

CHRISTMAS WITH THE QUIRKES & BURKES

A radio play - comedy

By

Jan Storey and Joy Meekings

JAMES QUIRKE Aged 45, husband of Sue and younger brother of Kathy Burke

SUE James' wife aged 43

TARA Sue & James spoilt 16-year-old daughter

KATHY BURKE James' older sister, aged 48

MATT Kathy's son aged 21

BRETT Kathy's son aged 16

ANGIE Matt's sophisticated girlfriend, aged 29

Synopsis

The Quirke & Burke families are gathering for their annual family Christmas lunch. If past history is any indication the event will end badly. Will this Christmas be any different? Can they resist the temptation to bicker and be pleasant to each other instead?

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SCENE 1: DRIVING TO FAMILY CHRISTMAS PARTY**AUDIO:** Sound of car doors closing and car starting up

JAMES Glad to see you're not sulking, Tara.

TARA I'm only going cause mum promised me ...

JAMES (Abruptly) What? What did you promise her, Sue?

SUE Not much ... I ...

TARA (Cuts across Sue) **She** promised I could go to Bali for schoolies.

JAMES No one asked me – do you know how hard it is just to pay your school fees?

TARA (Petulant) So you tell me every day.

SUE Tara does appreciate it James, don't you dear.

TARA Hmm ... sure.

SUE (Artificially brightly) And she thinks she'll be school captain next year.

JAMES Yeah?

TARA I'm **so** going to be captain, Dad. I'm really popular. Everyone's promised to vote for me.

SUE Our daughter, Tara Quirke, School Captain, Bayside Grammar.

TARA And I'm so going to study hard, Dad.

JAMES Good. There'll be no partying and no ...

AUDIO: Mobile phone rings

TARA Hi Dad's driving us to the fam's Christmas lunch ... Dad, who's going? Rach wants to know.

JAMES All the family ... Aunty Kathy, Gran, Matt, Brett, ...

SUE And Matt's girlfriend ...

TARA Sorry Rach. Mum interrupted ... Matt & Brett? ... they're my cousins ... no, they're not hotties ... they're weird ... so is my Gran ... Yeah, she's the Gran who thinks she's a mermaid.

JAMES That's a bit unfair.

TARA Sorry. What was that Rach? Now Dad's interrupting ... Dad, will Uncle Nigie Pegie be there?

SUE His name is Nigel, Tara. And no, he won't be there. He's away on a work emergency.

TARA Awesome ... See you Rach ... Bye. Pity Brett and Matt having Nigie for a father. He's such a loser.

SUE Don't speak like that about your uncle, Tara.

TARA It's true. He's an idiot. And he's got sick hair. Does he get it permed or what?

JAMES Your hair's curly.

TARA Yeah and I hate it. Where did it come from? You two don't have frizz hair.

SUE A throw-back from some ancestor?

TARA Can't believe you hung out with Nigie at uni, Mum. Bet he was a nerd.

SUE What's wrong with nerds? Didn't stop the girls chasing him.

JAMES Maybe it was his curls.

TARA Embarrassing. I'm so glad he's not **my** father!

JAMES (*Teasingly*) You do look a bit like him now I come to think of it.

TARA (*Playfully*) Shut up.

SUE (*Overly brightly*) Kathy's doing turkey for lunch and baked ham.

JAMES My favourite!

TARA What! Doesn't she know I'm a vegan. Now I **really** don't want to go to the dumb lunch.

SCENE TWO: KITCHEN IN KATHY'S HOME

AUDIO: Christmas music playing – pots and pans banging

KATHY Matt ... (*then shouts*) MATT!

AUDIO Fast footsteps

MATT What's up Mum?

KATHY It's 40 degrees, the air con won't work, I just checked the turkey and the oven's cold. Trust Dad to be away when he's needed.

MATT Mum, calm down.

KATHY (*Sighs heavily*) I'm sooo over this lunch!

AUDIO Sound of oven door being kicked

KATHY Ouch! My foot. Why did I kick the oven door!

MATT You fixed it. Look! The oven light's come on.

KATHY Ow! My foot's killing me....

MATT Sit down! I'll get some ice ... here you are.

KATHY Oh, that's better.

MATT Reckon we'll all be in the pool later!

KATHY Later! (*Laughs*) Now would be better. (*Pause*) Hey ... hope Angie gets here soon. You seem pretty keen on her.

MATT (*Shyly*) I am.

KATHY Sounds serious ... Pity Dad's away.

MATT Yeah. I wanted her to meet you both.

KATHY Is she gluten free, vegan, vegetarian, fructose, lactose, dairy or wheat intolerant. Any allergies like nuts?

MATT (*Laughs*) Angie's fine, Mum. Tara's the only vegan in the family!

KATHY Last Christmas she wouldn't eat any roast veggies because the turkey was next to them. This year I'm steaming hers!

MATT Spoilt! What Tara wants, Tara gets!

KATHY Brett can help put up the tables. (*Yells*) Brett ... (*louder*) BRETT .. Get down here. Now!

BRETT (*From upstairs*) Give me a min. Have to finish this game ... or I'm dead.

KATHY Now Brett!

AUDIO Footsteps running down stairs

BRETT Yeah. What?

MATT Mum wants us to set up outside.

BRETT Do I have to?

KATHY Yes you do. And while you're there, keep an eye on Gran.

MATT What for? Can't she look after herself.

KATHY She's in the pool and the gin's gone missing.

SCENE THREE: OUTSIDE – SOUNDS OF SPLASHING IN POOL, BIRDS

AUDIO: Front door bell rings

MATT I'll get it!

AUDIO Door opening

MATT Merry Christmas Quirkles!

JAMES And a ho ho ho to you, Matt.

MATT Mum's in the kitchen wrestling with the turkey.

TARA Gross.

KATHY (Calling from kitchen) Drinks are outside near the pool. I'll join you in a mo.

SUE I'd kill for a drink. I'm parched.

AUDIO Sounds of splashing in the pool

TARA Check out gran trying to ride the pink flamingo. Sick.

JAMES Hmm. Sure, looks like she's loving the water. (Calls out) Hi Mum, your family's here! (Pause) Brett's looking after you ok?

BRETT (Calls) I'm making sure she doesn't do any double backflips.

JAMES (Whispering) Say hello to your Gran, Tara.

TARA (With attitude) Hi, Gran.

AUDIO Female mumbling from pool

KATHY Happy Christmas, family. You're right for drinks?

SUE Loving this chardie.

JAMES Pace yourself Sue.

SUE (Bitchily) Go pace yourself James. You're not my minder.

AUDIO Front door bell rings

MATT That'll be Angie. I'll get it.

AUDIO Footsteps

TARA (Whispering) Where did Matt find her? Tinder?

JAMES Shoosh Tara.

MATT Everyone, this is Angie.

ANGIE Hi. Nice to meet you all.

JAMES (Coughs) Your face looks familiar, Angie?

ANGIE Really?

SUE (Sarcastic) Dream on James. (Pause) Champagne, Angie?

ANGIE Lovely. Thanks.

SUE So where did you meet Matt?

ANGIE (Doubtfully) He's ... um ... a client of mine.

KATHY A client? What type of business are you in?

MATT Angie works in ... ah ... (Quickly)... the service industry.

TARA You mean like a personal trainer.

ANGIE Sort of. I run an Agency. An Escort Agency.

AUDIO: Sound effect of electronic sting

SCENE FOUR: PRESENT OPENING

AUDIO: Christmas music playing in background

KATHY We're doing presents now. Everyone into the living room.

SUE What about Gran?

KATHY Brett?

BRETT I'm not getting her!

KATHY Go on Brett.

BRETT No way. She's in the pool. Naked.

TARA Naked? That's **so** disgusting.

SUE She'll be burnt to a crisp.

KATHY Where's James? He should get her.

JAMES Hello. Did I hear someone mention my name? Do you want me to be Santa?

KATHY Our mother's naked in the pool.

JAMES I know, I know. She's been drinking gin neat and won't get out.

TARA (Mumbles) Thank goodness.

KATHY You may as well start being Santa then, James.

JAMES OK. This one's for you Matt from the Quirke's.

AUDIO: Sound of paper ripping

ANGIE What is it, Matt? Looks interesting.

MATT Do you reckon? It's a self-help book.

SUE Have you got that one already?

MATT (Cynically) No. But are you suggesting I need help?

ANGIE I'm sure your Aunty doesn't mean that.

JAMES (*Unnaturally cheerfully*) And moving right along ... this one's for ... let me see ... Sue from Kathy and all the Burkes.

AUDIO: Sound of paper ripping

SUE Wonder what it could be? Oh. A vase. (*slowly*) Where **did** you find it?

KATHY I thought you'd like it.

SUE It's the same one I gave Vinnies.

KATHY What are you talking about - I paid a lot for it!

SUE No, I can tell. It's my old vase - see this chip on the rim.

TARA You hated that vase, Mum.

JAMES Good one sis. Spared no expense.

KATHY (*Forcibly*) Rude!

ANGIE My family have a \$20 limit.

MATT That's a great idea. We should do that. What do you think family?

TARA I think it's a rubbish idea. I want **my** present now. You did get me a new phone didn't you Mum? Dad?

JAMES You got a new one last year.

TARA But I want the latest model. You promised me ... my old one's so not cool.

AUDIO: Clinking of glass against bottle

KATHY Oh no. Mum! We thought you were happy in the pool. Wait a min. I'll get you a towel.

AUDIO: Incoherent mumbling in background

SUE What are you doing Brett?

BRETT Getting a snap for Instagram.

SUE Can't you control your son, Kathy!

SCENE FIVE: WAITING FOR LUNCH AROUND THE POOL

AUDIO: Chairs being moved, sound of birds

KATHY I've turned the oven up high ... the turkey still isn't ready.

SUE (*Slurring*) Stuff the turkey. I need another bottle of wine, Kathy!

KATHY Don't you think you've had enough.

SUE (Petulant) Don't tell me what to do. Anyway, who cares I'm not driving.

KATHY Maybe not a car but you're driving me round the bloody bend!

SUE You cow!

JAMES Come on you two, it's Christmas Day, be nice ...

SUE (Slurring her words) Good old James, so reliable, so calm and so boring!

JAMES Sue, enough!

SUE Well you are boring. Hey everyone. My husband is boring. Boring.

KATHY Don't speak to my brother like that! If Nigel was here, he'd sort you out.

SUE (Slurring) Too late. Already has! Many times ... (laughs ... pause) Tara's his daughter! Oopsie. Didn't mean to say that!

ALL (Gasps) What? Good God! Bloody hell!

TARA Mum! Tell me you're lying. Mum?

SUE I'm not. It's true.

TARA Not listening. Blah blah blah blah

KATHY Tara's Nigel's daughter? You can't be serious!

SUE (slurring) I'm serious. James and I aren't compatible, especially in the bedroom, are we dear husband?

JAMES That's low even for you.

TARA Still not listening. Blah blah blah

SUE Nigel and I ... we couldn't help ourselves. Been at it for years now!

KATHY You're lying.

SUE Not lying! Nigel is Tara's father! Did a DNA test after she was born ... never told a soul.

KATHY So Nigel doesn't know?

SUE Nope ... he's got no idea...Tara's half Quirke and half Burke (whispering & slurring) I'd rather be a Quirke than a Burke though. (laughs)

KATHY You really are a piece of work! This is the worst day of my life.

SUE I'm loving it. (shouts slurring) More wine please! (laughs)

TARA Does that mean Matt and Brett are my half-brothers.

SUE Co..rrect!

TARA My friends will dump me ... (*sobs*) and I won't get to be school captain.
(*sobs more loudly*)

JAMES Well, since we're into home truths, I've got one of my own.

ANGIE No need to say anything, James.

JAMES But I think there is. (*pause*) I've been using Angie's Escort Agency for years.

TARA Dad!

SUE You absolute arse!

MATT (*Emotional*) How could you Angie. I love you!

ANGIE Matt, you poor sweet boy.

MATT Oh, I want to die!

KATHY Pull yourself together Matt.

AUDIO **Fast footsteps**

BRETT Guess what! (*pause*) The images of Gran in the pool have gone viral!
(*pause*) 250,000 likes and counting! Worldwide coverage!

TARA That's it. My life is over! (*sobs*)

KATHY Whatever else could go wrong?

AUDIO **Smoke alarm goes off**

KATHY Oh my God! I forgot about the oven. The kitchen's on fire!

ALL VOICES Where's the fire extinguisher. Call the fire brigade! Get some water from the pool! Do something...

BRETT (*Excitedly*) My drone's streaming this live right now! I'll be famous... I'll have my own YouTube channel.

TARA That's it! I'm calling Uber Eats and I'm ordering vegan!

AUDIO: **Christmas music (or Runaround Sue by Dion)**

THE END

