

A VILLAINOUS CHRISTMAS

by Brent Holland

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SYNOPSIS: It would appear that Reginald's desire to have Bethany's hand in marriage has caused him to descend into total villainy... but is that the real story?

DURATION: 55 minutes.

TIME: December 22nd-25th.

PLACE: Somewhere where it's cold during the winter!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 females, 3 males, 6 either)

REGINALD (m)	A good guy that has been put in a tough place. <i>(236 lines)</i>
BETHANY (f)	A young widower with a small child. Very poor, very dramatic. <i>(123 lines)</i>
CLARA (f)	Bethany's young daughter. Idealistic and naïve. <i>(40 lines)</i>
LOUISE (f)	Bethany's best friend. Protective. <i>(29 lines)</i>
BEATRICE (f)	Another of Bethany's friends who is concerned about her. <i>(10 lines)</i>
CONSTANCE (f)	Bethany's friend. Generous and friendly. <i>(16 lines)</i>
SIMON (m)	Reginald's good friend. A co-worker at the bank. <i>(56 lines)</i>
WILLIAMS (m/f)	The head of banking finance. A typical villain with black hat and cape. <i>(32 lines)</i>
SOLES (m/f)	A member of the banking finance board. <i>(9 lines)</i>
BAKER (m/f)	A member of the banking finance board. <i>(6 lines)</i>

CARTER (m/f).....	A member of the banking finance board. <i>(6 lines)</i>
ALICE (f).....	The receptionist at the bank. <i>(14 lines)</i>
SINGING TELEGRAM GUY (m/f).....	A guy who is only decent at his job. Enthusiastic. <i>(11 lines)</i>
MAURICE (m)	A villain with money to spare. Wants to corrupt Reginald. <i>(87 lines)</i>
WILLIE (m/f).....	A local preacher who has a part time job working for a villain to make ends meet. <i>(18 lines)</i>
MAMA SQUIRES (f)	Reginald's mother, caring and loving... also very sick and will die without help. <i>(44 lines)</i>
ISABELLA (f)	Reginald's younger sister. 18 years old and feels like she should have a job to help the family. <i>(12 lines)</i>
KATE (f).....	Reginald's youngest sister. 15 and a spitfire. <i>(12 lines)</i>

DIRECTORS NOTES: Almost the entirety of this play should be done in a very melodramatic tone. You really can't be too big for most of these scenes. There are times, however, when Reginald must move the plot forward, and because of that, he is only truly melodramatic while playing the pseudo-villain in the first part of the show. For every other character, play it to the hilt!

COSTUMES: Costumes should be typical winter wear of the late 1800's. Heavy coats, scarves and hats galore! The villains should be decked out in black coats, pants and capes as well as black hats and, of course, black mustaches!

SET: Sets can range from minimal and representational to very complex and elaborate! The action takes place in the homes of the two protagonists as well as a couple of quick jaunts to the local bank.

AUTHORS NOTE: I love a good melodrama and this should be played that way. Despite a more elaborate plot than most melodramas, characters should play this over the top and as if the events are literal life and death. Villains should act villainous, despite the fact that none of the villains in this show are truly evil, and the heroes should be comically heroic. Have fun with this. I know we did!

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

A Villainous Christmas premiered at Laney High School in Wilmington, NC in December of 2024 with the following cast and crew:

REGINALD.....	Alex Hendrickson
BETHANY	Miriam Van Slyke
CLARA.....	Taylor Boughton
LOUISE.....	Sara Duffield
BEATRICE.....	Edie Zeldin
CONSTANCE	Tenaya Toon
SIMON	Nathan Daniel
WILLIAMS	Micah Gesualdi
SOLES	Maddy Liva
BAKER.....	Lilly Stanley
CARTER	Hannah Pattison
ALICE	Jacqueline Stallo
SINGING TELEGRAM GUY	Wyatt LaBrake
MAURICE.....	Kevin Williams
WILLIE	Clarke Campbell
MAMA SQUIRES.....	Liz Willoughby
ISABELLA	Bee Upchurch
KATE	Emma Wadkins

Stage Manager: Madz Bluford

DEDICATION

When we were dating, my wife Sierra and I would text each other the cute little argument that includes who loves the other more. I would like to state definitively now that the answer is me, as I am much bigger than she is and it only makes sense that a body that's like 6'2 and 270 pounds could hold more love than someone her size. For real.

SCENE 1

AT START: *There is a visible calendar on stage reading: DECEMBER 22nd. In the home of the widow Bethany, the lights come up on the widow BETHANY and her daughter, CLARA, knitting. There is a knock on the door.*

BETHANY: I wonder who that could be?

CLARA: I don't know mama! Should we answer the door?

BETHANY: I don't see why we shouldn't!

More knocking.

CLARA: Are we expecting anyone?

BETHANY: Not that I know of. I wonder if it's Christmas carolers?

After all, Christmas is only a few days away.

CLARA: I do so love Christmas carols! It brings me such joy! It almost makes me forget that we are too poor to buy Christmas presents!

BETHANY: And it almost makes me forget that two years ago my dear husband, who was also your father was killed in that mine explosion on Christmas eve! Such a sad, sad day!

More knocking.

CLARA: If it's Christmas carolers we should definitely answer the door!

REGINALD: *(From outside, muffled.)* It's not Christmas carolers!

BETHANY: But what if it's a stranger? One that has evil in his heart?

REGINALD: *(Outside again, still muffled.)* I'm not a stranger! Open the door!

BETHANY and CLARA go back to knitting. A few moments pass. More knocking.

BETHANY: Goodness! I had forgotten someone was at the door!

CLARA: Should we answer it mama?

REGINALD: Yes!

BETHANY: Is that you? Reginald?

REGINALD: It's cold out here! Open the door!

BETHANY crosses and opens the door. When she does a loud wind sounds and snow blows in. This should be as campy as possible.

BETHANY: Reginald! What brings you out in this storm?

REGINALD: It's nice to see you, Bethany. You're as beautiful as always! As is your daughter. Hello, Clara!

CLARA: Hello, Mr. Reginald!

BETHANY: How have you been, Reginald?

REGINALD: I've been fine, Bethany, very fine. How have you been?

BETHANY: I've been great. Thank you for asking.

REGINALD: Boy, it's freezing in here. You should light a fire.

BETHANY: It's not that cold.

CLARA: Mama! I can't feel my toes again!

BETHANY: Get up and do some more jumping jacks, love.

CLARA: Ok, Mama!

CLARA gets up and starts exercising.

REGINALD: *(Looking around for firewood.)* Let me start a fire, please!

CLARA: *(While exercising.)* We don't have any wood, Mr. Reginald!
Or Coal!

REGINALD: *(To BETHANY.)* Have things really gotten that bad, Bethany?

BETHANY: I'm afraid so.

BETHANY starts crying. CLARA also starts crying, but doesn't stop exercising.

REGINALD: I had no idea!

BETHANY: *(Still crying.)* We are so poor!

CLARA: *(Also still crying, and still exercising.)* So poor!

REGINALD: Well, I have come to talk to you about something important.

The crying continues.

REGINALD: I can wait.

More crying.

REGINALD: *(Patting her on the back.)* There, there.

Crying reaches a crescendo.

REGINALD: *(A bit frustrated.)* Can you two dry it up? Please? I'd like to discuss something with you.

BETHANY: *(Getting it together.)* I'm sorry, Reginald. I'm trying to be strong. It's just that being so poor... *(They both start to cry again.)*

REGINALD: *(Cutting them off.)* I'm sure it's terrible! But if you would listen for a moment, maybe I can help.

They both dry it up, though CLARA is still exercising... changing it up with different moves.

REGINALD: Thank you. I've been meaning to talk to you for a while, Bethany.

BETHANY: You have? About what?

REGINALD: I know it's almost two years since the accident.

BETHANY: The terrible explosion that killed my husband.

REGINALD: Yes. That one.

BETHANY: The explosion that stole Clara's father...

REGINALD: Right.

BETHANY: And drove us into desperate poverty! *(Both BETHANY and CLARA start to cry again. After a few moments they dry it up and CLARA goes back to exercising.)* What did you want to talk to me about, Reginald?

REGINALD: Well, Bethany, you know I have admired you for a long time.

BETHANY: I know, Reginald, but as I told you before, I am still in mourning.

REGINALD: Yes. You have said that. But if you would consider...

BETHANY: When the time comes and I have properly mourned my dead, horribly burned and dismembered husband, I may once again be willing to open my heart.

REGINALD: (*Taking her hands.*) Bethany. I need you to listen.

CLARA is exercising and he shoots a look at her.

BETHANY: I'm listening.

REGINALD: I've been thinking about this for a long time.

He glances at CLARA, still going at it.

BETHANY: Thinking about what?

REGINALD: It's just that, well, you're poor and well, I... (*Looking at CLARA.*) Clara, dear, could you take a break for minute? Maybe get some water or something?

CLARA: Sure Mr. Reginald! I should probably hydrate if I'm going to keep exercising to keep myself from freezing to death. (*She exits.*)

REGINALD: (*Calling after her.*) That's a good girl! (*To BETHANY.*) So, as I was saying... I've been thinking about it for a long time, and while I know you say you are mourning...

BETHANY: Over my dead husband...

REGINALD: I also know that you are very poor... (*she starts up to cry but he quickly continues.*) But I could be a help there if you would let me!

BETHANY: What do you mean, Reginald?

REGINALD: (*pulling out a ring.*) I want you to marry me, Bethany.

BETHANY: Marry you?

REGINALD: I would be a loyal and loving husband, Bethany.

BETHANY: I know you would, Reginald. You were always a good friend to Nigel... and you have always been kind to Clara.

REGINALD: (*He is on one knee.*) Marry me, Bethany.

A tense moment passes.

BETHANY: (*Very melodramatic.*) I can't!

REGINALD: Yes you can!

BETHANY: But my poor, unrecognizable, charred husband's body hasn't even been in the ground for two years!

REGINALD: It's time to move on, Bethany! It's time for you to live again! To love!

BETHANY: I'm not ready!

REGINALD: But, Bethany...

BETHANY: (*Coldly.*) I would like you to leave, Reginald.

REGINALD: But...

BETHANY: Leave! (*She starts crying.*)

CLARA enters.

CLARA: You've made my mama cry, Mr. Reginald!

REGINALD: I didn't mean to...

REGINALD exits, dejected as BETHANY and CLARA embrace.

CLARA: That's ok Mama. He's gone now!

Blackout. The next day... same location. BETHANY and CLARA are knitting, along with Bethany's friend LOUISE. There is a visible calendar on stage reading: DECEMBER 23rd.

LOUISE: I don't know, Bethany. It might be a good idea. You're going to need help if you want to survive the winter. It's only going to get colder, ya know.

BETHANY: I know, Louise. But I'm just not ready to make that kind of commitment. It hasn't even been two years yet! I'm still in mourning!

LOUISE: I hear Reginald got hired on at the bank.

BETHANY: I heard that too. He's the junior member of the finance department.

LOUISE: That's not a bad job. I imagine he could afford to put some wood in your fireplace. If you know what I mean.

BETHANY: Louise! Don't say such things in front of Clara!

CLARA: That's ok, Mom! I'm much too young to understand the double meaning of what Mrs. Louise just said.

BETHANY: That's a good girl.

LOUISE: So what else happened last night?

BETHANY: Well, after explaining that he would be a good and loyal husband, he got down on one knee and proposed!

LOUISE: Was he sweet about it?

BETHANY: He was! And he had a ring!

LOUISE: Was it a diamond ring?

BETHANY: None other!

LOUISE: That Reginald is a keeper! You should grab him right up!

BETHANY: But it hasn't been two years yet!

LOUISE: If I weren't a married woman, I'd steal that man for myself!

There is a knock on the door.

CLARA: Mama! Someone's at the door!

BETHANY: I wonder who it could be?

LOUISE: I'll get it!

BETHANY: But what if it's a villain?

LOUISE: I guess I'll take my chances. *(She goes to the door.)*

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY: Singing Telegram for Ms. Bethany Jasperson! Are you she?

LOUISE: I'm not, but she's right over there.

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY: *(Walking in, standing in front of BETHANY.)* Singing Telegram for Ms. Bethany Jasperson!

BETHANY: I'm Bethany Jasperson.

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY: *(Singing to the Tune of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen".)*

GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN

I'VE COME HERE NOW TO SAY

THAT YOU SHOULD MARRY REGINALD

BEFORE THIS CHRISTMAS DAY

HE PROMISES TO BE LOYAL AND KIND UNTIL THE END

NOW SAY YES AND LET THE HONEYMOON BEGIN, LET IT BEGIN!

NOW SAY YES AND LET THE HONEYMOON BEGIN!

BETHANY: Oh my!

LOUISE: Isn't that the sweetest thing ever?

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY: I beg your pardon, but there's more.

CLARA: There's more? Yay!

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY: Mind if I continue.

LOUISE: Yes, Please!

BETHANY: But...

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY: (*Singing—same tune.*)

GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN

I KNOW YOUR HUSBAND'S DEAD

BUT IF YOU MARRY REGINALD HE'LL SEE YOU'RE WARM AND
FED!

HE'S REALLY QUITE THE CATCH YOU SEE, SO YOU SHOULD
BE HIS WIFE

IF YOU DO, HE'LL GIVE YOU A BETTER LIFE, A REALLY GREAT
LIFE!

IF YOU DO I'M SURE HE'LL GIVE YOU A GREAT LIFE!

BETHANY: This is really overwhelming.

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY: (*Singing...this time to "Silent Night".*)

SILENT NIGHT HOLY NIGHT

YOU SHOULD BE REGINALD'S WIFE

MARRYING HIM WILL NOT BE ALL THAT BAD

HE'S GOT A GOOD JOB AND WILL BE A GREAT DAD!

ANSWER YES! BETHANY....

ANSWER YES BETHANY.

He is finished now.

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY: Mr. Reginald Squires has pre-paid for
your response.

LOUISE: How considerate!

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY: (*Handing her a pen a piece of paper.*)

So if you'll put your reply here, I'll take it to him at once.

LOUISE: You should marry him, Bethany!

CLARA: Do it Mama!

BETHANY: (*Finished writing.*) Here you go. Please take that to Mr.
Reginald at once.

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY: Will do. Thank you ma'am! And Merry
Christmas!

BETHANY: Merry Christmas to you too!

SINGING TELEGRAM GUY exits.

LOUISE: So, are you going to do it?

BETHANY: You know I can't! It hasn't even been two years!

Blackout. The next evening. It is Christmas Eve. CLARA is exercising while BETHANY knits. There is a knock on the door. There is a visible calendar on stage reading: DECEMBER 24th

CLARA: I'll get it Mom!

BETHANY: Clara! Ask who it is, first!

CLARA: *(Running to the door.)* Who is it?

LOUISE: *(From outside the door.)* Merry Christmas!

CLARA: It's Mrs. Louise!

BETHANY: Then open the door!

CLARA opens the door and LOUISE, BEATRICE and CONSTANCE enter, all carrying food.

LOUISE, BEATRICE and CONSTANCE: Merry Christmas!

BETHANY: What's this?

BEATRICE: Louise told us about how sad, lonely and poor your Christmas was going to be!

CONSTANCE: And we couldn't bear thinking about you and little Clara over here by yourselves, without a proper Christmas dinner!

BETHANY: But, you shouldn't have!

LOUISE: I've been planning it for days! My husband is down at the pub and told me to take as long as I'd like tonight.

BEATRICE: Mine is with him, but he had better come home and he had better have a late night Christmas present for me. If you know what I mean!

BETHANY: Beatrice!

CLARA: That's ok Mom! I don't know anything about late night Christmas presents!

CONSTANCE: I wish I had a husband to bring home late night Christmas presents.

They ALL laugh.

LOUISE: Well, let's eat before the food gets cold.

They spread out the food.

CLARA: Mama, shouldn't we say Grace before we eat?

BETHANY: Absolutely, dear. Would you like to say it?

CLARA: I sure would! Everyone bow your heads. *(She prays.)* God, thank you for the food and for such wonderful friends! Thank you for Christmas and even though Mom says Santa Claus is going to skip our home this year, thank you for him too. And God, If you see my mangled, burned up and mutilated daddy up there, tell him I love him. *(A beat.)* Also, if you could send some help down here, that would be great. Being poor sucks. Amen"

EVERYONE: Amen.

Knocking at the door.

BEATRICE: Are you expecting anyone, Bethany?

BETHANY: Not at all.

CLARA: I wonder who that could be.

REGINALD: *(Muffled.)* Open the door!

CONSTANCE: It's a man!

BEATRICE: Is it true that Reginald Squires wants you to marry him?

More knocking.

BETHANY: I don't want to talk about that.

REGINALD: *(Muffled.)* It's really, really cold out here!

CONSTANCE: I heard he was just hired at the bank!

REGINALD kicks down the door. He is dressed as a stereotypical melodrama villain, black cape, hat and mustache included. For this scene, REGINALD is even more melodramatic than the women. He is a full blown villain.

REGINALD: There you are! I thought I would find you here!

BETHANY: It's Christmas eve and this is my house. Of course you would find me here.

BEATRICE: Reginald! Why are you dressed... like a villain?!

REGINALD: Because I am tired of waiting for a response from Bethany!

BETHANY: But I sent a response!

REGINALD: But it was not the response I wanted!

BEATRICE: So how does that relate to you dressing like a villain?

REGINALD: I have come to demand you marry me!

CONSTANCE: How does that work?

REGINALD: (*Dropping the melodrama for this line.*) I really didn't expect you to have company on Christmas Eve. Would it be better for me to come back after they leave?

BETHANY: No matter when you come back, the answer will still be no, Reginald.

REGINALD: (*Back to melodrama.*) That's what you think!

BETHANY: It IS what I think.

REGINALD: (*Pulling out a sheet of paper.*) Do you know what this is?

BETHANY: No.

REGINALD: It's the deed to your house! I used my considerable influence to purchase it from the bank! (*He laughs villainously.*)

The WOMEN all gasp.

CONSTANCE: But what does it mean?

REGINALD: It means that I own the mortgage and if you don't get caught up on your payments, your house will be mine!!

BETHANY: You were my husband's friend! Why would you do this?

MAURICE enters. He is also dressed in typical villainous attire.

MAURICE: Because Reginald Squires works for me now! (*He laughs villainously.*)

BEATRICE: I thought he worked at the bank.

REGINALD: I quit.

MAURICE: That's right! He quit and now he works for me! (*He laughs villainously... sees that REGINALD isn't laughing, shoots him a look and then both laugh villainously.*)

BETHANY: How can this be?

MAURICE: I've been recruiting Reginald for years... I just knew he had what it takes to achieve true villainy!

BETHANY: (*Approaching REGINALD innocently.*) Is it true, Reginald?

REGINALD: I'm afraid it is. And if you don't agree to marry me, I'll foreclose on your house and then you'll be doomed!!

REGINALD and MAURICE laugh. BETHANY starts to cry... at this CLARA runs up and starts hitting REGINALD.

CLARA: You're a bad man! You're making my mama cry!

REGINALD works to separate himself from CLARA, it is not easy.

REGINALD: Get off of me!

BETHANY: (*To LOUISE.*) What am I to do?

LOUISE: I think you're going to have to marry him.

BETHANY: But it hasn't been two years...

LOUISE: I don't think they care, Bethany.

MAURICE: We don't care at all. You know why? Because we're villains! (*He laughs.*)

REGINALD: That's right. As villainous as any villains ever! (*He laughs but his heart isn't in it.*) So, what will it be. WILL YOU MARRY ME?

LOUISE: If you don't... you and your daughter...

BETHANY: I need time to think!

REGINALD: I need an answer now!!

BETHANY: But I can't marry you! There's no preacher!

MAURICE: We already thought of that. That's your cue, William!

WILLIAM enters, dressed as a villain, carrying a bible.

CONSTANCE: Pastor Willie! What are you doing here!

WILLIE: Uh, I kind of work part time for uh...

MAURICE: I see you two have met!

CONSTANCE: There's only three churches in town! Everyone knows Pastor Willie!

WILLIE: (*Embarrassed.*) Well, uh... being the pastor of the third biggest church in town doesn't always pay the bills, so I had to... uh... find a part time job.

MAURICE: I have Pastor William on retainer! When needed he serves me as the EVIL REVEREND WILLIAM! (*He laughs. He shoots WILLIE a look to laugh as well.*) You know the rules William.

WILLIE: I'm really not good at doing the laugh.... It's just not my thing.

MAURICE: This will not look good on your next evil performance review!

BETHANY: But why are you here, Willie?

REGINALD: He's here to marry us. RIGHT NOW!

BETHANY: (*Crying.*) No!!!!

REGINALD and MAURICE: Yes!!!

BETHANY: This is terrible! What I am going to do?

REGINALD: I'm only going to ask this one more time... WILL YOU MARRY ME?

BETHANY: (*Meekly.*) Yes.

The other WOMEN cry as the lights go out. This is the end of the first part of the play. In the original production, between each scene, the entire cast came out and sang a Christmas carol or two, in full costume and in character. Kind of.

SCENE 2

When the lights come back up we are at the bank. REGINALD enters. ALICE, the receptionist sits at her desk. There is a visible calendar on stage reading: DECEMBER 22nd.

ALICE: (*With a melodramatic flair.*) Good morning, Mr. Squires!

REGINALD: Good morning Alice! And please, call me Reginald.

ALICE: I'll try, Mr. Squires. Mr. Adams was looking for you, earlier.

SIMON ADAMS enters, he's dressed nicely. The interaction between SIMON and REGINALD should not be played melodramatically.

SIMON: And I still am! Good morning, Reginald!

REGINALD: Good morning, Simon!

SIMON: Ready to start your second week?

REGINALD: I am! I read that book you gave me over the weekend! Thanks for that! It really cleared up my questions about mortgages and property law. *(He goes to give him the book back.)*

SIMON: Keep it. You'll want to refer to it pretty often.

REGINALD: You're the best!

SIMON: I know you'll be good at it. Everyone already loves you. Right Alice?

ALICE: *(Dramatically.)* You seem to be the absolute perfect hire.

REGINALD: Thanks Alice! *(To SIMON.)* You want to look over that account you gave me on Friday? I want to make sure I'm not messing it up.

SIMON: Maybe after lunch. Right now I'm in a meeting with the mortgage and finance board. That's why I was looking for you. I thought it would be a good idea for you to meet anyone you haven't had the chance to yet.

REGINALD: Are you sure?

SIMON: Absolutely! Come on!

They cross the stage to a room with a table. At the table are MR. WILLIAMS, MRS. BAKER, MRS. SOLES and MS. CARTER. They are a pretty over the top group. MR. WILLIAMS is dressed in all black and is obviously a villain.

SIMON: Mr. Williams?

WILLIAMS: *(Laughing diabolically.)* Come on in, Simon.

SIMON: This is Reginald Squires, our new finance guy.

WILLIAMS: Nice to finally get to meet you. *(Gets up and shakes hands with REGINALD.)* How was your first week?

REGINALD: *(Taking in that WILLIAMS is a villain.)* Uh...

WILLIAMS: Are you alright?

REGINALD: Sorry. It was great. Everyone has been super helpful.

WILLIAMS: That's good to hear.

SOLES: Nice to see you again, Reginald. *(To WILLIAMS.)* I had the chance to train Reginald last week on our record keeping system.

REGINALD: And you were fantastic. I'm sure I'm going to have questions.

SOLES: Hit me up any time.

SIMON: And these two are Paulina Baker and Cynthia Carter.

REGINALD shakes hands with both.

REGINALD: Nice to meet you.

CARTER: Nice to meet you too.

BAKER: We've heard really great things about you, Reginald.

REGINALD: All lies, I'm sure.

They ALL laugh.

REGINALD: Well, I don't want to keep you guys from business...

WILLIAMS: Not at all. (*Diabolically.*) We're actually meeting about some of the accounts in this part of town, so why don't you have a seat?

REGINALD: Are you sure?

WILLIAMS: I don't think anyone here would object?

SOLES: Of course not!

BAKER: You're one of us now.

CARTER: Have a seat!

REGINALD sits.

REGINALD: Thank you.

WILLIAMS: So, where were we?

BAKER: We were just about to talk about our three problem accounts.

REGINALD: Problem accounts? (*Realizing his place.*) Sorry.

BAKER: Questions are welcome, Reginald. To answer you, we have three accounts that are continuously late.

REGINALD: Ok.

CARTER: We have already foreclosed on the Jenkins and Van Buren accounts. The evictions were ugly, but it is what it is.

SOLES: Are we still holding off on the Jasperson account?

WILLIAMS: We are. Three more days. We'll foreclose on Christmas.

CARTER: That's cold.

WILLIAMS: It's always cold on Christmas. (*He laughs.*)

REGINALD raises his hand.

WILLIAMS: You have a question?

REGINALD: You said Jasperson?

WILLIAMS: Yes. You know the Jaspersons?

REGINALD: I know Bethany Jasperson.

BAKER: That's the one.

WILLIAMS: The Jasperson account has been problematic for us on several fronts. But we should be able to wash our hands of her in three days. *(He laughs and the others join in with him, all but SIMON.)*

REGINALD: What happens in three days?

SOLES: *(Looking at WILLIAMS.)* Is it alright to tell him?

WILLIAMS: How well do you know Ms. Jasperson, Reginald?

SIMON gives him a look.

REGINALD: Just... sort of know who she is, that's all.

CARTER: Well, not to seem secretive, but Mr. Squires IS a new employee. This might be something to discuss in private.

WILLIAMS: I suppose you are right. *(Dismissively.)* It was nice finally getting to meet you Reginald. Welcome to the team.

REGINALD goes to leave.

SIMON: I'll walk you out.

The two exit and move back into the room with ALICE.

ALICE: That was quick.

REGINALD: It was long enough. *(To SIMON.)* Why didn't you tell me?

SIMON: Tell you what?

REGINALD: That we're working for...

ALICE: You didn't tell him that our boss is a bona fide villain?

SIMON: I didn't think about it.

ALICE: Seems like that might have been an important thing to mention.

REGINALD: You think?

ALICE: I mean, when I got hired it was like the first thing I was told. My sister was like “If you take that job, Mr. Williams is a villain.” And I was like... aren't all bankers villains?

SIMON: Thank you, Alice.

ALICE: I'm just saying.

REGINALD: (*To SIMON.*) We need to talk.

SIMON: Ok.

REGINALD: Privately.

SIMON: Fine.

They walk a distance from ALICE.

REGINALD: (*Boiling.*) They're going to foreclose on Bethany's house?!

SIMON: Oh that? That's just business.

REGINALD: Are you serious? Maybe I should get YOU a black hat and cape!

SIMON: Ok... It's not just business, but it's super sensitive.

REGINALD: What is?

SIMON: (*Whispering.*) There's more to this than a foreclosure.

REGINALD: What do you mean?

SIMON: What I am about to tell you, you have to promise to keep secret. You can't tell anyone, not your mom, not Bethany... No one! Got it?

REGINALD: What's going on Simon?

SIMON: There's a reason they haven't foreclosed on her account. You see, her husband was part of a big lawsuit after his death.

REGINALD: I didn't know that.

SIMON: Almost no one knows. It was a big class action thing. The thing is, Bethany Jasperson is entitled to almost two hundred thousand dollars.

REGINALD: Two hundred thousand?

ALICE: That's a lot of money.

REGINALD and SIMON scoot farther away from ALICE.

SIMON: Yes. Two hundred thousand. But there's a catch. The money can only be collected by the man of the home.

REGINALD: Man of the home? What does that mean?

SIMON: It's 1871! No bank is going to be willing to write a check that large to a woman!

REGINALD: Why? That seems awfully sexist.

SIMON: Of course it is, and I'm sure in another thirty to fifty years, they'll get that figured out and things will change, but for now, it's the way it is.

REGINALD: But her husband died!

SIMON: And her father is dead and she has no brothers or living male relatives. She can't collect.

REGINALD: Does she know?

SIMON: Of course she doesn't. The bank owns the mine that Nigel died in. If she collects, the bank has to pay up! But here's the catch... she only has two years to make the claim and that two years is up...

REGINALD: On Christmas.

SIMON: At midnight on Christmas Eve to be exact. That's why Williams is so happy. He's planning to give out big Christmas bonuses to himself and the managing partners.

REGINALD: I have to tell Bethany!

SIMON: You can't.

REGINALD: Why not?

SIMON: Because you're an employee of the bank. If you tell her and they can prove it, and they WILL prove it, then she forfeits the money and you could be sued.

REGINALD: Really?

SIMON: Sadly, that's the truth.

REGINALD: Why didn't you tell me before I got hired?

SIMON: It wouldn't have mattered! They just would have tracked the information through you back to me. It would have been the same result!

REGINALD: What can we do?

SIMON: I don't see how we can do anything.

REGINALD: I'm not just going to sit by and allow them to steal money from Bethany and take her house!

SIMON: You're still into her aren't you?

REGINALD: That has nothing to do with it.

SIMON: Of course you are.

REGINALD: Whether I am or not, helping her is the right thing to do.

SIMON: Then I guess you're going to have to get her to marry you.

REGINALD: What?

SIMON: If she marries you, you can collect the insurance money.

REGINALD: That's a great idea!

SIMON: But if you tell her, they'll know. And you know that Bethany is a horrible liar.

REGINALD: How am I supposed to get her to marry me without me telling her everything?

SIMON: I have no idea.

REGINALD: I need to get working on this now.

SIMON: Good luck. For what it's worth, I'm glad you know.

REGINALD: Me too. Thanks Simon. *(He goes to exit.)*

ALICE: Where are you going? You just got here.

REGINALD: I have things to do. Tell Mr. Williams, I quit. *(Exits.)*

ALICE: You told him, didn't you?

SIMON: You know I did. You were listening the whole time.

ALICE: It was the right thing to do. I'm proud of you.

Blackout. Another possible break with entertainment from the cast. In the original production, the four businessmen read "The Night Before Christmas" and acted it out.

SCENE 3

When the lights come back on, REGINALD is coming home to his mother, MAMA SQUIRES, and two younger sisters, KATE and ISABELLA. As before when he enters there's a sound of wind and snow. There is a visible calendar on stage reading: DECEMBER 22nd.

REGINALD: *(Entering.)* I'm home!

KATE and ISABELLA enter.

KATE: Reggie! *(She hugs him.)*

ISABELLA: *(Excited.)* What are you doing home so early?

REGINALD: I got done with all of my work, so they let me go home.

ISABELLA: But it's not even lunch time yet!

REGINALD: What can I say? Your big brother is fast.

MAMA SQUIRES enters, she is in her 50's and old for her age.

MAMA: You were never fast about doing your school work that's for sure.

REGINALD: That's because they weren't paying me to do my school work.

MAMA: So, you only work if someone's paying you?

REGINALD: Absolutely.

ISABELLA: I wish you'd let me get a job!

REGINALD: No way! With all of the suitors you've got? You'll be married this time next year!

ISABELLA: I don't want to be married! I want to make money!

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