



**drama by george**

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# Build-Your-Own Jesus

*By George Halitzka*

(A large kiosk sits onstage with a sign overhead that reads "Build-Your-Own Bear." The OWNER is cheerfully collecting money from a DISTRAUGHT MOM, dragging her young DAUGHTER behind her. The DAUGHTER is hugging a huge, brand-new teddy bear and smiling happily.)

DISTRAUGHT MOM

(doing a cash register double-take)

Two hundred and fifty bucks?!

(into her purse)

Do you take Visa?

OWNER

(holding out his hand expectantly)

It's everywhere you want it to be.

DISTRAUGHT MOM

(accusingly)

Your ad said "starting at \$29.95"!

OWNER

Well, it's a funny thing about a Build-Your-Own Bear. It keeps growing till it costs you everything.

DISTRAUGHT MOM

(subject change)

Sweetheart, have you thought of a name?

DAUGHTER

Honey Bear.

DISTRAUGHT MOM

(averting her eyes as she signs the credit slip)

You mean "Money Bear"--

(She averts her eyes as she signs the credit card slip.)

OWNER

Thank you; come again!

DISTRAUGHT MOM

When my rich uncle dies.

DAUGHTER

I forgot--Money Bear needs sunglasses!

DISTRAUGHT MOM

Money Bear's gonna squint.

(DISTRAUGHT MOM pulls her DAUGHTER offstage. Meanwhile, NANCY enters with her two daughters, JULIE and JESSICA.)

JULIE

Mom! Jessica pushed me!

JESSICA

She did it first!

JULIE

I have a *bruise!*

NANCY

Stop it, you two! Jesus is watching!

(JULIE and JESSICA are quiet for a moment, nervously looking at heaven. But once NANCY's back is turned, the shoving match resumes. NANCY whirls on them, pointing upwards.)

Jesus!

OWNER

(stepping into NANCY's path)

Excuse me, ma'am . . . are you sure?

NANCY

What?

JULIE

Mom! It's Build-Your-Own Bear!

JESSICA

Heather Plank has one with his own limo!

OWNER

Are you *sure* Jesus is watching?

NANCY

He sees everything--

OWNER

Maybe that's up to you. Presenting . . . "Build-Your-Own Jesus!"

(With the air of a showman, the OWNER removes part of his sign, to reveal another one underneath that reads "Build-Your-Own Jesus." He lifts a cheesy-looking stuffed version of a Sunday School flannelgraph onto the counter.)

JULIE

Cool!

JESSICA

I don't know *anybody* with their own Jesus!

OWNER

Every God-fearing American should own one.

JESSICA

(puppy-dog eyes)

Please? Pretty please with sugar on top?

JULIE

And a cherry?

OWNER

Starting at \$29.95 . . .

NANCY

Why not?

(The GIRLS cheer. The OWNER takes out two unstuffed Jesus-doll cases.)

JULIE

Can I make mine soft and cuddly?

OWNER

Any way you like your Jesus is okay with me!

(The OWNER begins piling fiber-fill into the Jesus cases.)

OWNER (*cont'd*)

What color hair?

JULIE

Mine's gonna be blonde.

JESSICA

Like Fred Beasley. Julie and Freddy, sittin' in a tree--

JULIE

Shut up!

JESSICA

--K-I-S-S-I-N-G--

JULIE

You're such a baby!

JESSICA

Julie wants to marry *Jesus!*

NANCY

She's had worse boyfriends.

JESSICA

Can mine have big eyes? So I know he feels sorry when I'm grounded?

NANCY

He doesn't feel sorry if you deserve it.

JESSICA

He's my Jesus!

OWNER

Noses, ladies?

JESSICA

(pointing to a small nose)

That little one. He's not sticking it in my business!

OWNER

Now we just need mouths. There's the smiling Jesus . . . the stern Jesus . . . the suffering Jesus--

JULIE

Suffering? My Jesus isn't hanging on any dirty old cross!

NANCY

Good; I'm not washing blood off him.

OWNER

Any clothes today?

JESSICA

The gold robe!

OWNER

Excellent choice--the Pharisee Special! We'll just stick your new friend in the Bear-O-Matic . . .

(He sticks the dolls under the counter. Machine noises.)

JESSICA

My Jesus is better than yours!

JULIE

Is not!

(The GIRLS continue their fight silently. NANCY seems troubled as she speaks to the OWNER.)

NANCY

Do you sell a lot of these?

OWNER

Everyone needs a personal savior.

NANCY

Are . . . *pastors* buying?

OWNER

Reverend Smucker at First Church just ordered a clear one. Nearly invisible.

NANCY

That's good.

(trying to explain)

It made me feel . . . well, I tell my girls Jesus is God . . .

(The machine dings. The OWNER brings two finished dolls up from under the counter with a flourish.)

OWNER

Ladies, your Jesuses are ready!

JULIE

My Jesus is going to heaven, and he won't take you!

JULIE

Mine's a prophet! He sees you taking my turn at dishes.

OWNER

Speaking of profits, that's \$612.35. Paper or plastic?

(He punches keys on the cash register.)

NANCY

What? I don't have that kind of money!

OWNER

Well, it's a funny thing about a Build-Your-Own Jesus. It keeps growing till it costs you everything.

(Blackout.)

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