

# **IF YOU'RE GOING TO DANCE, YOU HAVE TO PAY THE FIDDLER**

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A Winter Holidays Diversity Play  
in Five Scenes

by  
Terry Lee Marzell

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

Mr. Joe Hunter	An American husband and father
Mrs. Kate Hunter	An American wife and mother
Heather Hunter	An American teenaged girl, the daughter of the house
Jeremy Hunter	An American teenaged boy, the son of the house and the younger brother of Heather
Juanita Rodriguez	A teenaged Mexican American girl, a neighbor of the family, and the friend of Heather
Ava Goldberg	A teenaged Jewish American girl, the friend of Heather
Jamal Washington	A teenaged African American boy, the neighbor of the family, and the friend of Jeremy
Jian Yu	A teenaged Chinese American boy, friend of Jeremy
Christmas Carolers	A group of singers, indeterminate number

## **SET DESIGN**

The set is designed to look like an average American living room. In center stage is a couch. Next to the couch on stage center left, there is an end table with a lamp on it. To stage right of the couch and is a fireplace with four stockings hanging on it. The stockings bear the names of the family members: Mom, Dad, Heather, Jeremy. Downstage left is a television set. For Scene II, to the right of the fireplace at center stage right, there is a medium-size Christmas tree without ornaments. For Scene III, the tree should have ornaments and presents underneath.

## **TIME**

The present, during the Christmas season.

## **COSTUMES**

All characters wear everyday casual dress such as jeans, T-shirts, and tennis shoes. Mrs. Hunter could wear an apron in Scene I. All characters should have hats, coats, scarves, and mittens, etc., that indicate very cold weather outside.

## PROPS

### SCENE I

- Four stockings for fireplace mantle. One stocking should contain candy canes, pens, pencils, and a packaged video game.
- Three history textbooks
- Numerous notebook papers with writing on them
- A "Christmas Jobs for Santa's Helpers" List
- Mr. Hunter's hat, coat, and scarf
- Two cups for hot apple cider (cider not required)
- Mrs. Hunter's purse
- Mrs. Hunter's checkbook
- Furniture polish and dust cloth

### SCENE II

- Three video game controllers

### SCENE III

- Carolers' hats, coats, gloves, mittens
- Carolers' song books
  
- Christmas tree of medium height
- Boxes for ornaments
- Ornaments
- Styrofoam cups (could be carried on a tray)
- Ava's parcel to give to the Hunter family
- Juanita's parcel to give to the Hunter family
- Mrs. Hunter's parcel to give to Ava
- Mrs. Hunter's parcel to give to Juanita
- Mrs. Hunter's parcel to give to the retirement home
- Television cord
- Mrs. Hunter's coin purse full of quarters
- Stack of Christmas cards
- Sound of doorbell ringing

SCENE IV

- Potted poinsettia

SCENE V

- Newspaper
- Nativity scene
- Bag of groceries
- Television repair book
- Tool chest
- Sound of clock ticking

**SCENE I**

*(At Rise: The Hunter living room. Heather, Ava, and Juanita are sitting on the living room couch. Heather is seated furthest to stage right. All of the girls are surrounded by textbooks and papers. They have obviously been studying for a test together.)*

AVA

*(Closing textbook and beginning to gather papers up)*  
Well, that about does it.

JUANITA

Yeah. I guess we're ready for tomorrow's History test in first period. What a hideous thing to have to face the first thing in the morning.

HEATHER

No, Juanita. The most hideous thing to have to face the first thing in the morning is Mrs. Amir's bright-eyed-and bushy-tailed welcome.

AVA

I know.  
*(Mimics exuberant teacher)*

"Good morning, students. Is everyone ready for another fun-filled day?" Yeesh.

HEATHER

How can she possibly be so awake every morning at the screaming crack of dawn?

JUANITA

Heather, 8:30 is not the crack of dawn.

HEATHER

Juanita, NOON is the crack of dawn, as far as I'm concerned.  
*(Enter Jeremy stealthily from stage right, crossing behind the couch. Looks to the left and to the right. He is obviously trying to hide from someone. He ducks behind the couch. Juanita, Ava, and Heather have been following his movements with their eyes.)*

HEATHER

Ahhh, the untamed kid brother in his natural habitat.  
*(All girls giggle)*

JEREMY

*(Head popping up from behind couch)*  
 Cut it out, Heather. I'm hiding from Mom. She's been looking all over the house for me, and she's got that stupid "Christmas Jobs for Santa's Helpers" list in her hand. I HATE that list!

HEATHER

Don't be such a mondo-dismo, Jeremy. That "Christmas Jobs for Santa's Helpers" list has been a part of this family's holiday traditions since way back when Grandma was a little girl. That list is as important to our celebration of the holidays as turkey and stuffing and pumpkin pie and presents are.

AVA

"Christmas Jobs for Santa's Helpers"? What's that?

JUANITA

Yeah, Heather, What IS that? I've never heard of it before.

JEREMY

You both must come from a NORMAL family.

MRS. HUNTER

*(From offstage, calling in search of her son)*  
 Jeremy! Jeremy!

JEREMY

*(Ducking out of sight behind the couch)*  
 Yikes! She's coming!

HEATHER

Well, according to the family tradition, each member of the family is responsible for one special job to help get the house ready for the holidays. If you're a kid, it makes you feel good because you really believe that you're one of Santa's helpers. When you grow up, you still appreciate the list because it is such a part of our family tradition. But HIM!

*(Indicating Jeremy with a jerk of the thumb)*

Well, he's at that awkward in-between age. YOU know.  
*(Juanita and Ava giggle in agreement)*

JEREMY

*(Popping up from behind the couch and threatening Heather with a closed fist)*

Knock it off, you guys!

AVA

Oh, like we're really scared.

JUANITA

Well, like, what kind of jobs are on the list?

HEATHER

Well, Mom and Dad's job is to buy the Christmas tree. My job is to make the wreath and hang it on the front door. And Jeremy's job is to set up the nativity scene. That job is always reserved for the BABY of the family.

*(Jeremy groans)*

Oh, quit whimpering, Jeremy.

*(In a baby-talk voice)*

It's a very important job.

JEREMY

It's just about the worst thing about Christmas that anybody ever thought up. I can really get into the pumpkin pie and the turkey and the stuffing and the egg-nog..

JUANITA

And the presents.

AVA

And we get two whole weeks off from school, so we can sleep in late and we don't have to do any crummy homework.

JEREMY

But that stupid list of Mom's ruins Christmas for me every year. I HATE that list. And I HATE being the baby of the family.

MRS. HUNTER

*(Again from offstage, calling out)*

Jeremy! Jeremy!

*(Once again, Jeremy ducks behind the couch out of sight.)*

HEATHER

*(Getting up and crossing to the right end of the couch; she points a finger at Jeremy and yells)*

Come out from behind that couch, Jeremy Hunter! Come out and face up to your responsibilities as the baby of the family like a man!

*(Jeremy crawls into view on all fours from the left end of the couch. Mrs. Hunter enters from stage right, holding the Christmas jobs list in her hand.)*

MRS. HUNTER

Jeremy! Jeremy!

*(Sees the girls)*

Oh, hello, Ava. Hello, Juanita.

JUANITA AND AVA

Hi, Mrs. Hunter.

MRS. HUNTER

Heather, have you seen your brother? It's time to start thinking about our jobs as Santa's helpers again. My, how the year has gone by so fast.

MRS. HUNTER

*(Seeing Jeremy crawling away from them on the floor at the other end of the couch)*

Oh, there you are, Jeremy. What are you doing down there on the floor?

HEATHER

He was searching for grubs, like the rug vermin that he is.

JEREMY

*(Getting up from the floor and dusting himself off)*

Mom, one of these days you're going to regret it that you ever taught her how to talk. I know I already do.

*(Mr. Hunter enters from stage left. He is wearing a hat, coat, and scarf, for it is very cold outside.)*

MR. HUNTER

Honey! I'm home! Whew! It's as cold as Alaska outside.

*(He begins to remove his winter outdoor clothing.)*

JEREMY

*(Jeremy bolts for the door, stage left, running into Mr. Hunter in his haste to get outside.)*

'Bye, Mom! Hi, Dad! Gotta go! Important errands. 'Bye!

MRS. HUNTER

Jeremy! Wait! The list!

*(It is too late; Jeremy is already gone)*  
Oh, well. We'll catch him later.

AVA

Want to bet?

JUANITA

I wouldn't bet MY Christmas present on that.

MRS. HUNTER

*(To Mr. Hunter)*

Come on into the kitchen dear. I have a nice kettle of hot apple cider that will warm you up in a jiffy.

MR. HUNTER

Mmmm. Whoever started hot apple cider as a Christmas tradition in this family should get an extra-special hug.

*(Mr. Hunter starts towards Mrs. Hunter, with arms outstretched and ready to hug her. Mrs. Hunter looks around him to see the girls are watching, and puts her hand out to stop him. Then she beckons him to follow her into the kitchen.)*

MRS. HUNTER

In the kitchen, dear.

*(Mr. Hunter and Mrs. Hunter exit, stage right)*

AVA

Boy, your family sure is into Christmas traditions.

HEATHER

Isn't everybody?

AVA

Well, my family is Jewish, so we have Hanukkah traditions instead of Christmas traditions.

JUANITA

Hanukkah? I've never heard of that. Tell me about it.

AVA

Oh, I love Hanukkah. It's one of my favorite holidays. Hanukkah celebrates a miracle that happened way back in ancient times, when the Temple was re-dedicated after the defeat of the Maccabees. When the Jews lit the menorah, they had a supply of oil to keep the candles burning for only one day, but a miracle

happened. The candles stayed lit for eight whole days! That's why we call Hanukkah the "Festival of Lights."

HEATHER

How does your family celebrate Hanukkah, Ava?

AVA

Well, Hanukkah lasts for eight days. Each day we light one of the eight candles on the family menorah, which is like a candelabra, and we sing a special song. Traditionally, we eat jelly doughnuts and potato pancakes called latkes. And every day we exchange a small present.

JUANITA

Wow, a present every day for eight days! That's great!

AVA

And the little kids like to play a game with a four-sided spinning top called a dreidel. And we also get chocolate that is wrapped to look like gold coins. That's called gelt.

HEATHER

How does your family celebrate Christmas, Juanita?

JUANITA

Well, I think my favorite part is when we all get together on Christmas Eve, which we call Buena Noche. We all eat tamales, and then we go to church. When we get there, we have Las Posadas. That's a re-enactment of when Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, and they were looking for a room at an inn to spend the night, and they kept getting turned away. At the end, the kids lead the procession to the church where we place a figure of the Baby Jesus into the nativity scene. Then we have Midnight Mass.

AVA

It all sounds wonderful. I love this time of year.

HEATHER

Yeah, but there's just one Christmas tradition in our family that I really detest.

AVA

Really, Heather? What's that?

HEATHER

It's the annual Christmas football game. I detest sports, and I think it is really disgusting that Dad and Jeremy force Mom and me to sit through an afternoon of stupid football on the precious few days we get off for Christmas vacation.

JUANITA

Yeah, that sure sounds tough, Heather.

HEATHER

Tough! It's intolerable, absolutely intolerable, that's what it is! All year long it's basketball, baseball, hockey, football, tennis, golf. Nauseating. All of it is nauseating. But on holidays it simply should NOT be allowed. I mean, I can't even watch something neat on TV, like "The Worms—Live from Underground New York," or something like that. I can't even play any of my new CD's like the Frantics or the Bubbleheads. And if I try to use my new Christmas gadgets, like my hair crimper or something, it makes the picture on the TV set go haywire, and then my dad yells at me to

*(Imitating Mr. Hunter)*

"turn that infernal contraption off, for cryin' out loud." Honestly, it makes me positively terminal to think of enduring that stupid football game again this year.

JUANITA

I know what you mean, Heather. My mom is always complaining about football, too. She says she can't understand why grown men would want to dress up to look like "robot-headed, grill-faced, overstuffed easy chairs." She really makes me laugh when she says they look like easy-chairs.

*(Juanita pantomimes the stooping position of the two-point stance. Heather and Ava giggle.)*

HEATHER

I know. It's all too stupid for me.

JUANITA

Well, cheer up. It could be a lot worse, you know.

HEATHER

How?

JUANITA

Well, your dad's favorite Christmas sport could have been "Bowling for Reindeer."

AVA

Or worse, yet, "Wrestlemania for Santa's Elves."

JUANITA

*(Picking up textbooks and papers laying on the couch)*

Well, I have to go now. My mother is taking my sisters and me to the grocery store to buy all of the things we need to make our Christmas tamales. She said I should be home by five o'clock. It's almost that time now.

AVA

*(Helping Juanita)*

Yeah, I have to go, too. I'm supposed to help my mother unpack and set up the menorah tonight.

HEATHER

Well, OK, girls. Thanks for coming over to study for the History test tomorrow.

*(All girls head for stage left)*

And don't forget Miss Amir's handy-dandy, "neato-keeno" test preparation tips.

JUANITA

Oh, yeah.

*(Imitating exuberant teacher)*

"Get a good night's rest and eat a good breakfast."

HEATHER

Right. Little does she know that's a luxury reserved only for weekends.

AVA

Well, see you tomorrow, Juanita. 'Bye, Heather.

HEATHER

'Bye, Ava.

JUANITA

Yeah, see you later, Ava. 'Bye, Heather.

*(Ava exits, stage left)*

HEATHER

'Bye, Juanita.

*(Juanita exits, stage left. Heather crosses to center stage and once again sits on the couch. Mr. Hunter and Mrs. Hunter enter from stage right. Mr. Hunter is*

*carrying a cup of hot apple cider. Mrs. Hunter is carrying the Christmas jobs list.)*

MR. HUNTER

Mmmm. This hot apple cider is just the ticket on a freezing cold day, Kate. I feel warmer already.

MRS. HUNTER

And you'll feel even warmer once you've hung up the mistletoe, honey.

HEATHER

*(Rolling her eyes in disgust)*

Mom!

MRS. HUNTER

It's alright, dear. We're married.

MR. HUNTER

That's right. Sixteen years and we're still newlyweds.

HEATHER

You guys are disgusting.

MRS. HUNTER

Well, Mr. Hunter, shall we take our disgusting selves down to the Christmas tree lot and fulfill our obligation on the Christmas jobs list?

MR. HUNTER

Whatever you say, Mrs. Hunter.

MRS. HUNTER

But, Joe, this year when we buy the family tree, let's get a little one.

*(Indicates size of about two feet high)*

MR. HUNTER

Oh, no, Kate. We have to buy the biggest tree on the lot, or it won't be right. Our tree should be at least this high!

*(Indicates a size as high as he can reach. Mr. Hunter and Mrs. Hunter begin to put on their coats and gloves. Mrs. Hunter locates and picks up her purse.)*

HEATHER

Oh, here we go again. You guys have this same discussion every year.

MRS. HUNTER

That's because every year, I remember that the year before we had a tree that was way too big.

MR. HUNTER

You can never have a Christmas tree that is too big, too green, or that smells too woodsy.

*(Sniffing the air)*

Mmmmm. I can smell our very own gigantic tree, right here in this very living room right now.

MRS. HUNTER

*(Pointing to the floor)*

If it were up to your father, we'd plant a forest of Douglas fir right here in the living room.

HEATHER

Well, all I can say is, you guys should practice what you preach. You're always telling Jeremy and me to compromise. I think YOU should do the same.

MR. HUNTER

Never! A huge tree is absolutely essential to a proper Christmas celebration.

MRS. HUNTER

No, it's not. Any size tree will do. And this year, I think we should get a little one.

MR. HUNTER

Sorry, Kate. A man's home is his castle. And in THIS man's castle, we're having a BIG tree.

*(Mrs. Hunter opens her purse and takes out a checkbook. She waves the checkbook under Mr. Hunter's nose. Heather stands in-between Mr. Hunter and Mrs. Hunter, and as the next lines are spoken, she pantomimes speaking the words, too. It is obvious she has heard this exchange many times before, and she has the dialogue memorized.)*

MRS. HUNTER

Ah, yes, dear, but in this man's castle I happen to have custody of the checkbook. And that gives ME veto powers.

MR. HUNTER

Ah, yes, dear, but...

*(He pats his coat pocket as Heather simultaneously pats her hip)*

I happen to have custody of the credit cards. And a credit card over-rules a checkbook any day of the week.

MRS. HUNTER

*(Placing a hand over her forehead, Sarah Bernhardt style, as Heather does the same)*

Curses! Foiled again!

HEATHER

Honestly, you two. This discussion every year over the size of the Christmas tree is like an annual theatrical production. I've got the script memorized.

MR. HUNTER

You're right, Heather.

*(Takes Mrs. Hunter by the hand and gently pulls her towards the door, stage left)*

Come on, Kate. Let's go down to the Christmas tree lot to continue the theatrics.

MRS. HUNTER

Just as you say, darling.

*(To Heather)*

Did you finish your homework, Heather?

HEATHER

Yes, Mom.

MRS. HUNTER

Then would you pick up the living room a bit? Oh, and I'd appreciate it if you would do the dusting while we're gone.

HEATHER

OK, Mom.

MRS. HUNTER

Thanks, dear. See you later.

HEATHER

'Bye, Mom. 'Bye Dad.

MR. HUNTER

We'll be back soon.

*(Mr. Hunter and Mrs. Hunter exit, stage left. After they are gone, Heather begins to straighten up the*

*living room. She goes to a cabinet, takes out furniture polish and a dusting cloth, and begins to dust the furniture. After a few moments, Jeremy enters from stage left.)*

JEREMY

Brrr! I was hiding out behind Juanita's tool shed when I saw Mom and Dad leave. Then I knew it would be safe to come back inside. I'm going to get some of Mom's hot apple cider. I'm frozen to the marrow.

HEATHER

*(Continuing to dust)*

Jellyfish like you don't have bone marrow.

JEREMY

Yuk, yuk. Is it true jellyfish don't have bones, or did you just make that up?

HEATHER

It's a scientific fact that I learned watching you slip and slide all over the place trying to avoid your share of the Christmas jobs around here. A spineless jellyfish, that's what you are. You've got no backbone for Christmas tradition, little brother.

*(Jeremy falls onto the couch while Heather crosses to the television set. Heather begins to dust the TV.)*

JEREMY

Oh, Heather, you're so funny I forgot to laugh.

HEATHER

I happen to think I'm hilariously funny.

*(Uses dust cloth as if it were a sword, and begins to fence with the TV set)*

En guard!

*(Slaps the TV right and left with the dust cloth)*

Take that! And that! And that!

JEREMY

Hey!

*(Leaps up from the couch and catches her arm to prevent Heather from slapping the TV)*

Take it easy on the television! Dad and I need that TV for our annual football game!

*(Heather stops slapping the TV; Jeremy lets go of her arm)*

HEATHER

Oh, brother. I think I'd almost give up TV forever if I could just be spared the Christmas football game just this once. I HATE sports. I hate football most of all.

JEREMY

Oh, Heather, you're such a geek. The annual football game is the most important Christmas tradition we've got in this family. Well, after the presents, that is.

HEATHER

What a misguided sense of priorities you have, little brother.

JEREMY

Well, my priority right now is to get some hot apple cider. I'll just leave you to finish your dreary housework. And just remember to be gentle with the television set, or I'll give Dad a detailed description of what you were doing to it!

*(Jeremy exits, stage right)*

HEATHER

*(Looking thoughtfully at the television)*

Oh, there MUST be a way I can spare us from the interminable torture of that stupid football game. Maybe Ava and Juanita can help me think of a way. As for now,

*(Rubbing her hands in malicious glee)*

I think I'll go down to the basement for the box the nativity scene is packed in.

*(Heads for stage right, then stops to look at the audience)*

I'm such a wonderfully helpful older sister!

*(Heather exits, stage right)*

(CURTAIN)

**SCENE II**

*(At Rise: The Hunter living room, arranged as before. As the curtain opens, Jeremy, Jamal, and Jian are sitting on the couch. Each boy is holding a controller, and they are all in the process of playing a video game.)*

JAMAL

*(Shouting out jubilantly)*

Oh! And that makes ME the winner!

JIAN

Oh, man, Jamal! I thought I was going to beat you that time!

JAMAL

Face it, guys, I am the king of video games.

JEREMY

*(Setting down his controller)*

Well, I'm fried. I'm done for the day.

JIAN AND JAMAL

*(Also setting down their controllers)*

Yeah, me, too.

JIAN

So, Jeremy, I see you haven't put up that nativity scene yet.

JEREMY

Nope. Don't wanna do it. Not gonna do it.

JIAN

Oh, come on. It's not that big a deal. Holiday traditions are kind of nice. You should just do it.

JEREMY

Really, Jian? And I guess you're jumping at the chance to participate in holiday traditions at YOUR house.

JIAN

Oh, I don't mind. I kind of like them. Especially the one coming up, Chinese New Year.

JAMAL

How do you celebrate Chinese New Year in your family?

JIAN

Well, the first thing we do is clean the whole house from top to bottom. That clears out all the bad luck that might have collected during the old year.

JEREMY

Well, that doesn't sound like fun at all.

JIAN

Well, I don't have to do that part. After the cleaning, we do a lot of feasting. I am really good at feasting. So, we have this lengthy dinner on New Year's Eve called the "reunion dinner," and it's the most important meal of the year. We eat noodles to symbolize long life, and round dumplings to symbolize family unity, and, as the last course, fish is served, but we don't eat the fish because it symbolizes abundance in the coming year.

JEREMY

What else?

JIAN

Well, on our house and on our gates we hang red lanterns and post scrolls printed with messages of good luck. On New Year's Eve, we stay up late to welcome in the New Year, and just after midnight we set off firecrackers to frighten away evil spirits. And parents give their kids red envelopes that have money in them. Red is the most lucky color.

JAMAL

I always say the best part of any holiday is firecrackers!

JEREMY

Nope. The best part is the presents!

JIAN

I think the best part is the dragon dance on New Year's Day. My brothers and I always get to be part of the dragon. The dragon symbolizes good luck. The longer the dragon, the more luck it will bring to the community, so we try to get everyone to take part in the dance.

JEREMY

Cool, Jian. What about you, Jamal. What winter holiday traditions does your family do?

JAMAL

Well, we celebrate Kwanzaa.

JEREMY

Kwanzaa? I've never heard of that holiday. What is that?

JAMAL

Kwanzaa is an African American holiday that goes on for seven nights, starting the day right after Christmas. It's a holiday that celebrates family unity, and African heritage and culture.

JIAN

That sounds cool.

JAMAL

So each night, the whole family gets together, and one of the kids lights a candle on a candle holder called a kinara. The kinara has seven candles: three red, three green, and one black.

JIAN

Are the kinara and the candles symbols?

JAMAL

The kinara symbolizes our roots, and the candles symbolize the seven principles of the holiday. We have other symbols, too. We use a mat to stand for our traditions, fruits to stand for our hard work, and corn to symbolize the future.

JEREMY

No presents?

JAMAL

Oh, yeah, we get presents. The presents symbolize the love of our parents, and the commitments that the kids make and keep during the year.

JIAN

Commitments? What kind of commitments?

JAMAL

Oh, you know, the usual. Doing your homework, doing your chores. That kind of stuff.

JIAN

I like it.

JAMAL

Yeah, it's a pretty cool tradition.

JIAN

So what do you think, Jeremy? Holiday traditions are pretty neat. Are you ready to set up that nativity scene yet?

JEREMY

Nope. I'll eat the food and open my presents, but I don't want to do any of the work.

JAMAL

I don't think it works that way, bro'.

JEREMY

*(To the audience)* Hey, it works for ME.

*(CURTAIN)*

### SCENE III

*(While the curtain is closed, a group of carolers comes from the back of the auditorium towards the stage, and crosses to the center to stand just in front of the stage. This group can be as large or as small as the director desires. They are dressed for cold weather, and could be carrying songbooks, if the director wishes. The carolers are singing Christmas carols; the director can decide on how many songs and which ones. It is recommended to create a set list of carols from around the world. As the last song begins, the curtain goes up.)*

*(At Rise: The Hunter living room, arranged as before. A bare Christmas tree of medium height has been added to the stage on the left. Boxes of Christmas ornaments are strewn about the room. Mr. Hunter, Mrs. Hunter, Heather, and Jeremy surround the tree and are in the process of decorating it.)*

MR. HUNTER

*(When last Christmas song has ended)*

Oh, that is one of my favorite Christmas songs.

MRS. HUNTER

Mine, too. Oh, I'll bet the carolers are freezing. Go, Jeremy, and tell them to come up to the door for some hot apple cider.

*(Mrs. Hunter exits, stage right. Jeremy goes to stage left and calls out.)*

JEREMY

Hello, there! Come up to the door for hot apple cider, OK?

*(The carolers move from the center to the left side of the stage, disappearing out of the auditorium through the side door. Mrs. Hunter appears from stage right and crosses to stage left. She is carrying Styrofoam cups.)*

MRS. HUNTER

*(Handing cups to the carolers)*

Here's the hot cider. This will warm you right up. Here you are.

*(Turning to the family)*

Whew! It's cold out there.

HEATHER

*(Hanging another ornament on the tree)*

Well, Dad, I see you didn't end up buying the biggest tree on the lot. I don't know why you and Mom had that same old argument about it. You never end up buying the biggest tree there.

JEREMY

Well, they never end up buying the smallest one there, either.

MR. HUNTER

Well, when we got to the lot, your mother picked out the most miniscule tree there. Just like she does every year.

JEREMY

And I'll bet she said, "Let's get a little one this year."

MR. HUNTER

*(Hanging another ornament on the tree)*

She did.

MRS. HUNTER

Then your dad picked out this giant-sized tree that would never have fit in this house. It had to have been at least 20 feet tall.

HEATHER

And I'll bet he said, "No, Kate, we have to have the biggest tree. Nothing smaller than the biggest tree."

MRS. HUNTER

*(Hanging another ornament on the tree)*

He did.

JEREMY

Well, Dad, why didn't you buy it?

MR. HUNTER

Well, that tree was the right size, but it wasn't bushy enough in the branches.

MRS. HUNTER

No kidding. That tree looked like a giant's toothpick.

MRS. HUNTER

Then I picked out a tree that was a little bit larger than the first one I picked out.

MR. HUNTER

*(Hanging another ornament on the tree)*

Right. THAT tree was only semi-miniscule.

MRS. HUNTER

Well, to make a long story short, the trees I picked out kept getting larger and larger, and the trees your Dad picked out kept getting smaller and smaller, until we finally compromised on this one.

JEREMY

I think you picked a good one.

HEATHER

*(Hanging another ornament on the tree)*

I don't know why you're so impressed, Jeremy. Mom and Dad go through this same thing every year, and for all their negotiating, they always bring home a tree this size. Really, I think the whole negotiation process is a colossal waste of time. I don't see why you don't just skip it.

MRS. HUNTER

Why, Heather, haven't you figured it out yet? The negotiation process is one of our family's best Christmas traditions. We wouldn't dream of skipping it. It's part of the fun.

MR. HUNTER

*(Hanging the last ornament on the tree)*

Well, we're through decorating the tree.

*(All stand back to admire it)*

It's the prettiest tree we ever had.

MRS. HUNTER

Yes, dear. It certainly is.

JEREMY

Ah, Mom, Dad. You say that every year.

HEATHER

Is that part of the ritual, too?

MR. HUNTER

Yep. Sure is.

*(There is a ring of a doorbell. Heather crosses to stage left to open the door. Ava and Juanita enter. Each girl carries a small parcel.)*

HEATHER

Oh! Hi, Ava. Hi, Juanita.

AVA and JUANITA

Hi, Heather. Hi, Mr. and Mrs. Hunter.

JUANITA

*(Handing parcel to Mrs. Hunter)*

Mrs. Hunter, my mother sent over some of the fruit tamales we made for our Christmas celebration. I helped make them. They're really good.

MRS. HUNTER

Why, thank you, Juanita. That's very thoughtful.

AVA

*(Handing parcel to Mrs. Hunter)*

And my mother sent over some of the Hanukkah doughnuts we made. I hope your family likes them.

MRS. HUNTER

I'm sure we will, Ava. We have something for you, too, girls.

*(Mrs. Hunter exits stage right)*

MR. HUNTER

Well, son, I think it's about time you and I went outside to decorate the front yard with strings of lights. Then we'll be accomplishing two Christmas traditions at the same time.

JEREMY

What do you mean, Dad?

MR. HUNTER

Well, one tradition is decorating the yard, and the other is leaving this mess for your mother to clean up! But listen, son, we have to finish the yard decorating by dark today, because tomorrow, bright and early, is the big football game.

JEREMY

Oh, right, Dad. We don't want anything to get in the way of that!

HEATHER

*(Sarcastically)*

No, we wouldn't want anything to get in the way of that.

MR. HUNTER

OK. Let's get started.

*(Mr. Hunter and Jeremy exit, stage left)*

HEATHER

Honestly, girls. I just don't think I'll be able to survive that football game tomorrow. The more I think about it, the more determined I am to fix it so they won't inflict football on Mom and me again this year.

JUANITA

Well, what do you plan to do?

HEATHER

I want you two to help me think of a way to temporarily dismantle the TV set.

AVA

Oh, gosh, Heather, do you think we should? What if we break it for good?

HEATHER

If we all take it apart, then at least one of us will remember how to put it back together again after the game.

JUANITA

I think it's awfully risky.

*(Mrs. Hunter enters from stage right. She is carrying two small parcels.)*

MRS. HUNTER

Here we are, girls. Traditional Christmas cookies for the Rodriguez family. Yours are in the shape of Christmas bells.

*(Hands one parcel to Juanita)*

And traditional Hanukkah cookies for the Goldberg family. Yours are in the shape of the Star of David.

*(Hands the other parcel to Ava)*

AVA

Thank you, Mrs. Hunter.

JUANITA

Thanks very much, Mrs. Hunter.

MRS. HUNTER

You're welcome girls. And thank your moms for the great tamales and the super doughnuts.

AVA and JUANITA

We will!

HEATHER

Mom, Juanita and Ava and I are going over to the retirement home now to sing Christmas carols to the old people with our choir class. We'll be back in a couple of hours.

MRS. HUNTER

OK, but wait a minute. There's something I want you to do for me while you're there. I'll be right back.

*(Mrs. Hunter exits, stage right)*

HEATHER

Now is our chance, girls. Help me with the television.

*(All girls cross downstage to where the television is. They begin to poke and prod inside of it.)*

AVA

I don't know if we're doing the right thing.

HEATHER

Of course, we are. Think of the peace and quiet I'll have tomorrow.

JUANITA

*(Examining back of television)*

I've never seen the back of one of these before. Such a lot of electrical wires and cords and things. Maybe if we took one of those things out.

AVA

Well, at least unplug it before you go yanking things out of it. It wouldn't be good if one of us got electrocuted. How would we explain that?

JUANITA

*(Unplugging the TV)*

Wouldn't it be enough just to leave it unplugged?

HEATHER

No. My dad's too smart. He'd figure it out and plug it right back in, and then I'd be right back where I started.

JUANITA

How do we know which cord to take out?

HEATHER

We'll just have to experiment.

AVA

*(Pointing)*

Let's try that one.

JUANITA

Why?

AVA

Because it's the biggest.

HEATHER

*(Removing the cord)*

I got it! Now, plug the TV back in and see if it's messed up or not.

*(Juanita plugs the TV in)*

AVA

*(Staring at the TV screen)*

I don't see anything. I think we killed it.

HEATHER

*(Staring, then slapping Ava on the back)*

Deader than a doornail. What a success, my partners in crime!

JUANITA

I don't like the sound of that.

HEATHER

Hurry. Let's put the TV back before Mom comes back.

*(The girls replace the TV to its former position.)*

HEATHER

*(Holding the TV cord)*

Now. We have to put this in a safe place so we can find it and replace it after the football game.

AVA

Yeah. We'd better not lose it, or it will be US that's deader than a doornail.

JUANITA

Why don't you hide it in your Christmas stocking?

HEATHER

Too incriminating.

AVA

Then why don't you hide it in Jeremy's Christmas stocking?

HEATHER

Oh, Ava, you are too brilliant. Let's do it.

*(The girls cross to the fireplace and slip the cord into Jeremy's stocking. Just in time, for Mrs. Hunter enters from stage right, carrying another parcel and a small coin purse full of coins.)*

MRS. HUNTER

*(Handing parcel and coin purse to Heather)*

Here you are, girls. I want you to take this fruitcake to the retirement home and give it to the old people you see there. This should brighten up their Christmas. And here is a purse full of quarters you three can use to buy raffle tickets. It's 25 cents a ticket, and if you win, you'll bring home a nice poinsettia plant. The money from the sale of the raffle tickets is going to be used to buy a wide-screen television set for the retirement home. It's a good cause, so spend all these quarters. Divide them up. If any one of you wins the plant, you can just keep it.

HEATHER

OK, Mom.

JUANITA and AVA

Thanks, Mrs. Hunter.

HEATHER

Well, we'd better be going now, or we'll be late. 'Bye, Mom.

JUANITA and AVA

'Bye, Mrs. Hunter.

MRS. HUNTER

'Bye, girls. See you later. Have a good time.

*(Ava, Juanita, and Heather exit, stage left. Just as they are leaving, Jeremy enters from stage left.)*

JEREMY

We're just about finished in the yard, Mom.

MRS. HUNTER

That's great! Well...

*(Mrs. Hunter looks at her watch)*

I think before I clean up this mess I'll run down to the post office before it closes and put this year's Christmas cards in the mail.

JEREMY

Ok, Mom. I'll tell Dad.

MRS. HUNTER

*(Gathering purse and putting on coat)*

Oh, and Jeremy, I want to see that nativity scene set up tonight.

JEREMY

Ah, Mom, do I have to?

MRS. HUNTER

You know, Jeremy, that as the youngest child in the family, it is your responsibility to see that the nativity scene is set up each year. It's a wonderful tradition. Some day you will appreciate it. Really.

JEREMY

No, I won't. I abdicate.

MRS. HUNTER

What?

JEREMY

I abdicate from the responsibility. And I abdicate from my position as the youngest person in this family.

MRS. HUNTER

You can't do that, Jeremy.

JEREMY

Why not? If the Duke of Windsor can do it for the woman he loves, why can't I do it for the job I hate?

MRS. HUNTER

*(Shaking a finger in Jeremy's face)*

Jeremy, I want to see that nativity scene set up BEFORE you eat dinner tonight. Get my message?

JEREMY

I got it, Mom, no dinner for me until the nativity scene is set up, right?

MRS. HUNTER

Right. You've put it off long enough. I want to see this living room populated with Biblical people and creatures before another sun sets. Well, I'm off. See you later.

JEREMY

Ok, Mom. 'Bye.

*(Mrs. Hunter exits, stage left. Jeremy watches Mrs. Hunter leave, then steals a glance at the stockings hung on the fireplace mantle. He tip-toes over to the stocking with his name on it, and then, looking over his shoulder to make sure no one is there, peeks inside.)*

JEREMY

I wonder what old Santa brought for Jeremy this year. Hmmm.

*(He pokes around in the stocking)*

Candy canes. Pencils and pens for school. Oh, neat, a video game! And... what's this?

*(He pulls out the TV cord)*

Somebody in this house sure is weird. I'm glad to find out it isn't ME.

*(He examines the cord)*

What IS this thing? Well, whatever it is, I know somebody it will be better for than me. Weird Heather, that's who. I'll just slip this thing into her stocking.

*(He drops the TV cord into Heather's stocking)*

Let HER figure out what to do with it.

(CURTAIN)

**SCENE IV**

*(At Rise: Ava, Juanita, and Heather walk out in front of the curtain. They are on their way home from their choir concert at the retirement home. Juanita carries a large potted poinsettia plant.)*

AVA

Boy, those people at the retirement home sure do like to have the choir come to sing to them at Christmas.

JUANITA

Yeah. They sure do seem to really appreciate our singing.

HEATHER

Not like our parents, who have to pretend they like our annual concert, whether they really do or not.

AVA

Well, I don't know. My mom always says she has a good time at our concerts, but my dad always says

*(Mimics her father)*

"It was a good effort, honey." I don't know if that means he like it or not.

HEATHER

Maybe the people at the retirement center like us better because they can't hear us as well.

JUANITA

Oh, bite your tongue, Heather. Mrs. Nguyen says we are good, and she should know. She's the choir director, so she's the expert.

AVA

And it sure was lucky of you to win that poinsettia plant in the retirement home raffle, Juanita.

JUANITA

Yeah, I know my mom will be very happy with it. She's been talking about planting a poinsettia in the back yard for a long time.

AVA

And now the people of the retirement home have enough money to buy that wide-screen television for their recreation room.

HEATHER

Yeah, television.

JUANITA

Have your father and brother found out about the broken TV yet, Heather?

HEATHER

Not yet. Boy, am I looking forward to a blissful day tomorrow with no darned football games intruding on my peace and quiet.

AVA

I just hope your family doesn't find out what we did to the television.

JUANITA

I sure hope we don't get into trouble.

HEATHER

Don't worry, girls. When the guys find out they can't watch the football game this year, they'll be a little sad. I'll even pretend I'm a little sad, too. Then they'll find something else to do, and I'll have an afternoon of peace and quiet. Then, after the game, at my first opportunity, I'll just slip the ol' cord back into the ol' television set, and presto! The TV will be as good as new. The mystery of the temporary fritz will never be solved, and after a while they'll all forget all about it. It's as easy as pumpkin pie, girls. The plan is foolproof.

AVA

I sure hope you're right, Heather.

JUANITA

Me, too.

HEATHER

Don't worry about it. Hey, do you girls want to come over to my house and help me finish the wreath I'm making for the front door?

JUANITA

*(Shifting the plant from one arm to the other)*

Sure. But let's go to my house so I can give my mom this poinsettia plant. It's getting heavy.

AVA

OK. But I can't stay long because I have to be home before sunset for the lighting of the candle on the menorah.

HEATHER

OK. Let's go.

*(Juanita, Ava, and Heather exit stage left.)*

**SCENE V**

*(At Rise: The Hunter living room, arranged as before. The Christmas tree has been fully decorated, and there are wrapped presents arranged underneath it. Mr. Hunter is reading the newspaper, and Jeremy is arranging the nativity scene on the end table. Juanita, Ava, and Heather enter from stage left.)*

HEATHER

Hi, Dad. Hi, Jeremy.

MR. HUNTER

Hi, girls.

JUANITA and AVA

Hi, Mr. Hunter.

JUANITA

Oh, what a beautiful nativity scene. We always put ours under the Christmas tree with all of the presents.

MR. HUNTER

That nativity scene has been handed down from generation to generation in our family for 125 years. It always goes to the youngest child in the family, the one whose job it had been for many years to set it up each Christmas.

*(To Jeremy)*

One day, son, this nativity scene will be set up in your home each Christmas by your youngest child.

JEREMY

I'm never having any kids, Dad.

MR. HUNTER

You're not? Why not, son?

JEREMY

I'm too afraid one of them will turn out like Heather.

*(Jeremy sticks his tongue out at Heather. Ava and Juanita giggle.)*

HEATHER

Oh, funny, Jeremy. Where is Mom?

MR. HUNTER

She's at the grocery store buying provisions for the holiday meal.

JEREMY

*(Looking at his watch)*

Hey, Dad. Isn't it time for us to watch the pre-football game interviews on TV?

MR. HUNTER

*(Looking at his own watch)*

Sure is, son. Go turn on the set.

*(Ava, Juanita, and Heather look knowingly at each other)*

HEATHER

*(Showing mock interest)*

Oh, girls, isn't it grand? Pre-football game interviews. Let's sit down and watch this.

JUANITA

Grand?

AVA

You want to watch football?

HEATHER

Oh, I think football is fascinating.

JEREMY

*(Suspicious as he crosses the room to turn on the television)*

Since when?

HEATHER

*(Mock excitement)*

Oh, I've been looking forward to this game all year.

MR. HUNTER

Well, I'm so glad to hear that, Heather. Girls, you're all welcome to join us here for the great football game tradition.

JEREMY

*(Fiddling with the television)*

Hey, Dad. Something's wrong with the TV. I can't get it to turn on!

MR. HUNTER

Well, is it plugged in, son?

HEATHER

*(Aside, to Juanita and Ava)*

I told you he'd think of that first.

JEREMY

What?

HEATHER

Nothing. Honestly. Not a thing.

MR. HUNTER

*(Crossing to the TV and looking all around it)*

Well, maybe it's the circuit breaker. I'll go check it out.

*(Mr. Hunter exits, stage right)*

JEREMY

*(Crossing over to Heather and shaking a fist in her face menacingly)*

What did you do to the television, Heather?

*(Heather crosses over to where the stockings are hung and places a hand protectively over the stocking with Jeremy's name on it.)*

HEATHER

Me? What makes you think I did anything to the television, Jeremy?

JEREMY

Because you HATE sports. You've ALWAYS hated sports. And now, for no good reason, you're suddenly anxious to watch this football game.

AVA

He's got a point there, Heather.

JUANITA

It's hard to deny it.

JEREMY

*(Repeating his fist-shaking gesture)*

What did you do to the television, Heather? Confess!

*(Mr. Hunter enters from stage right. Jeremy drops his fist and whistles innocently, staring at the ceiling.)*

MR. HUNTER

Did we get a picture yet?

JEREMY

No, Dad.

MR. HUNTER

No?

JEREMY

What are we going to do, Dad? Our whole Christmas is going to be ruined if we don't get to see the big game.

MR. HUNTER

I'm just as disappointed as you are, son. Come with me. Let's check the electrical wiring outside. Maybe a cable has become disconnected.

JEREMY

*(Staring pointedly at Heather)*

If something outside isn't already disconnected, something inside soon will be!

*(Jeremy and Mr. Hunter exit, stage left)*

JUANITA

Gosh, Heather. Your brother sure is mad about missing the game.

HEATHER

He'll get over it.

AVA

But your dad doesn't look very happy, either.

HEATHER

It will soon pass.

JUANITA

I don't think we did the right thing, Heather.

AVA

Yeah, I think we should fix the television back to the way it was.

HEATHER

Relax, girls. I guarantee you this will all blow over in just a few more minutes.

AVA

Well, OK. But just for a few more minutes.

JUANITA

Yeah. This is getting scary. What if your brother figures out what we did and tells your father?

HEATHER

Jeremy is not that smart.

AVA

Well, it didn't take him long to point the finger of blame right at YOU.

HEATHER

Oh, Ava, don't you know that's what he's supposed to do? Since the beginning of time, every time something goes wrong you're supposed to blame your brother or sister. What else are brothers and sisters good for?

*(Mr. Hunter and Jeremy enter from stage right.)*

MR. HUNTER

Did we get a picture yet?

JUANITA, AVA, AND HEATHER

*(Without even looking at the television)*

No.

Mr. HUNTER

*(Scratching his head)*

Well, I'm so confused. It was working fine yesterday.

JEREMY

*(Looking pointedly at Heather)*

Yeah, it was working fine yesterday.

MR. HUNTER

It hasn't been acting funny.

JEREMY

But Heather sure has been.

MR. HUNTER

I can't imagine what happened to it.

JEREMY

I can.

HEATHER

*(Crossing over to stand between Mr. Hunter and Jeremy and putting an arm around each)*

Gee, Dad. Gee, Jeremy.

*(With mock sympathy)*

It'll be a shame to miss the annual football game this year. But that's the way the old Christmas cookie crumbles. Better luck next year.

JEREMY

Can't we hire a repairman, Dad?

HEATHER

*(In sudden panic)*

No!

JEREMY

Why not, Heather?

HEATHER

Well, uh, because...

AVA

Uh, because they cost extra on the holidays.

MR. HUNTER

Ava is right, Jeremy. And besides, your mother is at the grocery store with the checkbook buying Christmas dinner. Do you realize what that means? It means we'll be bankrupt by the time she gets home.

JEREMY

Well, don't you have any cash, Dad?

MR. HUNTER

I'm afraid not, son. I spent it all on the tree.

JEREMY

Well, I have seven dollars in my stash upstairs. And I'm SURE Heather would be willing to make a contribution, since she has been looking forward to this game so much.

AVA

I'll make a contribution.

HEATHER

*(Glaring at Ava)*

You don't have any more money, Ava. You spent it all on raffle tickets, remember?

AVA

Oh, yeah.

JEREMY

Well, can't you just charge it?

MR. HUNTER

Jeremy, the problem with credit is that you can dance all you want, but eventually you have to pay the fiddler. And we already owe money to half the fiddlers in town. No, charging it is really not an option right now.

JEREMY

*(Slumping down on the couch, moaning, head in hands)*

Oh, what are we going to do? If we don't get to watch that game, our Christmas is going to be ruined. Just ruined!

MR. HUNTER

*(Dejected, also slumps down on the couch)*

I know son, but what can we do?

*(Ava, Juanita, and Heather look at each other uneasily and shift from foot to foot.)*

MR. HUNTER

Jeremy, why don't you go next door and ask Juanita's dad if he has a repair book for television sets. Then go over to Jian's house and ask his dad if he has a tool chest. Maybe we can figure out what's wrong and fix it ourselves in time. While you're gone, I'll go call Jamal's dad and ask him if he has any advice on how we can fix this.

JEREMY

OK, Dad. I'll be right back!

*(Jeremy exits, stage left; Mr. Hunter exits stage right)*

JUANITA

Oh, Heather, I feel terrible.

AVA

I feel so guilty.

JUANITA

I think we ought to put the television back the way it was.

AVA

So do I.

HEATHER

I'm afraid you're right. If Dad starts poking around in the back of the TV, he's sure to notice the missing cord. Let's put it back.

*(The girls cross to the area where the stocking are hung. Heather reaches into Jeremy's stocking, feels around, begins to look concerned.)*

HEATHER

Hey, girls, I can't find the cord!

JUANITA and AVA

What?!

HEATHER

It isn't in here!

AVA

Well, turn the thing upside down and shake everything out. It's GOT to be in there!

JUANITA

Yeah, that's where we put it.

*(Heather takes the stocking off the mantle and shakes all of the contents out. The three girls poke through the objects, but the cord is clearly missing.)*

AVA

It's really missing!

JUANITA

Oh, no!

AVA

What are we going to do?

HEATHER

Well, girls, like Dad said, if you're going to dance, you have to pay the fiddler. But since it was all my idea, I think I should face the music alone. Why don't you two go home, and when

my Dad comes back, I'll confess the whole thing to him. Don't worry, I'll leave you guys completely out of it.

AVA

Are you sure you want to do this, Heather?

HEATHER

It's the only thing I can do now.

JUANITA

I agree.

*(Grabbing Ava and dragging her towards stage left)*

Come on, Ava. Let's get out of here before the big explosion.

AVA

Are you sure, Heather?

HEATHER

*(Like a martyr)*

I'm sure.

AVA

OK. We'll see you later.

JUANITA

Yeah, IF you're still alive.

*(Juanita and Ava exit stage left. Heather picks up Jeremy's stocking, shoves all the contents back into it, and returns it to its place over the mantle. As she does this, Mrs. Hunter enters stage left, carrying a bag of groceries.)*

MRS. HUNTER

Oh, there you are, dear. I need help carrying all the groceries for the Christmas dinner in from the car.

HEATHER

*(Wringing her hands)*

Mom, I've got a problem.

MRS. HUNTER

Can it wait until we get all the groceries in from the car?

HEATHER

Not really.

MRS. HUNTER

I see.

*(Mrs. Hunter sits down on the couch, placing the bag of groceries on the floor beside her)*

OK. I'm listening.

HEATHER

Well... uh... er... you see...

MRS. HUNTER

Please tell me what you need to say, Heather. I've got ice cream melting in the car.

*(Enter Jeremy from stage left carrying the repair book and the tool chest. Enter Mr. Hunter from stage right)*

JEREMY

Dad, I'm back with the repair book and the tool chest.

MR. HUNTER

Oh, good, son. Now, let's take a look at that TV.

MRS. HUNTER

Is there something wrong with the TV?

HEATHER

Well, you see, that's my problem.

MRS. HUNTER

What do you mean?

HEATHER

*(Taking a deep breath)*

Mom, Dad, Jeremy. I have something to say about the television set.

*(All look expectantly at Heather. Heather continues to wring her hands and looks very embarrassed. Jeremy sets down the tool chest and the book and folds his arms.)*

HEATHER

Well, you see, well, you know how much I HATE the annual Christmas football game.

MR. HUNTER

But a little while ago you said you were fascinated by football. You said you've been waiting all year for this game.

HEATHER

I lied.

JEREMY

I knew it!

MRS. HUNTER

Go on, Heather.

HEATHER

Well, I decided that this year, well... uh... well...

MRS. HUNTER

Ice cream, Heather, ice cream.

HEATHER

I decided that this year I didn't want to be tortured by that stupid football game so I dismantled the television so it wouldn't work.

*(Heading for stage left)*

Can I go over to Ava's for a while?

JEREMY

I KNEW it! I knew you broke that TV set so we couldn't watch the game. Boy, are you gonna get it now.

MRS. HUNTER

Quiet, Jeremy. We'll take care of this.

MR. HUNTER

Well, that sure explains a lot.

MRS. HUNTER

That was a very selfish thing to do, Heather.

HEATHER

I know, Mom.

MR. HUNTER

We have always taught you to respect the rights, the beliefs, the heritage, and the traditions of other people. And that includes the traditions of your brother and your father.

HEATHER

*(Ashamed)*

You're right. I'm sorry.

MR. HUNTER

Just how, exactly, did you dismantle the TV, Heather?

HEATHER

I took a cord out of it.

JEREMY

Aha!

MRS. HUNTER

Quiet, Jeremy.

MR. HUNTER

*(To Heather)* And just where is this cord now?

HEATHER

I hid it in Jeremy's stocking. But when I went to get it so I could put the TV back together, it was gone! I swear I don't know what happened to it.

JEREMY

Wait a minute.

*(Jeremy crosses over to the fireplace, takes down Heather's stocking, and pulls out the missing cord.)*

JEREMY

*(Holding it up for all to see)*

Is this it?

HEATHER

Yeah, that's it!

JEREMY

So, THAT'S what that is. I wondered what that thing was.

MRS. HUNTER

And just how did you happen to find that cord in your stocking which you are not supposed to look in until Christmas morning, young man?

JEREMY

Uh, oh. I'm busted.

MR. HUNTER

It looks like you're both busted. Now, about your consequence, young lady.

MRS. HUNTER

What do you think it should be, Joe?

MR. HUNTER

Jeremy, come over here. Kate...

*(Mr. Hunter, Mrs. Hunter, and Jeremy huddle together. We hear whispers, occasionally one points to Heather, one looks her way. In the background we hear a loud TICK TOCK TICK TOCK to indicate the passage of time. Heather shifts uneasily from foot to foot. At last the huddle breaks up.)*

HEATHER

Well?

MRS. HUNTER

First of all, you are going to fix the television set. And if you can't figure out how to put it back together, you are going to pay for a repairman out of your allowance.

MR. HUNTER

Secondly, you are going to watch every football game for the rest of the season with Jeremy and me. Four more games.

HEATHER

Oh, no!

JEREMY

But here's the best part. You are going to be our servant during every game.

HEATHER

Servant?

MR. HUNTER

Yes. You have to bring us snacks if we're hungry.

HEATHER

Snacks?

JEREMY

And you have to bring us drinks if we're thirsty.

HEATHER

Drinks?

MRS. HUNTER

And pillows, if they want them.

HEATHER

Pillows?

JEREMY

And blankets, if we're cold.

HEATHER

Blankets?

MR. HUNTER

And massage our shoulders during half-time.

HEATHER

Massages?

MRS. HUNTER

AND clean up and wash the dishes when the game is over.

HEATHER

AND clean up the mess?

*(To the audience)*

I'll never dance again. It's too expensive to pay the fiddler!

*(CURTAIN)*

**THE END**