

THE BICKERSONS  
*CHRISTMAS EVE*  
WRITTEN BY PHILLIP RAPP  
DEC 22 1946

CAST  
HOST  
BLANCHE  
JOHN

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INTRO MUSIC

HOST:

It's Christmas Eve, and the Bickersons have NOT retired. Mrs. Bickerson is busy wrapping presents in the bedroom while husband John, exhausted as he is from the pre-holiday activity, puts the finishing touches to the tree, which stands proudly in the kitchen -- the only other room in the Bickersons' small apartment. Listen.

BLANCHE:

(CALLS) John? John?! Will you bring the scissors, please? (NO ANSWER) John?! (ANNOYED, TO HERSELF) What is he doing in there?

SFX: DOOR OPENS

JOHN:

(THE FAMOUS BICKERSON SNORE -- LOW, LOUD AND LONG -- WITH A HIGH-PITCHED TAIL)

BLANCHE:

Oh, no!

JOHN: (ANOTHER BIG SNORE, WITH A GOOFY FINISH -- THEN A THIRD)

BLANCHE:

How can a man fall asleep on a ladder?

JOHN:

(TWO MORE BIG SNORES, WITH FINISHES THAT SOUND LIKE A SNICKERING, WHINNYING HORSE)

BLANCHE:

I haven't got the heart to wake him.

JOHN:

(A FINAL SNORE)

BLANCHE:  
I'd better get him off of there. (CALLS) John?! JOHN!

JOHN:  
(IN MID-SNORE, WAKES WITH A START) Nnngh!

SFX: JOHN FALLS OFF LADDER, CRASHES TO FLOOR BEHIND--

JOHN:  
(YELLS) Whoa! (CONFUSED) What's the matter, Blanche? What happened? Huh?

BLANCHE:  
Oh, you poor dear! Did you hurt yourself?

JOHN:  
No, no, I'm all right. How'd I fall off that ladder? I must have fainted.

BLANCHE:  
(DRY) Yes, dear. You were fainting like a log when I came in. ... Why, John!

JOHN:  
What?

BLANCHE:  
You never even touched your dinner -- not a morsel of it.

JOHN:  
I don't like the looks of it, Blanche.

BLANCHE:  
Oh, stop that talk! It's perfectly good food. You let it sit there on the kitchen table for hours getting cold. You want me to warm it up for you?

JOHN:  
No. Just tell me what's on that big plate.

BLANCHE:  
Are you trying to be funny, John?

JOHN:  
I'm not trying to be funny, Blanche. What is it?

LANCHE:

You know very well I can only cook two things -- liver and rice pudding. ...

JOHN:

Well, which one is that? ...

BLANCHE:

How can you be so nasty on Christmas Eve, John?

JOHN:

Blanche, I just asked ya a civil question, that's all. I didn't think it was liver because your liver always looks like rubber heels. ... That stuff looks more like scrambled eggs, so I thought it might be rice pudding.

BLANCHE:

Why don't you taste it and find out?

JOHN:

I'm not hungry.

BLANCHE:

That's why you're always tired, John. You don't eat enough.

JOHN:

I eat plenty.

BLANCHE:

Well, what did you have for lunch today?

JOHN:

Well, you oughta know -- ya packed it for me. And listen, Blanche, I'm getting sick of carrying my lunch to the office in paper sacks. Why can't I go to a restaurant like the other fellows?

BLANCHE:

John! What are you talking about?! I haven't fixed your lunch for two years!

JOHN:

Oh, Blanche, every morning of my life I find my lunch wrapped in brown paper on the side of the sink.

BLANCHE:

Lunch?! That's the kitchen scraps! ...

JOHN:

How do ya like that? No wonder I never have an appetite. Why do ya do that to me, Blanche?

BLANCHE:

Go on -- eat some dinner and finish trimming the tree.

JOHN:

I don't want any dinner. I wanna go to sleep.

BLANCHE:

Aren't you gonna finish the tree?

JOHN:

I can do it in the morning.

BLANCHE:

But, John, tomorrow morning is Christmas Day! I expect a lot of people to drop in. The butcher's coming and the milkman is coming and--

JOHN:

Listen, Blanche, I can't afford to give those guys presents! Why did you invite them over?

BLANCHE:

I didn't invite them. They're coming here to collect their bills.

JOHN:

Bills? What bills? I gave you money for the bills.

BLANCHE:

Well, I had to buy presents, didn't I? My sister Clara sent me a package and I had to get her something in return.

JOHN:

No, you didn't! Nobody asked her to send you anything.

BLANCHE:

Well, she did just the same. So I bought her a bottle of perfume.

JOHN:

How much was that?

BLANCHE:

Twenty-four dollars.

JOHN:

Twenty-four dollars?! Why, nobody can carry that much perfume!

BLANCHE:

It was only an ounce, silly. It's the latest perfume -- very daring; it's called "Perhaps."

JOHN:

"Perhaps"? For twenty-four dollars you should get "Positively"! ...

BLANCHE:

Don't be so crabby, John. We're not gonna fight on Christmas Eve, no matter what happens. Remember, you promised.

JOHN:

Okay.

BLANCHE:

(COOL) I'm not even gonna get mad because you didn't send me a Christmas card.

JOHN:

I did send ya a Christmas card.

BLANCHE:

It isn't necessary to make excuses or alibis, John. I'm going to forget it entirely.

JOHN:

I don't have to make excuses. I did send you a Christmas card. I mailed it five days ago!

BLANCHE:

John, you promised you wouldn't shout.

JOHN:

Well, then, why are ya goading me like this? You know I wouldn't say I sent you a Christmas card unless I had.

BLANCHE:

I never received it.

JOHN:

Well, then it got lost in the mail.

BLANCHE:

(NOT PRESSING THE POINT) That's possible.

JOHN:  
(RELIEVED) Thank heaven!

BLANCHE:  
(POINTED) All the other cards came. ...

JOHN:  
That doesn't mean anything. One card can get lost, can't it?

BLANCHE:  
If you sent it.

JOHN:  
I DID send it! I SWEAR I sent it! Had a wonderful poem on it; a beautiful picture; it was trimmed with lace! Cost me a buck!

BLANCHE:  
All right, John.

JOHN:  
Well, do you believe me?

BLANCHE:  
Let's not discuss it any more.

JOHN:  
Okay.

BLANCHE:  
But I hope you don't forget to send one next year.

JOHN:  
Ack! ... (TO HIMSELF) What's the use? (TO SATISFY HER) All right, so I didn't send you a card.

BLANCHE:  
That's all. Why didn't you admit it before?

JOHN:  
There was nothing to admit. I just said I didn't send it to end the argument. But I really sent it!

BLANCHE:  
What did it say on it?

JOHN:

(HASN'T A CLUE, IMPROVISES) It said, "Merry Christmas to my love."

BLANCHE:

That could be anybody.

JOHN:

Let me finish! It said, "Merry Christmas to my love, my wife, my life, my turtle dove. Life with you is great, it seems. I love you more than pork and beans!" ...

BLANCHE:

You're only adding insult to injury, John.

JOHN:

Well, how do I know what it said? I can't remember what-- (QUICKLY) What's that laying on top of the newspaper? (TRIUMPHANT) There it is! There's my card!

BLANCHE:

(DELIGHTED, VERY QUICKLY) So it is! See?! You didn't have to get so excited after all! Thank you, darling! It's a lovely card.

JOHN:

(DARKLY) Wear it in good health. ... Well, let's open the presents and then go to sleep.

BLANCHE:

Well, how could you, John? You know we never open presents until Christmas morning. Besides, you haven't finished trimming the tree.

JOHN:

All it needs is a string of lights. One of the bulbs is blown -- that kills the whole string.

BLANCHE:

Can't you buy a bulb?

JOHN:

The stores aren't open now. What time is it?

BLANCHE:

Five past twelve.

JOHN:

Well, that's good. It's Christmas Day. Let's open the presents!

BLANCHE:

You didn't even hang up your stocking.

JOHN:

I haven't got one that would hold anything. They look like lace curtains. Come on, let's open the presents, Blanche. Come on, huh?

BLANCHE:

Oh, all right.

JOHN:

Say, we haven't got very many this year, have we? (SUDDENLY VERY INTERESTED) Oh, who's this from?

BLANCHE:

That's from Leo Gooseby. (DRY) It's amazing how you went to the one shaped like a bottle!

JOHN:

(FEIGNS INNOCENCE) Oh? Oh, is that what it is?

SFX: GIFT UNWRAPPED

JOHN:

I hope it's good stuff.

SFX: POP! OF CORK ... JOHN DRINKS

JOHN:

(EXHALES) Ahh -- mmm! That's not bad at all.

BLANCHE:

John! That's shampoo!

JOHN:

SHAMPOO?! ... Why, that chiseler! Two-bit Leo. What do I want with a bottle of shampoo? And to think I threw out thirty-nine cents on a tie for him! ... What've you got there?

BLANCHE:

It's another present for you. (SURPRISED) From your boss!

JOHN:

No kiddin'? Gee, that's a big one! Uh, what is it, Blanche?

BLANCHE:



A five-gallon can of lighter fluid. ...

JOHN:

(ANNOYED) Well, that's fine. That's just what I need. I don't even own a lighter!

BLANCHE:

Well, don't feel too bad, John. Maybe you can exchange it for something else.

JOHN:

Last year he sent me a bowling ball case. Must get these things in a rummage sale. I never heard of such presents.

BLANCHE:

Here's one for me, from Louise Shaw.

JOHN:

Shoo. Bet that's a dilly.

SFX: GIFT UNWRAPPED BEHIND--

BLANCHE:

Oh, Louise always sends something nice. Not expensive, but it usually comes in handy. (OVERLY IMPRESSED) Well, look at that!

JOHN:

What is it?

BLANCHE:

(ENTHUSIASTIC) It's a polo score-pad. Isn't that nice? ...

JOHN:

(IRONIC) That'll sure come in handy. Honest, Blanche, you've got the weirdest collection of friends. Is there anything else?

BLANCHE:

Just our presents to each other. Why don't you look at what I got you first? And then you can show me what you got for me. Now, close your eyes. I'll unveil it.

JOHN:

Well, all right -- I hope you didn't spend too much, dear. I - I don't really want anything.

BLANCHE:

Open your eyes.

JOHN:

(BEAT, STUNNED) Blanche. (BEAT, GENUINELY MOVED) Aw, Blanche, darling, that-- Why, that's beautiful. That's a dream! A portable bar -- with a brass rail!

BLANCHE:

Don't you think a kiss is in order, John?

JOHN:

Oh, a million kisses!

SFX: SEVERAL LOUD SMACKS

BLANCHE:

Well, stop kissing the bar! I meant a kiss for me!

JOHN:

Oh. ... I'm sorry, darling. It's -- it's just too good to be true. (GIVES HER A SMACK) Oh, you're wonderful. (UNEASY) Uh, Blanche, that - that must have cost a fortune.

BLANCHE:

John, don't get angry, but -- I sold my fur coat.

JOHN:

(BEAT, DISBELIEF) You - you sold your fur coat?

BLANCHE:

I wanted you to have the bar, and I didn't have the money.

JOHN:

You sold your coat? That beautiful fur coat that you bought yourself for my birthday? ... That gorgeous bald mink?

BLANCHE:

I got seventy-five dollars for it. The bar cost eighty-five.

JOHN:

Aw, Blanche, you never should have sold that bald mink.

BLANCHE:

It doesn't matter. I have a cloth coat and I never get cold.

JOHN:

Yeah, but, uh, you don't understand. Uh, open the present I got for you.

BLANCHE:

I can't wait, John.

SFX: GIFT UNWRAPPED

BLANCHE:  
(THRILLED) Oh, a muff! A fur muff!

JOHN:  
(QUIETLY PROUD) Genuine plucked skunk. ... I had it made special to match that coat. It can hold two full quarts! ... (SADLY) And you sold the coat.

BLANCHE:  
(UNDERSTANDINGLY) Well, what's the difference, darling? Someday you'll make a lot of money and then you'll be able to get a coat that'll match the muff. (SIMPLY) I'm very happy, John.

JOHN:  
I know, but, uh--

BLANCHE:  
And you still have the gorgeous bar.

JOHN:  
That's just it.

BLANCHE:  
What's the matter?

JOHN:  
I sold all my bourbon to pay for the muff. ... (WRY) That's great, isn't it? What a break for both of us.

BLANCHE:  
I think it's wonderful, John.

JOHN:  
What do ya mean, Blanche?

BLANCHE:  
I've never been so happy in my life. We've both made a sacrifice and that's worth more than all the gold and precious jewels in the world. Just to know that you gave up a prized possession is proof enough that you love me.

JOHN:

I've always loved you, Blanche. I may holler and rant and act like a first class crumb sometimes- but you never doubted that I loved you, did you?

BLANCHE:

No, John.

JOHN:

It's been seven years, honey. Most of it uphill. I haven't showered you with diamonds or bought any yachts, but I try not to deny ya anything. I suppose you have your little faults. What woman hasn't? Or what man either, for that matter? We're both pretty sensitive people. Maybe that's why we beef so much. Still, I don't think we're any worse than any other married couple. At least we have a safety valve and we can let off steam. Some of the others just carry it inside until the break comes. No, Blanche, I like it this way, and I love you more than anything on earth.

BLANCHE:

(WARMLY) John!

JOHN:

(PLAYFUL WHISPER) Hey, cut that out! (AN IDEA) I'll prove how much I love ya. Where is that liver -- or rice pudding -- or whatever it is you made?

BLANCHE:

(CHUCKLES) It's liver.

JOHN:

(MERRILY) I'll eat every bit of it, if it kills me! Let's go.

BLANCHE:

Merry Christmas, darling!

JOHN:

Merry Christmas!

CLOSING MUSIC