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A Right Christmas Caper

A Play for Children

Willis Hall

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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A RIGHT CHRISTMAS CAPER

First performed at the Shaw Theatre, London, on 30th November, 1977, with the following cast :

Convict Gilbert	Tom Owen
Convict Crosby	Mike Savage
Detective Constable Grummett	Stephen Lewis
Mr Mullins	David Weston
Mr MacBain	Johnny Wade
The Prison Governor	Bunny Reed
Clara Grummett	Jo Kendall
Alexander Grummett	Russell Glead
The Ice-Cream Girl	Sue Bond

Directed by	Brian Rawlinson
Designed by	Dee Greenwood
Lighting by	Mark Jonathan

ACT ONE

Scene One—A Prison Yard

Scene Two—Detective Constable Grummett's Living-room

ACT TWO

Scene One—A Police Station

Scene Two—A Forest

ACT ONE

Scene One

Two convicts, Gilbert and Crosby, are trudging round and round the exercise yard of a prison. In the centre of the yard stands a stunted, leafless, little tree.

It is Christmas Eve and the prison yard is bathed in moonlight. A notice proclaims: A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR CONVICTS. But it is a chill night and the two prisoners are not feeling particularly merry. Gilbert begins to sing in an attempt to bolster his spirits.

Gilbert *(singing)* While shepherds watched
 Their turnip tops
 A-boiling in the pot
 The Angel of the Lord flew down
 And scoffed the blinkin' lot . . .

Crosby Belt up, Gilbert.

The two convicts continue to plod round and round the tree. Gilbert manages to keep his silence for only a matter of seconds.

Gilbert *(singing)* Oh Hell, O Hell,
 The Angels did shout
 When they fell down from Heaven
 And knocked themselves out . . .

Crosby I said, put a sock in it, Gilbert.

Gilbert I'm only trying to cheer us up, Crosby.

Crosby Don't bother.

They plod on. Two prison warders, Mullins and MacBain enter.

Mullins Smartly does it, you felons. Keep moving! No talking, and pick those feet up. Christmas Day tomorrow remember. Right, Mr MacBain?

MacBain Christmas Day it is, Mr Mullins. And prison Christmas Dinner for you two lucky lads at noon tomorrow!

- Crosby What are we getting this year, Mr MacBain ?
- MacBain The same as every year, Crosby. Stringy chicken, soggy sprouts, greasy gravy and cold mashed potatoes.
- Crosby Ugh !
- Mullins Lovely ! Followed by sloppy Christmas pud and lumpy custard.
- Gilbert Agh !
- MacBain Delicious ! Serves you right for being naughty. A Merry Christmas to you, Mr Mullins !
- Mullins Ditto, Mr MacBain—and a very happy New Year ! I sincerely hope I have the pleasure of pulling a cracker or two with you before the night is out. Come on, you convicts, eyes front, chins in, chests out—let's see a spring in your step, lads. It is Christmas Eve, remember.
- MacBain It is indeed, Mr Mullins. And we ought to be on our way if we don't want to be late for the Prison Governor's sherry party.
- Mullins There'll be mince-pies, Mr MacBain !
- MacBain There'll be Christmas cake with icing and little plastic reindeers !
- Gilbert Are we getting any special treats tonight, Mr MacBain ?
- MacBain If you behave yourselves—an extra digestive biscuit with your mug of cocoa.
- Mullins Stick at it, Gilbert and Crosby. Keep moving round the exercise yard. And let's see a happy smile on both your faces. It's the festive season !
- Mullins and MacBain go off singing 'God rest you merry gentlemen'. Gilbert and Crosby wait until the two warders are out of sight and then they cease their perambulations.*
- Crosby They've gone ! Stringy chicken, soggy sprouts, greasy gravy, cold 'taties. I hate being in prison at Christmas, Gilbert. I do, I really hate it.
- Gilbert We could escape.
- Crosby From here ? Tonight ?
- Gilbert Why not ? It's the best time of the year to escape. It's marvellous out in the world tonight, Crozz. It's

Christmas Eve. 'Ere, I'll bet if we did escape, we could find a *real* Christmas scene—instead of just this rotten prison scenery. There'll be shop windows, Crozzie, full of toys, all lit up, with the glass all steamy from kiddies' faces. And the streets out there will be full of cheerful people with enormous parcels. We might even find our very own tree.

Crosby (*indicating the tree*) We've got a tree.

Gilbert That's not a tree! A *real* tree, Crosby. With fairy lights and stars and shiny balls and tinsel and presents piled up underneath it. And it'd be *our* tree, Crozzie.

Crosby I'm not sure about that, Gilbert.

Gilbert How do you mean?

Crosby It's not only Christmas Eve, Gilbert. (*He points above his head*) Look up there. It's full moon as well.

Gilbert So what?

Crosby So what? I'll tell you 'so what', Gilbert. I know where I like to be when it's full moon—Chrissy Eve or no Chrissy Eve—and that's safely locked up in my own little cell, warm and snug in my very own bed, with my head beneath the blankets.

Gilbert What are you talking about?

Crosby You know what comes out when it's full moon, Gilly?

Gilbert (*shaking his head*) No.

Crosby Yes, you do. I'll give you three guesses—go on, guess.

Gilbert I haven't the faintest idea.

Crosby Yes, you have. I hate it when you mess me about like this, Gillo. I do, I really hate it.

Gilbert Is it Dracula?

Crosby No. We had him last year—he doesn't need a full moon. He comes out of his coffin every night as soon as it's dark. Try again.

Gilbert Frankenstein's monster?

Crosby He was in the play the year before last. Doesn't time fly? No—it's somebody much worse than him.

Gilbert I've no idea. Give me a clue.

- Crosby Somebody that's really horrible. And his face is all furry and so are his hands and feet.
- Gilbert It's not Paddington Bear, is it?
- Crosby No! (*Indicating the audience*) I'll bet they know. (*And then to the audience*) Who is it, kids, that only comes out when it's full moon and has an evil furry face and evil furry hands and feet? (*Audience: 'Werewolf!' 'The Wolfman!'*) Who did you say? (*Audience: 'Werewolf', etc.*) That's him. There you are—the Werewolf.
- Gilbert A wolf where?
- Crosby A wolfman.
- Gilbert There's no such thing as a wolfman.
- Crosby Oh yes there is, Gillo, and every night when there's a full moon you can hear his evil unearthly bloodcurdling howling drifting on the still night air.
- Gilbert There isn't. There's no such person. He's just in stories. Somebody made him up.
- Crosby Are you sure, Gilly?
- Gilbert Absolutely certain. You don't want to be frightened by silly stupid things like that.
- At which point, we hear an unearthly bloodcurdling howl drifting on the still night air. Gilbert, terrified, leaps up into Crosby's arms.*
- Ooo-er!
- Crosby Fantastic, Gilbert, you've done it again! Trust you to get it wrong. No such thing as a werewolf? What was that?
- Gilbert's courage begins to return. He gets down from Crosby's arms.*
- Gilbert That wasn't the cry of the wolfman, Crozz.
- Crosby Wasn't it? It sounded like an evil unearthly bloodcurdling howl all right—and it was drifting on the still night air.
- Gilbert No, it was probably just the stage-manager, messing about with a sound effect. It was nothing to worry about.
- Crosby Oh no, nothing to worry about at all—I know this

- much Gillo,—I'm staying where I am tonight. Wild horses wouldn't drag me out of this prison.
- Gilbert You do what you like, Crosby. I'm going to make a break for it. I'm not stopping here one night longer. Wolfman or no Wolfman—if I have to listen to those warders and the Prison Governor sing 'Silent Night', one more time, just one more Christmas morning, I shall go raving mad. I'm off.
- Crosby How are you going to get away?
- Gilbert Dead simple. I shall create a diversion.
- Crosby What a great idea, Gilbert! It's a fantastic idea, is that . . . (*He double-takes*) Create a what?
- Gilbert A diversion. You know—I'll attract their attention somewhere else and while they're . . .

A raincoated figure approaches the stage from out of the audience. It is Detective Constable Grummett. He also wears large boots and a bowler hat.

- Grummett Oh, no, you won't, Gilbert!
- Crosby Who are you?
- Gilbert You're not allowed up here!
- Grummett Yes, I am. I can go wherever I please. I have *carte blanche*. I am Detective Constable Grummett, C.I.D. I also happen to be a member of the audience.
- Crosby It's him again!
- Gilbert I don't know how he does it. He never misses a performance.
- Grummett You're right, Gilbert. I don't. I come here regular to keep an eye on you two villains. (*He gets on to the stage*) I am also here as a *bona fide* representative of the Public Moral Code. I am here to see that what takes place upon this stage is right and proper family seasonal entertainment.
- Gilbert There's nothing wrong with this play.
- Grummett Pull the other one, Gilbert, it's got bells on it! Nothing wrong with the play? You mean there's nothing right with it! Bloodcurdling, unearthly, evil howls? Drifting on the still night air? Wolfmen? Convicts nipping over prison walls? Creating . . . what did you say you were going to create?

Gilbert Only a diversion.

Grummett Disgraceful! I've got you this time, Gilbert and Crosby. I'm banning this entertainment.

Crosby You can't do that, Detective Constable Grummett!

Grummett I've done it, Crosby. We're going to have something else instead.

Gilbert Such as what?

Grummett Wait for it. This'll impress you. I'm going to personally organize something that is appropriate for the time of year, will entertain these kiddie-winkies, and something that can also be counted as educational and instructive.

Crosby What is it, Detective Constable Grummett?

Grummett A Carol Concert.

Gilbert } A what?
Crosby }

Grummett A Carol Concert.

Gilbert } A Carol Concert?
Crosby }

Grummett You heard. Something a bit uplifting. (*To the audience*) You'd rather have a Carol Concert, wouldn't you? (*Audience: 'No!'*) Well, you're flippin' well getting one! You ignorant little horrors! Starting off with 'Silent Night', going into 'We Three Kings of Orient Are', and I haven't decided yet what comes after that one.

Gilbert But we haven't got the right scenery for a Carol Concert, Detective Constable Grummett. This is prison scenery.

Grummett That's just where you're wrong, clever-clogs. This scenery ideally suits my purpose. 'Cos what we're going to have is a *Prison* Carol Concert. You convicts are going to sing some carols for the Governor and the warders. It'll make a smashin' evening's entertainment. Where is the Prison Governor?

Gilbert Having a glass of Chrissy sherry with the warders.

Grummett Yes, of course he is! Do you happen to know if it's real sherry or theatrical sherry?

Crosby How do you mean, Detective Constable Grummett?

Grummett What I say. Are they drinking real sherry out there,

or prop sherry? I know what actors are—they stand up here pretending to be drinking real drink, and all the time it's just cold tea or something.

Gilbert It's real sherry all right, Detective Constable Grummett. The Governor always has a bottle of proper sherry backstage every Christmas.

Grummett Does he really? I'll nip along and join him then. While I'm gone, you two can make a start and get some rehearsing in on a couple of the golden oldies—'Good King Wenceslas' and 'Silent Night'. I'll probably get a couple of sherries when he hears about my Carol Concert.

Grummett goes off, breaking the little tree.

Crosby A Carol Concert? A fizzin' Carol Concert! Look what he's done to our tree. I hate Detective Constable Grummett, Gilbert—I do, I really hate him! I hope it is cold tea!

Gilbert Don't be like that, Crozz. He's given me a great idea.

Crosby Not another of your ideas, Gilbert.

Gilbert Why not?

Crosby I don't think the world is ready for another of your ideas, Gillo.

Gilbert You wait until you hear this one—you'll like it.

Crosby Go on.

Gilbert I'm going to use his Prison Carol Concert to create my diversion.

Crosby Terrific, Gilly! How will you do that?

Gilbert (*indicating the audience*) I'm going to get them to help me.

Crosby The audience? All these kids? Help you to escape?

Gilbert Yeah.

Crosby How do you know they will?

Gilbert I'll ask them. How about it, kids? Will you help me to get out of clink? (*Audience: 'Yes!'*) There you are!

Crosby Great! Great! What do you want them to do, Gilly?

Gilbert I'm going to get them all to join in the Carol Concert.

- Crosby Get all those kids to sing carols with us?
Gilbert What's wrong with that?
Crosby I hate Detective Constable Grummett, Gillo. And I'm not all that fond of the Prison Governor either. Why should we get all the kids to sing carols for them?
Gilbert That's my *idea*, Crozzo. They're not going to sing proper carols—they're going to sing funny ones.
Crosby What? With the wrong words?
Gilbert Yes.
Crosby Do you mean like: 'Good King Wenceslas knocked a bobby senseless, right in the middle of Marks and Spencers'—all like that?
Gilbert (*nodding*) Yes.
Crosby Fantastic! What a great idea, Gilly. The Prison Governor will go spare when he hears that at his Prison Carol Concert. He'll go stark raving bonkers. (*A sudden thought*) Hey! Hey! Hey! He'll blame Detective Constable Grummett for it!
Gilbert I know.
Crosby He'll think it was all Grummett's idea in the first place.
Gilbert 'Course he will. And then, while the governor is doing his nut, and spifflicating Detective Constable Grummett—that'll be my diversion. I shall make my escape.
Crosby I'll come with you, Gilbert.
Gilbert I thought you weren't going to escape from prison?
Crosby I'm not going to let a great idea like yours go to waste. There's just one tiny thing though, Gilbert.
Gilbert What's that?
Crosby The audience doesn't know the words to your Chrissy carol.
Gilbert They'll soon learn them. I've had them written down.
Crosby What—on one of them big sheets that comes down from up there?
Gilbert Yes. I know it's not entirely original, but it has been known to work.
Crosby Not in the first scene, Gilly.
Gilbert What do you mean?

Crosby You never bring on the words of songs until the Second Act, Gilly. You never bring on the song-sheet in Christmas pantos until after the principal boy has won the hand of the beautiful principal girl. It's entirely against the laws of theatrical convention.

Gilbert Oh, blow theatrical convention, Crosby. This is an emergency. (*Into the wings*) Can we have the song on please?

A sheet is dropped in from above, bearing the words of Gilbert's carol.

Crosby Oh, them's great words, Gilly! Terrific! I should think the Prison Governor will go blue in the face when he hears them.

Gilbert I hope so, Crozz. Shall we have a rehearsal, kids? Are you ready? One—Two—Three . . .

All While shepherds washed
Their dirty socks
And laid them out so neat
The Angel of the Lord passed out
When he smelled their sweaty feet!

Gilbert What did you think, Crozz? . . . Crozz?

During the song, Crosby has had his eyes fixed on the song-sheet, his back to the audience. He is still singing it when the others finish.

Crosby Eh?

Gilbert I said, what did you think of it?

Crosby Have they sung it?

Gilbert Just now.

Crosby I didn't hear anything.

Gilbert I think you'll have to try a bit harder, kids. Shall we have one more go? Really open your lungs this time. One—two—three . . .

All While shepherds washed
Their dirty socks
And laid them out so neat
The Angel of the Lord passed out
When he smelled their sweaty feet!

Crosby Great! Fantastic! I heard every word that time!

Gilbert I should think the Prison Governor'll give Detective Constable Grummett what for when he hears you sing that.

The song-sheet disappears again.

Look out! I think they're coming. Look innocent, Crozz.

Gilbert and Crosby take up their positions for the carol concert, standing at attention and staring straight out at the audience.

Detective Constable Grummett returns with the Prison Governor, who sports a large moustache.

Grummett This way, Governor. I thought we'd hold the Prison Carol Concert out here in the exercise yard, sir.

Governor What a jolly good idea, sergeant! It's an absolutely spiffing thought. A choir of convicts! Ha, ha, ha! Where are they, Grummett?

Grummett These are they, Governor. Convicts Gilbert and Crosby.

Governor (*a trifle disappointed*) Just the two of them?

Grummett You know what it's like at Christmas, sir. It's difficult to lay your hands on spare convicts. Most of 'em are on absence of leave—acting in pantos up and down the country—taking the parts of wicked robbers or forty thieves or Abanazars and suchforth. These two'll do, sir. I'll get them to sing up and move about a bit so it'll look as if there's more of 'em.

Gilbert Psst! Psst!

Grummett Will you excuse me for a tiny moment, Governor? I think one of the altos wants a word with me.

Grummett crosses to Crosby. Gilbert is behind Crosby.

What is it?

Gilbert While you were out, Detective Constable Grummett, we had a great idea.

Grummett (*to Crosby*) You didn't move your lips. Oh yes? I'll believe that when I hear it.

Gilbert It's about your Carol Concert. We can get the audience to sing with us.

Grummett (*glowering at the audience*) What? That ignorant lot of hooligans? Join in a Carol Concert? What makes you think they'll do it?

Gilbert We've already asked them.

Grummett Really? And do you mean to tell me they've agreed? Stone me—wonders will never cease. There's hope for the world yet. (*He crosses back to the Governor*) Excuse me, Governor—permission to speak?

Governor Yes, Grummett?

Grummett I've just had rather a brilliant idea, sir.

Governor Go on?

Grummett Supposing we were to augment the choir with the voices of the audience?

Governor What a splendid wheeze, Grummett! Did you actually think of that yourself?

Grummett (*inclining his head, modestly*) I do 'ave 'em occasionally, Governor. They're not exactly convicts—yet—but the way they've been behaving, I hope to nick the lot of them before the entertainment's over (*To the audience*) I'll wipe those silly smiles off your faces with some solitary confinement and a Chrissy diet of bread and water! Now then, I'm going to conduct this Convicts' Carol Concert personally, so you'd better all sit up straight and behave yourselves. (*Back to the Governor*) Are you ready for your concert, sir?

Governor I can hardly wait, Grummett.

Grummett Then with your permission, sir . . .

Governor Proceed.

Grummett bows to the Governor formally, in the manner of a famous conductor, then crosses and takes up his position facing the audience. While he is doing this, and unnoticed by him, the song-sheet is dropped in again.

Grummett (*out of the corner of his mouth*) What have I been practising, Crosby?

Crosby 'While Shepherds Watched', Detective Constable Grummett.

Grummett 'While Shepherds Watched'—when I count three.

(*To the Governor*) 'While Shepherds Watched', sir.
 (*Back to the audience*) A-one—A-two—A-three!

Audience While shepherds washed
 Their dirty socks
 And laid them out so neat
 The Angel of the Lord passed out
 When he smelled their sweaty feet!

During the singing of the above, Grummett has become increasingly agitated at hearing the wrong words. He runs up and down the front of the stage, haranguing the audience. The Governor also shows displeasure. In the ensuing kerfuffle, Gilbert and Crosby effect their escape into the auditorium.

Grummett Shut up! Stop it! Stop messing about you little horrors!

The song-sheet has disappeared again.

Governor Was that your idea of a joke, Grummett?

Grummett No, sir—it wasn't, sir—not me, sir. But I've a very good idea who it was—it was these two villainous . . . (*At which point he realizes that Gilbert and Crosby are no longer present*) Good Lor! They've gone, sir!

Governor Gone?

Grummett Gone—gone!, They've vamoosed . . .! (*He spots them in the auditorium*)

Grummett produces his whistle and blows several short, sharp blasts on it. Mullins and MacBain enter at the double.

Grummett After them, lads! Smartly does it—get after those two desperate criminals! Chop-chop—at the double!

Mullins and MacBain leap off the stage and pursue Gilbert and Crosby through the stalls. The two convicts make good their escape and disappear into the foyer, pursued by the two warders. Grummett regains the attention of the audience.

Grummett All right! Face front! Look at me, you horrible little monsters! I saw you! I spotted you assisting them two convicts *and* interfering with my two assistants while they were acting in the course of their duty! Permission to arrest the entire audience, Governor?

Governor Don't be an idiot, Grummett! Never mind the audience. Two convicts have got away.

Grummett Indeed they have, Governor. But fear not, sir. My lads will have the villains back in no time. Don't you worry.

Governor I don't intend to, Grummett. You're the one that's going to do the worrying. This was a happy little play about Christmas Day in a prison, until you stuck your big long nose in where it wasn't wanted. Carol Concert indeed! If those two prisoners aren't recaptured, Grummett, and double-quick, I shall ring Scotland Yard and speak to your superior officer.

Grummett You wouldn't do that, sir.

Governor I would. I will. I'll have you back in uniform and playing Ernest the Policeman in a provincial tour of 'Tales of Toytown'.

The Governor stalks off. Grummett follows him.

Grummett No, sir. Not that, sir. Anything but that, sir!

Mullins and MacBain enter, out of breath.

MacBain Lost 'em, Mr Mullins.

Mullins We always do, Mr MacBain. Every year, we lose 'em in the audience.

MacBain It's beginning to get me down, Mr Mullins.

Mullins Don't say that, Mr MacBain. It's a grand life, acting the part of an officer in Her Majesty's Prison Service. It's better than playing police constables.

MacBain We were constables in last year's panto.

Mullins We were all sorts last year. We were constables, we were guardsmen—we even played a panto horse!

MacBain I enjoyed that!

They assume their panto-horse positions and gallop around the stage

I wouldn't say 'no' to playing a panto horse again, if ever the opportunity arose.

Mullins I'll tell you what I *didn't* like about last year's panto.

MacBain Go on?

Mullins The grinning green skelligog. That really put the wind up me.

MacBain I don't remember that one.

Mullins Yes, you do. You must do. When all the audience went 'Whee!' and this grinning green skelligog came on. It gave me the shivering ab-dabs.

MacBain (*shaking his head*) No, I don't remember that at all. Will you refresh my memory?

Mullins Is that wise?

MacBain (*addressing the audience*) Would you like to do it now, kids? When I say 'Go' you all say 'Whee!' and see if it stirs my memory. Ready? Go!

Unnoticed by MacBain, a grinning green skeleton descends and jiggles in front of Mullins. Mullins is struck speechless and suffers an attack of the shivering ab-dabs. As the skeleton disappears again, MacBain turns back to Mullins. He fails to notice his comrade's distressed condition.

MacBain Are you all right, Mr Mullins? I've just remembered. It wasn't 'Whee!'. It was 'Whoo!'. And it wasn't a grinning green skelligog either—it was a horrible hairy spider.

Mullins I've no recollection of that at all.

MacBain (*moving downstage*) Shall we try it, kids? When I say 'Go!' all shout 'Whoo!' Go!

Unnoticed by MacBain, a horrible, hairy spider descends and dangles in front of Mullins, striking him dumb with fear and giving him the screaming jim-jams. After the spider disappears, Gilbert and Crosby are seen trying to sneak furtively across the stage.

Mullins The missing convicts, Mr MacBain! After 'em!

The two warders, blowing short, sharp blasts on their whistles, pursue the convicts again, through the audience and out into the auditorium. Detective Constable Grummett

enters and blows his whistle to gain the audience's attention.

Grummett I was watching that, you rotten little monsters. Don't think, I didn't see you, going 'Whee!' and 'Whooh!' and fetching on skelligogs and spiders. And you big ones are just as bad. And if none of you grown-ups can't control the kids—I shall take certain steps to do the job myself. I've got friends in high places. I shall speak to a chum of mine who's a chum of a chum of the man who blots the copy-book of the Minister of Education. He'll settle your lot's hash all right. He'll get a couple of days knocked off your Chrissy holidays! I'll have your school dinners cancelled! *(A fiendish laugh)* That'll teach you! That'll serve you right. You won't get the better of Detective Constable Grummett very easily.

Grummett turns to leave but, before he can do so, Clara Grummett, his wife, approaches the stage from the back of the auditorium. She is trundling a shopping trolley.

Clara Stephen! Stephen Grummett!

Grummett Clara! My own darling Clara! *(To the audience)* This is as much a surprise to me as it is to you. Allow me to introduce the wife—Clara, my love, this is the audience.

Clara Grummett casts a peremptory glance over the audience.

Clara Merry Christmas. How do you do? *(Then back to Grummett)* I can't let you out of my sight for an instant, can I, Stephen?

Grummett *(to the audience)* Excuse me one moment. *(Back to Clara)* What do you mean, dearest? What are you doing here, in the theatre?

Clara The very question, Stephen, that I was about to ask you.

Grummett I'm here on official business, Clara.

Clara You're supposed to be off duty.

Grummett A policeman is never off duty, Clara.

Clara You gave me to understand that you were going into town to make some last-minute seasonal purchases. You told me, quite specifically, that you

were going out to get a sprig of mistletoe, a half-pound bag of Brazil nuts, and some stocking-fillers for little Alexander.

Grummett And so I am, beloved. Post-haste.

Clara Then what are you doing here? I popped down to the butcher's to collect the turkey for tomorrow. (*She holds up her shopping trolley*) I have it here. And something *told* me to look inside this theatre. Why did you come into the building, Stephen? What makes you do it? It happens every year.

Grummett Only my copper's sense of duty, Clara. I like to make sure that the panto's up to scratch, that's all, and not a load of old rubbish, and it is rubbish. It's a good job I did come in—I'm trying to turn it into a Carol Concert. 'Christians Awake', and 'Away In A Manger'. (*To the audience*) That's what you want isn't it, kids?

Audience No!

Grummett Shurrup, you ignorant hooligans! I'll decide what's best for you!

Clara makes a move to clamber up on the stage.

Clara, you're trespassing on the stage! It's out of bounds to members of the audience. The only people allowed up here are actors, criminals playing the parts of actors, and plain-clothes detectives representing the Arts Council. You can't come up here, my dear.

Clara We'll see about that.

Clara is on the stage.

Grummett But you're supposed to be at home, Clara. Attending to that myriad of last-minute festive details—wrapping up prezzies; hoovering the living-room carpet; picking up the Chrissy cards that have fallen down into the fireplace from off the mantelpiece. You should be home, dear.

Clara points a dramatic finger at the set which has appeared behind them and now lights up.

Clara That *is* my home, Stephen.

Grummett and Clara move into the set.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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