A Colonial Christmas



By

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A Colonial Christmas

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A Colonial Christmas

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Norman Hartley ..... The father, late forties

Maureen Hartley ..... The mother, late forties.

Tina ..... 17 year old daughter.

Jerry Hartley ..... 15 year old teen son.

Goldie Hartley ..... Grandmother

Ted ..... Adult Neighbor

Alice Parkinson ..... Adult Neighbor

Turk mid twenties ..... Tina's boyfriend. Also plays a mummer.

James ..... eighteen, Salvation Army worker

George Washington ..... as stated.

James Monroe ..... played by actor playing Salvation Army worker.

Jeremy Hartley ..... drummer boy, fifteen

Ebenezer Mather ..... played by actor playing Ted

Four Carolers ..... also play Mummers.

ACT ONE

(AT RISE: the living room of the Hartley home, the present, evening and it's dark. Fireplace. A large picture window upstage, door to kitchen and off to bedrooms left and right. Christmas lights can be seen across the street, but the HARTLEY house is barren of seasonal accouterments.

Carolers are standing outside the window and singing.

A large wrapped package sits near the fire place.

The front door opens and the HARTLEY family mobs through the door, loaded with unwrapped presents. MAUREEN first, followed by her two teenage kids, TINA, in spiked hairdo and JERRY, with his jeans almost around his knees. Finally NORM. Bringing up the rear is Grandma GOLDIE, standing in the doorway, the snow still falling on her, watching the scene unfold. It's Christmas eve. Lights up. Everyone is talking.)

TINA: (On cell phone.) I can't hear. Would everyone please shut-up.

MAUREEN: I'll settle for 'please be quiet' young lady.

TINA: (On phone.) You're where. . .?

NORMAN: Who's she talking to?

JERRY: The Turk. On his hog. Comin' this-a-way.

MAUREEN: It's Christmas Eve. Tell him to . . . to. . .

NORMAN: It's no use.

TINA: He'll be here in ten minutes.

JERRY: Yeah, I'll bet he smelled the turkey.

MAUREEN: There is no turkey.

JERRY: And no mince pie, right? Causa we gotta ze pizza pie!

(He starts to open Pizza but MAUREEN takes it away from him.)

TINA: Shhh. He wants to know if we're going to watch A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

NORMAN: On our T.V.?

TINA: He never misses it. And, he's got presents for everyone.

MAUREEN: Oh great, what'll we give him? This year we're not. . .

JERRY: Give him a can of Pennzoil.

NORMAN: What's he doing driving a motorcycle in the middle of winter? It's snowing.

(He kicks the door shut. No one notices GOLDIE standing in the doorway. MAUREEN sticks a pre-fab bow on a shovel handle.)

MAUREEN: Which reminds me. Here, merry Christmas.

NORMAN: For me? (Somewhat sarcastic.) Surprise!

MAUREEN: We agreed. No wrapped presents. No pretense. No, surprises.

(TINA points to large single wrapped package.)

TINA: What's that then?

MAUREEN: That has your Grandmother written all over it. Just ignore it. Look everyone, I'm tired of cooking and cleaning and getting all those Christmas ornaments out and putting them away—we've evolved as a family. And I've evolved as a woman. We're old enough now to entertain ourselves.

NORMAN: A snow shovel!

MAUREEN: That's right, something useful for a change. It's snowing., Norm. Ice? Law suits? Besides, you love shovels.

NORMAN: I like finding things. Shovels are alright, it's just. . .well, I sort of would have liked a metal detector.

MAUREEN: You should have said something then.

(Hands shoe box to JERRY.)

This is for you.

(NORMAN throws ribbon off and heads for the door, stopped by JERRY'S exclamations as he holds up his new NIKE'S.)

JERRY: We gotta take 'em back. They don't throb.

MAUREEN: One hundred and nineteen dollars and they don't do what?

JERRY: (Takes drum sticks from back pocket.) Pulsate. With light. To the rhythm of my feet. Like when I play, you know, the bass drum, boom, getcha, boom, getcha boom boom boom. . . Everyone in the band is supposed to have them. The girls dig it.

TINA: Nobody over ten wears the pulsators, it's like so uncool.

MAUREEN: Maybe they need batteries.

NORMAN: There's another shovel in the garage, if you'd like. . .

JERRY: No thanks.

MAUREEN: You're right, I think we should exchange them, for something in the fifty dollar range.

JERRY: These will be great. I'm grateful. Nothing will separate me from these shoes. I'll sleep in them. Gotta go.

MAUREEN: Gotta go where, Jer?

(Cell phone rings.)

JERRY: I got a band rehearsal Mom, we got a gig tomorrow.

MAUREEN: Forget it.

TINA: (On phone.) Are you alright? He wiped out. Lost all his presents.

JERRY: Mom, please.

MAUREEN: No, Jerry.

JERRY: (Whining.) Jerry! I hate 'Jerry'. From now on I answer only to Ringo. That's what the guys in the band call me. Mom, you got to let me go.

MAUREEN: Not tonight. Tonight's a family night.

KIDS: Family night!!!

TINA: Who ever heard of family night?

NORMAN: Where's Mom?

MAUREEN: Didn't she go to her room?

NORMAN: You think she's still in the SUV? She has trouble handling that door. . .

(He opens door. GOLDIE hasn't moved.)

Mom? What's wrong? You coming in?

GOLDIE: I'm not sure.

NORMAN: Why not?

GOLDIE: Not much about Christmas going on in this house. At least out here it's snowing. And there's the music.

(Four carolers appear behind Grandma singing "The Snow Lay On the Ground". Norman hurries her in, shutting the door. The music is heard more faintly in the background, second verse in Latin. She comes in. NORMAN helps her with her coat.)

NORMAN: It's freezing.

GOLDIE: As if anyone cared. Albert. . . used to care.

MAUREEN: You want me to fix you up something hot to drink.

GOLDIE: You mean like slip something into the microwave. Zip Zap. That's not fixing up. That's irradiating. No thanks.

(Getting out of galoshes which NORMAN is trying to undue.)

I can get out of my own goulashes, thank you.

(Muttering)

No Christmas going on here.

MAUREEN: What was that?

GOLDIE: Just look at this place. Where's the tree?

NORMAN: Well, you see, we figured. . .

MAUREEN: I sold it in July at the garage sale.

GOLDIE: Whoopee!

NORMAN: We put up some lights outside.

GOLDIE: Oh yes, 'Rudolph with his nose so bright. . .' Albert always said . . .

(TINA is going through some bags.)

TINA: We voted, Grandma. No decorations this year. Has anybody seen my Covergirl Lippety Slick Lipslick. It's like totally not here.

GOLDIE: Albert always insisted on a real Christmas. We move to Florida, he kicks the bucket, and it all goes phssst! Good thing he's not around to see this. He'd stand right here, carving knife in hand and tell us all . . .

TINA: For the twenty seventh time.

GOLDIE: About your great, great, great, great Grandfather, Jeremiah Hartley, and how he lived in this very house and would most likely have served up a steamin' hot turkey or maybe a goose. . .

MAUREEN: No turkey this year, Goldie.

GOLDIE: And if there was it'd be one of those frozen butterball thing-a-ma-jigs, all juiced up with hormones, with stuffing that comes in little plastic bags.

MAUREEN: She's doing it again, call her off Norman.

NORMAN: (A warm memory) I remember your stuffing Mom, you used to save the crusts from our peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that nobody finished. . . and add sausage. . .

MAUREEN: (more insistent) Norman. . .

NORMAN: Times have changed, Mom.

MAUREEN: Families are busy. Busier. Aerobics. Soccer.

TINA: She's right, Grandma. I mean like we are maxed out. Trying to stay like beautiful . . .

JERRY: 'Like' she thinks she's Brittany Spears. She flashes her belly button 'like' in the middle of winter.

TINA: At least I don't have zits.

JERRY: My zits are my badge of honor.

TINA: Yeah, but who's going to go see a band called "The Zits".

JERRY: In your face, big sister.

TINA: You are like totally gross. (To Grandma.) It's like Mom says, grandma, we don't have time for Christmas. They load us down with homework for the break. I've got a paper to write on something. . . that happened. . . back before. . . well even before you were like born. And my question is--who cares? What difference does it make? Turk is about to curb his hog at my front step and my hair is a disaster. That's what matters. The here and the now. I hate history. I hate school. I hate. . .

GOLDIE: Lot of 'hate' going around this family

NORMAN: What's wrong with history. I like digging for relics, and things.

TINA: Right. 'Hey, you want to know what my father does, he digs holes for swimming pools. For a living.'

MAUREEN: Your father is a home aquatic engineer.

NORMAN: You never know what you're going to find in someone's back yard. (musing) I should have been an archeologist. Or fought in the revolutionary war, or. . .
(Takes brochure out of his pocket.)
Did you see this? They're advertising for someone to run the Revolutionary war re-enactment each year at Valley Forge. Full time job.

MAUREEN: Half time pay.

NORMAN: But it's always been my dream. . .

MAUREEN: To do what? Organize a bunch of guys so they can run around in short pants shooting blanks at each other? Forget it.

TINA: Mom's right. You have a garage full of rusty muskets and old belt buckles. What good is it?

NORMAN: It gives me a sense of belonging.

TINA: What good is it? I want to look forward.

NORMAN: If you don't know where you've been, how are you going to know where you are going?

TINA: You gonna let a lot of dead people tell you how to live?

NORMAN: "Those who do not learn from history, are doomed to repeat it."

TINA: This dumb term paper is not going to make me any more attractive or richer. It's just a few more facts to mess with your mind.

GOLDIE: Now, you take Christmas for example. . .

TINA: Christmas happened two thousand years ago. I'm with Maureen—what good is it now?

(Beat. Mom had reentered.)

JERRY: Uh-oh.

MAUREEN: Don't put words in my mouth. I wasn't talking about the, uh, 'nature' or the 'meaning' of Christmas, I was just taking a stand against all the . . . uh, commercialization that goes along it.

TINA: So, you believe in Christmas?

MAUREEN: As an expression of love and family values, yes.

GOLDIE: It's a good thing that Grandpa Albert can't hear you now.
He'd remind you that back in Jeremy Hartley's day you had sit down dinners, and not just on the holidays. Alright you two, would you please take a seat.

(She is sitting the children down. Complaints. JERRY grabs a slice of pizza and begins chewing on it with a resultant slap on the wrist.)

GOLDIE: Back then you didn't grab for anything.

(She takes the pizza away.)

JERRY: Hey, that's my . . .

GOLDIE: Shush. You never spoke unless spoken to; you broke your bread, never bit into a whole slice.

NORMAN: And you never took salt with a greasy knife. Salt was a rare commodity, you see. You often brought your own salt shaker with you.

GOLDIE: And no tea was drunk as a protest against those British taxes.

NORMAN: You guys remember the Boston Tea Party?

JERRY: (Facetious) Was that in your time, Grandma?

GOLDIE: What's wrong with being old fashioned? Albert and I got a TV back in the fifties like everyone else. When it went on the fritz we canned it. Good riddance.

TINA: So what did everyone do in those days, I mean, like to fill up time, without the Mall and TV?

GOLDIE: Good question.

JERRY: You shouldn't have asked.

GOLDIE: If you lived on Jeremiah's farm you'd be up by five, feed the pigs, bring in the wood. After school you came home and gathered vegetables. Before supper you'd sit down and spool some yarn.

JERRY: Not me, that's girls work.

GOLDIE: (holding up broom.) After supper you worked with a jack knife to make some birch splinter brooms. In bed by eight.

TINA: (Facetiously.) No way.

(TINA is wiping her Pizza greased hands on the tablecloth.)

GOLDIE: In 1776 the young women and their mothers just might have been making uniforms for the soldiers.

TINA: 1776. That's the year I'm supposed to be writing about.

NORMAN: Well, write it about here. The Battle of Trenton. George Washington crossing the Delaware. Christmas Day, 1776.

TINA: There's nothing new about that—thanks but no thanks Norman.

NORMAN: (muttering) What ever happened to Daddy?

TINA: I've 'evolved' too.

JERRY: (with his drumsticks, drumming on everything around. Off to the side the carolers are making the rap sound effects to underscore the piece.) You want history, big sister, I got it. Rap Revo history by Ringo the Zit Hartley. Here we go.

Young George never told,
Never told a lie,
Made himself a general by and by
Fought for the South next to Gen-er-al Lee
He was the best little General anyone could be.

He crossed the Del,
The river Del-a-ware
His soldiers were cold
Cause their feet were bare.
He surprised those Yanks
At Gettysburg town
But he lost the battle
And that got him down.
'til he just happened by
That Christmas Eve
To Nate and Nellie's Road House
Where, would you believe?
The Zits were a rocking and a rolling
That night,
And they cheered him up,
'til he was ready to fight,

So he lost the battle but he won the war,
And young Ringo Hartley he's a goin' out the door.
I said, goin' yes he's goin', I said he's goin' out the door.

(He puts his hand on the door.)

MAUREEN: No you don't.

JERRY: Mom, the Zits are playing tomorrow at Nate and Nellie's Road House. We gotta practice. . .

GOLDIE: But that's a . . . bar.

MAUREEN: You're not old enough to play in a bar.

TINA: (In a mocking rap rhythm.) Nobody's there on a Christmas Day, that's why they let the Zitsers play.

JERRY: Not true.

MAUREEN: Norman!

NORMAN: Uh, Jer, I think you'd better pass on this one. And, I think I'd better give you a crash course in American history— 'Gettysberg?' and 'Yanks'?

JERRY: No! No all around. I'm gonna drown in "noooos"

MAUREEN: You heard your father, Jeremiah.

TINA: Yes. . . 'Jeremiah'!

JERRY: Aaargh! Don't call me that. "Jeremiah". It's Ringo. I'm outa here.

MAUREEN: Jeremiah Hartley!!!

(He opens the door. TURK, in leather, chains, and covered with snow and carrying presents is standing in the doorway. He looks monstrous, goggles, snow covered, chains. JERRY screams, legitimately, and hides. Behind the Carolers are singing softly, 'O Holy Night.')

TURK: Hey everybody, Ho-ho-ho.

MAUREEN AND JERRY: Oh, no.

TURK: You gonna invite the Turk in or what?

NORMAN: Uh, come on in.

(TINA drags him in, snow cascades from his shoulders.)

TURK: And a merry Christmas to you, Norm. And many more.

TINA: The shows about ready to start.

JERRY: I thought you wiped out.

TURK: I did-- near the curve going down the hill toward Dunk's ferry—there was a deer in the road. I went over slow, like in the movies, doing like slow motion, down on the road in the ice and snow. Then I started spinning, me and Babe.

MAUREEN: Babe?

TURK: That's my hog. I call her Babe? Like in the flick? Hog—Babe? Anyway, I look up and there's the stars spinning round, cause I'm spinnin' round, that's what they looked like from my p.o.v. And suddenly life was OK. I mean it was OK that I lost the presents I bought, and it was OK that I had to spend the next couple of hours stuffed up here, and I decided then and there that I was going to become a vegetarian and bike to the Keys. Yes, the Turk thought to himself as he was spinning round and becoming one with the universe, he thought, "Turk my man, it's cold here, why don't you just fly south like the birdies. Do."

(To TINA.)

You want to fly south with the hog man?

TINA: (cautionary) Turk!

MAUREEN: No, she doesn't.

TURK: With all due respect Mom, I wasn't asking you. I was asking Tiny Tina Turnip over here. She knows what I'm talking about.

MAUREEN: What are you two planning. Norman. . .

(She yanks NORMAN'S sleeve.)

NORMAN: Er. . . I think she's a little young, Turk.

MAUREEN: A little. . .!!

(Interrupting.)

TURK: "I want my freedom. I want to fly away." That cry echoes still in my Turk head. I wonder where I heard that, huh, Tina full of, uh. . . tripidation?

TINA: (whispering) Not now, Turk.

NORMAN: Maybe next Christmas, or the one after. . .

TURK: Who knows where the Turk will mark his territory come next Yuletide. Don't worry, I'll take good care of her. I got mosquito netting.

MAUREEN: Don't you have a family to spend Christmas with?

TURK: Who me? I'm the lone wolf. Tonight when you go to sleep some people might hear Santa's sleigh bells, dingle dangling from a rooftop, others will be overdosing on "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem", but the lone of heart will hear will hear my cry, and they will be drawn. I leave tomorrow. The Florida Keys. You comin'?

TINA: We'll talk about it later.

MAUREEN: There's nothing to talk about, young lady.

TURK: You get cable, right? Good. THE CHRISTMAS CAROL.

(Starts TV with remote. Sound track to the original THE CHRISTMAS CAROL is heard.)

Almost time. Where's my popcorn? My bruski?

(TINA hands him some popcorn.)

TINA: You want a ROOT beer?

TURK: Yeah, sure, why not. I don't want to be disturbed.

(GRANDMA enters with a large bowl of egg nog.)

NORMAN: What's that?

GRANDMA: Egg nog. And this just happens to be Martha Washington's famous recipe:
1 Quart milk
1 quart cream
1 dozen eggs
sugar, vanilla and nutmeg galore.
Try some.

(MAUREEN does.)

MAUREEN: It tastes. . . too sweet. What's missing.

(TINA dips her finger in it.)

GRANDMA: Well, if you have to know:
1 pint brandy, a shot of rye whiskey,
Jamaican rum and a little sherry.

TURK: Now you're talking sweetheart. I'll take some of that stuff.

GRANDMA: I'm not your sweetheart.

(TINA, changing the subject, holds up a twig that was sticking out of the egg nog.)

TINA: Bird's nest, right?

GRANDMA: No dear. That's Rosemary. The legend is that Mary hung our Savior's baby clothes on Rosemary branches because it gave off an aroma pleasing to the Father on high.

TURK: This is the good part. The knocker. Scrooge grabs for it, but. . . It morphs like. . . . into what's –his- names face.

NORMAN: Marley.

TURK: Yeah. Jacob Marley. I knew that. Musta been the fall. (Looking at action on TV) There, you see? I get Goosebumps every time, never fails.

(His face never leaves the TV.)

(There is an knock on the door. JERRY, who has been creeping out opens it disgustedly. JAMES GRUBER stands there with a Christmas tree. He is dressed in his Salvation Army Uniform. Behind him the Carolers are singing 'The Holly and the Ivy' or 'Oh, Christmas Tree'.)

JERRY: We're not buying.

(He slams the door shut. Puts jacket and scarf on.)

GOLDIE: That's the Gruber's boy. Open the door.

(He opens the door. Singing has continued.)

JERRY: Sorry James. Didn't recognize you. When'dya get drafted?

JAMES: (Enters.) Hello Mr. Hartley, Mrs. Hartley.

TINA: Hey, James.

MAUREEN: Come on in, James. You still at college?

JAMES: Still there.

GOLDIE: Have a glass of egg nog.

JAMES: Well, I don't . . .

GOLDIE: Don't worry. The spirit of Christmas has left this house and there's no spirits in the egg nog either.

JAMES: Well, in that case, thank you.

(He drinks.)

JERRY: Don't waste your time. She's got a tattoo. You want to know where it is?

TINA: Jerry?!

JAMES: I noticed you didn't have a Christmas tree in the window.

NORMAN: You selling trees, for the. . .?

JAMES: Salvation Army. It's for a good cause.

MAUREEN: We're not doing the Christmas tree thing this year.

JAMES: It's my last tree , and, well, I know it's a bit. . . patchy.

MAUREEN: I'm not sure . . .

GOLDIE: We'll take it. We'll take it. Now, you just sit down here. I'll get you a little donation. .

(She sits him down next to TINA.)

TURK: (To the TV.) I can't hear.

JAMES: (To TINA.) The idea for decorating trees for Christmas came over with my relatives from Germany in 1776.

GOLDIE: So write your paper about that.

TINA: Christmas trees in 1776?

TURK: Snuff it please.

JAMES: I have a lot of books and stuff at home. Maybe tomorrow you could come over.

TINA: (pointing to TURK.) I'm sorta like. . .with . . . him.

JERRY: Like she's sorta . . . going steady.

TURK: He's at the dance and he's got this Babe in his arms and all he can think about is money. Scroooooooge!
(Bronks cheer.)
I hate this part. The love of his life and he blows it.
(See's James)
Who's he?

JERRY: (Insinuating) Next door neighbor. He invited Tina over to his house to see some of his . . . 'research'. He's gonna help her write her 'paper'.

TURK: Oh yeah? Is this true?

TINA: No Turk. (To Jerry.) Jerry!!!!

JAMES: (Shake hands.) James Gruber. I live just down the road.

TURK: (Rising.) So, why you all dressed up, James, it's Christmas, not Halloween.
(He laughs, but nobody else does. He tries again.)
Where's your bell? You know, ding, ding, alms for the poor?

MAUREEN: Uh, Turk. James is a guest in our house. If you'd please. . .

TURK: I fought in Iraq. I got a uniform too. These are Army boots. They did more than stand on some street corner, let me tell you. (kicks sofa) Shock and awe.

TINA: Turk. . .!!

TURK: Why'd I do that? The Turk is riled. The Turk is steamed.
(Beat. Referring to James.)
He's not staying for dinner is he?

JAMES: No, I'll be going. Good to see all of you again. If you can make it, come by the Soup Kitchen in town. We could use some help.

JERRY: We don't do soup kitchens.

TURK: I was shot at. Over there.

MAUREEN: We're going to be spending the evening together. Here.

TURK: Twice. (He dodges bullets, MATRIX style.)

MAUREEN: (Trying to diffuse the situation.) Good to see you again, James.

JAMES: Goodbye. Auf Weidersehen.

(He exits.)

MAUREEN: He left the tree.

(TURK grabs tree. Heads for door.)

TURK: Give it up, Grandma.

GOLDIE: I beg your pardon.

TURK: (At the door.) Hey buddy, you forgot your tree. Auf Weinerschnitzel. And you won't be seeing US anytime soon.

(He comes back in. Embarrassed.)

MAUREEN: Us!!!?

TURK: Sorry about the sofa.

(GOLDIE grabs tree back.)

GOLDIE: Give me that!

MAUREEN: (To TINA) What did he mean, 'US'?

TINA: Nothing. Wouldcha cool it, Turk. Please. The uh. . . shows on.

TURK: Oh yeah. Whadda I miss? Letsee, letsee. . .

(He jumps over sofa.)

GOLDIE: Does anyone happen to have a candy cane? Nobody's listening.

MAUREEN: I didn't buy any this year. They get lint on them when they sit around in Christmas stockings.

NORMAN: I'll miss the stockings this year. The little things. Razor blades.

JERRY: Comic books.

TINA: Lipstick.

TURK: Spark plugs. How about you, Grandma?

GOLDIE: I'm not your Grandma, thank you.

MAUREEN: (To NORMAN.) You see what she's doing, Norman? We agreed on a limited Christmas this year.

GOLDIE: (muttering, working on tree) God sends mankind his greatest gift and you want a limited edition.

MAUREEN: What was that?

GOLDIE: Albert said that this house was made for Christmas. Why he ever wanted to sell it to you and drag me off to Florida was beyond me. He hated shuffleboard.

TURK: (To the TV) Oh no. Oh no. I missed it. 'Christmas Present' is gone.

GOLDIE: You can say that again.

(She exits to kitchen.)

MAUREEN: I don't believe this.

TURK: Gone.

NORMAN: Is he crying? You alright, Turk?

TINA: He's just a big baby. It's OK Turkey.

NORMAN: They've got to have it down at Blockbuster.

TURK: Not the original. Not the one directed by Brian Desmond Hurst with Alastair Sim as Ebenezer Scrooge and little Glyn Dearman as Tiny Tim. I checked.

(Outside the big picture window the carolers are singing 'The Coventry Carol'. Then there is a preemptory knock on the door. The CAROLERS look over and peter out on the singing. Everyone looks at JERRY who has been sneaking out.)

JERRY: Just my luck.

(He opens the door. TED and ALICE, neighbors, are standing there.)

NORMAN: Ah, Ted, Alice. Come on in.

JERRY: Oh, no. (He joins TINA and TURK on the sofa.)

MAUREEN: You look great.

ALICE: Cancun.

TED: Alice likes to go where it's. . . 'hot'.

ALICE: Sun tan land -- where we can get away from the rush, the cheap glitz, things like . . . this . . . (She touches the wreath on the door.)

TED: Club med, Cancun. Christmas morning you sleep in.

NORMAN: So why. . .

ALICE: Why are we here?

TED: We've been asking ourselves the same question. (Laughter.) Actually. . .

ALICE: Ted got another promotion—second this year. He was called back for the transition.

MAUREEN: Would you like a glass of egg nog?

TED: No thanks.

ALICE: We're going strictly vegan this year. No eggs.

TED: Cheese.

(ALICE hands over a little package of cellophane wrapped in a ribbon.)

ALICE: Nuts.

MAUREEN: Why thank you.

ALICE: We're evolving as a family.

NORMAN: I see. Evolving. . . Well, come on in.

TED: We can only stay for a moment.

(He holds up another bag of nuts.)

We're making the rounds.

ALICE: We may not be celebrating Christmas this year, but that doesn't mean we can't be sociable.

MAUREEN: As you can see, we're cutting back on Christmas.

ALICE: Yes, I remember you saying something at the Fitness Center last month. We were side by side on the treadmills you see and I said something about Christmas being so. . . depressing. . . all the canned music and how it is really not designed for women at all, not evolving women like us anyway, and Maureen agreed.

(ALICE has been wandering in the room. She looks at the socks which are drying on the metal screen in front of the fireplace.)

MAUREEN: Those are Jerry's soccer socks—drying out.

ALICE: Yes. Nice tree.

MAUREEN: It was a gift.

TED: (At window.) And I see Rudolph's on the front lawn again. Can't keep a good reindeer down.

MAUREEN: You know Norman.

NORMAN: (Raises his hand) Guilty of . . . family tradition.

TED: My father used to take me hunting every Christmas. I hated it. Family tradition. Macho male thing—don't come back without the deer. Now we feed them in our backyard. Have names for them. . .

ALICE: Gigi . . . Gertie.

TED: And Ralph. Even put in a saltlick.

TURK: Yeah, I know what you mean. Just tonight as I was cruisin' down this backwoods road there's this deer up ahead who freezes when he sees my headlight, and as I get closer it's like me, not him, who is transfixed, I mean, I look into those big brown liquid eyes getting' bigger and bigger and I'm there in that glen, with Bambi and his Mom, I'm back there, and I cloud up, and then. . .

I hit him. Splat. He dents my front fender. And I felt a twinge, like in here, like when Scrooge finds out Tiny Tim died in Christmas future.

(Awkward silence. GOLDIE enters with Christmas crèche.)

GOLDIE: I found this in the attic.

MAUREEN: Goldie, this is Ted and Alice Parkinson. They bought the Turner place just before you and Albert went South.

GOLDIE: Right. Chem lawn sign.

ALICE: We were sorry to hear about Albert. What do you have there?

GOLDIE: One crushed crèche. But I'll fix it up. Albert used to hide the baby Jesus until Christmas morning and than He would miraculously appear.

(Silence.)

TED: Which sort of brings us to why we came by. Jan and Fred Stumphofer have done it again.

ALICE: It's one of the reasons that we go south for the season. Haven't you noticed? At the far end of the street.

(Blank.)

The second floor windows?

TED: "Jesus Saves" spelled out in large letters.

ALICE: Colored lights this year.

GOLDIE: What's wrong with that?

NORMAN: It is their house.

ALICE: I know. . . but it reflects on the entire neighborhood, don't you think?

TED: Sort of like putting a flag pole in your front yard.

GOLDIE: What's wrong with that?

TED: Now, it's not that we have anything against Christmas, per se.

ALICE: We respect it as an expression of love and family values.
(Both NORMAN and GOLDIE look at MAUREEN.)
It's more a matter of . . . taste.

TED: And we were thinking of asking if you would like to be part of a caring delegation of . . .

ALICE: Concerned neighbors. . .who could suggest to Fred and Jan the inappropriateness of their . . .

GOLDIE: Oh no you don't.

MAUREEN: Goldie, please. Thanks for coming over, we'll talk it over and get back to you.

GOLDIE: Oh no we won't.

MAUREEN: Norman.

(NORMAN tires to mollify GOLDIE.)

GOLDIE: If those lights are the only way that this neighborhood will be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas, so be it.

MAUREEN: I'm sorry, Alice. It's been a trying evening.

ALICE: I understand. We'll be in touch.

GOLDIE: Go ahead, Norman. Tell them what Albert would have said.
(He shrugs.)
Alright, I'll do it. The Hartley family has been celebrating Christmas on this plot of land since 1757, and prayers have gone up from that table since George Washington bivouacked here in 1776. So if you got any gripe it oughta be with us.

ALICE: It's time we were on our way. Maureen, Norman – seasons greetings.

(NORMAN opens the front door.)

GOLDIE: And a 'Merry Christmas' to you too.

(They leave. The kids and TURK on the sofa celebrate loud enough for the parents to hear.)

MAUREEN: It's not funny. (To NORMAN.) Your mother just threw our neighbors out.

GOLDIE: Shake the dust from your sandals.

MAUREEN: I'll go after them and see if I can smooth things over. You coming Norman?

NORMAN: Uh, sure.

MAUREEN: And bring the snow shovel.

(She exits.)

GOLDIE: Norman Hartley, don't you stand for anything anymore?

(He grabs shovel and leaves a bit shamefaced. Door closes. GOLDIE sees all the kids staring at her.)

So what are you staring at?

JERRY: You did great, Grandma.

TINA: Nobody talks to the Parkinsons that way. Awesome.

TURK: Shock and awe. Come and give the Turk a big hug.

GOLDIE: Forget it Charlie. I'm not the evening's entertainment. (Beat.) You don't mind if I kick the sofa, do you?

TURK: Be my guest. (She does so.)

GOLDIE: That's for smallmindedness and stuck uppityness and political correctedness.

TINA: (Kicking) And homework and homework and homework and this place and not being eighteen yet. . .

JERRY: (Kicking) And that word--No, No, No, No. . .

TURK: (Kicking) Shock and awe. Shock and . . . awe. . .

(They look at each other and laugh.)

GOLDIE: Alright, let's see if you learned anything. Jeremiah, what's this?

(She holds up the crèche.)

JERRY: A. . . let me see. . . oh yeah, a crush.

TINA: A crush is what you have on Lenore Shipley.

JERRY: Do not.

TINA: Do to. It's a crèche, drum brain.

GOLDIE: And what does this Crèche represent?

JERRY: That's easy. Everyone knows the Christmas story.
Grandma. And now presenting Ringo Hartley's Rap version of ye old
Christmas saga.

(He raps, again hitting furniture with his drum sticks. The CAROLERS appear and make rap supporting sounds. TURK and TINA respond to the beat.)

It was on Christmas Day,
A long time ago,
That a baby was born,
And as you oughta know,

His Mother was Mary,
And his poppa was Joe,
And they went to an Inn
To get outa the snow.

The baby came along,
Not soon after that,
And he cried and he screamed,
Just like any new brat.

But some shepherds were there,
And some Kings from the east,
They brought gifts galore,
And they had a great feast.

TURK: And the baby he grew,
To be six feet tall,
And he traveled on a hog
Which was the envy of them all.

VROOM, Vroom, Vroom- Vroom,
Vroom, Vroom, Vroom-Vroom-Vroom
So they killed him dead,
And they laid him in a tomb.
And the tears were shed,
Amongst the gloom and the doom.

ALL: Doom doom ta doom,
Doom doom, da doom doom.

TINA: Then he went up there,
Someplace in the air,
And we don't know how,
And we really don't care.

'Cause it all took place
In the faraway past,
With David and Moses
And the whole Bible cast.

So, read it in a book,
Memorize a verse,
Be good cause Santa's coming,
Try not to do your worse.

ALL: So, read it in a book,
Memorize a verse,
Be good cause Santa's coming,
Try not to do your worse.
Word!

GOLDIE: So, that's what Christmas is like for you? I told your parents they were raising a herd of little heathens.

(She goes into kitchen. MAUREEN and NORMAN enter from outside. The kids dive for the sofa and scrunch down.)

MAUREEN: You could have said something to them.

NORMAN: Since when is Alice Parkinson your best friend?

MAUREEN: Alice is trendy and upbeat and she's connected and she listens to me when I talk. I don't find any of those things around this place.

NORMAN: Ah yes, she's 'evolving' then, that's the word for the day.

MAUREEN: She's not. . . stagnant.

NORMAN: I . . . I shoveled their walk.

MAUREEN: She kept telling you they had a service that took care of that.

NORMAN: Actions speak louder than words.

MAUREEN: Oh yes, Norman Hartley, man of action. You know, I think Alice was right.

NORM: Right about what?

ALICE: Right about you.

NORMAN: You talk about me when you're . . . treadmilling along together?

MAUREEN: Sometimes.

NORMAN: OK. What does she say?

MAUREEN: Alice says: that you're going through a mid life crisis.
That you've found yourself half way through your career and all you see is a bunch of holes in the ground.

NORMAN: Alice said that?

(Long pause. He collapses on bean bag.)

She's right.

MAUREEN: Look, I'm sorry, I didn't mean. . . It's that time of year. Christmas. Brings out the worst in all of us.

(Looks for a new target. To the couch crowd.)

MAUREEN: Are you almost finished watching that show? My date with Martha Stewart starts in ten minutes.

TURK: But you gotta see the look in Tiny Tim's eyes when he sees the goose, and the tiny bit of saliva that globs up, right here, right here, as he smells it. Watch!

TINA: I hate this movie!

TURK: I heard that.

TINA: It's black and white.

JERRY: The Zits are calling. Mom. . . Dad. . . Alright, if I can't go out than Ringo practices here, in the living room.

(JERRY starts banging away and singing cacophonously a song from the Beatles.)

MAUREEN: Jerry, please.

TURK: I can't hear the show.

NORMAN: That's enough Jerry. Ringo. I said. . . that's enough!

TINA: Would somebody please shut him up.

(The CAROLERS appear in window, adding to the confusion, singing "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear.")

NORMAN: (to living room) Would you shut up.

(To CAROLLERS.)

Just shut up. (He slams door.)

(Silence.)

TINA: (Passionless.) You're not supposed to say those words, Norman.

MAUREEN: Deja vue.

(Silence.)

NORMAN: I think I'll go out. Think I'll shovel our walk.

MAUREEN: That tree has got to go.

NORMAN: Maybe I'll shovel the walk for everyone in the neighborhood.

TURK: (pointing to TV.) There, you see? (Pointing to his lip.) Right there. He's drooling.

JERRY: Drummers are a dime a dozen. I'll be replaced. Is anyone listening?

MAUREEN: You see what's happening to this family?

NORMAN: Has anyone seen my gloves?

MAUREEN: It's her fault.

(She points off towards the kitchen indicating Grandma, but TINA thinks she means her.)

TINA: Me?

(GOLDIE has come in then steps back so she isn't seen as she overhears the conversation.)

MAUREEN: Not you. Your mother Norm. She can't stay with us. She's critical of everything I do or say and keeps going on about Albert until I want to scream.

NORMAN: My mother?

MAUREEN: Goldie. She's sold the condo, she has the money, enough to get a room in a retirement . . . community. There, I've said it.

NORMAN: And I suppose this was Alice's idea, also?

(Silence. MAUREEN shrugs. TURK stands, stretches.)

TURK: (standing, stretching) I'm hungry. What's for dinner?

(GOLDIE enters. Speaks bravely.)

GOLDIE: I made some cornbread. Now, at George Washington's Mount Vernon they might have served Hickory smoked hams with sweet yams. Fish and oysters were brought up daily from the river. Oysterpies.

MAUREEN: You eat the oysters out of the Delaware today. . .

THE KIDS: You die!

GOLDIE: Wild blackberry deep dish pie.; apple tansy . . .

MAUREEN: Stop!

GOLDIE: (If she doesn't talk she'll break down.) Of course that was just for the rich and famous. You and I might have eaten cornmeal mush with molasses for breakfast; Hoecakes made of corn for lunch; corn pone, corn stew or hasty pudding for dinner and the old tried and true. . . corn bread.

TURK: (Stands, stretches, scratches his stomach.) I want meat. Bird meat.

TINA: I thought you'd become a vegetarian?

TURK: (Gestures towards TV.) I want goose. Or turkey. Like the Crachits.

(He grabs a piece of cornbread.)

Merry Christmas, Grandma.

GOLDIE: (weakly) I'm not your. . .

TURK: (Kindly, kissing her on top of head.) I know. . . I'm outa here.

(He heads for door.)

TINA: Turk!

TURK: This is not a happy place. You comin'?

TINA: Could we talk about it tomorrow?

TURK: I get the picture. I'll swing by in the morning. Three short beeps – then you got three minutes to get out this door. We travel light. We don't look back cause Christmas present is . . . a thing of the past.

(He leaves.)

TINA: Turk. . . (She runs to the door.)
Now do you see what you've done. You've ruined Christmas Eve, 2003, . . .forever. . .
Nobody cares about me. . . I'm going with him, you'll see.

(TURK howls his wolf howl. She runs into bedroom. NORMAN comes in the open door.)

MAUREEN: Good riddance. (A look from NORMAN.) Not you.

(JERRY runs to door, calls out.)

JERRY: (Mockingly) Turk, take me with you. Turk. . .

(Sound of motorcycle engine revving up and away.)

TINA: (runs out with suitcase trailing clothes.) He's gone. I want my freedom. You're all just a bunch of old . . . relics.

JERRY: I resent that!

(She throws bag down. She starts back to her room.)

MAUREEN: Tina Hartley, you come back here and pick this up.

(TINA stops but doesn't turn.)

GOLDIE: You know Tina, when I was your age. . .

TINA: (Yelling.) Help! Anyone??!! I don't need this!

MAUREEN: Tina!

GOLDIE: He was right, you know. Christmas in this household is just not happening. I'm going up to my room. Come and get me on . . . on 12th night.

(GOLDIE starts out. NORMAN is concerned, tries to get her to stay.)

NORMAN: Wait! What's this? Mom, is this your present?

GOLDIE: It's a mistake.

MAUREEN: So it IS yours?

JERRY: Looks big enough to be a snare drum.

TINA: A one way ticket out of this place . . .

NORMAN: Metal detector?

GOLDIE: It's something from the attic. For the whole family.

TINA: (A bit sarcastic.) Let's open it, the suspense is killing me.

NORMAN: Well, it has been a tradition to open one present on Christmas eve. . . in the past.

(They all look at Maureen.)

MAUREEN: Do whatever you want.

NORMAN: Mom, why don't you. . . perform the honors.

GOLDIE: Oh, alright.

(The present is revealed.)

TINA: What is it?

GOLDIE: It's an old musical instrument. Belonged to Albert's grandfather. They call it. . . a barrel organ. . .

TINA: Where's the monkey? I know . . . Jerry.

JERRY: Very . . . funny. What do you do, put in a quarter?

GOLDIE: You turn this handle. It should play old music, something cheerful, maybe even Christmasy.

MAUREEN: (To NORMAN.) I told you to clean out the attic.

(She grabs tree and exits with it.)

JERRY: I don't do old. (He leaves humming through gritted teeth.)

TINA: And I don't do cheerful. (She leaves.)

NORMAN: Sorry Mom. I guess it's not happening this year.

(Picks up shovel. Lamely.)

The garage.

(He shrugs. Exits out front door. GOLDIE starts picking up the wrapping paper. The lights dim slightly and a glow settles over the barrel organ. She picks up a picture of Albert, sighs, starts to take the cornbread back to the kitchen, but something about the barrel organ catches her eye. She puts down the cornbread.)

GOLDIE

Oh, what the heck. . .

(She approaches the instrument and begins to play, and as she slowly begins to revolve as she turns the handle, an old tune comes out, and it gets louder and goes faster, and is joined by all kinds of additional time travel sounds, accompanied by the whooshing of the wind and discordant Christmas carols. The CAROLERS off to the side start singing and are spun away The various family characters are 'spun' on stage as if drawn to the
spinning figure of GOLDIE. They are now dressed in Colonial garb, and GOLDIE has also thrown on a bonnet and shawl. They are yelling, reverb effect:

VOICES: "Hold on." "What's happening." "We're going into the Matrix"; "I'm too young to die."; "Somebody, anybody, grab my hand"; 'Help"; "It's a roller coaster"; 'Lord God, help us."

(Their voices blend as if falling from a great height.0

VOICES: Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!

(Lights come up, but dim, because the effect should be as of candle light, the spinning stops and the family is flung to the corners of the room with their props in hand and dressed in Colonial garb.

The stage now reveals a Colonial house interior, a lot of exposed stone and wood—a farmstead. There is a large fireplace, stacks of wood, a double swinging door at the front entrance, a couple of small windows, fairly nice furniture, and some Christmas decorations—candles and barrels, skins, some gardening equipment, stacks of seeds, etc. are placed about. Lots of greens spread about. Rosemary, ivy.

The family finds themselves with strange props doing strange activities. MAUREEN is sewing. GOLDIE is working on a Christmas wreath. TINA has a scouring pad and a pewter mug in her hand. NORMAN has a musket in his hands. JERRY holds a twig broom. They are speechless- but only for a moment. TINA screams.) NORMAN runs for the door, exits.)

MAUREEN: What is. . . what just . . . happened?

NORMAN: I'll check outside.

(He runs outside holding musket.)

JERRY: The electricity must have gone out.

MAUREEN: Will someone please tell me what is going on?

GOLDIE: Look at these clothes?

(TINA screams.)

NORMAN: (runs back inside.) There's an army outside. On the front lawn. It's . . . Christmas Eve! 1776!

(TINA screams.)

(Black out. Music. End of Act I. Christmas music up.)

ACT II

(Everyone in the same position. Replay, as the actors whirl into position. NORMAN enters.)

NORMAN: (rushes back inside.) There's an army outside. It's Christmas eve. . . 1776.

TINA: (Stands.) Look at me. I'm all dressed up. In a . . . dress.

MAUREEN: What's going on? What are these?

GOLDIE: A Colonial uniform. Prettiest cross stitch I've ever seen.

MAUREEN: But I don't even know how to sew?

NORMAN: A Brown Bess Kentucky flintlock. 46" barrel.. . . Where did this. . .?

JERRY: (At window.) No street lights. No neighbors. No neighborhood. (Checking out shoes.) But I still got these. Got my shoes. That means I'm me.

MAUREEN: Where are we? Exactly.

NORMAN: (Running out, going back for his rifle.) I'll check.

TINA: Everything's so tight.

MAUREEN: So dim.

TINA: No TV.

GOLDIE: Thank the Lord for that.

TINA: What are these?

GOLDIE: That is a scouring pad and that is a pewter mug. Start scrubbing.

MAUREEN: What's happened?

GOLDIE: I think we've been . . . transported.

MAUREEN: What do you mean, transported?

GOLDIE: Maybe it's the rapture. Surprised to see we all made it.

MAUREEN: You mean heaven is like. . . this?

JERRY: Freezing cold?

TINA: I'm too young to go to heaven. Help!

JERRY: Maybe it's not heaven, maybe its. . .

(NORMAN bursts back in.)

NORMAN: Get ready for this.

JERRY: Hell.

NORMAN: Sort of. Fires and snow and cannons and. . . General George Washington's army – must be at least a couple of thousand.
But it's still our house, or part of it. No pool, no garage, (Goes to doorway into bedrooms) . . . no conveniences.

TINA: Oh my God. Call 911. I need running water. Would somebody DO something?

GOLDIE: Maybe we've been transported back in time.

JERRY: Like in Back to the Future. . . and I forgot my skateboard.

TINA: There's an army outside which means there must be a war, and if there's a war we could get hurt.

JERRY: Cool.

MAUREEN: Alright. Let's keep calm. We'll go about this in a rational matter. One thing at a time. First thing to do is to check to see if we have food and water. Is there a lock on the door. We don't seem to be prisoners. Where's the nearest town? There must be a way back. Where's that barrel thingy?—it's over there. Good. Now, Goldie, you just crank it up once more and we'll see if we can find our way back. . . to civilization. On the count of three . . .

JERRY: I know, I got it. There was something in the egg nog. We were drugged and we've been placed out in the wilderness someplace, to see if we can survive. It's another version of The Survivor Show.

(He plays the cameras. Speaks to 'audience'.)

Ringo J. Hartley here. Drummer for the Zits. I'm a born survivor. First thing I'm going to do is to get the family to vote my big sister out.

TINA: So, where are the television cameras?

JERRY: They're hidden. But everything you say, everything you do will either count for or against you.

GOLDIE: (At barrel organ.) Careful with that thing, you'll send us back to the Ice Age.

(TINA is turning profile.)

JERRY: What are you doing?

TINA: It's my best side.

JERRY: The camera's could be. . . everywhere.

TINA: But I only have one good side.

MAUREEN: (At barrel organ.) It's jammed.

GOLDIE: Tastes like . . . Winchester stew. They put apples in, mixed right up with the potatoes and meat. Probably . . . rabbit.

TINA: Gross.

JERRY: I don't do rabbit.

NORMAN: (At window.) Fires as far as you can see.

JERRY: A high budget Survivor show. Don't you see? We are to 'become' uh, how do you say . . . ah, yes, 'colonial' . . . uh, dwellers.

NORMAN: They're coming this way.

MAUREEN: What do you mean?

NORMAN: Someone who looks official. They probably want to use this place as a command post. I'll find out.

(He goes out. MAUREEN takes rifle.)

MAUREEN: Give me that. You could hurt yourself.

(He leaves.)

Maybe we ought to stay neutral in this conflict. We need a better understanding of the issues. There's the safety of the family to think about. . . We'll say no to command posts, no, no, no. . .

(NORMAN comes back in.)

So what did you say?

NORMAN: I said, 'yes'.

MAUREEN: (Sarcastic.) Oh, that's Great! We have to make a list.

(There is a knock on the door.)

MAUREEN: Don't let anyone in, not until we've figured this thing out.

TINA: It's Turk! There is no way I can let him see me like this? I mean, like this is so uncool.

MAUREEN: Goldie, quick, there's still time. Crank this thing. It won't budge for me. Get us out of here!

GOLDIE: No! Maybe we were meant to be right here, right now.

(Another knock on the door.)

JERRY: It's gotta be an immunity challenge. Open the door.

(NORMAN opens the door. LIEUTENANT JAMES MONROE enters, shaking the snow from his cape and uniform.)

MONROE: Ah, Mr. Hartley, a Merry Christmas to you Sir, and to your. . . uh, family. I had been told that this house was temporarily unoccupied. The General will be here shortly.

TINA: (Blurting out.) Who are you?

MONROE: Lieutenant James Monroe.

(He bows formally to TINA. Behind MONROE, GOLDIE mimes a curtsy, which TINA awkwardly tries to emulate.)

Squire Hartley, you didn't mention you had ladies in residence. Charming.

TINA: Uh yeah, and like same to you too.

MONROE: And you are?

TINA: Uh. . . uh. . .

NORMAN: This is my daughter Tina. She's seventeen. . .

TINA: Pu-lease!

MONROE: Honored, Miss Hartley.

TINA: Oh.

(He puts out his hand to kiss TINA'S. She frantically looks back at GOLDIE who kisses her hand to show TINA what to do. TINA then turns and kisses the back of MONROE'S extended hand.)

NORMAN: (Covering.) My wife Maureen Hartley, son Jerry. . .

JERRY: Like swinging Dude, you are good. . . isn't he good.

NORMAN: And my mother, Mrs. Goldie Hartley.

(GOLDIE has been holding a fan which she starts vigorously pumping—she bows eloquently.)

GOLDIE: Charmed, I'm sure.

NORMAN: And you are. . . James Monroe?

MONROE: Hm. Aid-de-Camp to the General.

(To JERRY.)

Might I prevail upon you. . . Master Hartley, I have to transform your residence into a Command Center. We'll place this table over here.

NORMAN: THE James Monroe?

MONROE: Excuse me?

NORMAN: Like in President James Monroe?

MONROE: President? I'm not sure. . .

MAUREEN: (To MONROE, blurting.) This isn't our house. . .

MONROE: You are the Hartley's aren't you?

MAUREEN: Yes, well He is, anyway. . .

GOLDIE: We're ALL Hartley's—at heart.

MAUREEN: Strictly speaking, yes. But you see, we had a large television set sitting over there, and there was a kitchen with a . . . garbage disposal, and drapes . . . We'd appreciate it if you could tell us where they went.

TINA: Mom!

NORMAN: Dear, please. . .

JERRY: Play along.

MONROE: (Placing maps on the wall and tables.) Madame, my personal regrets are extended to you over the loss of certain of your. . personal accouterments, and I can assure that the General does not tolerate looting or pillaging of any sort.

(A map is knocked to the floor.)

TINA: Here, let me help.

JERRY: Maps. So, the immunity challenge is going to be a treasure hunt. What's the first clue. Ah hah. 'X' marks the spot.

MONROE: Yes. Trenton New Jersey. Have you been there by any chance?

JERRY: Oh yeah, the Pirates. We play them every year in football.

MONROE: Football? Pirates?

MAUREEN: If this is a game, Mr. 'Monroe', then it's not very funny. We would like an explanation-- for this place, these. . . costumes, that Army sitting outside on our front lawn, and this intrusion into our lives.

MONROE: (Ignoring her, turning to NORMAN.) You assured me, Sir, that you AND your family were sympathizers with our cause.

NORMAN: Yes, yes, of course, we are.

MAUREEN: But I demand to know. . .

MONROE: You are "Whigs" then.

MAUREEN: What?

MONROE: Whigs.

MAUREEN: I beg your pardon.

NORMAN: We're loyal. . .

MONROE: You're Loyalists!!!???

TINA: No, no. We' re not. . . Why didn't I pay attention in class.

NORMAN: We're not . . . Tories.

TINA: That's it.

MONROE: Then what are you?

NORMAN: We're Patriots.

JERRY: We're Patriotic.

GOLDIE: We're for Independence.

TINA: We don't like the King.

JERRY: He is one bad dude.

ALL: We're for you!

(The door flies open, GEORGE WASHINGTON is framed in the doorway. Snow flies in. Accompanying him is the half frozen figure of JEREMIAH HARTLEY, carrying a drum. WASHINGTON points towards the fire. He takes off his cape and hat, handing them to MONROE.)

WASHINGTON: Get over there boy. Warm yourself in the fire. Could somebody see to him?

(JEREMIAH half stumbles to the fire. Tries to warm his hands, GOLDIE wraps him in a blanket.)

MONROE: Sir, Mr. Norman Hartley, Esq. . . . and family.

WASHINGTON: What?

(MONROE whispers to him.)

WASHINGTON: I see. We appreciate your hospitality, Mr. Hartley. Mrs. Hartley. I hope that we will not be inconveniencing you for any extended period of time. If you'll please excuse me. . .

(The great man crosses the room and sits heavily at the table. He studies the maps for a few seconds, and then his head sinks into his hands, obviously exhausted.)

TINA: He's so big.

NORMAN: Over six feet tall.

TINA: George Washington. Like he is real. I've got to take notes.

JEREMIAH: (Noticing the crowd.) Who are you?

JERRY: We're the Hartley's.

JEREMIAH: I'm a Hartley and I don't know you.

WASHINGTON: What's this?

JEREMIAH: I've never seen them before.

WASHINGTON: Mr. Hartley, an explanation is due.

NORMAN: Uh, sure. We're. . .

MAUREEN: The long lost Hartley's . . .

GOLDIE: On your father's side.

NORMAN: That's right. Distant relatives come to share the yuletide season with our long lost relatives.

JEREMIAH: My mother didn't say anything about your coming to visit.

TINA: It's a . . . surprise.

ALL: (weakly, a bit broken.) Merry Christmas.

(They all shake hands about and back slap. MONROE takes paper from a leather file.)

MONROE: The latest dispatches, Sir.

(WASHINGTON rifles through documents.)

WASHINGTON: Bills of lading. The farmers are charging us a King's ransom for their livestock. We are hardly in a position to negotiate and they press their advantage. Look, no boots! When are we going to get a shipment of boots? Is there anything to drink?

(The family is galvanized into action. They bring over drink and food.)

GOLDIE: Yessir. Hot . . . um, cider.

TINA: (With pewter cup.) Here General. Newly polished.

MAUREEN: Some Winchester stew.

NORMAN: And corn bread.

GOLDIE: (Opening stove.) Why, look what I've just found.

JEREMIAH: That's Venison pie. I shot the deer.

WASHINGTON: Well then, serve it up. After all, it is Christmas eve.

(He rifles through some papers, stops, chuckles and brings out an old faded recipe.)

Would you look at this. Martha's recipe for Capon stuffed with oysters. She always served this at Christmas. To come home to Martha's wassail bowl after choosing and felling the yule log: warmth and laughter and fellowship. I miss her.

(Referring to TINA.)

And your name. . .?

TINA: Tina, Sir. Tina Hartley.

(She curtsies.)

WASHINGTON: You remind me of my young Patsy. She was a creature born for Christmas. What joy she gave us when she came out all dressed for church.
(To JERRY.)
And you young, Sir?

JERRY: Uh, Ringo. . . er, Jerry, uh, that is, Jeremiah Hartley.

(He does an awkward half bow.)

WASHINGTON: What a coincidence. Jeremiah Hartley, I'd like to introduce you to . . . Jeremiah Hartley.

JEREMIAH: I'd shake your hand, but my fingers are froze. Couldn't play to muster the troops this afternoon. Let everyone down.

WASHINGTON: Don't be too hard on yourself, Master Hartley.

JERRY: You play the drums, for General Washington?

JEREMIAH: I'm not much good at it.

JERRY: Could you show me your drum?

JEREMIAH: It's over there.

WASHINGTON: My adopted son John will be opening his presents this evening. I got him a filigree watch and a miniature stable with six horses in it. When do you celebrate the coming of our Saviour?

GOLDIE: Well . . . we weren't actually planning much of a celebration this year, were we Maureen?

MAUREEN: No. . . not really.

WASHINGTON: No matter. As long as your thoughts and prayers are directed towards the birth of Him who is the source of our joy.

MAUREEN: Errr. . . right.

MONROE: Here Master Hartley. A present for you.

(He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a musket ball.)

In New York we melted down a statue of King George and made lead musket balls. Here.

JERRY: Cool.

MONROE: Excuse me ?

JERRY: Neato. I mean, right on. Uh. . . thank you sir.

(JERRY walks forward talking to TV, flashing the musket ball to Tina on the way.)

JERRY: Take notice TV land, how Jerrboy is helping yon half frozen drummer boy. Remember me when it comes time to select your favorite survivor.

(TINA crosses to MONROE, flirting with fan, deep Southern accent.)

TINA: (To MONROE.) Do you have one of those musket thingy's for little ol' me?

MONROE: A musketball? Well, I don't know if that is an entirely appropriate gift for a young lady.

(She rolls her eyes and sighs.)

Will this do, a handkerchief, it has my initials there, and there the Monroe crest.

TINA: Why thank you, Sir. Much obliged.

(He bows and kisses her hand.)

MAUREEN: Uh Scarlet, GONE WITH THE WIND doesn't happen for another two hundred years.

NORMAN: (Conspiratorially, to WASHINGTON.) So tonight's the night, eh?

WASHINGTON: I beg your pardon.

NORMAN: The big crossing.

WASHINGTON: I'm sorry Mr. Hartley, but I am not at liberty to divulge that information at this time.

NORMAN: That's OK. Just stick to it.

WASHINGTON: Stick to what?

NORMAN: Stick to your guns.

WASHINGTON: Yes, I most certainly will do that. Lieutenant Monroe.

(They study the map and talk.)

MAUREEN: (Gestures for NORMAN to come over.) You can't influence him. If you do you might change history. I read that someplace.

GOLDIE: Dinner is just about ready. Uh, General, would you mind moving your maps and things, you're going to need all the victuals you can get crossing that River and fighting those Hessians down in Trenton.

WASHINGTON: (Stands.) Lieutenant!

MONROE: (Stupefied) I swear, I didn't say anything, Sir.

(They cross to eat at the table. MONROE pulls out TINA'S chair, and then MAUREEN'S.)

JERRY: (To JEREMIAH) Aren't you going to eat?

JEREMIAH: You're serving up our Christmas dinner. I was to watch over it tell my Mother gets back. There'll be hell to pay.

(As the table is being set.)

MAUREEN: (To NORMAN.) Can you tell whether he's real or not.

NORMAN: He smells real.

TINA: He looks real.

GOLDIE: (facetiously) Well, why don't you try pinching him and see if he yelps.

(Back to boys.)

JERRY: You're spilling . . . easy.

JEREMIAH: I can feed myself. If my father was here. . .

JERRY: Your father? Where . . .?

JEREMIAH: Captured at the Battle of Long Island. But he'll come back, I know it. What are you doing here?

JERRY: Good question.

GOLDIE: Food's on.

(JERRY starts to help, JEREMIAH over.)

JEREMIAH: Ahh. Leave me be. You'll only be making things worse.

(The Hartley family noisily starts passing food and diving in. All except GOLDIE that is. WASHINGTON and MONROE watch in undisguised concern. MONROE finally taps a glass with a knife and clears his throat.)

MONROE: I think grace would be appropriate.

(They all somewhat guiltily stand and fold their hands.)

WASHINGTON: Lord God, bless this family and provide us with wisdom and courage so that we might move only in your Providence. In Christ's mighty name, Amen.

MONROE: (Pulling out TINA'S chair.) If you would allow me, may I sit here Miss Hartley?

TINA: Yeah, I'd like that.

(They start in eating. There is a knock on the door. MONROE, at a nod from WASHINGTON, goes to open it. The CAROLERS are there. They sing 'The Wassail Song'. They are dressed roughly as Revolutionary soldiers and camp followers. COL. EBENEZER MATHER fights his way roughly through the CAROLERS.)

GOLDIE: Been a long time since we had a sit down dinner.

MAUREEN: This venison pie is good!

MONROE: It's Col. Ebenezer Mather.

WASHINGTON: Hm, yes. The Northeast will have its say (A sigh.)

MATHER: (To CAROLERS.) If you'll please stop that. I said desist. Col. Ebenezer Mather reporting sir. As Commanding Officer of the men of the Massachusetts Liberty Guard I have an official complaint to register.

WASHINGTON: Would you care to join us for dinner?

MATHER: No thank you, Sir. I'm here to object to the celebration that is going on throughout the camp.

WASHINGTON: It IS Christmas eve, isn't it Lieutenant?

MONROE: Most assuredly, Sir.

MATHER: In Massachusetts we do not celebrate Christmas.

GOLDIE: Join the party.

MATHER: And we certainly do not condone libations of an alcoholic nature. The primitive rituals you allow, no encourage, have Pagan roots.

WASHINGTON: I can assure you Col. Mather, that the celebration of the birth of our Savior is at the rightful center of these festivities.

MATHER: No one rightly knows whether or not December 25th is the authentic date for Christ's birth in any case.

WASHINGTON: You might be right there, Colonel, but it only seems appropriate to celebrate the coming of God's Son here on this poor earth and Christmas WILL be celebrated on this eve. Now, do you have other matters of pertinence to discuss?

MATHER: Yes, sir. I certainly do. What I have to say I want taken down, for the record—Lieutenant, please.

WASHINGTON: (To family.) If you'll excuse us.

(The family takes some food and sit elsewhere.)

MATHER: I represent a contingent of concerned officers Sir, who feel that your intended crossing of the Delaware at this time is near suicidal in nature.

GOLDIE: Hogwash!

WASHINGTON: Go on, I'm listening.

MATHER: First of all, as to the condition of the men. One gill of rice, 2 ounces of meat a day—they've been reduced to chewing on beef hides and fire cakes.

WASHINGTON: It is anticipated that with the enemy supplies captured at Trenton we can make it through the winter.

NORMAN: Exactly. The storehouses at Trenton. . .

MATHER: Half the New Jersey contingent of militia has gone home. The other half will be up for discharge in a couple of weeks.

WASHINGTON: That's why we have to move now. We desperately need a victory.

MATHER: Many of the men don't have shoes. You expect them to make a winter's march. Look at that boy there. And the river— I've been down there. Ice floes.

WASHINGTON: All the more reason to advance now, before it freezes.

MONROE: Glover's Durham boats will get us across.

MATHER: A snowstorm will be setting in. The northeast wind will beat into the faces of the men.

MONROE: We already have sufficient wind coming from the Northeast, eh General?

(TINA laughs, covers her mouth. WASHINGTON rises.)

WASHINGTON: Is there anything else, Col. Mather?

MATHER: I have just begun: The Hessian-German garrison in Trenton, they're trained mercenaries. We don't even know how many there are.

NORMAN: You don't have to worry, most of them will desert anyway.

TINA: Yeah, our neighbor James Gruber? He's German.

MATHER: You have German soldiers for neighbors?

TINA: Not here. Well here, but not . . . now.

WASHINGTON: We have spies, Colonel. We'll get an accurate estimate of their size and deployment.

MATHER: (Grasping at straws.) You will be leading an untrained rabble. They don't know how to march in ranks or maneuver on the battlefield. The men don't know what a bayonet is. . .

WASHINGTON: Are you finished, Colonel?

MATHER: My objections . . .

WASHINGTON: Have been duly noted.

(JEREMIAH is trying to bring out a flyer from inside his jacket. He gets it out, but it drops to the ground because he can't hold it. JERRY picks it up.)

JEREMIAH: If you'll excuse me General, Sir. The men have been passing this around. Gen. Ewing asked that I give it to you.

JERRY: Let's see. (Jerry takes it, passes it on to his father.) Here.

NORMAN: It's by Thomas Paine. From THE CRISIS journal, written just a week ago. . . I know this. . .

(Distant song from CAROLERS, singing 'OUR COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE or some equivalent. Halfway through he looks up, having memorized it in the past.)

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in the crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands for it NOW deserves the love and thanks
of man and woman everywhere."

(NORMAN chokes up. TINA hands him a handkerchief.)

WASHINGTON: Mr. Hartley, I appreciate your sentiment as well as Mr. Paine's rhetoric. Would that it were shared by all. Are you with us, Colonel?

MATHER: (stands at attention, salutes.) May God watch over you General.

(He exits.)

WASHINGTON: Was that a yes or a no?

(MONROE shrugs. WASHINGTON sinks into his chair again.)

WASHINGTON: He's right you know.

MONROE: As you are, Sir.

WASHINGTON: In confidence, I tell you James, that I have never been in such an unhappy and divided state since I was born.

MONROE: The men are behind you, Sir.

WASHINGTON: Yes, I know. But I sense the impossibility of serving with reputation, or doing any essential services to the cause by continuing in command, and yet I am told that if I quit the command inevitable ruin will follow.

MONROE: You are the man that God has chosen for this hour.

NORMAN: Uh, excuse me General. I couldn't help overhearing. If I may be so bold. . .

MAUREEN: (Hissing.) Norman. Remember what I said.

(There is another knock on the door. MONROE goes to answer it. He goes outside. Again, 'The Wassail Song' can be heard just outside the door.)

TINA: (to MAUREEN) Mom. Did you see? James Monroe . He's such a . . . such a gentleman.

MAUREEN: It's nice to know that back then a man knew, uh knows, how to treat a woman with. . . with . . .

GOLDIE: Civility.

(MONROE re-enters.)

MONROE: It's some of the troops and their followers, Sir, here to put on a Mummers show in the tradition of a Christmas pantomime. They'll be asking for refreshment.

GOLDIE: Bring 'em in, we have food and drink to go round.

(WASHINGTON nods, MONROE opens the door, and several 'players' come in. Costume wise they are a varied menagerie of military dress and civilian and rags and blankets to keep warm. Throughout the scene they are given treats and drinks by the family.)

ALL: (Sing.)
TO WASHINGTON'S HEALTH,
FILL A BUMPER AROUND,
FOR HE IS OUR GLORY AND OUR PRIDE.
OUR ARMS ALL IN BATTLE
WITH CONQUEST BE CROWNED,
BECAUSE HE'S ON OUR SIDE.

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