know...

HILDA (*to MAGGIE*). They're right here, I'm right here, where're you?

MAGGIE. Right next to you. Is this one of the songs?

MYRNA. But suppose we can't read the words? Suppose the wind's blowing too hard, or there isn't any light somewhere, then what're you going to do?

HILDA. Hum.

PENELOPE. She's in a mood.

HILDA. Will you people stop saying that?

MYRNA. We need Satch.

HILDA. Don't call him.

MYRNA (*calls out*). SATCH! (*A crash is heard from the storage room.*)

HILDA (*grinaces*). I told you not to call him.

(*SATCH enters from the storage room and crosses to the group.*)

SATCH. Hilda, you remember you was wondering where you'd put your good china?

HILDA (*alarmed*). What?!

SATCH. Just kidding. It didn't break. (*He waves her off.*)

HILDA (*relieved*). Good!

SATCH. Not all of it.

HILDA. Huh?

MYRNA. Satch, we're doing "The Twelve Days of Christmas" and we're doing it by rote.

SATCH (*looks at his hands*). But I ain't got anything with it wrote in.

HILDA. That's not what rote means.

MYRNA. Rote is by heart.

SATCH. I don't care who wrote it, I ain't got any.

MAGGIE. Try doing it from memory.

SATCH (*nods*). And if that don't work, we'll get somebody to wrote it down.

PENELOPE. Is he like this all the time?

HILDA. Not on Thursdays.

PENELOPE. How come?

SATCH. That's my day off.

MYRNA. Can we get started? I only have an hour off for lunch. Now, Maggie, you sing the first verse, then Hilda, you take the second one, Satch, you take the third one, Penelope, you take the fourth one and we'll all sing the fifth, (*She sings.*) fiiive goood riiings. Ready? (*Everyone clears their throats, making horrible coughing and rasping noises.* MYRNA *waits for it to die down.*) I may not have lunch.

PENELOPE. But we all sing in the beginning?

MYRNA. Right, and the fifth, (*She sings again.*) fiiive goood riiings. Ready? (*She drops her arm and conducts them.*)

ALL (*In different keys*). On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me... (*MYRNA flags them to stop quickly.*)

MYRNA. In the same key!

PENELOPE. Well, somebody needs to give us the key.

MAGGIE. You want to do it? It's a filthy job.

SATCH. Why don't we get that rote guy to do it?

HILDA. Will you drop that?

MYRNA (*searches her pockets*). I had a pitch pipe with me when I started out. Oh, well. (*She hums a tone. Everyone begins humming and zeroing in on the note. Then, again, MYRNA drops her arm and they begin.*)

ALL. On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me...

MAGGIE. A partridge in a pear tree. (*MYRNA nods approval.*)

ALL. On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me...

HILDA (*flatly*). Two turtle doves.

MAGGIE. And a partridge in a pear tree.

ALL. On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me...

SATCH. Three fat ducks.

MYRNA. Hold it! (*They stop singing.*)

HILDA (*slaps SATCH's shoulder*). Three fat ducks?

SATCH. Well, it's three birds of some kind, what difference does it make?

HILDA. Who's gonna give somebody three fat ducks!

SATCH. I'd rather get that than a partridge in a pear tree!

HILDA (*to MYRNA*). Why don't we just dress him up like

Santa Claus and throw him down a chimney?!

MYRNA (*hands a book to SATCH*). Just read off the lyrics for now. I had to hand write the words on the music. Hope you can read it.

PENELOPE. What are the three birds, anyway?

MAGGIE (*reads her book*). Here it is. (*She squints.*) "Three fried hicks."

MYRNA. That's "three French hens"!

MAGGIE (*trying to read it*). It is?

HILDA. Why're we bothering with this anyway?

MYRNA. You really are in a mood, aren't you?

HILDA. But what's the point?

MYRNA (*irate*). It's to spread joy and gladness and Christmas spirit! Now, cheer up, dang it! (*She composes herself.*)

Where were we?

SATCH. "Three fat ducks."

MAGGIE. "Three fried hicks."

MYRNA. "Three French hens!" (*She rolls her eyes.*)

HILDA (*sarcastically*). Cheered up now, are you?

MYRNA. Where were you at Halloween when we needed a witch to burn? Look. (*She looks at MAGGIE'S book.*) It's "three French hens" and then after that... (*She points to PENELOPE.*)

PENELOPE (*tries to read it*). "Four Climbing Blimps."

MYRNA. "Four calling birds," my God!

PENELOPE. This says "four calling birds, my God"?

MYRNA. No! It says "four calling birds." I said "my God"!

PENELOPE. What are calling birds, anyway?

MAGGIE. And what're they calling for?

SATCH. Three fat ducks. (*HILDA moves to him.*) Don't hit me again!

HILDA (*to MYRNA*). You're sure we want to sing this thing? Christmas will be over by the time we get through.

MYRNA. Let's start from the beginning. (*Everyone else groans.*) That's the spirit. Okay. (*She hums a tone and drops her arm. They begin.*)

ALL. On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me...

MAGGIE. A partridge in a pear tree.

ALL. On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me...

HILDA (*again flatly*). Two turtle doves.

MAGGIE. And a partridge in a pear tree.

ALL. On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me... (*Everyone turns and looks at SATCH with a hard glare.*)

SATCH. Three French hens.

END Side #4
(*They relax and continue. LEO enters through the outside door and listens.*)

HILDA. Two turtle doves.

MAGGIE. And a partridge in a pear tree.

ALL. On the fourth day of Christmas my true love gave to me...

PENELOPE. Four calling birds.

SATCH. Three French hens.

HILDA. Two turtle doves.

MAGGIE. And a partridge in a pear tree.

ALL. On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me... (*Everyone gets ready to sing but LEO takes the lead in a voice pure and refined.*)

LEO. Fiivve gooodd riitiings! (*Everyone stops and looks at LEO.*)

SATCH. What the heck was that?

MYRNA (*trappurous*). That was lovely!

LEO. Oh, sorry. I hope I didn't interrupt your song.

MYRNA. Who're you and can you help us?

JERRY. I'll tell you your problem. You're a woman!

DONNA & PENNELOPE. Hey!

PENNELOPE: That's a hasty generalization. You can't assume that whatever you argue with Donna about—she's an individual—applies to all women!

MAGGIE: That would be like me saying just because Satch is a wisecracking, slightly crazy, Martian-seeking kook—so are ALL men.

PENNELOPE: No! Not Satch. (All pause. SHE looks to Satch.)

He's an individual who's loyal—(stepping closer to him) funny—(stepping closer to him) and caring (sharing a moment with their eyes).

LEO (holding an ornament). Jerry. (He nods for JERRY to come over to him. As JERRY crosses to him, LEO hands the ornament to PENNELOPE and she and SATCH continue decorating the tree.) Let's get a fresh look at this thing. What started the argument between you two?

JERRY (defiantly). What started it? I'll tell you what started it. (He deflates.) I don't know what started it. (HILDA hangs up the phone.)

LEO. Well, let's just try to get to the bottom of this. (He moves JERRY over to the couch and forces him to sit. DONNA moves further down the couch to get away from him.) Donna, why don't you talk this out calmly.

DONNA. I don't see how it's any of your business.

LEO. You almost got me in a fist fight with your husband. Don't you think that entitles me to say something right about here?

DONNA (weakens). I'm sorry about that. (Glares at JERRY.)

But that's all!

LEO (behind the couch). Fine. Now, why did you marry Jerry?

DONNA. What?

LEO. Simple question of motive. Why did you marry him?

DONNA. I...I don't know right now.

LEO. You married him because you fell in love with him.

And why? Because he seemed so helpless.

DONNA. Well, I guess, in the beginning...

JERRY. What do you mean, I seemed so helpless?

DONNA (smiles). Well, you did. Clothes were never ironed, you were always eating out, you couldn't manage your money...

JERRY. I did all right.

LEO (shakes his head at JERRY). No, you didn't.

JERRY. What?

DONNA. You were always losing things.

JERRY. Like what?

LEO (leans in). Like her, if you don't shut up.

JERRY. Well, will you please answer me this? Why are you mad at me?

DONNA. You don't know?

JERRY. No.

DONNA. You really don't know?

JERRY. No.

DONNA (after a slight pause). You really don't know.

JERRY (to LEO). This what you mean by us talking it out?

LEO. Say no.

JERRY (back to DONNA). No.

DONNA. Well...

PENNELOPE (to SATCH). Here it comes.

DONNA. If you don't know, I'm not going to tell you! (She crosses her arms. HILDA is all smiles as she moves over to LEO.) Side #5 start

LEO. Just try to think, Jerry. Back when the argument started.

JERRY. O-kay! (He gets a confused look on his face.)

Leo Donna, Jerry, Satch, Penelope

Hilda - 1 line

LEO (*to HILDA*). Good phone call?

HILDA. You can say that again.

SATCH (*hopefully*). They ain't closing down the station?

HILDA. Didn't have anything to do with the station. It was a personal call.

SATCH (*to PENELOPE*). She's got personals now.

PENELOPE. I heard.

LEO. Well, Jerry.

JERRY. Well, the only thing I can remember is we got back some pictures we took at the family reunion last month.

LEO. Yours or hers?

JERRY. Oh, mine. And she took the pictures. And we were just looking at them, everything was going along sweet as pie, and then she ups and gets angry with me.

DONNA. For no reason, obviously.

LEO. What did you say, Jerry?

JERRY. Nothing...only...

LEO. Only what?

JERRY. Well, some of them was out of focus.

DONNA (*enraged*). Two of them were blurry. Only two!

JERRY. Yeah, the pictures of Uncle George were blurry.

DONNA. Your uncle George is blurry!

JERRY. He just needs a shave.

DONNA. And steam cleaning.

JERRY. Hey, don't go picking on Uncle George.

DONNA. Well, you were picking on my photography skills.

PENELOPE. Skills? (*She moves to them.*) I think I see where this went.

JERRY. Yeah, that's right! She starts in saying...

LEO (*finishes JERRY'S thought*). That she'd like to take pictures professionally.

JERRY. Yeah. And the only reason why she was having trouble that day...

LEO (*again jumping in*). Was because she needed a better camera.

DONNA. Listen, I could've done a much better job...

PENELOPE (*finishing DONNA'S idea*). If you had a stronger lens.

DONNA. Right. See, I really...

PENELOPE. Have an eye for scenes and composition. (*To LEO.*) This is fun.

SATCH (*moves to them*). Yeah, and then Jerry says he really can't afford a new camera right now.

PENELOPE (*to SATCH*). And Donna comes right back with "If you can afford to keep fixing up that stupid truck, you can afford me a new camera!"

SATCH. But a camera is a luxury and we need the truck.

PENELOPE. Not if I can start making money with taking pictures. (*DONNA and JERRY move their heads back and forth as they watch their lives being relived.*)

SATCH. Yeah, and how long will that take? We need the truck right now.

PENELOPE. You just won't admit that I might be a good photographer.

SATCH. I didn't say anything like that.

PENELOPE. Then buy me a new camera with a stronger lens!

SATCH. I already told you we can't afford it!

PENELOPE. That's because you're the cheapest man in the world!

SATCH. Because I won't buy you a camera?

PENELOPE. Because you won't even talk about it! I'm going home to Mother! (*She turns to HILDA.*) Hilda, give me a ticket!

HILDA (*amazed*). What are you talking about?

PENELOPE. Huh? *(Realizes she has gotten carried away.)*

Oh, sorry.

LEO *(to JERRY)*. Something like that?

JERRY. Now, that's scary.

LEO. Now you know what started it, you can solve it.

JERRY. Can't we just watch Satch and Penny solve it and go on from there?

DONNA. Oh, that's just like you!

JERRY. Sure sounded like me.

Side #5 **END**

(MAGGIE enters through the outside door carrying a tray of cookies.)

MAGGIE. I brought the cookies. *(She moves to the table.)*

There's some more out in the car.

HILDA. I'll help you.

LEO *(starts to move)*. Oh, let me get them. *(HILDA holds him in one place.)*

HILDA. No, no, you stay right here. Don't want you leaving right now.

LEO. I beg your pardon?

HILDA. I mean...*(She indicates JERRY and DONNA)*...you

got your work cut out for you here. You just stay here. We'll get the refreshments. *(HILDA and MAGGIE exit through the outside door.)*

PENELOPE. She certainly cheered up all of a sudden.

LEO. Wonder why?

SATCH. I bet it was that phone call. *(He thinks about it.)*

JERRY. Donna, why can't we just stop arguing until after Christmas, at least.

DONNA. And what good will *that* do?

JERRY. Well, we can have our holiday and exchange presents.

DONNA. Oh, that's it, huh? *(She crosses to her suitcase and opens it. She extracts a wrapped present and shoves it into JERRY's arms.)* Here! Merry Christmas!

JERRY. No, I don't mean here, I mean...

LEO *(looks at the tree)*. No, Jerry, that's what's missing. Put it under the tree. *(He is starting to get excited.)* Presents. That's what's needed. Satch. *(JERRY shrugs and places the gift under the tree.)*

SATCH. Yeah?

LEO. You got any presents here?

SATCH. Well, I got one for Hilda, it's...*(He indicates the office.)*

LEO. Get it. Put it under the tree.

SATCH. Right, Leo. Whatever you say. *(He exits into the office.)*

PENELOPE *(moves to LEO)*. What're you up to now?

LEO. Just fixing the place up. Tell me, you've known Hilda how long?

PENELOPE. Years now. Why?

LEO. Then you know why she hates Christmas, right?

PENELOPE. I'm not real sure...

(FAIRFAX enters quietly from the storage room.)

FAIRFAX. Mrs. Trowbridge?

LEO *(crosses to him)*. Just stepped out for a minute. Maybe I can help you.

FAIRFAX. Well, I suppose. I got everything down on this inventory sheet except for the decorations on that tree and this one other box here. *(He pulls a large box out of the storage room.)* It's not exactly railroad required, if you understand my meaning.

(He places it next to the other gifts.) Right? What? What happened?

HILDA *(moves to SATCH)*. The daughter also said she was calling back because she didn't leave her number the first time. *(SATCH looks up, guiltily.)* Said she'd called once before and talked to some guy. Satch, why didn't you tell me she called? You knew about Leo?

SATCH. Why? I tell you why. Because of what you all just said. All the good he'd been doing, all the tinsel, all the singing, all the... Christmas. Yeah, I knew he was here and I didn't tell her. And if I had it to do all over again, I'd do it the same way.

HILDA. But he needs to be watched, he needs help, he needs...

SATCH. You listen to me, Hilda Trowbridge. If Leo Tanenbaum or Smith or whatever his name is ain't right in his head then I wish it was catchin' 'I. If what he's done is outta bounds with normal behavior around here, then it's us that ought to be watched. That man in the storage room is the happiest man I ever met. And he's willing to share it. Now, I myself have been accused to being what they call eccentric, maybe that's all that's wrong with him. Or should I say, *right* with him.

JERRY. Wait a minute, that guy's daughter is coming for him right now?

HILDA. Be here shortly, she said.

JERRY. And what's she going to do with him?

HILDA. Well, she said she didn't have any choice now. He's... *(Everyone groups around her and she looks hard at them.)* What is this ambush all of a sudden?

MAGGIE. What's she going to do to Leo, Hilda?

DONNA. Yeah, what'd she say?

HILDA. She said she'd probably have to commit him. *(Everyone else starts looking at each other.)* She said she didn't have any choice. He won't recognize anything or anybody he knows, he goes off on these binges, pretending to be something he ain't...

JERRY *(to SATCH)*. I got my truck outside.

SATCH. Where're you going to take him?

JERRY. Wherever he wants to go.

MAGGIE *(moves to the outside door)*. I'll keep a lookout.

SATCH *(knocks on storage door)*. Leo, can I see you a minute?

HILDA. What're you doing? *(She crosses to SATCH.)* Just what do you think you're going to do, help him get away? SATCH. Just as fast as I can.

DONNA *(to JERRY)*. We can take him to our house until after Christmas.

JERRY. Our house? I thought you were going to your mother's and...

DONNA. Can't you tell a marital spat when you hear one.

MYRNA. Wait a minute, how come you get to take him to your house? He can stay at mine.

MAGGIE *(moves away from the door)*. Wait. They're gonna start looking for him. Let me take him outta here in the mail truck.

PENELOPE. And what will you say if they stop you?

MAGGIE. I'll say he's special delivery.

HILDA. I don't believe you people!

SATCH *(knocks again)*. Leo! You in there?

HILDA. This man is unstable. He's capable of anything!

MYRNA. We've seen what he's capable of.

MAGGIE. And what you're capable of.

HILDA. Don't turn this on me! I'm just doing my job.

MAGGIE. Yeah, keep telling yourself that.

SATCH. I hope he ain't run out the back door of the storage room.

HILDA. Satch!

SATCH. What?

HILDA. There ain't a back door to the storage room.

SATCH. Oh, yeah. *Side #6 End*

(LEO comes out and closes the door behind him.)

LEO. Someone call me?

SATCH *(moves him to JERRY)*. Yeah, Leo, we want you to take a little ride with us.

LEO. What?

JERRY. Yeah, Leo, we want you to spend Christmas with us.

LEO *(stopping them)*. Hold it. You do?

JERRY. Yes, we do.

DONNA. Both of us.

LEO *(smiles)*. Thank you, Donna. But I...

DONNA. We won't take no for an answer. We want you to have *your* Christmas.

LEO. My Christmas?

SATCH. Yeah, Leo. You've been so busy propping up *our* holiday, it never occurred to us that maybe it's *you* that needs help.

LEO. Me?

MAGGIE. It's our way of paying you back.

PENELOPE. Our greeting card to you.

LEO. Oh, that's so nice.

JERRY. Only we don't have much time. *(He starts pulling LEO to the door again. LEO stops them.)*

LEO. Wait a minute, I can't go. Oh, I appreciate the thought. You don't *know* how much I appreciate it. But I got a train to catch. *(To HILDA.)* The Christmas Express, remember?

HILDA *(looking off)*. They ain't run that thing in years. *(LEO moves away from the others and to HILDA.)*

LEO. And you won't believe any differently, will you, Hilda?

HILDA. Facts is facts, and you can't change them, no matter what kinda tricks you got up your sleeve, Mr. Smith!

LEO *(as if almost remembering)*. Smith? Smith.

JERRY. Leo, we need to get out of here!

DONNA. Yeah, I need to start dinner.

LEO *(looks squarely at HILDA)*. Hilda, listen to me. The Christmas Express is coming. I'm telling you, it'll be here.

And I have to be on it.

SATCH. Leo, you can't just sit around here, waiting for some train.

LEO. Oh, Satch, haven't you gotten it yet? I know Hilda hasn't. But, don't you see? It's not just a train, it's a feeling, a sound, a sensation, a visit, a gift, not just transportation. Whenever you suddenly get a feeling something's going to happen, something good, that's the Christmas Express. Whenever you're feeling down and you hear a sound, maybe a train whistle or a doorbell or a telephone, and you know it's good news, that's the Christmas Express. It can be anything that brings joy to your heart. And I call it the Christmas Express... because it's the expression of the feeling of Christmas. And what better feeling is there? What better sound? What better sign is there for Christmas? *Side #7 Start*

(Suddenly, the storage room door bursts open and FAIRFAX, now dressed completely as SANTA CLAUS, jumps out.)

FAIRFAX. Merry Christmas! Ho ho ho! Merry Christmas!

LEO. Well, there's that.

*Pennelope
Maggie*

*Donna,
Jerry,*

*Satch, Deborah, Myrna,
Fairfax, Leo,*

MYRNA. Who in the world...?

SATCH. Mr. Fairfax?

HILDA (*grabs LEO*). What did you do to him?

FAIRFAX (*makes a motion like he's cracking a whip*). On

Dasher, on Dancer, on Prancer, on Vixen!

LEO (*moves to FAIRFAX*). You look great, Theodore.

FAIRFAX. You can call me Santa. (*He holds his stomach and laughs.*) And have all you been good little boys and girls?

LEO. You're just in time, Santa. I think we need you to hand out the presents. Oop! Wait. I almost forgot one. (*He crosses to his satchel. He opens it and takes out an old envelope.*)

HILDA (*crosses to FAIRFAX*). Mr. Fairfax, I can assure you...

FAIRFAX. Please...Santa.

HILDA. You don't have to humor him, sir.

DONNA. Jerry, we need to get him out of here.

JERRY. Oh, right. (*He rushes over to LEO, followed by DONNA.*) Leo! We need to get to the house.

(*DEBORAH enters through the outside door.*)

LEO (*moves to FAIRFAX*). Just a second. Delivery for old Saint Nick.

JERRY. Leo!

DEBORAH. Excuse me? I'm looking for my father. I'm Deborah Smith and...oh, there you are, Dad!

HILDA. About time you got here. I didn't think he was going to be here much longer.

SATCH (*hand on LEO's shoulder*). We tried, Leo. (*Everyone sadly watches as DEBORAH crosses to LEO. However, she passes him and moves to FAIRFAX.*)

DEBORAH. What're you doing in this outfit?

HILDA. Wait. I thought...(*She points to LEO*.)

FAIRFAX. I'm Santa Claus.

DEBORAH. Oh, Dad!

HILDA. But that's not him.

DEBORAH. What?

HILDA. That's not your dad.

DEBORAH. I ought to know my own father.

FAIRFAX. Debbie, it's all right. (*He moves to LEO*.) Leo asked me to play Saint Nick. I can do some good for once.

DEBORAH. I don't care who asked you...(*She realizes.*) You called me Debbie. (*She moves to FAIRFAX.*)

FAIRFAX. That's your name, isn't it?

DEBORAH. You know me, Dad? You recognized me?

FAIRFAX. It's all right, Debbie. (*They hug.*) It's all right, now. After all, it's Christmas. Right, Leo?

LEO. Right, Theodore. (*PENELOPE wipes an eye.*)

MAGGIE (*to PENELOPE*). You crying?

PENELOPE. Shut up!

SATCH. Then if this is Mr. Smith...? (*He turns to LEO.*)

LEO. Time for the presents. Santa?

FAIRFAX (*moves to the tree*). Up on the rooftop, click, click, click, down through the chimney with good Saint Nick. (*He stops and turns back.*) Oh, Debbie, I'm sorry I don't have your present with me.

DEBORAH. Oh, Dad, you just gave me the greatest present I could ever ask for.

FAIRFAX. Well...be that as it may. Now, let's see what we have here? Side #7 END

LEO. Get Donna's first.

DONNA. Huh?

JERRY (*to LEO*). You knew, didn't you?

FAIRFAX (*holds up a gift*). Donna Cummings. (*He crosses and hands the gift to DONNA.*)