

Jesus Is Right for Whatever's Wrong

(A Christmas Play)

By Eloise Haycox

Scene 1: Birthday Party Begins

(Scene opens with Carla, Melanie, JoAnn and her friends at Carla's home playing a table game or putting a puzzle together and talking – anything that is comfortable for talking and laughing and being happy.)

JoAnn: Did you guys see the car Bethany's parents got her for her sixteenth birthday?

Melanie: Is that where she got it? It looks really sharp!

JoAnn: She said her parents went to the car dealership and let her pick any car she wanted.

Melanie: Wow! But I don't think Carla will be getting a new car. I got a cell phone for my sixteenth birthday.

Carla: I'm hoping I get a cell phone, too, WITH unlimited phone time AND unlimited text messaging.

Melanie: *(teasingly)* And WHO would you be wanting messages from?

Carla: *(acting embarrassed)* It's nothing, really! He was just asking me if I had my science project done.

JoAnn: *(jokingly)* Science project? I thought it was a SOCIAL SCIENCE project.

Carla: *(covering her face)* But he IS sort of cute, and at least he cared to ask about my homework. But Mom and Dad said I can't date yet, so it doesn't matter anyway. Back to our game, girls! *(Everyone goes back to playing and visiting.)*

JoAnn: *(answering cell phone)* Hello...surely not tonight...please, do I have to come?...right, we've been having fun at Carla's birthday party but her Mom's not even home yet...can't you explain that I already had plans...oh, OK, I'll be there in a little bit. Bye.

Melanie: What's up?

JoAnn: We've got company and my parents want me to come home so we can all go out to eat together. What timing! She's afraid they'll feel bad if I don't join them. Sorry, Carla, I really wanted to stay. Happy Birthday!

Melanie: I'll give you a ride home.

Carla: *(gasps and puts hand to forehead)* The CAKE! I forgot the cake! Mom asked me to pick up the birthday cake from the grocery store and I totally forgot it. Melanie, can you pick it up on your way home?

Melanie: Sure, no problem!

JoAnn: *(chuckling)* Now I won't feel so guilty making her leave your party to take me home. She has to go out anyway.

Carla: See you tomorrow, JoAnn.

Kendra: *(patting stomach)* I'll eat an extra piece of cake for you.

(JoAnn and Melanie leave together as everyone cheerfully waves. Then the girls continue playing and laughing for a little while longer.)

Mom: *(rushing in from work with coat on, taking it off as she talks)* Hi, girls. Sorry I'm late but something came up at work and I had to stay a little longer. Carla, did you bring the cake?

Carla: I forgot it earlier so I asked Melanie to pick it up just a little bit ago.

Mom: *(as she rushes out of the room)* I'll go get the food out, then we will be ready to eat.
(Girls continue to play and visit a while longer)

Mom: *(coming back into the room)* The food is ready. Is Melanie back yet?

Carla: She had to take JoAnn home first. She should be here right away. *(Carla turns back to game as Mom starts to walk out of the room.)*

(They hear someone knocking at the door. Mom rushes towards the door to open it.)

Mom: Probably Melanie with the cake. *(She speaks excitedly as she is opening the door)*

Melan... *(voice fades off as she steps backwards, and puts her hand to her mouth as a policeman is seen at the door)* What's wrong?

Policeman: Are you Mrs. Phillips? Melanie's mother?

Mom: *(breathlessly)* Yes, what...?

Policeman: I'm afraid there's been a horrible accident. Melanie was leaving the grocery store and was struck by a semi – it was on the driver's side. Melanie was killed instantly.

Mom: Not Melanie!! *(turns to Carla, puts both hands on Carla's shoulders and shakes her as she speaks)* It's your fault! If you had picked up the cake like I asked, Melanie would still be alive! Because of you, Melanie is gone!

Policeman: *(putting arm around Mrs. Phillip's shoulders and drawing her away from Carla)*

Mrs. Phillips, it was an accident. It's not Carla's fault; it's not your fault. Apparently the sun was in her eyes and she didn't see the semi coming down the highway and pulled out right in front of it. He didn't have any time at all to stop or swerve or anything.

Mom: *(shoulders drooping)* Where is she? When can we see her?

(Curtain closes)

Scene 2: High School Awards Day at School

(Carla is with her friend, Kendra Jackson and Kendra's parents. The Awards Program has just finished and they are talking before heading home. Both girls are holding several awards – which can be certificates, ribbons, pins and maybe a trophy – whatever is easy to borrow or pick up from second hand stores or something.)

Mrs. Jackson: You both did very well. We're so proud of you Kendra. *(Pointing to Carla's awards)* Carla, you've got to be so happy with the Scholarship and all.

Carla: *(with an eager tone and tossing her head back as she talks)* College, here I come!

Mrs. Jackson: You sound like you're ready leave now and you've not quite graduated yet.

Carla: I can't wait to be myself – to finally get out from under Melanie's shadow.

Kendra: What do you mean? Your sister died two years ago.

Mrs. Jackson: I know you'll never forget her and that she'll always be missed, but what do you mean about "her shadow"?

Carla: *(sadly)* Were my parents here today? No! Want to know why? Mom said it would make her too sad because it would make her wonder how many awards and trophies Melanie would have by now.

Mrs. Jackson: *(places hand gently on Carla's arm)* Carla, dear, surely your mom doesn't mean it quite like that.

Carla: No, really. If you could see our house you'd understand, especially the family room. Mom arranged every ribbon Melanie ever won and put them in frames that are hung on the walls. There's a photo album with her achievement and attendance certificates, and a glass display case for her trophies and awards.

Mrs. Jackson: I can understand that she would want to preserve her memories but surely she notices your achievements, too.

Carla: (*shaking head*) I can't even set any of my awards on my dresser in my own bedroom because it makes her think about Melanie. Dad's OK, but he can't say much otherwise it upsets Mom.

Kendra: No wonder you are ready to move on.

Carla: I think mostly that I just want them to be proud of me just once. I've tried so hard to make them happy. They were always so proud of how smart and talented Melanie was, so I tried harder to make good grades and to excel in music. But all I seem to do is create more memories of how wonderful Melanie was. I finally got Mom to listen to my contest piece one evening, and she started crying and saying that Melanie was just a natural at anything she wanted to do and said she hated listening to me practicing, and then she started yelling at me and told me never to practice at the house again.

Mrs. Jackson: But your hard work really did pay off, Carla. Not only are you the Valedictorian, but you also received a 4-year, full-ride scholarship. You are a very special person, Carla, and we're proud to have you as Kendra's friend. I'm sure you're the reason Kendra started taking her schoolwork more seriously and ended up being the Salutatorian. Before you started studying together, Kendra was much more interested in her social life instead of her grades. Thanks for being a good influence.

Kendra: (*giving Carla a hug*) I wish we could go to the same college, but studying to be a Veterinarian doesn't necessarily mix with getting a major in social services and a minor in music.

Carla: I'm really going to miss you. I could always cry on your shoulder when I needed breathing room from home.

Mrs. Jackson: (*kindly*) Don't be too hard on your parents, Carla. They probably don't realize that they are shutting you out as they grieve the loss of your sister. They haven't stopped to think that you miss her, too. Give them a chance, Carla. I think their love for you is still there, but it may be hiding right now.

(*Curtain closes as they turn to walk away*)

Scene 3: High School Awards Day at Home

(*Curtain opens as Carla is almost home. She meets her dad off stage or at edge of stage – keeping this conversation separated from the next scene in the family room. Mom is in the family room, either walking around looking at the framed awards or the trophies or just sitting on a chair looking thru the album of honors and certificates.*)

Dad: Wow, Carla, if that armload is all awards you received today, you must not have left any for your other classmates.

Carla: (*laughing*) Trust me, Dad, I left the science awards for the other kids – and the woodworkers award, and, well, I left lots for the others.

Dad: So how did you do?

Carla: The best one, Dad, was a 4-year, full-ride scholarship so long as I keep my grades high enough each semester.

Dad: I'm proud of you, girl. I would love to have been there today, but your mother didn't think she could handle it and didn't want me to leave her alone. Better go ahead in and tell your mother the good news.

Carla: Thanks for caring, Dad. I'm trying to understand. You are right, I'd better go see Mom now.