

# Miss Kitty's Curious Christmas

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**Place:**

Long Island, New York

**Time:**

1950s

**Cast of Characters:**

**Kitty Kelly** – A 30-something homemaker with Southern roots.

**Kathy Kelly** – Kitty's daughter.

**Lee Webb** – Kitty's little brother, a handful at any age.

**Ethel Webb** – A Southern momma.

(Kitty sits at a table, stringing popcorn; Kathy enters)

Kitty: Well good morning, little Miss Punky Pots!

Kathy: (Sleepy) Mom, where's Daddy!

Kitty: It's nine-thirty, sweetie, you know he's delivering the milk!

Kathy: But I didn't have school today! I wanted to help him!

Kitty: Your dad didn't have the heart to wake you on Christmas Eve!

Kathy: But I like helping him!

Kitty: I know... Maybe you can help me make popcorn string for the tree before Grandma Ethel and Uncle Lee get here!

Kathy: (Sits) Mom, why do we put popcorn on the Christmas tree?

Kitty: To make it pretty, baby!

Kathy: Isn't the tree pretty already?

Kitty: Yes, sweetie, I think so... Very pretty...

Kathy: Daddy says the Christmas angel looks like you! (Kitty smiles) But why popcorn?

Kitty: Well, I guess I've always done it. Always...

Kathy: Was your tree big? What color were your lights?

Kitty: We didn't have lights on the tree back then darlin'!

Kathy: Ornaments?

Kitty: Just popcorn, little girl! That's about all anyone had!

Kathy: Why, mom?

Kitty: Because everyone was so poor!

Kathy: Why?

Kitty: Because there was a depression on!

Kathy: What's a depression?

Kitty: That's when everyone's poor.

Kathy: Mom, I don't get it!

Kitty: You're six! I'm not sure you're meant to as of yet!

Kathy: But we're rich now, aren't we, mom?

Kitty: Oh yes, my darlin'! We are rich in so many ways! Now where is your little nose?!  
(Grabs Kathy's nose) Got it!

Kathy: Momma! My nose! I need it!

Kitty: What's the magic word?!

Kathy: Please!

Kitty: (Let's go of Kathy's nose) Good as new! (Kisses Kathy) I love you, precious!

Kathy: (Rubs her nose) Love you, mom! Mom, did you have turkey for Thanksgiving?

Kitty: If someone shot straight enough!

Kathy: Did you have Halloween?

Kitty: Don't you have popcorn to string, young lady?!

Kathy: Did you? Did you?! Did you?!

Kitty: Of course I did!

Kathy: What was it like?! (Lee enters under a sheet, only Kitty sees him) Did you trick or treat?  
Was it fun?!

Kitty: (Looking at Lee) Yes, yes.

Kathy: Did you dress like a princess? (Looking at Lee, Kitty shakes her head) Momma! Look!  
The mailman! (Kathy points to the window; Lee exits) Can I get the mail?

Kitty: (Looks for Lee) Yes, that's fine, but put your coat on!

Kathy: Can I make a snow angel for you?

Kitty: No baby, not now.

Kathy: Just one? Please?!

Kitty: Just one.

Kathy: Will you watch me, mom? Will you? Will you?!

Kitty: Of course I will, precious! (Kathy exits; Kitty crosses to window) Just one, precious...

Lee: (Enters, under a sheet, and sneaks behind Kitty) Boo! (Kitty shrieks) I gotcha! I gotcha!  
Scared ya, didn't I, Kath-a-leen?!

Kitty: Lee! You!

Lee: Thought I was a real ghost, didn't ya?! I scared you!

Kitty: No, you didn't!

Lee: Ten-years-old, still believin' in ghosts! What a baby!

Kitty: You didn't scare me!

Lee: Baby, baby, baby! Stick your head in gravy! Boo!

Kitty: You don't scare me!

Lee: Hell, Kathleen! You're as white as this sheet!

Kitty: Ah! You said a curse!

Lee: So?!

Kitty: You're only seven!

Lee: Hell! Damn! Crap!

Kitty: You'll get in trouble!

Lee: Crap! Damn! Hell!

Kitty: You must not want anything for Christmas!

Lee: Waddyamean?!

Kitty: Good kids get presents, bad kids get nothin'!

Lee: There ain't no dang Santa!

Kitty: Not for you, Lee!

Lee: Last year I wanted a bike – all I got was socks and two oranges!

Kitty: There's a depression on!

Lee: Other kids got bikes, why not me?!

Kitty: 'Cuz you're bad!

Lee: If all I get is socks and oranges, I may as well stay bad!

Kitty: Fine! I like oranges! (Shows off an orange)

Lee: Hey! Where'd you get that?!

Kitty: From Momma! For Halloween!

Lee: Where's mine?!

Kitty: Ask Momma!

Lee: Give me that one!

Kitty: No!

Lee: You can have mine!

Kitty: I wasn't born last night!

Lee: Momma! Kath-a-leen won't share! (As Kitty looks away, Lee puts a bucket over her head and takes the orange) Bucket head! Bucket head! Ripped her drawers and wet the bed!  
(Exits)

Kitty: (Struggles with the bucket) Lee!

Lee: (Offstage) Momma! Kath-a-leen's outside with a slop bucket on her head!

Ethel: (Enters) Kathleen! Girl, you don't have the sense the Good Lord gave an outhouse rat!  
You wash off, now!

Kitty: But Momma!

Kathy: (Enters; Ethel exits) Mom, did you see me?! (Removes her coat)

Kitty: Yes, I did! (Looks at Kathy) Oh Punky Pots! You're a hot mess! Sit down, let me comb your hair!

Kathy: (Sits) Here's the mail... (Kitty combs Kathy's hair) The mailman said he can't wait to eat

turkey, but it's Christmas – we have goose!

Kitty: Some people have goose, some have turkey or ham.

Kathy: Mom, I have to go! (Exits; Kitty combs her hair; A noise is heard offstage)

Kitty: Kathy! Is everything alright?

Lee: (Enters, throwing dirt clods) I got ya! I seen ya flirtin' with the boys and I got ya!

Kitty: (Holds her eye; In pain) Why?! Lee! I'm bleedin'!

Lee: Don't tell Momma! Don't tell Momma!

Kitty: I'm bleedin'!

Ethel: (Enters) You two! What now?!

Lee: Momma, Kath-a-leen throwed a rock at me 'cuz she was flirtin'. I threw dirt back!

Kitty: Lee!

Lee: She was flirtin' – combin' her hair like she was the Crisfield beauty queen!

Kitty: Was not!

Ethel: Lee, git!

Lee: Momma?

Ethel: Boy, you git! (Lee exits) Kathleen, let me see your face... Oh! Sit down... Put this on it... (Hands Kitty a rag)

Kitty: (Sits) Momma! It hurts!

Ethel: (Angry) Kathleen, what was on your mind?! Flirtin' with those boys! Please! Tell me!

Kitty: I wasn't!

Ethel: You're a pretty girl. Pretty enough! But that's a sure way to get in trouble. That's what happens with the wrong boy... your life may as well be over!

Kitty: But Momma!

Ethel: What do you think your father would say?!

Kitty: Poppa Theron believes anything Lee says!

Ethel: I mean your natural father!

Kitty: He'd believe me!

Ethel: Is that right?!

Kitty: I don't know... I don't know about him!

Ethel: I've told you about him a hundred times!

Kitty: A long time ago! I don't remember so much...

Ethel: Well... I... I guess that's my fault then. It's my fault...

Kitty: Momma...

Ethel: (Hushes Kitty) Your father... (Looks down at her folded hands) Kathleen, your natural father, George Ogden Mattis Kelly... He was the tallest, handsomest, strongest man in the whole of Bird's Nest, Virginia! Lord knows he didn't wanna leave us! Fever took him, and quick, too! (Pauses for breath) You weren't but five months old when we was all alone in this world, but...

Kitty: Momma?!

Ethel: Make no mistake, I have been blessed! Oh yes I have! Theron Henry Webb is a hard-workin', kind, and godly man, but your father, George Kelly... Lord knows I thought that man was made of iron, like Superman... (Nods and fights back tears)

Kitty: Don't be sad, Momma!

Ethel: I'm not. I'm not, baby...

Kitty: But...

Ethel: He was real smart... Clever with his hands... Could fix just 'bout anythin'... Ol' cars... tractors... conveyer belts... He made real good money too, sometimes... Mostly... Mostly he just took whatever little people had to pay. He would never, ever, turn away a neighbor in need. No sir! Not him... That man, he'd always figure somethin' out... That is 'til you come along...

Kitty: Are you alright, Momma?

Ethel: (Nods) I don't think he ever believed you were real... He'd hold you in one great big hand and say 'Look here, Ethel, she's no bigger than a kitten! Her name's not Kathleen, it's Kitty! My little Kitty!' Proud, proud, proud of you he was! (Weepy) 'You make sure she has an education, you hear! Make sure she goes all the way through high school!' That's what he said and you will, won't you, Kathleen?!

Kitty: Yes! I love school, Momma!

Ethel: That's my girl! That's my good, good girl! (Hugs Kitty) You're gonna finish school and be the Crisfield Beauty Queen to boot! (Removes rag from Kitty's head) Now let me see this... (Examines Kitty's wound) There! Not hardly even a mark! (Kisses Kitty's forehead) There! Good as new! All this fuss over a little bit of nothin'! You're right as rain, aren't you?!

Kitty: (Nods) I am!

Ethel: Well, Theron Webb's gonna be home for supper shortly and we're just gonna light up and say 'Happy Thanksgiving!,' aren't we?

Kitty: (Nods) We're gonna light up, Momma!

Ethel: Happy Thanksgiving, Kathleen!

Kitty: (Hugs Ethel) Happy Thanksgiving, Momma! Happy Thanksgiving!

Kathy: (Enters as Ethel exits) It's Christmas, not Thanksgiving, Mom!

Kitty: You're right, Punky Pots, it is Christmas and we still don't have any popcorn strings for the tree!

Kathy: Is that a hint?!

Kitty: That is most definitely a hint, precious!

Kathy: All right! (Sits and begins to string popcorn)

Lee: (Enters, singing and smoking) *Oh! I wish I was in the land of cotton!* (Sits on a bench and drags on the cigarette) *Old times there are not forgotten!* (Coughs) *Look away... Look away... Look away, Dixie Land!* (Coughs) Hey, Kath-a-leen! Got me some cigarettes! Yeah, buddy! Ain't nothin' I like better than a nice cigarette after a long hard day! Hey, Kath-a-leen, you wanna cigarette?!

Kathy: (Stringing popcorn) Mom, do you think Santa feeds popcorn to the reindeer?

Kitty: I don't think so...

Lee: Fine, then! Just more for me! (Inhales and coughs) Hey, Kath-a-leen, don't I look grown up?! (Coughs)

Kathy: Then what does Santa feed the reindeer?

Kitty: I'm not sure... Hey! Maybe...

Lee: 'Hey! Maybe?!' Hey-maybe-you're-a-baby! (Blows smoke at Kitty)

Kathy: Mom?! Is something burning?!

Kitty: The goose! (Jumps up)

Lee: (To Kitty) Baby... Baby, stick your head... (Kitty takes Lee's cigarettes and exits)

Lee: Hey Kath-a-leen! My cigarettes! Give me my cigarettes, Kath-a-leen! Damn it, Kath-a-leen! Damn, damn, damn! (Kitty enters) I want my damn cigarettes!

Kitty: They're mine now! (Crosses to Kathy, hiding cigarettes behind her back)

Kathy: What's yours, Mom?

Kitty: You are! You're all mine, precious! (Kitty hugs Kathy)

Lee: I ain't funnin', Kath-a-leen! I want my damn cigarettes!

Ethel: (Enters) Where'd y'all get cigarettes?! (Takes cigarettes)

Lee: (Lee and Kitty point at each other) They're Kath-a-leen's, Momma! (Kitty and Kathy string popcorn) She made me smoke 'em!

Ethel: Well! If you two are big enough for cigarettes, that means you're too big for Santa!  
(Exits)

Lee: Whaddyamean, Momma?! I'm too little for cigarettes! I believe in Santa! (Pauses; To Kitty) Hell! You just ruined Christmas, Kath-a-leen! Damn it!

Ethel: (Offstage) Lee Bunk! You get in this house right now!

Lee: I'm gonna get ya for this, Kath-a-leen! (Sticks out his tongue and makes a face at Kitty)

Kitty: (Softly) Go away, Lee! (Lee exits)

Kathy: Mom, did you just say something about Uncle Lee?

Kitty: Why... Oh, yes! I imagine I was thinking back to Christmas with your Uncle Lee when we were small...

Kathy: Did you get lots of presents?

Kitty: We did alright... Sometimes...

Kathy: Who got more? You or Uncle Lee?

Kitty: Uncle Lee, mostly!

Kathy: Because he was the good one?!

Kitty: Oh I wouldn't say that...

Kathy: Uncle Lee was the bad one!

Kitty: I never said that!

Kathy: But he was! Uncle Lee was bad, wasn't he?

Kitty: He was just my little brother, and sometimes little brothers can be a handful!

Kathy: That means Uncle Lee was bad!

Kitty: Now, now Kathy... (Knock at the door)

Kathy: The door!

Kitty: Speak of the devil! That must be them!

Kathy: I'll get it! (Opens the door) Grandma Ethel!

Ethel: Well! Merry Christmas, sugar! Give Grandma a kiss! (Kisses Kathy)

Kitty: Momma!

Ethel: Now there's my Kitty! Merry Christmas, baby! (Hugs Kitty)

Kitty: Merry Christmas, Momma!

Ethel: Oh Kitty, it's been so long!

Kitty: Only about four months!

Ethel: You wait 'til this little one's gone for four months then you tell me how long it's been!

Kathy: Grandma Ethel, where's Uncle Lee?!

Ethel: Well, your uncle's still outside admiring the New York skyline.

Kathy: I'll get him! (Exits at a gallop)

Kitty: How are things back home, Momma? Sit!

Ethel: (Sits) Oh, you know... Nothing ever changes... Not really... But your brother's been steppin' out with that Sanders girl!

Kitty: Which one?! Not the little one?! (Ethel nods) You're kidding!

Lee: (Enters with Kathy; To Kathy) You mean to tell me you've been up in all them buildings?!

Kathy: Yes!

Lee: Man alive! New York City! (To Kitty) Well, how do, big sister?!

Kitty: (Opens arms; Hugs Lee) You look well, little brother!

Lee: You look like the angel on top of the Christmas tree, sissy! When do we eat?!

Ethel: Now Lee!

Kathy: Uncle Lee, I'm stringin' popcorn, do you want to help?

Lee: I'll help eat it, little sprout! (Eats a fistful of corn)

Kathy: Uncle Lee!

Kitty: Now Lee! You know that's for the tree! (Lee sticks out his tongue and makes a face at Kitty)

Kathy: Uncle Lee, my mom says you were the bad one!

Ethel: No, she never did! Both my children were good! (Lee pelts Kitty with popcorn) Good as gold!

Kathy: But my mom says...

Kitty: (Has had enough) Lee! (Kitty throws a handful of popcorn at Lee)

Lee: Hey now Kath-a-leen!

Kitty: You never changed!

Ethel: Now you two...

Lee: I'm just hungry, Momma! (Phone rings)

Kathy: The phone! It's Daddy!

Kitty: I've got it, baby. (Answers phone) Hello? Merry Christmas, Dr. Brown... Yes... Yes... Doctor? Oh my! Yes... Yes, I understand... Yes... Well, Merry Christmas... Merry Christmas, Doctor... (Hangs up phone) I have to sit down... (Sits)

Ethel: Kitty?!

Lee: What's wrong, Sis?

Kitty: (To Kathy) Baby, come here... (Grasps Kathy's hands) That was the doctor, precious...

Kathy: What did he say, Mom?

Kitty: He said one of your presents is going to be a little late! About eight-and-a-half months late! (Ethel reacts) We're gonna have a new baby! A new brother or sister for you, Punky Pots!

Ethel: Congratulations!

Kathy: I hope it's a little brother, Mom! (Lee rains popcorn on Kitty's head)

Lee: Congratulations!

Kitty: (Picks popcorn out of her hair) Careful what you wish for, baby! Lee! (Throws popcorn at Lee; Kathy joins in; Everyone joins in the fun; In unison) Merry Christmas!

**FINIS**

Miss Kitty's Curious Christmas