

But friends, let's get to the real reason I'm here today. Fruitcake! That's right! Today we are going to make fruitcake! Yes, the Christmas gift that lasts a lifetime. And friends it's simple. I have put together here a very basic batter. Now before I add the fruit, I like to add just a smidgen of rum. Of course, we want to taste our rum to be sure it hasn't gone bad. (*tastes*) Ummmm, perfect. Rum should always go down smooth. Speaking of going down, I was going down to the market yesterday and happened to spot some lovely fruit and then I said to myself, Julia, why waste good fruit when nobody eats a fruitcake? So I came right back to the convent and found this bowl of perfectly beautiful plastic fruit. No one will ever know the difference. This fruit looks a little dry. Let's give the poor dears a little drink. (*pours rum over fruit*) And one for Julia. (*tastes a bit more*) Oh, yes, very smooth. (*maybe getting a teeny tipsy*) Now let's see. Did I put the rum in the batter? (*pouring a lot in and slurring speech slightly*) Oh well, better safe than sorry I always say.

REV. MOTHER. (*sitting in living room*) Good Lord, deliver me. There may not be a lot to drink at this party, but we've certainly got plenty of mixed nuts!

You know, this reminds me of the time my Mom and Dad were doing their act in Key Largo. Talk about everything going wrong that could go wrong. They were with the circus, ya know. Well, there was a storm... I mean a real lalapalooza! The tent collapsed on one side. So we were all stuck in the trailers. And it was Christmas.

At the same time that the circus was there, Sophie Tucker was in town. She was supposed to be doin' her club act, but, of course, there weren't any customers. That storm was raging like it had been directed by Cecil B. DeMille. Anyway, the hotel people invited all of us over for Christmas. I must've been about 12, I guess. Well, when Sophie Tucker started telling stories, I thought my Mom was gonna die. Soph says, "I thought about going to church with ya—but the last time I went to a church, the priest said, 'I'm sorry, Soph, but you can't come in here with that low-cut dress.'" Soph said, "but Father, I've got a divine right!" He said, 'You've got a pretty good lookin' left, too, but ya still can't come in here in that dress.' I tell ya, I don't think we ever laughed as much as we did that Christmas.

SR. ROBERT ANNE. Yo! Everybody! How ya doing? Welcome to the studios of WCON-TV Hoboken—formerly known as Mount Saint Helen's Convent Basement. I'm Sister Robert Anne from Brooklyn, New York... couldja tell? On behalf of all of us, thanks for being a part of our very first Christmas TV special.

Hey, before we get started, how about a hand for our studio band. (*she acknowledges band*) Now, how many of you have seen one of our benefit shows? All right. How many of you have never laid eyes on us? Okay. Just to be safe, I'd better bring you up to speed. Over here is our Mistress of Novices, Sister Mary Hubert.

SR. AMNESIA. You know, ever since I started recordin' country music, I've been blessed. Well, actually I was blessed before that when I won the Publishers' Clearing House Sweepstakes. But, that was really only a partial blessing since I didn't get to keep the money. It was kind of like when your Grandma gives you a savings bond for Christmas and you're supposed to be excited but you're really not 'cause you can't spend it on anything.

But singing country music is a whole blessing just for me. Like when I got to appear at the Grand Ole Opry with Little Jimmy Dickens and Lulu Roman. You know after I did that people started callin' and askin' me to sing their songs. Course, Reverend Mother won't let me sing just anything. She nixed "I Got You On My Conscience But at Least You're Off My Back." I guess she took it personally. Anyway, it doesn't matter 'cause I've got a brand new hit of my own. It's about me and my brother Will when we were kids. It was written by my friend Holly-John Davenport... you know her? She's the beauty queen who's plannin' on bein' a brain surgeon so she can cut all the dirty thoughts out of people's minds. I think she may be on to something. All right, here we go.

SR. HUBERT. (*narrating*) Once upon a time there was a very nice family in a very nice town. They lived in a very nice house complete with very nice mice and a very nice cat... except when it came to mice... then the cat was... well... there's no other way to put it... a killer! The mice lived behind the living room wall and they never came out because of the cat. They worked there, they ate there, they slept there, they even voted there! And that's where our story begins. T'was the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.

SR. ROBERT ANNE. Actually, Christmas back in Brooklyn meant a lot of **different** things to me. Like one year—Christmas meant a month of detention...

See, we couldn't afford much and my Mom had found this scrawny little Christmas tree... my brother said it woulda been better if we'd decorated the broom! Anyway, there was a tree in front of Finklestein's Pawn Shop that I knew would look great in our living room. I mean, what did the Finklestein's need with a Christmas tree, anyway? Well, it **did** look great in our house till Mr. Finkelstein called my Mom. I didn't even get a lump of coal that Christmas. But hey, I'm not looking for sympathy here. I was a tough kid. I could always handle it all.

Except for the year my dad left. That was rough. It was the one time I'd really tried to clean up my act.

*Music starts under.*

The Sisters told me that if I could prove to them that I could change for the better, I'd be allowed to participate in the living nativity at St. James Cathedral. Ya gotta understand... St. James was the big time. It was like the World Series of Nativities, you know what I'm saying?