

MUGGSY'S MERRY CHRISTMAS

by Donald Payton



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**MUGGSY'S MERRY
CHRISTMAS**

A CHRISTMAS FARCE IN ONE ACT

By Donald Payton

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SYNOPSIS: Christmas is here at last in the Maxwell home! Lucas and Courtney are very anxious to open their presents. But Pa Maxwell says “No, not until cousin Arthur gets here.” Arthur just got out of the hospital and Mr. Maxwell is intent on giving him the merriest Christmas imaginable. While the Maxwells are out delivering food to the Salvation Army, Muggsy and Elmer, a couple of hapless thieves, drop in very much intent upon burglarizing the place. While they are stumbling around the room, the Maxwells come home. Elmer manages to hide, but poor Muggsy stumbles over the footstool and falls flat on his face. The Maxwells mistake him for cousin Arthur and the result is a complete three-ring circus of howls, laughter, and Christmas fun! One interior set.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 4 males)

MR. MAXWELL (m) Middle-aged, head of the family. *(71 lines)*

MRS. MAXWELL (f)..... The very understanding mother of the house. *(28 lines)*

LUCAS MAXWELL (m) Energetic thirteen year old son who wants to open his presents immediately. *(45 lines)*

COURTNEY MAXWELL (f)..... Gracious fifteen year old daughter. She is also very anxious to open her presents. *(31 lines)*

MUGGSY (m) A harmless crook who comes nosing around the Maxwell home. Completely dazed by the Christmas tree and all of the presents. *(90 lines)*

ELMER (m) Muggsy's partner in crime.
Like Muggsy, he's never seen
anything that could equal this
Christmas tree. (60 lines)

PROPS

- ☐ Christmas tree
- ☐ Christmas Presents
- ☐ Christmas Cards
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Apple
- ☐ Basket of Food Covered With Cloth
- ☐ Doll Hanging On Tree
- ☐ Water Gun
- ☐ Box of Chocolates
- ☐ Bowl of Fruit
- ☐ Shirt
- ☐ Coats/Gloves
- ☐ Watch
- ☐ Popcorn Balls
- ☐ Sack of Food

TIME: Christmas morning

PLACE: Living room of the Maxwell home

SETTING:

There are three entrances. Stage right, leading outside; a door stage left, leading into the dining room and kitchen; and a rather wide opening, center, leading into the rest of the house. A very beautiful Christmas tree is stage right in front of the bookcase. Presents surround the Christmas tree. A sofa is stage left facing down-right-center. Easy chairs are right-center and stage right corner. A small table is left of the corner chair, covered with Christmas cards. A floor lamp backs the chair. A footstool is in front of the chair, right-center. There is a desk stage left with a chair to match. A telephone is on this desk. Other decorations and furniture may be added, such as a stereo and other chairs.

AT RISE:

Mr. Maxwell and his son, Lucas, are on stage. Mr. Maxwell is in the chair, right-center, reading a newspaper. Lucas is gazing wistfully at the presents under the tree.

LUCAS: *Couldn't I open just one, Pop?*

MR. MAXWELL: *(Without taking his eyes from the paper.) No, Lucas.*

LUCAS: *(Teasing.) But Pop, what would it matter if I—*

MR. MAXWELL: *(Breaking in; looking up.) Lucas, how many times do you I have to tell you that you are not to open your presents until we are all together? (He resumes reading.)*

LUCAS: *(Sits; gazing gloomily at tree.) Pop? (No answer.) Pop?*

MR. MAXWELL: *(Sharply.) Lucas, did you hear what I said?*

LUCAS: *(Sadly.) Yes sir, but —*

MR. MAXWELL: *(Again breaking in.) Then don't bother me any more. I'm trying to read the paper. (Reading.) Now let's see. Where was I? Oh yes — continued on page six "B." (Starts fumbling through the paper.) Page six "B" — page six "B." (Wildly.) Where in tarnation is page six "B?" Lucas, have you seen page six "B"?*

LUCAS: *(Unconcerned as he drops down on one knee to inspect a present.) Nope.*

MR. MAXWELL: *(He rises and starts looking around the room.)*

Then for Pete's sake start looking for it. It's getting so a person has to be the first to get the paper around here if he wants to find it in one piece. It's either that or hire a detective.

LUCAS: *(Picking up the missing page from out of the chair his father had been sitting in.)* Here you are, old man.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Snatching the paper.)* That isn't a very nice thing to call your father, Lucas.

LUCAS: *(Walking back toward the tree.)* Well, I'm mad. It's finally Christmas and just look how it has turned out.

Mr. Maxwell resumes reading as Lucas sits very dejectedly, chin in his hands. Courtney Maxwell enters left, munching on an apple.

LUCAS: Yessir! That's what I say. Some Christmas!

COURTNEY: *(Walking to the left of her father and planting a kiss on his forehead.)* Fa-ther, *(No answer.)* Father.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Without looking up.)* No! The answer is no!

COURTNEY: No what, Father? I didn't even ask you anything.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Looking up.)* You didn't need to. I knew perfectly well what was coming next. *(Resumes reading.)*

COURTNEY: What, Father? *(No answer.)* Father?

LUCAS: *(Disgustedly.)* Don't bother him. I think he's finally found the funny papers.

COURTNEY: Father? *(Patting his back.)* Couldn't I open just one package?

MR. MAXWELL: *(Laying the paper on the arm of the chair.)* Why can't you two wait until your cousin Arthur gets here? It isn't a life and death matter, is it? Arthur would enjoy seeing you open your presents, so just wait.

COURTNEY: *(Pleadingly.)* But Father –

MR. MAXWELL: *(Again cutting in.)* Courtney, didn't you hear what I said?

COURTNEY: Yes, Father.

MR. MAXWELL: Your cousin will be here in a few minutes now and when he comes, we will all open our presents together. That boy has been in the Army for a long time now and you know he wants to enjoy a real old time Christmas, don't you?

COURTNEY: I guess so.

MR. MAXWELL: And don't you think so, Lucas?

LUCAS: *(Trying to smile.)* Yeah, I guess he would.

MR. MAXWELL: That's better. *(He starts to read again, but again lowers the paper.)* Oh yes, I forgot. Let's not ask him too many questions. He probably wants to enjoy the Christmas holiday without a bunch of questions.

COURTNEY: I hadn't thought about that.

MR. MAXWELL: When he comes, I'll ask him how he's feeling and we'll let it go at that. The young man was seriously wounded, you know.

LUCAS: Okay, Dad.

Mr. Maxwell resumes reading, but Courtney and Lucas linger by the tree.

LUCAS: *(Worriedly.)* What if Arthur doesn't come?

MR. MAXWELL: *(Without looking up.)* He will.

COURTNEY: What if his plane was grounded.

MR. MAXWELL: Then I'm sure he would take a train.

LUCAS: *(Exploding.)* But, Dad, it's too snowy for trains.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Looking up.)* If he wasn't coming, he would have called.

COURTNEY: Maybe the telephone lines are down and—

LUCAS: *(Breaking in.)* —and he couldn't get through.

MR. MAXWELL: Let's hope not. Because if we found out he was stranded, we would have to go get him.

LUCAS: Before we opened our presents?

MR. MAXWELL: Of course.

COURTNEY: *(Wide-eyed.)* Oh, that would be terrible.

MR. MAXWELL: I should say so. So don't try to think of any more difficult conditions that might befall him. *(He picks up the paper and starts reading again.)*

COURTNEY: Will you know cousin Arthur when you see him, Father?

MR. MAXWELL: *(Without looking up.)* Of course.

LUCAS: How long has it been since you saw him last, Pop?

MR. MAXWELL: Fourteen years.

COURTNEY: (*Astonished.*) Fourteen years? Then how will you know him?

MR. MAXWELL: (*Unconcerned.*) Oh, there will be a family resemblance.

LUCAS: (*Gazing at the tree.*) Probably a hard head.

MR. MAXWELL: (*Sharply.*) Lucas, I am ashamed of you. Go see if you can help your Mother.

LUCAS: Yes sir. (*Doesn't move, still gazing at the presents.*)

MR. MAXWELL: (*Firmly.*) Right this minute.

He rises and starts toward Lucas, who circles around toward the door, left, as his mother enters. She is carrying a large basket of food, covered with cloth.

LUCAS: (*Coming to a halt.*) Do you need some help, Mom?

MRS. MAXWELL: (*Setting the basket onto the floor.*) No, dear.

LUCAS: She doesn't want any help, Dad. What's the basket for, Mom? (*Mr. Maxwell resumes reading.*)

MRS. MAXWELL: The Salvation Army. We're going to give this basket to a family that isn't as fortunate as our family. I hope it will help make their Christmas a little merrier.

COURTNEY: (*Thoughtfully.*) You know, I think that's one of the most important things about Christmas, Mother.

MRS. MAXWELL: I know it is, dear. And don't ever forget it. Well, is everyone ready to go?

MR. MAXWELL: (*Over his paper.*) Go? Go where?

MRS. MAXWELL: Down to the Salvation Army to deliver this basket.

MR. MAXWELL: But what about Arthur?

MRS. MAXWELL: I doubt he'll get here before we get back, but if he does, he can make himself right at home. We're not going to be gone more than ten minutes, just leave the door unlocked. Get your coats, guys, let's go.

LUCAS: Okay, Mom. (*Lucas and Courtney exit center.*)

Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell walk over to the tree.

MRS. MAXWELL: Isn't it beautiful, John?

MR. MAXWELL: *(Putting his arm around her.)* It certainly is. This is our eighteenth Christmas tree and I do believe that they get more beautiful every year.

MRS. MAXWELL: I do too, John. *(Glancing at the presents.)* John?

MR. MAXWELL: Yes?

MRS. MAXWELL: *(Getting down on her knees under the tree.)* Maybe I could open just one?

MR. MAXWELL: *(Sharply.)* Now I know where the kids get it. The answer is no. That is all I've heard for the last hour—*(Pause.)* —which one did you want to open?

MRS. MAXWELL: This one from Mother.

MR. MAXWELL: *(With interest.)* Is it to me, too?

MRS. MAXWELL: Yes. *(Holds up a rather large package.)* I can't imagine what it could be.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Taking it from her.)* To John and Janet. Hmmmm! I don't see what it would hurt if we opened just one. *(Pushing it toward her.)* No-no, we'd better not. *(Pulling it back toward him.)* Still, I don't see what it would hurt. *(Laying it down.)* It wouldn't be right, though. *(Picks it up again.)* Or would it? Maybe if we opened just this one –

Lucas and Courtney enter center. They are bundled up in their coats, hats, etc. Lucas has earmuffs.

COURTNEY: *(Breaking in on the cue of "this one.")* Okay, we're ready. *(Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell jump from under the tree.)*

LUCAS: *(With suspicion.)* Dad, what were you and Mom doing under the tree?

MR. MAXWELL: *(Guilty.)* Admiring the tree, son.

LUCAS: *(Accusingly.)* Pop, I'm ashamed of you.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Heading toward Right.)* Get the basket, Lucas, and let's go. *(He exits.)*

MRS. MAXWELL: *(Shouting.)* John, where's your coat?

MR. MAXWELL: *(Shouting from offstage.)* It's out in the car.

MRS. MAXWELL: *(Disgustedly.)* That's a good place for it, why didn't I think of that. *(Lucas picks up the basket.)* Be careful with the basket, Lucas. *(They all exit right.)*

The stage is empty for a few seconds, then Elmer peeps in center. He looks around cautiously, then he slowly, lightly enters on tip-toe.

ELMER: C'mon in. *(He motions out-center for Muggsy to enter.)*

MUGGSY: *(From offstage.)* Is dey all gone, Elmer?

ELMER: Sure, c'mon in. *(Muggsy tip-toes into the room; glances around nervously.)*

MUGGSY: *(As he tip-toes down center.)* Are ya sure there is just four in dis family, Elmer?

ELMER: *(Positively.)* Sure I'm sure.

MUGGSY: *(Fearfully.)* And are ya sure we is all alone?

ELMER: *(Even more positively.)* Sure I'm sure we is all alone. Just relax.

MUGGSY: Well I'm worried about this job, Elmer. I don't aim to be sent back to the penitentiary. I just been out two months.

ELMER: *(Disgustedly.)* How many times do I haf to tell ya' there is nuttin' to worry about? Ten chances out of nine they is eatin' Christmas turkey wit' someone; and if they is, there ain't much tellin' when they'll be back. Mebbe not till tomorrow—or the next day.

MUGGSY: *(Nervously.)* But supposing somebody else hears us and reports us to the cops?

ELMER: Muggsy, you worries too much. Everybody is going to be so busy unwrapping their Christmas purties that they won't notice a thing that goes on around here. We can grab what we want and beat it.

MUGGSY: *(Wistfully.)* Gee, just imagine gettin' a Christmas present. Don't that sound wonderful?

ELMER: Yeah, it sure does.

They walk toward the Christmas tree.

MUGGSY: Just look at that tree. Ain't it a beaut? *(He stands and gazes with an open mouth.)*

ELMER: *(Also gazing at the tree.)* Yeah, it really is. *(Pause; wistfully.)* Did you ever have a Christmas tree, Muggsy?

MUGGSY: Naw, I ain't never had none yit, but I'm gonna have one someday. *(Not taking his eyes from the tree.)* Did you ever have a Christmas tree, Elmer?

ELMER: Yeah, I had one once, but it didn't have no purties and ornaments like that one.

MUGGSY: And look at that thing on top. Boy, it really shines don't it, Elmer? I'm gonna have one of them things on my tree, too.

ELMER: *(Staring, spellbound.)* Yeah, I'm gonna have one on mine, too. *(Pause.)* I think I'll have two Christmas trees, Muggsy.

MUGGSY: I'm not. I'm just gonna keep one tree all year long.

ELMER: Yeah, that is a good idee. I might decide to keep both of mine all year, too. I sure likes me Christmas trees.

MUGGSY: Yeah, me too.

They continue to stare; both completely captivated by the beauty of the tree.

ELMER: I'm gonna have lots of ormanents on my trees, too. In fact, I'm gonna have lots of everthin'.

MUGGSY: What's them long things that hang down, Elmer? *(He points to an icicle.)*

ELMER: You mean them long, silver things?

MUGGSY: *(Nodding.)* Yeah, I think so. What is they?

ELMER: Icicles.

MUGGSY: *(Astonished.)* Icicles? *(A pause; hopefully.)* I think I'll touch one.

ELMER: Be careful, you don't wants to hurt the tree.

MUGGSY: Naw, I won't hurt it. I'll be real careful. *(He edges to the tree and gently, carefully touches one of the icicles.)* Are you sure those things are really icicles, Elmer?

ELMER: They're not real, Muggsy. That's just their perfessional name. They're called icicles, but still they're not icicles? Does you see what I mean?

MUGGSY: Sure, I guess I just ain't smart like you are, Elmer. I wisht I coulda gone to school like you did.

ELMER: Yeah, it's a shame you didn't have the chance like I had. Them reform schools are first class joints. I was there for just ten years, Muggsy, but I came out with a first class education.

MUGGSY: Yeah, I wish I could go. But I ain't never gonna be as lucky as you, Elmer.

Elmer goes over and drops into an easy chair during the preceding speech.

ELMER: Boy, you oughta let yourself relax in one of these chairs, Mugsy old boy. They is strictly first class, too.

MUGGSY: *(Worriedly.)* I think we oughta scram while we got the chance, Elmer. I tells ya I don't wanta go back to the penitentiary. *(As he heads up-center.)* I'm gettin' out of here right now.

ELMER: *(Grabbing him by the seat of his pants.)* Now calm yourself, Mugsy old boy. We is as safe as a bug in a jug.

MUGGSY: *(Turning around.)* Mebbe so, Elmer, but here is one bug that don't want to go back to the jug. I just got out and I don't intends to head right back. So long. *(Again starts center.)*

ELMER: *(Again pulling him back.)* Now just calm yourself off, Mugsy, and think it over. If you'll stay, I'll reads you something.

MUGGSY: You know I loves to hear you read, Elmer, but I don't intends to get caught. Especially on Christmas day.

ELMER: Christmas ain't no difference from none of the other days, Mugsy. We has got to make an hones' livin' hasn't we?

MUGGSY: Yeah, I guess we has.

ELMER: In fact, we is really showin' our pates-ratism to our country. Are we loafin' on the job like other people. No sir. We is goin' right on with our work, ain't we? Yes sir.

MUGGSY: Mebbe you're right, Elmer.

ELMER: They might even give us a presidential slitation – or something. *(Mugsy picks up a Christmas card from the basket.)*

MUGGSY: Read me this, Elmer. *(Hands it to Elmer.)*

ELMER: *(Reading very slowly.)* A – Merry – Christ – mas and – a – happy – New Year.

MUGGSY: Ain't that beautiful? Them words just kinda does somethin' to a fellow, doesn't they, Elmer? Read some more.

ELMER: (*Looking inside the card.*) I send a – wish – upon its way, to (*Squinting his eyes.*) b-b-bright—en up this h-h-hol-e-day. It's very simple – but sin – sincere, good luck – good h-health, through – out – the – year. (*Looking close.*) Uncle Herman and Aunt Maud. (*Looks up triumphantly.*) Well, what does you thinks of it, Muggsy?

MUGGSY: Ain't it wonderful? Never in me whole life have I heard anything like it. (*Pauses; thoughtfully.*) Uncle Herman and Aunt – Aunt who, Elmer?

ELMER: Aunt Maud.

MUGGSY: Wonder who they are, Elmer?

ELMER: They're the ones that sent the card.

MUGGSY: Boy, that sure was nice of them. I wish somebody would send me a card. I wish Uncle Maud and Aunt Herman would. (*Sadly.*) They probably won't, though. Read another one, Elmer.

ELMER: (*Picking up another card.*) It's sending this – this g-glad greeting with its warm and – warm and friendly touch, that gives the – the charm to – Christmas --- and – makes it – mean so much. Grandma and Grand-pa.

MUGGSY: Gee! Don't that make ya sentimental, Elmer? Grandma and Grandpa. I betcha I had a gramma and granpa once. I just betcha I did.

ELMER: Yeah, I betcha I did too. (*He puts down the card.*) I – I – I think I'm getting kinda – kinda sentimental, too, Muggsy. Maybe we had better go.

MUGGSY: (*Hanging his head.*) I – I wish I had a Christmas present to open. If I could just open one present I'd be happy for the rest of my life, Elmer, just one box.

ELMER: Just open one of those under the tree, Muggsy. I know these people wouldn't care. I know they is really fine people.

MUGGSY: Then I guess I will. (*As he goes around the tree looking for the perfect present.*) I don't know which of these to operate on. (*With astonishment.*) Hey Elmer, they got a stiff around here. (*He points up at a doll hanging on the tree.*)

ELMER: Huh? (*He runs over by Muggsy.*)

MUGGSY: A stiff. There it hangs right there.

ELMER: That's a doll. (*With utter disgust.*) Muggsy, you is beyond a doubt the most ig-gorant person that ever uttered a syllable of breath.

MUGGSY: (*Hanging his head; sadly.*) It – it really ain't my fault, Elmer. When I was just a little feller I – (*Sniffs.*) -- I was – dropped on a doorstep.

ELMER: From the sound of things they must o' dropped you on your head.

MUGGSY: (*Choosing a package.*) I guess I'll open this one. (*He carefully hands it to Elmer.*) What does the little card say?

ELMER: To Mi – chael – from – Mother.

MUGGSY: To Lucas from Mother. Gee! (*He starts unwrapping it.*)

ELMER: Be a little more nicer with it. You might tears the paper.

MUGGSY: I – I – I'm just so nervous and excited, Elmer. I – I – don't know exactly what I'm doin'. (*He gets all of the paper off; holds up the present.*) It's just a little box, Elmer. (*Disappointed.*) But I guess it is kinda purty.

ELMER: Maybe there's somethin' in the box.

MUGGSY: (*Excitedly.*) Yeah, there might be. You thinks of everythin', Elmer. (*He opens the box and removes a water pistol.*) Gee Elmer, look a' this – A rod! Boy-oh-boy! (*He stares at the gun.*) Ain't it a beaut? What kind of a gat is it, Elmer?

ELMER: (*Looking at the box.*) It's – it's a – water pistol.

MUGGSY: (*Doubtfully.*) A water pistol? (*Pause.*) What's a water pistol, Elmer?

ELMER: It's a gun that you shoots in the water. It's one of them new 'ventions that has lately been perfectocated.

MUGGSY: (*Staring at the gun.*) Gee Elmer, ain't science wonderful? (*He puts the gun back into the box.*) I – I guess I've looked at it long enough. (*He puts the box back under the tree.*) I – I – I don't know how to say this, Elmer, but this is the happiest Christmas of me whole life. I ain't never gonna ferget it as long as I lives.

ELMER: (*Deeply touched.*) Them's really good words, Muggsy. They're makin' me feel sentimental again.

MUGGSY: Yeah, me too.

ELMER: (*Thinking to himself.*) You know, Muggsy, come to think of it you're right about not takin' nothin' on Christmas day. It—it would be a terrible, terrible thing to do. Least I think so.

MUGGSY: Yeah, me too.

ELMER: And – and well, I – I just kinda feel ashamed of myself. *(He hangs his head.)*

MUGGSY: *(Also hanging his head.)* Yeah – me too. And I thinks we oughta scram.

ELMER: *(Starting toward center.)* Yeah, me too. *(He stops suddenly.)* Does you hear nothin'?

MUGGSY: Huh-uh.

ELMER: Well I does. *(He goes over to the window.)* Muggsy! They is on the front porch now and comin' in. We got to hide.

He races for the sofa, hides behind it. Muggsy, following after him, stumbles over the footstool and falls flat on the floor.

MUGGSY: *(Horried.)* I – I didn't m-m-make it, Elmer. I – I d-d-idn't m-make it.

Muggsy gets to his feet as the Maxwell family comes back into the room. He looks very wide-eyed at them and they stand looking at him for a few moments. Then Mr. Maxwell moves toward him.

MR. MAXWELL: *(Extending his hand; cordially.)* Welcome, Arthur.

MUGGSY: *(In astonishment.)* Huh?

MR. MAXWELL: Welcome to the Maxwell household. *(He pushes his hand closer to Muggsy, who can think of nothing to do but shake it.)* This is Janet, my wife—

MRS. MAXWELL: *(Cordially.)* How-do-you-do, Arthur.

MR. MAXWELL: And my daughter, Courtney.

COURTNEY: Pleased to meet you, Arthur.

MUGGSY: *(Trembling.)* Y-yeah.

MR. MAXWELL: And this is my son, Lucas.

LUCAS: *(Pumping Muggsy's hand energetically.)* Hi ya, Art. What's buzzin', cousin?

MR. MAXWELL: Well, we're certainly glad you're here. We've all been on pins and needles for fear that you wouldn't be able to get here. And now that you're here, we're going to make this the biggest and merriest Christmas of your entire life.

MUGGSY: *(Astonished.)* You means me?

MR. MAXWELL: Of course we mean you.

MUGGSY: (*Excitedly.*) Wow!

During the preceding conversation, the Maxwells all remove their coats, caps, etc. and arrange them neatly on the back of chairs. All except Lucas, who gives his coat a big heave into a corner of the room.

LUCAS: (*Anxiously.*) Can we open the presents now?!

MRS. MAXWELL: Be patient, dear.

MR. MAXWELL: (*Sitting, motioning for Muggsy to do likewise.*) Well, how does it feel to be out?

MUGGSY: Does you means that you knew I was in? (*Very wide-eyed.*)

MRS. MAXWELL: Of course we knew. I know it looks like we didn't because we didn't write, but it's just like pulling teeth to get John to scribble a line.

COURTNEY: And I'm terribly sorry that I didn't write you, too.

MUGGSY: (*Sitting nervously on the edge of a chair.*) Aw, dat's okay.

COURTNEY: (*Bringing over a box of chocolates.*) Have a chocolate, Arthur?

MUGGSY: Gee, tanks. Doesn't cares if I don't. If'n it's okay wit' you, I'll just have two.

MRS. MAXWELL: Why sure, just help yourself. (*Muggsy takes the third piece.*)

LUCAS: (*Breezily.*) Were you an officer, Art?

MUGGSY: (*Not understanding.*) Huh?

LUCAS: I says how many stripes did you have?

MUGGSY: Oh, I just had 'em all over me. Never tooks the time to count 'em. There was lots of 'em, though. Ever where I looked there were stripes.

MR. MAXWELL: (*Laughing to Mrs. Maxwell.*) There he goes with that old Maxwell humor.

COURTNEY: Did you recognize him when you first saw him, Father?

MR. MAXWELL: Why sure, I'd have known him anywhere. He's got the Maxwell eyes – the Maxwell hair – the Maxwell physique. Why, I'd have known him with my eyes shut.

LUCAS: (*Nudging his father.*) When do we proceed to open the presents, Pop?

MR. MAXWELL: (*Ignoring him.*) Yes sir, I'll bet you're really glad to be a free man.

MUGGSY: Yeah, that's one place I don't intends to go back to. I likes it a lot better like this.

MR. MAXWELL: And you'll be more convinced than ever after today. We're really going to try to give you a day you'll never forget.

MUGGSY: Wow.

MR. MAXWELL: (*Crossing over to the tree.*) I think we've got a few things for you here, Arthur.

MUGGSY: (*Astonished.*) For me?

MR. MAXWELL: (*Picking up the presents as they all crowd around.*) Sure.

LUCAS: When do I open mine, Pop? (*Mrs. Maxwell steps on his toe.*) Yikes! (*He sits; holding his toe.*) Is this justice, I ask you? Christmas! Nuts! More like April Fools!

COURTNEY: (*To Muggsy.*) Another chocolate?

MUGGSY: (*Helping himself.*) Gee, tanks.

MRS. MAXWELL: (*Bringing over a bowl of fruit.*) And help yourself to the food, too.

MUGGSY: Wow. (*He takes an apple; starts champing on it.*) I just can't get over this.

LUCAS: Do I get an apple, too, or do I have to wait until Halloween? (*He takes an apple.*)

MR. MAXWELL: I guess we'll start in by giving you this. (*He hands Muggsy a nicely wrapped package.*)

MUGGSY: (*Astonished.*) You – you – you mean me?

MRS. MAXWELL: Of course.

MUGGSY: (*With shaking hands he takes the present.*) Wow!

COURTNEY: Go ahead and open it.

MUGGSY: (*Still fearing that there's a catch to it.*) You mean it's – it's – all right?

MRS. MAXWELL: Why sure. Go ahead.

MUGGSY: Wow. (*He starts unwrapping it.*)

LUCAS: If I had it my way! When do I open mine?

MR. MAXWELL: Not until after cousin Arthur opens his. You know that it's more blessed to give than to receive.

LUCAS: (*Dropping suddenly; as if it's the last straw.*) Oh, for Pete's sake. If I had it my way! (*He jams the apple into his mouth and takes an enormous bite.*) I'd open all my presents in two seconds flat!

MUGGSY: (*Excitedly.*) Wow, a shirt. (*He holds up a shirt.*) Wow. A real live shirt. (*Looking up.*) And ain't it soft.

COURTNEY: (*Handing him a package.*) And here's one from me.

MUGGSY: (*With astonishment.*) You means I get to open another one? (*He takes it.*) Wow, tanks.

LUCAS: (*Disgustedly.*) Christmas comes but once a year and when it comes – I sit and watch it go by.

MRS. MAXWELL: Don't you want to watch your cousin open his presents, dear?

LUCAS: I would rather watch Lucas. It would be much more entertaining.

MUGGSY: (*Practically shouting.*) Wow, leather gloves. (*He holds them up.*) I'm just so happy I – I don't know what's to say.

LUCAS: (*Talking to himself.*) I can think of plenty of things I'd like to say. Like—

MR. MAXWELL: (*Breaking in, sharply.*) —Lucas!

LUCAS: If I –

MR. MAXWELL: (*Speaking louder as he again breaks in.*) Lucas!

LUCAS: (*Subdued.*) Yes sir!

MR. MAXWELL: (*Taking a smaller package from off the tree.*) And here's one from all of us to you, and we sincerely hope that you enjoy it. (*Holding it out to him.*) We give it to you from the bottom of our hearts.

LUCAS: (*To himself.*) As well as our pocketbooks.

MUGGSY: (*Happily.*) Oh, golly wow. I just never dreamed nothin' like this could happen to me. (*He excitedly rips off the paper, holding up a watch; shouting with joy.*) A watch! I just gotta sit down. This is more than I dreamed of. (*He sits.*) In fact, it's more than I could ever dream of. I just can't believe it.

MR. MAXWELL: And we all sincerely hope that you enjoy this Christmas.

LUCAS: (*Disgustedly.*) I just hope that somebody does.

COURTNEY: Have another chocolate?

MUGGSY: (*Taking another one.*) Doesn't care if I don't.

MRS. MAXWELL: And would you like a popcorn ball?

MUGGSY: Well wow, I –

COURTNEY: *(Breaking in.)* You'll just have to try one. *(She takes a bowl of popcorn balls from off of the bookcase.)* My mother makes the best popcorn balls.

MUGGSY: *(Overcome with emotion.)* This is more than I ever dreamed of before. I just didn't know there was such things as wonderful.

MR. MAXWELL: And Janet has prepared a dinner that we think you'll really enjoy. Turkey, cranberry sauce, dressing, mashed potatoes, giblet gravy, candied sweet potatoes, mince pie, and –

At this point, Elmer stands bolt-up-right behind the sofa.

ELMER: *(Breaking in on the spoken cue of "pie.")* I – I – I'm Elmer.

Everyone whirls around, facing him. Elmer doesn't move, but just stands there, apparently scared to death.

ELMER: *(Forcing himself to speak; stammering.)* I – I – I didn't mind it so much when you presented him with the choclicks, and I – I – I didn't mind so much when you shoves the fruits and nuts, and I didn't care too much when you gives him presents, but when you tells about the turkey, and the cranberry sauce, and the dressing, and the mashed potatoes, and the giblets gravy and – and – and good stuff like that it – it -- was just too much for me constitution. I – I couldn't stand it.

MR. MAXWELL: *(To Muggsy.)* Who—who is this? Do you know him?

MUGGSY: *(Wildly.)* He's – he's my partner.

LUCAS: Your partner? *(Muggsy nods.)*

ELMER: Yeah, that's me.

MR. MAXWELL: What do you mean, your partner?

MUGGSY: *(Stammering.)* He – he – well – I – I – we –

ELMER: *(Breaking in.)* Yeah.

COURTNEY: *(To her mother.)* Maybe, it's his buddy, Mother.

MRS. MAXWELL: Yes John, it might be.



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