

CHAPTER SEVEN CHRISTMAS
By Andrew Frodahl

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AUDITION 1-- for 5 m and 5 w

In this scene, the family chats over the feast, but the trouble is just beginning.

(PRUITT and PRUDY enter from the kitchen. They both are wearing tattered clothes and have scratches all over their faces. They block the door together behind them.)

PRUITT: Your lordship. We got a problem.

MIRANDA: What happened?

PRUDY: It's the cat, miss.

PRUITT: It's tearing everything to shreds. We barely got out here alive.

MELVIN: I told you that cat was possessed! Who let it roam free?

DELORES: I did. Spoofy is normally an angel.

MELVIN: Yeah, a fallen one!

DELORES: He probably heard you call me fat and got upset.

MELVIN: I didn't call you fat!

PRUITT: This thing has got one thing on its mind: destruction!

MELVIN: Where is it?

PRUITT: I managed to get it trapped in the kitchen. Mister Melvin, the granite countertops will never be the same.

PRUDY: I can go get my shotgun.

MELVIN: Great idea!

MIRANDA: What? No!

DELORES: I will go in there and get my darling. When I come back I expect an apology.

MELVIN: An apology? Your crazy cat just tore up the kitchen! Oh, Miranda, we are in trouble!

(DELORES enters the kitchen.)

DELORES: *(Offstage.)* Spoofy, it's Mommy. *(SFX: Cat growl.)* Come here. Now!

MIRANDA: Melvin, don't panic. I'm sure we can clean it up.

(DELORES reenters carrying Spoofy. She is petting him.)

DELORES: Good news is the pies weren't touched.

PRUITT: Please keep that thing away from us!

(SFX: Cat growl.)

MELVIN: Delores, please put Spoofy back into his carrier.

DELORES: Where's my apology?

MELVIN: I didn't call you fat.

DELORES: You said I needed the diet shakes. I think we all know what you were implying!

MIRANDA: Melvin, just say you're sorry so we can finish dinner.

MELVIN: Fine. Delores, I'm sorry.

DELORES: Just 'cause you say it don't mean you mean it.

MELVIN: Now please put Spoofy back into his cell block for the safety of our guests.

TATE: My belly is feeling a little funny.

TANYA: Well, babe, you haven't had a cheat day in months.

TATE: That could be it. Melvin, where is the bathroom?

MELVIN: I don't know; they're everywhere. Turn a corner and you will find one. I'm going to assess the damage.

(MELVIN exits to the kitchen. PRUDY follows him.)

PRUITT: Closest one is down the north wing, third left.

TATE: Thank you. Be right back.

(BRIAN enters from outside with a first aid kit. DELORES puts Spoofy back in his carrier in the living room.)

TANYA: Poor thing. First time off the shakes and eating solid food.

BRIAN: The snow is really falling out there. I'd say four to five inches have fallen since we got here. Here is the kit.

CHARLOTTE: Let's sit you down and get you bandaged up.

DENNIS: Thank you.

(DENNIS sits in the wingback.)

DELORES: Don't let him milk the situation, Charlotte. He likes to draw attention to himself.

TANYA: *(Looking at her cell.)* I guess it's a good thing we are all snug here for the night. The weather report is saying up to a foot tonight.

DELORES: Oh, but we are not staying here tonight, Tanya. Didn't you know?

TANYA: Know what?

DELORES: Should I tell her, or maybe you should tell your sister why we all are not welcome to stay the night?

TANYA: What? Miranda?

MIRANDA: Melvin and I thought it best if everyone stayed in hotels. You know, have your own space.

TANYA: Space? This place is huge! How much space you need?

DELORES: According to Melvin I need a lot.

BRIAN: Now wait, to be fair, Melvin did say it was due to insurance reasons.

DELORES: Oh, please tell me you don't really believe that malarkey?

BRIAN: Are you calling my son a liar?! Melvin isn't perfect, but he is no liar!

MIRANDA: Everyone, please be civil.

TANYA: Are we not good enough to sleep in your new house?

MIRANDA: No, that's not it at all.

(MELVIN enters from kitchen. PRUDY follows.)

MELVIN: The custom granite countertops are now adorned with Spoofy's claw marks.

DELORES: I'm sure they will buff right out.

TANYA: So, Melvin, you think you are better than the rest of us?

MELVIN: What? No, I've never thought that. But you all certainly have thought you're better than me.

BRIAN: Don't worry, son. I told her about the insurance.

TANYA: Some family Christmas this is turning out to be. All of us will be camped out at the Econo fighting off fleas and hostile truckers while you are in your fluffy robes drinking hot cider and listening to Perry Como.

MIRANDA: Tanya.

TANYA: Why did we all agree to come to your place this year?

MIRANDA: I wanted to celebrate a big family Christmas.

CHARLOTTE: *(To MELVIN.)* I understand the insurance thing, sweetie, but I don't see how it's safe for all of us to be driving out in a blizzard.

DELORES: It's not sensible!

MIRANDA: Melvin? It's just for the night.

MELVIN: Miranda, no! Look what happened to the kitchen! We can't afford to have any more mishaps.

DELORES: One thing I know is you can certainly afford it.

PRUITT: I don't want to intrude on family matters, but, Mister Melvin, it wouldn't be wise to send everyone into town in such bad weather. Prudy and I don't mind if they stay at our house. We got plenty of rooms.

PRUDY: We sure do!

DELORES: The servants' quarters?

MELVIN: Chives, I don't think that is a good idea.

PRUDY: It's no trouble. And everyone will be right next door.

PRUITT: Although I must insist that the cat stay in the garage.

DELORES: What? Spoofy sleeps with me!

PRUDY: The garage is heated.

PRUITT: It's that or the Econo.

DELORES: Fine.

MIRANDA: That's very kind of you both.

BRIAN: I guess technically we will still be in your house, it's just the servants' quarters.

MELVIN: Right.

(TATE enters from down the hall.)

TATE: Hey, Melvin?

MELVIN: Yeah?

TATE: Do your toilets have a tendency to backup?

MELVIN: Backup? What do you mean?

TATE: I think it's that four-ply toilet paper you've got in there. Soft, but pretty heavy-duty stuff.

BRIAN: It sounds like a rushing river. Do you hear that?

MELVIN: Great!

TATE: We are going to need some towels. A lot of towels.

PRUITT: Don't worry, I'm on my way! *(Exits down the hall but quickly returns.)* On second thought, it's worse than I thought. I better go next door and git me my waders.

(PRUITT exits. MELVIN sits down on the couch and puts his head in his lap.)

DELORES: I hope you didn't overpay for this place, Melvin. It looks nice, but seems to have bad plumbing and faulty countertops.

AUDITION 2-- for 5 m and 5 w

In this scene, the truth comes out.

(BRIAN, CHARLOTTE, MIRANDA, TATE, TANYA, and DENNIS enter from kitchen door.)

BRIAN: No need, son.

TATE: We heard it all through the floor vent. I knew you were lying about being in a band.

MIRANDA: Tate, please.

MELVIN: That's right. Tate, I lied about that. I've been jobless for months. I'm a big fat liar and a big fat failure.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, Melvin, why didn't you just tell us you were on hard times?

MELVIN: Because everyone else in this family is such a big success.

BRIAN: I've always told you the music business is not a stable industry.

DELORES: I can't believe, my dear Miranda, that you went along with this cockamamie scam.

MIRANDA: Mom, you make everything a competition. It's tough to swallow when your sister is so rich and in such great shape and perfect! I admit I enjoyed feeling like I had the upper hand for once.

TATE: I guess Tanya is back to winning the competition. Even with the baby on the way.

TANYA: The baby part could be a lie too; everything else is.

DELORES: Please tell me the baby part is not a lie?

MIRANDA: No, that is real.

TATE: You know Tanya and I could have a baby too if we wanted. Lots of them. But we like our freedom right now.

MELVIN: Tate, do you want me to just say it? You're successful, you're great, and, man, I wish I could afford to buy the cars you drive and give my wife expensive jewels, but alas I'm a failure. Does that make you feel better?

TATE: I would be lying if I said it didn't a little.

PRUDY: Wow, someone's parents didn't teach them manners.

BRIAN: How bad is it, Melvin?

MELVIN: We lost our house, had to sell the car, maxed out all the credit cards, and are facing daily phone threats from collectors. Dad, you raised a failure.

PRUITT: Now, if you don't mind, I'd like to give my two cents. Mister Melvin, you are not a failure. You faced some hard times, but that's not because you necessarily brought them upon yourself. This whole idea that money or wealth makes you a success is really foolish.

MIRANDA: Funny coming from you, Pruitt. You and Prudy are very rich.

PRUDY: Yes, but it doesn't mean nothing really in the grand scheme of life.

PRUITT: Do any of you know what today is really about?

DELORES: Presents.

TANYA: Shopping and peppermint lattes.

TATE: Lavish parties and ugly sweaters.

PRUITT: No. Two thousand years ago God sent his only Son to this world to pay a debt.

CHARLOTTE: You're talking about the baby Jesus? It's such a cute story.

PRUDY: It ain't no tale, lady.

MELVIN: A debt?

PRUITT: Yup, a debt way bigger than your debt, Melvin. A debt that no amount of anyone's wealth could pay off.

MELVIN: I can't imagine a debt bigger than mine.

PRUDY: Even if you had all the riches ever obtained in the history of the world, it wouldn't be close to enough.

BRIAN: What is this debt?

PRUITT: The wages of sin. And the payment they require is death.

DENNIS: Ooh, I don't like that.

PRUDY: But this is where the baby Jesus comes in.

PRUITT: God's only Son Jesus came into this world on Christmas to grow up to be a man and pay the debt. A debt He didn't owe, a debt none of us could pay.

MIRANDA: How did he pay it?

PRUDY: With His life. You see, the debt required a perfect, sinless sacrifice.

PRUITT: Which no one but Jesus could pay. You see, Melvin, Miranda, being poor doesn't mean you are a failure or worthless. Jesus paid your debt in full! The balance is no longer due. You are priceless to Him.

MELVIN: Why would He do that for us?

PRUDY: 'Cause He loves us. It was God's gift to us. The greatest gift that gold and silver cannot buy.

PRUITT: The world has it all backwards. Christmas isn't about all these material things. Sure, things are nice - I love my four-wheelers, sleds, and boats - but truth is Christmas is about a debt needing to be paid for a bunch of failures. (*Beat.*) Us!

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