

**PERUSAL SCRIPT**

# **YULETIDE**

by

**Matthew Ivan Bennett**

based on stories by O. Henry, Hans Christian Andersen, and French/German folklore

Episode 9 in the **RADIO HOUR** Series



Newport, Maine

© 2016 by Matthew Ivan Bennett  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION:

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that

## **YULETIDE**

being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States Of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion Of Canada, and the other countries of the Copyright Union, is subject to royalty. Anyone presenting the play without the express written permission of the Copyright owners and/or their authorized agent will be liable to the penalties provided by law.

**Script and music copies must be rented from the Publisher and Royalty must be paid to the publisher for each and every performance before an audience whether or not admission is charged. A performance license must first be obtained from the publisher prior to any performance(s).**

Federal Copyright Law -- 17 U.S.C. section 504 -- allows for a recovery of a minimum of \$250 and a maximum of \$50,000 *for each infringement*, plus attorney fees.

The professional and amateur rights to the performance of this play along with the lecturing, recitation, and public reading rights, are administered exclusively through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be made. For all other rights, inquiries may be made to the authors through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS. Any adaptation or arrangement of this work without the author's written permission is an infringement of copyright. **Unauthorized duplication by any means is also an infringement.**

**FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCE RIGHTS YOU MUST APPLY TO THE PUBLISHER OR YOU ARE BREAKING THE LAW!**

The possession of this PERUSAL SCRIPT, does not constitute permission to perform the work herein contained, in public or in private, for gain or charity. Proper prior application must be made, license granted and royalty paid before a performance may be given. Copies of this SCRIPT and all other rehearsal materials may be rented from:

LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS  
P.O. Box 536 Newport, ME 04953-0536  
[www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com](http://www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com)  
Printed in the United States Of America

THIS NOTICE MUST APPEAR IN ALL PROGRAMS, ON ALL POSTERS AND PUBLICITY MATERIALS AND INTERNET ADVERTISING/WEBPAGES FOR THE PLAY:

*"Yuletide" is presented through special arrangement with Leicester Bay Theatricals. All authorized materials are also supplied by LBT, [www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com](http://www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com)*

NOTE: Your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals limits you to making copies of this document for persons directly connected with your production. Do not distribute outside of your cast and crew. Following your performance run you must destroy all photocopies, preferably by shredding them. If we sent you the document in printed format, you must return that document to us. If we provided you with an electronic PDF file, simply trash that on your computer so that it cannot be recovered. The electronic document may only be on ONE computer -- it may NOT be duplicated. This is also a part of your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS —

### *The Gift of the Magi - 1F 2M (no doubling)*

O. Henry - Narrator  
Della - A young newlywed woman  
Jim - A young newlywed man

### *The Little Match Girl - 1girl 1boy 4M 1F 1 either M or F (can be doubled to 3 performers)*

Match Girl (girl)  
Describer (M or F) Narrator  
Revelers - Can be played by all listed characters except GIRL  
Driver (M) - a man in a hurry  
Urchin (boy) - A homeless boy  
Boozer (M) - A homeless man  
Father (M) - An abusive father  
Grandmother (F) - A kindly matron  
Gentleman Passing (M) - A concerned citizen  
ACTOR 1 — Revelers/Urchin/Boozer/Father/Gentleman Passing  
ACTOR 2 — Grandmother and Match Girl  
ACTOR 3 — Describer, Driver and others as needed

### *The Black Knight - 1F 4M(including 1 boy) (Doubling may be possible, if needed)*

Adeline Meyer (F) - A dedicated mother  
Jacob Grimm (M) - Of the Brothers Grimm. Collecting the story of *The Black Knight*  
Edsel Meyer (M) - A spiteful and petty man  
Con Meyer (boy) - A sensitive child  
Hans Trapp (M) - A supernatural evil being; a demon

### **Period Costumes or contemporary clothes**

### **Radio Station setting** (or full stage setting)

### **Sound Effects required** (can be Foley, recorded, or a mix of both. Music required.)

### **DISCLAIMER:**

The options to fully stage or to stage for radio is left to the producer. The option to simulcast from the live performance on radio, or to record the performance for later broadcast must be specified in your licensing agreement with Leicester Bay Theatricals, and if EQUITY actors are used must be approved by EQUITY. A fully staged play may not be broadcast without Virtual Licensing Rights, which must also be obtained from the publisher, with permission from EQUITY.

**YULETIDE** by Matthew Ivan Bennett Episode 9 in the RADIO HOUR Series. 3-5 performers can double the roles. Period Costumes or contemporary clothes. Radio Station setting. SFX essential. Staged Radio Drama, Radio Broadcast, Fully-Staged Production, or Virtual Theatre. 53 minutes. Celebrate the Holidays, with three stories. The first two are family-friendly classics: "*The Gift of the Magi*," originally published in 1905, it is a straightforward adaptation of the beloved classic adapted for radio. It's the story of a young couple - a man and wife each willing to make deep sacrifices, to show their love at Christmas by giving the perfect Christmas gift to the other. *The Little Match Girl* is a short lyrical adaptation of the tragic and moving holiday story by Hans Christian Andersen. A girl in desperate straits tries to make money for her family by selling matches on the street in wintertime. When you have nothing, where do you turn for warmth and comfort? The Match Girl strikes a match and in the brief flicker of the flame, she sees her fondest dreams. The last one, though, is a deliciously dark thriller for the holidays, *The Black Knight* recounts the French/German legend of the demon Hans Trapp, charged with punishing the wicked at Christmas. The very dark "Knight" has some mild language and intense and verbally-gory situations not recommended for children. YULETIDE was a co-production between Salt Lake City's Plan-B Theatre Company and the University of Utah's Public Radio station KUER's Radio West. **ORDER #3243**

**MATTHEW IVAN BENNETT** is a resident of Plan-B Theatre, listed by American Theater magazine as one of 14 companies nationwide exemplifying social action and civic engagement. At Plan-B, he's premiered several stage and radio plays, including an adaptation of "*Frankenstein*" that won a Utah Broadcasters Association award, and "*Eric(a)*"—which won Best Drama at the United Solo festival in New York. He received the Holland New Voices award from the Great Plains Theatre Commons, has twice been a finalist in screenwriting at Austin Film Festival, and in 2016 was an O'Neill finalist. His short plays have appeared at Chicago's Circle Theatre, Rising Sun in New York, Monkeyman in Toronto, and the Source Festival in DC. Matt is a member of the Dramatists' Guild.

## YULETIDE

### PART 1: THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

**F/X:** *Coins being counted.*

**O. HENRY:** *(narrating throughout)* One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas. There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl.

*(DELLA howling)*

**F/X:** *Flopping.*

So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs—

*(DELLA sobbing)*

Sniffles—

*(DELLA sniffing)*

And smiles—

*(DELLA becomes manic)*

With sniffles predominating.

*(DELLA weeps)*

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at eight dollars per week. A floorboard that squeaked.

**F/X:** *Wood creaking.*

A radiator that banged as if part of a parade.

**F/X:** *Radiator knocking.*

A letter-box into which no letter would go—

**F/X:** *Rusty letter-box...*

An electric doorbell from which no mortal finger could coax a ring.

**F/X:** *Dead button...*

Also, notice the card there, bearing the name “Mr. James Dillingham Young”? The “Dillingham” was flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid thirty dollars per week. Now, with the income shrunk to twenty dollars, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming mideponymous “D.”

**F/X:** *Door; Footsteps. (all in memory)*

But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called—

**DELLA:** *(in memory)* Jim! *(tackling him; kissing him repeatedly: mwah, mwah, mwah)*

**O. HENRY:** And greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

*(DELLA composing herself)*

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag.

**F/X:** *Makeup (powdering); Motor car passing (faint.)*

She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray background. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only one eighty-seven to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him.

**DELLA:** Hmm...

**O. HENRY:** Something fine and rare and sterling—something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim. There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an eight-dollar flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art

*(DELLA issues a sigh of resolve)*

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

**F/X:** *Hair falling (surreal)*

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride.

**F/X:** *Ticking...*

One was Jim's gold watch, which had been his father's—

**F/X:** *Ticking (louder)...*

And grandfather's.

**F/X:** *Ticking (even louder)...*

The other was Della's hair.

**F/X:** *Hair brushing...*

Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor with a silver mop—

**F/X:** *Mopping... (fantasy)*

All his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed—

**F/X:** *Pocket watch.*

Just to see him pluck at his beard from envy. So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her.

**F/X:** *Hair wrapping...*

And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute—

*(DELLA whimpering)*

And stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet. On went her old brown jacket—

**F/X:** *Jacket...*

On went her old brown hat.

**F/X:** *Hat...*

With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

**F/X:** *Door; Stairs; Street (time passing.)*

Where she stopped the sign read:

**DELLA:** Madam Safronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds.

**F/X:** *Stairs.*

**O. HENRY:** One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting.

*(DELLA panting...)*

Madam, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the “Safronie.”

**DELLA:** Will you buy my hair?

**O. HENRY:** Asked Della. “I buy hair,” said Madame. “Take yer hat off and let’s have a sight at the looks of it.”

**F/X:** *Hair falling (surreal.)*

Down rippled the brown cascade. “Twenty dollars,” said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.

**DELLA:** Give it to me quick.

**O. HENRY:** Said Della.

**F/X:** *Scissors...*

*(DELLA sniffing...)*

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim’s present.

**F/X:** *Shop bell.*

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation—as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch.

**F/X:** *Ticking.*

As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim’s. It was like him. Quietness and value—the description applied to both.

**F/X:** *Cash register.*

Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the eighty-seven cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

**F/X:** *Door.*

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons—

**F/X:** *Drawer.*

And lighted the gas—

**F/X:** *Match; Gas pilot.*

And went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends—a mammoth task. Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

**DELLA:** If Jim doesn't kill me—

**O. HENRY:** She said to herself—

**DELLA:** Before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do—oh! What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?!

**THREE AND A HALF more pages to the end PART 1.**



**PART 2: THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL**

**F/X:** *Wind.*

*(GIRL is shivering, and vocalizing, throughout)*

**MUSIC**

**DESCRIBER:** Cold. A terrible, twilight cold.  
*(read like a stream of consciousness)*

**F/X:** *Footsteps in hardened slush.*

Snow on the cobblestones. The last evening of the year.  
*(REVELERS laughter from a barroom)*

Here, along the street, a little girl, bareheaded, slippers too large for her feet.  
Rounding the corner, a carriage, dreadfully fast.

**F/X:** *Carriage.*

*(GIRL lunges free)*

**DRIVER:** Watch yourself, you little brat!

**DESCRIBER:** Her slippers off in the mud and ice: one of them buried, nowhere; the other—

**URCHIN:** Ha ha ha ha: finders keepers!

**DESCRIBER:** A boy in rags, fingers grimy.

**GIRL:** Thief!

**F/X:** *Running.*

**URCHIN:** *(already in the distance)* Ha ha ha ha!

**DESCRIBER:** The tiny maiden, now with naked feet, toes red and heels blue in the frost.  
*(GIRL sniffing)*

There, inside her frayed old apron, a jumble of matchsticks. There, in her hand, a bundle of matches, the tips like holly berries. But men and women with coins? None; nobody, the whole livelong day, nobody; no shiny money in her pocket.

**F/X:** *Doors bolting, shop windows closing, carts wheeling off, etc....*

Not a penny, and the cobbler gone now. The tailor gone. The carts with meat pies all gone. Boozers in the alcoves.

**BOOZER:** *(with a bottle)* Hey, li'l girl. C'mere, sweetie.

**DESCRIBER:** Trembling, cold, hunger—a picture of sorrow.

**BOOZER:** *(behind her now)* I said c'mere!

**DESCRIBER:** Snowflakes on her long fair hair, hair in ringlets, icy wet on her neck; the girl too distracted to feel because—

*(GIRL with an inhale of delight)*

Oh the candles! The gleam behind glass. The smell! Roast goose? Yes. New Year's Eve.

**F/X:** *Piano within.*

*(GIRL hums along)*

**F/X:** *The wind gusts. The piano fades.*

That corner, formed by two houses, below the rich merchant's window.

*(GIRL rubs, and blows on, her hands)*

There, little feet drawn up close.

*(GIRL chattering)*

And yet the air, a kitchen knife, colder, colder, till thoughts of home—

**F/X:** *Boots.*

**FATHER:** *(her imagination; above her)* How much? ... I said, "How much"? ... Anything? ... Why're you shakin' so much? Huh?! Why. Are. You. Shak—?!

**DESCRIBER:** Not home. Not there. No matches sold. No money clinking in her pocket.

Besides, at home, only the roof, the cracks with straw, the wind shrieking.

**F/X:** *Wind in a crack (made louder by imagination.)*

Not home, here...in the corner...with...the matches! Oh, a match. A world of comfort. If only...if only a single one, out of the bundle, against the wall and—

**F/X:** *Matchstrike (slow and surreal.)*

Oh the blaze! Oh the warmth! The flame like sunset, so vivid. Her hands over the wondrous light, as though before a large iron stove with burnished brass feet, a brass ornament on top.

*(GIRL sighs)*

Fire. Fire. Burning. Blessing. The girl's feet stretching now, out, to feel the—

**F/X:** *The match goes out.*

Cold. The stove gone. A blast of wind. A charred little stick in her hand. Quick, another match, against the wall.

**F/X:** *Matchstrike (slow and surreal.)*

*(GIRL expresses relief)*

Light. The wall...transparent like a veil. A room beyond. A table. A snow-white cloth. Porcelain.

**F/X:** *Plates; Cups.*

A roast goose, steaming. A stuffing of apple and dried plums and cinnamon.

**F/X:** *The dead goose honks.*

The goose! Alive, a hop down from the dish, reeling about on the floor.

**F/X:** *Clatter.*

The knife and fork in its breast, a limp, a drag to the poor little girl when—

**F/X:** *The match goes out.*

Cold. The wall. Damp.

*(GIRL chattering)*

A match. A match.

**F/X:** *Matchstrike (slow and surreal.)*

*(GIRL expresses amazement)*

A Christmas tree, magnificent. A thousand candles on spring-green branches. The ornaments gaily-colored pictures, like the ones she'd seen in the shop windows—peacocks and angels, cardinals and mangers, sandy beaches, blue sleepy townships, bells, stars, the stars, higher and higher, the pine needles brushing the heavens. The girl, her fingers reaching, and then—

**F/X:** *Meteor (apocalyptic.)*

A star falls! A long blinding trail of fire! A memory: her old grandmother; the only love in her house ever.

**GRANDMOTHER:** *(in memory)* “When a star falls, a soul rises.”

**F/X:** *The match goes out.*

**ONE AND A HALF more pages to the end of PART 2.**

### **PART 3: THE BLACK KNIGHT**

*F/X: Teapot (whistling, then screaming—for a long beat before it's pulled away);  
Footsteps—with cane;  
Pouring;  
Hearth (in the background.)*

**ADELINE:** (*mid 50s*) You look like a sugar man. Sugar?

**JACOB:** (*late 20s*) Plain will be sufficient. Thank you.

**ADELINE:** It's no trouble. Despite the miserable character of my kitchen, I do very well for myself. I can afford sugar, Mr. Grimm.

**JACOB:** Well then, please, begin dispensing it.

*F/X: A heaping three spoonfuls; stirring.*

**ADELINE:** You seem young to be writing a book. Too many young people write books.

**JACOB:** You think so? Are you a very wide reader, Mrs. Meyer?

**ADELINE:** (*sitting; effort*) I read. But I doubt that I will turn your pages, Mr. Grimm.

**JACOB:** (*laughs*) Can you be so sure from two minutes with me?

**ADELINE:** I can be sure a man with boots as shiny as yours never set his mind on the common folk or what interests them.

**JACOB:** Your directness charms me, Mrs. Meyer, but I must contradict you: I came here in pursuit of the folk and I daresay my book will interest you in a way you may not expect. For *you* could be one of its authors.

**ADELINE:** Me.

**JACOB:** Yes indeed. Strictly speaking, *I* am not writing a book, Madame. Only editing one. (*she grunts*) You see, I'm collecting household tales, fairy stories—for the nursery, and for grown-ups. We—my brother and I—are reconnecting the folk to their lore. So much has been lost, you know. But with the assistance of fabulists like you, we can restore for all of Germany—

**ADELINE:** “Fabulists”?

**JACOB:** Storytellers. Anecdotists. Raconteurs.

**ADELINE:** Who told you I was anything of the kind? Was it Mr. Schmidt? Were you down at the pub before your evening meal, sir?

**JACOB:** Yes, I often stop in alehouses—

**ADELINE:** Do you?

**JACOB:** To track down the local talents. He said you had a wonderfully complete version of “The Black Knight.”

**ADELINE:** Did he now.

**JACOB:** He did—he suggested, in fact, I would root out no finer teller of the tale.

**ADELINE:** —Get out.

**JACOB:** I beg pardon?

**ADELINE:** Leave here.

**JACOB:** Ah, he did indicate you might be unwilling. Now am I prepared to pay—

*F/X: Fist on the table.*

**ADELINE:** I am not unwilling, Mr. Grimm; I am furious. My story is not for sale and it does not belong in a fancy pack of fairy stories. Tell that to Mr. Schmidt.

**JACOB:** —But you do know a variant of “The Black Knight”?

**ADELINE:** Are you in on it?! Did they sic you on me?

**JACOB:** Madam, I am genuine. I came only for the story.

**ADELINE:** Hans Trapp is no story! He’s blood and bone!

*(Beat: JACOB laughs...)*

*F/X: She breaks a cup.*

**JACOB:** *(stops laughing...)* Ah. You were not jesting. So you...actually believe in him?

**ADELINE:** The Black Knight is a man like you.

**JACOB:** Yes, the story has an historical basis. He was a German knight circa 1450—

**ADELINE:** He still lives, Mr. Grimm. He gave me this scar, on my cheek here. My limp.

**JACOB:** Right. Now I think it is you and the barkeep making merry with *me*. I should go.

*F/X: Chair.*

**ADELINE:** I am a Christian lady, Mr. Grimm: if I lie the Devil take my tongue. I met Hans Trapp on the road to Sturzelbronn twenty-seven years ago at Christmas.

*F/X: Blizzard (briefly, in memory.)*

**JACOB:** Sturzelbronn.

**ADELINE:** On the road to, in the forest.

**MUSIC**

*(HANS TRAPP darkly chuckling, in memory)*

**JACOB:** Did he have pointy teeth and old straw jutting from his clothes? Little bells on?

**ADELINE:** Young man, you may have been to university and memorized a good deal of Greek, but I guarantee if you publish “The Black Knight” as a nurse’s tale you *will* harm someone—likely a child. So. Put another log in the stove for me.

**JACOB:** Mrs. Meyer, the day fades, and as my lodging situation—

**ADELINE:** You’ll stay with me. You’ve gotten my hackles up and till they’re down you’ll sup at my table, sleep at my hearth, and listen well.

**JACOB:** My dear lady, as appealing as your fire—

**ADELINE:** I lost two husbands that year, and a little boy. The records can prove it.

**F/X:** *Blizzard (in memory)*

The snow came; the sickness came; Death came.

**MUSIC: ORGAN**

**JACOB:** Madam, I am sorry. But—

**ADELINE:** If you’re sorry you can show it by sharing some soup—and listening.

**F/X:** *Coughing (male.)*

It took my Berit in three days. We kissed for the first time at the bonfires of Sommertagszug; when we kissed for the last time, *he* was the fire. His fever.

**F/X:** *Groaning (male); Shoveling.*

I would have had to bury him myself—had it not been for Edsel. You remind me of him, you know. You sound a little like him, Mr. Grimm. *(back in time...)*

**F/X:** *Wind... Shoveling... Boots in snow...*

**EDSEL:** Adeline! Adeline! What the devil are you doing out here?

**ADELINE:** *(late 20s)* Have you lost your eyes, Edsel? What does it look like?

**EDSEL:** *(sighs)* He’s passed on then?

**ADELINE:** If you want to call it that. Just before dawn.

**EDSEL:** Where’s your coat?

**ADELINE:** Con.

**EDSEL:** Where is he? Why’s he not helping? Con!

**ADELINE:** It was hardly two hours ago, Edsel, leave off.

**EDSEL:** He ought to be helping his mother, dammit. Con!

**ADELINE:** —He ain't four years old, leave 'im be.

**EDSEL:** Where's he hidin'? You in the barn, Con?!

**ADELINE:** He's in the trees.

**EDSEL:** By himself?

**ADELINE:** He's a smart boy.

**EDSEL:** He's a dreamer. *Con!* Get over here and move this earth for your mother!

**ADELINE:** —How about *you* give me a hand? He was your brother after all.

**F/X:** *Shoveling...*

**EDSEL:** God help me. Forgive me, Adeline. I shouldn't be... I'm just... Here, take my coat, give me the shovel. Go find your boy before the wolves do.

### **MUSIC**

**ADELINE:** (*narrating; to JACOB*) Digging that hole may have been the only kindness Edsel Meyer ever showed me. Certainly, it was no kindness when he offered his hand in marriage.

**F/X:** *Church bells.*

(*narrating; to JACOB*)

Had I been in my right mind, I would have socked him for even suggesting it. He wanted the farm, that was plain to see, but grief can make you un-see many a thing, Mr. Grimm. Did I know Edsel Meyer had run off his wife with that temper? Course I knew. He and my Berit were cut from two cloths. Berit got the silk, but Edsel? He was leather, outside and in.

**F/X:** *Chopping (potatoes); Pages turning.*

(*CON humming throughout*)

**EDSEL:** Adeline. I told you to harness up the mule.

**ADELINE:** Edsel, it's going to storm, have you seen the sky? We may as well go tomorrow and try to enjoy Christmas morning in our own house.

**EDSEL:** They're expecting us.

**ADELINE:** I doubt they are now.

**EDSEL:** The clouds are too high for any storming.

**ADELINE:** They'll drop soon.

**EDSEL:** (*re: Con*) What's he doing? (*snapping*) Hey. Boy. The family Bible's not a plaything.

**ADELINE:** He's looking at the pictures; he's not doing any harm.

**EDSEL:** Con. You hear me?

*(CON hums)*

**EDSEL:** Shut up and look up.

*(CON hums)*

**EDSEL:** Hey!

*(he claps)*

Are you goin' daft?!

*(CON stops humming)*

**ADELINE:** No he is not! He's still finding his feet in all this.

**EDSEL:** Why's he not talking to me?

**ADELINE:** He's not saying much to me either. Give it time.

**EDSEL:** —I don't want his grubby hands in all the books.

**ADELINE:** Why not? Someone here ought to handle them.

*(CON starts up humming)*

**F/X:** *Boots.*

**EDSEL:** *(getting closer; under his breath)* ... Was that meant to be a slight?

**ADELINE:** *(under her breath)* Go back to clearing the tree line, Edsel.

**EDSEL:** *(still low)* Did you give this guff to my brother?

**ADELINE:** *(still low)* I had no need to.

**EDSEL:** *(lower than before)* "No need," eh? You had him broken pretty well?

**ADELINE:** We had a good understanding.

**EDSEL:** Yeah? Well...I think we will too.

*(kisses her on the cheek)*

Now you harness the mule. When I finish up in the field, we ride to my parents' place. A new tradition. It always hurt them that you and Berit never came. You hurt my mother's feelings. But, you can set things right. We leave at noon—not a minute a later, alright?

*(to CON)*

Boy! Scrub your hands.

**F/X:** *A heavy book closing (transition.)*



**ADELINE:** (*narrating, to JACOB*) I should've put my chopping knife in his ribs right then. It would've been a mercy—had I known who was waiting on the road.

**F/X:** *Wind; Mule (and cart.)*

**EDSEL:** (*in the past*) Damn it all. Your sour mood has gotten mixed up in the weather.

**ADELINE:** I'm sure that's it.

**EDSEL:** There's going to be a foot of snow on the ground.

**ADELINE:** We should try and turn back.

**EDSEL:** We're more than halfway.

**ADELINE:** No, that's the Hubers' old farm.

**EDSEL:** I know which it is—and the Hubers' lies closer to Sturzelbronn than home.

**ADELINE:** It lies farther from Sturzelbronn.

**F/X:** *Gust of wind.*

*(CON whimpering)*

*(rubbing his back and arms)* It's alright, Con, it's alright, we'll turn around.

*(EDSEL grouches)*

**ADELINE:** (*to CON*) We'll be back by the fire in a wink, OK? We'll curl up together with hot cider and when we nod off, Father Christmas—

**EDSEL:** Don't you blather to him about Father Christmas.

**ADELINE:** *And when we nod off—*

**EDSEL:** The fire will go out and the the smoke will rise up into Heaven with your dreams, boy, and the angels will catch 'em in a bottle and when you've been extra good? They'll break your bottle on a mountaintop!

**F/X:** *SNAP! (wooden wheel breaking); Mule whinnes.*

**ALL:** Ahh!

**F/X:** *Cart stops; Wind...*

**EDSEL:** Well ain't that a Christmas miracle.

**ADELINE:** Was that the wheel?

**EDSEL:** Course it was the wheel.

**ADELINE:** Do we have a spare?

**EDSEL:** That was the spare.

**ADELINE:** Can you fix it?

**EDSEL:** Out here in the ice?

**ADELINE:** Will you try, please?

**EDSEL:** Had we set out earlier...

**ADELINE:** Well, we didn't, so just hop out and...have a peek at it, Edsel.

**EDSEL:** —It's cracked in two!

**ADELINE:** Before the three of us turn blue, go see what you can manage already.

**EDSEL:** *(sighs; heaves himself down, grumbling in frustration as he goes)*

**F/X:** *Boots (in snow.)*

**ADELINE:** *(privately)* Are you OK, Son?

*(CON pouting: "uh-uhn")*

**ADELINE:** No? Can I blow on your hands? I'm part dragon, you know. Want a bit of dragon breath?

*(CON "uh-huh")*

**ADELINE:** OK. Give 'em here.

*(blows on his hands)*

**EDSEL:** *(from behind)* Officially broken!

*(kicks the wheel)*

**F/X:** *Splintering.*

**ADELINE:** Hey, no need for that! Put your strength into a plan.

**EDSEL:** The plan is: wait for a new wheel. Someone's bound to come by.

**ADELINE:** In this?! I think that we'd better trudge out to the Huber's cottage.

**EDSEL:** The roof fell in on that hovel years ago.

*(CON gives a little gasp—he has seen something; his breath quickens...)*

**ADELINE:** It's the only shelter in three miles, Edsel, and this blizzard is only beginnin'.

**EDSEL:** —It's a not blizzard, woman.

**ADELINE:** You said a "foot of snow," what is that?

**CON:** *(whispering)* Mommy.

**EDSEL:** —A foot is a foot of snow; it could let up.

**ADELINE:** It could make us into mannikins till the first of March.

**CON:** (*whispering*) Mommy.

**EDSEL:** —If you carry on like that it will.

**CON:** Mommy.

**EDSEL:** Not now, boy.

**ADELINE:** Dontcha give him “Not now” when he’s spoken to us! You rail at him for not speaking and then you hit him with “Not now.” What is it, darling? Go ahead.

**CON:** (*very faint*) A man.

**ADELINE:** A what now? Say it so Mommy can hear you, Con. So we both can hear.

**CON:** (*loud fearful whisper*) A man.

### **CREEP OF MUSIC**

**ADELINE:** (*confused*) You saw a man? Where, Sweet? (*he points*) Over there?

**EDSEL:** What’s he pointing at?

**ADELINE:** I...I think that scarecrow there, in the field.

(*CON “uh-uhn”*)

**ADELINE:** No? Not the scarecrow?

**EDSEL:** Prob’ly a deer.

**ADELINE:** He saw someone!

(*into the field*)

Hello?! Is somebody out there?!

### **MUSICAL STING**

(*narrating; to JACOB*) As we trod through the snow to the farmhouse—

**F/X:** *Boots (in snow)...*

I kept my eye on that sagging lonely scarecrow in the winter wheat. Edsel had a mean barking laugh at me for “talking to an empty field,” but...I grew up in a place where a girl has to pay attention, Mr. Grimm. You town folk’ll say, “Hans Trapp is coming!” to scare a girl into soapin’ behind her ears. If we say it, we mean the man’s shadow is in your yard. So if I was keepin’ one eye on that scarecrow, I had my reasons: Who put a scarecrow in a field that’s gone half wild? Who needs a scarecrow that’s six-and-half feet? Why was it not swayin’ in the wind?

**F/X:** *A door (smashed in); Wind.*

**EDSEL:** Ah ha! Looks like some boy adventurers have been here. Patched it all up. Come on in. ... What's the matter with you two? Come in. This was your idea.

**F/X:** *Boots on the threshold; Door shut (imperfectly.)*

*(ADELINE & CON are chattering)*

*(claps; rubs)* Well hey now: they left some logs for us. How considerate. And the ashes...feel warm. You're going to get that fire in the end, boy.

**F/X:** *Logs.*

No Father Christmas, but you'll soon find a fire is more reliable, Con.

**ADELINE:** Edsel. Stop. Someone's living here.

**EDSEL:** Pshh. Here? This is nothing more than a hideout—the kind you build when you're eight or nine. Look how they mended the roof here: it's a shamble of sticks, every which way, pine and spruce and beech, no plan at all.

**ADELINE:** Suppose there's a vagrant.

**EDSEL:** Do you see pots and pans, a man's bedroll? All I see are...what? Wooden horse, a lost marble, a little shoe. Have you seen many drifters playing at marbles, Adeline?

**ADELINE:** Con! Drop that now.

**F/X:** *Marble drops, rolls.*

**EDSEL:** Oh for Pete's sake: it's a piece of glass. He found it fair and square. Pick it up, Con, it's yours.

**ADELINE:** Leave it; it's tainted.

**EDSEL:** Boy, your mother's more superstitious than a goat; it's yours if you want.

**ADELINE:** The Holy Spirit has fled from this house, Edsel. The air tastes of sulfur.

**EDSEL:** It tastes like piss—because the boys were pissin' in the corner prob'ly.

**ADELINE:** —If you bothered with the Bible more than settin' it out for company—

**EDSEL:** You point me to where the Bible has two words on empty farmhouses.

**ADELINE:** I can *feel* it.

**EDSEL:** You're just being jumpy.

**F/X:** *Thud!*

*(ADELINE & CON gasp; quickened breath)*

**ADELINE:** He's coming.

**EDSEL:** "He" is a dollop of wet snow that just fell on the roo(f)—

**F/X:** *Unnaturally heavy footfalls (on the roof.)*

*(CON whimpering)*

**MUSIC**

*(low)* Might be a bear.

**ADELINE:** *(low)* A bear? How'd it get up there?

**EDSEL:** *(low)* They can climb, Adeline.

**F/X:** *More footfalls (on the roof.)*

**ADELINE:** *(low)* Sounds like two feet to me.

**EDSEL:** *(low)* Maybe it's your scarecrow. Maybe you've been a bad boy, Con, and it's old Hans Trapp out of stories.

**ADELINE:** *(low)* —Don't say his name.

**EDSEL:** *(getting louder with each one)* Hans Trapp. Ooo, Hans Trapp. Hans Trapp!

**F/X:** *The door (smashed in); Wind.*

*(ALL THREE gasp)*

**F/X:** *Boots on the threshold; Bells (throughout) Door shutting (imperfectly.)*

**HANS TRAPP:** *(gentlemanly; stomps off the snow)* Some storm, eh? If the clouds don't break, our bodies may never be found. Although I see you found my fire.

*(silence)*

Oh, my heavens, I've frightened you, haven't I? Apologies. When the wind screams like this, I invariably fail to recognize that I have guests until I'm bursting in on them. I assume that *is* your wagon on the roadside and your mule tethered to the sapling out there. On Christmas Eve too. Of all the bad luck.

*(silence)*

Are you a family of mutes? Speak.

**EDSEL:** *(clears his throat)* Did you not...see the bear, sir?

**HANS TRAPP:** Bear? Was there a bear? A Forest King? Here, at my sweet humble abode?

**EDSEL:** It was on the roof. Not two minutes past.

**HANS TRAPP:** *(chuckles)* I can't believe you. I must see this for myself.

**F/X:** *Door; Wind; Boots (in the snow.)*

*(outside)* HUH! WELL, THERE'S THE ROOF...BUT I SEE NO CLAWS! NO JAWS, NO MATTED FUR!

**ADELINE:** *(privately)* Edsel. The man's clothes. His clothes—

**EDSEL:** *(privately)* Hush up. I see what he is.

**ADELINE:** (*privately*) The straw, in his sleeves. The silver bells.

**NINE more pages to the end of this script PART 3, AND THE PLAY.**