

STORYBOOK CHRISTMAS
A MUSICAL CHRISTMAS CAROL

Book, Music & Lyrics
by
Stephen Taft

@ 2014 Stephen Taft

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A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT:

Whether we wish to admit it or not, theatre is a business. It's my hope that you may find *Storybook Christmas* to be a success artistically and also at the box office. One of the biggest challenges many theatre organizations may have is expanding their audience and their talent pool. It's my belief that *Storybook* contains specific opportunities to aid you in achieving such goals.

Musically, I am a big believer in collaboration and it's been my experience that talented musicians and vocalists can provide their own unique interpretation to a song when given the latitude to do so. I encourage it. The musicians of Nashville, Muscle Shoals, Branson or any community of talented country and bluegrass musicians in particular, know how to get a toe-tapping, connect to a lyric, bring a tear to an eye, or a fill a heart with joy.

The characters in the classic story of *A Christmas Carol* may be familiar to you, but I challenge you to make these specific characters your own. Although there are various interpretations of this Christmas classic (including films and stage plays), the most successful productions will remember that these characters could very well be real people.

The characters are not intended to be stereotypes or caricatures, but intelligent, authentic people each with their own unique personality and life challenges. I encourage you to stay true to who they are. Do so and you will discover the humor, the heart, the joy and the ultimate message behind *Storybook Christmas: A Musical Christmas Carol*.

Have a great day.

Stephen Taft

WHAT WAS THE REACTION?

The premiere of *Storybook Christmas* was at the Cedar Falls Community Theatre in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

"*Storybook Christmas* is a humorous, heartfelt treat! It's an effective and entertaining re-telling of a familiar story with well-drawn and authentic characters. Ultimately, this is the stuff of Dickens' beloved 'A Christmas Carol' -- life lessons in friendship, love and compassion told with humor and good music. It's a great family treat for the holidays."

- Waterloo Courier

"Your work last night was amazing! I enjoyed the entire production and you are certainly to be commended for all the hats you wore to make it happen. I was especially interested in your songwriting before I attended and it was great to hear that side of your many talents.

John Vallentine
Director, School of Music.
UNI

"I watched your Christmas Story play twice and was very pleased with it. As I understand you did the whole script, staging and music. What a gifted person you are. We are supporters of both the CF Oster Regent Theater and the Lanesboro, MN Commonweal Theater/ I would like to pursue the possibility of finding what I need to do to get the script to the Commonweal group so they can review it."

Kent Ruby
Oster Regent Patron

"I saw *Storybook Christmas* last night, and although country music isn't usually my cup of tea (and I might not have gone except a ticket came with my season membership), I thought it was great."

Oster Regent Patron

"If you haven't seen *Storybook Christmas* then GO!! It's fabulous! Blessings abound."

Cathy & Leonard Upham
Oster Regent Patrons

"I loved it. *Storybook Christmas* is a fun twist on an old favorite with toe tapping songs and a message that reminds us all of the true meaning of Christmas. I came out of the theatre whistling some of the songs and thinking about Christmas in my hometown."

Matt Ray
DJ-KWAY 99.3FM Waverly, IA

"My family loved it! A fun creative, country twist to a Christmas classic. The fact that it was 100% local made it even that more enjoyable."

KVCM 93.5FM The MIX Cedar Falls, IA – owner 11 stations

"*Storybook Christmas* is a new fun-loving holiday show with toe-tapping music, witty lyrics and an unforgettable timeless message."

John C. Luzaich
General Manager, Oster Regent Theatre

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

8 Males / 7 Females / Children (optional)

MEN

LUCAS BOONE (50's) is a cheap, grumpy, middle to upper-middle age man concerned with making money, money and of course, more money. He owns a used car dealership. He has a chip on his shoulder and it won't be easy to knock it off. He's a character in the best sense of the word. Think Jeff Bridges. This is a demanding role as he appears in every scene but one. Boone sings on six of twelve musical numbers. The ability to play guitar is ideal, but not necessary. Baritone/Tenor.

JAKE BAILEY (30's-40's) is a bit younger than Lucas as he died a few years back. He is Boone's former business partner and not a member of the present world. Jake was the one with the true musical talent, but in truth is a down-to-earth homebody and was the third part of a love triangle. He carries a somewhat heavy burden (literally). Jake is the primary vocalist on "This Town".

B.J. THE DJ (mid-20's-early 30's) has a Blake Shelton type of personality and an excellent connection with his radio listeners. He has a sense of humor, is caring, and really loves Anna Sue Bailey (Jake Bailey's daughter). They sing a duet entitled "A Gift of Love." If he plays guitar, it's a plus.

CARTER (Visitor #1): Age 60+ - Once a country star at the Grand Old Opry he is now a "Visitor" (or Ghost) of Christmas Past. He knows how to "take stage". We can also tell he's lived (he's been married several times). Singing skills are not necessary.

JOHNNY is THE Man in Black (yep, that Johnny) and is "Visitor #3" (or Ghost) of Christmas Yet To Come. Johnny sings on "The Good Lord's Rules". A bass or baritone voice (singing and speaking) is ideal, but an actor that can embrace the essence of Johnny is more important.

YOUNGER CARTER (30's) A younger version of the older Carter. In a scene of Christmas Past he is a star at the Grand Old Opry. Singing skills are not necessary.

YOUNG LUCAS (late teens-early 20's). Young looking. A dreamer. The ability to harmonize is ideal. He sings with Young Jake on "This Town" and also on "Better Deal".

YOUNG JAKE BAILEY (late teens-early 20's). Handsome. Nice hair is a good thing. Always the guy everyone knew would succeed. Good singer. Sings lead on "This Town" and also sings on "Better Deal". The ability to play guitar is helpful.

WOMEN

BOBBIE JACKSON is a loyal female employee to Lucas Boone. Late 20's-early 30's. She works as Boone's receptionist, accountant, marketing director, finance officer, camera-woman and more. She is attractive, yet unassuming. Bobbie sings "The Joy Christmas Brings" and on two ensemble numbers.

ANNA SUE BAILEY (early 20's) - She inherited her father's musical talent and is quite confident in her womanhood. She sings several musical numbers and is also a member of the ensemble number "Merry Christmas to You". The ability to play guitar is ideal, but not essential.

LEOMA and LYNNETTE (the L & L Girls) - ages may range from upper-40's-60's. They have an internal energy about them and are members of the local Women's Auxiliary Club and proud of it. The ladies are attempting to raise funds to purchase presents for needy children in the community. They may sing on ensemble numbers, but vocal skills are not essential. They are a hoot! Comic timing is important.

MILLIE (30's-40's) - "Visitor" #2 – Ghost of Christmas Present – sort of – grammar was never her strength. Millie was a mechanic at Boone and Bailey's Used Car Sales before her untimely demise. She's not very fond of her former employer. Singing is not essential.

MARY BAILEY (late 40's-50's) – Widow of Jake Bailey and mother to Anna Sue Bailey. Mary is a smart, caring, independent woman. She dated Lucas Boone long ago. She sings on "The Good Lord's Rules" and on ensemble numbers.

YOUNG MARY (late teens-early 20's). She a fun loving friend of young Lucas Boone and young Jake Bailey. She dates Young Lucas, although he is never quite ready to make a long-term relationship commitment. She sings a beautiful solo, "Don't Send Me Roses".

TOWNSPEOPLE (ENSEMBLE)

There is one primary ensemble number in Act 1 (with a reprise in Act 2) Non-country singing voices are welcome, as well as some character male voices.

SCENE BREAKDOWN

ACT I

- SCENE 1 Exterior – The corner of Main and Bailey Way
- SCENE 2 Exterior of downtown shops
- SCENE 3 Interior office of Bobbie Jackson at the auto dealership
- SCENE 4 Interior office of Bobbie Jackson at the auto dealership
- SCENE 5 Exterior – The corner of Main and Bailey Way
- SCENE 6 Lucas Boone's bedroom
- SCENE 7 Frozen pond (ice-fishing) – *The Past*
- SCENE 8 Stage of the Grand Ole Opry - *The Past*
- SCENE 9 Lucas Boone's bedroom
- SCENE 10 Restaurant – *The Past*

ACT 2

- SCENE 1 Control room of a small town radio station – *The Present*
- SCENE 2 Lucas Boone's bedroom
- SCENE 3 Funeral home – *The Future*
- SCENE 4 Lucas Boone's bedroom
- SCENE 5 Lucas Boone's bedroom and the radio control room
- SCENE 6 Community Center stage (same basic set up as Act 1 / Scene 8)

*Scenic design can be as extravagant as budget and time allow or suggested simply with select scenic elements and with light design isolating acting areas and playing an integral part in the overall visual design.

TIME

The Past, the Present and the Future – of course

LOCATION

A community of good country people.

*The radio station call letters in this musical may be WKID or KKID depending on which side of the Mississippi your community may be located or the location in the U.S. the artistic team decides to set the play. The call letters reference a fictitious radio station and do not reflect the station format or personalities of any specific radio station.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT 1

If You Like Nascar.....	Boone
Merry Christmas to You.....	Boone and Ensemble
It's Up to Us at Christmas.....	Boone & Bobbie Jackson
The Joy Christmas Brings.....	Bobbie Jackson
Better Deal.....	Young Lucas, Young Mary, and Young Jake Bailey
This Town.....	Young Jake and Young Lucas
Don't Send Me Roses.....	Young Mary

ACT 2

I Wish It Was Christmas Every Day of the Year.....	Anna Sue
A Gift of Love.....	Anna Sue & B.J.
The Good Lord's Rules.....	Anne Sue, Mary, Leoma, Lynnette, Boone & Johnny
Guitar Pickin' Angel.....	Boone
Storybook Christmas.....	Anna Sue & Boone
Storybook Christmas (Reprise).....	Anna Sue & Ensemble
Merry Christmas to You (Reprise).....	Ensemble

INSTRUMENTATION

Acoustic Guitar

Electric Guitar

Bass Guitar

Banjo

Drums

Tambourine

**STORYBOOK CHRISTMAS:
A MUSICAL CHRISTMAS CAROL**

ACT 1 / SCENE 1

SETTING: *It's very early morning on Christmas Eve. It's cold. We are in a community of good country people. The economy is less than great however.*

AT RISE: *We begin with LUCAS BOONE (commonly known as MR. BOONE around town), pacing underneath a street lamp on the corner of "Main and Bailey Way". He's waiting for BOBBIE JACKSON to arrive. BOONE is not happy. The sun is barely coming up.*

BOBBIE enters in a hurry with tripod and video camera. BOONE is about to record his weekly commercial for his used car dealership. At this moment, BOBBIE JACKSON serves as his cameraman.

BOONE

Jackson! You're late! I should dock you for every minute you're costing me.

BOBBIE

Actually sir, I'm three minutes early.

BOONE

Do you see the sun Jackson?

BOBBIE

Barely sir.

BOONE

Well then, you're late!

BOBBIE

Yes sir.

(BOBBIE attempts to quickly set up the camera.)

BOONE

(Pause. BOONE impatiently)

Bobbie, you 'bout ready?

BOBBIE

Yes sir, just a second.

BOONE

Do you know what a second costs me?

BOBBIE

Not really sir.

BOONE

Not really?! You're my accountant ain't you?

BOBBIE

At the moment sir, I'm your camera-woman and . . . I . . . I think we're ready.

BOONE

Camera WOMAN?!

BOBBIE

Yes sir. I am a female.

BOONE

I know you are! *(Beat)* 'Course, now that I think about it, women don't make as much as a man . . . maybe I need to . . .

BOBBIE

. . . get this commercial recorded?

BOONE

Right you are Bob-a-roo. It's the holiday season. Time to sell, sell, sell, and profit, profit, profit. Got it?

BOBBIE

Got it.

BOONE

Roll it.

BOBBIE

Rolling.

(BOBBIE signals for BOONE to begin.)

BOONE

(To the camera and with a totally positive disposition.)

Hey there. Need a used car this Christmas?

IF YOU LIKE NASCAR

BOONE (*sings*)

IF YOU LIKE NASCAR AND DRIVING FAST
TAKE A STEP BACK TO THE PAST
GOT A '96 BLACK Z28
305 HORSE, 6 SPEED V-8

I CAN SEE YOU BURNIN' RUBBER THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF TOWN
ENVY OF EVERY REDNECK AROUND
GIRLS WILL LINE UP FOR A RIDE
DON'T HESITATE COME ON DOWN AND BUY

NEED A CAR THIS WINTER I'M THE ONE TO SEE
NO MONEY DOWN MAKES IT EASY
FINANCE HERE MAKE YOUR PAYMENTS HERE TO
YOU GOT BAD CREDIT? I'M A FRIEND TO YOU

BOONE (*spoken*)

Boone and Bailey's Used Car Sales, on the corner of Main & Bailey Way. Merry Christmas!

(*BOBBIE signals for BOONE to cut.*)

BOONE

Did we get it?

BOBBIE

Got it.

BOONE

How was I?

BOBBIE

Slicker than snot on a doorknob sir.

BOONE

Yes! I felt it Bobbie. I should be on the Grand Ole Opry rather than here selling used cars. What do you think of my lyrics this week?

BOBBIE

Stronger than bear's breath.

BOONE

I thought so. Past, fast, Z-28, V-8. That's rhyming Bob-a-roo.

BOBBIE

Nashville is kicking themselves sir.

*(BOONE is not quite sure how to take that last comment.
HE clears his throat.)*

BOONE

Well, go do your editing thing and get that commercial down to the TV station pronto. Then get the jingle version down to WKID. I want it on radio and TV by noon today. Got it?

BOBBIE

Got it.

(BOBBIE begins to pack up the equipment.)

BOONE

Well then, move it move it move it!

BOBBIE

(As BOBBIE exits.)

Moving sir. Moving.

(LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.)

B.J.

(V.O. during the transition to Scene 2.)

Good morning everybody! This is B.J. *your* DJ at radio station WKID welcoming our early risers. It's gonna be a chilly one today folks. High about twenty-five and dipping down to 'bout fifteen tonight. On top of that we got snow coming our way so it looks as if a white Christmas is in the forecast. How 'bout that? Git your sleds and ice skates out kids and remember to bundle up. And Happy Holidays!

(Jingle bells transition us into the next scene.)

ACT 1 / SCENE 2

As lights rise we come upon a downtown street with early-morning shoppers, a bell-ringer, and a small group of carolers. A lone individual wrapped in a winter coat, scarf and gloves tries to ignore all the holiday cheer. It is of course, LUCAS BOONE.

BOONE crosses to a BELL RINGER at a red kettle, gets out his wallet, takes out a couple of dollars to put in the kettle and then . . . pulls them back out. The BELL RINGER is shocked! BOONE embraces the personal joy of the moment, crosses to the bench and sits. Those passing by ignore him, on purpose.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU

CAROLERS

MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU

MAN 1

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

WOMAN 1

BEST WISHES

MAN 2

HAPPY SOLSTICE TO YOU

BOONE

(BOONE crosses and sits on a main street bench.)

THEY WALK BY, DON'T SAY HI
TALK BEHIND MY BACK
THEY SAY

BELL RINGER

HE'S CHEAP, RUDE, AND MEAN

BOONE

WELL I AM, IT'S A FACT

BOONE

BUT I'M RICH MORE THAN THEY KNOW
I LOVE THE COLOR GREEN

BOONE

MONEY PUTS A SMILE ON MY FACE
LIKE THEY'VE NEVER SEEN

I HAVE A FRANKLIN BLANKET
TO KEEP ME WARM AT NIGHT
MY PILLOW IS STUFFED WITH GENERAL GRANT
A THOUSAND FEELS JUST RIGHT

CAROLERS

MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU
MELE KALIKIMAKA, BONNE ANNÉE TO YOU

WOMAN 2

IT'S GOING TO BE A GREAT DAY

WOMAN 3

(Walking with WOMAN 2)

A WHITE CHRISTMAS WE HEAR

WOMAN 4

(Loaded down with shopping bags)

SHOPPING DONE, TIME FOR FUN

CHORAL GROUP

AND HOLIDAY CHEER

WOMAN 4

(SHE sits next to MR. BOONE)

MERRY CHRISTMAS.

BOONE

(BOONE sings somewhat sarcastically.)

MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS CAN'T WIN
I THINK I'M GOING TO VOMIT IF I HEAR MERRY CHRISTMAS AGAIN

CHORAL GROUP

MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU

BOONE

*(Grabs a bag from WOMAN 4, sticks his head in the bag
and well . . . you know.)*

MAN 1 & 2
THE ECONOMY SUCKS AND MY BUCK ISN'T WORTH WHAT IT USED TO BE

WOMAN 1, 2, 3, & 4
BUT WE DON'T CARE BECAUSE WE'LL SHARE THE DAY WITH FAMILY

WOMEN 3 & 4
WE'LL START OFF IN THE KITCHEN

WOMAN 1 & 2
BAKING PUMPKIN PIES

MEN 1 & 2
AND WE'LL END UP WITH OUR BELTS UNDONE, STUFFED AND ABOUT TO DIE

CHORAL GROUP
(To those passing by.)

JOYEUX NOEL, BO NADA, FELIZ NAVIDAD

BOONE
WHAT?

WOMAN 1 & 2
IT'S GOING TO BE A GREAT DAY

MINISTER
PRAISE TO OUR GOD.

CHORAL GROUP
MAY PEACE LOVE AND JOY FILL YOUR HEART TONIGHT
MAY YOU FIND THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT TO BE A GUIDING LIGHT

ALL
(Gathering around the bench where BOONE sits.)

MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU
MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, EVEN YOU, MR. BOONE

ALL
(To BOONE.)
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

(BOONE covers his ears.)

AHHHHH!

BOONE

(BLACKOUT)

*(Short musical interlude from "Merry Christmas to You"
transitions into Scene 3.)*

ACT 1 / SCENE 3

(BOONE enters the office of Boone and Bailey's Used Car Sales.)

BOBBIE

Merry Christmas Mr. Boone.

(BOONE takes off his hat and coat and tosses them to BOBBIE. BOBBIE rises to put them on the coat rack.)

BOONE

(Groans loudly and rants to BOBBIE.)

Carolers. I hate 'em. Stores are barely open and everyone is singing *(sings sarcastically)* "Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas to you." Makes me sick.

BOBBIE

I saw sir.

(BOONE exits into his inner office - out of sight – upstage of BOBBIE's area or off stage. BOBBIE is at the front desk. Two fun-loving ladies enter, MISS LEOMA and MISS LYNNETTE.)

BOBBIE

Merry Christmas! And how are the "L and L" girls today?

LEOMA

Did you hear that Lynnette, she called us girls.

LYNNETTE

I did Leoma. Bobbie, you are a charmer.

LEOMA

And sweet! If you were my sister I'd gobble you up. Gobble, gobble, gobble . . .

LYNNETTE

Put a damper on it Leoma.

(To BOBBIE.)

We're doing just fine thank you Bobbie.

LEOMA

(Shivers. To LYNNETTE.)

Is it just me or is it colder in here than it is outside?

BOBBIE

Mr. Boone does like it on the cool side.

LEOMA

Cool? It's so cold my butt cheeks are stuck together.

LYNNETTE

(LYNNETTE is perhaps a bit embarrassed. BOBBIE just smiles politely.)

Leoma, perhaps we should return to the task at hand?

LEOMA

You're right Lynnette. *(Gesturing.)* Go on.

LYNNETTE

(Smiling. To BOBBIE.)

We were hesitant to intrude . . . given . . .

LEOMA & LYNNETTE

(Whispers.)

Mr. Boone's reputation.

LYNNETTE

But, it's the holiday season and as vice-president of the Ladies Auxiliary Club . . .

LEOMA

I'm secretary!

LYNNETTE

. . . we are hopeful he may find it within his heart to donate this year to the children's toy drive . . .

LEOMA

. . . as so many people are out of work . . .

LYNNETTE

. . . and we would hate to see any child go without on Christmas Day.

BOONE

(From the inner office – off-stage.)

That would be a shame wouldn't it?

(BOONE enters and crosses to the ladies.)

BOONE

I mean what don't they have? A video game? \$100 tennis shoes? I-phone? I-pad? The popular electronic gadget of the day? When I was a kid, we didn't have every little gizmo under the sun and if we wanted something, we got a job and saved for it.

LEOMA

That's the point Mr. Boone, jobs are scarce as you know.

LYNNETTE

It's my understanding that Mr. Jamison, an extremely hard worker at our former factory asked you for a job not long ago, any job, and you said no!

BOONE

(Quite quickly a light bulb goes off in BOONE'S head.)

Well, that's because, uh . . . I have Bobbie Jackson! Bobbie's my receptionist, secretary, accountant . . . a . . .

(Snapping his fingers for BOBBIE to chime in.)

BOBBIE

. . . marketin' director . . .

BOONE

marketin' director . . .

BOBBIE

finance officer . . .

BOONE

. . . finance officer . . .

BOBBIE

. . . sales associate? . . .

BOONE

. . . Don't press it.

BOBBIE

Camera . . . woman and part-time mechanic.

BOONE

See, a very talented and valuable employee.

BOBBIE

Why thank you Mr. Boone.

LYNNETTE

What's he paying you Bobbie?

BOONE

Now wait just a dog-gone . . .

(LEOMA cuts BOONE off with a hand gesture.)

LEOMA

Go right ahead Bobbie.

BOBBIE

I get a nickel over minimum wage.

LYNNETTE

Well, (*Looking at BOONE*) we think *you* need a raise.

LEOMA

We do.

BOONE

(*To Leoma and Lynnette*)

If I wanted your advice I'd let you know. I'm the one who should be receiving charity. Do you know how many people are behind on their payments? How many cars I'm gonna have to repossess this week?

BOBBIE, LEOMA & LYNNETTE

This week?

BOBBIE

But sir, it's Christmas . . .

LEOMA & LYNNETTE

. . . and then New Year's Eve!

BOONE

And then Valentine's Day and Easter. (*Beat*) Look folks, I have a business to run.

LEOMA

But, people need cars to get to work to make the money to pay their bills.

BOONE

You just said there ain't no work. So, I guess for them folks cars aren't really necessary are they?

BOBBIE

But, sir, "putting others before ourselves"?

BOONE

Bob, Bob, Bob, Bob, Bob, Bob, Bobbie. I am thinking of them. If we repossess the cars of folks that can't afford them, then those folks don't have the burden, the incredible pressure of being behind on their payments. And with the money they are saving they can buy their kids those precious gadgets these young folks crave today. So in reality Bob-a-roo, we're doing them a favor.

BOBBIE

But sir . . .

BOONE

But nothing! I want a list by the end of the day.

BOBBIE

Yes, Mr. Boone.

BOONE

(BOONE turns to go to his office, stops and addresses the ladies.)

Did I live up to my reputation . . . girls?

LYNNETTE

Why, I never!

LEOMA

Well, we know who's on the naughty list this year don't we Lynnette?

LYNNETTE

Yes we do sister. Looks like Santa and Rudolph can just by-pass this place.

BOONE

Santa and Rudolph. HA! Y'all are so gullible. I never did understand that whole Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer thing. *(Sarcastically)* I mean seriously, a red nose lights up the sky helping Santa get to where he needs to get? I mean there's nothing to light up. He's in the sky! It's night and very black up there! When you're driving a car (from Boone & Bailey's Used Car Sales) headlights light up the road, street signs, trees, roadkill. Up in the sky there's nothing around you. What's to light up? The fog? Then you can't see anyway.

LEOMA

(To BOONE.)

You see this purse?

BOONE

Yeah.

LEOMA

Do you know what else it is?

BOONE

(Sarcastically.)

What?

LEOMA

A weapon!

(SHE chases after BOONE around the desk. It's pandemonium!)

LYNNETTE

Get him Leoma!

LEOMA

I got him. You no good, selfish, tight-fisted, son-of- . . .

(BOBBIE gestures for LEOMA and LYNNETTE to calm down as BOONE cowers behind BOBBIE.)

BOBBIE

Ladies! Ladies! It's all right. Don't mind him. He's . . . unique and . . . and needs our holiday well-wishes.

LYNNETTE

(Recovering her sense of decorum.)

Bobbie, you are a saint.

LYNETTE AND LEOMA

You are.

(BOONE clears his throat and steps back. To BOBBIE.)

BOONE

I want that list – pronto!

(HE looks at LEOMA, scowls and quickly exits.)

LEOMA

I wonder who put sandpaper on his toilet seat this morning?

LYNNETTE

I think I'm going to faint.

LEOMA

Here Lynnette . . .

(Reaching into her purse and pulling out a flask.)
 . . . this might help.

LYNNETTE
 Why thank you, Leoma. I think it might.
(SHE takes a swig.)

LEOMA
 Bye Bobbie.

BOBBIE
(Whispers.)

Ladies. . .
(SHE reaches into her purse and gives LEOMA a \$5 bill.)

BOBBIE
 . . . it's not much, but times are tight.

LEOMA
 Bless you Bobbie. You're such a generous soul. Merry Christmas.

(As the ladies exit, LYNNETTE takes another swig from the flask. To LEOMA and perhaps in a raspy voice – given what was in the flask.)

That was good.

BOONE
(BOONE peaks into the room – then enters.)

Bobbie, did you turn the thermostat up?

BOBBIE
 Of course not, sir.

BOONE
 Well, turn it down a bit. It's hotter than a Billy goat with a blow torch. *(Beat.)* Now, GIT BACK TO WORK!

(BOONE begins to exit to his office.)

BOBBIE
 Yes sir. Uh . . . Mr. Boone, I was wondering if I might be able to leave a bit early today?
(BOONE is astounded. Stops and turns to BOBBIE.)

BOBBIE
 Considering it's Christmas Eve?

BOONE

Bob, Bob, Bob, Bob, Bob, Bob, Bobbie . . . you're killing me. Yes, it's Christmas Eve, and I git that you'd like to be home with your family. But some of us . . . Bobette, some of us put others before ourselves.

IT'S UP TO US AT CHRISTMAS

BOONE (*singing*)

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR WHEN FAMILIES
GO TO CHURCH AND SING IN A CHOIR
LATER ON THEY GATHER AT GRANDMA'S
AND SING CAROLS BY THE FIRE
THEY EAT TATERS, TURKEY, ALL KINDS OF STUFF
AND TELL STORIES AGAIN AND AGAIN

I FEEL DEEPLY THAT IT'S OUR DUTY
TO BE THERE FOR THEM

(*Spoken*) Yes I do.

IT'S UP TO US AT CHRISTMAS
TO GET FOLKS WHERE THEY NEED TO BE
WE'RE 'BOUT BRINGING THEM TOGETHER
UNDER A CHRISTMAS TREE
WE MAKE THE DEALS OF A LIFETIME
DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD POSTPONE
THE CHANCE TO BUY THE CAR OF THEIR DREAMS
AT A TWENTY-THREE POINT NINE PERCENT LOAN.

THINK WHAT A MAN WOULDN'T GIVE
TO LOOK OUT IN THE SNOW
AND SEE A TWO-TON FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE PICK-UP
WRAPPED IN A BRIGHT RED BOW
TEARS WOULD STREAM DOWN HIS CHEEKS
HE'D THANK US FOR BEING HERE
HE'LL LOVE US MORE WHEN WE THROW IN
A FREE CASE OF BEER

(*Spoken*) They'll love us!

IT'S UP TO US AT CHRISTMAS
TO GET FOLKS WHERE THEY NEED TO BE
WE'RE 'BOUT BRINGING THEM TOGETHER
UNDER A CHRISTMAS TREE
WE MAKE THE DEALS OF A LIFETIME
WE'RE THE DEALER WITH A HEART

WE LOVE TO HEAR THE KIDDIES CHEER
WHEN THEIR NEW CAR STARTS

PUT YOURSELF IN MY SHOES
OR BETTER, PUT YOURSELF IN THEIRS

WOULDN'T YOU RATHER BUY A CAR
FROM A DEALERSHIP THAT CARES?

THE ECONOMY'S DOWN, UNEMPLOYMENT'S UP
SO I THINK IT'S FAIR TO SAY
THAT BOONE AND BAILEY'S USED CARS
CAN MAKE A CHRISTMAS DAY

(Spoken) Help me out Bob-a-roo!

BOONE AND BOBBIE

IT'S UP TO US AT CHRISTMAS
TO GET FOLKS WHERE THEY NEED TO BE
WE'RE 'BOUT BRINGING THEM TOGETHER
UNDER A CHRISTMAS TREE

BOONE

WITH NO MONEY DOWN OR BACKGROUND CHECK
THEY'LL DRIVE AWAY WITH A SMILE
WITH A SHINY SOMEWHAT RELIABLE CAR
AT LEAST FOR AWHILE

BOONE

Do you still want to go home early today Jackson?

BOBBIE

Well, since you put it that way. *(pause)* I guess not.

BOONE

That's the Christmas spirit!

(Using a money gesture on "M".)

Now, let's work on accentuating the "M" in Christmas.

*BOBBIE scrambles to get to work while BOONE
returns to his office as LIGHTS FADE.*

B.J. (V.O.)

Howdy do folks. This is B.J. your DJ on WKID. Well, the snow is beginning to fall lightly as I look out the station window and the new forecast calls for a dip down to minus ten tonight. So git that fireplace going and bundle up. And remember, go slow and light on the brakes this afternoon. It could get slippery.

After the top-of-the-hour news we'll return with the all-time top fifty holiday classics. But first, a word from our sponsor, Boone and Bailey's Used Car Sales.

BOONE'S recorded jingle from Scene 1 transitions us into Scene 4)

ACT 1 /SCENE 4

We hear a tick-tock, tick-tock of a clock noting the passage of time. Interior of Boone and Bailey's Used Car Sales. BOBBIE is gathering a list of paperwork for MR. BOONE. Then . . .

BOBBIE

(Via a desktop intercom or phone – even though BOONE'S office is close by.)

Mr. Boone, I have that list of repossessions for you.

BOONE

(Enters from his office and crosses to BOBBIE.)

Give it here.

(BOBBIE hands him the list. BOONE notices a small table-top Christmas tree on a table in the office).

BOONE

Bobbie! What is THAT?!!

BOBBIE

It's a . . . a Christmas tree Mr. Boone.

BOONE

I can see that. What's it doing here?

BOBBIE

Well sir, it's Christmas Eve and it might brighten the mood . . . a bit . . . around here . . .sir.

(BOONE glares at BOBBIE.)

BOONE

Are you saying we're not having a good time? That I'm a grouch, a grumbler, a Grinch?

BOBBIE

I wouldn't say that sir. My kids thought it might be nice.

BOONE

Your kids thought it might be nice? That's so sweet. *(Beat)* How many kids do you have Bob-a-roo?

BOBBIE

Six.

BOONE

Six?!!!! I must not be working you hard enough.

BOBBIE

Yes sir.

(Beat. BOBBIE offers him a decoration to put on the tree.)

Would you like to add a decoration to the tree?

BOONE

NO!!

BOBBIE

Right.

(BOBBIE rises, steps to a coat rack and begins to put on her coat and hat.)

BOONE

Where do you think you're going?

BOBBIE

Uh . . . home? It's almost five-o'clock.

BOONE

(Looks at his watch.)

Almost, but not quite. Right?

BOBBIE

Right again sir.

(BOBBIE puts her coat and hat back on the coat rack.)

BOONE

Oh, go ahead. It's the holiday season. Never let it be said I'm not charitable.

BOBBIE

Never sir. I mean, thank you sir.

(BOBBIE picks up her car keys and leans down to pick up something –in a desk drawer or on top of the desk covered with a small towel. BOONE'S been looking over the list.)

BOONE

Bob-a-rino? Your on this list.

(BOONE holds out his hands for the keys to BOBBIE'S car.)

BOBBIE

Yes sir, but maybe I can catch up with our traditional . . . *(Hinting.)* Christmas bonus . . .

BOONE

Hmmm...I'm not sure I can afford it this year. The heating bill is gonna be flat out insane considering how warm you keep the place.

BOBBIE

Sir, payday is just around the corner . . . we're only a few days away.

BOONE

Bob, Bob, Bob, Bob, Bobbie. I can't believe that you ain't learned the importance of meeting your obligations on time. Even if you pay me on payday, your still two months behind on your car payment, unless you plan on making three payments by next week? *(Of course, BOBBIE can't.)* I see. I'm . . . I'm very disappointed.

BOBBIE

But sir, it's my youngest son, Timmy. I've . . . I've had some unexpected medical bills.

BOONE

(Looking around.)

Have you seen my fiddle Bobbie?

BOBBIE

Sir?

(BOONE sarcastically mimes playing a fiddle with a sad look on his face. Then . . .)

BOONE

Good night Bob-a-loo.

(HE gestures for the keys to her car. SHE hands them over.)

BOBBIE

Sir, I live five miles outside of town . . . its winter!

BOONE

Call your husband. Tell him to come git ya?

BOBBIE

I can't. He's on a truck run and stuck a few hours west in a storm that's heading this way.

BOONE

Hmmm . . . well Bob-a-loo-ee, your always telling me how cold it is in this here office. Heck, it's in the twenties out there. Your used to it! Your young! Think of the great shape your gonna be in.

BOBBIE

Actually sir, the temperature is . . . dropping.
(*BOONE could care less.*)

Right. Sir, for you.

(*SHE gives BOONE a pie.*)

BOONE

What's this?

BOBBIE

It's a pecan pie sir. I made it for you. Merry Christmas Mr. Boone.

BOONE

Pecan huh?

(*HE takes the pie. Smells it. Looks at BOBBIE.*)

I prefer crème pies.

BOBBIE

I'll make a note of it sir.

(*Bobbie begins to exit.*)

BOONE

Bobbie . . .

BOBBIE

(*Stops and turns.*)

Yes sir?

BOONE

. . . here.

(*BOONE hands BOBBIE the scarf off of his neck. Who says he doesn't have a heart?*)

BOBBIE

Thank you sir.

(*SHE exits.*)

BOONE
(Calling after BOBBIE.)

Enjoy your day off. Some of us have to work on Christmas Day! *(Beat)* Hey Bobbie, I have a decoration for the tree!

(HE laughs and adds BOBBIE'S car keys to the tree.)

LIGHTS FADE. The wind begins to blow.

ACT 1 / SCENE 5

BOBBIE is outside the dealership on the corner of Main and Bailey Way. It's a clear, cold evening with snow on the way. The wind blows. BOBBIE pulls the scarf around her neck and her coat tight.

BOBBIE

(Sarcastically.)

“I prefer crème pies. Some of us have to work on Christmas Day.” He just blinds me with his sunshine.

(Church bells ring.)

THE JOY CHRISTMAS BRINGS

BOBBIE

(She smiles and embraces the goodness in her heart and sings.)

HEAR THOSE CHURCH BELLS
RING OUT IN THE WINTER WIND
SMELL THE PUMPKIN PIE
SITTIN' BY THE WINDOW COOLIN'

SEE THAT CHRISTMAS TREE
STANDIN' IN THAT FIELD OF WHITE
WAITIN' TO BE DRESSED UP
ADMIRER ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT

IN THE DISTANCE THERE ARE SLEIGH BELLS
SPECIALS AT THE GENERAL STORE
AND MISTLETOE ARE HUNG
IN THE FRAME OF EVERY DOOR
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TOWN SQUARE
RED NOSE FOLKS SING
SONGS ABOUT BETHLEHEM
AND THE JOY CHRISTMAS BRINGS

FAMILIES WILL GATHER
BOW THEIR HEADS AND PRAY
SHARE A CHRISTMAS MEAL
RECALL THE GOOD OLD DAYS

DAD WILL TELL THE STORY
OF HOW CHRISTMAS CAME TO BE

OF A BABY IN A MANGER
BORN FOR YOU AND ME

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TOWN SQUARE
RED NOSE FOLKS SING
SONGS ABOUT BETHLEHEM
AND THE JOY CHRISTMAS BRINGS
AND EVERYONE WILL SMILE
CAUSE THEY'RE HAVING SO MUCH FUN
CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS AND
THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD'S SON
YES WE'RE CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS
AND THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD'S SON

*The wind begins to increase as BOBBIE heads off
into the night.*

*LIGHTS FADE and music transitions us into the
next scene.*

ACT 1 / SCENE 6

MR. BOONE'S bedroom (in a house trailer). There's a single bed, nightstand, electric fireplace and a chair. A guitar sits in the corner. Clothes hang over the chair. He's a bachelor for sure. On the wall hangs a 970's WSM Opry floor sign (that once stood in front of a mic stand). A photo of Young Lucas Boone and Young Mary is visible. Is there an "X" crossing out a young Jake Bailey in the photo as well? Moonlight through a window dimly lights the room. BOONE is tossing and turning having a nightmare.

BOONE

No, no, no! Wait! What about me? We're great . . . as a team!

VISITOR #1

(An other-worldly recorded voice-over of the YOUNGER CARTER.)

Bailey's the one that can sing Boone, not you. He's got looks, charisma and good looking hair. And he writes from the heart. I'm gonna make *him* a star.

BOONE

Noooooooooooooooooo!

BOONE awakens suddenly and sits up. HE'S breathing hard. JAKE BAILEY is in the shadows. BAILEY may appear younger than his friend. Yet, he's been dead a while and looks it. Chains weave up his body and around his shoulders including one with a tow hook. He also carries a large cloth sack.

BAILEY

Luke, you are such a ding-bat.

BOONE

What? Who is that?

(HE grabs his lamp from the night stand to defend himself if need be. HE turns it on.)

BAILEY

(Walking into the light.)

A ding-bat . . . and a whiner.

(BOONE gets out of bed, lamp in hand. HE is wearing a nightgown. BAILEY can't help but notice. Laughs.)

BAILEY

What are you wearing!?

BOONE

My pajamas!

BAILEY

Looks like a nightgown to me.

BOONE

I like to be . . . free.

BAILEY

You been living alone way too long.

BOONE

Who are you?

BAILEY

Don't you recognize me Luke?

BOONE

No. I'm gonna call . . .

(HE puts the lamp down and reaches for the phone. And yes, it's a land-line phone, perhaps cordless. It saves money.)

BAILEY

It don't work Luke. You can't call for help.

BOONE tries the phone anyway. There's no dial tone. Then realizes . . .)

BOONE

Wait a minute, only one person ever calls me Luke.

BAILEY

That's right. It's me. Jake Bailey.

BOONE

(Beat) Oh, I git it. *(Laughs)* Bobbie Jackson put you up to this didn't she? For repossessing her car.

BAILEY

You did what?

BOONE

(Looking closer at Jake.)

Ya do look a bit like Jake, though a bit pale.

BAILEY

I am Jake.

BOONE

(Getting serious and irritated.)

Alright, enough joking around. Jake died a few years back.

BAILEY

Don't you think I'd know that? Look, I like you friend . . .

BOONE

If you are Jake you're not my friend. He was nothing but a no good, back-stabbing . . .

BAILEY

Let's not get into that.

BOONE

Why not? Can't admit it?

BAILEY

You don't let nothing go, do you Luke?

BOONE

I should've taken your name off the dealership sign when you died. But no, I'm a loyal man.

BAILEY

You're mean, stingy, and lonely is what you are.

BOONE

But I'm rich!

BAILEY

You're rich off of other folk's misery.

(BOONE doesn't have a comeback. Beat.)

Man, I loved you like a brother.

BOONE

Well, the feelings not mutual.

BAILEY
That don't surprise me.

(Beat.)

BOONE
What do you want?

BAILEY
Well, I'm here to let you know that tonight you're gonna have three visitors.

BOONE
Visitors? Well, VIS-I-TORS ain't welcome at my house. Ever!

BAILEY
You don't have a house. It's a trailer!

BOONE
It's a Fleetwood double-wide!! Beacon Hill Series!

BAILEY
You always did need to have the biggest and the best didn't you?

BOONE
Dang tootin'.

BAILEY
Good. Because this Christmas you're getting the best visitors I could muster up from the past, present, and future.

BOONE
I don't celebrate Christmas, so tell your *friends* they ain't welcome.

BAILEY
I'm not asking Luke. They *will* be here.

BOONE
(Crawling back into bed and attempting to ignore the situation. To himself.)
It's OK, I know I'm sleeping. This is all just a bad nightmare and a horrible case of indigestion. I gotta quit eating them burritos.

BAILEY
(With a bit of reverb perhaps if body mics are used.)
I'll be your worst nightmare if you don't listen up!

BOONE
(Turning to BAILEY.)

Well excuse me! The ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future you say?

BAILEY
 I said visitors, not ghosts.

BOONE
 Whatever . . . ain't I heard this story before?

BAILEY
 Probably. Not like this though.

BOONE
(Beat. BAILEY just stares at BOONE. Maybe BOONE should listen.)

BOONE
 Will these . . . “vis-i-tors” be . . . you know . . . like you?

BAILEY
 You mean deader than fried chicken?

BOONE
 No, irritating.

BAILEY
 Yep, they'll be just like me. *(Beat)* Look Luke, this is yer last chance to make right all the wrongs you done in life. And you best git it right this time.

BOONE
 Now wait a minute . . .

BAILEY
 This ain't a debate Boone!! Your journey begins tonight!

BOONE
 Tonight? When?

BAILEY
 Soon.

(BAILEY begins to exit.)

BOONE
 Wait. What are you carrying there? And what's with the tow chain?

(BAILEY turns to BOONE.)

BAILEY

Well, I have some chocolate pudding, a deck of cards, something to wet my whistle, a cassette deck . . . remember those?

(Leaning toward BOONE.)

And YOU.

BOONE

Me!?

BAILEY

Yep. Your the burden I carried in life . . . and carry 'round with me now. I never should gone solo. I know that. That's why I'm here to tell you that if you don't have an attitude adjustment soon, I'll be repossessing you! And as much as I love you, I'm getting real tired . . .

BAILEY exits.

BOONE looks around, slowly lays back down, turns off his nightstand lamp, turns over and attempts to go to sleep. Moonlight shines through a window. A tick-tock, tick-tock sound cue establishes the passing of time. BOONE falls asleep – snoring. And then . . . bong, bong, bong! BOONE wakes and grabs his tiny night stand clock. He looks at it. Shakes it. It's a lot of sound for a tiny clock. BOONE gets up. Looks around, doesn't see anything. Lays back down. Gets comfortable. Then . . .

VISITOR #1 (CARTER) – HIS face slowly appears through the headboard of the bed. BOONE doesn't notice it at first. Then, BOONE looks up and sees him, screams and climbs to the DS side of the bed. CARTER pops up from behind the bed laughing. He is the Ghost of Christmas Past and once was a country star. He crosses to BOONE wearing an aged rhinestone suit, cowboy boots and hat.

CARTER

Howdy boy!

BOONE
(BOONE screams– terrified.)

Your ghost number one!!

CARTER
 You are such a ninny.

BOONE
 Am not.

CARTER
 Are too.

BOONE
 Am . . .
(CARTER gives him a look of warning.)

You're . . . you're a ghost ain't you?

CARTER
 I'm a "visitor," because I'm just visiting. I ain't haunting!

BOONE
 Well, that makes me feel so much better. *(Beat)* Jake said I would recognize my "visitors". You are . . .?

CARTER
 You don't recognize me? This outfit don't ring a bell?

CARTER
(CARTER hangs his head. He is clearly disappointed. Looks at BOONE.)

I was hosting the Opry when you auditioned.

(BOONE turns on the light switch and crosses to CARTER.)

BOONE
 Carter? Carter Smith? Now I remember. I always liked your music, although you're judgment of people was questionable.

CARTER
 Got me there, was married four times.

BOONE

What do you want with me?

CARTER

Lucas Boone . . . , we're all in charge of our own destiny. Now, you're getting a shot at changing the direction you're heading which just might be . . . (*Gestures south*), so, you better take advantage of this opportunity. But right now it's time for us to travel . . . back in time.

BOONE

And how are we supposed to do that?

CARTER

Why, I brought my tour bus. Let's go.

(Tour bus horn sounds— toot, toot.)

BOONE

I'm going back to sleep.

BOONE gets back in bed, turns off his night stand light and pulls the sheet over his head. The only light shines through a window.

If the theatre has a fly system, his sheet cover may "fly" into the fly's. Otherwise CARTER might simply pull his cover off. Remember, CARTER is a "visitor" not a ghost and therefore the "visitor's" can touch things if they wish.

BOONE

Let me be!

CARTER

It's time to go!

BOONE slowly rises – terrified. HE and CARTER disappear into the darkness as the tour bus departs via sound cue. LIGHTS FADE.

B.J. (V.O.)

Howdy folks. B.J. your DJ has been working on the intellectual side of his life recently. I've been reading a book. (*Beat*) If you just fell off your chair, dust yourself off and get back up. Now, I've been reading Willie Nelson's *Roll Me Up and Smoke Me When I Die* and I highly recommend it. Now of the jokes I can tell, I thought some of our listener's might be able to relate to this one.

"A man came out of an antique store carrying a large grandfather clock. He bumped into a drunk and busted the grandfather clock into a thousand pieces. The guy said, "Why don't you watch where you're going?" The drunk said, "Why don't you wear a wristwatch like everyone else."(*Chuckles*.)You got to love that Willie.

Music transition

SCENE 7

The past (mid-1970's). BOONE and CARTER arrive on the scene of two boys ice fishing (perhaps in an ice house or an open pond). YOUNG LUCAS BOONE and YOUNG JAKE BAILEY are in their late teens.

BOONE

I remember this place. We did more talking than fishing though.

JAKE

Man, I can't believe it's been cold enough for this little pond to freeze. We never get to do this.

LUCAS

Yea, I'm thrilled (*HE'S the perpetual complainer.*) Dang ice will probably melt, I'll fall through . . .

JAKE

Oh, quit your complaining. It's a beautiful day outside. Blue sky, sun's shining and if we're lucky, we'll get a bite.

LUCAS

. . . then we got to clean the fish, cook the fish, eat the fish, and hope you don't git a bone stuck in your throat.

JAKE

Dude! Give it a rest.

(Beat)

LUCAS

Jake, what do you want to be when you grow up?

JAKE

I don't ever want to grow up. I want to be like Peter Pan.

LUCAS

You're nuts.

JAKE

How 'bout you Luke?

LUCAS

I want to be on the Grand Ole Opry.

JAKE

Seriously?

LUCAS

Yep. I want to be up there with all the great ones.

JAKE

I think I'd be fine just fishing, playing ball, and picking my guitar once-in-a-while.

LUCAS

(Sarcastically.) You dream big Jake. *(Beat)* Don't you ever think about traveling the world? Havin' things? Man, I want a big house, red Corvette convertible, and a touring bus – maybe one with a cool mural on the side. And . . . I want to walk the beaches of California with lots of gals clawing at me.

JAKE

Shoot, everything I need is right here.

(YOUNG MARY enters.)

YOUNG MARY

What are you two wild and crazy boys up to?

LUCAS

Just fishing.

JAKE

And wishing.

YOUNG MARY

For what?

LUCAS

Leaving. Singin' on the Opry. Checking out California. Comin' back to visit after I've made the big time and driving a sweet looking machine . . .

JAKE

. . . with a hot looking mama by his side – a blond.

YOUNG MARY

Bleached, no doubt. *(Beat)* You can't leave. We're a team. We've all been together since first grade.

LUCAS

Sometimes you just have to move on. I mean, we ain't kids no more.

YOUNG MARY

Right. (*Somewhat sarcastically*) High school graduation's in a few months . . . gee, we're almost over the hill. (*Beat*) You know, the grass ain't always greener out there.

LUCAS

I know. Might be a bit warmer though.

BETTER DEAL

LUCAS (*sings*)

I COULD STAND AN INCREASE IN THE TEMPERATURE
WALKIN' ALONG A BEACH
BEING BLINDED BY SUN-BATHED BEAUTIES
ALL WITHIN MY REACH

YOUNG MARY

BUT THEY'D NEVER GIVE YOU THE TIME OF DAY
GIVEN THE WAY YOU WALK
YOU'RE JUST A TRUCK-DRIVING COUNTRIFIED DAYDREAMING BOY
WITH A UNIQUE BOW-LEGGED WALK

YOUNG MARY & JAKE

GIVE IT A REST, YOU GOT THE BEST
RIGHT HERE WHERE YOU STAND
WE THREE ARE AS TIGHT AS THE HARMONIES
IN A BLUEGRASS BAND

JAKE

THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN WEALTH AND FAME
AND A GIRL AROUND EACH ARM

YOUNG MARY

IF YOU'RE GOING SHOPPING THERE'S A BETTER DEAL
RIGHT HERE ON THE FARM

JAKE

Now wait a minute . . .

LUCAS

ARE YOU SAYING A MAN CAN'T DREAM?

YOUNG MARY

I'M SAYING, "TAKE A LOOK AROUND."

LUCAS

I HAVE AND I KNOW IF I STAY HERE
I'LL NEVER LIVE IT DOWN

LUCAS

I'VE GOT TO SPREAD MY WINGS
COME WITH ME, GIVE IT A TRY
I'VE GOT MY BABY-BLUE'S ON THE TARGET
READY TO HIT THE BULL'S EYE

YOUNG MARY & JAKE

GIVE IT A REST, YOU GOT THE BEST,
RIGHT HERE WHERE YOU STAND

YOUNG MARY & JAKE

WE THREE ARE AS TIGHT AS THE HARMONIES
IN A BLUEGRASS BAND

YOUNG JAKE

THERE MORE TO LIFE THAN WEALTH AND FAME
AND A GIRL AROUND EACH ARM

YOUNG MARY

IF YOU'RE GOING SHOPPING THERE'S A BETTER DEAL
RIGHT HERE ON THE FARM

LUCAS

Is that right?

YOUNG MARY & JAKE

Yep!

LUCAS

(He thinks about it for a bit.)

OK.

LUCAS *(Sings)*

I'LL GIVE IT A REST

YOUNG MARY & JAKE

YOU'RE THE BEST

LUCAS, YOUNG MARY & JAKE

TOGETHER WE'LL MAKE A STAND
WE THREE ARE AS TIGHT AS THE HARMONIES
IN A BLUEGRASS BAND
THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN WEALTH AND FAME
WE'LL STAY DOWN ON THE FARM

YOUNG MARY

(Between LUCAS and JAKE)

FOR ME I CAN'T FIND A BETTER DEAL
THAN A COUNTRY BOY ON EACH ARM

LUCAS & JAKE

It's true! *(Spoken.)*

LUCAS & JAKE *(sing)*

SHE WON'T FIND A BETTER DEAL
THAN A COUNTRY BOY ON EACH ARM!

(YOUNG LUCAS, JAKE and MARY laugh. LUCAS AND JAKE begin to pick up their fishing poles, etc., preparing to leave.)

YOUNG MARY

Well, what do you boys want to do tonight?

JAKE

Let's go bowling.

LUCAS

I can't. I have to work.

YOUNG MARY

You're always working. Can't you switch with someone?

LUCAS

I volunteered for double-shifts. Makin' lots of money.

YOUNG MARY

Money, that's all you ever think about.

(Looks to JAKE)

Well, I suppose that leaves us.

JAKE

Guess so. Loser pays.

YOUNG MARY

(To LUCAS)

You better loan him some of that money you're making.

LUCAS

Sure, with interest of course.

JAKE
 Loan shark.
(They begin to exit.)

LUCAS
 No talent.

JAKE
(With his best DeNiro impression.)
 “You talkin’ to me?”

LUCAS
(Doing his best John Wayne impression.)
 Ya’ darn tootin’ I am buck-a-roo!

YOUNG MARY
 You boys are crazy.
(LUCAS, JAKE & MARY exit.)

BOONE
 I remember that day. We were great friends.

CARTER
 Sure looked like it.
(BOONE looks off-stage.)

BOONE
 I’d prefer if we didn’t watch.

CARTER
 Why’s that?

BOONE
 Snowball fight. I lose.

LUCAS
(Off-stage)
 Ouch!
(BOONE and CARTER cringe. Tour bus horn sounds.)

CARTER
 Time to go anyhow.

BOONE

Home?

CARTER

Not a chance.

LIGHTS FADE on CARTER and BOONE.

B.J. (V.O.)

Howdy do folks. Got another one from Mr. Nelson. "A drunk fell out of a second-floor window. A guy came running over and asked, "What happened?" The drunk said, "I don't know, I just got here." (B.J. laughs). This is B.J. your fun-loving D.J. at WKID.

Musical transition into the next scene.

ACT 1 / SCENE 8

The past. Mid-1970's. CARTER and BOONE reappear on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry. Down center is one microphone where YOUNG JAKE BAILEY and YOUNG LUCAS BOONE are getting ready to audition at the Opry. The WSM Grand Ole Opry placard is in front of the mic stand DC. The YOUNGER CARTER might be dressed in an outfit suggesting CARTER'S personality and the period as might the BOYS for this audition. BOONE and CARTER observe the scene. The BOYS are looking out at the Opry in awe!

YOUNGER CARTER

(Entering he sees the boys. Gesturing large and taking stage – as he has a habit of doing.)

This it boys, where dreams come true and stars are made. The Grand Ole Opry! Only the best make it to the Opry. Eddie Arnold, George Jones, Patsy Cline, God rest her soul, Minnie Pearl and of course, yours truly – Carter Smith.

JAKE & LUCAS

Yes sir.

YOUNGER CARTER

Well, let's hear what you got?

(They give each other a reassuring look.)

THIS TOWN

JAKE *(sings)*

SUNSHINE GRACES OUR TOWN MOST SUMMER DAYS
WALK DOWN THE STREET YOU'LL BE GREETED WITH A SMILE
WE'RE FAR ENOUGH OFF THE BEATEN PATH TO BE SMALL
CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE CITY TO BE IN STYLE

THE MUNICIPAL BAND PLAYS IN THE PARK EVERY TUESDAY NIGHT
OLD AND YOUNG SIT BENEATH THE STARS
WE SING ALONG AND KNOW THAT THE GOOD OLE DAYS
ARE IN THE HERE AND NOW AND WHERE WE ARE

JAKE & LUCAS

IF AIN'T HEAVEN, IT'S PRETTY CLOSE
YOU'RE WELCOME TO VISIT AND STAY A WHILE

JAKE & LUCAS

WE LIVE LIFE WITHOUT REGRETS, WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET
AND WHAT YOU GET CAN ONLY BE FOUND RIGHT HERE IN THIS TOWN

JAKE

FAMILY IS A WORD CLOSE TO OUR HEART
THOUGH PERFECT WE DON'T CLAIM TO BE
WE DO THE BEST WE CAN WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH
AND OFFER TO HELP THOSE IN NEED

WE LIKE TO LAUGH AND PLAY TRICKS ON OUR FRIENDS
WE GO TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY RELIGIOUSLY
WE STILL HAVE A DINER AND A DOLLAR MATINEE
WE LIKE LIFE THE WAY IT USE TO BE

JAKE & LUCAS

IF AIN'T HEAVEN, IT'S PRETTY CLOSE
YOU'RE WELCOME TO VISIT AND STAY A WHILE
WE LIVE LIFE WITHOUT REGRETS, WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET
AND WHAT YOU GET CAN ONLY BE FOUND RIGHT HERE IN THIS TOWN

YOUNGER CARTER

Who wrote that song?

JAKE

Uh, I did sir.

YOUNGER CARTER

Well, I'll tell you son. I didn't hear nothing 'bout trucks or drinking and nothing 'bout cheating . . .

(JAKE and LUCAS look at each other . . . worried.)

YOUNGER CARTER

. . . but . . . it's dang fine song. Reminds me of my younger days and my home town. *(To LUCAS.)* And what's your specialty son?

LUCAS

Well, I sing harmony . . . and I play a mean kazoo!

(HE grabs a kazoo from his pocket and is about to play, but JAKE gently stops him.)

We're a team. I also write . . . and do comedy. I got a great one: "She Dumped Me and I Feel Like Trash."

YOUNGER CARTER

(Not really interested.)

That's OK.

JAKE

How 'bout, "It's Tough to Think of Me as Macho When I Got Dishpan Hands"?

YOUNGER CARTER

We already got a Ray Stevens boy, and I got a tight schedule. *(Stepping to LUCAS.)*
Now, it takes a bit of a track record to play the Opry. . .

(The boys are disappointed.)

. . . but, it takes an *idiot* not to recognize talent! And son *(turns to JAKE)*, I'm no idiot. The song's got possibilities, you sing well enough, and the girls will like you. I'm gonna make you a star boy.

(The YOUNGER CARTER puts his arm around young JAKE'S shoulder and begins to walk off. JAKE stops.)

JAKE

But, what about my friend?

YOUNGER CARTER

Stars have to have roadie's son. Make him a roadie!

JAKE and YOUNGER CARTER exit. LUCAS is angry. He paces, getting even more angry. HE thinks for a moment, looks around to make sure no one is watching and then takes the "WSM Grand Ole Opry" sign that sits around the mic stand and quickly exits. BOONE and CARTER look on in silence for a moment.

OFF-STAGE VOICE

Hey boy, get back here. Bring that back!

CARTER

You stole the WSM sign?!

BOONE

Yeah. It's in my trailer. Been feeling guilty for years.

CARTER

Hmmm, I guess being left out didn't sit too well with you did it?

BOONE

Dang right it didn't. I wasn't gonna be no roadie! I should've been there right beside him. I could write songs you know. Still do.

CARTER

Yeah, I've heard your jingles.

BOONE

Jake had a number one hit, the town named a road after him . . .

CARTER

And then what?

BOONE

He gave it all up! Moved back here.

CARTER

Why'd he do that?

BOONE

Because he was crazy! He had it all right there in front of him. *(Beat)* How could he turn his back on all that?

CARTER

You could have told him to go back to Nashville . . . keep writing and singing. He would've played the Opry.

BOONE

I know! *(Beat)* I was jealous. If I couldn't have it, then why should he? *(Beat)* At first, I was thrilled when he gave up on his music and went into business with me, but then. . .*(pause)*

CARTER

What?

BOONE

Never mind. *(Beat)* He had a big heart though, too big I guess. Died before his time. *(Beat)* He's a guitar picking angel now.

CARTER

(Referencing a possible song title.)

Hmmm. Guitar picking angel? Not bad.

(Tour bus horn sound – toot, toot.)

Well, I got to run son. My best to you.

Wait . . .wait. Get back here!

BOONE

LIGHTS FADE. Musical transition into the next scene (a little bit of the melody from “Guitar Picking’ Angel” – perhaps on piano or guitar – melancholy feel)

ACT 1 / SCENE 9

LIGHTS RISE on BOONE'S bedroom. HE'S tossing and turning.

BOONE

Wait, don't go!

(BOONE wakes and sits up – looks around – shakes his head).

I'm working way too hard.

(Lays back down.)

MILLIE *(Visitor #2- in the shadows.):*

You don't know what hard work is.

VISITOR #2 (MILLIE) is a former mechanic at Boone and Bryant's Used Car Sales. She's dressed in oily, grey or denim bib overalls with tools hanging and clanging from all over her body. She has absolutely no problem telling it like it is.

BOONE

(BOONE sits back up.)

Millie . . . is that you?

MILLIE

Yep, it's me.

BOONE

You could use some makeup.

MILLIE

(Reaching for a wrench.)

This wrench and your head. Say it again. Come on . . .

BOONE

I was just joking.

MILLIE

You best be careful.

BOONE

You're my second . . . visitor?

MILLIE
I am.

BOONE
What do you want?

MILLIE
I don't want nothing . . . 'specially from you. The question is what do *you* want?

BOONE
I'd love to be left alone.

MILLIE
Well, we can't have everything we want now can we? (*Beat*) But, since you'd *love* to be left alone. And since *love* is the category question of the moment, I gotta ask . . . have you ever, really loved Mr. Boone?

BOONE
Getting a tad personal ain't you Millie?

MILLIE
It's not like you can fire me.

BOONE
Well, it's none of your business.

MILLIE
I beg to differ.

BOONE
If you must know, I have loved and I do love. I love money!

MILLIE
(*In tribute to Gomer Pyle*)
Surprise, surprise, surprise!

BOONE
And I love my business. And a . . . (*Saluting.*) I love the red white and blue!

MILLIE
I give you that last one Mr. Boone. But, has there ever been that special someone? (*She smiles.*) A woman?

BOONE
Millie, this conversation is getting' just a bit weird.

MILLIE

I'm not talking about me!

BOONE

Oh. Well, as a matter fact, there was someone.

MILLIE

(Totally shocked.)

Really?

BOONE

Yea!

MILLIE

Alright, now we're getting somewhere. Who was she?

BOONE

It's none of your business!!

MILLIE

Just because you can drive a tractor in a field of corn it don't make you no Colonel. Now, who was she?

BOONE

Look, that's in the past and I believe we're supposed to be dealing with the present.

MILLIE

Well, my schooling was limited and I was never too good in English. And if your not gonna tell me, I guess we'll just have to go see. Come on.

(MILLIE exits.)

BOONE

Where are we going?

(MILLIE doesn't answer. BOONE follows her – just a tad frustrated.)

Dag nabbit Millie, where are we going? Millie . . . !

LIGHTS FADE. Musical transition)

ACT 1 / SCENE 10

A soft light rises on a table and two chairs. It's a restaurant. Soft music plays in the background. A YOUNG MARY sits at the table. A dozen roses are on the table. YOUNG LUCAS enters. MILLIE and BOONE observe.

BOONE

I recognize this place.

LUCAS

Hi Mary, sorry I'm late.

YOUNG MARY

(Irritated.)

It's almost closing time.

(HE sits. MARY remains silent.)

LUCAS

I said I'm sorry.

YOUNG MARY

I know. I got the flowers – as I always do.

LUCAS

Do you like 'em? They cost a pretty penny.

YOUNG MARY

Well, that's surprising considering how you hate parting with a dollar.

LUCAS

Look Mary, I'm working hard so we can have a future.

YOUNG MARY

I know, but a future with what and for what? You're a phantom. You're never around. How many times have you promised we'd go dancing?

LUCAS

Honey, that was like a . . . a campaign promise!

YOUNG MARY

Don't you honey me. And don't you treat me like some gullible voter. You care more about your business than you do me. You do nothing but work. You're so cheap your trailer's . . .

LUCAS

It's a double-wide!

YOUNG MARY

. . . your trailer's as cold as a morgue. (*Beat.*) I'm not sure I really know who you are.

LUCAS

Sure, I'm a bit tight with my money. But one day, you'll be thankful. (*Beat*) Look, I'm trying to make it right here. Flowers, our favorite table, soft lights.

YOUNG MARY

I know. I appreciate the effort, but . . .

LUCAS

But what? Come on, spit it out.

BOONE

It's time to leave.

BOONE attempts to leave. MILLIE grabs him by the collar and terms him around to watch.)

MILLIE

Shhh . . .

DON'T SEND ME ROSES

YOUNG MARY: (*Sings*)

AGAIN YOU SEND ME ROSES INVITE ME OUT TO DINE
 HOPING THAT I'LL BELIEVE IN ALL YOUR FANCY LINES
 I'VE CLOSED MY EYES A DOZEN TIMES ALONG THE WAY
 BUT YOUR GIFT OF GUILT CAN'T REBUILD A LOVE THAT'S WITHERED
 AWAY

DON'T SEND ME ROSES WHEN I'M TORN APART
 DON'T SAY WITH LOVE WHEN IT'S NOT FROM THE HEART
 DON'T SAY YOU NEED ME 'CAUSE THIS IS GOODBYE
 THE SOFT PETALS YOU SEND ME ARE JUST A THORN IN MY SIDE

WAS I GIVING TOO LITTLE, ASKING TOO MUCH
 FOR ME TO BE THE ONLY ONE TO FEEL YOUR TOUCH

THE COST OF LOVE IS MORE THAN WE CAN PAY
 IT'S TOO HARD TO MEND A HEART THAT BENDS SO MUCH THAT IT
 BREAKS

DON'T SEND ME ROSES WHEN I'M TORN APART
 DON'T SAY WITH LOVE WHEN IT'S NOT FROM THE HEART
 DON'T SAY YOU NEED ME 'CAUSE THIS IS GOODBYE
 THE SOFT PETALS YOU SEND ME ARE JUST A THORN IN MY SIDE

LUCAS

Hmmm . . . maybe this will soften the thorns a bit.

(HE takes out a jewelry box and hands it to her.)

YOUNG MARY

What this?

LUCAS

Open it.

YOUNG MARY

(SHE does. Is it a ring? Of course not, it's a pair of ear rings.)

Ear rings.

(She's not surprised.)

They're beautiful. But, I can't accept them.

LUCAS

Why not?

YOUNG MARY

I . . . I just can't.

LUCAS

What are you trying to say?

YOUNG MARY

(Pause)

We're through.

LUCAS

What? Why? *(Beat. Then it hits him.)* Oh, I get it. You're kidding ain't you? *(Laughs)*
 This is good, like in the old days with me and Jake.

YOUNG MARY

The old days? The old days weren't that long ago. And no, I'm not kidding. It's over.

LUCAS

I can't believe this! You know, there's never been anyone other than you.

YOUNG MARY

Really? I've seen you dance with your money, kiss your money, and caress your money! Your money might as well be another woman. It's a little strange.

MILLIE

(Looks at BOONE. It is strange.)

LUCAS

Oh yeah . . . well, wait till I tell Jake you're leaving me.

YOUNG MARY

(Pause)

He knows.

LUCAS

What?

YOUNG MARY

He knows.

LUCAS

He knows? *(Beat)* Oh, oh I git it. How could I be so blind? He didn't turn his back on his music and come home to be with his best friend. He came back for you.

YOUNG MARY

Not at first. He came back to be in a town he loves and to be around people he cares about. He went into business with you!

LUCAS

Yeah, he got into my business all right.

YOUNG MARY

That's not fair. He's a true and loyal friend.

LUCAS / BOONE

How can you say that? He stole you away from me.

YOUNG MARY

He didn't steal anything from you, because you never really had me. All you care about is money.

LUCAS / BOONE

What's wrong with that?

MARY

You probably even sleep with money.

LUCAS

I . . .

(HE can't answer. HE does sleep with his money.)

MILLIE

(To BOONE)

Really?

YOUNG MARY

Well, I hope it keeps you warm.

(Slowly SHE rises and hands LUCAS the jewelry box.)

Here, I'm sure you can get a refund.

(SHE exits.)

LUCAS

(HE sits there. Pause. To himself.)

I can't. It was on clearance.

(HE is – alone.)

MILLIE

(Looks at BOONE in disbelief.)

Mr. Boone, *you* are an idiot! And I'm talking in the PRESENT tense.

LIGHTS FADE. Music Out.

END OF ACT I

ACT 2 / SCENE 1

The control room of Radio station WKID. ANNA SUE or B. J. or both can play guitar or the music may be “pre-recorded” tracks played via the radio station equipment (although technically played live). BOONE and MILLIE are in the shadows observing.

B. J.

Howdy folks and a Merry Christmas to everyone. This is B. J. *(to ANNA)* your handsome DJ coming to you from radio station WKID with a special Christmas Eve gift. *(Beat)* Tonight, it’s Christmas Karaoke featuring a couple of original tunes written by a talented little lady I know. Just like her daddy, this little girl writes from the heart and paints with her lyrics. So let’s gather ‘round the radio like in the old days, grab a sugar cookie and a cup of cider and enjoy Miss Anna Sue Bailey, daughter of our very own Jake Bailey, may he rest in peace. *(Pause)* Take it away darlin’.

ANNA SUE

Thank you B. J. *you handsome DJ.* This first one is titled, “I Wish It Was Christmas Every Day of the Year.”

I WISH IT WAS CHRISTMAS EVERYDAY OF THE YEAR

JANIE LYNN *(sings)*

THE WEATHERMAN SAYS IT'S SEVEN BELOW
OUTSIDE THE GROUND HAS A BLANKET OF SNOW
THE POND AT THE PARK IS COVERED WITH ICE
THE MALL HAS GREAT SALES ON ALL MERCHANDISE

DECORATIONS ARE ALL OVER TOWN
THE NIGHT AIR IS FILLED WITH JINGLE BELL SOUNDS
REHEARSALS ARE ON FOR THE CHRISTMAS PLAY
LITTLE BOYS AND GIRLS, WAIT FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

IT'S CHRISTMAS, THAT TIME OF YEAR
FOR SANTA CLAUS AND A RED NOSE REINDEER
STREETS ARE LINED WITH COLORED LIGHTS
CAROLERS SING, O HOLY NIGHT
AT CHRISTMAS, HEARTS CAN FORGIVE
CEASEFIRES ARE CALLED SO SOLDIERS MAY LIVE
CHURCHES ARE FULL, LOVED ONES ARE NEAR
I WISH IT WAS CHRISTMAS, EVERYDAY OF THE YEAR

FLAMES IN THE FIRE ARE DANCING IN TIME
PRESENTS ARE WRAPPED, CHRISTMAS CARDS SIGNED

*IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE IS ON ONCE AGAIN
FOLLOWED BY BING IN HOLIDAY INN*

IT'S CHRISTMAS, THAT TIME OF YEAR
FOR SANTA CLAUS AND A RED NOSE REINDEER
STREETS ARE LINED WITH COLORED LIGHTS
CAROLERS SING, O HOLY NIGHT
AT CHRISTMAS, HEARTS CAN FORGIVE
CEASEFIRES ARE CALLED SO SOLDIERS MAY LIVE
CHURCHES ARE FULL, LOVED ONES ARE NEAR
I WISH IT WAS CHRISTMAS, EVERYDAY OF THE YEAR

(During the instrumental break B.J. proposes to ANNA SUE. We see the action of B.J. opening a box with a ring and putting it on NNA SUE'S finger, but we don't necessarily hear dialogue – but perhaps the WKID listeners do as the “On Air” light is still on.)

AT CHRISTMAS, HEARTS CAN FORGIVE
CEASEFIRES ARE CALLED SO SOLDIERS MAY LIVE
CHURCHES ARE FULL, LOVED ONES ARE NEAR
I WISH IT WAS CHRISTMAS EVERYDAY OF THE YEAR
I WISH IT WAS CHRISTMAS EVERYDAY OF THE YEAR

B. J.

How 'bout that folks? That was lovely Anna Sue. Seems like you inherited yer daddy's gift for writing and singing. And I must say if it was Christmas every day of the year, the world would be a much better place. You have one more for us, right?

ANNA SUE

You know we do B. J. We've been rehearsing all week.

B. J.

Well, here's a first folks. B. J. and Anna Sue teaming up with . . .

ANNA SUE

Don't you mean Anna Sue and B. J.?

B. J.

We kid we kid at WKID.

(ANNA SUE gives him “that” look. An uncomfortable pause.)

But she's not kidding. *(Clears throat.)* Take two folks. Here's Anna Sue Bailey and B. J. with “A Gift of Love.”

(ANNA SUE kisses B. J. on the cheek.)

A GIFT OF LOVE

ANNA SUE (*sings*)

SNOW IS FALLING ON THE WINDOW SILL
SOFT AS COTTON AND THERE'S A CHILL
IN THE AIR, IT'S IN THE AIR
IT'S CHRISTMAS TIME, SLEIGH BELLS RING
RED NOSE FOLKS ARE CAROLING
IT'S A TIME TO SHARE, AND I'D LIKE TO SHARE

BUT ALL I HAVE IS A GIFT OF LOVE
AND THREE LITTLE WORDS I CAN'T SAY ENOUGH
WRAPPED IN A KISS GOOD AND TIGHT
JUST FOR YOU ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT

THIS GIFT OF LOVE WILL CURE HEARTACHES
IT'S GUARANTEED NOT TO BREAK
SO WON'T YOU TAKE
THIS GIFT OF LOVE

B. J.

I'D LIKE TO BUY YOU FANCY CLOTHES
FURRY SLIPPERS TO WARM YOUR TOES
A PARIS GOWN THAT YOU COULD WEAR UPTOWN
ON NEW YEAR'S EVE WE COULD DANCE
SET NEW STANDARDS FOR ROMANCE
THEN RIDE AWAY IN A RED AND WHITE CUSTOMIZED SLEIGH

BUT ALL I HAVE IS A GIFT OF LOVE
AND THREE LITTLE WORDS I CAN'T SAY ENOUGH
WRAPPED IN A KISS GOOD AND TIGHT
JUST FOR YOU ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT
THIS GIFT OF LOVE WILL CURE HEARTACHES
IT'S GUARANTEED NOT TO BREAK
SO WON'T YOU TAKE
THIS GIFT OF LOVE

ANNA SUE AND B. J.

WON'T YOU TAKE THIS GIFT OF LOVE

B. J.

Merry Christmas from all of us at WKID. May your day be blessed with love and happiness . . . and we W-Kid you not.

Lights slowly fade on the Control room to only highlight BOONE and MILLIE.

BOONE

That's Jake's daughter? She grew up.

MILLIE

How come you don't know the child of the man that was your best friend?

BOONE

I . . . I lost track of time . . . got too involved in my work. I . . . it was hard to face the family after Jake passed. And quite honestly, I couldn't look Mary in the eye.

MILLIE

(Sarcastic.)

I couldn't look Mary in the eye! Ahh. *(Getting angry.)* Well, how difficult do you think it was trying to raise a little girl without her daddy!? As always, you're thinking more about yourself than others. You know sometimes life is about making choices. I mean, you might be able use a wrench to pound in a nail, but a hammer will do a heck of a lot better job.

BOONE

Are we done?

MILLIE

Not quite.

Lights fade up on the Control Room

B. J.

It's B. J. here on WKID folks. This just in, I'm hearing through the grapevine that Lucas Boone is putting a damper on the holidays for several folks in town. Starting Christmas day he'll begin repossessing cars if owners are one payment late. If you've been having a rough time, I'd suggest you hightail it out of town and visit a relative, but we have a whopper of a snowstorm coming and it's so cold my Grandpa's teeth were chattering . . . in the glass! So, let me just suggest you just stay put. In the meantime, we'll just hope ole Mr. Boone can't get through to you. For WKID, this is B. J. your helpful DJ wishing you a happy holiday season.

B. J. plays a Christmas class. Suddenly we hear jingle bells (carried by LEOMA) as MARY BAILEY, LEOMA and LYNNETTE peak through the door and then enter the radio station. BOONE and MILLIE observe.

MARY

Is it OK to be here B.J.?

LEOMA

(Wiping snow off of her coat.)

Whew! It's getting rough out there.

B.J.

Sure, come on in.

MARY

We were listening to the broadcast on the way over and well did you . . . a . . . I mean . . .

LEOMA

Oh, spit it out Mary.

MARY

Did you propose to Anna Sue tonight?

B.J.

I sure did.

LEOMA & LYNNETTE

(LEOMA & LYNNETTE pull ANNA SUE over to a chair to inspect the ring.)

Ooooh . . .! Congratulations! Get on over here! That's wonderful darling. Let's see the ring.

(ANNA SUE displays an engagement ring. The LADIES are thrilled and are quite giggly.)

LYNNETTE

Anna Sue, you sounded wonderful on the radio.

ANNA SUE

Thank you.

(B.J. gestures or clears his throat fishing for a compliment from the ladies.)

LEOMA

Oh, you were fine too B.J., just fine.

LYNNETTE

You must be thrilled Mary.

MARY

I am. B. J.'s a good man and they make a great couple. *(Beat)* What a blessed evening it is. You know, it's easy to forget the true meaning of Christmas in difficult times and although we always appreciate unwrapping presents, the gift of friendship, love, compassion, and family are the most precious. *(To ANNA SUE)* I wish your daddy were here at a time like this.

LYNNETTE

He was so good looking. A dazzling white smile . . .

LEOMA

. . . pretty eyes. . .

LYNNETTE

. . . a great singing voice . . .

LEOMA

(To LYNNETTE.)

and a cute little tush . . .

(The ladies giggle.)

LYNNETTE

High five to that!

(All the women high-five. B.J. is left out.)

B. J.

Well, I feel like a saddle that's been rode hard and hung up wet.

LYNNETTE & LEOMA

Are you not getting enough attention?

ANNA SUE

Don't worry honey. I think you're just fine.

(ANNA SUE steps to B.J. and gives him a gentle pat.)

B. J.

(Cuddling up to ANNA SUE)

You do, do you?

ANNA SUE

I do.

LYNNETTE & LEOMA

Mistletoe time!

(LYNNETTE gets mistletoe out of her purse and hangs it over ANNA SUE and B. J.'s heads.)

B. J.

Why thank you ma'am.

(They kiss.)

MARY

Now, with that all of that said and done, I know we'll have some disappointed children if they don't have a present under their tree in the morning. Thankfully, *(referring to LYNNETTE and LEOMA)* the Ladies Auxiliary Club has done an excellent job of fundraising from some of our more generous members in the community.

LYNNETTE

Mr. Boone isn't one of them.

LEOMA

Right you are sister.

MARY

We still have a lot of gifts to deliver.

B.J.

I have my four-wheeler, but I think we'll need more than one.

MARY

Perhaps Lucas will help us?

LYNNETTE

Who?

MARY

Lucas . . . Lucas Boone . . . Mr. Boone.

LYNETTE

Ohhh, that's right. You were on a first-name basis with him once-upon-a-time. You two . . . dated?

MARY

Yes, a lifetime ago it seems. Now, back to the matter at hand . . .

LEOMA

Well, he won't help.

LYNNETTE
He won't . . .

LEOMA
. . . never . . .

LYNNETTE
. . . ever.

LEOMA
You have a better chance of keeping ashes out of pancakes.

(MARY, ANNA SUE & B.J. stare at her, look at each other and silently ask "WHAT? LYNNETTE however understands.)

LYNNETTE
I smell what you're stepping in sister.

BOONE
(TO MILLIE)

Don't believe a word they say.

B.J.
I'll ask him. I bought my pick-up from him last year.

BOONE
That's true. He did buy it from me. Gave him a special single-digit interest rate!

(The wind is picking up. Lights flicker in the control room.)

B. J.
Man, it's a heck of a storm brewing out there.

(MARY'S cell phone rings. She answers.)

MARY
Excuse me. Hello. . .
(There is a worried look on her face.)

ANNA SUE
What is it Mama? Mama?

MARY

(Mary ends the call.)

B. J., the presents will have to wait.

LIGHTS FADE on MARY, ANNA SUE, B. J. and the LADIES. (A cell phone rings. It's MILLIE'S. She answers it.)

MILLIE

Hello . . . Yep . . . Got it . . . On it.

BOONE

Ghosts have cell phones?

MILLIE

Spooky isn't it? Gotta run.

BOONE

Wait! What's going on?

MILLIE

Can't tell you.

BOONE

You mean you won't tell me!

MILLIE

I *can't* tell you!

BOONE

At least tell me why you came here tonight?

MILLIE

(Beat)

You remember that day you fired me for being late?

BOONE

Not really.

MILLIE

Figures. Well, I was trying to fix my brakes that morning and I had to get my boy to school. I was rushing to get the job done 'cause I knew you'd be madder than a puffed

toad if I was late for work. When you're a mechanic, it's not good to rush. You always miss something. Well, I got my boy to school alright, but I was late getting to work.

MILLE

A whole six-and-half-minutes as you so kindly pointed out. To make a short story shorter, you fired me . . . on the spot. I was less than pleased 'bout that and was heading home . . . maybe driving a bit too fast. Anyway, my brakes went out. It's not a good thing to happen when there's ice on the roads. All because I was six minutes late?!

BOONE

Six-and-a-half . . . (*MILLIE glares at him.*) . . . apparently.

MILLIE

(*MILLIE grabs her wrench – again.*)

Wrench . . . head. (*HE gets the point.*) Anyway, I'm still P.O.'d with you.

BOONE

(*BOONE doesn't quite know what to say. Beat.*)

What happened to your boy?

MILLIE

He was raised in a foster home.

BOONE

Where was your husband?

MILLIE

If I'd a known that I might not have been working for a no-good, cheap skate like you! (*Beat*) Anyways, the boy grew up fine. You know him. He's B. J. the DJ at WKID.

BOONE

B. J. is the son of Millie?

MILLIE

Yep.

BOONE

I'm sorry.

MILLIE

What the heck is that supposed to mean!?

BOONE

No, no. I mean, I'm sorry about what happened . . . to you.

MILLIE

Really?

Yeah.

BOONE

Hmmm . . . well, that's a start.

MILLIE

LIGHT'S FADE. Musical transition.

ACT 2 / SCENE 2

Light's rise on BOONE'S bedroom. He's in bed, wide awake waiting for visitor number three.

BOONE waits. Nothing. He looks around. Nothing. HE gets out of bed . . . looking. Suddenly, we begin to hear something in the instance. Is it is train? It is! We only hear the train (and perhaps a brief familiar musical intro). We never actually see a "train" except perhaps its light approaching. It approaches and arrives as if pulling into a station. BOONE is scared to death (almost). HE jumps back in bed and peaks out under the covers.

The steam (fog) of a train appears. Entering (amidst the steam and back lit) with a black guitar around his back – and wearing black pants, black shirt, black shoes and large pompadour hair style is THE "MAN IN BLACK" - VISITOR #3.

JOHNNY

Hello, my name's Johnny. Johnny . . .

BOONE

(BOONE sits up.)

I know. Are you here to show me the future?

JOHNNY

(JOHNNY crosses down to BOONE)

Could be. You learn anything yet?

BOONE

I'm not sure . . . maybe.

JOHNNY

Well, it took me a while too. You ready?

BOONE

I suppose.

JOHNNY

Then let's go.

(BOONE gets out of bed.)

All aboard!

JOHNNY

JOHNNY and BOONE turn and walk through the steam. The train pulls out of the station.)

Lights fade.

Lights up on the radio control room.

B. J.

Howdy folks, this is B. J. at radio station WKID with an important announcement folks. Bobbie Jackson has not arrived home this Christmas Eve. Now, with all this crazy weather the freeway's been closed and it's my understanding her husband Ross won't be rolling his rig this way till the weather clears. She was last seen this evening walking up Farm Road 297 toward home. However, she never made it. So, if you have a snowmobile or four-wheeler, it's time to roll.

Lights fade.

ACT 2 / SCENE 3

We hear the train pull up. JOHNNY and BOONE enter. We are in a funeral home. Lights rise on a casket or an urn. Flowers surround it. MARY BAILEY, ANNA SUE, LYNNETTE and LEOMA are present.

BOONE

What's this?

JOHNNY

Time to walk the line son.

BOONE

What?

JOHNNY

Bite the bullet. Face the music. Eat some cranberries.

BOONE

Cranberries?

JOHNNY

Cranberries! (*Shivers*) Oooh . . . I never did like 'em. Anyway, because you repossessed Bobbie's car and made her walk home in below freezing temperatures and a snow storm, she . . . well, she never made it. They found her on the side of the road.

BOONE

What?!

(BOONE is stunned.)

JOHNNY

Yep, frozen like one of those ice sculptures . . . holding a picture of her little boy in her hands.

BOONE

I didn't know it was gonna git that cold.

JOHNNY

It don't matter. (*Angry*) How stupid and selfish can you be!? (*Beat*) What did you git out of making her walk home? Hmmm? Did you think that would make your business stronger? Did it put money in your pocket?

BOONE

I . . . I didn't really think . . .

JOHNNY

Dang right you didn't think. You didn't really need to repossess her car. Were you gonna make Bobbie walk back and forth to work all winter? Did you think that would help her be on time? *(Beat)* You know, this year folks had the opportunity to remember what Christmas is all about - each other. Heck, these folks are just trying to feed their families and keep warm. Man, you screwed this up more than I ever could. And I was pretty good at it.

Lights rise up full on the funeral home.

MARY

There's not much one can say at times like this. It's certainly not the Christmas we were expecting. We're all gonna have to pitch in and help.

LYNNETTE

We'll take care of the food. Leoma's a great cook.

LEOMA

Oh, no I'm not.

LYNNETTE

You are too.

LEOMA

Well . . . I'm OK.

LYNNETTE

You're more than OK. Your food is scrumptious. It's delectable, mouthwatering and flat out lip smacking delicious.

LEOMA

Well, if you say so.

LYNNETTE

I do and it is.

(The L&L girls hug.)

MARY

I'll take Timmy to the doctor when he needs to go and Anna Sue and I can watch the kids when Ross is out of town.

ANNA SUE

Momma, I've heard through the grapevine that Ross is going to sell his eighteen-wheeler.

MARY

He can't do that!

ANNA SUE

He figures it's the only way he can pay for Timmy's operation and be there for the kids.

LYNNETTE

I heard Ross was so angry he took a Louisville Slugger and was about to do a number on Mr. Boone's cars.

LEOMA

The Sheriff didn't arrest him, but he did force Ross to play chess with him all night.

LYNNETTE

That had to be worse than sitting in jail.

LEOMA

I hope Mr. Boone rots in a manure patch, gets dug up, tossed around and becomes lunch for the local critters.

MARY

No you don't.

LEOMA

I do.

MARY

You don't.

LEOMA

I do.

MARY

(Softly.)

You don't.

LEOMA

I guess not. *(Beat)* Can he at least go straight to the devil?

MARY

That'd be easier than seeing me. *(Beat)*. I know what Ross is dealing with because I've been there. *(To everyone.)* But don't let our hearts harden. Not like his. Forgive and the emotions we are feeling, and I know Ross is feeling, will fade . . . in time. *(Beat)* Now, folks will be arriving soon. Let's take a moment to bow our heads.

(After a moment ANNA SUE begins singing.)

THE GOOD LORD'S RULES

ANNA SUE (*Sings*)

MOMMA USE TO READ ME BIBLE STORIES
SHE'D PRAY WITH ME WHEN IT WAS TIME FOR BED
SLOWLY I'D DRIFT OFF TO DREAMLAND
AND HEAR FOR MYSELF THE WORDS MY MOMMA READ

SUDDENLY I WAS LISTENING TO JESUS
FROM A MOUNTAIN TOPI COULD HEAR HIM SAY
"LOVE THE LORD GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART
AND MY FATHER WILL REWARD YOU ONE DAY."

HE'D SAY "LOVE YOUR FELLOW MEN AND DO UNTO THEM
AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU
LEND A HAND TO THE WEAK
YOUR VOICE TO THOSE THAT CANNOT SPEAK
AND HEAVEN'S LIGHT WILL SHINE ON YOU
IF YOU FOLLOW THE GOOD LORD'S RULES.

BOONE (*to JOHNNY*)

THERE WAS A TIME I BELIEVED
BUT THAT WAS SO LONG AGO
THEN ON MY WAY DOWN THE ROAD TO GETTIN' RICH
I FOUND THE GREEN BUT LOST PART OF MY SOUL

JOHNNY

BEEN THERE SON, BUT THE LORD FORGIVES
I CAN TELL YOU PRAYER IS WHERE YOU START
PUT YOUR HANDS TOGETHER AND TALK TO HIM
REMEMBER HE'S RIGHT THERE IN YOUR HEART

ANNA SUE/MARY/LYNNETTE/
LEOMA/ BOONE & JOHNNY

LOVE YOUR FELLOW MEN AND DO UNTO THEM
AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU
LEND A HAND TO THE WEAK
YOUR VOICE TO THOSE THAT CANNOT SPEAK
AND HEAVEN'S LIGHT WILL SHINE ON YOU
IF YOU FOLLOW THE GOOD LORD'S RULES

LOVE YOUR FELLOW MEN AND DO UNTO THEM
AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU

LEND A HAND TO THE WEAK
YOUR VOICE TO THOSE THAT CANNOT SPEAK

ANNA SUE/MARY/LYNNETTE/
LEOMA/ BOONE &JOHNNY
AND HEAVEN'S LIGHT WILL SHINE ON YOU
IF YOU FOLLOW THE GOOD LORD'S RULES

*LIGHTS FADE on the funeral home, but still
highlight BOONE and JOHNNY.*

BOONE

What's with the boy, Timmy?

JOHNNY

Well, he's pretty sick and needs constant care from a doctor.

BOONE

What's wrong with him?

JOHNNY

I don't know the details, but he's been sick for a while and them medical bills have been pretty tough on Bobbie and Ross, which is why they've been a bit behind on them car payments. Timmy needs a very expensive operation. But of course, there was a slim chance they could afford it with Bobbie working for you. But now, it sure as heck ain't gonna happen.

BOONE

She never told me.

JOHNNY

She tried, but you wouldn't listen. Have you ever even met Ross or the kids? *(No response)* I thought not.

BOONE

How is Ross gonna support em? There ain't much work 'round here and if he sells his truck . . . and what about Timmy?

JOHNNY

Good questions. You'll have to figure out them answers on your own.
(A train whistle sounds.)

Well, I hear the train a comin' . . .

(Another train whistle.)

It's comin' round the bend . . .

(We hear the train approaching as well. JOHNNY approaches the train.)

BOONE

Wait! You were showing the future. What would or could happen. It doesn't have to happen. Right? Right?!

(JOHNNY turns and speaks.)

JOHNNY

You're running out of time, and I don't know if you can change things or not. It's not for me to say.

BOONE

Well then, who can I talk to? Who?

JOHNNY

I think you know.

JOHNNY exits through the steam of the train. A final train whistle and we hear the train depart.

LIGHTS FADE as we hear the train leave and head down the tracks.

ACT 2 SCENE 4

BOONE'S bedroom. It's the middle of the night. HE sits on a chair near his bed. Next to the chair is his guitar and a bottle of bourbon. He pours a glass, is about to drink it, but then sets it down.

BOONE

(To himself and full of frustration.)

Idiot!

HE sits for a moment and then grabs a pen, paper and his guitar and slowly begins to write a song. HE thinks, writes and sings slowly searching for the words during the first verse strumming a chord here and there. It finally just comes natural to him - or maybe he's getting some assistance.

GUITAR PICKIN' ANGEL (Track 11)

BOONE

(Searching for the chords and the words)

TO SIT AND WONDER WHY CAN DRIVE A MAN INSANE
I KNOW A FEW SHOTS OF BOURBON WON'T ERASE THE PAIN
BUT I FEEL BETTER KNOWING THAT ON HIS JUDGMENT DAY
THE LORD GAVE HIM A FENDER STRAT AND SAID, "ROCK THE NIGHT
AWAY."

(The tune and lyrics magically come to him and the rhythm picks up.)

THERE'S A GUITAR PICKIN ANGEL ROCKIN' UP IN HEAVEN
A GOLDEN VOICE DJ SPINNING THE TOP TEN
ST. PETER LEADS THE CHOIR SINGING "ROCK OF AGES"
WHILE THAT GUITAR PICKIN' ANGEL ROCKS WITH A COUNTRY BAND

THERE'S MARTY ROBBINS ON THE KEYBOARD, STRINGBEAN ON BANJO
IN THE SPOTLIGHT IT'S ONLY RIGHT TO HAVE THE KING OF ROCK N' ROLL
BUDDY HOLLY WRITES THE MUSIC AND SINGS HARMONY
WHILE THAT GUITAR PICKIN' FRIEND OF MINE IS CRANKING OUT THE
LEADS

THERE'S A GUITAR PICKIN ANGEL ROCKIN' UP IN HEAVEN
A GOLDEN VOICE DJ SPINNING THE TOP TEN
ST. PETER LEADS THE CHOIR SINGING "ROCK OF AGES"
WHILE THAT GUITAR PICKIN' ANGEL ROCKS WITH A COUNTRY BAND

LATE AT NIGHT WHEN ALL IS STILL LOOK OUT AMONG THE STARS
 YOU MAY SEE AN ALL-STAR BAND ON GLORY BOULEVARD
 THEY'LL ALL BE WEARING HALOS AND THEIR GOWNS OF WHITE
 RAISIN' HELL IN HEAVEN AND ROCKIN' OUT ALL NIGHT

THERE'S A GUITAR PICKIN ANGEL ROCKIN' UP IN HEAVEN
 A GOLDEN VOICE DJ SPINNING THE TOP TEN
 ST PETER LEADS THE CHOIR SINGING "ROCK OF AGES"
 WHILE THAT GUITAR PICKIN' ANGEL ROCKS WITH A COUNTRY BAND
 THAT GUITAR PICKIN' FRIEND OF MINE IS ROCKIN' WITH A COUNTRY
 BAND

*(BOONE is emotionally drained. From the shadows . . .
 CARTER, MILLIE, JOHNNY and JAKE emerge.)*

CARTER

That's pretty good son. It's a lot easier to write when it comes from the heart.

MILLIE

Your jingles still stink!

(CARTER nudges MILLE)

Sorry.

JOHNNY

You know it takes more work to frown than to smile. Elvis knew that. And you been working way too hard.

JAKE

That was a good song friend. You finally learned how to write. Learn anything else tonight?

BOONE

I sure did Jake.

(BOONE crosses to JAKE.)

I'm sorry, 'bout everything. I am so, so sorry.

JAKE

That's good to hear Luke. Now it's time to make a difference.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

ACT 2 / SCENE 5

BOONE'S bedroom. We hear the chimes of a loud church bell - the sun rises and streams through the window. It's a new day. It's Christmas!

Lights fade up. BOONE is lying on the floor – curled up, asleep. He slowly rises.

BOONE

What a night.

(HE begins to dress. BOONE sees the paper he scribbled the song on. HE picks up the paper and slowly lays down quietly singing a lyric from "Guitar Pickin' Angel". Something is underneath his pillow. It's a wrench! HE picks it up.)

It happened. I wasn't dreaming. I can't believe it!
(Suddenly remembering.)

Bobbie!!!
(HE turns on the radio.)

B. J. (V.O.)
Merry Christmas everybody from WKID. B. J. your holiday DJ here and it's a great day. The storm laid a fair share of powder last night to make some great sledding for the kids, the sun is shining, and best of all Bobbie Jackson made it home safely last night.

BOONE
Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!
(BOONE dances around, stops, HE looks up.)

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!
(HE picks up his phone and calls the station. Lights rise on the control room.)

B. J.
Yes-sir-ee folks, Jim Johnson was running his snowplow up near Goose Gap and spotted Bobbie Jackson trudging along in knee-deep snow and picked her up. Bobbie was cold and a bit tired, but some hot coffee, a warm bed and she's doing fine this morning. And I hear her husband Ross made it home safely, pulling his eighteen-wheeler in just a bit ago. We now open our lines if you'd like to send Holiday wishes to any of our listeners.

(Noticing the phone line lighting up.)

B. J.

Whoa, you folks are fast. We have a caller.

(HE answers the call.)

B.J.

WKID, good morning to you. Who would you like to send Christmas wishes to?

BOONE

(Sounding angry)

I'd like to make a correction to a report you made yesterday, B. J.

B. J.

Mr. Boone?

BOONE

That's right. You reported I'd be out today repossessing cars. Well . . . that is entirely false and I'm gonna sue WKID for making such a statement!

(Pause – B. J. is stunned.)

B. J.

Mr. . . . Mr. Boone . . . I . . .

BOONE

I'm joking! *(Laughs)* This is the W-KID ain't it? *(Laughs)* Fer all you folks out there behind on payments, I want you to know you don't have another payment until . . . March! And come down and see me after New Year's and we'll refinance your loan. How about . . . 15.9%? *(Pause)* Just kidding! *(Laughs)* Who'd ever thought I'd be a kidder? *(Laughs)* Folks, come on down by January 3rd and I'll give you a new, honest and fair . . . 3.9% loan. Now that's for old and new customers.

B. J.

Does that mean I can refinance Mr. Boone?

BOONE

Sure does. *(Serious)* However, there's a catch.

B. J.

Uh huh . . . a catch. And what might that be?

BOONE

I want to sing a duet . . . with Anna Sue Bailey at the Community Hall *tonight*. And I'd like to invite everyone to come hear it.

B. J.

Really?

BOONE

Really. And I'd like WKID to broadcast it live.

(Pause. There is not an immediate response from B.J.)

Refreshments will be provided.

B. J.

Well, in that case . . . and what would you like to sing?

BOONE

A Christmas song I wrote.

B. J.

A Christmas song? . . . You wrote? Ohhh . . . K. I guess that can be arranged.

BOONE

Good. You'll talk to Anna Sue and get her in contact with me?

B. J.

Sure, I'll do that.

BOONE

7:30 sound good?

B. J.

Uh, sure.

BOONE

Good. Talk it up. I'd like a lot of people there.

B. J.

We'll do our best to get folks out there, but Mr. Boone, it's Christmas after all.

BOONE

B. J., aren't you just a bit curious?

B. J.

Yes sir, I guess I am.

BOONE

Well, they will be too.

B. J.

I see your point.

BOONE

Excellent. Merry Christmas to everybody and a special shout out to the Jackson and Bailey families. Oh, one more thing . . . If my favorite “L and L” girls are listening, call that fella you told me about and tell him to come see me. I could use some help at the dealership.

(BOONE hangs up. HE finishes dressing.)

B. J.

Well folks, you heard it here on the W-KID, but we’re not kidding. Come on down to the Community Hall this evening at 7:30 for what I am sure will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Now, let’s start the hour off with a Christmas classic guaranteed to make you smile.

A traditional Christmas instrumental softly plays under the dialogue. BOONE calls the station again. They are not on the air.

B. J.

Merry Christmas, WKID.

BOONE

B. J. it’s me again.

B. J.

Yes, sir. What can I do for you?

BOONE

Did ya ever get those presents delivered to those needy kids?

B. J.

No, but how did you know . . . ?

BOONE

Long story. How about ya stop down to the dealership after work and we’ll fill up one of my 4x4’s with the presents and get them delivered pronto?

B. J.

Uh, OK. See you ‘bout one-o’clock?

BOONE

How many families?

B. J.

Fifty-four.

BOONE

Whoa . . . that's a lot of presents.

B. J.

Yes it is. We have a lot needy folks in town.

BOONE

I'll grab a Suburban. See you at 1pm.

(BOONE hangs up. Picks it up and dials again – another number)

B. J.

(Stunned. Slowly hangs up the phone.)

Bye.

LIGHTS FADE IN THE CONTROL ROOM but remain on BOONE in his bedroom.

BOONE

Hello Henry. Lucas here. *(Beat)* Boone. *(Pause)*. Yes, my first name is Lucas. *(Beat)* Henry, quit laughing. It's a good name. *(Beat.)* I'm calling because I need fifty-four turkeys. Yeah, today. Hmm . . . how are you on ham? OK, I want your best meat. Turkey, ham, and if you run out of that grab some steaks. Your best, you hear. And all the fixin's – taters, dressing, lots of buns. Oh, and no cranberries. Deliver what you got down to the dealership pronto by one o'clock. I'll make it worth your while. And Henry, Merry Christmas.

(HE hangs up and dances. HE is one happy fellow.)

I'm happier than a tick on a fat pig!

LIGHTS FADE. We hear the sound of a clock ticking as a few hours have passed.

B. J. (V.O.)

Good afternoon everybody! This is B. J. your Merry Christmas D.J.! Thank you to the many generous folks in town that helped make this a pretty special Christmas for a lot of youngsters out there. And I trust my bowling buddies are 'bout ready to bust a gut after what I am sure was a top-notch, A-1 prepared Christmas dinner in their household. My beautiful fiancée, Anna Sue, brought down my favorite ice-box desert for me just a bit ago and all I can say is Mmmm, Mmmm...! It's been a storybook Christmas so far and I'm here to tell you it just got better. Ross Jackson called and said an anonymous donor just made it possible for his son, little Timmy, to get the care he needs, all expenses paid. And Ross and his wife Bobbie want to pass on their heartfelt thanks to that very special person, as do all of us down here at WKID.

Brief musical transition into Scene 6.

ACT 2 / SCENE 6

Lights rise. A microphone is down center. The Opry backdrop is in, perhaps with some holiday decorations added. The audience serve as community members. The JACKSON and BAILEY FAMILIES and L & L LADIES are present as are JAKE, CARTER, MILLIE and JOHNNY. BOONE and ANNA SUE are also onstage. B. J. steps up to the microphone.

B. J.

Welcome everyone to our very own Opry, broadcasting live and remote from WKID.
I'm B. J. your . . .

(B.J. holds his hand up to his ear as ANNA SUE holds up a sign inviting the audience & others on stage to join in with the following.)

ANNA SUE & AUDIENCE:

. . . HANDSOME DJ!!!!

B.J.

And tonight, I promise we'll see something special. Now, every big act needs a great opening act. And we have just the thing. Please give a big hand for our very own . . .

_____!

[NOTE: Each producing theatre company may insert their own unique hometown specialty act appropriate to this moment in the show. It may be music, magic, dance or comedy. It's important to have an act that gives this moment a lift in terms of rhythm and energy. It may also help at the box office.]

B. J.

How about that?

(B.J. leads the audience in applause. To the SPECIALTY ACT)

Thank you folks. Y'all were great!

(B. J. crosses to MR. BOONE.)

Uh, I need to announce Anna Sue first.

BOONE

Or else you'll be in hot water, right?

B. J.

Right. How do you know that?

BOONE

Freaky ain't it? *(Smiles)*

B. J.

Yes, it is.

(B. J. at the microphone.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, are y'all ready for a treat?!

Assume there will be a response. Repeat the question if you desire to really get the audience pumped up.

B. J.

Well then, please give a big hometown welcome for Miss Anna Sue Bailey!

Applause from characters on stage, including the "VISITORS", and the audience as B. J. encourages it – like the Opry hosts of the past. ANNA SUE steps forward.

And of course . . . *(with lesser enthusiasm)* Mr. Boone.

Dead silence or perhaps a scattering of applause. BOONE steps forward.

Well sir, the mic is yours.

BOONE

(BOONE steps to the microphone. Hesitant.)

I uh . . . I want to thank all you folks for coming out here this evening. Particularly on short notice. It's always been my dream to sing at the Grand Ole Opry. But for Jake Bailey, there were more important things in life. Well, when he came home years ago he tried to teach me the Opry could be wherever we wanted it to be as long as we were around good people, family and friends . . . like his wife, Mary . . . and Bobbie Jackson over there. It's good to see you Bobbie.

BOBBIE is a little surprised at the acknowledgement, but nods to MR. BOONE and smiles.)

Now Bobbie, I can't give you your keys back. *(Beat)* But, I've been thinking. Without you I'd a lost that dealership years ago. How would you like to be a Sales Associate?

BOBBIE

(Rather stunned as is everyone else.)

An Associate?

BOONE

Yep!

BOBBIE

Uh...yes sir. I'd like that very much.

BOONE

Best thing about being a salesma . . . uh, woman, is you get to drive a car of your choice – for free. So, you'll need some new keys! *(BOONE tosses BOBBIE a set of car keys. HE engages the audience.)* And how about a raise for Bobbie Jackson?!!

BOBBIE

Thank you Mr. Boone!

(Beat. To the audience.)

BOONE

It's taken me awhile to figure out exactly what Jake was saying when he came back to town. I can be a little hard-headed sometimes, but I think I finally got it. This song is dedicated to the best friend I ever had, Jake Bailey, and to you folks, the ones that make our town so special. I also want to thank Anna Sue for teaming up with me this evening. She's pretty brave ain't she? I hope you enjoy it. It's called "Storybook Christmas."

(ANNA SUE steps up to the mic with BOONE.)

STORYBOOK CHRISTMAS

BOONE

IF YOU LISTEN CLOSE YOU CAN HEAR
JINGLE BELLS THROUGHOUT OUR TOWN

ANNA SUE

AND THE BIGGEST SNOWFLAKES YOU'LL EVER SEE
FALL GENTLY TO THE GROUND
AND ON A COLD CLEAR FULL-MOON NIGHT
IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR TOWN SQUARE

BOONE

WE DECORATE AN EVERGREEN
RISING THIRTY-FEET IN THE AIR
WE TRIM THE TREE WITH ORNAMENTS
AND HAND-MADE POPCORN CHAINS

ANNA SUE
 BRIGHT RED BOWS, COLORED LIGHTS
 AND OVERSIZED CANDY CANES

BOONE
 WE GENTLY PLACE A TWINKLING STAR
 AT THE VERY TOP

ANNA SUE
 AND PLACE BEAUTIFULLY WRAPPED CHRISTMAS GIFTS
 FROM SARAH JANE'S GIFT SHOP

BOONE & ANNA SUE
 WREATHS HANG ON THE GAZEBO
 NEARBY CHURCH BELLS RING
 CAROLERS FILL THE NIGHT WITH SONG
 WELCOMING ALL AROUND TO SING

IT'S THE KIND OF STORYBOOK CHRISTMAS
 WE READ TO OUR KIDS AT NIGHT
 PICTURE PERFECT NORMAN ROCKWELL
 PAINTED WITH CANDLE LIGHT

BOONE
 TRADITION CALLS FOR A PARADE
 LED BY SANTA CLAUS
 THE HIGH SCHOOL BAND STEPS IN TIME
 AND IS GREETED WITH APPLAUSE

ANNA SUE
 SNOW FALLS SOFT AS COTTON
 MIDNIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE
 STARS DANCE IN THE MOONLIGHT
 IT'S ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BELIEVE

BOONE AND ANNA SUE
 WREATHS HANG ON THE GAZEBO
 NEARBY CHURCH BELLS RING
 CAROLERS FILL THE NIGHT WITH SONG
 WELCOMING ALL AROUND TO SING
 IT'S THE KIND OF STORYBOOK CHRISTMAS
 WE READ TO OUR KIDS AT NIGHT
 PICTURE PERFECT NORMAN ROCKWELL
 PAINTED WITH CANDLE LIGHT
 PICTURE PERFECT NORMAN ROCKWELL
 PAINTED WITH CANDLE LIGHT

ALL on stage applaud. It's assumed the audience will as well. BOONE is obviously touched by the response.

ANNA SUE

Mr. Boone . . .

BOONE

Please, call me Luke. That's what your daddy use to call me.

JANIE LYNN

Mr. Luke . . . B. J., that *very handsome* DJ and I will be getting married in the near future. And since daddy's not here to walk me down the aisle . . . I was wondering if you would?

BOONE

It would be my honor.

HE is really touched. SHE gives him a hug.

CARTER, MILLIE and JOHNNY all notice. They all smile including JAKE.

At this moment (if possible), the "burden" JAKE has been carrying for so many years slowly "flies" up and away. JAKE feels the burden lifted. CARTER, MILLIE and JOHNNY all notice it. They all smile including JAKE BAILEY.

ANNA SUE (*sings*)

WREATHS HANG ON THE GAZEBO
NEARBY CHURCH BELLS RING

(Church bells do ring.)

ANNA SUE & BOONE

CAROLERS FILL THE NIGHT WITH SONG
WELCOMING ALL AROUND TO SING

ALL (*sing*)

IT'S THE KIND OF STORYBOOK CHRISTMAS
WE READ TO OUR KIDS AT NIGHT
PICTURE PERFECT NORMAN ROCKWELL
PAINTED WITH CANDLE LIGHT

ANNA SUE & BOONE
PICTURE PERFECT NORMAN ROCKWELL
PAINTED WITH CANDLE LIGHT

B. J.
(Stepping forward to the mic.)

Live from our very own Opry . . .

ALL
MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU
HAPPY HOLIDAYS, BEST WISHES, HAPPY SOLSTICE TO YOU
MAY LAUGHTER FILL YOUR HEART AND CHARITY LIFT YOUR SOUL
MAY YOU FIND YOURSELF WITH SOMEONE DEAR UNDER A MISTLETOE
MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS, MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU
MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO YOU, MR. BOONE!

Merry Christmas!!

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END