

A White Elephant Christmas

3 Males, 3 Females, 2 M/F, and Extras M/F

JESTER (M/F) funny man of the Court

TOWN CRIER (M/F) the professional announcement maker and best friend of the Jester

KING (M) ruler of the realm who did not like the gift the Duke gave him last Christmas, so he gave him a white elephant

DUKE (M) the Duke of Cornwall who is being financially ruined by the white elephant

DUCHESS (F) the Duchess of Cornwall and a voice of common sense

FIONA (F) scullery maid who hates the white elephant but has created a gift exchange around it

HOLLY THE HUCKSTER (F) a purveyor of goods to the gullible

SID THE SARCASTIC (M) Holly's sidekick who's funny sarcastic, not passive-aggressive sarcastic (okay, maybe both)

EXTRAS (M/F): Members of the Court, Guards, Servants, and Pages

Sample Pages

FANFARE AND WELCOME

(When guests have been seated, a second BRASS FANFARE will signal all entertainers to clear the hall. Lights up on main stage as TOWN CRIER & JESTER enter from opposite sides of the stage.)

TOWN CRIER: Wes hale, good Jester!

JESTER: Good evening, Town Crier. Have you come to announce the King's visit?

TOWN CRIER: Yes, I traveled ahead of the court to make sure all is ready.

JESTER: The Duke has been preparing for weeks. Though, it's been a bit ... stressful.

TOWN CRIER: Stressful?

(SFX of an elephant trumpeting offstage. TOWN CRIER looks side stage, confused.)

FIONA: *(Offstage.)* Scat! Scat you big oaf! Get out of my scrubbing tub!

TOWN CRIER: Jester, what on earth is going on back there? Has someone taken up the trumpet?

(SFX of elephant trumpeting again.)

FIONA: *(Offstage.)* Don't you dare! *(SFX of water splashing.)*

FIONA: *(Offstage.)* Oh, now you've done it! How do you like that? *(SFX of smacking, elephant trumpeting and retreating.)* And don't come back, you hear me?

TOWN CRIER: Jester, I ask again. What is going on back there?

DUKE: *(Entering.)* It's that wretched white elephant the King gave me for Christmas last year.

TOWN CRIER: A white elephant? What a generous gift.

DUKE: Gift? I can't afford to take care of an elephant! Besides, it wasn't a gift.

TOWN CRIER: I'm very confused. I thought it was a Christmas gift from the King?

DUKE: He called it a gift. It was meant as a punishment. The King hated my present to him last year, so he gave me a white elephant to let me know he was displeased.

JESTER: Very displeased.

DUKE: The elephant has nearly ruined me financially.

TOWN CRIER: Well, what did you give the King last year?

DUKE: A portable decision-making kit.

TOWN CRIER: A what?

DUKE: A portable decision-making kit.

JESTER: Yeah, you heard him right.

TOWN CRIER: Um, how does that work?

DUKE: Well, you see, contained within a box is a piece of parchment, a pair of scissors, and a rock. It will make decision-making easier for the King. (*JESTER & TOWN CRIER just stare at DUKE.*) What?

TOWN CRIER: You thought that was a good gift?

DUKE: It's better than the other decision-making kit. The coin.

JESTER: I don't know. At least the coin makes cents for a change. (*Laughs heartily at his joke.*)

TOWN CRIER: Where did you buy the decision-making kit?

DUKE: From a traveling tinker.

TOWN CRIER: What was his name?

DUKE: I didn't ask for her name, and she didn't give it to me.

TOWN CRIER: Maybe there's a reason she never gave it to you, if you know what I mean.

DUKE: All right! I got it completely wrong. And for a year, I've been saddled with this elephant. Do you know how much it costs to feed one? And the King would never allow me to give it away.

JESTER: (*To TOWN CRIER.*) So, the Duke hopes to get back in the King's good graces this year.

TOWN CRIER: And how do you plan to do that?

DUKE: With the perfect gift. Something that will be so spectacular, the King will be willing to take back the white elephant.

TOWN CRIER: And did you find the perfect gift?

DUKE: I believe I have. (*Crosses to the KING's chair and pulls out a bag of cheerios.*) I got this from an unusual woman I met traveling on the road.

JESTER: What is it?

DUKE: Donut seeds! You know what a sweet tooth the King has. And I spent extra on the Honey Nut variety. Now he can grow acres of donuts! (*JESTER & TOWN CRIER just stare at DUKE.*) What?

JESTER: Did you buy these donut seeds from the same woman?

DUKE: Of course not. What kind of fool do you think I am? This woman had an eye-patch and a hook. A completely different woman.

JESTER: This woman who sold you the donut seeds ... did she travel in a wobbly wagon—

TOWN CRIER: Pulled by a cranky donkey—

JESTER: Wearing bangles and baubles?

TOWN CRIER: The woman, not the donkey.

DUKE: (*Hesitant.*) Yes ...

JESTER: Was she traveling with a sarcastic sidekick—

TOWN CRIER: Bobbing on the buckboard—

JESTER: Crying out,

JESTER / TOWN CRIER: “Presents to please, gifts to gratify, boondoggles to bewitch”?

DUKE: (*Hesitant.*) Yes ... How did you know—

TOWN CRIER: (*To JESTER.*) I thought the King banished them from the realm?

JESTER: (*To TOWN CRIER.*) Clearly, they’re back.

DUKE: Who?

TOWN CRIER: Well, I hate to tell you this, but that was Holly the Huckster.

JESTER: And her evil sidekick, Sid the Sarcastic.

TOWN CRIER: Sid gets you really depressed.

JESTER: And then Holly convinces you that you need retail therapy. You end up buying completely useless gifts.

DUKE: You mean, these aren’t actual donut seeds?

TOWN CRIER: You know that donuts don’t grow in a field, don’t you?

DUKE: Well, I guess I never really thought about where they come from. The servants simply bring them to me when I desire them. I've always wondered why they didn't ripen. (*JESTER & TOWN CRIER just stare at DUKE.*) What?

JESTER: Never mind. In any case, you've been swindled.

(*BRASS FANFARE.*)

DUKE: Oh, that wretched elephant!

TOWN CRIER: Actually, Duke, that's the brass fanfare announcing the King.

DUKE: The King! Oh, no! Has he arrived so soon? What will I do for a Christmas present?

JESTER: Worry not, Duke. The Town Crier and I happen to be experts in such matters. (*To TOWN CRIER.*) I think we'll need Fiona for this.

TOWN CRIER: Quite right.

JESTER: We'll take care of this. You go greet the King, and we'll get this all sorted out. (*DUKE and JESTER exit.*)

TOWN CRIER:

(*Looks to the back of the hall.*) I see the King has arrived. (*Calls out loudly.*)

Ready the meal and heat the wassail!

Bring forth the meat and finest of ale!

Blow the clarion! Singers appear!

The King and his court are drawing near! (*Exits quickly.*)

After wassail, the exchange begins ...

JESTER: So, what is this white elephant game the Duke has devised?

TOWN CRIER: I'm working on it.

JESTER: You mean, you don't have a plan yet?

TOWN CRIER: I said I'm working on it!

FIONA: (*Enters.*) What's so important that it can't wait until after the meal?

JESTER: The Duke needs a fabulous gift for the King.

FIONA: Is that all? I'm pretty busy. Besides, doesn't the King have enough in life?

TOWN CRIER: If the gift puts the King in a good mood, he will take back Blanco.

FIONA: Who's Blanco?

JESTER: The white elephant.

FIONA: You mean that miserable, monstrous leviathan that keeps wrecking my kitchen?

JESTER: Yeah, that's the one.

FIONA: 'Cause the *Boar's Head Carol* is about to be changed to the *Elephant's Head Carol*.

JESTER: Um, that doesn't sound all that appetizing.

FIONA: So, let me get this straight. If the King is pleased with his gift, he'll take that oafish, oversized mammoth away?

TOWN CRIER: That's the plan, but we need to invent a game called the white elephant. (*FIONA looks confused.*) I was improvising.

JESTER: During the course of the game, we must produce a gift that the King will love.

(*BRASS FANFARE.*)

TOWN CRIER: And quickly. They're serving the first course!

FIONA: I think I have an idea. (*Exiting.*) I won't be long.

JESTER: Excellent. We'll just have to stall until she returns.

(*JESTER & TOWN CRIER exit. Lights up on ROYAL TABLE. **The FIRST COURSE is served.** Ambient entertainers may entertain guests at tables. After guests have had some time to eat, JESTER & TOWN CRIER enter.*)

KING: I am quite intrigued by this white elephant gift. So, how do we play the game?

DUKE: (*Looks to JESTER & TOWN CRIER.*) Well, you see ... it's quite ... um ...

JESTER: (*Stalling for time.*) Before we begin, if I may, I am reminded of a joke. Which animals were the last to leave Noah's Ark? (*Beat.*) The elephants because they had to pack their trunks. (*JESTER laughs heartily. ROYAL COURT laughs politely.*)

KING: Clever. Now about this white elephant gift.

JESTER: Oh, and how about this one. What is the biggest type of ant? *(Beat.)* An elephant. *(JESTER laughs heartily. ROYAL COURT laughs politely.)* And why are elephants such bad dancers? *(Beat.)* Because they have two left feet! *(JESTER laughs heartily. ROYAL COURT laughs politely.)*

KING: That's quite enough, Jester.

JESTER: *(Laughing.)* Oh, I could go on all evening.

DUCHESS: Please don't. *(JESTER is brought up short.)*

KING: Besides, I want to know how we play the white elephant game?

FIONA: *(Enters and bows before the ROYAL TABLE.)* I can explain the game, Sire.

KING: So, you are an expert in this white elephant game?

FIONA: Apparently, the Duke has put me in charge of all white elephants. *(SFX elephant trumpeting offstage.)*

DUKE: Is it time for the main course already?

FIONA: No, that's just that aggravating albino making his opinion heard.

KING: What did you say about Blanco?

JESTER: She didn't say Blanco, your majesty. She said, "albino."

TOWN CRIER: We have a guest from Norway.

KING: *(Confused.)* I see.

FIONA: Anyway, back to the white elephant game. We will start with two gifts. Every table will get a chance to keep their gift or switch. And since you're the King, you will get to choose last, which means you'll be able to trade for any gift you want. *(Hands one gift to JESTER then takes the other gift and crosses to table 1.)* I will give the first gift to this table for them to open. *(Hands box to table and waits for them to open it. It is a clothespin with a card "Silent Night Snore Stopper." FIONA holds it up.)* How interesting! A Silent Night Snore Stopper!

DUKE: Isn't it just a simple clothespin?

TOWN CRIER: I believe it goes over the snorer's nose. To stop him from snoring.

KING: Or her.

DUCHESS: Are you saying the Queen snores?

KING: No. "Snore" is too feeble a word for what I experience every night.

TOWN CRIER: Perhaps "snort" or "wheeze"?

JESTER: Or the sound of massive deforestation? *(ALL look at JESTER.)* Lots and lots of sawing.

KING: Jester, are you making fun of the Queen?

JESTER: Oh, not at all, your majesty!

DUKE: *(To KING.)* The Jester often gets carried away. *(To JESTER.)* Just as a person who displeases me gets carried away to the dungeon. Do you want to get carried away, Jester?

JESTER: I'm quiet now.

KING: In any case, I would love to have that present.

FIONA: Oh, but we are just beginning. You may want something else later, so be patient, my King.

JESTER: Besides, if you get that present, the Queen might hang you out to dry. *(KING & DUKE glare at JESTER.)* Sorry, I can't resist a pun. *(KING & DUKE continue to glare.)* I'm very quiet now.

As the evening goes on, the gifts get worse ...

TOWN CRIER: The King loves the white elephant exchange so far.

JESTER: So, we need more gifts. The more gifts we have, the more likely the King will find one that he likes. He'll be in a good mood—

FIONA: And he'll take back that miserable mammoth.

TOWN CRIER: We need to find someone who sells some really good swag.

FIONA: We can just go where I got the first two gifts. That wobbly wagon is stuffed with great loot. You've got to be careful with that donkey, though. He has a nasty disposition.

TOWN CRIER: What a minute. Wobbly wagon?

JESTER: Cranky donkey?

FIONA: *(Hesitant.)* Yes.

TOWN CRIER: That's Holly the Huckster.

FIONA: It is not Holly the Huckster. I bought those gifts from a man named Harry the Honest *(Stressing the "H" in honest)*.

TOWN CRIER: Harry the Honest *(Stressing the "H" in honest)*?

FIONA: Alliteration is big in sales.

JESTER: Are you sure that man is Harry? I mean, Holly's servant is a man called Sid the Sarcastic.

FIONA: No, Harry's servant is a woman named Uma the Uplifting.

TOWN CRIER: I don't know. I mean, the similarities –

HOLLY: *(From offstage.)* Presents to please, gifts to gratify, boondoggles to bewitch!

FIONA: Here he comes now. See for yourself.

(HOLLY and SID enter. SEE PRODUCTION NOTES. SID carries boxes 3-5.)

HOLLY: Presents to please, gifts to gratify, boondoggles to bewitch!

FIONA: Show us your wares, Harry the Honest.

HOLLY: Fiona, my favorite customer! How are you today? *(TOWN CRIER & JESTER circle around HOLLY.)* What's going on?

JESTER: Well, this definitely isn't Holly the Huckster. I mean, look at that mustache. And that nose.

TOWN CRIER: And that definitely isn't Sid the Sarcastic. I mean, look at that hair and those girly arms.

SID: *(In girly voice.)* Yes, that's why I need your manly arms to carry these oh so heavy boxes. *(Unloads the boxes on TOWN CRIER.)*

TOWN CRIER: Wait ... was that sarcastic?

HOLLY: No, it was uplifting. That's why you are up lifting those boxes for me. Thank you!

FIONA: What's in the boxes, Harry?

HOLLY: I can't tell you. They are mystery boxes.

FIONA: What are mystery boxes?

HOLLY: You don't know what's in them. *(Beat. Speaking quickly.)* You buy them as is. No returns.

TOWN CRIER: Wait, wait, wait. No returns? They could be a total rip off.

HOLLY: Or they could be a total treasure. I'll admit, it's a gamble –

JESTER: I love a gambling. What a rush! It's like trying out a new joke for the Royal Court.

FIONA: Or a new recipe.

TOWN CRIER: Or a new, hard-hitting editorial about tax levies. *(ALL stare at TOWN CRIER.)*

SID: *(In girly voice.)* Tax levies. Oh, the rush! Be still my beating heart.

TOWN CRIER: *(To SID.)* Are you being sarcastic?

SID: Sarcastic about tax levies? Perish the thought.

HOLLY: So, Fiona? Do you want to take a chance?

FIONA: I don't know ...

TOWN CRIER / JESTER: Yes, yes, yes!

HOLLY: Good. That will be three and a half crowns.

FIONA: Three and a half crowns? I don't have that kind of money.

JESTER: Here you go *(Counts out money to HOLLY.)* three and a half crowns.

TOWN CRIER: Jester, where did you get that kind of money?

JESTER: That money is the tax levies. I won them in a boxing match against the tax collector.

TOWN CRIER: I told you my editorial about tax levies was hard hitting.

SID: *(In girly voice.)* Oh, the rush.

FIONA: Thanks, Harry. Will you be around the castle tonight if we need more presents?

HOLLY: I'll be peddling my wares hereabouts. Just give a shout. Let's go Sid.

TOWN CRIER: Sid?

HOLLY: Uh, kid. Uma's like a kid sister to me.

SID: *(In girly voice.)* She's not kidding.

(HOLLY & SID exit. FIONA, JESTER, and TOWN CRIER each take a box.)

FIONA: Let's take these mystery gifts to the Royal Court and continue the white elephant.

TOWN CRIER: These gifts could be total trash.

JESTER: Or total treasure.

(Lights up on ROYAL COURT.)

FIONA: What a gamble.

TOWN CRIER / JESTER / FIONA: Oh, the rush!

DUKE: What's the rush?

TOWN CRIER: It's the Christmas rush, my Duke.

JESTER: And we have three more gifts for the white elephant. *(SFX of elephant trumpeting offstage.)* I mean, the white elephant gift exchange.

DUCHESS: The last two gifts were ... interesting.

KING: Interesting? They were very good. Just ask those people who have the gifts so far. Do you like your gifts? *(Points to tables 1 and 2 then waits for a response.)*

DUCHESS: Their responses were ... interesting.

JESTER: Their responses will be interesting ... er, after these gifts.

FIONA: Here's the first one. *(Crosses to table 3 with box 3.)* Here you are. Let's see what you got! *(Table 3 opens the box. FIONA holds up a clear bag of broken candy canes.)*

DUCHESS: What is that?

DUKE: A broken teacup?

KING: A splintered Precious Moments Santa?

DUCHESS: A shattered barber shop pole?

FIONA: It's a Candy Cane Jigsaw Puzzle. (*ALL look at FIONA.*) Expert level.