

**'Twas the Clash Before Christmas**  
**By Karen Jones**

*(Excerpts may be used royalty free for auditions.)*

**AUDITION -- for 5 m, 5 w, 2 flexible and 1 girl**

*In this scene, the family is explaining the situation to the police officers.*

**JONATHAN:** They're referring to the turkey, Dad.

**VERN:** Well heck, that old tom ain't been mistreated. He's been fed up good and proper. Going to be mighty tasty, that bird.

**HOKE:** Now, if you're talking about that little spill he took off the back of the truck. Well, sir, it just addled him some. I don't reckon it bruised the meat any. It should still be good to eat.

**SGT. SMITH:** Now, wait a minute, you say the bird fell off a truck?

**VERN:** Now, we've already been through that with that trooper. How many tickets does a body have to get for one little mistake?

**SGT. SMITH:** Okay, we'll just let that go for the moment. Let's get back to the vandalism. Officer Jones?

**OFFICER JONES:** I caught this young man dragging this shrub from out behind one of the houses.

**JONATHAN:** Clifford, what's going on?

**CLIFFORD:** Well, while I was out tracking Murphy, I spotted this little ol' tree. Now I know it ain't much, but it was the best I could find.

**JONATHAN:** But, why?

**CLIFFORD:** Well, I figure Cissy deserves a REAL Christmas tree. One that she don't have to tote around a candle to snort to make it feel like Christmas.

*(OTHERS nod in agreement. Ad lib: That's fer sure, etc.)*

**SGT. SMITH:** Is the homeowner pressing charges?

**OFFICER JONES:** No one was at home at the time. However, since the vandalism took place in a gated community, it is safe to assume that charges will be made.

**HOKE:** A gated community? Is that where you city folks fence in your critters?

**SGT. SMITH:** I beg your pardon?

**MICHELLE:** No, Father Hoke. They don't keep animals there. It's a community that the owners try to keep secluded.

**VERN:** In other words, they're rich folks and don't cotton to regular folks like us.

**BEULAH:** Well, now, that ain't a bit neighborly. You'd think we were "rift-raft" or something.

**HOKE:** Don't go throwing a hissy fit, Ma. We do the same thing back home. Only we use "No Trespassing" signs.

**JONATHAN:** *(Relieved.)* Exactly...

**MRS. WINSLOW:** *(Interrupting.)* Excuse me, but which community are we talking about?

**OFFICER JONES:** Colonial Heights.

**MRS. WINSLOW:** Colonial Heights?

**OFFICER JONES:** Yes, ma'am. Number 1389 Colonial Heights.

**MRS. WINSLOW:** *(Pauses.)* Wait a minute, that's my home.

**JONATHAN:** Clifford!

**CLIFFORD:** Well, she has a passel of little pines around back of her garage, and Cissy needed a proper tree. Didn't figure anyone would even miss it.

**VERN:** Now, I know you meant well, son. Only I think you ought to have asked first. City folks don't appear to be as obliging as folks back home.

*(SFX: Walkie-talkie goes off. OFFICER JONES answers.)*

**OFFICER JONES:** *(Into the walkie-talkie.)* Yes, we understand. We'll be right there. *(Lowers it.)* That was animal control. They need backup down at the dog park. It seems there is a large gangly bird of some kind chasing a great dane around the pond.

**CLIFFORD:** I bet's that Murphy.

**JONATHAN:** You think?

**PEARL:** What's a dog park?

**MICHELLE:** It's a place where you take your pets to run and get some exercise.

**HOKE:** Now, don't that beat all. First, you got special police to protect them and now a park for them to play in.

**OLIVE:** You folks sure put a lot of store in your critters, don't you?

**BEULAH:** Beats all I ever seen.

**SGT. SMITH:** Be that as it may, we have certain laws concerning animals. But right now we'd better head down to the park. We'll come back later to finish this up. *(Addresses MRS. WINSLOW.)* In the meantime, you need to decide whether or not you want to press charges. Come along, Jones.

**HOKE:** You might want to go along, Clifford. That tom can be a mite feisty.

**CLIFFORD:** *(Eagerly.)* Yes, sir. Can I have my hatchet back?

**CISSY:** *(Panicky.)* Mama!

**JONATHAN:** Forget the hatchet, Clifford. We'll probably be donating Murphy to a petting zoo.

**BEULAH:** That might not be such a good idea, Johnny. There was more than one reason we chose him for dinner. He might be fat and juicy, but he's also quite a handful.

**JONATHAN:** But I thought you said Pearl held him in her lap on the way down here.

**HOKE:** She did. But that was after we poured some of Beulah's sassafras tea down its gullet. Slept like a baby after that.

**JONATHAN:** I'm afraid to ask this, but how in the world did you pour tea down that turkey's gullet, *(Pauses.)* I mean, throat.

**VERN:** Well, I tell you, it took some doing. First, Clifford had to put an arm-lock on him to keep him from flogging us. *(Crouches down and makes a circle of his arms.)* Then we stretched up his neck like this *(Mimics pulling up.)*

**HOKE:** Better watch what you say there, Vern. The animal police may not take a shine to what we done.

**VERN:** Hmm, I bet you're right. Let's just say, once that ole tom got a swig of that tea, he wasn't a bit of trouble.

**JONATHAN:** But sassafras tea shouldn't have that type of effect.

**HOKE:** This is your ma's brew, Johnny. Need I say more?

**SGT. SMITH:** Are you saying that we're dealing with a drunk turkey?

**VERN:** Not anymore. He had stopped his staggering anyway.

**HOKE:** But he could be a bit hung over. And if that's the case, you had better be a mite cautious. He is one ornery bird. Like I said before, it'd be best to take Clifford with you. He'll know what to do.

**CLIFFORD:** Does that mean I can use the hatchet?

**OLIVE:** No, Clifford. Just catch him. We don't want to be upsetting little Cissy here.

**CLIFFORD:** (*Grumbles.*) Aw shucks!

(*CLIFFORD leaves with the POLICE OFFICERS.*)

**VERN:** But what about Christmas dinner? I really had a hankering for some turkey.

**MICHELLE:** I'll take care of dinner, Uncle Vern. I'll just run down to the market and pick up a Butterball.

**HOKE:** A ball of butter? What in the world— (*Stops as BEULAH punches HIM in the ribs.*)

**BEULAH:** Why, that sounds real nice, Michelle. You can pick up the butter and me and Olive will tag along and pick out the turkey and some fixings. After all, we know what our menfolk like. They can be mighty picky sometimes.

**VERN:** Aw, we ain't picky. We just don't cotton to fish bait.

**MRS. WINSLOW:** (*Gets to HER feet.*) You know, I really must be going.

**JONATHAN:** (*Turns to MRS. WINSLOW.*) I am truly sorry for everything, Mrs. Winslow. Let me assure you, this is not a typical evening for us. It's just my family can get a little...enthusiastic. They didn't mean any harm. And I will be more than happy to pay for any damages to your property.

**OLIVE:** Now, Johnny, if'n there is any damage, me and Vern will take care of it. After all, Clifford is our responsibility.

**VERN:** (*Concerned.*) Olive?

**OLIVE:** Hush up, Vern. It's just a little ole tree. All we have to do is dig one up back home and bring it on down here to Ms. Winslow's house. You'll never be able to tell the difference.

**JONATHAN:** That won't be necessary. We'll just pick one up from the nursery.

**BEULAH:** Nursery? What in the world does young'uns have to do with it?

**MICHELLE:** It's not that kind of nursery, Ma. This is a tree nursery. It's a place where they grow plants and trees to sell.

**BEULAH:** What? You mean you have to buy your trees down here?

**OLIVE:** Well, I've never heard such a thing. No wonder you use fake ones.

**JONATHAN:** (*Lowers and shakes his head.*) I'm sorry Mrs. Winslow. This is getting SO out of hand.

**PAPPY:** Now, there ain't no need to apologize, Johnny. This is just a little misunderstanding. We just do things a little different back home is all. What you might call a "Culture Clash." And as for this here tree situation, why it's jest a "man added" thing. Shouldn't be a fretting over something like that.

**MRS. WINSLOW:** Man added?

**PAPPY:** Why sure. It's just something "man added" to the Christmas celebration. You know, Christmas tree, Santa Claus, reindeer and such. Christmas is supposed to be a celebration of the birth of the Christ child. But man has added so much malarkey to the mix that the real Christmas message is being buried underneath it all. Instead of sitting back and celebrating Christmas, folks just run around like a chicken with its head cut off trying to get everything just so.

**MRS. WINSLOW:** Well, everyone has their own traditions to follow.

**PAPPY:** That they do. And that's all right as long as you remember what and who you're really celebrating. Remember the angels' message of "Peace on Earth"? Can you honestly say there you feel peaceful at Christmas?

**MICHELLE:** I know what you mean. Christmas has gotten so hectic with everything you think you have to do, that you don't really get to enjoy any of it.

**OLIVE:** You are absolutely right. Here we've all been acting like a Martha instead of a Mary like we should have.

**MRS. WINSLOW:** Mary and Martha? Are they some more of your relatives?

**BEULAH:** Oh, dear me, no. They're from the Bible. They were the sisters of Lazarus and friends of Jesus.

**MRS. WINSLOW:** I'm not sure I follow.

**PAPPY:** You see, Maggie, when Jesus showed up at their house one day, Martha ran around doing all sorts of chores to make things right and proper for the Lord. But Mary just sat there enjoying the Lord's fellowship. Now after a while Martha commenced to get riled up about Mary not doing her part and wanted Jesus to say something to her. But instead, Jesus told Martha that Mary had made the better choice.

**MRS. WINSLOW:** Well, that hardly seemed fair.

**PAPPY:** Don't get it wrong. There ain't a thing wrong with doing for the Lord. In fact, that's a mighty fine thing to do. But Martha lost sight of what was truly important. Every now and then, you need to just sit back and enjoy His fellowship, just like Mary.

**HOKE:** Yep, you've got to keep things in perspective. Martha was too busy running around "doing" that she wasn't "listening."

**PAPPY:** She just needed to "Be still and know" like the Good Book says.

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