

Crudgemuffin Christmas

By Michael Wright and Ane Mulligan

*Characters: Beauregard Crudgemuffin an old-money Southern gentleman
Margaret Crudgemuffin, Beau's wife, a sheltered Southern belle.
Scarlett Loblolly, Margaret's first cousin
Woodman, the Crudgemuffins' English butler
Forsythia Wentworth Loblolly, Margaret's mother.*

Scene: Living room of the Crudgemuffin manse. Woodman is holding a skein of tinsel between his two outstretched hands, at Margaret's decorative disposal. Beau is assisting - slightly.

Margaret: Oh, Beauregard. I do so love this time of year. The leaves have fallen, there's frost nearly every morning now.

Beau: It may get you in the holiday spirit, Hollybell, but the frost has positively finished off the Jasmine.

Margaret: Oh, who cares about those puny, fair weather friends anyway. I'm ready for the holiday plants...

Beau: Like pointsetters?

Margaret: *(completely at a loss)* Whut?

Beau: You know, Pointsetters. Those red and white plants that look like flowers, but don't let the cat eat 'em.

Margaret: *(begins twittering)* Oh,Beau.....You meanpoinsettias (ha, ha, ha) every time you said “pointsetters” I thought you were talkin’ about Daddy’s old huntin’ dogs! (ha,ha,ha,)

Beau: *(pretends a slight)* Well. I’m happy I could afford you some amusement ..at my expense, my little Christmas cactus. As I recall, your Daddy’s dogs weren’t much good for the cat either.

(doorbell)

Margaret: Oh, my! Perhaps its carolers. *(looks at her watch)* At noon?

Woodman: Allow me, madam. *(He tosses the rest of the tinsel at once on the tree and exits. Marg looks at Bo in amazed approval, as if that was the perfect touch)*

(Scarlet sails in as if upon a cloud of good cheer)

Scarlet: A spectacular pre-winter felicitation to my two favorite kin! I have arrived with my decorating expertise to save you from the numerous and sully Martha Stewardian Faux Pas out there, just waiting to spring and catch your color scheme in their tasteless jaws.

Beau: Somehow “Howdy back” seems woefully inadequate.

Margaret: *(Embracing Scarlet)* My favorite cousin Scarlet! You are as marvelous as ever! And your timin’ is impeccable, as usual:

Scarlet: It’s lunchtime?

Margaret: Momma’s comin’!

Scarlet: This very day?

Margaret: This very hour!

Beau: This very hard to take.

Scarlet: I am positively thrilled! I haven't seen Aunt Forsythia in a month of Sundays!

Margaret: You were always her favorite niece, you know.

Beau: I thought she was the only niece....

Margaret: Shush, now darlin' I think your huntin' dogs are barkin'. You know, the point...

Beau: ...certainly. I'll just give them a rudimentary visual inspection...

Margaret: ...and look at them too, while you're at it.

Beau: Certainly. Capital Idea, my little mistletoe.

Scarlet: *(conspiratorially)* Cousin, he's makin' fun of your feet again. *(he exits and she eyes the tossed tinsel)* Shades of the barbarian hordes! Whoever has assaulted this poor tree with such tinsular insensitivity!?!

Margaret: Kitty! Where is that ol' cat? You rascal! *(enter Woodman)*

Woodman: The honorable, widowed Mrs. Forsythia Wentworth Loblolly.

(She sweeps in with as much "sweep" she has left, which ain't much)

Girls: Momma/Aunt Forsythia! However are you?? *(etc) (they group hug)*

Forsythia: My precious Rosebuds! You are as lovely as ever! *(almost a whisper)* Straighten the posture, Margaret, dear. Scarlet, your nose is shinier than a new nickel. *(Both Margaret & Scarlet look miffed at the reprimand)*

Margaret: Oh, mamma, how perfect! You've come just in time to help trim the tree!
Woodman! Please bring in that dusty, old bag in from the hall (*Margaret and Scarlet do a "take" to Forsythia. Not a sound is made.*)

Forsythia: Why do I sense such restraint? (*Immediately in bursts Woodman with a large shopping bag full of decorations*)

Woodman: As you requested, Madam. Shall I notify Mr. Beauregard?

Forsythia: Please do, Woodman. (*Woodman exits*) It was such a long ride and I could use some amusement.

Scarlet: Well, these things aren't going to place themselves (*indicating the decorations*).

Margaret: Indeed! Lets all begin. (*in comes Beau as they begin to trim the tree. Woodman follows him in and goes to his "station" near the door.*)

Beau: How festive. And dear Mother Loblolly! (*kissy, kissy*)
I declare, my old darlin', you haven't aged a moment since I last saw you!

Forsythia: Beauregard Crudgemuffin! I see you could still go into the fertilizer business. You old charmer!

Margaret: Now this reminds me of Christmases when I was a little bitty girl. Remember, Momma? Cousin Scarlet and I and you an' Daddy would all gather around the Christmas tree an' decorate it together? I wish we could recapture those old days!

Forsythia: I do remember indeed, Margaret, darlin'. I remember your Cousin Scarlet (*eyes Scarlet who is placing tinsel so carefully on the tree*) had a Martha Stewart bent even then! She'd get all fired up if you put so much as 2 pieces of tinsel on one branch!
And, law! She took ever so long to trim the tree!

Scarlet: Why Aunt Forsythia! You always said you loved the way I laid the tinsel! You said it caught the firelight so pretty.