

HO. HO. HO.

TEN-MINUTE PLAY

By Joseph Sorrentino

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SYNOPSIS: It's Christmas Day and two actors - - out of work and money - - dressed in well-worn Santa and elf costumes hit the streets hoping to beg enough money for a hot meal. As they continually scare away potential benefactors, their conversation ranges from the weather, to business practices, to how best to serve cat (baked or fried). In the end, only a minor miracle saves them from a hungry Christmas.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(2 MEN)

FRANK.....A well-dressed, well-spoken man, in his mid-late 30s. He's an actor.

HARRYA much less well-dressed man, in his late-50s. He's a blue collar worker. Or was one, anyway.

All in the Name of Frankenharry . . .

Joseph Sorrentino's *Frankenharry* plays get their name from the two unforgettable Philadelphia actors, Frank X and Harry Philibosian, who starred in the original Philadelphia Fringe Festival productions. Although the relational plays are not really linked, there is an underlying "opposites truly do attract" thread. Frank is usually the urbane, well-dressed and well-spoken actor while Harry is more of a blue collar Everyman stumbling his way through life. Whenever he stumbles into Frank's life, it almost always ends with surprising and refreshingly comic results. The sharply drawn characters with contrasting qualities give audiences a reason to get involved with them over and over again. These Philadelphia Fringe favorites have been called "clever . . . idiosyncratic," " . . . genuinely funny" and "hilarious" and may be produced individually or as "An Evening with Frankenharry."

AT RISE:

As lights come up, we see FRANK dressed in what is supposed to be an elf's costume and HARRY as Santa Claus. They are definitely out of their element; they and their clothing are looking rather worn. FRANK can have cigarettes which he occasionally puffs on, HARRY a cigar and a bottle in a brown paper bag he keeps hidden under his coat and drinks from occasionally. There is a bucket on the ground, a hand-drawn sign above it that says "Salivation Army."

HARRY: Frank?

FRANK: What.

HARRY: I'm cold.

FRANK: It's December, Harry, you're supposed to be cold.

Pause.

HARRY: Frank?

FRANK: What.

HARRY: I'm really cold.

FRANK: Try ringing the bell. See if that helps.

HARRY rings it once. Pause.

FRANK: Well?

HARRY: Didn't help.

FRANK: Don't you have any of that . . . whaddaya call it . . . ? Uh . . . uh . . . antifreeze you always carry around? Take a swig of that.

HARRY: Why you gotta say that? I don't do that no more.

FRANK: Right.

HARRY: I don't.

FRANK: Whatever.

HARRY: You hurt me. You really hurt me, Frank.

FRANK: Well . . . I . . . I didn't mean to hurt you. It's just . . . you've been complaining ever since we got out here.

Pause. HARRY sneaks a drink from his bottle.

FRANK: I told you this wouldn't work.

HARRY: We hadda try somethin'. We haven't worked in months. Not even one lousy audition. You rather starve?

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FRANK: As opposed to freezing to death? (*Picks up and turns bucket over.*) Not a cent. It's these stupid costumes. It'll be a miracle if we get any money. Where'd you get them anyway?

HARRY: My cousin.

FRANK: Oh . . .

HARRY: What?

FRANK: I should've known. This is the same cousin who got us those gorilla suits for that catering gig, isn't it?

HARRY: That was a simple misunderstanding . . . classic case of miscommunication. I'm the one who told him we needed two monkey suits.

FRANK: How he didn't know "monkey suit" was slang for tuxedo . . .

HARRY: I take full responsibility for that. He got us exactly what I asked for.

FRANK: What he got us was tossed outta that restaurant, that's what he got us.

HARRY: Not to mention fired. (*FRANK reacts.*)

FRANK: And what is this outfit, anyway? I thought I was supposed to be an elf.

HARRY: You are an elf.

FRANK: I look like a psychotic jester.

HARRY: You look fine.

FRANK: Well, I don't feel fine, and it's affecting my ability to get into character.

HARRY: He got us these outfits for free and that's about all we can afford right now, OK? Just don't go blamin' everythin' on me.

FRANK: Who do you want me to blame? It was your idea.

HARRY: If you have a better one . . . (*Pause.*) We shoulda tried out for "The Nutcracker."

FRANK: It's a ballet, Harry.

HARRY: I know that.

FRANK: We can't dance.

HARRY: So?

FRANK: Wait . . . there's someone. Give 'em a ring.

HARRY: (*Ringin' bell.*) Ho. Ho. Ho.

FRANK: Nothing. (*Pause, lights cigarette.*) I don't understand why no one's stopping. (*Longer pause. Stare at audience. Maybe FRANK adjusts HARRY's collar. HARRY sneaks drink.*)

HARRY: Location.

FRANK: Location?

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HARRY: Must be. Everything I ever read says location is the most important thing in business. Maybe this isn't the best location.

FRANK: It's the only one where we don't have to worry about cops.

HARRY: True, but . . . there's no people either. Maybe we should try somewhere else tomorrow.

FRANK: Too late.

HARRY: Why?

FRANK: Today's Christmas.

HARRY: Right. I forgot. *(Takes out bottle, offers to FRANK.)* Merry Christmas. *(FRANK pauses.)* Hey . . . it's Christmas.

FRANK: Here's at ya. *(Drinks, gives bottle to HARRY.)*

HARRY: And you. *(Drinks.)*

Pause.

HARRY: Frank?

FRANK: Now what?

HARRY: I'm gettin' hungry.

FRANK: Just don't think about it and you'll be OK.

HARRY: How can I not think about it? My stomach's really churnin' here. I haven't eaten since breakfast yesterday. *(Pause.)* See that cat over there?

FRANK: Where?

HARRY: Over there. On the wall.

FRANK: Yeah.

HARRY: It's been sittin' there awhile. That cat's startin' to look pretty good to me, Frank.

FRANK: Harry . . .

HARRY: *(Taking a step.)* Here kitty, kitty . . .

FRANK: *(Grabbing him.)* Harry! Stop it! You're supposed to be Santa. Santa wouldn't eat a cat.

HARRY: Sorry . . . I'm . . . I'm just hungry, is all. *(Pause.)* Whaddaya think cat tastes like?

FRANK: Stop thinking about it.

HARRY: I'm just wonderin'. Whaddaya think it tastes like?

FRANK: How the devil should I know? Probably tastes like chicken. Every time someone wants you to eat something weird, they say it tastes like chicken. Why not just eat chicken, then? *(Pause. They both lick their lips.)* That's what it tastes like. Chicken.

HARRY: I bet it'd taste all right fried. Anythin' tastes good fried.

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FRANK: Baked.
HARRY: What?
FRANK: Baked. I prefer baked.
HARRY: You think?
FRANK: Oh yeah . . . surround it with some of them nice little potatoes . . . slice of pineapple on top . . . make a nice gravy . . . slap that bad boy right in the oven and . . .
HARRY: Forget it.
FRANK: What?
HARRY: It just left.
FRANK: Oh.

Pause.

HARRY: Man.
FRANK: What is it now?
HARRY: My feet are killin' me.
FRANK: So siddown.
HARRY: I can't.
FRANK: Why not?
HARRY: I'm in character.
FRANK: And?
HARRY: I don't think Santa would sit down on the job.
FRANK: You don't think . . . Trust me, it's all right. No one believes you're Santa anyway.
HARRY: Oh . . . and you can do better?
FRANK: I didn't say I could. But it wouldn't hurt to lighten up on the "Ho. Ho. Ho." a little. Get in the spirit. Here, try it like this, *(Happy.)* Ho! Ho! Ho!
HARRY: *(Deadpan.)* Ho. Ho. Ho.
FRANK: Not "Ho. Ho. Ho." Ho! Ho! Ho! Try and put a little more life into it. C'mon . . . one from the belly, Harry.
HARRY: *(Same.)* Ho. Ho. Ho.
FRANK: Right . . . OK . . . let's try something else . . . I know, I know. Try it with a little smile and . . . and use that bell. Go for the gusto here, Harry. Let 'er rip.
HARRY: *(Same, with bell.)* Ho. Ho. Ho.
FRANK: Ah, jeez, Harry, can't ya . . . Ooh . . . ooh . . . someone's coming this way. Quick, give 'em a little of that special Harry holiday spirit. Let 'em feel the love.

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HARRY: (*Deadpan.*) Ho. Ho. Ho.

Pause.

FRANK: Man, did you see her take off?

HARRY: Really peeled outta there, didn't she?

FRANK: Woman can really work that wheelchair . . . that was a complete 180. I just don't get it. (*Looks at sign.*) Harry, you misspelled "Salvation" for Pete's sake.

HARRY: I did?

FRANK: You wrote "Salivation."

HARRY: It's not my fault. You know I can't spell.

FRANK: No wonder no one's stopping. Who's gonna give money to the "Salivation Army?" Nobody's gonna give money to an army of slobberers.

HARRY: Next time, you write the sign.

FRANK: I will. What's coming up next anyway? Easter?

HARRY: I think so.

FRANK: Well, "Happy Easter" can't be too difficult to spell. I just hope your cousin comes up with better costumes. (*Looks up.*) It's getting late. Wanna go home?

HARRY: You think?

FRANK: Might as well.

HARRY: You got any money?

FRANK: Nope. You?

HARRY: Just some change.

FRANK: (*Picking up bucket.*) Forget dinner, then . . .

HARRY: We make anything at all?

FRANK: What do you think? (*Turns bucket over. A twenty dollar bill floats out.*) Harry?

HARRY: Yeah? (*He looks.*) A twenty.

FRANK: You put this in there?

HARRY: Me? You kiddin'?

FRANK: You see anyone put it in?

HARRY: No. You?

FRANK: Uh-uh. Know what this is?

HARRY: A miracle?

FRANK: Dinner. If we hurry, we can get to The Apollo before it closes.

HARRY: What are we waitin' for?

Gathering bucket, sign.

HARRY: Hey, Frank?

FRANK: Yeah?

HARRY: That cat . . . if we hadda . . . you know . . . you really think
baked is better? I mean, if we hadda?

Exit.

FRANK: *(From off stage.)* If we hadda, yeah. Better for you. Less
grease.

BLACKOUT.

THE END