

CHRISTMAS WITH MISFITS;

An Adult View of a Holiday Without Pity

five short plays for three actors

by

Julie Jensen, Playwright

CHARACTERS:

The Girl and the Elf:

GIRL...*A 7-year-old, played by an adult. She wears a kid's dress, somewhat fancy for the holiday. The performance should not be campy or silly. She's pretty damned serious; you should be too! [played by Actress #1]*

ELF...*A 49-year-old little person, played by a normal-sized man. He wears a red and green elf suit. He means well, but he's been caught by circumstances. This situation sometimes leads to exasperation. [played by Actor]*

Him and Her on Christmas Eve:

HIM...*An adolescent nerd. He might have a lisp, might wear a wool hat, might have big glasses. [played by Actor]*

HER...*An adolescent nerd. She might have a lisp, might wear a wool hat, might have big glasses. [played by Actress #2]*

The Baby Jesus Collection:

WOMAN 1...A woman with positive human spirit. [played by Actress #1]

WOMAN 2...A woman with less positive human spirit. [played by Actress #2]

GUY...A guy who thinks he's sexy and who's completely absorbed by his collection. [played by Actor]

The Christmas Cat:

CAT...A cat or an outrageous gay guy. [played by Actor]

Christmas at Meadows Manor:

HIM...Older straight man in a wheel chair. [played by Actor]

HER...Older gay woman in a wheel chair. [played by Actress #2]

SETTING:

A large box, six feet or so high, containing a jumble of Christmas stuff a Christmas nightmare. Feel free to pack in the stuff; it's Christmas, after all!

TIME:

Either fifteen minutes ago or fifteen minutes from now.

Lights up on a large box, maybe six feet square, that spills its contents toward the audience, a chaos of Christmas stuff, including NARRATOR. Over-sized boxes wrapped to look like presents can be used for tables in the plays. There should also be two chairs.

NARRATOR *[played by Actress #2]*

You're about to see four short plays about Christmas. I'm not supposed to tell you how many plays there will be, in case you are displeased and start counting on your fingers. But tonight, I think it's a good idea to tell you how many plays there will be, since tonight we are telling the truth. About several things, including Christmas.

And here's the first truth: Christmas is a holiday that insists on magic. People are asked to believe outlandish things, not the least of which is that Jesus was born on this night two thousand fourteen years ago. But that's off the subject, since we all know that Christ left Christmas a long time ago. Back to the play. It's called "The Girl and the Elf." It's about a young girl who falls in love with the elf from the Macy's Christmas window.

She begins setting up the stage.

This is a living room. Crowded with Christmas crap.

She sets up one of the boxes for a table.

This is a coffee table and a couple of children's chairs.

Pulling them down front.

Bowls of candy and plates of cookies.

Placing them on the coffee table.

NARRATOR *(cont.)*

It's neat but crowded.

She backs away from the scene.

It is the night before Christmas Eve.

GIRL enters with the ELF, showing him around.

GIRL

And this here's is our living room. Only it has a lots more stuff in it than usual because of it's Christmas.

ELF

Yeah.

GIRL

And we can sit on these little chairs right here if you want. They're for kids.

They both sit on children's chairs at either end of the coffee table.

Awkward pause.

And you can just reach out and get some food from these bowls. Whenever you want.

ELF

Um. No, thanks.

She sits on his knee.

GIRL

So. Did you study to learn how to be a elf?

ELF

No. It came with the territory.

GIRL

What's that mean?

ELF

It came with being short.

GIRL

We're not short.

ELF

You're not short. *I* am short.

GIRL

Not for our age, we're not short.

ELF

For my age, I am. Short.

Pause. Some discomfort. He rises.

Look, I think I should be on my way.

GIRL

Nuh-uhh! You can't just up and leave.

ELF

You're home and you're safe.

GIRL

I know, but it's the night before Christmas Eve.

ELF

Right. A busy time of year. For us. For everyone.

GIRL

You must like traveling around with Santa. He would be a lots of fun, I bet.

ELF

Actually, he's an alcoholic. And that makes him a bad driver.

GIRL

My dad's a alcoholic. When do you turn eight?

ELF

Eight?

GIRL

Yeah, when? When do you? Turn eight?

ELF

Forty-one years ago?

GIRL

Hah-hah! Think you're funny. I know all your tricks.

ELF

I don't have any tricks.

GIRL

You can saw something in two while you're singing a song.

ELF

Ahhh. No. I can't.

GIRL

Them other elfs in your family, they can do that.

ELF

I guess they can.

GIRL

But your job is nailing. Poing, poing, poing.

ELF

Yeah, that's my job. Poing, poing, poing.

GIRL

And you can spit nails out of your mouth and hit 'em with the hammer. Puff poing, puff poing, puff poing. That's a pretty good trick.

ELF

Puff poing, puff poing, puff poing.

GIRL

And Santa sometimes helps you out. By holding a bucket of nails.

ELF

No, Santa does not help out. Santa does not do a damn thing.

GIRL

Yes, he does. I saw him.

ELF

Nope. The elves do all the work.

GIRL How
come?

ELF

Because we are...enslaved.

GIRL

You have to do all the work without the help of Santa?

ELF

Santa is like God. He's not often around. And he does no work.

GIRL

Santa *is* like God. I agree with you there.

Santa is the miracle part of God. And the other part, the quiet part, is the Jesus part. And so Santa is what they have for us children. Then later we graduate to Jesus.

But the thing about Jesus, when you believe in him, he might not give you what you want. So I've decided to believe in Santa for one more year.

I think it's important to believe in Santa for as long as possible. It's like virginity. (*Not knowing what that means.*)

ELF

Yeah. (*Reaching for his cigarettes.*) Listen, I gotta have a smoke.

She bursts into laughter and slaps him as if he were her little friend.

GIRL

You don't smoke. (*A haughty stance.*) "I gotta have a smoke." That is so funny.

She watches him take out a pack of cigarettes.

Did you steal them cigarettes?

ELF

(*Making it up.*) Yeah, I did. I stole them. Cigarettes.

GIRL

What kind did you get?

ELF

Winstons.

She looks at the pack, touches it.

GIRL

It's kinda pretty, isn't it? But it's also evil. Evil pretty. Who'd you steal them from?

ELF

(*Making it up.*) From the 7-Eleven.

GIRL

Cuz if you stole them from your mom, she might notice, huh? And get on your butt.

She laughs.

ELF

Naw, my mom is long past caring about such things.

GIRL

Because she's got a job?

ELF

Yeah.

GIRL

That helps them quit worrying about their kids.

Returning the cigarette pack.

Except I don't think I can smoke one of these.

ELF

That's all right, I'll just smoke one, and you can watch.

He flips a cigarette from the pack.

GIRL

Jeeze, you done that like you really practiced it!

ELF

Yeah, I did. I really practiced it.

GIRL

Except you can't smoke in here. Cuz this whole house is a no-smoking zone.

ELF

Right

He fidgets with the cigarette.

Santa used to smoke, ya know.

GIRL

No, he never.

ELF

Yep, a pipe. And he blew smoke rings and spelled things in the air.

GIRL

Like what?

ELF

Like "Drink Coca Cola."

GIRL

That's about my favorite thing about you, how you know so many great things about Santa. And they're all true, so that means that Santa is also true. But I gotta go pee now. Wanna come pee with me?

ELF

No. Ah. You go pee. I'll pee, ah, later.

GIRL

Don't you have to go?

ELF

Yes. But I'll go later.

GIRL

Don't you think it's fun to pee together?

ELF

I'm growing out of that, I think.

GIRL

I don't think I'll ever grow out of it. Do you know your nine times tables yet?

ELF

Yes.

GIRL

What's nine times six?

ELF

That's sixty-three.

GIRL

Buzz. Wrong. Fifty-four. And did you start on long division yet?

ELF

(Making it up.) Long division, yeah, a couple of months ago.

GIRL

Well, I really do have to go pee now. *(Whining.)* Come with me. Plee-se.

ELF

Naw. You, you go. Ahead.

GIRL

You know if you gotta pee and you don't wanna right then, you can turn your mind onto something else and then if you run in a circle and walk three steps backwards, you won't have to pee right then.

*She runs around the table and walks three steps backwards.
Then she sits back down.*

See there. That's how it works.

ELF

Yeah. Well, that's a good piece of advice.

GIRL

Yeah. *(Noting the treats.)* You can have some of these treats if you want.

'Cept my mom put out the crappy treats because she don't want me eating 'em. She thinks I'm on my way to being fat. So then she makes these awful treats with hazel nuts. So's I won't eat em. Cuz I hate hazel nuts. Except no one else likes hazel nuts neither, so here they are. But you can have some if you want 'em.

ELF

I'm not hungry.

GIRL

See, you don't like hazel nuts neither! Me and you, we got a lot in common. You know, me and Daisy and Golda all pee together.

ELF

Look, I have to be going.

GIRL

Yeah! So come and go with me.

ELF

No, I mean, I have to be leaving now.

GIRL

Nuh-huhh. You don't have nowhere to go.

ELF

Well, yes, of course I do. (*Inventing stuff.*) I have to go back to the store, with Santa.

GIRL

Macy's has the only real Santa. All them others, aa-ll them others, jist helpers.

ELF

I know. That's why I gotta go. (*Inventing stuff.*) Santa is mean if he catches us out too late on a work night.

GIRL

What kinda mean?

ELF

(Inventing.) Well, he beats us.

GIRL

Probably beats you with the reindeer reins.

ELF

That's it.

GIRL

I thought so. Cuz I am a expert on Santa. And a expert on the elves, too. That's how come I knew right away you was the real elf, the only real elf. That I have ever met.

ELF

Yeah. Well, there could be others, too. Other real elves.

GIRL

Nuh-huhh! I have met 'em all.

He puts the cigarette back in the pack and the pack away.

It probably don't seem unusual to you, being a elf.

ELF

Nope.

GIRL

I think it's pretty amazing. Cuz I just love elves.

ELF

That's good. You should love elves.

GIRL

I would do anything to become a elf right now.

ELF

Careful what you wish for.

GIRL

You must have wishes, or Santa will not know what to bring you. We have this feather bed in the loft. We can sleep up there tonight if you want.

ELF

No, I...I have to be going.

GIRL

Nuh-uhh. You live a long way away, and you have to stay over.

ELF

What about Santa and elves in the store window?

GIRL

It ain't the real Santa and the real elves in the store window at night. It's puppets at night. The real ones only live there in the day. At night they must find rooms in people's homes. And sometimes they do not find one and they have to sleep outside. Which is not good for them in the winter. See, I know ever-thing there is about elves.

ELF

Where are your parents?

GIRL

Went to a Christmas party at the Mitchells.

ELF

Are you here alone?

GIRL

I'm old enough to stay by myself.

ELF

I need to talk to them.

GIRL

Have another cigarette. You can smoke it on the front porch. Then we'll get ready for bed.

ELF

But it's...it's illegal.

GIRL

Smoking cigarettes in the third grade, yeah....

ELF

No, it's illegal for humans and elves...to mix.

GIRL

Because the humans would steal their tricks, and the elves would lose their jobs.

ELF

That's it.

GIRL

If you was nine feet high, your head would rub on this ceiling.

ELF

I guess it's good we're short.

GIRL

We're not short! How many times do I have to tell you? We are in the exact middle for our age group. Hey, do you like beers?

ELF

Yeah.

GIRL

Do you want me to get you a beer?

ELF

Yeah, that would be good.

GIRL

My dad has some of 'em hidden. But I know where they are.

She pulls a can from an unlikely place.

GIRL

Should I get two beers? One for me and one for you?

ELF

Yeah, get two.

She puts the cans on the table.

And I'll drink 'em both. Because you should not be drinking beers.

GIRL

Says who? The world authority on drinking beers and smoking Winstons?
Ha-ha!

He puts a can in his vest.

What is the most number of cartwheels you can turn in a row?

ELF

Thirty. Look, I gotta get out of here.

He picks up the other can.

GIRL

You're just afraid you won't get paid.

ELF

I don't need money. I do what I'm told. You're here and you're safe. Now I need to leave.

GIRL

Not without your money.

She hands him a wad of money.

ELF

Where'd you get this?

GIRL

My Christmas money. See, now you can stay all night.

ELF

But what about tomorrow morning?

When she's not looking, he puts the wad of money in his pocket.

GIRL

We have to get you back to the Macy's window by six in the morning. Come on, this is my only chance to sleep with a elf.

ELF

That is definitely. Not gonna. Happen.

GIRL

What else you want? Something to eat? I got all sorta stuff in the room. I got popcorn and peanut butter. Skittles and Gummy Worms.

ELF

In the loft?

GIRL

Yeah. My mom don't know I got 'em.

ELF

Look here. Look. Here. I am really very old.

GIRL

Yeah. You sort look old for our age.

ELF

I'm not old for our age. I am old.

GIRL

Hah, hah, hah.

ELF

Remember your times tables?

GIRL

Yeah.

ELF

What's seven times seven?

GIRL

Seven times seven is forty-nine.

ELF

That's how old I am.

GIRL

No, you're seven. We're both seven. Because we're both the same height!
And when we times-table our age, it comes out to be forty-nine. *(Singing.)*
And that's the miracle of math!

ELF

You are a child. And I am an old man.

GIRL

Can you throw a piece of popcorn in the air and catch it in your mouth?

ELF

You have to go to bed up there. With your popcorn, your peanut butter, your Gummy-things. *I* have to walk back down to the Macy's parking lot, get in my car, and drive home.

GIRL

Do you realize that if you were six foot seven, you wouldn't be able to get in our doors?

ELF

I will never be six foot seven.

GIRL

I might be.

ELF

You might be. I will never be. That's the difference between us.

GIRL

You can borrow some of my jams tonight. I have three sets of jams. One set is Fourth of July jams, one set is Halloween jams, and one set is Christmas jams. You can have the Christmas jams if you want.

ELF

You haven't heard a thing I've said, have you?

GIRL

Yes I have. You're trying to tell me you're not the real elf.

ELF

Yes. Yes, that's right. And I'm not. I'm not the real elf.

GIRL

Really?

ELF

Really.

GIRL

Then what about Santa?

ELF

I don't know about Santa. All I know about is elves. And the elves are bullshit.

GIRL

Whatever that means....

ELF

We get these gigs at Christmas. Pick up a few bucks. Most of the guys won't do it. They think it's demeaning. And it is. But so is everything else. Well, anyway, you don't have to do much. Dress up in a silly suit and greet the kids. Except most the kids are scared of us, so they put us over to the side on little stools, and we pretend to be working.

GIRL

Like nailing, huh? Poing, poing, poing.

ELF

Yes. Like that. Poing, poing, poing.

GIRL

I don't believe you, that you're not the real elf.

ELF

Why would I lie?

GIRL

To keep all the crowds away from you.

ELF

No one else even cares about elves. You're the only one that ever gave a damn about an elf.

GIRL

I was the only one that cared about you?

ELF

Yep.

GIRL

In the whole wide world?

ELF

Yep.

GIRL

The one and only true believer.

ELF

'Fraid so.

Pause.

GIRL

Then you should not'a messed that up.

ELF

No. Except at some point you gotta tell the truth.

GIRL

I might hate that.

ELF

Hate the truth?

GIRL

Yes I could hate that. Or else I could hate you.

ELF

Not my fault.

Pause as she considers this.

GIRL

If you ain't the true elf, who is?

ELF

That's just it. There aren't any.

GIRL

No elves?

ELF

None.

Long pause. As she rubs her foot on the floor. Everything is different. Then finally....

GIRL

You want me to call my big brother to walk over to the Macy's parking lot with you? He's upstairs with headphones on.

ELF

No. I'll just go through the mall. Less than a block.

GIRL

You really forty-nine?

ELF

Yep.

GIRL

My dad is forty-nine.

ELF

See there?

GIRL

Only he is six foot one.

ELF

Well, I'm not.

GIRL

Nope.

ELF

Listen. Thank you for the lovely evening.

GIRL

You're welcome.

ELF

Sorry I had to burst your bubble.

GIRL

Yeah, well, it was only gonna last one more year, at most.

ELF

But I think you're right, the longer you believe in Santa, the better.

GIRL

Yeah, well, it's like this. If you believe in Santa for a longer time, you have more miracles in your life. And that helps you in later life where there are no miracles.

ELF

Well, that's sorta true. But not entirely true.

He opens the door, then turns back to her.

GIRL

Don't tell me your name.

ELF

All right.

GIRL

Cuz I already know your name. Carl. First elf is Carl.

ELF

But I ain't an elf, first or thirteenth.

GIRL

Right. *(Long pause.)* What's the most number of times you can turn around without falling down?

ELF

I'll just be going then. Good night.

They hug. It's quite lovely. He leaves. She watches him go then closes the door.

GIRL

Good night. *(Whispering.)* Carl.

Lights out.

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