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## **Cast of Characters**

JOEY PRESTON, 20s, white

JOANNA BROWN, 20s, African American

IZZY MARQUISS, 30s, white

WALLY KRAKOWSKI, 30s, white

MUSICIAN, 40s or 50s

## **Time**

1954, Christmas Eve

## **Place**

Chicago.

A radio station sound studio.

Secondarily, a city street.

## **Production Notes**

A note about music: optimally, the actor playing Wally is proficient on piano, since he leads all the songs from the keyboard and plays some transitions for the radio show. The Musician can play any session instrument, ideally double-bass or sax or possibly trumpet. Or anything that works.

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# 'Twas the Night

by Robert Ford

## Scene 1

(LIGHTS UP on a Chicago city street. 1954. JOANNA BROWN, 20s, African American, and JOEY PRESTON, 20s, white, are waiting for a bus.

(The first few lines overlap like crazy:)

JOEY. No, no—

JO. No, it'll work—

JOEY. Sounds like—

JO. No it doesn't—

JOEY. Sounds too much like—

JO. Joey!

JOEY. (Singing:) *The weather outside is frightful—*

JO. Just listen.

JOEY. But the fire—

JO. Listen.

JOEY. But the fire—

JO. Just listen.

JOEY. All right, I'm listening.

JO. (Singing:)  
*Crouching by the fire,  
I feel my cheeks on fire,*

JOEY. *You are such a liar—*

JO. Will you stop?

JOEY. You don't have a fireplace—

JO. Stop it.

*Yeah...I can build a fire  
It's true.*

JOEY. You cannot do that.

JO. Why not?

JOEY. You can't just repeat the same word, it's not a rhyme.

JO. That's the point. Crouching by the *fire*, I feel my cheeks on *fire*. I can build a *fire*. Makes you think about fire.

JOEY. This is a Christmas song?

JO. Does it or does it not make you think of fire?

JOEY. It's more a love song.

JO. (*Heading into the street...*) You haven't even heard it.

JOEY. A *torch* song, get it? Torch—?

JO. I get it—

JOEY. Waiting by the fire?

JO. (*Looking for the bus:*) Meanwhile, Wally's gonna kill us.

JOEY. What does he care?

JO. He always cares.

JOEY. We're late one last time? Who cares? Next verse.

JO. No.

JOEY. Next verse.

JO. No.

*(But he waits.)*

You don't deserve it.

*(He waits.)*

You sure?

*(He nods.)*

*I've wrapped up all the presents –  
all the Christmas presents –  
That little pile of presents  
Sure grew.*

Well?

JOEY. Nobody does that.

JO. I do.

JOEY. It's gotta rhyme. Like, change "presents" to "gifts."

JO. Uh-uh.

JOEY. Then you've got...lifts, rifts, drifts—drifts is great, snow drifts...

JO. I need two syllables.

JOEY. Why do you need two syllables?

JO. I need two syllables.

JOEY. So then you've got, all right...peasants.

JO. *Such a lot of peasants.*

JOEY. Okay, pheasants. Pheasants is Christmas. My grandma made pheasant.

JO. Oh come on.

JOEY. She used to make it.

JO. In Chicago?

JOEY. Come Christmas, that's all she used to talk about.

JO. I actually *had* pheasant.

JOEY. Oh yeah?

JO. Yeah.

JOEY. How'd it taste?

JO. You don't believe me? Christmas dinner. Daddy brought 'em in from the fields, one or two birds. Had to go around a big table.

JOEY. Uh-huh. Nice and greasy, I bet.

JO. You are not getting back on my good side.

JOEY. What other side you got?

JO. Oh please. I'm walking. *(She starts off down the sidewalk.)*

JOEY. *(Calling after her:)* Here's a riddle, Joanna Brown...how can you be in two places at one time?

JO. Like here, and clear across town where we're supposed to be in *(Checking:)* eleven minutes?

JOEY. No, no—

JO. Or like last night? Like how you were wherever you were *(Glancing around to make sure they're alone:)* when you were supposed to be with me at the movies?

JOEY. No.

JO. *(Still circumspect:)* You gonna tell me where you were?

JOEY. I can't.

*(She starts to walk.)*

**JOEY.** Take Santa Claus, okay? He's *gotta* be more than one place at a time. How's he gonna get down every chimney in every city in every country in the world in one night?

**JO.** I don't have a chimney.

**JOEY.** Me neither, but, genius that I am, I have figured out how to be in two places at once. I have figured out how to be in New York and Chicago at the same time.

*(Beat.)*

**JO.** Joey...

**JOEY.** The Broadway Limited. New York to Chicago. Sixteen hours... It's a sleeper. Gets in over at Union Station, I looked into it.

What.

**JO.** It's fifteen-and-a-half on the Twentieth Century.

**JOEY.** Fifteen-and-a-half?

**JO.** Twentieth Century Limited. Fifteen-and-a-half hours. And you can get it right over on LaSalle... I looked into it too. Also. As well.

**JOEY.** See?

**JO.** Yeah.

**JOEY.** No sweat.

**JO.** Yeah...no sweat.

**JOEY.** So sing me the third verse?

**JO.** Now you're pushing it.

*(LIGHTS SHIFT TO: Studio B at radio station WCGW. Low-rent, with a sound effects table, a standing mic or two, music stands, a well-worn spinet, maybe a snare and high hat. There's a cramped office just off the studio, which may or may not be separated by sound-proof glass. Also, possibly: a sound-proof window to the hallway outside the studio, so we can see anyone approach.)*

*(IZZY, 30s, white, has just gotten off the phone in the office. She glances down at the trash basket out of which she pulls a folder: a radio script in a blue cover. She flattens out the wrinkles, crosses to the sound effects table. It's not her thing, but she's going to give it her best shot.)*

**IZZY.** *(Reading from script. Man's voice:)* "Hey, Betsy. Over here."

*(Sound effects: She does FOOTSTEPS. Same voice:)*

"Is that who I think it is?"

*(Woman's voice:)*

"Open the window, Frank, too much frost."

*(IZZY looks around the table for something to make the window sound with. She's going to try the "door.")*

"...too much frost."

*(She tries the "door"—sounds like a door. She picks up some other device.)*

"...too much frost."

*(Tries it. Doesn't work. Is going to use her voice:)*

"...too much frost." K-chung. P-sch-sch-sch-sch.

*(She makes a pretty good whispered sound of wind blowing, and interrupts herself with dialogue. Man's voice:)*

"Is it him?"

*(Attempts sound of WIND. Interrupts with Man's voice:)*

"It is, isn't it."

*(Woman's voice, alternating with man's:)*

"Really?"

"I think it is."

"It can't be."

"Hey, Santa!!"

"Shh!"

"Over here!!"

"What are you doing?"

"Over here, Santa Claus!!"

"Leave him alone."

"What?"

"He's got his rounds he's gotta make."

*(WIND SOUND. Woman:)*

"You really think that's him?"

"Sure. There's the eight reindeer."

"The eight reindeer."

"Flying."

(*Man:*)

"Weird."

(*WIND SOUND.*)

"There he goes."

"There he goes."

(*WIND SOUND. Man:*)

"He's gone."

"Sure is cold all of a sudden."

"Right."

P-sch-sch-sch-sch. K-chung.

(*WALTER KRAKOWSKI, 30s, white, has entered and been watching in the shadows of the studio.*)

**WALLY.** What's all this?

**IZZY.** My God...sneak up on a girl.

**WALLY.** Where's Sam?

**IZZY.** He's...I got a call. He's—

**WALLY.** Stop... I don't wanna know.

(*He starts to remove his things.*)

**IZZY.** Hey, Wally...you shouldn't...

**WALLY.** What.

**IZZY.** It shouldn't end like this.

**WALLY.** Like what?

**IZZY.** Frank says, "Right." P-sch-sch-sch-sch. K-chung.

**WALLY.** Try it with the sandpaper block.

**IZZY.** It shouldn't end with the window closing.

**WALLY.** We're not using my script.

**IZZY.** I know, but—

**WALLY.** She says, "Sure is cold," he closes the window. I like it. And...oh yeah, we're not using that script.

**IZZY.** I know—

**WALLY.** You pull it outta the trash?

**IZZY.** Here's what she should say... (*Sexy*) "Sure is cold all of a sudden." Like that.

**WALLY.** Uh-huh.

**IZZY.** Betsy says, "Sure is cold all of a sudden..." (*Looking incredibly huggable:*) See what I'm getting at? Window stays open, so he has to, you know...

**WALLY.** Got it. (*He grabs the script from her, ducks into the office, tosses it back in the trash basket.*) So where is he?

**IZZY.** Frank? He's at the window.

**WALLY.** Sam. Where's Sam?

**IZZY.** He had to go see his sister.

**WALLY.** His sister?

**IZZY.** Yeah.

**WALLY.** Same one who was sick *last* Christmas?

**IZZY.** This time she's getting married.

**WALLY.** Getting married? Sam's just finding this out, that his sister's getting married?

**IZZY.** Shotgun wedding, Walter. It happens. (*Beat.*) I could do it.

**WALLY.** Get married?

**IZZY.** No. I could do the sound effects. (*She grabs something at random from the sound effects table, makes sound.*)

**WALLY.** Uh-huh. Lovebirds are late. (*Glancing around.*) Everything humming next door?

**IZZY.** Father MacIntyre's talking with God.

**WALLY.** With him or to him?

**IZZY.** What's the difference?

**WALLY.** *To* him, it's just your own voice. *With* him, you hear something back.

**IZZY.** Glad to be enlightened.

**WALLY.** Glad to enlighten you.

**IZZY.** The nuns teach you that?

**WALLY.** No, that was Rabbi Silverman. The nuns taught me that when it's cold outside you shut the window. (*Noticing:*) We're outta coffee here.

(JO and JOEY have entered the hallway, just off stage.)

**JOEY.** (*Offstage:*) A-one, a-two, a-one two three four

**JOEY/JO.** (*Entering:*)

TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY  
 FA LA LA LA LA, LA LA LA LA  
 ALL EXCEPT FOR OUR FRIEND WALLY  
 FA LA LA LA LA, LA LA LA LA  
 HE WILL SING THAT SAME OLD CAROL  
 FA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA  
 'CUZ HE'S GOT US OVER A BARREL  
 FA LA LA LA LA, LA LA LA LA

(*They end with an open gesture to him, as if it's his line.*)

**WALLY.** You two are late.

**JOEY.** You think we planned it that way? Besides...

**JO.**

It's his fault.

**JOEY.**

It's her fault.

**WALLY.** A coupla real entertainers.

(*IZZY is standing with her hand out.*)

What?

**IZZY.** Coffee money. Ever since the big announcement, no one's been adding to the can.

**WALLY.** Oh. (*He hands her some money.*)

**IZZY.** (*Exiting:*) Be right back.

**WALLY.** Where was I...oh, yeah...you're late.

**JOEY.** It's just a rehearsal.

**WALLY.** Try that line in New York.

**JOEY.** I will.

**WALLY.** I know you will, and they'll send you back to Des Moines where you belong.

**JOEY.** Except I'm from Chicago.

**WALLY.** Yeah, so's the Queen of England.

**JOEY.** I grew up on the North Side.

**WALLY.** Yeah?

**JOEY.** C'mon, Wally—

**WALLY.** Most triple plays in the National League. What year?

JOEY. Sox or Cubs?

WALLY. He proves my point.

JOEY. Sox or Cubs?

WALLY. Don't insult me.

JOEY. You're insulting me.

JO. Cubs. 1947. Two triple plays in the season. Both against Cincinnati.

WALLY. Sox are American League.

JOEY. (*Making nasal buzzer sound, then:*) I was joking.

WALLY. I said National League.

JOEY. It was a joke.

WALLY. It was a joke and I'll knock your damn lights out.

JOEY. (*Ralph Kramden:*) Why I oughta...

WALLY. And you're no Jackie Gleason.

JOEY. Thank God.

WALLY. Can we work please?

*(JO and JOEY are getting themselves ready.)*

JO. Where's the band?

WALLY. Maybe tonight.

JOEY. Maybe?

WALLY. You know how it is with horn players around the holidays.

JOEY. (*A glance with JO.*) No. How is it?

WALLY. They've got church jobs. Plus...I'm a little tight.

JOEY. Don't tell me you lost a sponsor.

WALLY. I lost a sponsor.

JO. Who'd we lose?

WALLY. Skinner's. Last minute.

JOEY. You lost Skinner's? How'd you lose Skinner's?

WALLY. Just forget it.

JOEY. It's raisin bran, for Pete's sake.

WALLY. "We're not sponsoring a tearjerker."

JO. They said that?

**WALLY.** It's a tearjerker. The episode. City Police.

**JOEY.** They're crazy.

**WALLY.** They don't want people sobbing into their raisin bran Christmas morning.

**JO.** Soggy flakes.

**JOEY.** You happen to mention that everybody's gonna be listening? I mean everybody in the world?

**WALLY.** Sure I did. It's bad news. They don't want it associated with their flakes.

**JOEY.** They're idiots.

**JO.** It is the last show, Joey.

**JOEY.** It's not the last show.

**JO.** It's the last *Wally K's Variety Hour*.

**JOEY.** Wait, which is it...is Skinner's upset because the variety hour's going off the air, or because of City Police?

**WALLY.** That's not it.

**JOEY.** 'Cause City Police is not going off the air—I mean, going to television is not going off the air—

**WALLY.** Joey—

**JOEY.** Plus it's the holiday show. Nobody misses the holiday show.

**JO.** It's the break-up, Joey. Betsy and Frank. Right, Wally?

(*Beat.*)

**JOEY.** You showed Skinner's the script?

**WALLY.** 'Course I did.

**JOEY.** You should not have showed them the script.

**WALLY.** I always show them the script.

**JO.** You explain it to them?

**WALLY.** No I did not explain it to them.

**JO.** Did they ask why we're killing off Betsy?

**WALLY.** I managed to avoid the question.

**JO.** Just curious.

**WALLY.** They said, and I quote, "We could live without the break-up."

JO. So could I, if you wanna know.

JOEY. Which script did you send them?

WALLY. What do you mean which script? The only script. The holiday script. The New York script.

*(A glance between JOEY and JO.)*

JOEY. We read the New York script.

WALLY. I should hope so, since we're about to perform it for a couple million people.

JOEY. You're better.

WALLY. Maybe.

JOEY. What maybe, you're a better writer.

WALLY. I know the characters.

JOEY. You *made* the characters.

WALLY. These TV guys'll catch up in two seconds. NBC, they got the best writers in the world.

JOEY. Yeah? You see that line, "All bets are off, Bets." What was that?

WALLY. It's a cute line.

JOEY. It's a terrible line. "All bets are off, Bets"? I never called her Bets in my life. *(To JO:)* I ever call you Bets?

JO. I don't think so.

JOEY. See? Not in three years did I ever call her Bets. Not to mention, I would never say that to her. "All bets are off." This is the love of my life.

WALLY. Is it?

JOEY. Sure it is, come on, Wally.

WALLY. 'Cause it was your call, Joey. Need I remind you.

*(Beat. WALLY blew it.)*

JO. Whadayou mean, his call?

JOEY. Doesn't matter—

JO. What do you mean, his call?

JOEY. Forget it.

JO. Your call to kill off Betsy?

JOEY. No, Joanna, no. Wally, listen to me, you know damn well there's a better way to split us up, 'cause you wrote one.

**WALLY.** No kidding. How about we do the first number?

**JOEY.** We read your script.

**JO.** Izzy told us.

**JOEY.** So, whaddaya say?

**WALLY.** I wrote a backup final episode. I wrote a backup, Izzy told you—thank you, Izzy!—and we're not doing it.

**JOEY.** Fine.

**WALLY.** We're doing the script New York sent us, that's final.

**JOEY.** That's final.

**WALLY.** So let's do the number. *(Beat.)* What now?

*(JOEY is looking at JO.)*

**JOEY.** Joanna's got something.

**JO.** No, Joey.

**JOEY.** She's got something.

**WALLY.** They need the studio in an hour.

**JO.** They need the studio.

**JOEY.** Show him the song, Jo.

**WALLY.** Barker likes to get in here before his show.

**JO.** Everybody knows that.

**JOEY.** She's got a song, Wally. It's good.

**WALLY.** You asking me to change the line-up?

**JOEY.** She wrote it.

**WALLY.** So she wrote a song.

**JOEY.** Just listen.

**WALLY.** It's the day of. I will not change the line-up the day of. You know that.

**JOEY.** It's the last show, Wally.

**WALLY.** I will not compromise this show.

*(Beat. WALLY puts out his hand for the music and JO hands it over. He looks at it.)*

**WALLY.** It's not even arranged.

**JOEY.** So fake it.

**WALLY.** Fake it.

**JOEY.** You could fake the dark side of the moon. Come on.

*(WALLY goes to the piano. JO is reluctant.)*

**WALLY.** C'mon, c'mon.

*(JO snaps him the tempo, he blocks, then breaks out a few chords and she sings.)*

**JO.**

I SEE CHRISTMAS IN YOUR SMILE, IN YOUR  
LIPS, YOUR CHEEKS, YOUR EYES, YOUR STYLE, WHY

*(WALLY stops playing.)*

**WALLY.** Sell me the song. You gonna sell me the song? Coupla bars...

*(He starts playing again.)*

**JO.**

I SEE CHRISTMAS IN YOUR SMILE  
IN YOUR LIPS, YOUR CHEEKS, YOUR EYES, YOUR STYLE,  
WHY DON'T YOU STICK AROUND AWHILE  
WE'LL RING...A LITTLE DING.

THAT BIG ROUND BELLY, THAT BEARD BEGUILE ME  
AND PUT MY HEART AND SOUL ON TRIAL  
DON'T MAKE THOSE DEER FLY ONE MORE MILE  
LET'S RING...A LITTLE DING!

*[Chorus]*

NICKY, NICKY, NICKY, DON'T BE SO TRICKY,  
AIN'T GOT TIME TO BE SO PICKY  
WAIT MUCH LONGER THING'S'LL REALLY GET STICKY  
THAT GRANDPA CLOCK'S GOIN' TICKY TICKY TICKY!

SO SANTA DON'T BE SO HESITANT,  
WHY YOU GOTTA BE SO RETICENT?  
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M HEAVEN SENT,  
SO LET'S RING...A LITTLE DING.

I 'PRECIATE THAT YOU'RE A SAINT, DEAR,  
BUT I'M UNDERNEATH A TIME CONSTRAINT HERE

JUST CLIMB ON IN MY STUDEBAKER,  
WANNA BRING PRANCER? THERE'S ROOM, WE'LL TAKE  
HER!

I KNOW YOU LOVE ME, DON'T BE SUCH A FAKER  
YOUR NEW ELF'S HERE, DON'T YOU DARE FORSAKE HER,

LET'S FLY DOWN THE HIGHWAY, YOU OLD HEART-  
BREAKER  
AND RING A LITTLE DING!  
LET'S RING A LITTLE DING!  
WE'LL RING A LITTLE DING!

*(IZZY has entered and listened. She and JOEY applaud.)*

**WALLY.** Ring a little ding?

**IZZY.** It's terrific.

**JO.** You don't think it's maybe a little too forties?

**IZZY.** *(With a glance at WALLY.)* All we do is forties. I love it.

**WALLY.** Ring a little ding?

**JOEY.** It's bells. It's Christmas bells, sleigh bells. C'mon, it's cute as all get-out.

**IZZY.** Give her a break, Wally—it's the last show.

**WALLY.** "It's the last show." What, are we gonna die after this show? We gonna sink into the lake? There's considerations, like any of us wanna work after this show? Aside from Joey Preston, movie star.

**JOEY.** TV.

**IZZY.** I got coffee to make.

*(She starts off. JOEY follows her. Out of range of the others:)*

**JOEY.** You get my message?

**IZZY.** Sure.

**JOEY.** Well?

**IZZY.** Wally's gonna kill you.

**JOEY.** But will it work?

**IZZY.** How should I know?

**JOEY.** What do you think?

**IZZY.** *(Gesturing for him to shut up, and escaping...)* Sh.

*(IZZY exits.)*

*(JO has been watching WALLY, who's been going back over the song.)*

**JOEY.** Are you gonna use it?

**WALLY.** It's not arranged, I gotta time it out. Let's go to the first duet.

**JOEY.** Wally.

**WALLY.** It's not arranged, I got (*Checking:*) three hours and a million things to do.

**JOEY.** And the question on the table is, are you gonna use it?

(*Beat.*)

**WALLY.** It's smart. It's up.

**JOEY.** It's very up. Whaddaya say?

**WALLY.** Bridge needs work.

**JO.** It does. The bridge needs work.

**JOEY.** And?

(*Beat.*)

**WALLY.** Maybe.

(*JO screams.*)

I said maybe.

**JO.** I know, I know—can I use the phone?

**WALLY.** Maybe.

**JO.** I know, I know—you are such a...what's the word?

**WALLY.** Mensch.

**JO.** Yeah—you're one of those—can I please use the phone?

(*Beat.*)

**WALLY.** Merry Christmas.

**JO.** Thank you. (*Goes to office, reemerges.*) Hey Wally? (*Winks.*) You're a real mensch.

**WALLY.** You too.

(*WALLY is at the piano, making notes, trying to time out the song.*)

**JOEY.** You wanna tell me what happened?

**WALLY.** No.

**JOEY.** I thought it was pretty much money in the bank.

**WALLY.** I don't want to talk about it.

**JOEY.** No, this affects my life. You're not gonna be writing the show in New York, that affects my life.

**WALLY.** I'm sorry.

**JOEY.** It affects my happiness.

**WALLY.** What do I care about your happiness?

**JOEY.** You care about my happiness.

**WALLY.** (*Referring to his attempts to time Jo's song.*) You gonna let me do this?

**JOEY.** No. Listen to me. It's a set-up. You pull me outta nowheresville—

**WALLY.** Da Vinci's is not nowheresville.

**JOEY.** You pull me out of *nowheresville*, risk your neck, put me on the radio.

**WALLY.** What neck?

**JOEY.** What neck? Replacing that guy, *firing* that *mob* guy wasn't suicide?

**WALLY.** Hearing that *voice* was suicide.

**JOEY.** I liked that voice. Smooth as a milkshake.

**WALLY.** Yeah. Vanilla with eight cups of sugar.

**JO.** (*On phone in office.*) Two million people... it's syndicated.

(*Beat. WALLY and JOEY notice her.*)

**WALLY.** You wanna know what I did for you? Your happiness? That girl in there. What're you doing about that, uh?

**JOEY.** (*More confidential.*) You almost blew it. I told you I didn't want her to know about the deal.

**WALLY.** What difference does it make to her?

**JOEY.** You don't get it.

**WALLY.** I get it. You do something nice, you don't want her to know about it...God forbid she thinks you like her or something.

**JOEY.** We've been together three years. She knows I like her.

**JO.** (*On phone.*) That's what I'm saying: with Wally "maybe" means yes...

**JOEY.** We go back there all the time, you know.

**JO.** No, goofball, I want to surprise her...

**WALLY.** Where?

**JOEY.** Stan's Joint.

**WALLY.** She still sing there?

**JOEY.** You kidding? She can't walk into the place without getting hauled up to the microphone. How come we never see you there?

**WALLY.** Never seem to get around anymore.

**JOEY.** How come?

**WALLY.** Feels different these days.

**JOEY.** How?

**WALLY.** I never used to feel so white.

**JOEY.** You are white.

**WALLY.** I mean really white.

**JOEY.** Who cares? Jo reminds me how white I am every day of the week.

*(WALLY starts off toward the exit for Studio A.)*

Where you going?

**WALLY.** I left the list...

**JOEY.** Wally...

**WALLY.** Huh?

**JOEY.** Don't do it.

**WALLY.** Bernie's just spinning records in there, it's all right.

**JOEY.** No. Don't get old.

*(WALLY waves him off, exits.)*

**JO.** *(Still on phone:)* No, no, we're live, but there's no audience in the studio...

*(IZZY enters with coffee.)*

Yeah, they stopped doing that here...

*(JOEY nabs IZZY on her way to the office.)*

**JOEY.** Iz...just...

**JO.** I'll have to ask Izzy.

**JOEY.** What are my odds?

**IZZY.** I told you, I don't know.

**JOEY.** Better than even?

**IZZY.** Joey...yes, okay? They're better than even.

*(And she crosses to the office. JO has hung up.)*

JO. Hey, Izzy, what do we got in Evansville?

IZZY. Indiana?

JO. My grams is there.

IZZY. (*Consulting a station list:*) Thought your people were in Arkansas.

JO. Christmas. She's visiting her sister.

IZZY. (*Spotting the listing:*) KEVA Evansville. She'll hear it Monday night.

JO. Monday?

IZZY. They gotta press the vinyl, mail it.

JO. Monday.

IZZY. Imagine. Someone's in a factory on Christmas Day, pressing LPs.

*(She has retrieved the script from the office trash where Wally threw it earlier. She ducks out of the office and hands the script to JOEY.)*

JOEY. What's this?

IZZY. What I told you about. Wally's script for "City Police." The one he wrote.

*(He takes it, immediately opens and starts to read, heads off to Studio A. IZZY is back in the office.)*

IZZY. Where you two gonna be?

JO. I don't know.

IZZY. I mean tomorrow.

JO. Oh.

IZZY. Christmas.

JO. Probably my sister's.

*(Beat.)*

IZZY. And after that?

JO. We...have a plan.

IZZY. A plan?

JO. You know it's only sixteen hours on the train?

IZZY. To New York?

JO. Yeah.

**IZZY.** Pretty fast.

**JO.** I know, isn't it? Less than a day and you're walking down Fifth Avenue.

**IZZY.** If that's what you want.

**JO.** Yeah.

**IZZY.** That what you want?

*(Beat...then, singing, but pronouncing the vegetables the same.)*

*You say tomato, I say tomato...*

*(JO smiles.)*

*You say potato, I say potato...*

**JO/IZZY.** *Potato, potato.*

*(Both of them, laughing...)*

**IZZY.** Remember that?

**JO.** Of course I remember that.

**IZZY.** You completely lost it.

**JO.** Of course I lost it. Why'd he do that?

**IZZY.** You completely went up—

**JO.** He knows the song.

**IZZY.** Everybody knows the song.

**JO.** He did it on purpose.

**IZZY.** All for you. *(Beat.)* That was it, wasn't it.

**JO.** What?

**IZZY.** When it, you know, happened for you two.

**JO.** Nothing happened. The boy got us fired.

**IZZY.** "You do not crack up on the air..."

**IZZY.**

"not ever...not on *Wally K's Variety Hour!*"

**JO.**

"not ever...not on *Wally K's Variety Hour!*"

**JO.** He got us fired.

**IZZY.** And he got you back on.

**JO.** Feels like a long time ago.

**IZZY.** Three years is a long time in this business.

(*Beat.*)

JO. Izzy, you'd tell me if there was anything I should know, right?

IZZY. What're you talking about?

JO. Joey's not telling me something.

IZZY. Like what? What wouldn't he be telling you?

JO. He cancelled our date last night. Friday we always go to movies. Little place on the South Side where they don't care...*every* Friday.

IZZY. Is that all?

JO. I can't remember a Friday we didn't go to the movies.

IZZY. I wouldn't worry about it. It's Christmas, he's dealing with New York, moving.

JO. So he didn't tell you?

IZZY. About last night? Why would he tell *me* anything?

JO. He talks to you.

IZZY. He was probably out buying a suitcase or something.

JO. It's like he's got a secret. He's walking around with a secret.

IZZY. All men have secrets.

JO. Just now, you were at the store, Wally says something about the break-up being Joey's call—on City Police, Betsy and Frank—and Joey shuts him right up.

IZZY. That's NBC—that's the producers—

JO. No. They didn't have to kill Betsy off. I was standing right there and Joey shut him up.

(*Beat.*)

IZZY. He swore us to secrecy.

JO. What? Omigod, Izzy, what?... What?

IZZY. Joey basically made it a condition in his contract—that if they didn't hire you to do Betsy on TV, if they didn't hire *you*, then Betsy—the character Betsy—had to be eliminated. Or no deal.

IZZY. What?

IZZY. It was Joanna Brown, or no dice. I think he thought they might back down and hire you.

JO. Why wouldn't he tell me that?

IZZY. I don't know. But it's the truth.

JO. It still doesn't explain Friday night.

IZZY. Yeah, but don't you think it's tearing him up inside—that he's going and you're not?

JO. I told him he had to go. He asked me, I told him he had to go. It's too big.

IZZY. And now you wish you hadn't.

JO. Yeah. I don't know, Izzy...I feel so up in the air.

IZZY. Up in the air...tell me about up in the air.

JO. What do you mean? You're not leaving the station, are you?

*(Beat.)*

IZZY. I came in for something, what'd I come in for...

JO. You had the coffee.

IZZY. Right.

*(IZZY leaves the office. JO hesitates, follows her.)*

JO. You used to wear a ring.

IZZY. What?

JO. Three years ago, I first came on the show... It was Larry Met-calf's, wasn't it.

IZZY. I used to wear a lotta rings.

JO. This was not a lotta rings.

*(Beat.)*

IZZY. Wally worshiped Larry. They were partners, but Wally...he worshiped him.

JO. What about you? You wore his ring even after...you know...the plane crash...

IZZY. For a while, yeah.

JO. And up in the air ever since.

IZZY. We're all up in the air, aren't we? Us girls?

JO. What about...?

IZZY. What?

JO. You and Wally?

IZZY. Wally? You want up in the air: he's the original Goodyear blimp. He's a hot air balloon.

(JOEY and WALLY re-enter from Studio A.)

**JOEY.** What do you mean we have no choice?

**WALLY.** You cannot burn bridges in this business.

**JOEY.** They gonna break the deal? The deal's in. We do what we want.

**WALLY.** And thereby burn a bridge.

**JOEY.** You're saying someday, not today, but someday you might wanna take the gig? Is that what you're saying?

**WALLY.** I will never write for TV.

**JOEY.** So burn the bridge. Let's do your script.

**WALLY.** Whose show is this...for one more day?

(JOEY says nothing.)

It is I, Walter Krakowski, the man you must humor. (*Calling over to the office.*) Izzy. Joanna. City Police.

**JOEY.** Who's running the table? Where's Sam?

**IZZY.** His sister's getting married.

**JOEY.** Thought she was sick.

**IZZY.** That was *last* Christmas.

**WALLY.** City Police. We won't run the whole thing, just where the sound effects are heavy—for Izzy.

(*He tosses Wally's script down, finds the one he arrived with.*)

**IZZY.** Can we run the effects through the monitor, just so—

**WALLY.** Already thought of that...

(*She taps the sound effects table mic. It's on. The actors are all in place.*)<sup>1</sup>

I'll skip the recap...

**JOEY.** So, from...

**WALLY.** Sergeant Belfry's line, "Thank goodness you're here..."

(*And, continuing as BELFRY:*)

**BELFRY.** Thank goodness you're here, Frank. They're in the bedroom.

**FRANK/JOEY.** How many?

<sup>1</sup> Cut previous two lines if no monitor is used.

**BELFRY.** Four altogether. A broad, two guys, and a dog.

**FRANK.** A dog?

**BELFRY.** Yeah. Merry Christmas.

**FRANK.** What kind?

**BELFRY.** It's a German shepherd, Frank. Tear your arm right off.

**FRANK.** I doubt that, Sergeant Belfry. What you don't know is—I grew up around dogs—back in Atlantic City— (*As JOEY:*) Atlantic City?

**WALLY.** What?

**JOEY.** Frank's from Oklahoma.

**WALLY.** Not anymore, he's not. He's from New Jersey. Thought you said you read the script.

**JOEY.** I skimmed it.

**WALLY.** Uh-huh. Can we keep going?

**FRANK.** What you don't know is—I grew up around dogs—back in Atlantic City, my best friend was a dog— (*To WALLY:*) So...Jersey accent?

**WALLY.** Just act the thing.

**FRANK.** Back in Atlantic City, my best friend was a dog—

*(IZZY has started lightly whistling into the mic the theme from Lassie.)*

We used to solve crimes together in the neighborhood...his name was Laddy—

**WALLY.** Hold it, hold it hold it...what're you doing?

**IZZY.** It's from *Lassie*.

**WALLY.** First of all, we can't do that, and second of all, don't do that.

**JOEY.** I think it's appropriate.

**WALLY.** What?

**JOEY.** As long as we're descending into this "Oh, by the way, even though we're just about to bust the door down and beat up the bad guys, *here's my whole life story*" crap, let's bring on the theme music.

**IZZY.** It's *Lassie*.

**JOEY.** Perfect.

**WALLY.** Can we just get through this?

**FRANK.** ...we used to solve crimes together in the neighborhood... his name was Laddy—

*(Sound effects: muffled noise in from the bedroom, like a chandelier crashing, followed by a dog bark.)*

**FRANK.** What was that?

**WALLY.** Sounded like— *(Eyeing IZZY:)* —furniture moving.

**FRANK.** They're barricading the door.

*(Sound effects: dog barking.)*

Let's go.

*(Grunts from FRANK as he rushes the bedroom door, rams it...)*

*(Sound effects: door handle, thud of door against furniture on the other side, furniture sliding, dog barking, footsteps...)*

**FRANK.** Police, hands up!

**BAD GUY 1/JO.** Don't shoot, don't shoot!

**BELFRY.** Behind you, Frank!

*(THUD of Frank getting struck from behind...)*

**FRANK.** Why you...

*(A FIST FIGHT: two SMACKS...GRUNTS from FRANK and BAD GUY 2, played by WALLY. FRANK gets the upper hand...)*

**BAD GUY 2.** Hey, let go, let go—

*(LOUD SNAP of a tibia... BAD GUY 2 GROANS.)*

**BAD GUY 1.** Hey, what's the idea!

**JOEY.** Whoa, whoa, hold it... *(Referring to the loud snap:)* isn't that a bit much? I mean, what, I break the guy's arm?

**WALLY.** If you remember from the last episode, these are some really bad guys.

**JOEY.** Yeah but I mean—does Frank do that? Break guys' arms?

**WALLY.** In New York, he breaks arms.

**JOEY.** I don't like it.

**WALLY.** It's why they bought the show. The tough-guy aspect. The no nonsense aspect.

**JOEY.** I like nonsense.

**WALLY.** Take it up with New York. Let's get on with it.

**JOEY.** You got a twig or something, Iz? I mean that thing is—ouch—you know what I mean?

**WALLY.** Let's get on with it.

**JOEY.** Plus it's Christmas. Who goes around breaking guys' arms on Christmas.

**WALLY.** "Hey, what's the idea."

**BAD GUY 1.** Hey, what's the idea!

**FRANK.** I don't know. How about we ask that bank guard lying in Chicago General with a bullet in his gut. Gettem' outta here, Sergeant.

**BELFRY.** Sure thing, Frank.

*(Receding FOOTSTEPS.)*

*(Fading, overlapping:)*

**BAD GUY 1.**

Get your paws off me, ya big lunk, what you think—hey! cut it out...

**BAD GUY 2.**

Hey, keep 'em to yourself, Magillah. Ya creep, who you think you are...

*(TWO BARKS from the shepherd.)*

**FRANK.** Hey, pooch. Too bad they don't allow dogs in Joliet. We're gonna have to find you a foster home...for about 20-to-life...

*(Cute DOG WHIMPERS.)*

Wait a minute...c'mere, girl.

*(PAWS on hardwood.)*

You look awful familiar...let's see that collar...

*(JINGLE of dog tags.)*

Lucy...

*(More DOG WHIMPERS.)*

what're you doing here, girl?

*(FOOTSTEPS. Spiked heels.)*

**BETSY.** Hi, Frank.

**FRANK.** Betsy?

**BETSY.** Beautiful night, eh Frank?

**FRANK.** I don't see your camera.

**BETSY.** I'm not on the beat.

**FRANK.** No, I can see that.

**BETSY.** I'm on a different beat.

**FRANK.** I can see that, too.

*(Pause.)*

**BETSY.** C'mere. You can see the lake.

**FRANK.** I guess I'll stay over here.

**BETSY.** You were never one to do that, were you Frank?

**FRANK.** What's that?

**BETSY.** Stop and take in the view.

**FRANK.** Your hair looks great, if that's what you mean.

**BETSY.** Very funny.

*(FOOTSTEPS: Frank approaching the window. CITY SOUNDS, WIND grow as he gets there. FRANK and BETSY speak softly, closer.)*

**BETSY.** Eight flights up...whattaya think, maybe we'll see Santa Claus.

**FRANK.** Santa's a myth, Bets. He's just a story.

**BETSY.** Don't tell me that. Not now. Not tonight.

*(CITY SOUNDS again.)*

You really took care of those two yokels.

**FRANK.** It's my job.

**BETSY.** Almost wish I had the camera.

**FRANK.** Yeah. You'd make the page three Crime Corner for sure.

**BETSY.** No kidding.

**FRANK.** 'Course...looks like you're gonna make page three either way.

**BETSY.** I guess that's up to you, isn't it.

**FRANK.** Whaddayou mean?

**BETSY.** You don't have to arrest me, Frank.

**FRANK.** You know, I had my suspicions...too many times you'd already be at the crime scene when no one could've known. We'd pull up outside a bank and you'd already be there, snapping away. But I would think, it can't be...it just can't be...

**BETSY.** I love you, Frank. I know it looks bad, but you have to believe me, all this stuff I'm mixed up in, I can explain. But first you have to believe I love you. You have to believe in us. Do you believe in us?

**FRANK.** I do.

**BETSY.** Really believe it then, Frank.

**FRANK.** And I'd've bet the earth, the sky, all those nights down by the lake...I'd have bet the whole world on us.

**BETSY.** Bet on us now, Frank.

**FRANK.** I can't.

**BETSY.** Why not?

**FRANK.** 'Cause...

*(He can't stand it; he walks away from the script stand in despair...)*

**WALLY.** Just finish it, Joey.

**FRANK.** 'Cause all bets are off, Bets. Come on, I'll take you down to the station myself.

**BETSY.** Wait...

*(CITY SOUNDS come through again.)*

Look at that.

**FRANK.** What?

**BETSY.** It's Santa. There. Over the lake.

*(GEESE HONKING in distance.)*

**FRANK.** It's a flock of geese. Come on. Let's go.

*(Their FOOTSTEPS. DOG WHIMPERING. FOOTSTEPS STOP.)*

**BETSY.** Do me a favor, will you Frank?

**FRANK.** What's that?

**BETSY.** Take Lucy, will you? It'll mean a lot to me.

**FRANK.** I don't think I can.

**BETSY.** Oh Frank, show a little responsibility for once in your life.

*(DOG WHIMPER.)*

**FRANK.** All right, Bets. It's a deal.

*(WALLY plays a quick lick on piano finishing the serial.)*

**WALLY.** And this has been...et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Song song song.

**JO.** Which one?

**WALLY.** The new Meredith Willson.

**IZZY.** (*Singing.*) *It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas.*

**JO.** That's not exactly new.

**WALLY.** New enough.

**JO.**  
Came out in '51.

**JOEY.**  
*It's beginning to look a lot like  
Cleveland.*

**WALLY.** Will you stop it?

**JOEY.** The script stinks, Wally.

**WALLY.** Does not.

**JOEY.** Love overcomes, what...nothing? They'll hate me.

**IZZY.** No they won't.

**JOEY.** I'm gonna let a little bank robbery get between me and my girl?

**WALLY.** Joey—

**JOEY.** I say we do your script.

**WALLY.** No.

**JO.** One thing, you know, Wally...do we wanna go up-tempo after a scene like that? I mean, "Goodbye, Lucy." "Goodbye, Frank."

*(Does the dog whimper, then, singing:)*

*It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...*

**JOEY.** (*Overlapping Christmas:*) *Disaster.*

**WALLY.** Whoa, whoa, whoa, what's going on here? No one's asking either of you. Whose show is this, anyway?

**IZZY.** No one's after tonight, Wally.

*(Pause.)*

**WALLY.** Okay...how about this...how about...we sign the episode off, I'm transitioning here... (*Plays some transition chords...into:*)

EVERY TIME WE SAY GOODBYE, I DIE A LITTLE...<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Or a similar "saying goodbye" song. See song licensing note that accompanies this script.

**JOEY.** No no no...

**WALLY.** No, Jo's right...

EVERY TIME WE SAY GOODBYE, I WONDER WHY A LITTLE,

**JOEY.** You're joking, right?

**WALLY.** Come on.

*(The others join, at first hamming it up...)*

**WALLY, JO, JOEY, IZZY.**

WHY THE GODS ABOVE ME,

WHO MUST BE IN THE KNOW.

THINK SO LITTLE OF ME, THEY ALLOW YOU TO GO.

*(The mood shifts as they continue...)*

WHEN YOU'RE NEAR, THERE'S SUCH AN AIR

OF SPRING ABOUT IT,

I CAN HEAR A LARK SOMEWHERE,

BEGIN TO SING ABOUT IT,

THERE'S NO LOVE SONG FINER, BUT HOW STRANGE

THE CHANGE FROM MAJOR TO MINOR,

EVERY TIME WE SAY GOODBYE.

*(Strangely moved, all of them...)*

**JOEY.** I've got a better idea...how about I swallow broken glass.

**WALLY.** There's a better arrangement.

**JOEY.** I will not sing that song.

**WALLY.** There's a better arrangement. *(To IZZY.)* I'll check next door...

**IZZY.** Music closet...

*(They collide trying to get through the exit door. WALLY lets her through first.)*

*(Pause.)*

**JOEY.** They're like *Singin' in the Rain*, those two. Who was that with Gene Kelly?

**JO.** Debbie Reynolds?

**JOEY.** Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds.

**JO.** Izzy and Wally? They're more like Tracy and Hepburn.

**JOEY.** Tracy and Hepburn, that's it. Always the last to know

**JO.** that they belong together.

**JOEY.** (*Overlapping.*) That they belong together.

(*As Tracy in Adam's Rib:*)

*What are ya? Sore about a little slap?*

**JO.** (*As Hepburn playing AMANDA:*) No.

**ADAM.** Well, what then?

**AMANDA.** You meant that, didn't you? You really meant that.

**ADAM.** Why, no, I...

**AMANDA.** Yes, you did. I can tell. I know your touch. I know a slap from a slug.

**ADAM.** What've you got back there, radar equipment?...

**JO.** I love that line.

**ADAM.** (*Maybe chasing her tail:*) What've you got back there, radar equipment?

(*Beat.*)

**JO.** We're square, right?

**ADAM.** Sure we are, kid.

**JO.** No, I mean us...we're okay.

**ADAM.** Oh, don't be 'diriculous.'

(*Beat.*)

**JO.** They're married in that movie.

**JOEY.** Who?

**JO.** Tracy and Hepburn. *Adam's Rib*.

**JOEY.** Right, yeah, I forgot. No romantic, what...

**JO.** Tension.

**JOEY.** Right. No, everyone-knows-that-they-should-be-together-except-them, 'cause

**JOEY/JO.** they're already together.

**JO.** They're not married in *Pat & Mike*, on the other hand.

**JOEY.** *Pat & Mike*.

**JO.** Of course *Adam's Rib's* the better picture.

**JOEY.** By a long shot.

JO. Even though, like you said,

JOEY. No romantic tension. It's more...

JO. Testing an idea.

JOEY. Yeah. That's good. Testing an idea... What idea was that again?

(Beat.)

JO. You got anything to tell me?

JOEY. Broadway Limited, remember? Sixteen hours. Twentieth Century, even less. We're square. You said it yourself.

JO. I asked it.

JOEY. Well we are.

JO. Then where were you last night?

JOEY. If I tell you, will you stop asking questions?

JO. Sure.

JOEY. All right then.

JO. All right then.

JOEY. I was with Izzy.

JO. You were with Izzy?

JOEY. Yeah. Shopping. I'm surprised she didn't tell you. (He hands her the script Izzy handed him earlier.) Here, take a look at this. It's Wal-ly's script for "City Police." (Pause.) What?

JO. She just told me she didn't know where you were last night.

JOEY. Who?

JO. You think I'm stupid?

JOEY. Heck no I don't think you're stupid.

JO. You're playing me for stupid.

JOEY. I'm not playing you at all.

JO. You just lied to me.

JOEY. Not exactly.

JO. Not exactly?

JOEY. Not exactly.

JO. Not exactly what.

JOEY. Not exactly I didn't lie to you.

**JO.** Joey, if you wanna say something, just say it. You wanna walk away?, walk away. Walk away, Joey. I get it. This is hard, I get it. And now you're going to New York, and I get it even more.

**JOEY.** I don't know what you're talking about.

**JO.** You don't know what I'm talking about?

**JOEY.** The Broadway Limited, remember? The Twentieth Century. Fifteen-and-a-half hours.

**JO.** You know what can happen in fifteen-and-a-half hours? You can forget a whole city, that's what can happen in fifteen-and-a-half hours. You can forget a whole city and everything in it—and everybody in it—and I'll tell you something else, Joey Preston, about what can happen in *five minutes*. In five minutes a girl can come to her senses. That's what I know.

*(Enter WALLY and IZZY at the same time.)*

**WALLY.** Anything?

**IZZY.** Nothing in the closet.

**WALLY.** We'll just have to go down the list. *(To JOEY and JO:)* You kids figure out how to beat the Russians yet?

*(JO grabs her bag, crosses to her coat, grabs it, exits.)*

## Scene 2

*(An hour later. WALLY is alone in the office. JO enters from outside. She crosses to the office.)*

**WALLY.** You're fired.

**JO.** Wally,

**WALLY.** You'll do the show,—you'll do the show?

**JO.** Of course.

**WALLY.** You'll do the show, and then you're fired.

**JO.** I understand.

**WALLY.** You can't just walk out of a rehearsal—you walked out of rehearsal.

**JO.** I know.

**WALLY.** You ever walk a tightrope?

**JO.** No—

**WALLY.** Without a net? We're doing a show live. Without rehearsal.

**JO.** I'm so sorry, Wally.

*(Beat.)*

**WALLY.** What he do to you?

**JO.** Nothing.

**WALLY.** That's what he said, so you're both lying.

**JO.** This is my last show and—

**WALLY.** Damn right it's your last show.

**JO.** It was *gonna* be—

**WALLY.** Your last show *in the business*. Did I mention the tightrope?, that particular metaphor? What'd Joey do to you?

**JO.** Nothing.

**WALLY.** I went out on a limb for you, you know. I called every New York jerk in my Wheeldex. Long distance. *(Beat.)* What.

*(She waits.)*

I got nothing.

*(Beat.)*

**JO.** Where are the others?

**WALLY.** Joey claimed he had Christmas shopping to do. *(Pause.)* Me, I'm all done.

**JO.** Yeah? *(Realizing:)* I mean...you shop?

**WALLY.** Maybe a little something for the ol' rabbi...you know, milk and a bagel before he goes back up the chimney... I expect better from you.

**JO.** I'm all upside-down, Wally.

**WALLY.** All upside-down... I'm not supposed to tell you this.

**JO.** Is it about Joey?

**WALLY.** Yeah.

**JO.** He told New York they had to kill off Betsy.

**WALLY.** Izzy told you.

*(She nods.)*

He made it a condition. It was you playing Betsy, or no deal.

**JO.** So they killed her off.

**WALLY.** I thought you should know that...about Joey.

**JO.** Shows how far they'll go.

**WALLY.** Shows how far *Joey* will go for his girl.

**JO.** No, it shows how badly New York wants Joey Preston.

**WALLY.** New York wants Joanna Brown too, they just don't know it yet.

**JO.** Apparently.

(*Beat.*)

**WALLY.** I tried, I made a lotta calls.

**JO.** I appreciate that.

**WALLY.** They're looking for another Beulah.

**JO.** The TV Beulah?

**WALLY.** Popular show.

**JO.** You see me chasing around after some white family, cooking their dinner, fixing their dumb mistakes?

**WALLY.** That's what I thought.

**JO.** Mammy-ing around?

**WALLY.** I get it.

Hey. There's a million chances out there for a cute kid like you.

**JO.** Thought I was fired.

**WALLY.** A cute kid with a voice like Ella and timing like

**JO.** A Timex?

**WALLY.** That I should fire you for. Look at Dandridge. Look at her career. You got everything she's got and more.

**JO.** She's got sex appeal.

**WALLY.** What?

**JO.** Dorothy Dandridge has sex ap—

**WALLY.** Stop, I heard you. Where'd you pick that up?

**JO.** Oh, come on, Wally.

**WALLY.** Besides, you've got plenty... You've got plenty, and if Joey can't...

**JO.** What?

**WALLY.** Never mind.

**JO.** You didn't tell him, did you?

**WALLY.** About your sex appeal?

**JO.** That you've been asking around for me in New York.

**WALLY.** Absolutely not.

**JO.** 'Cause he definitely should not know.

*(Beat.)*

**WALLY.** I know a guy, lives in my building, married an opera singer. She's colored.

**JO.** So what.

**WALLY.** So they're going to New York.

*(Beat.)*

**JO.** Can I show you something.

**WALLY.** What you got?

*(She takes a thick sheaf of music paper out of her handbag, hands it to WALLY...)*

You write all these?

**JO.** I was gonna...ask you to look at them.

*(He's doing just that.)*

**WALLY.** What's Joey think?

**JO.** He doesn't know, I mean...that there are quite so many.

**WALLY.** Why not?

**JO.** He gets all encouraging. It's disgusting, he gets all...

**WALLY.** Encouraging?

**JO.** Yeah.

**WALLY.** How terrible.

**JO.** Anyway...if you could just...

*(He's absorbed in the songs. She starts to back away, but stops, screws up her courage.)*

You ever heard of the Brill Building?

**WALLY.** The Brill Building?

**JO.** It's on Broadway.

**WALLY.** Uh-huh.

**JO.** They have all these little rooms with pianos. You write a song, and there's someone in the next room writing another one, and then you sell-'em, hopefully, 'cause the publishers are all there too, upstairs. Erksine Hawkins and Avery Parrish...they're colored...

**WALLY.** I know who they are.

**JO.** They got their music published there.

(*Beat.*)

**WALLY.** Listen to me. You go to New York, you show people these songs, do a little nightclub work. You do that. And you go with Joey. Strength in numbers.

What?

**JO.** I'm not going with Joey.

**WALLY.** Why not?

**JO.** I need to give him the out.

**WALLY.** What out? There's no out.

**JO.** Oh come on, Wally. You see the look on that NBC guy's face? You said, "And this is Jo Brown...she plays Betsy," you see his face?

**WALLY.** It was a surprise—I didn't know they were coming.

**JO.** Joey doesn't want to say it, and I don't want to make him say it.

**WALLY.** Say what?

**JO.** Wally...you know this, right? Do you know this? Some streets—most streets in this town, I have to let him walk ten steps ahead of me. On the bus, I can't even look at him. Maybe I'm dying to take that stupid face in my hands and just kiss him, and that's like...the death penalty. It's just... (*A long struggle:*) unfair.

**WALLY.** New York ain't Chicago.

**JO.** How do you know?

**WALLY.** Plus, hey, it's Christmas, right?

**JO.** So?

**WALLY.** So...miracles happen, Christmas.

**JO.** Said the nice Jewish guy to the cute colored kid.

(*Beat.*)

**WALLY.** Joey likes you.

**JO.** That's not enough. Is it.

(Pause.)

(IZZY enters with a grocery bag.)

**IZZY.** Hi, Jo. I got you a hot pastrami. (To WALLY.) I told you not to worry.

**JO.** I, uh...I'm not hungry. (She exits.)

(IZZY pulls out a bunch of carrots, breaks one off, holds it out.)

**IZZY.** Humerus.

**WALLY.** As in funny?

**IZZY.** No. As in arm bone. (She snaps it.) You like? Right close to the mic?

**WALLY.** Works for me.

**IZZY.** Split a hot pastrami?

**WALLY.** No thanks. Gonna time some stuff. Other things.

**IZZY.** (Reading that he wants to be alone:) Sure. I...forgot a couple items anyway. I'll be back.

(IZZY exits. WALLY calls after, as if reconsidering:)

**WALLY.** Hey!

(IZZY reappears.)

Watch that ice out there.

(He watches her go, he lingers for a moment. He ducks back into the office. He goes to a file cabinet, unlocks the bottom drawer, takes out a chess set, game in progress, puts it on his desk. He speaks as if to his opponent.)

King's Bishop's Pawn to King's Bishop's Pawn five.

That's your move? Nice.

You remember the Brill Building? Just got off the boat in Brooklyn, remember that? "Let's go check out the center of the known universe," that's what you said—back from France, still in our Army duds— "let's go check out the center of the known universe." The Brill Building. Ran into Johnny Mercer—you almost gave him a black eye, remember that?

I cut the kid a break, Larry. Her boyfriend's a schmuck so I cut the kid a break. And I'm gonna give Izzy the sound effects table. It's the last show, she should get it. She loves live radio more than life itself, more than she loves you, you know that, right? Isabel Marquiss

loves live radio more than she ever loved Larry Metcalf. So she gets the table. (*Stares at the game...*)

Just once you could let me win. I'll never know the difference, I swear to God.

Tonight's the last time we'll be "live from Lake Shore Drive." As if you can even see Lake Shore Drive from here. (*Makes a chess move. Looks up.*)

Your move.

(*BLACKOUT. END OF ACT I.*)

## ACT II

### Scene 1

*(The radio show is in progress: WALLY, IZZY, JO and JOEY.)*

**WALLY.** Hi Bobby!

**BOBBY/IZZY.** Hi Mr. K!

**WALLY.** Watcha got there?

**BOBBY.** Whaddaya think, Mr. K.

**WALLY.** Well, I don't know.

**BOBBY.** Dessert.

**WALLY.** Dessert?

**BOBBY.** My favorite kind, too.

**WALLY.** I don't get it, Bobby. You're holding your bowl upside-down. You all finished?

**BOBBY.** Nosirree, Mr. K. I haven't even started. See?

**WALLY.** Well, I'll be.

**BOBBY.** I gotta riddle for ya'. What's the only dessert you can hold upside-down and it'll never spill?

**WALLY.** Well, I don't know, Bobby, but I bet your mom likes that.

**BOBBY.** She sure does. Can you guess it?

**WALLY.** Only dessert that'll never spill...wait a minute...I think I know...I think I know...

**BOBBY.** It's Jell-O!

**WALLY.** Jell-O! Hey...you gonna save me a spoonful?

**BOBBY.** I don't know, Mr. K.

**WALLY.** What would your mom say about that? After all, it's Christmas.

**BOBBY.** Well...she always tells me to finish my plate. Leave it clean, she always says. Besides, you don't look like you're exactly starving to death, Mr. K.

**WALLY.** Thanks a lot, Bobby.

**BOBBY.** You're welcome, Mr. K.

**WALLY.** How about this, Bobby. You save me a spoonful of that delicious-looking Jell-O, and we'll sing you your favorite holiday song. How about that?

(WALLY crosses to the piano, unless he's already there.)

**BOBBY.** Any song I want?

**WALLY.** Any one you want, Bobby.

**BOBBY.** How's about... (Glancing at the show list.) "Winter Wonderland."

(The cast reacts, start shuffling music on their stands: she's gotten the wrong song.)

**WALLY.** You sure that's your favorite holiday song, Bobby?

**BOBBY.** Oh...no...I almost forgot. How's about... "Sleigh Ride."<sup>3</sup>

**WALLY.** "Sleigh Ride." Think we can do that guys? The Mitch Parish, Leroy Anderson tune?

**IZZY, JO, JOEY.** (*Ad lib:*) Sure, Wally. Yeah. No problem.

(PIANO.)

(IZZY, JO, JOEY, and WALLY all sing "Sleigh Ride.")

(SOUND of CHAINS AND HEAVY FOOTSTEPS.)

**BOBBY.** What's that sound, Mr. K? Who's coming?

**WALLY.** Sounds like...

(More CHAINS stopping, KNOCK at a heavy door.)

Sounds like we're getting a visit from Mr. Jacob Marley. Whaddayou think about that, Bobby?

**BOBBY.** I'm not sure if I like that guy, Mr. K.

**MARLEY/JOEY.** Scroooge.

**BOBBY.** See what I mean? I don't like him at all.

**WALLY.** Nevertheless, Bobby—

**MARLEY.** Scroooooooooooge.

**WALLY.** I think it must be time for—

**MARLEY.** Scroooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooge!

**WALLY.** The Thirteen-Minute Christmas Carol. That famous story by Charles Dickens, told in...wait a sec, I'm getting a signal from Jo Brown...are you sure?... Not possible!... A new challenge from Jo-

<sup>3</sup> "Sleigh Ride" is only a suggestion. Song selection may vary production to production. Obviously make adjustment to the following line, with regard to composers, when applicable.

anna Brown. Let's see if we can do it...that famous story by Charles Dickens told in just twelve minutes. Ready, Jo?

**JO.** Ready, Wally.

**WALLY.** Bobby, start the clock.

**BOBBY.** Got it, Mr. K. A-a-a-a-a-a-a-and go!

**JO.** Once again, we find ourselves in the cold, crowded streets of London, once again it's Christmastime, 1843.

**CAROLERS.** (*In background:*) "God rest ye merry, gentlemen, Let nothing you dismay," (*Fading ad lib.*)

**JO.** (*Overlapping:*) And once again, we stand in the snowy street outside the counting house of Scrooge & Marley where—

**MARLEY.** Scroooooooooooooooge!

**WALLY.** (*Eyeing JOEY.*) Not yet, Mr. Marley!

**JO.** Scrooge's nephew Fred peers through the frosted pane at the scene inside where two portly gentlewomen stand before the old man himself.

**GENTLEWOMAN 1/IZZY.** Good day, Mr. Marley.

**SCROOGE/WALLY.** Marley's dead.

**GENTLEWOMAN 1.** But your sign—

**SCROOGE.** Been dead these seven years.

**GENTLEWOMAN 1.** So sorry, Mr. Scrooge.

**GENTLEWOMAN 2/JO.** Alms for the poor, Mr. Scrooge? It's Christmas.

**SCROOGE.** What of the workhouses? Send them there.

**GENTLEWOMAN 2.** But many would rather die.

**SCROOGE.** Then they'd better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

**MARLEY.** Scroooooooooooooooooo—

**WALLY.** Quiet, Marley.

(*SOUND: DOOR CREAKING OPEN AND JINGLE OF DOORBELL.*)

**JO.** Now Fred comes in!

**FRED/JOEY.** A merry Christmas, Uncle!

**SCROOGE.** Why so merry? You're poor enough.

**FRED.** Why so dismal? You're rich enough.

**SCROOGE.** Bah humbug!

**FRED.** But Uncle, Christmas is a charitable time, when men and women open their shut-up hearts and think of people below them as fellow-passengers.

**SCROOGE.** You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

**FRED.** Dine with us to-morrow.

**SCROOGE.** I'll dine with you in

*(On the word "hell," WALLY signals IZZY, who clears her throat to mask the word:)*

hell first.

**FRED.** Pardon me, Uncle?

**SCROOGE.** I said I'll dine with you in

*(Same as before:)*

hell first. Good afternoon.

*(SOUND: JINGLE OF DOOR BELLS AND DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING.)*

**JO.** Scrooge turned to his clerk, Bob Cratchit.

**SCROOGE.** You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?

**BOB/JOEY.** Yes please, Sir.

**JO.** Not long after that, Scrooge arrived outside his front door.

**SCROOGE.** Eh? What's happened to my door knocker? What's that ghostly face? Is that—

**JO/JOEY/IZZY.** *(Whispering, out of synch:)* Jacob Marley.

*(PIANO CHORDS.)*

**JO.** And in he went...

*(SOUND: RATTLING KEYS, DOOR KNOB, DOOR OPENING, DOOR SLAMMING BEHIND.)*

**SCROOGE.** Who's here?

**JO.** He checked everywhere.

*(SOUND: RUNNING FEET. Continue as needed under:)*

**SCROOGE.** Nobody under the table...nobody in the closet... I'll just lock the door.

(SOUND: LOCKING OF DOOR TWICE.)

What's that?

(SOUND: A LOW BELL.)

Who's ringing that?

(SOUND: build to LOTS OF CLOCK BELLS. Possibly everyone is now at the sound effects table, helping IZZY. SOUND: going to HEAVY CHAINS BEING DRAGGED.)

**MARLEY.** Scroooooooooooooooooooge!

**SCROOGE.** Are you supposed to be Jacob Marley?

**MARLEY.** I *am* Jacob Marley... Why do you doubt your senses?

**SCROOGE.** Because even the littlest thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach, maybe an undigested bit of beef, a fragment of underdone potato—

(SOUND: A "FRIGHTFUL CRY" ACCOMPANIED BY CHAINS AND "A DISMAL AND APPALLING NOISE.")

Mercy! I believe you! You're Jacob Marley. Do speak comfort to me.

**MARLEY.** I have none to give. I cannot rest. No peace in the after-life. Incessant torture of remorse.

**SCROOGE.** But you were always a good man of business.

**MARLEY.** Business!

(SOUND: CHAINS.)

Mankind should have been my business.

(SOUND: BATHETIC VIOLIN MUSIC.)

Charity, benevolence should have been my business. But you, Ebenezer, you may yet escape my fate. You will be haunted by Three Spirits. Expect the first when the bell tolls one.

**SCROOGE.** Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over?

**MARLEY.** (*In distance:*) Look you, remember what has passed between u-u-u-usssssssss...

**SCROOGE.** Jacob Marleyyyyyyy...

(SOUND: RATTLE OF CHAINS. Beat.)

**WALLY.** How do you like it so far, Bobby?

**BOBBY/IZZY.** Not bad, Mr. K. But I was thinking about that digestive problem Mr. Scrooge mentioned.

**WALLY.** What digestive problem?

**IZZY.** You know. The slight disorder of the stomach from the undigested bit of beef and the underdone potato. Remember that?

**WALLY.** Yeah?

**IZZY.** My mom has something for that. She says it works every time—especially around the holidays when everyone turns into pigs at a trough.

**WALLY.** That's quite a metaphor, Bobby.

**IZZY.** Which metaphor is that?

**WALLY.** Pigs at a trough.

**IZZY.** Like I always say, Mr. K, I never meta-four, five or six I didn't like.

**ALL.** (*Singing:*)

STOMACH TROUBLES, INDIGESTION?  
REACH FOR ONE JAR WITHOUT QUESTION  
WHEN YOUR TUM FEELS...OH-SO DISMAL  
POUR A CAP OF...PEPTO-BISMOL.

**WALLY.** That's right mom. When your family turns into...

(*ALL imitate pigs in a trough.*)

**WALLY.** Reach for that Pepto-Bismol.

**BOBBY.** Where were we, Miss Brown?

**JO.** Well, Bobby, ol' Mr. Scrooge resolved to lie awake until the hour of one—which was when Marley had told him to expect his first visitation. The bell struck.

(*SOUND: BELL STRIKING THE HOUR OF ONE.*)

**SCROOGE.** Ha! Nothing!...

(*SOUND: something sweet signifying the presence of GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST.*)

Who-o-o-a-a-a-a—...!

**GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST/IZZY.** I am the Ghost of Christmas Past. Rise and walk with me!

**SCROOGE.** Through the window? I'll fall!

**PAST.** Bear but a touch of my hand—

**JO.** And through the closed window pane they went. The city had vanished, and below them,

**SCROOGE.** This country road, those boys there, I know them

**MICHAEL/IZZY.** Hello, Jerry.

**JERRY/JO.** Michael, nice pony there.

**MICHAEL.** Shall we race?

**JERRY.** Tally ho!

**MICHAEL.** Hyaa!

*(SOUND: HOOVES receding.)*

**PAST.** Look there's the school. See the sad little boy reading on a hard wooden bench...

*(SOUND: DOOR OPENING, LIGHTER RUNNING FOOTSTEPS.)*

...but who's this now?

**BOY.** Fan!

**FAN/IZZY.** Dear brother. I have come to bring you home.

**BOY.** Home, little Fan?

**FAN.** *(Laughing, clapping her hands:)* Yes! Home, for good and all. Father says you're never to come back to this mean old school. We're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world.

*(FAN and BOY laugh.)*

**PAST.** Always a delicate creature.

**SCROOGE.** Aye.

**PAST.** She had a child before she passed away.

**SCROOGE.** Yes.

**PAST.** Your nephew.

**SCROOGE.** Freddy.

*(SOUND/ALL of the city: carts, coaches, horses, people.)*

But what's this place? I was apprenticed here! There's old Fezziwig!

**FEZZIWIG/WALLY.** Yo ho, Ebenezer! Dick!

**DICK/IZZY.** Mr. Fezziwig!

**FEZZIWIG.** No more work to-night, lads, it's Christmas Eve! Clear away for the dance, boys!

**EB/JOEY.** Right away!/Yessir!

*(Polkas from the piano, clapping to the music and other raucous PARTY SOUNDS continue...)*

**SCROOGE.** Look how they all dance.

**PAST.** And those two? They seem to have danced together all night.

**YOUNG SCROOGE/JOEY.** Belle...

**BELLE/JO.** Ebenezer...

**YOUNG SCROOGE.** Call me Eb...

**BELLE.** Eb.

**YOUNG SCROOGE.** Another dance?

**SCROOGE.** Make it go on, spirit! Make it go on!

*(A huge laugh erupts from all. Fast and accelerating:)*

**GUEST ONE/JOEY.** Best party yet, Mrs. Fezziwig!

**MRS. FEZZIWIG/JO.** Good night, Mr. Barnacle.

**GUEST TWO/IZZY.** Merry Christmas, Mr. Fezziwig.

**MR. FEZZIWIG.** G'night, Miss Shrimp.

**GUEST THREE/IZZY.** Thank you!

**MR. FEZZIWIG.** Cheerio!

**GUEST FOUR/WALLY.** 'Night.

**MRS. FEZZIWIG.** 'Night.

*(SOUND: DOOR SLAM. BOLT.)*

**MR./MRS. FEZZIWIG.** *(Big sighs.)* Aaahhh.

**MR. FEZZIWIG.** To bed, Mrs. Fezziwig?

**MRS. FEZZIWIG.** To bed.

*(They giggle...)*

**PAST.** A small cost, to make these silly fools so full of gratitude.

**SCROOGE.** But it was a wonderful party.

**PAST.** Fezziwig spent but three pounds.

**SCROOGE.** But the happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune...

**PAST.** But look here.

**SCROOGE.** That's me! How much older I look! And Belle, how lovely.

**BELLE.** Another idol has displaced me.

**YOUNG SCROOGE.** What idol?

**BELLE.** A golden one.

**YOUNG SCROOGE.** Am I changed towards you?

**BELLE.** Our contract was made when we were both poor and happy.

**YOUNG SCROOGE.** I was a boy.

**BELLE.** Tell me, would you seek a poor girl out and try to win her now? You who weigh everything by Gain? Would you?

**SCROOGE.** Say something, you fool!

**BELLE.** You do not answer...I release you. With a full heart, I let you go.

**SCROOGE.** Spirit, why do you delight to torture me?

**PAST.** One shadow more.

**BOBBY.** We gotta hurry, Mr. K.

**PAST.** One shadow more.

*(SOUND/ACTORS: GIGGLING CHILDREN...)*

**SCROOGE.** Is that her children? Her husband?

**BELLE'S HUSBAND.** Belle, I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon. Old Ebenezer Scrooge. I passed his office window. His partner's passed, you know, and there he sat.

**SCROOGE.** Spirit—

**BELLE'S HUSBAND.** Quite alone in the world.

**SCROOGE.** Take me back!

**BELLE'S HUSBAND.** Completely alone.

**SCROOGE.** Haunt me no more!

**BELLE'S HUSBAND.** Utterly al—

**SCROOGE.** No-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o—!

*(PIANO: transition into SCROOGE snoring.)*

**JO.** And Scrooge found himself back in his own bed.

**BOBBY.** And now it's the Ghost of Christmas Present, right Miss Brown?

**JO.** That's right, Bobby.

**GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT/JOEY.** *(Huge laugh.)*

**BOBBY.** He's a giant, in a green robe, and he smiles a lot.

**JO.** And where does the Ghost of Christmas Present take Mr. Scrooge?

**BOBBY.** To the Cratchits' house!

**CRATCHITS/ALL.** Yay, it's Christmas!/It's Christmas, yay!

**BOBBY.** They're waiting for Mr. Cratchit and Tiny Tim.

**MRS. CRATCHIT/JO.** Where's Bob?

**MARTHA/JOEY.** Where's Tim?

**BOBBY.** And they think the Christmas goose is really fat

*(Over this: WALLY tosses a rubber chicken across the studio to IZZY in time for her to "squawk" it after the next line—she inadvertently left it there earlier in the show.)*

**PETER/WALLY.** What a bird!

*(SOUND: rubber chicken squawk.)*

**BOBBY.** But it's really not, and even though they're poor and they have holes in their clothes

**MRS. CRATCHIT.** What a lovely dress, Meg!

**BOBBY.** They're happy, and then Mr. Cratchit and Tiny Tim come home

**PETER.** Hallo, Tim.

**MRS. CRATCHIT.** Hallo, Bob.

**BOBBY.** But Tiny Tim has a crutch

*(SOUND: CRUTCH-SHOE-CRUTCH-SHOE.)*

And everyone eats and even though it's only a little food and a tiny dessert

**PETER.** I'm stuffed!

**MARTHA.** Me too!

**BOBBY.** And Mr. Cratchit says

**BOB.** A Merry Christmas to us all my dears!

**BOBBY.** and Tiny Tim says

**TINY TIM/JO.** God bless us every one!

**BOBBY.** and Scrooge says

**SCROOGE.** Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

**BOBBY.** and the Ghost says

**PRESENT.** I see a vacant seat in the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved.

**SCROOGE.** No, no, kind Spirit! Say he will be spared.

**PRESENT.** What then, Mr. Scrooge? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

**BOBBY.** That showed ol' Scrooge, didn't it, Miss Brown?

**JO.** That's right, Bobby.

**FRED and GUESTS.** (*Laughing boisterously.*)

**BOBBY.** (*Yelling over the laughing:*) And then there's a party at Fred's house, Scrooge's nephew, and Scrooge starts to really have fun, even though they can't see him, and there's a guessing game called—

**FRED and GUESTS.** Yes and No!

**GUEST ONE/JO.** Is it a thing?

**FRED.** No.

**GUEST TWO/IZZY.** An animal?

**FRED.** Yes.

**GUEST ONE.** Is it mean?

**FRED.** Yes.

**GUEST THREE.** Does it growl?

**FRED.** Yes.

**GUEST THREE.** Is it a lion?

**FRED.** No.

**GUEST TWO.** A tiger?

**FRED.** No.

**GUEST THREE.** A bear?

**GUEST ONE.** I've found it, Fred, I know what it is!

**FRED.** What?

**GUEST ONE.** Your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!

(*Laughter.*)

**FRED.** He's given us plenty of merriment tonight. I raise my glass—to Uncle Scrooge!

(*SOUND: glasses clinking.*)

**ALL.** Uncle Scrooooooooooooooge!

*(SOUND: over the following, twelve "somber" bell tones:*

*(Enter a MUSICIAN, hooded, carrying his instrument—a double bass, or sax, or trumpet, etc. He looks around. The others don't notice him at first.)*

**BOBBY.** *(Over the bell tones and the entrance:)* This is the scary one, right, Miss B.?

**JO.** Right, Bobby. Scrooge awoke a third time and beheld a solemn Phantom, shrouded in a deep black garment, with nothing visible but one outstretched hand.

**SCROOGE.** Am I in the presence of the Ghost of

*(WALLY sees the MUSICIAN, is startled.)*

Christmas Yet To Come?

*(MUSICIAN gestures, "Where should I set up?")*

Lead on, Spirit.

*(MUSICIAN gestures again.)*

The night is waning fast.

**BOBBY.** Plus there's only two minutes left on the clock, Miss B.

*(OVER THE FOLLOWING: WALLY gestures directions to MUSICIAN, where to set up, etc.)*

**SCROOGE.** I see, Ghost of the Future...I'm to follow where you're pointing...what is this little knot of business men coming into view?

**SPEAKER ONE.** I don't know much about it either way.

**SPEAKER THREE.** I thought he'd never die.

**SPEAKER TWO.** What has he done with his money?

**SPEAKER ONE.** He hasn't left it to me!

*(They laugh.)*

**SPEAKER THREE.** It's likely to be a cheap funeral. Don't know of anybody to go to it.

**SPEAKER TWO.** Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

**SPEAKER THREE.** I don't mind going, if a lunch is provided.

*(They laugh.)*

*(Meanwhile, the MUSICIAN has taken his instrument into the "hallway" to tune, out of mic range, but audible to the audience at various opportune moments.)*

**JO.** Then the Ghost of Christmas Future took Scrooge to a den of infamous resort,

**ALL.** (*Coughing, gross clearing of throats, spitting, wrangling.*)

**JO.** A low-browed beetling shop where an odd sort of estate sale was already in progress.

**WOMAN/IZZY.** Undo *my* bundle, Joe.

**JOE/JOEY.** What's this? Bed-curtains?

**WOMAN.** Aye! Bed curtains!

**JOE.** Don't tell me you took 'em down, rings and all, with ol' Scrooge still lying there?

**WOMAN.** And why not? Every person has a right to take care of themselves. *He* always did.

**SCROOGE.** Where point you now, Spirit?

(*SOUND: GHOSTLY WIND.*)

But that way's the churchyard.

(*SOUND: SCROOGE'S FOOTSTEPS ON PAVEMENT.*)

What's this? You point to a gravestone.

(*SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.*)

What name is this?

(*SOUND: SCRAPING OF A HEADSTONE.*)

**SCARY VOICE/JO.** (*Whispered...echo-chamber-y.*) Ebenezer Scrooooooge.

**SCROOGE.** No, Spirit! Oh, no. I am no longer the man I was. Why show me this if I am past all hope? Spirit? Spirit? Where are you?

(*SOUND: CHURCH BELLS OF ALL SORTS under the following. MUSICIAN: A few strains of "Deck the Halls," then a quiet, upbeat carol medley under the following.*)

What's this? Morning? I'm back in my bed. What day is it? What month is it? I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. I'll open the window.

(*SOUND: WINDOW OPENING. BELLS EVEN LOUDER.*)

Hallo! You there! What's to-day, my fine fellow?

**BOY.** Today? Why, Christmas Day.

**SCROOGE.** I haven't missed it. Do you know the Poulterer's in the next street but one?

**BOY.** I should hope I did.

**SCROOGE.** An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold that prize turkey?

**BOY.** The one as big as me? It's hanging there now.

**SCROOGE.** Go and buy it. Tell 'em to bring it here and I'll give you a shilling. Come back in less than five minutes and I'll give you half-a-crown!

**BOY.** Here, here!

**SCROOGE.** I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's.

**JO.** In the street he ran into the two portly gentlewomen.

**SCROOGE.** My dear ladies, how do you do? Here's for your cause.

*(SOUND: LARGE COINS ON PAVEMENT.)*

**GENTLEWOMAN ONE.** Bless me!

**SCROOGE.** And not a farthing less!

**JO.** Then off to his nephew's!

**SCROOGE.** Fred!

**FRED.** Uncle!

**SCROOGE.** Will you have me to dinner?

**FRED.** You bet!

**JO.** Next morning, day after Christmas, he was at the office early. And sure enough, when the clock struck nine

*(SOUND: NINE RAPID-FIRE RINGS.)*

no Bob Cratchit. Quarter past

*(SOUND: QUARTER HOUR.)*

No Bob. Then:

*(SOUND: door bells.)*

**SCROOGE.** Cratchit.

**BOB.** Sir?

**SCROOGE.** What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?

**BOB.** I'm very sorry sir.

**SCROOGE.** I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore,

**BOB.** I'll pack my things, sir.

**SCROOGE.** I'll raise your salary!

**BOB.** Sir?

**SCROOGE.** Merry Christmas, Bob. I'll raise your salary, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop!

**JO.** And old Scrooge was true to his word—

*(SOUND: "TIME'S UP" BELL under the following.)*

**BOBBY.** Time's up, Miss B!

**JO.** And it was always said that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us. And so—

**BOBBY.** Time's up!

**JO.** And so, as Tiny Tim observed,

**TINY TIM.** God Bless Us, Every One!

*(SOUND: "TIME'S UP" BELL—DING DING DING DING DING DING...)*

**WALLY.** How'd we do, Joey Preston.

**JOEY.** Twelve minutes and fifteen seconds.

**WALLY.** A new record.

**JO.** One thing about that Charles Dickens story.

**WALLY.** What's that Joanna Brown?

*(Piano and MUSICIAN start vamping: "White Christmas."<sup>4</sup>)*

**JO.** All those wintry scenes.

**WALLY.** Yes?

**JO.** Does it really snow that much over there in London?

**JOEY.** *(In background:)* Whoooooooooooooaaaaaaaaaaaaa...

**WALLY.** I don't know about London, Jo, but I do know that for half our listeners out there, the only white stuff they're gonna see this time of year is—

**JO.** —mashed potatoes and dumplings.

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<sup>4</sup> Or a similar holiday song. If another song is chosen, lines may be adjusted appropriately to introduce it. Another option is to skip ahead directly to Jo's line: "I see it coming, do you Joey?"

**WALLY.** That's right, Jo. This next song goes out to WSIX Nashville, WJNO West Palm Beach, WVTJ Pensacola and all those places where the cold white stuff stays in the sky...Joey?

**JOEY.** (SONG.)

(SOUND: applause.)

**JO.** I see it coming, do you kids?

**IZZY/JOEY.** Sure do, Jo.

**JO.** That holiday tradition.

**IZZY.** Wally's got a smile on his lips

**JO.** A twinkle in his dimple,

**JOEY.** A twimple in his dinkle.

**JO.** It's time for—

**JOEY/JO/IZZY.** "'Twas the Night Before Christmas."

**WALLY.** Not this year kids.

**JOEY.** Whu...

(Beat. No one's expecting this, and they're off script.)

**IZZY.** (Improvising as BOBBY:) Please, Mr. K.

**WALLY.** No, Bobby, it just doesn't feel right—I think we'll skip it this year.

**JO.** I know you don't mean that, Wally.

**BOBBY.** We gotta hear that famous last line...

**JO/JOEY/BOBBY.** "Merry Christmas, Chicago! Chicago, good night!"

**JO.** Come on, Wally. For old time's sake.

**WALLY.** All right...all right then...

'Twas the night before Christmas...yeah, that's good, I like that...  
when all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.

(SOUND: PATTERN OF RUNNING MICE FEET.)

Not even a mouse.

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.  
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,

(SOUND: SNORING KIDS.)

While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads.

*(SOUND/RECORD: a lick from The Nutcracker.)*

And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,  
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap.  
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,

*(SOUND: RISING CLATTER.)*

I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

*(SOUND: window being thrown open.)*

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow  
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below.  
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear...

*(Pause. LIGHTS are faltering...)*

What to my eyes...

A man in a ball cap...his face full of cheer.

*(LIGHTS HAVE SHIFTED, special on WALLY. During the following, the others, in silhouette, do what they would be doing if Wally were still reading the original story, which, to them, is what's going on.)*

The wind had picked up, it could not have been colder,  
The man in the street, clapped his arm on my shoulder,  
He said, "Get a move on, you crazy old Jew,"  
And he took us to Stan's, an old juke joint we knew.

*(The MUSICIAN begins to play some cool jazz, e.g., a bass line, if the instrument is double bass, or some such subtle background, fading under following, ad lib.)*

We went right to our corner; the waitress she knows us;  
It wasn't her table: the fact is she chose us.  
My friend in the ball cap's a bit of a flirt,  
Has a fiancé at home, but what could it hurt.

He wasted no time—came right to the point—  
"They need me out east," he said, scanning the joint.  
I said, "New York or Boston," two towns that I'd heard of.  
"Korea," said he—this I'd not heard a word of.

"They're shipping me out on December the Tenth,"  
"Tomorrow?" said I. "Yeah. No time to lament.  
"I'll be backing up Jane." "As in Russell?" I said.  
"That's the one," said he, tearing the crust from his bread.

"How close will you get?" and I meant to the bombs.  
 "I'll be right on her tail." The man had no qualms.  
 He'd thought it all out, clear from A up to Z.  
 Every i had been dotted, he'd crossed every t.

He had song lists and story ideas up to here;  
 He had sponsors lined up for well into next year.  
 Then he said something I guess you'd call fateful...  
 Right as the waitress came by with a plateful...

He joked how Glenn Miller went down over France,  
 "Jilted thousands of WACs who were waiting to dance."  
 But deep in his eyes I could see he was nervous;  
 We both had been there, both been in the service.

"If," he said, "if—this is nothing to sneeze at—  
 "If I get snagged by some dang Red Chinese brat  
 "Then I, Larry Metcalf, bequeath it to you,  
 "The station, the show, the recordings, the loo."

There's a joke that I turn to in times such as these,  
 This time it escaped me: I glanced down at my peas.  
 He laughed and he laughed, but I didn't believe it;  
 He'd put the thought out there: too late to retrieve it.

I said, "What about Izzy, you talked to her yet?  
 She can't be too crazy about this, I'll bet."  
 He told me he'd written a tome of a letter.  
 "I'm lousy in person, on paper I'm better."

We went out to the sidewalk to say our goodbyes;  
 The wind had picked up, it was stinging our eyes.  
 "Take care of her, Wally. Beyond any doubt...  
 "She's the one thing that I can't live without."

The mood was serene, with a touch of regret;  
 He climbed into his car and I'll never forget,  
 When I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,  
 Merry Christmas, Chicago...Chicago, good night.

*(As LIGHTS SHIFT back to normal, the others are applauding  
 WALLY.)*

**JO.** I don't know about you, Wally, but I can just imagine all the  
 folks at home gathered around the fire listening to the radio, and the  
 flavor of...what's that flavor, I can almost smell it...Wally—

*(WALLY is still spaced out.)*

*(With much overlapping...)*

**JOEY.** Chestnuts?

JO. Yeah. Chestnuts.

JOEY. CHESTNUTS ROASTING ON AN OPEN FIRE.<sup>5</sup>

JO. And kids coming in and out the door.

MOM/IZZY. Tommy, what I tell you about closing that door?!

TOMMY/JO. Aw, mom.

JOEY. JACK FROST NIPPING AT YOUR NOSE.

JO. Cuz baby it is cold outside.

MOM. You're dripping on the rug.

TOMMY. But mom...

JOEY. YULETIDE CAROLS BEING SUNG BY A CHOIR

JO. And lotsa folks

JOEY. DRESSED UP LIKE ESKIMOS.

JO. Cause everybody

IZZY. everybody

*(They're all looking at WALLY. Beat.)*

WALLY. *(Singing.)* EVERYBODY

ALL. KNOWS A TURKEY AND SOME MISTLETOE,

BOBBY. *(Under "TOE":)* And raspberry Jell-O!

ALL. *(SONG CONTINUES.)*

WALLY. Well, Izzy, I think it's time for

ALL. *(Singing.)* DEAR WA-A-A-A-ALLY-Y-Y-Y-Y-Y.

WALLY. Your letters. What do we have first?

*(SOUND: TEARING OPEN AN ENVELOPE WITH LETTER OPENER. Of course, WALLY reads from a script.)*

Dear Wally and the Gang. We're sure going to miss *Wally K's Variety Hour*. We plan our whole weekend around your show. What are we going to do? Signed, Mark and Judy B. from Kalamazoo.

Well, Judy and Mark—don't forget our most popular segment, "City Police," is going to television, and in two short weeks you can tune in to your local National Broadcasting affiliate and catch Joey Preston as Detective Frank Idlewild like always on Saturday night. And

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<sup>5</sup> As before, this song is optional. It may be replaced with another appropriate holiday song, or skipped entirely, with lines re-written accordingly. If the song is skipped altogether, jump to Wally: "Well, Izzy, I think it's time for."

Judy and Mark, after you watch “City Police,” we’ll still be here spinning records on WCGW for our Chicago listeners.

**IZZY.** So move to Chicago.

*(JOEY, unseen by WALLY is slipping a letter to IZZY, who then hands it to WALLY.)*

**WALLY.** What’s our next letter, Izzy?

*(SOUND: TEARING OPEN ANOTHER ENVELOPE.)*

Dear Walter. Is it true, like Bobby says, that that you’re almost completely bald, because I am awfully attracted to bald men, in fact the balder...

*(JOEY wrote this one, and WALLY now knows it...)*

the better. Signed, Rita Hayworth— *(Improvising:)* ski.

**JOEY.** Well, Rita—

**WALLY.** I’m not bald.

**JOEY.** He’s not, Rita. But if he were—

**WALLY.** I think there’s time for one more, Izzy.

*(IZZY searches desperately for another envelope, finds a “real” envelope, tears it open, hands it across.)*

Dear Mr. Krakowski—ooh, formal—I think I speak for thousands of your listeners. We’ve heard about Joey Preston going to the new TV show in New York. What about Joanna Brown? *(WALLY hesitates, maybe clears his throat...)* What’s going to happen to Betsy? It’s always been Jo and Joey. Please tell us why Jo isn’t going to New York too. Signed, Martin W. from Cincinnati.

**JO.** Can I take that one, Wally?

**WALLY.** Sure, Jo.

**JO.** Martin W. of Cincinnati, I can’t tell you how much I appreciate that question, and in the spirit of Christmas...in the spirit...

*(But JOEY takes the mic.)*

**JOEY.** Truth is, Martin W., New York isn’t ready for the likes of Joanna Brown. She’s too good for those people...that’s what it is.

*(Dead air.)*

*(IZZY grabs a nutcracker and a walnut from the sound effects table. She CRACKS THE NUT in front of the mike.)*

**IZZY.** Know what I’m doing, Wally?

**WALLY.** I have no idea.

**IZZY.** I'm cracking one chestnut for every year you haven't taken me to see *The Nutcracker* Ballet.

**WALLY.** That's a lotta chestnuts.

**IZZY.** Yup.

*(JOEY is at the sound effects table holding up a walnut mouthing "These are walnuts. Walnuts.")*

**WALLY.** You gonna roast them on an open fire?

**IZZY.** Ha ha.

**JOEY.** *(Just off mic:)* These are walnuts.

**IZZY.** *(Evil eyeing JOEY, cracking another one:)* It's not too late, you know...they've still got tickets over at the Civic Opera House.

**WALLY.** That so?

**IZZY.** On Wacker Drive.

**WALLY.** I know where the Civic is.

**IZZY.** Twenty North Wacker. *(She cracks another one.)*

**WALLY.** Hey, what brand are those chestnuts, anyway?

**JOEY.** They're walnuts.

**IZZY.** Blue Diamond Brand, what else?

**WALLY.** Quick, let me try one of those.

**JOEY.** *(Singsong:)* Wal-nuts.

**WALLY.** Mmm... Hey, don't Blue Diamond Brand Nuts have a monopoly on *freshness*?

*(JOEY gooses IZZY; she screams.)*

**IZZY.** Not in this studio.

*(SOUND: ba-dum bum.)*

**WALLY.** And now I think it's time for the final radio episode of City—whu...

*(JOEY is waving WALLY aside, pulling him away from the mike and distracting him...)*

**IZZY.** But before we go to City Police...Joanna, tell our audience what we saw out on the Magnificent Mile before the show tonight.

*(While JO and IZZY speak, IZZY is replacing the New York version of City Police with Wally's version, on each of the stands.)*

**JO.** (*Improvising:*) Well, there were...there were so many people out shopping, weren't there, Izzy? Do you remember that one man?

**IZZY.** I do...what did he say to you? That smart guy.

**JO.** I'm sure you remember better than me.

**IZZY.** No. That smart aleck.

**JO.** Oh yeah, him, with the dark green chapeau—

**WALLY.** Yes folks, speaking of smart alecks in green chapeaus, it's time for (*Plays dark flourish on the piano.*) City Police. You'll recall in our last episode, Frank Idlewild—detective *extraordinaire*—had just received a call from Sergeant Belfry—

**FRANK.** What is it, Sarge?

**BELFRY/WALLY.** You're gonna wanna see this, Frank. Your favorite block: Adams, right across from the Art Institute.

**FRANK.** I'm six minutes away.

(*SOUND: SIREN.*)

**WALLY.** The detective found himself on the eighth floor—about to meet the perpetrator of a string of bank robberies—and as of our last episode—cold-blooded murder.

(*Piano: dark flourish.*)

**BELFRY.** Thank goodness you're here, Frank. They're in the bedroom.

**FRANK.** How many?

**BELFRY.** Four altogether. Three guys and...

(*WALLY leafs ahead, realizes it's the wrong script—he searches frantically for the New York version.*)

**FRANK.** (*Off-script:*) Three guys and who, Sergeant?

**BELFRY.** (*Glaring at JOEY:*) Who do you think?

**FRANK.** Three guys and a broad?

**BELFRY.** (*Wryly:*) You read my mind.

**FRANK.** Is one of 'em the same shmo we've been chasing for six weeks?

**BELFRY.** Yeah, Frank.

**FRANK.** (*Back on-script:*) Not...Macon the Belcher?

(*And WALLY has given up, throws a defeated look at JOEY, and settles into the script.*)

*(Over the following, IZZY gets an idea, shoves her script into the hands of the MUSICIAN, points at a particular line, then dashes off to find – possibly in the office – a bottle of Coke, which she will open and chug...)*

**BELFRY.** I didn't know that about him.

**FRANK.** Know what about him?

**BELFRY.** The latter part, the...

**FRANK.** The Belcher part? Never had a meal with him, have you Belfry.

**BELFRY.** Sounds like he could use a little Pepto. Speaking of which...

**FRANK.** What?

**BELFRY.** You don't look so good yourself. Whatsa matter, Frank?

**FRANK.** They're moving me out, Belfry. Special case.

**BELFRY.** Outta Chicago?

**FRANK.** Don't wanna talk about it... That girl photographer show up yet?

**BELFRY.** "Girl photographer."

**FRANK.** From the Trib. Can never remember her name.

**BELFRY.** Drop the act, Frank.

**FRANK.** What act?

**BELFRY.** You gotta thing for her. It's crystal clear...clear as that black patch over your left eye.

*(JOEY throws a hostile glance to WALLY, who grins back.)*

*(IZZY is back...)*

**MACON/MUSICIAN.** Hey, Idlewild.

*(IZZY burps into her mic, or attempts to burp...)*

**BELFRY.** *(To FRANK:)* There's Macon now.

*(SOUND: A CRASH OF FURNITURE from inside the apartment. RUNNING FOOTSTEPS towards the door.)*

**BETSY.** *(Muffled:)* Frank! Frank! I know you're out there. They've got me, Frank!

*(SOUND: SLUG to Betsy's face. BETSY screams.)*

**MACON.** Keep quiet, girly. Idlewild. Get lost...or your girlfriend drops.

**BELFRY.** (*Hushed:*) Ya think he means through the window, Frank?

**FRANK.** (*Also hushed:*) I think that's what he means.

**BELFRY.** Should we call the Fire Department?

**FRANK.** Too late for that.

**MACON.** Eight stories up, Idlewild. Heckuva mess in the morning.

**BELFRY.** (*Hushed:*) What're you gonna do?

**FRANK.** (*As if through the door:*) I don't care what you do with the girl, Macon.

**BELFRY.** (*Hushed:*) Frank!

**FRANK.** So here's what's gonna happen. Me and Sergeant we gotta a coupla Colts between us, and I'm sure you got plenty a heat on your side of this door.

**MACON.** Don't try sweet-talkin' me, Idlewild.

**BELFRY.** (*Hushed, to FRANK:*) What're we gonna do?

**FRANK.** (*Hushed, to BELFRY:*) Remember the amusement park case? 'Fifty-one?

**BELFRY.** Sure.

**FRANK.** (*Back through the door:*) Thing is Macon, Sergeant Belfry here's the size of a Frigidaire. He's gonna bust the door down, take a coupla your bullets in the gut and keep on shootin' while I take out you, your pal with the sawed-off, and the goon who's holding the girl. Heck, I'll take her out too if I have to.

**BETSY.** Frank!

**FRANK.** Pipe down, sister. I never cared much for your lipstick color anyway.

**BETSY.** Oh, Frank.

**FRANK.** Plus...I forgot to get you a Christmas present.

**MACON.** You think I'm fallin' for this, Idlewild?

**FRANK.** That's just how big of a take-down you are, Macon. I'm willing to trade a queen and a pawn for you. What'll you trade for me?

**MACON.** I'm a dominoes man.

**FRANK.** Baloney. Only a chess player would've gotten this far in the game.

**MACON.** All right, Idlewild. Two pawns. 'At's all you're worth.

**FRANK.** It's a deal. Send out your two pawns, unarmed, and I'll come in with my hands up.

**MACON.** You must think I'm an idiot.

*(SOUND: SIX PISTOL SHOTS, which...what the heck... FRANK mimes.)*

**FRANK.** I'm empty—now open the door. Open it, or I send in the icebox.

*(Ad lib. from inside: "I dunno, boss." "What are you doin'." "I don't get it.")*

**MACON.** *(Through the door:)* Give me your guns!

**OFFICER/JO.** *(From way downstairs:)* Detective Idlewild.

**BELFRY.** *(Hushed:)* Here comes the cavalry, Frank.

**FRANK.** Shh... Tell 'em to stay back.

*(SOUND: BELFRY RUNNING A FEW STEPS.)*

**BELFRY.** *(Yelling down the hall:)* Hang tight, Mitch.

**OFFICER.** Sure thing, Sarge.

**FRANK.** *(Through door:)* What'll it be, Macon?

*(SOUND: LOCK UNBOLTING and DOOR OPENING.)*

Well hello, Boxer.

**BOXER/WALLY.** Hey Frank.

**FRANK.** Sorry to see you mixed up with this guy. Cuff 'em, Belfry.

*(SOUND: CUFFS GOING ON.)*

**BOXER.** Hey, not so tight.

**BELFRY.** Shut it, Boxer.

**FRANK.** Who's next? Oh, hey Pretzel.

**PRETZEL/IZZY.** Hey, Frank.

**FRANK.** Nice guy, Belcher unh? Turnin' you in like this?

**PRETZEL.** He's all yours, Frank.

*(SOUND: CUFFS GOING ON.)*

**BELFRY.** Let's go boys.

*(SOUND: THEIR FOOTSTEPS down the hall.)*

*(SOUND: DOOR closing.)*

**MACON.** Bolt it behind you, Idlewild.

(*SOUND: BOLT.*)

**FRANK.** Hi Betsy.

**BETSY.** Hi Frank.

**FRANK.** Get any good pictures?

**BETSY.** I doubt it. They tossed my Graflex out the window, Frank.

**MACON.** Quiet you two.

**FRANK.** Quite a collection there, Macon. Atsa lotta flatware.

**MACON.** A little whatchacall memorabilia from the war.

**FRANK.** Oh yeah? Which one.

**MACON.** Shut your trap, Idlewild. You and I ain't on speakin' terms. Just take your pick.

**FRANK.** Whaddaya mean?

**MACON.** Which gun you want me to shoot you with?

(*SOUND: ONE OR TWO FOOTSTEPS.*)

Uh-uh-uh—stay back, point from over there.

**FRANK.** I ever tell you about my track and field days down at State?

**MACON.** What do I care? Pick your poison.

**FRANK.** I tell you about my specialty?

**MACON.** Hundred yard dash? Who cares?

**FRANK.** Standing long jump.

**MACON.** He-e-e-e-e-e-ey!

(*SOUND: LOUD CRASH of bodies crushing furniture.*)

(*FIST FIGHT. Three or four fists hitting flesh, each one followed by groans from FRANK and MACON.*)

(*PIANO: transition chords. "Minutes later":*)

**BELFRY.** That's it, Frank, we're gonna seal the door.

**FRANK.** Leave that to me.

**BELFRY.** Sure thing.

(*SOUND: FOOTSTEPS followed by DOOR CLOSING. Outside in the hall:*)

Let's go, guys—Frank's comin' later...

(*SOUND: FOOTSTEPS receding outside door.*)

**FRANK.** Betsy, I...

**BETSY.** Don't even say it. I knew you were lying. At least about the lipstick.

**FRANK.** Only thing I like better than your lipstick is your—

**BETSY.** Shhhh. Don't start down that road. Not now. Not tonight.

**FRANK.** Hey, Betsy. Over here.

*(SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.)*

Is that who I think it is?

**BETSY.** Open the window, Frank, too much frost.

*(Sound of window opening, and outdoor sounds.)*

**FRANK.** Is it him? It is, isn't it.

**BETSY.** Really?

**FRANK.** I think it is.

**BETSY.** It can't be.

**FRANK.** Hey, Santa!!—

**BETSY.** Shh!—

**FRANK.** Over here!!—

**BETSY.** What are you doing?

**FRANK.** Over here, Santa Claus!!

**BETSY.** Leave him alone.

**FRANK.** What?

**BETSY.** He's got his rounds he's gotta make.

*(Sound of wind.)*

You really think that's him?

**FRANK.** Sure. There's the eight reindeer.

**BETSY.** The eight reindeer.

**BETSY.** Flying.

**FRANK.** Weird.

**BETSY.** There he goes.

**FRANK.** There he goes.

**BETSY.** He's gone.

*(Sound of wind. Sexy:)*

**BETSY.** Sure is cold all of a sudden.

*(Sound of wind keeps going. WALLY glares at IZZY, mimes closing window; she's holding up her hands, refusing to do the closing window sound.)*

**BETSY.** This is it, isn't it?

**FRANK.** What?

*(More wind.)*

**BETSY.** Goodbye.

**FRANK.** How do you... You know?

**BETSY.** I've seen it in your face ever since you came through the door...you're leaving.

**FRANK.** I don't know what to say.

**BETSY.** Can I say something then?

**FRANK.** Sure.

**BETSY.** I wish it was me leaving you. I wish a thousand bucks it was me leaving you.

**FRANK.** Listen to me, Betsy. I'm gonna tell you the truth here now.

**BETSY.** What do you mean—you haven't been telling me the truth?

**FRANK.** No, I haven't. But I'm gonna tell you now. After all it's Christmas and...

*(JOEY starts searching his pockets.)*

it's Christmas...and...

*(He glances at IZZY, who shrugs.)*

I'm going undercover. They need me in New York—and I tried to say no, believe me sweetheart, I tried to say no—but this is how it's gotta be. I know it's lousy, but it's just too darn important... *(He's found a ring box...)* for the country. *(He snaps it open, revealing an engagement ring.)*

**BETSY.** But...

*(WALLY is at JO's script pointing to her next line.)*

...how long will it take?

**FRANK.** I don't know. Could be six months. Could be forever.

**BETSY.** Forever? *(She's over the moon...)* I don't know what to say, Frank.

**FRANK.** You don't?

**BETSY.** You must go. It's Christmas. And Christmas is about... (*She's lost.*) Going under the covers, going...undercover...in New York... going... Frank, it's just so beautiful! ...*outside...there...through the frosty windows...*

**FRANK.** So I guess...

**BETSY.** I know.

**FRANK.** I guess this is...

**BETSY.** Yes.

**FRANK.** Goodbye...

(*Off-mic, maybe they kiss. PIANO MUSIC...*)

**WALLY.** And that's it for the final radio episode of "City Police." Tune in your TV sets to NBC in two weeks for the continuing adventures of Frank Idlewild, detective *extraordinaire*.

How about a song, Joanna Brown?

Jo Brown?

**JO.** Yeah?

**WALLY.** How about one more number?

**JO.** Whatever you want, Wally.

(*WALLY is holding one of her songs out to her.*)

This one?

**WALLY.** You heard her at the beginning of tonight's show, and the phone's been ringing off the hook ever since...

(*SOUND: PHONE RING.*)

Listeners begging for more. Ladies and gentlemen, let's hear another song by Joanna Brown sung by...Joanna Brown.

(*WALLY plays an intro...*)

**JO.**

CROUCHING BY THE FIRE,  
I FEEL MY CHEEKS ON FIRE...  
YEAH...I CAN BUILD A FIRE,  
IT'S TRUE.  
I GUESS I SHOULD THROW ON ANOTHER LOG...  
I'VE WRAPPED UP ALL THE PRESENTS—  
ALL THE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS—  
THAT LITTLE PILE OF PRESENTS

SURE GREW.  
 THINK I'LL GO AND POUR ANOTHER EGGNOG...  
 SOMETHING'S GONE, IT'S MISSING.  
 WHAT IS WRONG? WHAT'S MISSING?  
 BABY, ALL I'M MISSING  
 IS YOU...  
 BABY, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT IT  
 I DON'T WANNA FRET ABOUT IT  
 JUST ONE THING TO SAY ABOUT IT...  
 WHERE ARE YOU?

*(...and now JO is improvising, joined by JOEY.)*

BUT WAIT, UNDER THE TREE,  
 A NEW GIFT BY THE TREE  
 UNDERNEATH THE TREE  
 IT FLEW.  
 IT'S NOT A PHEASANT OR A PEASANT, UH-UH...

BABY, IT'S A SMILE  
 AND NOT JUST ANY SMILE  
 BABY IT IS YOUR SMILE  
 IT'S YOUR SMILE SMILING BACK AT ME

**JOEY.** SMILING LAUGHING BACK AT YOU

**JO.** YOUR SPARKLING

**JOEY.** LAUGHING

**JO.** CRACKING

**JOEY.** TEN-CARAT...

**JO/JOEY.** SMILING-UP-AT-ME SMILE!

*(SOUND from record player: LONG APPLAUSE as LIGHTS FADE.)*

## Scene 2

*(LIGHTS UP. Moments later. The MUSICIAN is packing up. WALLY is there. The others are not.)*

**WALLY.** Nice work... Haven't I seen you around here before?

**MUSICIAN.** I'm mainly down around Indianapolis these days.

**WALLY.** WIBC. The Barry Stern Show.

**MUSICIAN.** Yeah, uh...lately though...Seattle.

**WALLY.** Don Courtnay. KJR. The Martin Brothers.

**MUSICIAN.** Sure.

**WALLY.** Small world.

**MUSICIAN.** Yeah.

**WALLY.** Yeah... How'd hear about us?

**MUSICIAN.** Ran into a guy I used to know. Said you were short tonight.

**WALLY.** (*He's been writing out a check.*) Listen, uh...speaking of short.

**MUSICIAN.** What's this?

**WALLY.** Not much, is what it is.

**MUSICIAN.** Keep your money.

**WALLY.** I insist.

**MUSICIAN.** Keep it...I'm not here for that. (*Referring to his instrument:*) Me and Rosie, Christmas Eve... (*Glancing around the studio:*) ... we just needed a little of this.

**WALLY.** A little of what?

**MUSICIAN.** The ol' racket. The ol'...what you had here tonight. Not so much of it where I'm from.

**WALLY.** Seattle.

**MUSICIAN.** Seattle, right... Can I tell you something, sideman to sideman?

**WALLY.** What?

(*MUSICIAN takes the check, folds it, tucks in WALLY's pocket... or something equivalent.*)

**MUSICIAN.** Spend it on the girl. (*He starts to leave.*)

**WALLY.** There is no...

**MUSICIAN.** (*Indicating Studio A:*) No girl?

**WALLY.** No.

**MUSICIAN.** That wasn't Isabel Marquiss? (*Beat.*) None of my business anyway.

**WALLY.** Wait—

**MUSICIAN.** I was misinformed.

**WALLY.** Wait.

**MUSICIAN.** They say it's gonna snow tonight.

**THIS PLAY IS  
NOT OVER!**

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