

*A Play About Three Women Written by Four Men
Or Stick 'em in the Milking Machine Boys*

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Characters:

Tempestuous and bitchy teenage girl: Annie

A 20 something: still fertile: Beth

A 30 something: Still fertile: Cajun Cathy

Annie: Snowing in July. I can't believe this is my life!

Beth: I believe it's November

Annie: It is SO July.

Beth: And how do you know dear?

Annie: I've been counting the moons.

Beth: You can't see the moon dear. Or the sun for that matter.

Annie: I count every time I go to sleep

Beth: Well the way you sleep, dear, you snoozed right through July and now its November.

Annie: I have a keen biological clock.

Beth: And what does your biological clock tell you?

Annie: That's its July. And that I'm about two years away from wanting to have a baby.

Beth: Its November, and you probably want one already.

Annie (Looks around the room) Where's my book?

Beth: What book dear?

Annie: The one Aunt Cathy gave me for Christmas.

Beth: I think it's *Cajun* Cathy now.

Annie: You have got to be kidding.

Beth: She thinks it sounds more fun that way.

Annie searches frantically.

Annie (bitchy and tempestuous) But where the hell is my book, my Sylvia Plath book. What she wouldn't give to live in our world!

Beth: She would want to live in our world?

Annie: A world without men. Just us. Just women.

Beth: Men weren't all that bad, dear. *(This is said with distinct and lucid sexual overtones)*

Annie: Yes they were. They did this! (gestures out the window.) They blew themselves us, and took the rest of the world with them, the brutes.

Beth: Annie, men may have been violent and brutal and cruel. We all knew that. Before the war men settled their conflicts by killing each other with guns and grenades. But women used to settle disputes by wrestling in the mud. Even then we were more civilized than our menfolk. But nature put a little spark in our hearts that made us love them despite their cruelty. You would have known this if you'd been old enough to know men.

Annie: You are full of it today, aren't you. You've been cooped up in here too long. I'm glad I never knew men, you know, ah, er, eh, ah, er romantically.

Beth: You'd be surprised dear. It was refreshing to be with your manfriend. You didn't have to sit around all day and talk about feelings.

Annie: Didn't it bother you getting objectified all the time?

Beth: Better to be looked over than overlooked.

Annie: It's far better to be the subject of the sentence than the object.

Beth: Not if the verb is worship.

Annie: What if the verb is ravish?

Beth: What if the verb is love?

Annie: What if the verb is objectify?

Beth: I don't feel like worrying my silly little head about this anymore.

Annie: You have the cabin fever. But that's what happens when it snows in July.

Beth: Its November!

Cathy: (Bursting in vigilantly, with her arms full of presents, all of them wrapped in dirty newspaper.) It's Christmas. Merry Christmas! Joy to the World! Yaaaaay!

Annie (rolling eyes): It can't be Christmas. It's fucking July. Besides, we celebrated Christmas, like, two weeks ago.

Beth: Now Annie, I'm sure Cathy has worked very hard to make this an extra special Christmas.

Cathy: Let me put them down right here. Now we can't open them up now—we have to wait! Good things come to those who wait! No peeking or shaking. You'll know what Santa brought you soon enough.

Annie: You expect me to believe in Santa?

Cathy: Every good little girlie should believe in Santa!

Annie: Santa is dead! The radiation killed him! The blast threw the sizzled elfin bodies to the four scorching winds and then rained them down on the depleted Earth as nuclear dust, the heat of the bomb blast melted what was left of the North Pole! The only thing believable any more is Rudolf's glowing, radioactive nose!

Cathy is on the verge of tears, not sure what to do with the presents.

Beth: Hush Annie. *Crossing to Cathy.* I think Christmas is a wonderful idea! Every time we have it. Now where should we put these...

Cathy: Don't you see, girl? If not for Christmas, what do we have?

Beth: Christmas means being happy, let's try to be happy OK?

Cathy: Girl, you dwell on how bad things are. But you see, that's the beauty of Christmas. No matter how bad things get, Christmas is above all of that. Its one of those special moments were nothing matters but the spirit of Christmas, that simple spirit of joy that is the Yuletide season. Christmas trumps war, trumps death, trumps to selfishness of man, because it is one day that unites all of humanity. (She puts her arms around Annie and Beth, the only remaining human beings on the planet). Now, girls, lets go decorate!

Annie: No! And lose that phony Cajun accent! It's worse than when you pretended to be Irish. (Cathy does lose accent.)

Cathy: Tinsel and holly for everyone! (She tosses tinsel into Annie's hair.)
I'll get the lights!

Annie: NO!

Beth: (Takes Annie aside) Annie, I want you to think about Aunty Cathy. I mean Cajun Cathy. We need her to cheer us up.

Annie: She makes me feel totally lame-O.

Beth: Well, maybe some young lady needs and attitude adjustment.

Cathy: And we shouldn't forget the most important part of Christmas, the little baby Jesus.

Annie: Great, they dropped the A-Bomb, and now she's about to drop the J-bomb.

Cathy: Think of the miracle, girls, a little babe born off in some far corner of the Roman empire, in the dead of winter, in a manger, with a cow for his midwife, a goose as the obstetrician and a goat as the gynecologist. And this baby was destined to save the world, to bear all of our sins on his back and save all of humanity from our own wickedness.

Annie: Goddamn it! Don't you understand! The apocalypse has happened, and you got left behind!

Beth: Annie!

Cathy: You must have faith child! I haven't gotten to the real miracle yet.

Annie: What is that?

Cathy: It was a virgin birth! Parthenogenesis! Now if you ask me, that's the way of the future!

Beth: She doesn't remember Christmas. She doesn't remember how beautiful it could be.

Annie: Yes I do. It wasn't like you pulled me as a baby out of a bomb crater. I remember Christmas. All I remember was my Tickle-Me Elmo, my Polly Pee-Pee pants, my Pokeman, my talking Furby, my hokey-pokey Elmo, my Gigapet,.... all I remember is shit. Shit shit shit. You think I wanted all of this shit? And we called it Christmas. It was a farce.

Beth: Now Cathy, (teasingly) I think Annie is playing the role of the Grinch. Every Christmas needs a grinch, right?

Cathy: Awww, is someone's heart two sizes too small. You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch.
(*Cathy laughs amused by her own antics.*)

Annie: Well, Bah, hum, bug. You two have fun decorating! (Throws "decorations" up in the air. Sarcasically.) I'll spend this Christmas reading my book. (Exits.)

Beth: *Picks up paper decoration.* Oh, don't pay her any attention. She doesn't mean any harm. We can make a wonderful Christmas and she can join us when she's ready.

Cathy: I just wish she wouldn't deflate everything I try to do. She doesn't know what Christmas's all about.

Beth: It's true that we don't have much, but at least we've got each other.

Cathy: Well honey that might work if we were all lesbians. But as it is, we're four feathers short of a cock. Besides, we're together all the time. It's not like we can leave this house. *Crossing to window.* We need Christmas to break up these days that lie in eternal haze.

Beth: (sensitive to Cathy's mood) I think that's a great idea. And what have you been wanting this year Cathy? You have to tell me early so that I can beat the holiday crowds you know.

Cathy: Well I don't know I always liked that little whatchamacallit that you get me every year for Christmas.

Beth: *smiling* Oh that old thing, you get that every year. Aren't you tired of it yet?

Cathy: No, it's the sweetest thing.

Beth: No really, if you could have anything in the world.

Cathy: But there ain't exactly a whole lot left in the world.

Beth: No! Anything, if you could wish upon a star...

Cathy: Well, isn't it obvious.

Beth: What? A man?

Cathy: No, ten of 'em.

Beth: A harem of men!

Cathy: A barbarian hoard!

Beth: Good luck with that (winkingly). Sometimes I wish one would walk in here, throw down his rifle, rip off his gas mask, pull off his radiation suit, decontaminate himself for biological agents, and then, finally, gloriously yell, “Do with me what you will, woman!” Or maybe---

Cathy: (Cathy hasn't been listening to Beth's lusty fantasies. Rather, she inspects the blanket that Cathy has been knitting) What about that blanket you're knitting. I sure wouldn't mind getting that for Christmas. (wink wink, elbow, wink)

Beth: Well, it's much too narrow for you. And it isn't finished yet. Just wait, wait until next Christmas. We'll see then.

Cathy: That's what you said last Christmas.

Beth: (*sharply*) Yes, but you made last Christmas three weeks ago, so I haven't had much time to finish, have I?

Cathy: All right, all right, I'm sorry. You don't have to get all huffy-puffy fussy.

(*Annie returns*)

Annie: Well I searched this whole house, even the parts with dangerously high levels of radiation, and I couldn't find my book anywhere. Have any of you seen it?

Beth: I haven't seen it. You can't read Plath on Christmas. She didn't have the Christmas spirit.

Annie: Are you *still* decorating? You are sooooo stupid. (*looking out window.*)

Cathy: The fun part is putting it all up, although I always hate tearing it down.

Annie: You know what I used to hate about Christmas? The crowds---wait! Don't have to worry about those anymore! And the traffic, I hated the traffic---ooh, that's all gone too! And the petty materialism---gone, gone, gone, cleansed by nuclear fire.

My favorite part of Christmas was the snow. Wait! It's snowing now! It snows all the time! Its like everyday is Christmas! Even in July!

Starts to sing: I'm dreaming of a white Christmas, just like the ones I used to know---

Cathy: (*reminded*) Ooh! Carols! Wouldn't that be fun!

Annie: Don't you get it! There is nothing special about this day. Or about any other Christmas. It was just another day that humanity passed, naively marching, day by day, towards their doom!

Beth: She's just brooding cause she doesn't have a boyfriend. She's just sexually frustrated.

Annie: I am not sexually frustrated. I have transcended such base realities of rutting.

Beth: Oh God.

Cathy: Lets not fight on Christmas girls. Why don't we sing some Christmas Carols. Come Annie, what was your favorite carol? I'm taking requests.

Beth: Deck the Halls

Cathy: Deck the Halls with boughs of holly...(she continues singing it)

Annie (interrupting and interjection): Grandma got run over by reindeer!

Beth: I've had enough of your negativity. If you can't say anything nice, why don't you step outside!

Annie walks to the front door dramatically, which is barred by a two by four. She gestures to the two by four. Beth, admitting that Annie can't go outside, now moves towards her in a reconciliatory fashion.

Beth: Sorry, I keep forgetting... Annie (takes Annie aside for a secret conversation.) (Cathy continues to sing in the background, softly. She sings Silent Night.)

Beth: Annie, we need to get a Christmas present for Cathy. I was caught with my britches down when she announced that today was Christmas. What should we get her?

Annie: The paperweight?

Beth: We got that for her last time. How about the tin can?

Annie: I think she already wrapped that one for you?

Beth: What about the screwdriver? I don't think we ever gave her that?

Annie: Sure, lets get her that. She hasn't gotten that for a while.

Beth: I'll go wrap it up. (Exit Beth)

Annie: Well, here you are. It's Christmas. The world has been annihilated. All the men are dead. Most of the women too. It's the end, there is no hope.

Cathy: That's what you don't understand about Christmas. Its not a holiday about materialism, or even the subtle beauty of the snow. It's a moment of hope. The pagans on the solstice hoped for spring, for the days growing longer. The Magi in the desert saw the

star and hoped for Christ, for the birth of the child who would save the world. Strip everything away from Christmas, and that's all you have, a simple moment of pure, unadulterated hope. And that's why we need Christmas, us especially, us who have no hope.

Annie: Wow, that was like, totally spiritual. If only my teenage soul wasn't two sizes too small.

Cathy: Well, what the hell do you want me to say?

Beth: *Entering.* I think we're all ready for gifts!

Cathy: *Perking up.* Great! Gifts! Not the most important part of Christmas, but the funnest! Yay! *Squeals with joy.*

Annie: Great, shit wrapped in newspaper, along with the intangible gift of hope.

Cathy puts on a Santa hat and distributes the gifts, ho, ho ,hoing with glee. They gleefully tear into their gifts. Beth gets a paperweight, that is really just a dirty root beer bottle. Cathy gets a screwdriver. And Annie gets her copy of Sylvia Plath.

Beth: Ohh, I haven't gotten this one in a while.

Cathy: Yay a screwdriver! How original. And a Phillips head too!

Annie: Well that's where this has been.

Cathy (To Annie): I knew that was what you wanted.

Annie: Yes, I've been looking for it for the past five hours.

Cathy: I hesitated to give it to you, since all just a lot of angry man-hating. I swear girl, you're the only person here who doesn't want a man for Christmas.

Annie: I prefer my freedom. I'd rather live in the radioactive dust than get dominated by a man like poor Sylvia Plath.

Cathy: These are all lovely gifts.

Annie: Yeah, something I already had. I got my book from Cathy—but I didn't get anything from Beth.

Cathy: Maybe we should talk about our feelings a bit.

Beth: Well what do you want, if you wished upon a glowing nuclear ember, suspended in the thermosphere, what would want?

Annie: Something different. Something I've never gotten before. Maybe something *no one* has ever gotten before. (She crosses to the blanket on the couch, with the knitting needles still in it.) Something made just for me, new and fresh and all mine.

Cathy: (Seeing what Annie wants) Not the blanket! Beth promised it to me!

Beth (defensively) I did nothing of the sort.

Cathy: Yes you did! You said I could have it next Christmas.

Annie: *concurrently with above line.* So you can give it to me!

Beth: Not to you either. None of you can have it!

Annie: Don't be selfish!

Cathy: Don't listen to her! Give it to me.

(They come to blows)

Annie: Ow, don't hit me. I'm a living thing too!

Beth: Stop it! Stop it! (She smacks them both.) The world has had enough pain.

Cathy: To bad all the mud is glowing right now, otherwise we'd settle this the old fashioned way, bitch!

Annie: Don't call me that, you hussy

Beth: Girls!

Cathy: You cow

Annie: You she-goat!

Beth: Girls, stop being so mean.

Cathy: Fine, keep it for yourself!

Beth: Its not for me!

Annie: Well if its not for us and its not for you, who else in the world is it for?

Beth: *Cradling in a maternal fashion.* It's a baby blanket.

Cathy: What?

Beth: It's a baby blanket. *Pause* I made it...just in case. *Folding it carefully.*

Annie: Hope.

Cathy: The Magi see a star in the desert, and trek across the abyss.

Beth: That is what Christmas is all about.

Annie: A moment of hope in the season of cold death.

They sing:

We three kings of orient are
Bearing gifts we travel afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain
Following yonder star.

Lights go down. Exeunt all.

Finis