

A Christmas Wish by Mary Jones

JENNY: doer of good deeds

CASSIEL: one of the seven angels who holds the bowls of God's wrath.

TWO ROBED FIGURES

TIME: the present.

The scene opens on a Christmas morning, in a decorated living room—lit-up tree, wrapped gifts, etc. JENNY comes in, plops down with her gifts. She spots one, grabs it and unwraps it. A huge puff of smoke, and CASSIEL appears.

CASSIEL

(reading from a card) Greetings, I am CASSIEL, the Christmas Angel. I am here to... *(showing JENNY the card)* Can you read this?

JENNY

Um, I-I think it says "bestow."

CASSIEL

Huh. Yeah. Damn smudging. OK. *(Begins reading from card again)* I am here to bestow on you a Christmas wish, because of your kindness and good nature. *(Stops reading from card.)* One rule—no wishing for extra wishes. Got it? No loopholes. So what do you want?

JENNY

I get a wish?

CASSIEL

That's what they told me—

JENNY

Why?

CASSIEL

Why what?

JENNY

Why do I get a wish?

CASSIEL

[Sigh] Yeah, well, "God decides every year that the person who has done the most good in the world will be granted one wish for Christmas, as a sign of the Lord's commitment to 'peace on earth, good will toward men'." You get it this year.

JENNY

Am I really the person doing the most good?

CASSIEL

Yeah. So what is it? Love? Money? Fame?

JENNY

World peace!

CASSIEL

Huh?

JENNY

What about world peace? That seems like a good thing to wish for, what with it being Christmas and all—as you said, “Peace on earth, goodwill toward men”—

CASSIEL

Wait a minute now, you don’t want that!

JENNY

I don’t?

CASSIEL

No! I mean, think about it—world peace means no more war. No war means no weapons. No weapons puts a huge dent in the military-industrial complex, throwing the manufacturing industry out of whack. Suddenly you’ve got massive layoffs, unemployment, depression, starvation, all of which bankrupts the world governments which then collapse, leading to chaos, men and women in caves, wearing bearskins—an end to civilization as we know it!

JENNY

Oh. Well, um... What about an end to world hunger?

CASSIEL

Forget it.

JENNY

Now come on, what’s wrong with ending world hunger?

CASSIEL

Everything. Listen—you end world hunger, suddenly nobody’s starving to death. Everybody starts reproducing. Now you’ve got overpopulation, which leads to invasions, annexing land, starting wars, bombs, nuclear annihilation—

JENNY

Are you sure you’re a Christmas Angel?

CASSIEL

Actually, no—right now I should be at the gates of the Abyss with Apollyon, holding one of the seven bowls of God’s wrath and waiting for Armageddon to begin... but the boss thought I was a little too anxious to get going. Bastard. Just because I let a few plagues go early... Look, will you just listen to me? Wish for something practical, like a billion dollars or something.

JENNY

An end to materialism.

CASSIEL

Remember what I said about hurting manufacturing? I mean, what are ya, a commie?

JENNY

OK—what about universal equality? “God is no respecter of persons” and all that?

CASSIEL

Then who would work in the factories? Drive the buses? Sorry, kid, no disruption of the social hierarchy!

JENNY

You’re a bastard!

CASSIEL

Look—I ain’t leavin’ until you make a wish, got it?

JENNY

A wish? You want a wish?! I wish you’d go to hell!

[JENNY realizes what she has said, and claps her hand over her mouth in horror]

CASSIEL

What did you say?

JENNY

No! Oh no, I didn’t mean—

CASSIEL

[Genuinely shocked] That’s what I thought you said.

[There is a peel of thunder, a flash, and two robed figures appear to cart the screaming CASSIEL away offstage.]

JENNY

No! That’s not what I meant! I... That’s not what I wanted.

[JENNY sits on the chair, and notices a present by her feet. She reads aloud]

As a consolation, please accept this gift—

[JENNY opens the present, and pulls out a book.]

“The 2003 Entertainment Guide and Coupon Book.” Damn it, I already have one of those!