

MIDNIGHT BURGER

Interlude: Christmas Eve in Toad Suck

Joe Fisher

MIDNIGHT BURGER

Interlude: Christmas Eve in Toad Suck.

SONG: JOY TO THE WORLD.

EFFIE

Well, hi to anyone out there listening right now, hello y'all. It's Effie and I am not supposed to be speaking into this microphone of ours right now but it is Christmas Eve here in our little corner of God's Country and the mood struck me. I hope this season has struck you in good spirits. I know it's tough out there for some of y'all but I do believe that sorrows have the shelf life of a head of lettuce, and may your sorrows, if you have them, soon be wilted in your cupboard.

ZEBULON

Honey?

EFFIE

Oh, my. I've been discovered.

ZEBULON

My Dear, are you sending out missives to the listeners?

EFFIE

I am, Darling. I was in a mood.

ZEBULON

Very well, then, hello to you all.

EFFIE

Dear, you know around this time of year I get to thinking about the have nots.

ZEBULON

Such as we should.

EFFIE

And you also know how, this time of year we dip into the Brandy just a little bit.

ZEBULON

A bit yes.

EFFIE

Because y'all, we love Jesus but we drink a little.

ZEBULON

Just a bit.

EFFIE

Because we are on the eve of the birth of the Baby Jesus and if there were ever a time to show our appreciations it should be now.

ZEBULON

Yes, within moderation, of course.

EFFIE

If you say so, dear. Y'all I hope the lord has given you a year that affords you some presents under your trees. I don't mind telling you that I have been gifted with a husband who has a preternatural affinity for the giving of gifts.

ZEBULON

Well, not to light my own bonfire, Honey, but I do feel skilled in such arenas. I feel as though when I meet a person, I somehow know the perfect gift for them to receive.

EFFIE

I remember you gave Jim Tucker's wife that needlepoint set one year.

ZEBULON

Oh, that was a good one.

EFFIE

She'd never pointed a needle in her life and didn't know what to make of it all, but then, in the coming year she really took to it.

ZEBULON

Now their house is filled with all sorts of hoops and linens.

EFFIE

Much to the chagrin of Jim Tucker but if y'all know Jim Tucker that man ain't nothing but chagrin. Jim, if you're listening I apologize and I celebrate the life that God hath given you.

ZEBULON

Of course.

EFFIE

But stop being a grampus, you have a lovely wife.

ZEBULON

Honey-

EFFIE

I apologize and I digress, because I was talking about my husband's gift giving abilities. Y'all there are so many presents under that tree and I just have no idea what they are.

ZEBULON

I really have sailed over the yardarm on this particular season. It's going to be quite a Christmas morning.

EFFIE

But, now, we've been giving ourselves a gift all year haven't we, Dearest?

ZEBULON

That is true.

EFFIE

Y'all, this year we have been subscribing to magazines.

ZEBULON

Born out of necessity, of course.

EFFIE

Indeed. If y'all don't know - well, I'm lighting my own bonfire now - this entire contraption that we are speaking into was actually built by yours truly.

ZEBULON

Yes, as with my gift for the giving of gifts, you seem to have quite the affinity for the various ephemera of radio technology.

EFFIE

Y'all, when you hold something in your hands and know what to do with it without even reading a book, don't you know that's the lord talking to you?

ZEBULON

I came home one day to the whole study strewn with all sorts of tubes and wires.

EFFIE

He thought I'd gone round the bend, y'all, truly. But then a few months later I had it all sorted.

ZEBULON

So we thought it important that Effie stay abreast of this strange new world of the airwaves that we had found ourselves in.

EFFIE

And if you're in the know, the best way to stay in the know is with a subscription to Popular Radio Magazine.

ZEBULON

Yes, I always know when a new issue has arrived because you are nowhere to be found.

EFFIE

That's correct I am deep in it, y'all. But what had happened is that Zebulon was feeling a little left out not having his own magazine.

ZEBULON

I will admit to the jealousy, yes.

EFFIE

So I surprised him with a subscription to something called Adventure Magazine.

ZEBULON

Yes, you did, Honey. I spend as much time with that Adventure Magazine as I do with the scripture.

EFFIE

Yes, you do.

ZEBULON

Stories of pirates, of cowboys, adventures in the jungles of Panama. Every issue has me flung to all corners of the globe.

EFFIE

You can hear him in the house reading the lines out loud to himself sometimes.

ZEBULON

Can you?

EFFIE

Yes, dear. Sometimes I'm at the pig trough and can hear you in the house.

ZEBULON

Oh my.

EFFIE

But THEN we went even further. We went and got that subscription to that Life Magazine.

ZEBULON

Yes, and I don't mind telling you I am amazed at what people get up to all around this world.

EFFIE

There's a race they have every year over in England where they roll a big round of cheese down a hill and then everybody chases after it. You know what they get if they win?

ZEBULON

Cheese.

EFFIE

The cheese, they get the cheese if they win. Just make some cheese, y'all, you don't risk life and limb barreling down a hill.

ZEBULON

The photos are quite humorous.

EFFIE

They look so ridiculous, don't they?

ZEBULON

They do.

EFFIE

Like there's a gold bar inside that cheese. Oh! You know what we should do?

ZEBULON

What's that?

EFFIE

There's an article in the newest issue that I want to read to y'all. It's about how people are celebrating Christmas all over the world, you're just not going to believe some of it. Here it is. So, over in Finland on Christmas morning everyone has porridge, but it's made of rice and then at night, cause it gets real cold there, the whole family gets in a sauna. A sauna is like a shed and you put hot rocks in it so it gets real hot in there and and everyone sweats a whole bunch.

ZEBULON

Interesting.

EFFIE

Nearby in Denmark, their Christmas is a lot like ours but they put their tree in the middle of the room and everyone dances around it singing Christmas carols.

ZEBULON

That's nice.

EFFIE

You know, something that I don't think about much is that when it's winter in Arkansas and the weather's real bad, it helps if I remember that it ain't winter everywhere. And if you go down south long enough, you can find yourself in a place where it's summer right now. Like on the Island of New Zealand. They celebrate Christmas right in the middle of summer by having an outdoor cookout with all kinds of lobsters and fancy things.

ZEBULON

I'd never thought about that. I suppose it must be summer somewhere.

EFFIE

In Czechoslovakia they have a tradition of eating carp on Christmas Eve, but before they eat the carp they keep them alive in their bathtub for a few days. They say that the scales bring them luck.

ZEBULON

... I don't like that one.

EFFIE

Yes, I'm unclear how such a thing becomes a tradition. In Greece they put their Christmas trees on boats, down Mexico way they have parties all night and then have holy mass when the clock strikes midnight. In Spain they...

ZEBULON

Oh my, what do they do in Spain?

EFFIE

Well, they take a big hollowed out log, Dear, and they put a face on it and call it Caga Tio. All the presents go inside the log and then the whole family beats the log with sticks until this character named Caga Tio... defecates the presents onto the floor.

ZEBULON

I... how does...

EFFIE

Still better than fish in the bathtub.

ZEBULON

Yes, true.

EFFIE

Anyhow, y'all, we've been enjoying our magazines this year and if you think that makes us too fancy well then your name is probably Jim Tucker and you wouldn't like what we're doing anyhow I apologize Jim Tucker I celebrate the life that God hath given you. And I have reached the end of my glass, dear, and I am not yet done celebrating the Baby Jesus so how about a little reading for those that listen.

ZEBULON

There is a certain something that can only be read around this time of year, so perhaps we shall indulge ourselves.

EFFIE

That sounds real nice, Dearest. I love you so much.

ZEBULON

Yes, and I you, my Dear.

EFFIE

I love it when you read little things over the radio.

ZEBULON

I begin...

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through
the house
Not a creature was stirring not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there...

SONG: O, TANNENBAUM

END