

A CUDAHY CAROLER CHRISTMAS
(EXCERPT)

Written by

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SHOW OPEN:

In the blackness we hear the choir humming "Hark The Herald Angels Sing." Slides of various, old black & white photos appear on the screen on stage. (Note: These photos and descriptions upcoming may vary as photo research is done to find the most unusual and bizarre. These may also be manipulated digitally with the actor's faces.)

STASCH is heard over the house PA.

STASCH

Well, it's been a long and strange journey. Like the old saying goes, "There's no place to start like the beginning... 'cause if you start near the middle, then you get all turned around ass-end over tea cup and you don't know your butt-hole from a hole in the ice--" ah, but I digress. The Carolers from the town of Cudahy have a rich and unique history.

A slide of an odd singing group appears.

STASCH (CONT'D)

In the early part of the twentieth century, in the midst of the great poonchkie shortage of 1916, a group of hearty line workers from a fledgeling company called Harneschfeger formed a traveling singing group to ease the burdens of a town trying to celebrate Christmas without jelly-filledes. Paying the strolling singers with pickled eggs and Pabst Blue Ribbon, the town fell in love with the choir and looked forward to hearing their cheery tunes every yuletide season. And thus, The Cudahy Carolers were born.

Another slide appears; a flapper group circa 1929.

STASCH (CONT'D)

Throughout the years the choir has warmed our hearts and helped us through the rough times; depression...

A slide of a soup line during the depression.

STASCH (CONT'D)
 ...World War...

A slide of Pearl Harbor

STASCH (CONT'D)
 ...and prohibition.

A shot of FBI agents smashing beer kegs with hammers. The choir stops humming and gasps. A new slide appears; another group decked out in robes, circa 1950. The choir gives an audible "whew" and continues humming.

STASCH (CONT'D)
 The personality of the group has shifted as new members were added on and others dropped away, either from death, illness or lack of interest due to deer hunting and the NFL playoffs. We've had our stars over the years...

A shot of a goofy woman with cat's-eye glasses.

STASCH (CONT'D)
 There was Norma Chezlawitz, famous soprano who could hit a double high C if she sat pantiless on a block of ice.

A slide of a man with bug eyes and a toothy smile.

STASCH (CONT'D)
 And Emile Kazweicki, a tenor who could sing "Oh Come All Ye Faithful" while gargling a pint of Listerine.

A slide of identical twin girls covered with freckles.

STASCH (CONT'D)
 And the Jazwerski twins, Katie 1 and Katie 2, who would serenade the crowd with a rendition of "Angles We Have Heard On High" that could bring tears to Mike Ditka's eyes. Unfortunately, Katie 2 passed away suddenly from advanced impetigo, and poor Katie 1 could only speak every other word in a sentence and walked in endless circles until her death in 1971.

A slide of an elderly man holding a chicken.

STASCH (CONT'D)

And who could forget Lyle Szerbiak and Heinrich, his trained chicken that could peck out the rhythm section of "Jingle Bells" on tuned water glasses while Lyle accompanied him on the autoharp. Heinrich retired from the group in 1965 after Lyle twisted off his head, cooked and ate him with a side of boiled potatoes and stringed beans.

A slide monontage of the Carolers with the faces of current members, probably from the 70's, digitally blended in. Some show two children, a boy and girl, obviously the child versions of Zeke and Nellie.

STASCH (CONT'D)

Throughout the years the Cudahy Carolers have brought the message of peace, love and polkas to the sturdy denizens of our little South side burb. We've become a holiday tradition; like raw beef on rye with onions or creamed herring. We represent what Christmas is all about; a group of diverse, second generation Polish factory workers from a small industrial community nestled near Lake Michigan coming together in the spirit of brotherhood to sing the praises of the season...and maybe get some beer and blood sausage afterwards.

Slides of the faces of the choir members looking dour, angry and bitter appear in succession.

STASCH (CONT'D)

But then, at the peak of our performing abilities, like a dark cloud raining golf ball sized hail over Bethlehem, dissention set in. Jealousy, bitterness and anger took their toll. And in the blistering heat of rage and indignation, the Cudahy Carolers split up, and were no more.

The slides dim. The crowd moans sadly. Stasch steps on stage dressed in his robes and wearing a Santa hat.

STASCH (CONT'D)

Hi folks, I'm Stasch Zielinsky.

(Thunderous applause.)

You know, there was a time, not long ago, when people thought the Cudahy Carolers had disappeared from existence, never to be seen again. It left a holiday hole in the hearts of the South side bigger than Santa's beer gut. Christmas in Cudahy just wasn't going to be the same again. Something had to be done. That's where our story begins...

The Carolers enter wearing their robes and hats. They each stand in their own pool of light.

STASCH (CONT'D)

Tonight you'll be witness to an epic tale of hatred and joy, betrayal and retribution. It's about how the true meaning of Christmas can overcome any petty jealousy and bring people together in the spirit of love, peace and understanding. With an intermission for beer and refreshments. This, my friends, is the true story of The Cudahy Carolers.

Thunderous applause. The choir breaks into their rendition of "The South Side Carole Of Da' Bells" (as sung to the tune of "The Carole Of The Bells.")

CHOIR

"Recyclers say Throw cans away
Christmas is here, let's have a
beer
Strom Thurmond's old, bleu cheese
has mold.
Bow-legged knees, Pabst, if you
please
Pretzels I'll bring, Mustard with
zing
Jesus is here, let's have a beer
Cheese everywhere, curds in my
hair.
Sausage is ground, Brats by the
pound
Beer by the pail, buns getting
stale
Bean soup I'm bringing, farts will
be ringing

(MORE)

CHOIR (CONT'D)

Cheek has a tear, I'm out of beer
 Merry, merry, merry, merry
 Christmas.
 Merry, merry, merry, merry
 Christmas.
 Ed Putzkie tells, how his wife
 smells
 Shake can today, beer starts to
 spray
 Christmas is here, let's have a
 beer
 Bowling ball's cold, Score sheet I
 fold
 Roast beef and ham, poonchkies with
 jam
 Hey what the heck, where are the
 schnecks?
 Raw beef is ground, hey it's ground
 round
 On rye bread you, add onions too
 Right before mass, giving me gas
 Don't be a beggar, Pump up the
 keggar
 What did I hear? Let's have a beer
 Merry, merry, merry, merry
 Christmas.
 Merry, merry, merry, merry
 Christmas.
 My bunion hurts, blue bowling
 shirts
 Play polka tunes, bright brass
 spittoons
 Red checkered pants, high stepping
 dance
 Hair-do is set, With Aqua Net
 Varicose legs, green pickled eggs
 Let's have a nip, With chips and
 dip
 Horse radish too, forget to chew
 Fake mistletoe, Go shovel snow
 Head cheese I'll eat, Sure is a
 treat
 Pigs in a blanket, Show it I'll
 spank it
 The tapper's near, Refill my beer
 Merry, merry, merry, merry
 Christmas.
 Merry, merry, merry, merry
 Christmas.
 Brett Favre is King,
 Touchdowns he'll bring
 Da' Bears are pigs, new pack of
 cigs

(MORE)

CHOIR (CONT'D)

To Lambeau we go, Drive through the
 snow
 What's that I hear? Zeke hit a deer
 No need to fear, Plenty of beer
 Herring has stench, Made by Ma
 Baensch
 I like mine creamy, hot brats are
 steamy
 Top them with kraut, Gut sticking
 out
 Roluids I bring, Hey, that's the
 thing
 Go work at Ladish, Then have a
 radish
 Let's shoot a deer, Then have a
 beer
 Merry, merry, merry, merry
 Christmas.
 Merry, merry, merry, merry
 Christmas.
 Please don't offend, Song just
 won't end
 Bright furry caps, With big ear
 flaps
 Old flannel shirts, Roy's got the
 squirts
 It's quite a treat, Pig's pickled
 feet
 Holiday lamb, Shaped out of Spam
 Accordion tune, Drop pants and moon
 Armpits are wet, With putrid sweat
 Work on the line, Get overtime
 Babooshkas sing, Bob Hope and Bing
 Ground beef with noodles,
 sweatshirt with poodles
 My biggest fear, We're out of beer
 Please stop this thing!
 Christ the Savior is born.
 Pop a cold one!"

The choir exits leaving Stasch on stage. The lights change.
 Stasch takes off his hat and robes as he speaks. He puts on a
 parka and ear-flap hat.

STASCH

We start just a few weeks ago. The
 small suburban town of Cudahy had
 been without it's beloved choir for
 five years. All people had to fill
 the void during Christmas were
 repeats of TV's cartoon Grinch, and
 for those really desperate folks,
 the movie version.

(MORE)

STASCH (CONT'D)

I knew I had to take desperate measures to get the choir re-united and bring smiles of joy back to our little village. I started with the one man I knew would be the toughest nut to crack.

The lights change to reveal Pee Wee's basement apartment. PEE WEE enters wearing jeans and a bowling shirt. He wears a cap with a goofy saying like "Fishermen Have Stiffer Rods" or something equally as obnoxious.

STASCH (CONT'D)

The basement apartment of Pee Wee Kaputish, my one time best friend, who was now my sworn enemy. Five years ago Pee Wee vowed to despise myself and my offspring, forever spitting on the very ground we walked on, exercising a hatred heretofore unknown in the annals of human history. The reasons why, I'll reveal later. Hey, we want you to come back for the second act.

Stasch knocks at the door.

PEE WEE

Yah, hold yer water. I'm comin'.

Pee Wee opens the door. There is a dull silence.

STASCH

Pee Wee.

PEE WEE

Oh...it's you.

STASCH

Ya.

PEE WEE

What do you want?

STASCH

Can I come in?

There is a tense pause. Pee Wee turns and walks away.

PEE WEE

Free country.

Stasch enters and looks around.

STASCH

Like what you've done with the place.

PEE WEE

Look, what do you want Zielinsky? Cause whatever it is I ain't interested. So just get off yer high horse and take your business someplace else!

STASCH

Hey, hey, hey! Take the knot out of yer undies, would ya? I didn't come here to fight with ya.

PEE WEE

Then what?

STASCH

It's about the choir.

PEE WEE

The choir? What about it? It's history. Yesterday's news.

STASCH

Well it shouldn't be. I want to get it back together again. It's important.

PEE WEE

(Snorting cynically.)
Ya, right.

STASCH

Look, stop thinkin' about yourself for a minute and think about the community. They need us. You have to help.

PEE WEE

I don't need to do nothin! You got a lot of nerve comin' back here after what you pulled!

They yell and argue over one another.

PEE WEE (CONT'D)

The gall of you to come walkin' through my door after all the pain and anguish you brought into my life!

(MORE)

PEE WEE (CONT'D)

You ought to be ashamed of yourself
you lousy, good for nothin--

STASCH

Will you stop being so bull-headed
and listen to me for a second?! I
didn't come here for a fight! There
are more important things we need
to--HOLD IT!!!

There is silence.

STASCH (CONT'D)

Now we need to get this choir back
together. It's important. I can't
say why right now, but you gotta
believe me. Can't you put the past
aside for a little while? Just for
the holidays? There were times when
we didn't hate each other's guts,
remember? The good old days? Back
in high school when we were pin
setters at the old Alpine Lanes,
remember?

Pee Wee looks off wistfully as the lights change. Music
begins. Pee Wee sings "The Little Pin-Setting Boy"(as sung to
the tune of "The Little Drummer Boy".)

PEE WEE

"Come and roll them, pa rut ta tut
tut
Just washed and waxed the lanes, pa
rut ta tut tut
The finest pins I'll bring, pa rut
ta tut tut
The Brunswick ball is king, pa rut
ta tut tut
rut ta tut tut, rut ta tut tut

So, I set the pins, pa rut ta tut
tut Then sit on my butt

You rent the proper shoes, pa rut
ta tut tut
Size nine or ten can't lose, pa rut
ta tut tut
You treat your ball with love, pa
rut ta tut tut
And wear a Velcro glove, pa rut ta
tut tut
rut ta tut tut, rut ta tut tut

(MORE)

PEE WEE (CONT'D)

Still, I set the pins, pa rut ta
tut tut
Then sit on my butt

I'll buy some smokes for you, pa
rut ta tut tut
And make a beer run, too, pa rut ta
tut tut
But please don't throw a fit, pa
rut ta tut tut
If you get a five ten split, pa rut
ta tut tut
rut ta tut tut, rut ta tut tut

I just set the pins, pa rut ta tut
tut
Then sit on my butt
On my butt
On my butt..."

The light change. Pee Wee at Stasch with uncertainty.

STASCH

Look...I need to use your bowling
alley as a practice space tomorrow
night.

PEE WEE

Are you nuts?! Thursday nights is
ladies league at The Bowl-A-Riffic
Lanes. You'll be cuttin' into my
business.

STASCH

You ain't got any business! Ever
since the Red Carpet on Howell put
in automated score sheets you get
maybe two bowlers a week. And
that's only 'cause Mavis and Earl
Makowski live across the street.
Please, one favor for old time's
sake? I wouldn't ask if it wasn't
important.

Pee Wee thinks a moment.

PEE WEE

Well...all right. But that don't
mean I still don't hate your guts
forever and into eternity for what
you did to me.

Stasch holds out his hand and the two shake, reluctantly.

STASCH

Fine. Then we agree to disagree.

Pee Wee pulls his hand away.

PEE WEE

Hey, wait, I don't know about *that*!

(He ponders a moment.)

Oh...yeah...right, okay.

STASCH

Look, I hate to ask, but I need to talk to Edna about this...

Pee Wee turns away, pained.

STASCH (CONT'D)

I know the divorce was painful, and all, but she's important to the choir. We need her voice.

PEE WEE

She ain't the same, you know. Ever since she won one eighth of that Megabucks Jackpot she's all of a sudden Miss High and Mighty. Miss White Gloves And Table Manners. Miss I'm Too Hi-Falutin' For My Husband And Family So's I Think I'll Just Dump 'Em Like Hot Venison Sausage In The In-Sink-Erator. Suddenly me and the rest of this town ain't good enough for her. You'd think Martha Frickin' Stewart herself was blowin' smoke up her ass.

STASCH

She still live upstairs?

PEE WEE

Ya. I figure "Why waste money on rent", ya know? This basement's kinda homey, anyhow.

STASCH

See you tomorrow night.

PEE WEE

Ya. Ya, okay.

Stasch turns to leave.

PEE WEE (CONT'D)
Hey Stasch...

Stasch stops.

PEE WEE (CONT'D)
Tell her I said hello.

STASCH
Sure.

The lights change as Stasch exits.

STASCH (CONT'D)
Edna Kaputish was a long standing member in the choir. When she and Pee Wee were married, we could always count on their hard work, unbridled enthusiasm and their patented three bean salad. Huh, how ironic. I guess those truly were the "salad days."

Lights up as he rings her doorbell. She enters dressed in sort of a "Bizzaro World" June Cleaver outfit. Dress, pearls...sneakers. She answers the door.

EDNA
(Trying hard to sound upper-crust.)
Well...Sta--I mean, Mr. Zielinski.

STASCH
Hello Edna...Mrs. Kaputish

EDNA
It's "Kap-u-tishe."

STASCH
Huh?

EDNA
Do come in to my humble "adobe."

He enters.

EDNA (CONT'D)
May I take your chateau?

She holds out her hand. He stares at her, quizzically. There is an uncomfortable pause. She looks up at his ear-flap hat, clearing her throat.

STASCH
 (Realizing.)
 Oh! Oh, the hat, sure.

She brushes off the hat and sets it on a nearby chair. She picks up a tray of canapes from a table and offers some to him.

EDNA
 Would you care for some "horses du ovaries?"

He examines at the tray and takes one of the snacks. He sniffs it, shrugs and pops it in his mouth.

STASCH
 (Chewing.)
 Mmm. Good. What is it?

He takes the tray and begins eating more.

EDNA
 Do you like it? It's my own recipe;
 raw anchovies, Marshmallow cream
 and Cheese Whiz on Ritz Crackers.

Stasch stops chewing.

EDNA (CONT'D)
 (Martha Stewart-like.)
 It's a good thing.

Stasch slowly spits the contents in his mouth back on to the tray. He hands the tray back to her. She puts it down, half-disgusted.

EDNA (CONT'D)
 So...Mr. Zielinski, to what do I
 owe the immensity of the pleasure
 of this unheralded visit?

STASCH
 I've come to get the choir back
 together.

Edna steps away in mute disgust.

EDNA
 The choir? Why would you want to do
 that, for heaven's sake?

STASCH
 I can't really tell you right now,
 Edna.

(MORE)

STASCH (CONT'D)

But let's just say it's for the good of the community. For all of Cudahy.

EDNA

(With venom.)

Cudahy?! Why should I care for a dirty, ill-bred, illiterate, sweaty, mouth breathing, gum chewing, beer brewing, shit kicking, nose picking, backwater hell hole like Cudahy?!

STASCH

You don't like it here?

EDNA

I hate it here and I always have! Thank God that MegaBucks came through for me when it did. I saw the light. I realized it was high time to dump that moron of a husband, move out of this aluminum sided prison and head up to the North Shore, where people have culture and...and breeding and...and stuff like that there. Well, step one is done. I'm rid that idiot Pee Wee. And in a couple of weeks, after I'm packed and have my housing settled, it's off to Whitefish Bay. And bye-bye jerks-ville.

STASCH

I don't believe it. This isn't the Edna Kaputish I know--

EDNA

It's "Kap-u-tishe!"

STASCH

But, Edna...you were always so happy here before. You loved the Friday couples leagues at The Bowl-A-Riffic. Late night chilli at George Webb's. When we danced the polkas and mazurkas at The Concertina Bar, you were always the last one on the floor. Heck, you were even The Weiner Queen at The Kielbasa Fest three years running.

EDNA

That's the old Edna! The stupid
Edna. The mindless, boring
babooshka Edna. Well I'm done with
her now. She's dead and buried.
It's time to start a new life. I'm
going where there's culture and
manners and breeding.

STASCH

But why, Edna?

The lights change and music begins. Edna sings "Let It Go."
(sung to the tune of "Let It Snow.")

EDNA

"Oh the Cudahy folks are frightful
But Fox Point is so delightful
Since the culture here is just so-
so
I'll let it go, let it go, let it
go!

You know brats are the food for
noshing
And high fashion's just "galoshing"
Please drive me to the North Shore,
Joe
And let it go, let it go, let it
go!

Well the polka's turned way up loud
And my poor ears are starting to
bleed
Get me away from this doofus crowd
It's the rich Shorewood life that I
need!

Well you don't need nothin' fancy
To be a well kept North Shore Nancy
I'll escape from these South Side
schmoes
And let it go, let it go, let it
go!

When we've finally passed the sign
Saying, "City limits, ayna-hey"
I'll break open my finest wine
And drink a fat toast to Whitefish
Bay!

My resolve is slowly dying
As the Friday Fish are frying
But as long as the cheap beer flows

(MORE)

EDNA (CONT'D)

I'll let it go, let it go, let it
go!
I'll let it go, let it go, let it
go!"

The lights change back.

STASCH

I never knew you felt that way,
Edna. But please understand, this
is important. Maybe...maybe you
could sing with the choir, just
this one time--

She turns toward him to protest.

STASCH (CONT'D)

--To say goodbye. One more evening
of singing, to say goodbye to
everything you seem to hate so
much. Please, you owe us that much.

EDNA

Well, I don't know...it's all a bit
unseemly. Fraternizing with the old
"gang" again. People do look down
on that sort of thing.

STASCH

One more time, for old time's sake.

She smiles at him.

EDNA

All right, Stasch. For old time's
sake. But...just this once.

STASCH

Okay. We'll meet tomorrow night at
eight for rehearsal at The Bowl-A-
Riffic Lanes.

EDNA

Oh...will "he" be there.

She points at the floor.

STASCH

Ya, well, "he" does own the place,
Edna.

He points at the floor.

EDNA

I suppose so. Well, why not? We're all mature adults, right?

STASCH

Whatever...Oh, is Nellie home?

EDNA

Why do you ask?

STASCH

Come on, Edna, even when she was a little tyke she had the sweetest voice in the choir. It wouldn't be the same without her. You'd want to sing one more time with your daughter again, wouldn't you?

EDNA

Oh, that ungrateful, miserable girl! We had a fight and she moved out. Her head is filled with these stupid dreams and ideals. I told her, "Get your feet on the ground, young lady. Be a career woman. Become a professional lottery player like me." But does she listen? No. She wastes her life trying to chase some stupid dream.

STASCH

Where did she go?

EDNA

She took an apartment on Main Street above the News and Hobby Shop.

STASCH

I'll try her there.

He starts to leave.

EDNA

Stasch.

He turns.

EDNA (CONT'D)

I'm warning you, if she agrees to sing with the choir I don't want to see Zeke anywhere near her.

(MORE)

EDNA (CONT'D)

If he but shows his face at the bowling alley I refuse to sing one note. And that goes for Nellie, too.

STASCH

But Edna--

EDNA

--I mean it, Stasch. No Zeke.

STASCH

Okay, Edna. No Zeke.

He leaves. The lights change.

STASCH (CONT'D)

Zeke. A poor, misguided young fellah. He and Nellie--

He shouts to the lighting booth.

STASCH (CONT'D)

Hey! Could we bring that one slide up there?

A slide of two wrestlers from the 50's appears.

STASCH (CONT'D)

No, the other one.

Another slide of an ostrich pulling a surrey appears.

STASCH (CONT'D)

No, the other one.

A slide of two precocious children appears. She is singing sweetly. He is looking at her longingly.

STASCH (CONT'D)

He and Nellie were the child stars of the Carolers back in the early days. They did a mean duet of "Good King Wenceslas." They were a hit wherever we went. But then, as fate would have it, puberty set in. And overnight poor Zeke's face went from smooth alabaster to an endless sea of volcanic pimples. He never sang in public again. I don't think he ever really recovered. The other thing he never recovered from was a massive crush he had on Nellie.

(MORE)

STASCH (CONT'D)

From the moment he laid eyes on her
he worshipped the ground she walked
on. If she wanted a pencil erasure
he would've ripped his own tongue
out of his head for her to use.
Poor kid. Poor, stupid, brain-
addled kid. Oh, there he is now.

The slide goes out and the lights change. ZEKE comes on
carrying a step ladder.

ZEKE

(Seeing Stasch.)

Hi-ya Pop.

STASCH

Hi son. Whatcha doin' with the
ladder?

ZEKE

Goin' over to Kenny's. Me and him
and Stan and Marvin are gonna
change some light bulbs.

They wait for the wave of laughter to subside.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Where're you goin', Pop?

STASCH

Well, uh...I'm on my way over to
see...Nellie Kaputish.

Zeke gasps and walks down stage, staring into space?

ZEKE

Nellie? Did you say...Nellie?

STASCH

Oh geeze, here we go.

Stasch takes the ladder from Zeke as the music starts. The
lights change. Zeke sings "I First Met Nell." (sung to the
tune of "The First Noel.")

ZEKE

"I first saw Nell
In the dime store that day
Wearing culottes and a T-shirt
Saying 'Have A Nice Day.'

She bought some gum
And some garbage bag ties

(MORE)

ZEKE (CONT'D)

And the shine from her braces
Brought tears to my eyes

Oh Nell, Oh Nell
Oh Nell, Oh Nell
You are an angel
From heaven you fell

And then she skipped
Down the sidewalk for home
And I followed and hid
Behind their yard gnome

She went upstairs
And put on her bikini
And what I saw through her window
Firmed up my weenie

Oh Nell, Oh Nell
Oh Nell, Oh Nell
With all your clothes off
You sure look swell

Since that first time
I caught sight of her flesh
I knew that someday
Our lives would mesh

If she'd agree
To be my one true light
If not for a lifetime
At least for one night

Oh Nell, Oh Nell
Oh Nell, Oh Nell
Give me a chance
To ring your bell

For ten long years
I can't eat or sleep
Knowing that Nell's
Not mine to keep

So in my room
I've built her shrine
Made of snap shots
And squirrel bones
And pieces of twine

Oh Nell, Oh Nell
Oh Nell, Oh Nell
I am a victim
Of true love's spell

(MORE)

ZEKE (CONT'D)
 Oh Nell, Oh Nell
 Oh Nell, Oh Nell
 I am a victim
 Of true love's spell!"

The lights change back. Stasch hands the bleary-eyed Zeke the step ladder.

STASCH
 (Snapping his fingers.)
 Son? Son?

ZEKE
 Huh?

STASCH
 Better get over to Kenny's house,
 huh? Them light bulbs ain't gonna
 screw themselves in.

Zeke takes the ladder and heads off in a daze.

ZEKE
 Nellie...Nellie.

STASCH
 Zeke.

Zeke stops. Stasch points in the opposite direction.

STASCH (CONT'D)
 It's that way.

Zeke turns and heads in the opposite direction.

ZEKE
 Nellie...Nellie.

STASCH
 Well, that opened up a nice, messy
 can of worms. I'll just throw a
 bucket of cold water on him when he
 gets home.

Stasch "arrives" at Nellie's apartment.

STASCH (CONT'D)
 Ah, here we go, "Nellie Kaputish
 Apartment 3A."

He rings the bell, a buzzer sounds. Lights change on stage to reveal Nellie's apartment. She enters and answers the door. She is as dim as the bulbs Zeke has gone to change.

NELLIE
Yeah?

STASCH
Nellie?

NELLIE
Yeah?

STASCH
It's me.

NELLIE
Yeah?

STASCH
Stasch...Stasch Zielinski.

NELLIE
Yeah?

STASCH
From the Cudahy Carolers.

NELLIE
Yeah?

There is a pause.

STASCH
Can I come in?

NELLIE
Yeah.

She lets him in.

STASCH
So...how are you, dear?

NELLIE
Fine.
(a pause.)
Mom kicked me out.

STASCH
Ya, so I heard.

NELLIE
She says I'm just being selfish and
foolish. She doesn't understand me.
I don't think anybody does.

STASCH

Oh, now I don't think that's true.

NELLIE

Is it so wrong to have a dream, Mr. Zielinski? To have a burning and a longing in your heart? Is it wrong to want something so bad you'd be willing to walk right through hell itself to get it?

STASCH

Oh...probably not.

NELLIE

That's what I have, Mr. Zielinski. A dream. A small, burning hope that I won't let flicker out and die. That's what Mom doesn't understand.

STASCH

What is your dream, dear?

NELLIE

To be water ski queen for Tommy Bartlett's Wonderful World of Water Extravaganza.

STASCH

Oh.

There is a pause.

STASCH (CONT'D)

I didn't know you skied, Nellie.

NELLIE

Well. I don't really.

Another pause.

NELLIE (CONT'D)

I mean, I don't know how to swim all that well, either. But that shouldn't stop a girl from pursuing her dream, should it?

The lights change. Music begins. Nellie slips into a pair of skis and waddles about singing "In The Dells" (sung to the tune of "Silver Bells.")

NELLIE (CONT'D)

"Whining go-carts,
Crowded Wal-Marts
(MORE)

NELLIE (CONT'D)

Stinking hot traffic jams
On the street
There's a guy selling trinkets

Children screaming
People streaming
Out of bad tourist traps
And on every street corner there's
beer

In the Dells, In the Dells
It's tacky time for the tourists
It's a fling, where cash is king
And everyone has to pay

Old men sweating
Off track betting
And the huge water parks
Where the people all swim in their
urine

Hear the chips crunch
As the kids munch
On the junk food they get
From their slutty white trash Moms,
it's clear...

We're in the Dells, In the Dells
Let's take a ride on a Duck Boat
You'll feel alive, Ten ninety-five
And everyone has to pay

For this tartlet
Tommy Bartlett
Is the man I must see
For my ski dreams to come to
fruition

I'll wait tables.
Muck out stables
Even work Robot World
In this vile waste of nature I'll
be

In the Dells, In the Dells
Every three block's mini-golfing
Let down your guard, Use your
credit card
Because everyone has to pay
You know everyone has to pay!"

The lights change.

STASCH

I have a favor to ask you, Nellie. How'd you like to come back to the choir and sing one more concert?

NELLIE

Gee...I don't know.

STASCH

Please?

NELLIE

I'm sorry, Mr. Zielinski, but I have to concentrate on my water ski queen career right now. I can't be swayed by any outside distractions

She practices waving elegantly on one ski, like a water ski queen. Stasch thinks a moment. Then...

STASCH

Oh, well, that's too bad, sweetheart. It sure would've looked good on your resume.

NELLIE

My what?

STASCH

Well, when you go meet Tommy Bartlett and ask for a job, you're going to need a resume. And how many applicants are gonna be able to put down "lead singer in an exclusive South side Christmas musical troupe?"

NELLIE

(Realizing.)
Not many.

STASCH

Sure would make you stand out from the crowd.

NELLIE

It sure would.

STASCH

It might just be the hook you need to get Mr. Barlett's attention and land yourself a spot on his water queen squad.

NELLIE
It might just...

STASCH
So what do you say?

NELLIE
I'll do it!

STASCH
Great. We rehearse tomorrow night
at eight at your Dad's bowling
alley, okay?

NELLIE
Okay!

STASCH
Oh, and sweetheart? Leave the skis
at home, okey-doke?

He exits. The lights change.

STASCH (CONT'D)
Well, we're almost finished. Now
comes the sticky part. I gotta head
over to the local beauty salon. No,
not for a perm. It's owned by Wanda
Kazlakowski. She joined the choir
way back when I did. Now I gotta be
careful here. Wanda is "very
lonely" to put it tactfully. I
mean, I don't want to say she's man
hungry or anything, but if there's
any guys in the audience named
"Dick" who own a "shuttle-cock" and
work at Klements as a "meat
boner"...I'd take cover right away.