

"Holly and Mr. Ivy"

A one-act play by

Jason Half

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HOLLY AND MR. IVY - a one-act play

By Jason Half

CAST: (2M, 1F)

MR. IVY, 40s

HOLLY, 22

KRINGLY, ageless

SETTING:

The office of Mr. Ivy, bureaucrat, North Pole.

TIME:

December 21 of the present year.

HOLLY AND MR IVY - a one-act play by Jason Half

Lights rise on an office: desk, two chairs. Some holiday decor and toy knickknacks are visible, but the room is bureaucratically functional.

HOLLY, a young woman in her early 20s dressed in seasonal clothes, stands in the room, waiting.

MR. IVY, a rather harried middle manager in his 30s or 40s, enters and moves to the desk. He reads from a file folder.

MR. IVY
You are... Holly Sue Middlemuss?

HOLLY
That's right. Mister--?

MR. IVY
Ivy. Please sit, sit. I apologize for the wait, but it's incredibly busy in the office this time of year, I'm sure you understand. Now let's see what we have.

They sit. Ivy reads from the file.

HOLLY
I'm here because I want to see if--

MR. IVY
(Cutting her off)
Whoa-ay-oh! Wait. I'm reading your nine-fifty long form.

HOLLY
My what? Oh, that form I had to fill out and give to your elf?

MR. IVY
That's right.

HOLLY
That guy at the reception desk is your elf? I've never seen an elf that tall before.

MR. IVY
Oh yeah? How many elves have you seen? We're an equal opportunity employer, Miss Middlemuss. Besides, the shorter elves have trouble with some of the filing cabinets. But that's neither here nor there.

HOLLY

No.

MR. IVY

No. And what you're asking--well, we have a problem.

HOLLY

But you have all the forms! The nine-fifty, and I think I signed something called a three-twelve...

MR. IVY

No, the forms are all in order, Miss Middlemuss.

HOLLY

Would you please? Stop calling me that, please just call me Holly.

MR. IVY

All right. Well, Holly, what you're asking--the request you're submitting--it's just not possible.

HOLLY

It's not that much to ask!

MR. IVY

Look, Miss...um, Holly. We're in the business of giving gifts.

HOLLY

That's exactly what--

MR. IVY

Physical, tangible gifts. Think of our brand, think of the image: our jolly representative in red carrying a sack full of brightly colored presents to excited girls and boys.

HOLLY

What I want is a gift, for me and for them...

MR. IVY

But it's hardly a physical gift now, is it? It's certainly not something the elves can make in the toy shop or submit a purchase order to a retailer for. What you're asking--

HOLLY

It can happen! It's not impossible!

MR. IVY

Regardless, it falls well out of the scope of our business practice. You see that, don't you?

HOLLY

If you'll let me explain...

MR. IVY

I'm afraid your request as stated on the nine-fifty is denied.

Mr. Ivy finds a rubber stamp.

HOLLY

Wait!

MR. IVY

Denied, Miss Holly.

HOLLY

Just wait!

Mr. Ivy brings the stamp down, but Holly covers the paper with her hand a moment before. He stamps Holly's hand.

MR. IVY

Would you please remove your hand so I can use my denial stamp?

HOLLY

(Taking the form away)

No. Now look: no one's given me a chance to speak since I got up here. Everyone just has me fill out forms and now you try to get rid of me without even listening to me.

MR. IVY

We can't help you.

HOLLY

Well maybe you can. If you'd just listen. You owe me that. It took me two days to get up here from Encino, first on a plane and then on a bus and for the last stretch, a snowmobile.

MR. IVY

May I have that form back?

HOLLY

No. Don't send me away without hearing me out; it's not in the spirit of the season. Besides, what would your boss say?

MR. IVY

I sympathize, but I'm a busy man.

HOLLY

For the last four years I've been in college, three states away from where I grew up. And in that time I try to stay in touch with my parents, but you get busy and...it's hard, you know? And last time I was home, tail end of August, there's mom, with a forced smile and a lot of insignificant talk. And no dad.

She's evasive, but finally I make her answer the question: "Where's Dad?" And she tells me that they were both not happy with their relationship, that they wanted something else from their life. A trial separation. Mr. Ivy, I'd be supportive of this, but I see my mom, I visit my dad, and they're miserable. Whatever happy change they expected, it hasn't happened. And there's too much pride and stubbornness to let them call a truce and get back together.

MR. IVY

I understand.

HOLLY

Do you? You see why I'm here?

MR. IVY

Yes, but still-- Would you read your request, please? Off of the form?

HOLLY

(Reading)

"Dear Santa: Please reunite Carol and Joseph Middlemuss for possible reconciliation."

MR. IVY

Please bring mommy and daddy back together.

HOLLY

More or less, yeah.

MR. IVY

Can we put that in a box? No. Can we build it in the toyshop or buy it from Radio Shack or send an elf to Costco for it? No.

HOLLY

But if anyone can do it-- If anyone has the magic to bring two lonely people together--

MR. IVY

May I have the form?

HOLLY

Are you just going to cancel it with your stamp?

MR. IVY

Please, may I have it?

Holly gives Mr. Ivy the form.

MR. IVY (CONT'D)

Now. We've been in business here a long time, and we've seen this request before. Many times.

HOLLY

I figured you had.

MR. IVY

But the bylaws are clear on this: Mr. Claus cannot interfere in third party relationships. Even if he wanted to.

HOLLY

Of course he'd want to! He's benevolent and kind and doesn't want anybody alone on Christmas.

MR. IVY

But this is beyond his scope. Santa is not a licensed psychological counselor. Our business is built on presents, not people. I'm sorry.

Mr. Ivy stamps the form, places it in a completed work pile.

HOLLY

You are not being very helpful here!

MR. IVY

If you have a grievance, you can talk with our elf in H-R.

HOLLY

"Presents, not people." What a lousy way to run a business. Okay. Then I've got another request.

MR. IVY

Miss Middlemuss...

HOLLY

A present-centric one. Something well within your means. You won't even have to spend time listening to my problems.

MR. IVY

Now, you willfully misunderstand...

HOLLY

Show me what my parents are getting for Christmas.

MR. IVY

I can't. We have a confidentiality clause on all presents.

HOLLY

Even with immediate family?

MR. IVY

Especially with immediate family.

HOLLY

I won't tell them what they're getting. And look: if you can't deliver my wish, then give me this runner-up.

Let me see that they're getting something they'll really like, since my family won't be together.

MR. IVY

I'd need to call the warehouse. It's very busy this time of year.

HOLLY

Please. Don't make me go all the way home without knowing that they'll have a merry Christmas.

Mr. Ivy considers, pushes an intercom button, speaks into it.

MR. IVY

(Into intercom)

Kringly to Mr. Ivy's office please, Kringly to Ivy's office. Thank you.

(To Holly)

There. I've called the floor supervisor, he can pull the presents. Then you'll have to go.

HOLLY

Thank you.

MR. IVY

Are you sure you can't persuade your parents to reconcile?

HOLLY

I've tried with them both, and they refuse to budge.

MR. IVY

Stubborn, are they?

HOLLY

Very.

MR. IVY

I see the family resemblance. Ah, here's Kringly now.

KRINGLY enters. Energetic in a jingle-bell attired costume, his holiday spirit is two notches too exuberant.

KRINGLY

You asked to see me, Mr. Ivy? Ooooh! Who have we here?

MR. IVY

Um, Kringly this is Holly Middlemuss from Encino.

KRINGLY

Well, MAAARry Christmas! Kringly's very happy to meet you! That's a lovely sweater.

MR. IVY

Yes okay, Kringly, Miss Holly wants you to retrieve two packages from the warehouse but I--

KRINGLY

(Over the top delight)

Two packages?! From the warehouse?!

HOLLY

They're for my parents.

MR. IVY

Yes, I explained that the floor is very busy this time of year and you may not be able to--

KRINGLY

Taking a peek at your parents' Christmas presents? Kringly finds this highly irregular!

MR. IVY

It's all right, Kringly. I'm signing off on this. I'm writing out the requisition order right now.

Mr. Ivy fills out a form.

KRINGLY

Tell me, little girl.

MR. IVY

She's 22.

KRINGLY

Why do you need to see what your mummy and daddy are getting?

HOLLY

Because I'm afraid they're not going to get what they really need this year.

KRINGLY

And what is that?

HOLLY

Each other. They're separated.

KRINGLY

Separated?! Kringly is sad to hear that! Kringly bets Mr. Ivy is sad to hear that too!

MR. IVY

All right, Kringly, you should probably get back to the floor.

KRINGLY

It just breaks Kringly's heart, you know that? It breaks Kringly's heart.

HOLLY

Well I'm sad too.

MR. IVY

Okay, here, take the form, grab the gifts and bring them up here. Come on.

KRINGLY

Kringly needs a moment here.

HOLLY

Aww, Kringly. Don't be sad. I've got a plan to bring them together.

KRINGLY

You do?!

MR. IVY

Kringly, come on. I even wrote the claim numbers out for you. Go get them, then get back to work. And hurry up.

Kringly takes the paper, heads for the door.

KRINGLY

I'll be right back, Holly.

HOLLY

Thank you, Kringly.

Kringly exits.

MR. IVY

Is that true? Do you really have a plan for your parents?

HOLLY

I just thought of something. I don't know if it'll work.

MR. IVY

I'm sure it will. You seem a resourceful young woman.

HOLLY

Thank you.

MR. IVY

I must admit, I was surprised to see you up here. Your file says you haven't asked Santa Claus for anything since you were fourteen.

HOLLY

That's right. And that was for a guitar.

MR. IVY

So why put in a new request now? Eight seasons later?

HOLLY

I guess as you grow up, you start to lose a little of that feeling of magic the season carries with it. At least I did. It just becomes another day of the year, but the sad part is that it doesn't even register as a loss. Forgetting about Santa or that warm feeling with your family around you, it's all part of growing up. You can take care of yourself. You tell yourself that, anyway. But this year--I don't know. Mom, dad, and me, we all feel lonely. I guess I need some of that holiday magic back.

MR. IVY

As you can see, we don't really run on magic here, just efficiency. I hope this hasn't been a wasted trip.

HOLLY

I hope so too...

Kringly reenters carrying two presents with claims tags attached to them.

KRINGLY

Here we are!

(Reading the invoices)

"1-1-7-5-3-9-8-4-stroke-M." "1-1-7-7-3-2-4-1-stroke-W."

MR. IVY

Excellent! Thank you.

KRINGLY

I hope these gifts bring your family as much happiness as possible! Under the circumstances, Kringly means.

HOLLY

Thank you, Kringly, that's very sweet of you. Hey, do you think there's magic everywhere? Even in this office?

KRINGLY

Magic in this office? But of course!

Kringly takes in the office, looks at Mr. Ivy, who is frowning at him.

KRINGLY (CONT'D)

After all, you're here. And you bring the magic with you!

MR. IVY

All right, Kringly.

KRINGLY

I need to get to the warehouse floor, busy busy!! MAAAAARRRY CHRISTMAS!!

Kringly exits, jingling.

MR. IVY

Well Miss Holly, here's your parents' gifts, as requested. Contents listed right on the claims tag. See? For your father, a new coffee maker.

HOLLY

That's great, he needs it. There's only a microwave in his kitchen.

MR. IVY

And for your mother there's a...no, that can't be right.

HOLLY

What is it?

MR. IVY

It says it's a fifty dollar gift certificate to the Sushi House.

HOLLY

(Smiling)

No, that's right. She loves the spicy tuna rolls.

MR. IVY

Well. There you go. I hope they'll be happy with their gifts.

HOLLY

Mr. Ivy.

MR. IVY

That's all, Miss Middlemuss. Have a safe trip back.

Mr. Ivy returns to the paperwork on his desk. Holly remains standing, looking at the gifts.

HOLLY

Mr. Ivy?

MR. IVY

There's a lot of paperwork on my desk and time is running short.

HOLLY

I know. But what if... What if two of the presents got mixed up and delivered to the wrong house?

MR. IVY

Unthinkable. Such mistakes never happen now that the sleigh uses G-P-S.

HOLLY

Sure, but if mom got the coffee maker and dad got the Sushi House gift certificate... Don't you see? Neither of them has use for the wrong gift. Mom already has a coffee maker and dad hates sushi.

MR. IVY

Rest assured, we don't--

HOLLY

(Interrupting)

But they'd each know who could use their misdelivered present. And it might just be enough to get them talking again.

MR. IVY

That's pure speculation.

HOLLY

But we have to try. That's my plan. We can switch the claim tags.

Holly starts removing the tags.

MR. IVY

Here! No! You can't do that!

HOLLY

Come on, just these two, for the greater good.

MR. IVY

No! Miss Middlemuss, you're putting my job at stake!

Mr. Ivy prevents the switch, finally taking the presents off the desk.

HOLLY

Please. If this works, it'll be worth much more to my family than what's inside those boxes.

MR. IVY

You don't know if it will work, this tag-switching business.

HOLLY

No, I don't, but Mr. Ivy, I've got to do something. I came this far just to make a wish. Please don't take that away from me.

MR. IVY

(In frustration)

I can't let you do this. If I'm a party to this and the circumstances are discovered, then I could lose my job.

HOLLY

You won't. How could anyone here--especially here!--fault you for granting a wish? If anything happens, I will praise you. I will write the best letter to Santa he's ever read.

MR. IVY

No. Miss... Holly. I'm sorry, but no. I sympathize, I do. But what you're asking...goes against all of my professional instincts.

HOLLY

I understand. Thank you anyway.

Mr. Ivy puts the gifts back on the desk. Holly turns to leave.

A beat, and Holly turns back to address Mr. Ivy.

HOLLY

To get my mother and father to realize how much they still need each other? That's gonna take some real magic. And I've always believed that's what you really make up here. It's not about the presents, it's about the happiness they bring to people, a reminder that we care, that we love. That's why I traveled all this way. I had to see if I could find that feeling again. Because I believe Kringly is right: magic is everywhere. Even in this office.

Mr. Ivy frowns at the gifts, studies them, thinking.

A pause, then he decides.

MR. IVY

Well. Holly. Perhaps if I turned around in my chair in this manner, not looking at anything in particular other than my modest collection of snow globes...

Mr. Ivy turns away and Holly, taking her cue, switches the tags on the gifts.

HOLLY

Those are very nice snow globes, sir.

MR. IVY

Aren't they? Yes, I like them because they are decorative and can also function, when needed, as paperweights...

HOLLY

How nice. You can turn around now, if you wish.

Mr. Ivy turns back.

MR. IVY

Well.

HOLLY

Well.

A beat; Holly is very happy. Then, back to business:

MR. IVY

Yes, well, I'm going to have to deny your nine-fifty. Officially, company policy states that we do not interfere in third party relationships.

HOLLY

I understand.

MR. IVY

Good. So, I will send these packages back to processed claims and trust that that will be the end of the matter.

HOLLY

Okay.

MR. IVY

Very good. Thank you for coming, Miss Middlemuss. Have a safe trip back.

HOLLY

Thank you. Really.

MR. IVY

I did nothing. Merry Christmas.

HOLLY

Merry Christmas to you.

They shake hands. Holly starts to leave.

MR. IVY

Do you think... Do you think it will work?

HOLLY

I don't know. But for the first time in a while, I feel like there's magic again. Just a little bit. Because there's hope.

Holly smiles and exits.

Holly and Mr Ivy - Jason Half 14.

Mr. Ivy sits for a moment. He looks at the gifts, then pushes the intercom button.

MR. IVY

(Into intercom)

Kringly to Mr. Ivy's--

(Reconsiders)

Never mind. Cancel Mr. Kringly. Thank you.

Mr. Ivy rises, picks up the packages.

MR. IVY (CONT'D)

Kringly's got his hands full. I can take these back myself.

He crosses to the door, a spring in his step we haven't seen before. He leaves the office whistling "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

Lights fade.

THE END