‘Twas the Clash Before Christmas

By Karen Jones

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DEDICATION

This play is dedicated to Carolyn Bartlett Lyons, whose kindness, patience and courage touched everyone she met.
You are sorely missed.

And to the cast and crew of
Stevens Creek United Methodist Church.

STORY OF THE PLAY

It's Christmas Eve and Jonathan is looking forward to a quiet family celebration with his wife, Michelle and daughter, Cissy. This idea comes to a screeching halt when, unbeknownst to him, Michelle has invited his mountain family to come down for the holiday. These good folks turn up bearing, not only gifts, but a rocking chair (for Pappy's sciatica) and a live turkey for Christmas dinner. When another high-society guest shows up unexpectedly, the mountain folk eagerly pitch in to help. After all, that's what family is for. Unfortunately, their backwoods ways raise more than a few eyebrows with the sophisticated city dwellers. It all comes to a head when the turkey escapes and the police arrive to check out a report of an "axe-toting" prowler roaming the streets. In the midst of the ensuing confusion, the family patriarch steps in with his homespun wisdom to calm everyone down. He simply reminds them of the true meaning of Christmas, a message that has been buried underneath all the trimmings that society has added to the celebration. It's the message of God's love and "peace on earth, good will toward men." Approximately 30 minutes.

ORIGINAL CAST AND CREW

Tommy Bobbitt, Angela Lundy, Mallory Lundy, Jeanette Haga, David Haga, Alan Underwood, Emma Underwood, Ralph "Scooter" Jones, Susie Funk, Dylan Bobbitt, Katlyn Bobbitt, Ella Bobbitt, Kaitlin Hooven, Anna Waller, Brent Lundy.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 m, 5 w, 2 flexible, 1 girl)

Jonathan McGreevy: Country boy made good
Michelle McGreevy: City girl, married to Jonathan
Cissy McGreevy: Young daughter of Jonathan and Michelle
Margaret Winslow: High-society neighbor
Sergeant Smith: Police officer
Officer Jones: Police officer
Luther (Pappy) McGreevy: Patriarch of the family
Hoke McGreevy: Pappy's son, Jonathan's father
Beulah McGreevy: Hoke's wife, Jonathan's mother
Vern McGreevy: Jonathan's uncle
Olive McGreevy: Vern's wife
Clifford McGreevy: Vern and Olive's teen son
Pearl McGreevy: Vern and Olive's school-aged daughter

SETTING

Gracious upscale living room. Fireplace in center of stage decorated with candles, garland, stockings, etc. Bible is on the mantel. A Christmas tree is off to the side. Two chairs to either side of the fireplace. A small table next to one of the chairs has the telephone on it. Another table and chair to one side of the stage.

PROPS

Telephone, Bible, nativity set, wrapping paper, briefcase, car keys, child's book, rocking chair, candles, cooler, sleeping bags, bags of wrapped presents, trays of food, paper plates, cups, mason jar of tea, walkie-talkies, cut pine tree, strainer.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: MICHELLE sits at a table wrapping presents. CISSY sits reading a book. JONATHAN enters carrying car keys and a briefcase.)

JONATHAN: *(Places keys on the mantel and sets the briefcase down.)* Whew, what a nightmare.
MICHELLE: Bad day, dear?
JONATHAN: *(To CISSY.)* Hi, sweetie. *(To MICHELLE.)* Well, it wasn't too bad until I stopped by the mall coming home. *(Shakes HIS head.)* You wouldn't believe the things people do this time of the year. *(Slumps down in a chair.)* Thank goodness it's over. Now we can relax and enjoy Christmas…just you, me and Cissy.
MICHELLE: Hmm. About that…
JONATHAN: *(Sits up straight.)* About *w*hat? Did your parents change their mind about the cruise?
MICHELLE: No, they're still going.
JONATHAN: Then what?
CISSY: *(Excitedly.)* Grandma and Grandpa McGreevy are coming.
JONATHAN: *(Turns to MICHELLE.)* Please, tell me I didn't just hear that.
MICHELLE: *(Hesitates.)* Now, Jonathan, Cissy doesn't get to see your parents very often. And I really want her to get to know them better.
JONATHAN: Why didn't you clear this with me first?
MICHELLE: Well, it was sort of a spur of the moment thing. Your mother called and—
JONATHAN: Never mind. I know Mom. You didn't have a chance.
MICHELLE: Oh, it won't be that bad. Just a little "family get-together."
JONATHAN: Is that the term she used? "A little family get-together"?
MICHELLE: I think so. Why? Does that make a difference?
JONATHAN: *(Moans.)* Oh, yes. That's mountain code for kinfolk you can pile in a car.

MICHELLE: Oh, I think you're just exaggerating. But even so, I want Cissy to have the "big family" experience. As an only child I always felt I was missing out on something. You really don't know how lucky you were.
JONATHAN: There are two kinds of luck, you know. *(Grumbles.)* Just when are they due to arrive?

(SFX: Doorbell rings.)

JONATHAN: *(Cont'd. Gets to his feet.)* Never mind. I think I know.

(JONATHAN moves to the door and opens it. Outside is a loud group of people. THEY holler their greetings, Ad lib: Hey there, Johnny!...Why Cissy, you done got taller than a tadpole. BEULAH, OLIVE, PEARL, CLIFFORD and PAPPY file in. The women are carrying bags of presents, duffle bags, brown grocery bags, and a cooler. Clifford is carrying an old rocking chair.)

CLIFFORD: Where you do want us to set this, Pappy?
PAPPY: Just anywhere out of the way.
BEULAH: Now, Pappy, you're never in the way. Just haul it over here. *(Points to the front of the fireplace.)*
JONATHAN: Mother, you know you didn't need to bring that rocker. We have plenty of comfortable chairs.
BEULAH: Well, I'm sure you do, son. But Pappy's sciatica has been hurting him something fierce lately. This is the only chair that he's comfortable in. You don't mind do you, Michelle?
MICHELLE: *(A little overwhelmed.)* Of course not. Just make yourself at home.
BEULAH: See there, Johnny. Michelle don't mind a bit. Come on, Pappy, you sit yourself right here and finish off that nap you was a having in the truck.
PAPPY: I wasn't sleeping. The sun was jest in my eyes.
CLIFFORD: Yeah, right. Sun's been down for near an hour, Pappy.

BEULAH: Mind your tongue, Clifford. Pappy is just a mite tuckered out.
(PAPPY slowly walks over to the rocker, sits down and starts to rock. CLIFFORD stands and surveys the room.)

CLIFFORD: This sure is a purty place you have here.
PEARL: It sure is. Just look at that fine tree you have there.
OLIVE: My, it sure is big. But you know I can't get nary of a scent of it. You'd think a tree this size would be a smelling up the whole place. *(Wanders over to examine the tree.)*
JONATHAN: It's artificial.
PEARL: Artificial? You mean it ain't real?
OLIVE: Well, I'll be. Git over here and look at this, Beulah.
BEULAH: *(Walks over and touches the tree.)* It looks alright I reckon, but it just ain't Christmas without the smell of pine in the air.
JONATHAN: Michelle lights candles to add fragrance to the house. *(Indicates the numerous candles sitting around.)*
PEARL: *(Picks up a candle and sniffs it.)* Here ya go, Aunt Beulah. Have a sniff. It does smell good. *(Passes the candle to BEULAH.)*
BEULAH: *(Taking the candle and sniffing.)* Well, I reckon if a body can't get out and get the real thing, they just have to make do.
CLIFFORD: I sure wish you had told us you needed a tree. We would have been glad to tote one down fer you. Ain't that right, Pappy?

(PAPPY has fallen asleep. He gives a small snort.)

BEULAH: Well, I swan, if he ain't gone and dropped off agin. *(To MICHELLE.)* Just give him a poke if he gets too loud. He can rattle the window with his snoring sometimes.
PEARL: That's fer sure. We had to stuff cotton balls in our ears coming down here.

(PAPPY gives another loud snort.)

End of Freeview

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