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## Joy On Earth

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## Joy On Earth

### Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"The disc was spinning as all discs must. The rebounding sound was Miles' *Sketches of Spain*. It floated up from the stereo, filled the spacious room, settled on the youngman reclining on the modern danish dav. He was sitting loosely-settled back, feet on the coffee table, scotch and water in hand-he was resting, staring into the corner at the tinsel, the lights, the brightness that are Christmas."

### Cover Page Footnote

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## JOY ON EARTH

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You could have asked him about Christmas. Humbug. Perhaps he was confused; certainly he was bitter. "*C'est la vie*", he thought. "That is French for - - " he raised his glass to the empty wall - - for "here's looking at you." He had become used to it. But by no means was he satisfied.

He reached to his right, lifted a phone, and dialed a number. He could hear the click of hidden switch boards, the silence, finally the ring. Someone lifted a receiver.

"Hello, is Debbie there?" He could hear the party sounds — the music, the laughter, the clicking glasses. There were always parties on Christmas eve. It was the season of joy.

"Who is this speaking?" the phone asked.

"It's Bob. Is Debbie there?"

"Oh, Bob. Just a second, I'll call her." Then followed the nervous pause filled with muted music, laughter, glasses. He could sense this holiday joymaking, the phony happiness. At last an answer.

"Hello, Bob. It's good to hear from you." He felt tremblely as she talked. He always did. "How have you been, anyways?" The hope, the doubt.

"I'm fine, thanks. I just called to wish you a Merry Christmas."

"Excuse me," she said absently. "I can't hear you. We have some people over and they are making a tremendous racket."

"I said that I just called to wish you a Merry Christmas. That's all."

"Thank you, Bob, the same to you. Where are you going tonight?" Again he felt the faint hope, the doubt.

"I just thought that I would stay home and listen to a few records."

"Silly, it's Christmas eve—you should go out someplace. Why stay up in that apartment all alone?" He crushed out his cigarette and with it the hope."

Don't worry about me, Deb. a little solitude is what I like."

"There you go again. You're alone too much. You should go out once in a while." She began making conversation.

Then, "I'm sorry, Bob, but I have to hang up. Somebody is calling me. I'm hostess you know. Why don't you call me again some time! When we can talk more."

"Fine, Debbie. It was a bad time to call, anyway, so long."

"Good-bye, Bob." She hung up. He kept the receiver to his ear a few seconds then let it drop into its cradle. He pushed back his chair more and slumped his head back. An ice cube clunked noisily down in his glass, and reaching out a hand he finished the drink in a gulp and wearily got up to make another. Happy Humbug, he thought.

That afternoon he had been out walking. He had walked for hours up and down the neighborhood. He had seen the old steady hand in hand with that new guy. He had almost taken a swing at him. He didn't know why, but he always felt like swinging at somebody. He had passed bars just bursting with Christmas joy makers. He had heard their drunken laughter, their riotous "Jingle Bells." He had trudged through inch-deep slush, had been pelted with the pebble-like flakes. Cold, wet, tired. It was a happy, joyous, white Christmas.

He was making himself yet another drink. He was beginning to feel a little high but he didn't care. Miles' *Sketches* still rebounded off the walls. He felt like getting plowed. *Three cheers for Christmas!*

He sat down again, this time in the corner. His whole soul was spinning: Miles, Debbie, scotch and water, stereo, merry Christmas, old steady, laughter, "Jingle Bells," slush, girls, *C'est la Vie*, loneliness, kicks, life, people, humbug. He felt his hand smashing into the solid wall. It hurt like hell. It all hurt.

Charles Lyons