

A Christmas Role Play

The Christmas Bus

by Fr. Dan Kovalak

The setting is a bus. There are seven ‘passengers’ – two boys and 5 girls – and a narrator. Characters are seated by twos. The bus is broken down and the passengers are stuck. It is close to Christmas. The audience is essentially listening to their individual thoughts/prayers as they wait for the bus to be fixed.

Seven character monologues are offered. The lack of interaction makes it possible to adjust down the number of students. (The final character monologue would be adjusted accordingly).

At the conclusion, the audience is invited to join in the singing of *O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL*.

Characters (suggested pairings):

- (1) **Hollingsworth F. Pendleton III** – business exec with a briefcase
- (2) **Katy Bookmeister** – librarian with a book
- (3) **Marcy “Pinky” Pavlov** – waitress wearing an apron
- (4) **Dr. Penelope “Penny” Applegate** – doctor with a nice coat
- (5) **Joe “Cruiser” Balinsky** – truck driver with wallet photos
- (6) **Ginger Soup** – actress wearing makeup
- (7) **Helen Constantine** – mother/homemaker, sitting alone at rear

Note: If children are unable to memorize parts, it is appropriate to either have them read them (like a newspaper on the bus) OR to record their parts on a voice track prior to the performance.

Narrator:

Christmas—the most wonderful time of the year! Young and old alike are filled with excitement, anticipation and joy! Everyone is running to get everything ready—running to post office to get stamps for their cards. Running to the grocery store to get the nuts for their baklava and potatoes for their perogi. Running to the mall—several times—to get those special gifts for those special people.

But in the middle of all of this running, who has the time to think about the really important things in life?

Our scene today is a bus full of people—ordinary people like you and me—going about their daily activities. But on this particular day, close to Christmas, snow is falling, traffic is heavy, and roads are dangerous. *The bus has broken down*. It will probably be hours before its passengers will get to where they’re going.

But in the meantime, this problem may be *a blessing in disguise*. Because it gives the riders that time *they wished they had*...to think about things.

Let me introduce them to you. First there is **Hollingsworth F. Pendleton III**, a successful business executive. **Katy Bookmeister** is a librarian. **Marcy Pavlov** is a waitress who recently came to American from overseas. They call her “Pinky”. **Dr. Penelope**

Applegate is a physician at the hospital. They call her “Penny”. **Joe Balinsky** has been driving a truck for over 20 years. On the CB, they call him “Cruiser”. **Ginger Snap** is an aspiring actress who’s waiting for her big part in movies. And **Helen Constantine** is a homemaker and mother of three.

Let’s listen to their thoughts as they bide their time on a broken-down bus...

KATY BOOKMEISTER

(aloud) **Mr. Bus Driver, will we be moving soon?!**

(thoughts) Oh dear! Will this bus ever get going again! I’ll never make it to the library today. And I have all those children coming at 10 o’clock...and have to put up the Christmas display ... and I have to put back all those books that were returned yesterday ... and I need to rewind all those videos. Oh dear! ... and I’ll never make it to the bank today! How will I ever be able to buy Lois a present? I’m sure she is getting me something nice. Oh, come on bus! Get me out of here! It’s Christmas! (pause)

Christmas, Christmas, Christmas! Why do I worry so much about Christmas? I have a hundred other things to worry about. I don’t need Christmas! (pause)

Christmas ... Christmas. I wonder! Lord, help us out here. It’s all Your fault anyway! It’s Your Birthday! Can’t you see that I’m doing all this for You? I’m trying to be nice to everyone, trying to help people learn to read and telling Your story to children. Why can’t You help me out? You know I love You! (pause)

Lord, why were you born, anyway? Was it so that we could have this kind of Christmas? Was it to get us to love babies? And then You died on the cross! Why Lord? For me? ***Who am I lord, that You should come to me?***

GINGER SNAP

Won’t this bus ever move! Here I am, the great actress—sitting on a beat-up old bus. I wonder if Whoopi Goldberg ever had this problem!? I have an 11 o’clock with my hairdresser. And I’ll never make lunch with my director.

(aloud) **“Hey, do you think we can move a little! I am getting old sitting here!”**

(thoughts) Look at all the people here ... just stuck! Going nowhere! (pause)

That’s kind of like my career. I’ve been bending over backwards for all these producers, for what? For a little part in a soap opera, for some pocket change from a commercial? I thought for sure I’d get a spot in the Christmas show. (pause)

Christmas. That’s what all this is about. Everybody’s worried about Christmas, for what?! Oh God! Oh God! Oh God... I wonder if you’re listening to this? If You are, how about a little assist here? I mean, You know my life’s a mess. Can’t you just get me one part in one *big* show? Then, You know, I’ll pay You back! I’ll pray more. I’ll help others more. I’ll even ... go to church! How about it Lord? Are You listening? (pause)

Wait a minute. Christmas. Jesus’ birthday. Am I praying to a little baby? But Jesus is God. God became a baby?! Then He died on a cross?! For what?! For me? ***Who am I Lord, that You should come to me?***

JOE “CRUISER” BALINSKY

(aloud) **Come on you bunch of losers, get this thing fixed! Better yet, get me some tools and I’ll fix it myself. I’ve been drivin’ a truck for twenty years. And I got a load waitin’ for me in town.**

(thoughts) ‘Cruiser’ they call me. Well I ain’t doin’ much cruisin’ today. You know, I really hate snow. Almost got sideswiped in my last truck going to the West Coast. (pause)

Suppose I won't be seein' my family again this Christmas. That'll be three in a row I missed. My boy Joe's probably in the Christmas play again. I should get him somethin' from that sports store in town. (pause)

Wonder if my boy Tom will make it home from college? Gees, *that* sets me back some cash! I'll have to make a couple extra runs this month just to pay for his schoolin'!

(aloud) **Come on, let's get goin'!**

(thoughts) Where in the blazes are all these folks goin'? They sure ain't gonna get there today! I guess we're all just kinda stuck here together. (pause)

Funny ... the people you meet on the road. Specially at this time of year. Everybody's rushin' for Christmas. For what? It's nothin' but a birthday ... Jesus' birthday. (pause)

Jesus' birthday—is that what all this is about? Who is He anyway, just a little baby! A baby! Who grew up ... did all kinds of miracles and stuff ... taught people to live right ... died on a cross ... for what? For me? ***Who am I Lord, that You should come to me?***

MARCY “PINKY” PAVLOV

(foreign accent) How about that—bus is stuck, just like in my country. Everything's same, even buses. Sometimes they go, sometimes they stuck. But I never gonna make it to restaurant on time. Boss is gonna be mad. Take away my tips. Maybe I not even get to eat special today. Oy oy! (pause)

Why all these people so sad? Never been on broken bus before? Once I going to soccer game with my Yanni. Three buses broke. Nobody worry. Play another game next day. (pause)

Oh how I miss my Yanni. I come to America for work. Leave Yanni with my folks. Try to make money, bring him here. Now bus broken. And for Christmas! If I no work, can no buy presents, no mail federal express home. (pause)

Lord, Lord, bless my Yanni, my family, my friends, my boss. Don't make him angry with me. I know he is a good man at heart, just not show anyone because business is business. Lord thank you for giving me strength to work even though I stuck. Thank you for chance in America, for apartment and food—especially Tuesday special. Thank you, Lord, for Christmas—even like Americans celebrate. Maybe they forget You a little bit with many things to take attention, but they still love You ...and I love You too. Because ... ***Who am I Lord, that You should come to me?***

DR. PENELOPE APPLGATE

Here I am, the successful doctor, stranded here on a lousy bus. Well that serves me right! Two days my car's in the shop and I decide 'hey, I'll just take the bus for a change.' Smart huh?! What day is this anyway! (pause)

Gee, it's almost Christmas already. Oh well, it's just the same. I have to cover for my partner on Christmas anyway. It'll just be another day. More sick people, more accidents, more people eating too much and drinking too much. More cat-scans, more x-rays, more blood tests. Oh I hate to work with that miserable lab! (pause)

Yeah, more flu, more heart attacks, more arthritis, more cancer. You'd think that God would give people a break from all this at Christmas. (pause)

How is it God? Can't You hold off on all the sickness at Christmastime? I mean I understand sometimes people celebrate too much. I don't mind that. But, hey Lord, can't You just back off on the diseases a little? You know how it affects all those families. It ruins Christmastime for a lot of them. (pause)

Lord, how about it? Can You grant little ole me this one little wish ... this prayer? Yes, *I'm actually praying!* Imagine, Lord, I'm talking to You. It's been a long time hasn't it?! But certainly You know my troubles ... but I'm not even asking You to take care of *my* problems. I just see too much pain and suffering Lord, I pray that You'd somehow stop it ... Please, in honor of Christmas, Your birthday, how about granting me this one prayer? Come to my aid God, answer my prayer. (pause)

But ... ***Who am I Lord, that You should come to me?***

HOLLINGSWORTH F. PENDLETON III

Look at me ... the big business executive! I could buy this whole darn bus company out of petty cash! The one day I decide to let my wife drive off with the Mercedes I get on this stupid bus.

(aloud) **I don't suppose this wreck would have a fax, or a cell phone would it?**

(thoughts) Gee my office is gonna go nuts! And at this *time* of year no less — year-end reports, board meetings, staff meetings, consultants up to my ears. I don't need this hassle ... not *now* of all times! (pause)

Better make some notes. To Geri, cancel my 3 o'clock, postpone my 4 o'clock to 5, and call Donald and tell him I won't make it to the club until 6. Copy the report on my desk and fax it to the Tokyo office before 5. What else? (pause)

Oh man! Call Macy's and order one of those tennis bracelets for my wife. And pick out some earrings or something for my daughters. Charge it to my account. Deliver them to the office by Tuesday. (pause)

Just when I'm getting a handle on things, *Christmas* has to come along! What a hassle. (pause)

Christmas. Christmas ... again. Seems like I just went through this yesterday. They should just make it every *four* years like the elections. Why *every* year? (pause)

I guess it's because it's a birthday. I celebrate mine every year. But I wonder if God really wants it this way? Can't He move *His* to July when things aren't so busy? He could've been born anytime he wanted, how hard would it be to change it? ... Lord, how about it? Can't you change Christmas? (pause)

Listen to me, *I'm praying!* Haven't done that in a while. But hey, God, You *know* I'm busy ... and its all for my family. You understand don't You God? So maybe I've slipped a few times. I just do what I need to do to get ahead, Lord. (pause)

Yeah, I wasn't happy about firing that guy in accounting but he wasn't pulling his weight. It's too bad his kid had a bad heart, but hey, I've got to do my job too. (pause)

I wonder if he got another job? Maybe I was too hard on him? (pause)

Lord, I hope You're taking care of him and his family. How about helping me out a little this one time ... after all it's Christmas?! Look *after* him for me, Lord. Can you grant me this one little favor? I'll pay You back... But ... ***Who am I Lord, that You should come to me?***

HELEN CONSTANTINE

Goodness gracious will I ever get home today? Suzie and Mary will be coming home from school, Stephan will be delivering his papers, Bill will be home from work, the dog will wreck the house and I'll still be on this wretched bus.

(aloud) **Is there another bus coming for us, sir?**

(thoughts) Now let's not panic Helen, its just a little interruption. Your family knows what to do. (pause)

But I'll never get dinner ready in time for them before the play tonight. And I was supposed to bring cookies.

(aloud) **Is another bus coming for us, sir?**

(thoughts) Look at all these people, stuck like me. I wonder where they're all going? They'll be late too. But they don't look *too* upset.

Look at that woman. What a nice coat. Probably a doctor or lawyer or something. Looks like she's daydreaming. (pause)

And there's that loud fella, looks like a truck driver. Just took some pictures out of his wallet ... probably his family. (pause)

There's a waitress... what a fancy apron. Is she crying? Looks like tears to me. (pause)

And *that* woman looks very professional. She appears to be reading a book ... *but it's upside down!* (pause)

There's a beautiful girl, probably a model or something ... just staring out the window. (pause)

A man with a fancy briefcase. I wonder who he works for? He looks important. But he's just sitting there looking at the ceiling. (pause)

What's *with* all these people? Aren't they as upset as me that we can't get this bus moving? We'll all be late ... and at Christmastime, no less. (pause)

Christmastime ... Oh how I love it! The decorations, the tree, the presents, all those old pictures of the kids with Santa. Sitting together with some hot chocolate – just our family ... being together for a change ... Maybe *that's* what all these people are thinking about too?! (pause)

Lord, thank you for giving, me this time to think about others. Thank you for my family and friends, for our home and good health. Thank you even for broken down buses. And thanks especially for Christmas, Lord – when all this comes together to give meaning to our lives. (pause)

Lord, I have this one prayer. Can Christmas be celebrated *every* day, please? I know I haven't thanked you enough for all of Your blessings, but maybe, if Christmas came every day, I'd take more time to do this ... So now, Lord, even as You came as a babe in a manger, so come now to hear my prayer, from a humble and unworthy heart ... But ... ***Who am I Lord, that You should come to me?***

Narrator:

After several hours of waiting, the bus finally got going again. But it was strange to watch the riders getting off at their stops. Here were a bunch of people who never met, greeting one another! They even wished *the driver* a Merry Christmas. There was a certain peace with each of them. Was it just the wonder of Christmas?

As the story goes, we remember wise men, shepherds, and a bunch of people in a crowded inn. They were all busy people going about their business. But on one holy night in history, they were brought together in the city of Bethlehem. Their broken-down bus was a cave where a Child was born. It was God incarnate—Jesus Christ. And as they brought their gifts, watched in wonder, shared the news of this truly blessed event, and celebrated for the first time what has been celebrated ever since, that thankful generation said in the hearts; ***Who am I Lord, that You should come to me?***

Let's think about this as we sing – **O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL.**