



Sample Pages from
Humbug High: A Contemporary Christmas
Carol

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HUMBUG HIGH:

A CONTEMPORARY CHRISTMAS CAROL

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS BY
Lindsay Price

Based on *A Christmas Carol* by
Charles Dickens



Humbug High: A Contemporary Christmas Carol
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Characters

6M 13F with doubling

11M 20F without doubling

Male	Female
Eddie Scrooge	Narrator
Leland	Grace
Jonathan	Benita
Ghost of Christmas Present	Suzanne
Nathan	Cindy
Young Eddie	Bonnie
Ignorance	Madge
Suit Two	Ghost of Christmas Past
Suit Three	Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come
Robber	Debbie
Pawnbroker	Mrs. Farnsworth
	Lynn
	Tina
	Want
	Suit One
	Suit Four
	Maid
	Worker One
	Worker Two
	Landlord

Doubling

Debbie, Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come	Benita, Worker Two
Mrs. Farnsworth, Landlord	Young Eddie, Ignorance, Pawnbroker
Lynn, Suit One	Nathan, Robber
Tina, Maid	Jonathan, Suit Three
Grace, Suit Four	Leland, Suit Two
Want, Worker One	

Acknowledgments

Selections taken from:

The Night Before Christmas by Clement Clarke Moore

In the Bleak Midwinter – words by Christina Rossetti

Set Description

The set has three areas: stage left, where Eddie's bedroom is, stage right where the Bonnie/Lynn/Tina and the Young Eddie scenes are, and then an empty space centre stage.

The stage left and right areas can be as elaborate or as simple as your space determines. All Eddie's space really needs is a bed, a chair and a flat where Eddie can go behind to change. All the stage left space needs is a Christmas tree and a couple of cubes for seating. You could even use cubes for Eddie's furniture: a couple of cubes, a blanket and a pillow for his bed.

It would be nice if Eddie's bedroom had a door that could be slammed and a window for Madge to appear through. To accomplish Madge appearing through the window, all you need is stairs on the upstage side of the window, and then very solid bookcases on the downstage side for her to climb down.

It's important that the show not get bogged down by set changes – the smoother and swifter the better. As one scene ends on one side of the stage, something else should begin on the other side of the stage. Since there is the potential for a large cast, you could use them to move set pieces on and off.

Use light and sound to your advantage when moving from scene to scene. The play takes place in an other-worldly setting: that means you have a lot of leeway with how you present the set.

Unless they are used for effect, don't use blackouts to make your changes. Use the rest of the cast to bring things on and off in full sight. Use smoke to hide movement. Since the ghosts will never be as magical as they would be in a movie version, highlight the limitations of the stage instead of trying to be as high tech as possible.

Music

The Jelly Dance can either be recited as a syncopated poem, or sung. If you choose to sing, you may either use the sheet music in the appendix or make up your own melody.

PROLOGUE

The light is cold and low. Smoke eddies across the stage. A clock tower strikes midnight – twelve low gongs are heard, during which the actors enter to form a tableau. They stare solemnly at the audience. Above them all, solitary on a platform, stands EDDIE Scrooge. He is seventeen, but certainly has no childish ways about him. He scowls and keeps his arms folded. He is always cold and wears a scarf and jacket.

Once the bells stop, the NARRATOR steps forward. She holds a large ornate book in her hands.

ALL: Madge was dead...

NARRATOR: ...to begin with. There is no doubt whatsoever about that. The Ebenezer High School lunch lady lived alone, and it was only when she didn't turn up for work on Monday – the only day she'd never turned up in forty years – that anyone realized something was wrong. Madge wasn't a sociable type. The register of her burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk and the undertaker. Old Madge was as dead as a doornail.

ALL: Scrooge knew she was dead?

NARRATOR: Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? If Scrooge and Madge had any warmth in them at all, though they didn't, they might have been friends. Eddie Scrooge always ate his lunch in the stockroom with Madge and never in the cafeteria. Scrooge was the only one from the school who went to Madge's funeral. In fact, he was the only one who went at all. The mention of Madge's funeral brings me back to the point I started from.

The NARRATOR turns a page.

ALL: There is no doubt that Madge was dead.

NARRATOR: This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate.

EDDIE: Bah!

EDDIE moves off his platform and makes his way through the collected group. None of them touch him as he moves through, but they all speak directly to him.

ALL: OH! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge!
Hard and sharp as flint; secret and self-contained and solitary as
an oyster.

GIRLS: The cold within him froze his features...

BOYS: Nipped his nose...

GIRLS: Shrivelled his cheek...

BOYS: Stiffened his gait...

GIRLS: Made his eyes red...

BOYS: His lips blue...

ALL: And spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice.

NARRATOR: He carried his own low temperature always about him,
and didn't thaw one degree at Christmas.

*By now EDDIE is off to the side of the stage with his
back to the crowd.*

NARRATOR: Nobody ever stopped him in the hall to say...

ALL: "How you doing, Scrooge?"

NARRATOR: But what did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he
liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all
human sympathy to...

ALL: Keep its distance.

EDDIE: Bah, humbug!

EDDIE exits.

NARRATOR: *(to audience)* OK. Since "humbug," is not really a word
teenagers would use, or anyone these days, that'll be the last time
you hear it. But you had to hear it once, right? *(turns a page in her
book)* Once upon a time, of all the good days of the year, is where
our story begins.

The clock tower chimes again. Everyone exits.

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

Lights change. A school hallway, December 23rd. This scene could be done in front of the curtain.

LELAND sneaks onstage. He is carrying an armful of Christmas decorations and garland. He looks left and right. He gestures offstage.

LELAND: The coast is clear!

Three more enter: JONATHAN, GRACE, and BENITA. All are carrying armloads and boxes filled with decorations. The three begin to sneak across the stage with LELAND.

LELAND: *(sneaking sounds)* Duh, duh, duh, duh DAAAAAA, duh, duh, duh, duh. Duh, duh, duh, duh, DAAAAAA!

GRACE: Leland!

BENITA: Shh!

They almost make it to the other side when EDDIE (Edwin) Scrooge pops onstage and blocks their exit.

EDDIE: Where do you think you're going?

LELAND: Awwwwww we were so close!

EDDIE: Hall pass.

JONATHAN: Give it a rest Scrooge. It's Christmas.

EDDIE: Hall pass.

GRACE: We're decorating the cafeteria for the dance-a-thon.

EDDIE: Hall pass.

BENITA: It's for charity.

EDDIE: If you're in the hall, you need a hall pass.

BENITA: It's for charity!

EDDIE: I don't care what it's for.

GRACE: Mrs. Ashford gave us permission.

EDDIE: Then she should have given you a hall pass. I'll have to write you all up.

He starts writing “tickets” for each of them.

GRACE & BENITA: Aw Eddie.

JONATHAN: Where’s your Christmas Spirit?

LELAND: Running for its life.

GRACE: He can’t have no Christmas spirit.

BENITA: You like Christmas a little don’t you?

EDDIE: (*with venom*) I. Hate. Christmas.

LELAND: Why am I not surprised?

GRACE: You don’t mean that.

EDDIE: I do. People who celebrate Christmas are fools.

JONATHAN: I don’t get you at all Scrooge.

EDDIE: (*handing JONATHAN a ticket*) Deluded, misguided fools.

BENITA: But what about your family? You celebrate, right? Exchange presents?

EDDIE: No.

BENITA & GRACE: No???

JONATHAN: Dude. That is cold.

EDDIE: I don’t expect presents and I certainly don’t give any.

LELAND: What’s it like being a human popsicle?

BENITA: Eddie, Christmas is a good thing. It’s fun and everyone’s happy and warm and it’s about giving to others and –

EDDIE: What’s so good about it? It’s a completely manufactured commercial event where people are conned into overspending on presents that will be forgotten the second they’re opened. (*gives ticket to LELAND*) They’ll spent the rest of the year paying down their debt and do it all over again the next year. (*gives ticket to GRACE*)

GRACE: It’s not just about money Eddie.

EDDIE: Oh yes, (*with a sneer*) The Christmas spirit. Ridiculous! You think you can just ignore problems with a little holly and a Merry Christmas? The problems will still be there tomorrow and they

will be made twice as bad by having had Christmas the day before! Fools, all of you.

GRACE: Then I'm a fool.

BENITA: Yeah, and proud of it!

EDDIE: (*handing BENITA a ticket*) Get out of the hallway or I'll write you up for being disorderly. That'll get you a detention.

BENITA: (*completely shocked*) A detention at Christmas?

JONATHAN: Dude, that is cold!

GRACE: Come on guys.

They start to exit and LELAND stops.

LELAND: (*breaking out of the play*) Excuse me. I hate to be a pain here, but before we get into this any further I was wondering if I could request the boiled pudding speech. From the original?

Everyone, including EDDIE, looks at LELAND oddly.

JONATHAN: Lee, we're kind of in the middle of this already.

GRACE: (*in a stage whisper*) You're stopping the show.

LELAND: But it's my favourite speech. (*calling offstage*) Ms. Narrator! Ms. Narrator!

GRACE: Leland...

The NARRATOR appears with her book.

LELAND: It won't take five seconds. (*to the NARRATOR*) Hey Ms. Narrator.

BENITA: Don't call her that! She has a name. (*whispering to JONATHAN*) What's her name?

JONATHAN: I don't know. It says "Narrator" in the program.

NARRATOR: (*to BENITA*) Call me Nan. (*irritated, to LELAND*) I don't take requests.

LELAND: Please? Just one. You let him say "Bah humbug."

EDDIE: I'm Scrooge! That's what Scrooge says! It's in the title!

LELAND: Please? Pretty please? Pretty please with boiled pudding on top? Please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please –

NARRATOR: All right, all right! Don't make a habit of this. I'm the one who makes the interesting and quirky connections between the original and this version, not you.

LELAND: Outta sight!

NARRATOR: (*turning a page in her book*) Benita, why don't you lead him in.

BENITA: OK.

LELAND: (*rubbing his hands together with glee*) This is so exciting!

The NARRATOR glares at LELAND and exits. The others put themselves back into place. BENITA leads in with the original text.

BENITA: Don't be cross Eddie.

EDDIE: What else can I be, when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon Merry Christmas. What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with Merry Christmas on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!

BENITA: Eddie!

EDDIE: Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

BENITA: Keep it? But you don't keep it.

EDDIE: Let me leave it alone, then. Much good it may do you! Much good it has ever done you!

LELAND: (*clapping*) Bravo! Bravo!

The NARRATOR peeks her head in from offstage.

NARRATOR: Stop that! Stay in the play!

LELAND: Sorry!

SUZANNE enters.

SUZANNE: What's the hold up? We're waiting for these decorations.

LELAND: "Oh Come All Ye Faithful" here is just telling us how much he loves the holidays.

GRACE: (*holding up the ticket*) We're just going to take these to Mrs. Ashford and she's going to tear them up.

EDDIE: I don't care what you do. Just do it somewhere else. Move it along or I'll write you another ticket.

The group picks up their boxes and start to sing "Oh Come All Ye Faithful" as they exit.

EDDIE: (*calling out after them*) And no singing! Detentions for all of you!

EDDIE starts writing furiously. He pays no attention to SUZANNE, who has stayed behind.

SUZANNE: Merry Christmas Eddie.

EDDIE: Do you have a hall pass?

SUZANNE: What do you think?

EDDIE stares at her coldly and turns to a fresh page so he can write her a ticket.

EDDIE: Rules are rules, Suzanne.

SUZANNE: Even at Christmas?

EDDIE: Especially at Christmas.

SUZANNE: Speaking of which... (*she takes a deep breath as if she's about to do something difficult*) What are you doing?

EDDIE: Writing you a ticket.

SUZANNE: Not now. For Christmas. What are you doing for Christmas? December 25th?

EDDIE: Nothing.

SUZANNE: Nothing?

EDDIE: Did I not speak clearly enough for you?

SUZANNE: You're not going to Hawaii with Aunt Debbie?

EDDIE: No.

SUZANNE: Why not?

EDDIE: What I do is my business.

SUZANNE: Have you talked to your dad lately? We got a nice card from –

EDDIE: You are wasting my time.

He holds out the ticket to her. She doesn't take it.

SUZANNE: Why don't you come over to our house?

EDDIE: I beg your pardon?

SUZANNE: Come over to our house for Christmas. At least for dinner.

EDDIE: And why would I do that?

SUZANNE: It'll be nice.

EDDIE: *(with a scornful laugh)* Nice?

SUZANNE: Yes.

EDDIE: Ridiculous.

SUZANNE: And you should be with your family at Christmas time.

EDDIE: I have no desire to be with anyone. Least of all family.

SUZANNE: Everyone needs family, Eddie.

EDDIE: Do they? How touching. You should put that on a greeting card.

SUZANNE: But don't you think –

EDDIE: You are wasting my time Suzanne. If you don't want a detention along with your *(venomously)* friends I suggest you shut up and leave. Immediately.

SUZANNE: *(not defensive)* OK then. Merry Christmas Eddie.

SUZANNE turns to leave.

EDDIE: Suzanne.

SUZANNE turns back. EDDIE hands the ticket to her. She takes it and exits. On the opposite side of the stage CINDY enters. She is carrying a tin can that clearly has money in it. She approaches EDDIE and shakes the can at him. EDDIE, engrossed in making notes in his hall pass notebook, does not look up. CINDY shakes the can again.

EDDIE: Hall pass.

CINDY: (*waving it at him*) Here you go! I'm going to all the classes to ask for donations.

EDDIE: What for?

CINDY: You know, the big charity drive.

EDDIE: No. I do not know.

CINDY: (*astonished*) Sure you do! For The Cratchit Foundation? Give Kids a Christmas? It's only been on the announcements every day for a month. I think it's so cool we're holding the dance-a-thon at the school this year –

EDDIE: I have no wish to know. I don't care.

But CINDY's on a roll, and she keeps talking. EDDIE tries to move about the stage to get away from her and he can't.

CINDY: The whole town's getting involved. I can't wait to see Mayor Marley dancing up a storm!

EDDIE: I said I don't want to know!

CINDY: And there's going to be a raffle and an all-day bake sale...

EDDIE: Stop following me.

CINDY: And a gingerbread house competition and then the big concert at the town hall!

EDDIE: Stop talking.

CINDY: It's really important, especially at this time of year, to help out those who might not have common necessities and comforts.

EDDIE: Shut up!

CINDY: Any little bit we can do to help is greatly appreciated!

EDDIE: If you don't stop talking I'll write you a ticket!! You'll get detention for three months!

There is a pause as CINDY realizes her speech has not been well-received.

CINDY: Oh. So. (*she shakes her can*) How much will you be putting in?

EDDIE: Nothing.

CINDY: You're not going to make a donation?

EDDIE: No.

CINDY: But you're loaded!

EDDIE: (*coldly staring her down*) Is that so?

CINDY: (*backing down a little*) You don't have an extra five cents to help out someone less fortunate at Christmas?

EDDIE: People without money have no right to Christmas.

CINDY: Everyone deserves a Christmas.

EDDIE: Then they should work for it. What I do with my money is my business and it is not my business to give handouts. If there were no handouts then poor people might actually work for what they want.

CINDY: You can't just make blanket statements about the poor.

EDDIE: I can and I do. (*right in CINDY's face*) I know what poor people look like. They all look the same. They all grub for money. Poor people are poor because they are lazy. They don't work hard. They know all they have to do is put out a hand and someone like you puts something straight into it. People who work hard get what they deserve. People who don't work hard get what they deserve as well.

CINDY: I can't believe you'd say that!

EDDIE: I have work to do. I don't have time to give idle people a Christmas.

CINDY stomps off. BONNIE enters on the run. She is an assistant hall monitor. She is out of breath, but quite happy and cheerful.

BONNIE: Hi Eddie!

EDDIE: (*not looking at her*) Report properly.

BONNIE: Bonnie Crawley reporting in!

EDDIE: Where have you been?

BONNIE: Patrolling the 2nd floor just like you said, er, as requested, sir. Sir Eddie.

EDDIE: You're late.

BONNIE: *(she gives a little salute)* All's well in the corridors. OK, I have to skedaddle. I have to get to English. Mr. Frederick brought in eggnog!

She starts to take off but EDDIE's voice stops her in her tracks.

EDDIE: Bonnie. Did I release you?

BONNIE slowly turns around and comes to stand in front of EDDIE, without looking at him.

BONNIE: No, Eddie.

EDDIE: Who is in charge here?

BONNIE: You are.

EDDIE: You'd do well to remember that.

BONNIE: I will.

EDDIE: If you wish to keep this job you will be more mindful of the time. Is that clear?

BONNIE: Yes, Eddie.

EDDIE: This will be your first and only warning. I don't make empty threats.

BONNIE: Yes, Eddie.

EDDIE: Why were you late?

BONNIE: I –

EDDIE: And I'll know if you're lying.

BONNIE: I just took two seconds to listen to the choir practicing. They're singing at the town hall tomorrow night.

EDDIE: *(as if the most grotesque thing)* Singing?

BONNIE: Sure. *(she starts to sing)* "Oh Holy Night, the stars are brightly shin – " *(she cuts off the singing immediately with a cold stare from EDDIE)* Hmm. *(she coughs)* Are you, uh, going to the dance-a-thon?

EDDIE: Don't be ridiculous.

BONNIE: I think it'll be fun.

EDDIE: I'm not going and neither should you.

BONNIE: Me? Why?

EDDIE: The hall monitor position is a prestigious one. It demands respect. If you're out there doing The Watusi, who's going to take you seriously?

BONNIE: No one does The Watusi anymore, Eddie.

EDDIE: It's juvenile and a waste of time.

BONNIE: It's for charity.

EDDIE: Charity – Bah!

EDDIE storms off.

BONNIE: (*calling out after him*) Merry Christmas, Eddie! I promise I won't do The Watusi!

BONNIE dances offstage.

SCENE TWO

The setting changes. Stage left is EDDIE's bedroom, stage right is a living room set with a couch and a Christmas tree. See set description on page 4 for suggestions.

The entire cast enters looking solemnly at the audience as the scene change takes place. Smoke eddies across the stage. The light is cold and dim. The NARRATOR stands center stage with her book. She turns the page.

ALL: *(slow and precise)* Day becomes night.

NARRATOR: This particular day saw cold, bleak, biting weather. Foggy and dense. It was already dark by three o'clock but it had not been light all day. The fog was so thick that houses across the street from the school were mere phantoms. Streetlights were like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air.

ALL: Day becomes night.

NARRATOR: After school on this particular day, Scrooge went to yet another job: filing for the local law firm. They were having their Christmas party, but Scrooge refused to celebrate with the rest of the staff. He scowled at them as he continued his work. Scrooge has his life clearly mapped out: save his own money, take nothing from his parents or anyone, and as soon as school is over leave everything and everyone behind. No regrets, no backward glances. Nothing.

ALL: Day becomes night.

NARRATOR: The cold became intense. Not that Scrooge cared. He was always cold. He neither turned the lights nor the heat on when he arrived home, alone. He liked it cold and dark.

ALL: Day becomes night.

NARRATOR: Foggier yet and colder!

ALL: *(toning like a clock tower bell)* One.

NARRATOR: Piercing...

ALL: Two.

NARRATOR: Searching...

ALL: Three.

NARRATOR: Biting...

ALL: Four.

NARRATOR: Cold.

ALL: Five.

NARRATOR: Scrooge...

ALL: Six.

NARRATOR: ... ate his solitary dinner.

ALL: Seven.

NARRATOR: Scowled...

ALL: Eight.

NARRATOR: ... at the television.

ALL: Nine.

NARRATOR: And once...

ALL: Ten.

NARRATOR: ... the clock...

ALL: Eleven.

NARRATOR: ... had past...

ALL: Twelve...

NARRATOR: Scrooge finally retired to his dark and dreary bedroom at midnight.

EDDIE enters his bedroom and slams the door. He is in a foul mood. A phone begins to ring. He stalks over grumpily to the phone and answers it.

EDDIE: Hello? Hello mother. No, of course you didn't wake me up. Do I sound like I was sleeping? Yes I'm fine. The house is fine. It's the same as when you left it. No I haven't heard from Dad. I don't expect to. Yes, I'm fine. Stop asking me. I don't know. Yes, Suzanne asked me today. No I'm not going over there. Because I don't want to. Besides – *(A door slams from somewhere offstage followed by a prolonged echo. It is enough to make EDDIE pause and look around before returning to the phone conversation.)* What? No.

Nothing. No, don't call me tomorrow. I'm fine. *(with a sneer)* Yes, aloha.

EDDIE slams down the phone. He moves over to the door and opens it.

EDDIE: Hello? Hello? *(nothing responds)* Who's there? Anyone? Nothing. Of course there's nothing there.

EDDIE shuts his door. As soon as he does, there is another booming echo of a door slamming. Bells start to chime. There is the sound of a low moan. He wrenches open the door. As soon as he does, the noise stops.

EDDIE: Who's out there? You better just leave. The police are on their way.

There is silence. EDDIE goes to shut his door, and just before it's closed, pulls it open again, as if thinking to surprise someone.

EDDIE: Ha!

Nothing is there.

EDDIE: Ridiculous. My mind is playing tricks on me, that's all. I'm all alone, the security system is set. Nothing can get in here.

Far offstage there is the sound of a low moan.

EDDIE: I didn't hear that.

The moan is now accompanied by the sound of heavy chains being dragged across the floor.

EDDIE: I don't hear moaning and I don't hear chains.

The moaning and the chains get louder. EDDIE races for the phone.

EDDIE: Whatever you are, I'm calling 911! I'm calling 911! *(the phone isn't working)* Why can't I get 911? Now the phone kaks out? Now it decides not to work? Stupid piece of junk.

EDDIE throws the phone. The moaning and the chains get louder. Since he can't get the phone to work, EDDIE drags his bed so that it is in front of the door.

EDDIE: There. Ha, ha! Try and get through that, you freak.

With a big moan, and a bigger rattle of chains, MADGE the lunch lady enters the space. She is a ghost. She is covered in and drags numerous chains. Attached to the chains are pots, pans and soup ladles. She moves solemnly and ghostlike.

EDDIE: Holy guacamole! It's Madge's ghost!

EDDIE dives for his bed and goes under the covers. All at once the bells, the banging and the echoing come to a halt. And MADGE isn't quite so solemn anymore.

MADGE: Oh Eddie you were always over-dramatic. You don't mind if I sit down, do you? These pots weigh a ton.

MADGE clanks her way unceremoniously over to the chair and plops down.

MADGE: Ahhhhhhhh. That's better. My back is killing me. I've got a knot between my shoulder blades like you wouldn't believe. (*she tries to reach the spot but can't*) You don't have one of those hand-held massagers do you?

EDDIE: What do you want from me?

MADGE: Are you going to come out from under the covers so we can have a normal conversation?

EDDIE slowly comes out from under the covers.

EDDIE: What do you want from me?

MADGE: A lot, let me tell you. We have a lot to talk about.

EDDIE: I don't believe in ghosts. You're dead. You died over a year ago! You're not here and you're not real.

MADGE: Eddie. Do you see me? Am I not sitting right here, talking to you? Why do you doubt what you see?

EDDIE: Because. I could be hallucinating. I could be sick. Stomach flu. You could be a piece of bad beef doing the cha-cha in my intestines.

MADGE: Eddie, Eddie, Eddie, what did I tell you? Never eat the beef!

EDDIE: You could be sour milk. An underdone potato.

MADGE: And it's Thursday – never eat the beef on Thursday.

EDDIE: (*pointing a shaking finger at MADGE*) There's more gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!

MADGE: (*not fazed by EDDIE's outburst*) So tell me, Eddie, what's new? Have you got a girlfriend?

EDDIE: (*as if that's grotesque*) No.

MADGE: Made any new friends since I've been gone?

EDDIE: No.

MADGE: Why is that?

EDDIE: Because people are stupid. Everybody is stupid.

MADGE: Is that right?

EDDIE: Except for you. And me. We were the only ones who knew what was going on and never got lost in useless pursuits. Except now it's just me.

MADGE: Eddie. I was a miserly, miserable crab apple of a lunch lady. I hated my job, I hated my family, I never did anyone any good in my entire life. What makes you think I knew what was going on?

EDDIE: You were the best! You were a great businesswoman. You charged top dollar for the fries and only gave out a teeny tiny portion. You charged extra for gravy. Now they just pour gravy over everything willy nilly! You reused the pot roast for two, three, four days.

MADGE: Never eat the beef on Thursday.

EDDIE: It was a beautiful sight to behold.

MADGE: It wasn't beautiful Eddie. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the life I should have led.

EDDIE: What do you know? You're dead! I am not talking to you.

MADGE: Why not?

EDDIE: I don't believe in ghosts! You don't exist!

MADGE: Don't you want to know why I'm here?

EDDIE: No.

MADGE: Tough cookies. Listen up, kid. (*she gives a ghostly moan and rattles her chains*) If a human being does not do good in their lifetime, they are condemned to wander for eternity. I have

constantly traveled the world since my death without one moment of peace.

EDDIE: But you never traveled. You said it was too expensive and there was nothing you wanted to see.

At EDDIE's interruption MADGE lets out another moan and rattles her chains.

EDDIE: Sorry, sorry!

MADGE: You see this chain? I made it with my own bare hands. I made it link by link, and yard by yard. With every unkind word, and every selfish action, I made it longer. I made it of my own free will. And if you don't watch out, your chain will be twice as long.

EDDIE: But I'm only seventeen. How can I have a chain like that already?

MADGE moans again and rattles her chains.

MADGE: Hear me Eddie! Heaaaaaaaaaaaar meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

EDDIE: OK! OK! I will.

MADGE gives another moan, which turns into a racking cough.

MADGE: The moaning is murder on my throat. Don't smoke either! *(she recomposes her ghostly self)* You are heading down a path, Eddie. No space of regret can make up for opportunities missed in life. Soon you will become so entangled, escape will be impossible.

EDDIE: Don't you have anything good to tell me?

MADGE: There is no good in you Eddie. Your heart is ice and stone.

EDDIE: So what if it is?

MADGE: I don't have much time. You have a chance to avoid my fate. You will be visited tonight by three ghosts.

EDDIE: Ghosts? Does it have to be ghosts?

MADGE: *(breaking out of spooky mode)* I thought you didn't believe.

EDDIE: *(not convincing)* I don't.

MADGE: *(going back into spooky mode)* Without these visits, you cannot hope to escape the consequences. You. Will. Be. Doomed. *(she gives a long moan and an extra long rattle of her chains)* The first

ghost comes when the clock strikes one. *(out of spooky mode)*
OK kid, that's it for me. Do good with this, or it's curtains for you. And not the nice curtains. It's those cheap chintzy ones that yellow real quick.

EDDIE: I miss you, Madge.

MADGE: So make some friends.

EDDIE: I hate friends.

MADGE: So get a girl. Would it kill you to get a girlfriend?

EDDIE: Madge!

MADGE: I miss you too kid. Remember, for your own sake, what has passed between us!

MADGE begins to wail. The sound of wailing echoes all around the theatre. The bells, gongs and echoing slams start up again. EDDIE dives under the covers and MADGE exits. The noises rise to a crescendo and stop. There is silence.

SCENE THREE

EDDIE peeks his head out from underneath the covers.

EDDIE: Hello? Hello? *(he lowers the covers)* Madge? Come out, come out wherever you are... Bah! Ridiculous. I'm sure that was just a dream. Even though I wasn't sleeping. There's no reason to be frightened at all. Just a dream. Indigestion. Exhaustion. I'll go to bed and get a good night's sleep and then this won't be a problem anymore.

EDDIE gets up. He exits to change into his pj's. He can still be heard.

EDDIE: *(offstage)* You will be visited by three ghosts? Whoever heard of such a thing? That doesn't even happen in the movies. Ridiculous!

Suddenly there is the sound of a huge clock sounding chimes before it strikes the hour. At the end there is a pause, and then a loud booming GONG to signify one o'clock. EDDIE slowly and tentatively peeks his head out. He sees nothing.

EDDIE: Ha! I knew it!

EDDIE retreats again. As he does so the room starts to get brighter and brighter. Ethereal music begins to play. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST enters and waits for EDDIE. EDDIE meanwhile continues to talk. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST wears a white flowing robe.

EDDIE: Three ghosts my eye. When the clock strikes one. Ha! Bah! Ridiculous!

EDDIE enters in pj's and a robe. He starts to get into bed, not seeing the GHOST. He stops.

EDDIE: Wait a minute. How it could be one o'clock already? Madge was just here. No, no, no Madge wasn't here! And we don't even have a town clock. How can I hear a town clock strike one when we don't have a clock?!

CHRISTMAS PAST: Hello Edwin.

EDDIE: Aaaaaaaaghghghghghghgh!

EDDIE flings his sheets and pillows into the air as he turns to face the GHOST.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Hello Edwin.

EDDIE: He-He-Hello. How did you get in here? Are you a burglar?
Door-to-door salesman, uhhh, woman? Avon Lady?

CHRISTMAS PAST: You know I am not.

EDDIE: It was worth a shot. You're not the ghost Madge told me
about, are you?

CHRISTMAS PAST: I am.

EDDIE: Who are you?

CHRISTMAS PAST: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

EDDIE: Whose past?

CHRISTMAS PAST: Yours. Come Edwin. We have much to see before
the light of day haunts us.

She extends a hand out to EDDIE who doesn't take it.

EDDIE: I – I – I don't want to. There's nothing I want to see.

CHRISTMAS PAST: How do you know?

EDDIE: How are we going to travel? I'm no ghost, you know. I can't just
disappear and appear in places.

CHRISTMAS PAST: There is no time for hesitation or fear.

EDDIE: *(trying to muster some scorn)* I'm not afraid.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Then hold my hand fast. It is time to go.

She holds out her hand again. This time EDDIE takes it. They exit one way as the lights come up on the other side of the stage. It is a living room with a big tree in the middle. The boy, a YOUNG EDDIE, and his dad, NATHAN, are putting the tree into place. YOUNG EDDIE is seven.

YOUNG EDDIE: A little more to the left... a little more...

NATHAN: How's that?

YOUNG EDDIE: Perfect.

NATHAN: You think mom will like it?

YOUNG EDDIE: She'll love it!

NATHAN: Let's get the decorations.

NATHAN and YOUNG EDDIE exit. EDDIE and the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST enter.

EDDIE: Hey! It's my house! My old house. 1843 Tim Lane. I loved this house.

CHRISTMAS PAST: You remember it?

EDDIE: I could run through this house blindfolded! I just – I haven't thought about it in a long time.

CHRISTMAS PAST: You have happy memories here.

EDDIE: Sure I do! We had this really solid banister you could slide down and not get hurt and not break the banister. And I had this great room with a sloped ceiling and there was this window seat with a secret drawer where I used to keep my baseball cards. There was a huge backyard and a big oak tree I was always climbing up and down. I think I even carved my initials into the trunk.

NATHAN and YOUNG EDDIE enter with a box of ornaments. They start to go through the box.

YOUNG EDDIE: First is the snowman right?

EDDIE: (*calling out unexpectedly*) The snowman!

Realizing he's spoken too loudly, EDDIE clears his throat and coughs.

NATHAN: Why don't you find that and I'll work on the garland.

EDDIE: Hey! That's my dad! That's my dad. He looks so different.

CHRISTMAS PAST: And who is the boy?

EDDIE: I guess that's me. Hello me! When is this?

CHRISTMAS PAST: This is ten years ago. You are seven years old.

EDDIE: Seven! Can they see us?

CHRISTMAS PAST: These are but shadows of what has been. They can neither see nor hear us.

EDDIE: I wish they could. I would tell them a thing or two.

CHRISTMAS PAST: About what?

EDDIE: I don't know. Don't believe in Christmas for a start.

CHRISTMAS PAST: What a thing to say Edwin.

EDDIE: It's true. Look at them – they're happy and laughing. They have no idea what's going to happen. It's all a sham. It's not like this now, that's for sure.

YOUNG EDDIE: (*holding up the snowman*) I found it! I found it!

EDDIE: (*removing all traces of scorn from his previous line*) The snowman!
The snowman!

NATHAN: Way to go, Eddie!

The two do a highly complicated high-five routine with a grand finale. EDDIE laughs when he sees the high-five routine. He even tries a couple of the gestures.

EDDIE: My dad and I used to do that all the time. It got so complicated we'd forget what we were doing halfway through. (*calling out the moves*) Round the back! Steeplechase! Wiggle! Ha! They did it! (*he applauds*)

YOUNG EDDIE puts the snowman on the tree and he and NATHAN continue with the garland.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Your father loves you very much.

EDDIE: (*this stops him short*) I guess he did.

CHRISTMAS PAST: You think he no longer does?

EDDIE: No, I'm sure he does. I guess he does. I don't know. We... don't talk.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Why not?

EDDIE: I haven't seen him in a while.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Why not?

EDDIE: I just haven't. Things happened. (*lost in thought*) I forgot all about that handshake.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Why does the snowman go first on the tree?

EDDIE: Oh, I hardly remember. Some silly tradition.

CHRISTMAS PAST: And yet, it used to be very special to you.

A voice is heard offstage.

DEBBIE: (*offstage*) I'm home.

YOUNG EDDIE: Mom! Mom! We got the tree!

DEBBIE enters. She is young and happy looking.

EDDIE: That's my mom? She looks so young!

YOUNG EDDIE: Ta da!!

DEBBIE: Wow! That is some tree.

YOUNG EDDIE: Do you like it?

DEBBIE: Very much.

EDDIE: I don't remember what it feels like to be that excited.

DEBBIE: Well done, men. It's lovely.

NATHAN: The best in the lot.

YOUNG EDDIE: I picked it out myself.

DEBBIE: Did you?

YOUNG EDDIE: Well, maybe Dad helped a little.

EDDIE: I always got to pick out the tree.

CHRISTMAS PAST: You had a lot of traditions didn't you?

NATHAN: You're just in time Debbie. Now we can all decorate it together.

YOUNG EDDIE: We just started.

DEBBIE: I think I need some hot chocolate before we go any further, how 'bout you?

YOUNG EDDIE: With marshmallows?

DEBBIE: Of course.

YOUNG EDDIE: I'll get them!

He speeds off.

DEBBIE: Don't open the bag till I get there!

EDDIE: I haven't had hot chocolate with marshmallows in ages!

DEBBIE: The tree is lovely.

NATHAN: Can you believe it's been another year?

They hold each other and look at the tree.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Such simple things make them happy.

EDDIE: It doesn't really matter, does it? Happiness doesn't stick around.

CHRISTMAS PAST: You don't think hot chocolate and marshmallows would make you happy now?

DEBBIE: (to NATHAN) Merry Christmas.

NATHAN: Merry Christmas.

YOUNG EDDIE: (offstage) Mom! Dad! It's snowing!

DEBBIE and NATHAN kiss lightly and hold hands as they exit.

EDDIE: My parents are happy here. How come they couldn't stay that way?

CHRISTMAS PAST: Life is not a postcard, Eddie. Things change.

EDDIE: Why? Why can't everything stay the same forever?

CHRISTMAS PAST: Come Edwin. Another scene.

The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST gives a gesture and the lights change.

They turn around and the next scene happens center stage. A teacher, MRS. FARNSWORTH, is leading a group of students in a line onstage. They are preparing to do a dramatic reading of The Night Before Christmas. YOUNG EDDIE is in a nightgown and cap. Others have various props.

NOTE: All the students from the beginning are in this scene as their younger selves: CINDY, JONATHAN, SUZANNE, GRACE and BENITA.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: All right ladies and gentlemen, right this way, right this way. Lets get ourselves assembled center stage. Quickly, quickly, very good.

EDDIE: (*jumping up and down like a kid*) It's Mrs. Farnsworth! It's Mrs. Farnsworth! She was my fourth grade teacher. She was the best teacher ever.

The students form a line at the lip of the stage and look out at the audience nervously.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Excellent. Now, I want everyone to look out there. What do you see?

BENITA: Nothing. The auditorium's empty.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Exactly, Benita, exactly. There's nothing there. Certainly nothing to be afraid of, right? It's just a space. So when you're onstage tomorrow I want you to remember this feeling. The auditorium is empty. There's nothing to fear. It's just a space.

GRACE: *(shooting her arm up in the air)* But Mrs. Farnsworth, Mrs. Farnsworth, tomorrow night there'll be people there!

JONATHAN: What are you worried about? You're just a dancing sugarplum. You don't have any lines or anything.

GRACE: What do you mean "just a dancing sugarplum?"

JONATHAN: You got a small part.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Jonathan, there are no small plums. We do not make people feel small. Right? *(looking straight at JONATHAN)*

JONATHAN: Sorry Gracie.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Daylight's a wasting. Get your props set and – *(looking at the cards CINDY holds)* Cindy, are your reindeer names in order?

CINDY: I checked them in the classroom and then Leland offered to carry – Leland! Did you mess with my cards?

LELAND: I didn't do anything!

CINDY: You're always doing something.

LELAND blows a raspberry at CINDY.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: That's fine; we'll fix them now. Leland, help me please. The rest of you get set up.

The class silently gets ready and MRS. FARNSWORTH helps CINDY. Everyone is having a good time. Note that YOUNG EDDIE is right in the thick of things, happily chatting with the others.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Most of these children go to your high school, do they not? They are your peers?

EDDIE: I guess.

CHRISTMAS PAST: But you don't like them now.

EDDIE: No. It's different now.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Why do you suppose that is?

EDDIE: We were just kids. We didn't know any better. Now I know what's going on.

CHRISTMAS PAST: As you say.

YOUNG EDDIE and SUZANNE laugh together.

CHRISTMAS PAST: They look happy.

EDDIE: Happy has nothing to do with the way the world works. Adults aren't happy.

MRS. FARNSWORTH lets out a laugh and hugs CINDY.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Mrs. Farnsworth looks very happy, wouldn't you say?

EDDIE: Well, she's special.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: OK gang. Let's take it from the top. Are you ready, Eddie?

LELAND: Mrs. Farnsworth! Mrs. Farnsworth! Before we start can we show the class the extra moves we came up with?

CINDY: Leland, you're always putting extra moves into everything.

LELAND: They're good moves.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Leland, I don't mind if you want to create extra moves, but you should have asked me before we came to the auditorium instead of interrupting.

SUZANNE: Please Mrs. Farnsworth? We worked hard on them.

JONATHAN: We used the whole lunch hour to practice.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: If everyone in the class wants to see the moves then we'll see them.

Everyone puts up their hand except CINDY.

YOUNG EDDIE: Come on Cindy.

SUZANNE: Please?

CINDY: Oh all right.

EDDIE: I remember this! It's the – it's the – the jelly dance! The jelly dance! We did it all year.

LELAND, SUZANNE, and YOUNG EDDIE dance around JONATHAN who is dressed as Santa. NOTE: The point of this moment is to create something gleeful and sincere – to emulate the Fezziwig dance from the original.

You can put the following to music, or treat it as a poem.

LELAND: It's not the twinkly eyes.

SUZANNE: Or the cheeks like rose.

YOUNG EDDIE: Not the merry dimples.

JONATHAN: Or the cherry nose!

SUZANNE: How do we know Santa Claus?

YOUNG EDDIE: What's the secret code?

LELAND: No need to worry or to pause.

JONATHAN: It's his movement à la mode!

They all start to dance. Perhaps one of the characters has a tambourine.

ALL: Santa's got a little round belly,
That shakes like a bowl of jelly.
Everybody clap your hands,
We're gonna do the jelly dance!

YOUNG EDDIE: (*shouting out*) Everybody shake your belly!

JONATHAN: (*shouting out*) And make it move like jelly!

The whole class, including MRS. FARNSWORTH dances around in a circle, shaking their bellies. EDDIE also joins in on the sidelines, singing along.

ALL: Everybody clap your hands.
We're gonna do the jelly dance.
Everybody clap your hands.
We're gonna do the jelly dance!

*Everyone gives a big cheer and collapses into a heap.
There is much laughter and cheering.*

EDDIE: Yay! Yay!

CHRISTMAS PAST: (*politely clapping*) Well done Edwin.

EDDIE: What?

CHRISTMAS PAST: You were having fun.

EDDIE: I was not.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Yes you were.

EDDIE: Cut it out. I don't have fun.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Very well done! I think we should do that at the concert, don't you?

There is general excitement and agreement.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Now, let's start from the beginning.

They rush to get to their spots. YOUNG EDDIE is center stage. EDDIE bounces up and down in anticipation.

EDDIE: Oh, I was so nervous. It was such a big part. And I had to go first!

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Eddie, you start us off. Whenever you're ready.

YOUNG EDDIE looks very nervous. He opens his mouth and nothing comes out.

BENITA: (*whispering*) Go Eddie, go.

LELAND: (*whispering*) He looks like a fish.

CINDY: Be quiet Leland!

SUZANNE: What's the matter, Eddie?

YOUNG EDDIE opens his mouth again; nothing comes out.

EDDIE: Come on, Eddie! You can do it!

YOUNG EDDIE: I... I...

YOUNG EDDIE gets a look of panic on his face and turns to run offstage. MRS. FARNSWORTH grabs him.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Slow down there buckaroo. No running from our fears, Mr. Scrooge.

YOUNG EDDIE: I... I... I...

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Tell us what's going on.

YOUNG EDDIE: I've never had to go first before. I was thinking about how terrible it would be if I forgot the first line and I forgot the first line. Mrs. Farnsworth, what if that happens to me tomorrow night?!

EDDIE: Now you'll get to see how my "peers" treat me.

EDDIE is astonished to see all the other students comfort YOUNG EDDIE.

SUZANNE: You'll be fine.

JONATHAN: Yeah, you'll do great.

GRACE: You know it backwards and forwards.

BENITA: We'll help you out if you forget.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: That's very good, Benita. What do you do if someone forgets a line? You don't laugh, you don't point, you don't twiddle your thumbs.

CINDY: And you don't say they look like fish.

BENITA: Yeah, Leland.

LELAND: Sorry, Eddie. I didn't mean it.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: You roll up your sleeves and find a way to help. We all help each other.

EDDIE is shocked by the support from the other students.

EDDIE: Huh.

CHRISTMAS PAST: You seem surprised. They really supported you just then.

EDDIE: I saw them all today. They weren't very nice to me.

CHRISTMAS PAST: And were you nice to them?

MRS. FARNSWORTH kneels in front of YOUNG EDDIE.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: You're going to do fine. You remembered the words when we did it in the classroom, didn't you?

YOUNG EDDIE: Yeah but –

MRS. FARNSWORTH: No buts. You know you can do it. Believe in yourself, Eddie. That's where it all starts. (*she taps him on the heart*) In here. You have a good heart, Eddie. It will serve you well.

EDDIE: Huh.

CHRISTMAS PAST: She truly believed in you.

EDDIE: She was the best teacher.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Are you ready, Eddie?

YOUNG EDDIE: As ready as I'll ever be.

EDDIE: A teacher can be anything they want. They can be nice or mean. They can try too hard or not hard enough. She had the power to make us happy or unhappy. We all wanted to make her proud.

CHRISTMAS PAST: You don't feel that way about people now, do you? What happened to your faith in people, Edwin?

MRS. FARNSWORTH: OK. Chins up. Chests out. Speak to the back of the auditorium so everyone can hear your lovely dulcet tones. Ready? Off we go.

YOUNG EDDIE begins with pride.

YOUNG EDDIE: 'Twas the night before Christmas,
And all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring,
Not even a mouse;

As they speak, the whole class starts to move slowly backwards. They get quieter and quieter as if they are fading from sight. (NOTE: YOUNG EDDIE has to get offstage quickly.) If you need more of the poem to get everyone offstage, use it.

CINDY: The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.

EDDIE: Where are they going? What's happening?

BENITA: The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar plums danced in their heads.

EDDIE: Come back! Come back!

CHRISTMAS PAST: It's time for us to go. We have another scene to see.

EDDIE: I want to see the end of the performance. I want to do the jelly dance again.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Our time draws to a close. Come.

She takes his hand and the lights change. The students exit. EDDIE and the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST turn back to the living room set. NATHAN and DEBBIE enter. The atmosphere is tense. NATHAN and DEBBIE are fighting.

DEBBIE: We can't do this to him now.

NATHAN: I don't think we have a choice.

DEBBIE: It's Christmas. He'll be –

NATHAN: Do you really want to pretend through this? You think that will be good for him?

DEBBIE: What does it matter if it's before Christmas or after Christmas?

NATHAN: I'm not going to lie to him.

DEBBIE: Oh you're so good.

NATHAN: (*overtop*) You're the one who wanted to speed this up.

DEBBIE: (*continuing from above*) You're so righteous.

NATHAN: (*continuing from above*) You're the one who wants me out of the house.

DEBBIE: That's right. It's all about you, Nathan.

NATHAN: Come on, Debbie.

They go on fighting silently.

EDDIE: Oh.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Do you recognize the time?

EDDIE: Of course I do.

A door slams offstage.

YOUNG EDDIE: (*offstage*) I'm home!

DEBBIE: (*calling out*) We're in here, Eddie.

She sits down, putting her head in her hands. EDDIE enters talking.

YOUNG EDDIE: (*excited*) We had our last rehearsal before the Christmas concert. I can't wait to show you – (*he sees them, looking from one to the other*) What's the matter?

NATHAN: Sit down. We have something to tell you.

YOUNG EDDIE: Is someone sick?

NATHAN: No, no. Everyone's fine.

YOUNG EDDIE: Did I do something wrong?

DEBBIE: Of course you didn't. (*she takes a big breath*) This is hard, so bear with us.

YOUNG EDDIE: (*sitting*) OK.

NATHAN: Eddie, have you noticed that your mom and I haven't been getting along so much?

YOUNG EDDIE: Well, sure. It's hard not to notice.

DEBBIE: (*bitterly to NATHAN*) I told you.

NATHAN: Don't start.

DEBBIE: Eddie, your dad and I have to do something about that. It's not good to fight and we don't want you to see us fight. We've tried to work this out and –

NATHAN: We tried?

DEBBIE: I think I tried.

NATHAN: You're so busy pushing me out –

DEBBIE: (*overtop*) It's always the same argument with you.

NATHAN: (*overtop*) I can't believe you!

YOUNG EDDIE: What's going on?

DEBBIE and NATHAN stop fighting.

DEBBIE: Your dad and I are getting a divorce.

YOUNG EDDIE: What do you mean?

NATHAN: We're not going to be married anymore. We're not going to live together.

YOUNG EDDIE: Why?

DEBBIE: It's not good for us and it's not good for you.

YOUNG EDDIE: Why can't you work it out?

NATHAN: We don't want to fight anymore.

DEBBIE: It's better this way, Eddie.

YOUNG EDDIE: It's not better. It's the worst. (*standing*) You can't do this!

DEBBIE: Sit down, Eddie.

YOUNG EDDIE: Don't touch me!

NATHAN: Come on, son, we have to talk about this.

YOUNG EDDIE: If you get divorced, I'll hate you forever.

DEBBIE: You don't mean that.

YOUNG EDDIE: And what about Christmas? What about that?

NATHAN: Well, I'm going to have to go away.

YOUNG EDDIE: What?

DEBBIE: It'll be just you and me on Christmas Day.

NATHAN: And you and I will spend Christmas Eve together. It'll be fun.

YOUNG EDDIE: Fun? That's your idea of fun?

NATHAN: We didn't want to hide this any longer. It's best if this is out in the open.

YOUNG EDDIE: I hate it. You ruined Christmas. You ruined everything! I'll never forgive you for this.

He runs off.

DEBBIE: Eddie! Come back!

They go out after them.

CHRISTMAS PAST: You never did forgive your parents, did you?

EDDIE: I don't want to see anymore. Why'd you have to show me this?!

CHRISTMAS PAST: These are the shadows of things that have been.
They are what they are. Do not get angry at me.

EDDIE: I want to go home! Take me back and haunt me no longer!

CHRISTMAS PAST: Then home you shall go. Our time has come to an end.

EDDIE grabs the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST by the shoulders.

EDDIE: Take me home! Take me home!

The GHOST gestures, and there is a blackout. There is a booming echo of EDDIE calling out "Take me home." Other voices are also heard in the darkness. All of the following lines are said at the same time, overlapping to create a cacophony of sound.

DEBBIE: *(keep repeating this line)* Your dad and I are getting a divorce.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: *(keep repeating this line)* Believe in yourself Eddie.

YOUNG EDDIE: *(keep repeating this line)* First is the snowman right?

NATHAN: *(keep repeating this line)* The best in the lot.

CHRISTMAS PAST: *(keep repeating this line)* These are the shadows of things that have been.

SCENE FOUR

The cacophony stops. EDDIE wakes up in his bed. He is kneeling and grabbing his sheet as he grabbed the GHOST. His eyes are shut tight.

EDDIE: Take me home! (he opens his eyes) Agh! Agh! Ah – oh. My bedroom. My bed. Must have been the beef.

EDDIE falls flat on his bed and goes to sleep. The NARRATOR enters and comes to stand beside the bed. She turns a page in her book.

NARRATOR: Scrooge was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness and further of being in his own bedroom. He sank into a heavy sleep.

The clock tower begins to chime again, announcing the hour – at the end of the chime there are two GONGS signifying two o'clock. EDDIE sits up with a gasp.

EDDIE: Two o'clock! The second ghost will come when the clock strikes two. Alright, Ghost. Where are you?

NARRATOR: Scrooge was ready for a good broad field of strange appearances, and nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have astonished him very much. Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing. And consequently when the bell struck two, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling.

EDDIE: (to NARRATOR) Don't you think you should explain how it is I can hear a town clock in my bedroom when I live in the suburbs? And we don't have a town clock?

NARRATOR: (to EDDIE) You're supposed to be trembling. (to the audience) This is my favourite section from the original. When Scrooge sees a light under his bedroom door and gets up and goes to his other room and the whole place has been transformed, I love, love, love the description! It's like skydiving for narrators! We can't exactly do it justice here, given the theme and the budget. (she looks offstage and gives a disapproving cough) But since I'm the narrator, and I have the big book, I'm going to share it with you anyway. OK! So... Bell chimes two... Nothing happens... Scrooge out of bed... Opens door... And... (She turns a page and takes a deep breath. She really gets into reading the description. She is euphoric.) The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green that it looked a perfect grove; from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened. Heaped up on the floor,

to form a kind of throne were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn...

LELAND enters. He taps the NARRATOR on the shoulder.

NARRATOR: Great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages...

LELAND: Nan...

NARRATOR: Don't interrupt me! *(she goes on)* Mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts,

LELAND looks at EDDIE who shrugs. LELAND taps her on the shoulder again.

LELAND: Nan it doesn't have the right –

NARRATOR: What, you got your favourite moment and I can't have mine? *(she goes on)* Cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes –

The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT sticks his head onstage.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Hey! What's going on out here? I'm supposed to appear before intermission!

NARRATOR: All right, all right! *(she flips forward five or six pages and says quickly)* And seething bowls of punch that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. There, I'm done. Geesh!

LELAND: All that food talk makes me hungry.

The NARRATOR grs at LELAND and stalks offstage. LELAND follows. EDDIE lies down as if asleep.

The clock tower begins to chime again. At the end of the chime there are two GONGS signifying two o'clock. EDDIE sits up with a gasp.

EDDIE: Two o'clock! The second ghost will come when the clock strikes two. Alright, Ghost. Where are you?

There is a long pause. Nothing happens.

EDDIE: Whew. Nothing.

Music blasts on causing EDDIE to jump and scream. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT enters with a

huge boom box on his shoulder, which is blasting the Hallelujah chorus. The GHOST loudly and cheerfully sings along. He is dressed in a vibrantly coloured robe. He is incessantly cheerful and larger than life.

EDDIE takes his pillows and holds them over his ears.

EDDIE: Turn that off! Turn that off!

The GHOST turns the music off and puts the boom box on the ground. He gives a loud booming laugh.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Ha! Ha! Ha! Eddie. Where's your Christmas spirit? You've got to get into the music, man. It will fill you up so much the excess will spill out your ears! Ha, ha! You have to really belt it out! Come on, try it with me – (*singing*) “Hallelujah, Hallelujah Halle –”

EDDIE: Who are you?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: The Ghost of Christmas Present. (*he strikes a pose*) You have never seen the likes of me, have you?

EDDIE: Never. Spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Past showed me a lot. Gave me a lot to chew on. Can't we just call it a day and I promise not to be so cranky?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: 'Fraid not my friend. Are you ready for our journey?

EDDIE: No.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Ha! Ha! Ha! Hold on to my robe.

EDDIE: Where are we going? What are we going to see?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Don't be in such a hurry. You'll see soon enough... Ha! Ha!

The GHOST gestures. Lights change. Smoke swirls. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT waves his arms.

The lights come up on the left side living room scene. It still looks homey and lived-in, but is a bit more barren and sparse.

EDDIE: Look at this place. It's so shabby.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: And yet it is spotlessly clean.

EDDIE: Who lives here?

BONNIE enters with a small book and some wrapping paper. She hums a carol as she wraps the present.

EDDIE: That's Bonnie. This is Bonnie's house?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: It doesn't compare to your house, does it?

EDDIE: No.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: It's pretty small.

EDDIE: It's not terribly small.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: And there aren't too many presents under the tree.

EDDIE: I had no idea...

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: What?

EDDIE: I – I... I didn't know she was...

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: What?

EDDIE: I didn't know she was poor.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Why would you, man? She doesn't walk around with a sign around her neck, does she? "My name is Bonnie Crawley and I'm poor?"

EDDIE: Of course not. She should have told me.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Why? What would you have done?

EDDIE: I don't know.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Ridiculed her? Belittled her?

EDDIE: Of course not!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Oh no? Don't you know what poor people look like? Poor people are poor because they are lazy?

EDDIE: She never talks about needing money. She's always bubbly and laughing – it drives me crazy.

The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT gives out a loud booming laugh.

EDDIE: (*holding his head*) Do you have to laugh so loud?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: You should try it. You look like you could use a good laugh.

EDDIE: And Bonnie's not lazy. She's a straight A student. It doesn't make any sense that she's poor.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: The world does not turn on sense. Fathers die unexpectedly. Mothers can't get the work they're educated for. Sisters need extra care.

EDDIE: Her father died? And what's wrong with her sister? Why didn't she tell me?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Eddie, Eddie, Eddie.

EDDIE: I know, I know.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: What?

EDDIE: Bonnie and I don't talk. I... I guess I just boss her around.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: You guess?

EDDIE: I didn't know ghosts could be sarcastic.

The GHOST gives a loud booming laugh.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Ha! Ha! Ha! Behold!

LYNNE: *(offstage)* Bonnie?

BONNIE: In here, Mom.

She hurriedly cleans up her wrapping paper remains.

TINA: *(offstage)* Hey Bonnie!

BONNIE: Tinasita!

LYNNE and younger sister TINA enter. TINA is on crutches – she has cerebral palsy. LYNNE is dressed in a catering waiter's uniform: black pants, white top.

BONNIE: Merry Christmas!

LYNNE: Not yet.

BONNIE: Soon enough. *(to TINA)* How was the pool?

TINA: OK. Tiring.

BONNIE: *(to LYNNE)* How was work?

LYNNE: The same. Tiring, but done.

TINA: Some kids were making fun of me but I swam better than all of them. Ha!

BONNIE: Good for you.

EDDIE: What's wrong with her legs?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: She has cerebral palsy.

EDDIE: I didn't know that.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: You're very focused on your own life.

TINA: *(seeing the newly-wrapped present)* What's that?

BONNIE: *(she holds up the present, which is obviously a book)* Ah, ah, ah! Not yet.

TINA: I just want to see it.

BONNIE: You can see it, but no touching and no shaking to try and figure out what it is.

TINA: Looks like a tennis racket.

BONNIE: Darn! I should have wrapped it better.

LYNNE: *(to TINA)* Hey you, go put your things away. The last thing we need around here is a wet moldy bathing suit.

TINA: My swimsuit isn't moldy!

LYNNE: And lets keep it that way. Scoot!

TINA: Scooting!

TINA gets up and leaves. LYNNE sits.

EDDIE: Is she going to be all right?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: She is all right, Eddie. Don't you see how bright and vibrant she is?

EDDIE: But she can't walk properly.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Is that how you judge a person? By what you see? What do people see in you, Eddie?

LYNNE removes her shoes.

LYNNE: Oh that feels good.

BONNIE: Put your feet out. I'll rub them.

LYNNE: The house looks spotless.

BONNIE: We'll be eating off the kitchen floor tonight.

LYNNE: Thanks honey, I really appreciate it.

BONNIE: No sweat.

LYNNE: How was school?

BONNIE: Pretty awesome. Everyone was totally into the Christmas spirit. Almost everyone.

LYNNE: Did Eddie Scrooge treat you badly today?

BONNIE: Not so bad. Same as usual.

LYNNE: You don't have to do that job, Bonnie.

BONNIE: Hey, it pays and it's during school.

LYNNE: You don't have to work for someone like that.

EDDIE: Someone like what?

BONNIE: You work for bad bosses all the time.

LYNNE: That's different.

BONNIE: How?

LYNNE: I'm an adult.

BONNIE: Ooooooh it's the old "I'm an adult" line.

LYNNE: I'm serious. You have other things to worry about. Like school.

BONNIE: He doesn't bother me. It's money. Where else do hall monitors get paid?

LYNNE: That's because no one likes hall monitors.

BONNIE: People like me.

LYNNE: Bonnie, promise me you'll never work just for money. It'll eat your soul.

BONNIE: But you –

LYNNE: I work for you and Tina. I work for us. There's a difference.

BONNIE: I think Eddie works for money.

LYNNE: (*with a sigh*) I don't know what's wrong with that kid.

BONNIE: At least I know he won't be at the dance-a-thon.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Do you, man?

EDDIE: What?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Do you work for money?

EDDIE: Of course I do. I have a plan. I want to get out of here. Never look back. No regrets.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: That's some plan.

EDDIE: (*a little tentative*) There's nothing wrong with it.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Are you sure?

BONNIE: What was the party like?

LYNNE: Another fancy-dancy Christmas shindig. I got lots of tips. And lots of leftovers. The good kind.

BONNIE: Is there any shrimp?

LYNNE: Jumbo shrimp.

BONNIE: All right! (*singing*) I love jumbo shrimp, I love jumbo shrimp!

LYNNE: And stuffed mushroom caps.

BONNIE: (*making a face*) Ew. (*singing*) I don't like mushroom caps. You can have the mushroom caps. (*not singing*) What time do you have to work on Christmas Day?

LYNNE: Not till noon. We'll have a nice breakfast.

BONNIE: My shift's at three. Mrs. Parker said she doesn't mind if Tina sits in the kitchen.

EDDIE: Who works on Christmas?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Not everyone is lucky like you Eddie.

EDDIE: But they don't seem to mind. They're almost happy about it.

LYNNE: I'm sorry we won't be able to have a big dinner.

BONNIE: I got the extra large portion turkey TV dinners at the grocery store today. They even give you cranberry sauce.

LYNNE: Hey. I got an extra present for us.

BONNIE: What? Why, you're not supposed to –

LYNNE: (*holding up her hand*) I'm not making any promises. But if Christmas Day goes like today, I'm going to have enough money saved up to get the car fixed.

BONNIE: That's awesome!

LYNNE: Keep your fingers crossed and we should be able to go to Auntie Rose and Uncle Tom's for New Year's.

BONNIE: That's super awesome! Whoo-hooo!

TINA appears in the doorway.

TINA: What's all the racket in here?

BONNIE: Noooooothing.

TINA: What?

BONNIE: Noooooothing.

TINA: You know something! I hate when you know something and I don't. (*to LYNNE*) What did you tell her?

BONNIE & LYNNE: Noooooooooothing.

TINA: Argh!

EDDIE: They have so little. They have to scrape money together to get their car fixed? They have hardly any presents.

TINA: I put the leftovers in the oven, if anyone's interested.

BONNIE: You didn't touch the shrimp, did you?

TINA: Maaaaaaaaaybe.

BONNIE: (*jumping up*) Tinasita!

TINA: I bet you can't catch me.

BONNIE: (*moving in super slow motion*) I bet I can.

TINA: (*exiting*) I bet you can't!

BONNIE: (*exiting*) I'm gonna get you!

EDDIE: How can they be so happy?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Where does happiness come from?

EDDIE: I don't know.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Where does your happiness come from?

EDDIE: I don't know. I'm not happy. I never... I never thought it was important.

LYNN: *(still on the couch)* I don't supposed there's a leftover delivery service is there?

BONNIE: *(offstage)* Mom! She's touching the mushroom caps!

LYNNE: Don't you dare!

She exits on the run.

EDDIE: I wish my mother was like Bonnie's. She seems fun.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: How do you know your mother isn't fun? You rarely speak to her, do you?

EDDIE: Hmm.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: What are you thinking?

EDDIE: Nothing. I was talking to her, my mom, earlier on the phone. I wish... I guess I... I could have been nicer to her.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Onwards we go, Eddie. Hold my robe!

The GHOST gestures and the lights change. Smoke swirls around the stage. The two turn to see the group of students enter. This is the present. They are putting up decorations for the dance-a-thon. There is music playing and they are dancing and laughing. LELAND and JONATHAN hold out garland like a limbo stick.

LELAND & JONATHAN: Limbo!

GRACE: That's way too low.

JONATHAN: How low can you go? How low can you go?

GRACE: Not that low. What do you think I'm made of, rubber?

They raise the "limbo stick" higher.

GRACE: Higher. *(they raise it higher again)* Higher.

LELAND: Aw, come on. It's practically at your shoulder.

GRACE: I know.

She gracefully manoeuvres under the garland.

GRACE: Ta da!

JONATHAN: (*holding out his end of the garland*) Hold it, will ya Gracie?

GRACIE takes an end and JONATHAN prepares to go under. They hold the garland at waist height.

JONATHAN: Lower.

They put it lower.

JONATHAN: Lower.

They put it lower.

BENITA: You cannot go that low.

JONATHAN: Lower.

BENITA: You can't do it!

They put it lower. JONATHAN prepares to limbo. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST and EDDIE approach.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Limbo! I love the limbo. How 'bout you?

EDDIE: I've never done it.

JONATHAN approaches the garland. He starts to go under and falls flat on his back.

BENITA: I knew it!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Aw, too bad man.

The NARRATOR enters. She speaks to the audience.

NARRATOR: They don't really have intermissions in books. The chapter breaks are a form of intermission but some books have upwards of a hundred chapters and you're not going to have a hundred intermissions. That's a lot of trips to the bathroom! (*she claps a hand to her mouth*) I shouldn't have said that out loud.

LELAND: Limbo!

NARRATOR: What?

LELAND: Come on Nan.

JONATHAN & GRACE: Limbo!

NARRATOR: Oh no. I'm the narrator. That's would be unseemly.

LELAND: (*chanting slowly*) lim-BO, lim-BO, lim-BO... (*continuing*)

The others join in chanting with LELAND. The NARRATOR makes some feeble protests as the others continue to chant.

NARRATOR: No I can't. Really I can't. Sure it would be fun. Narrators don't limbo. Especially not Dickens narrators. I can't! Really I... I... All right, all right!

The others stop chanting and give a cheer.

NARRATOR: (*to audience*) Apparently, I'm going to Limbo. You go to intermission! Limbo everyone!

LELAND and the OTHERS: Limbo!

The curtains close or the lights go to black as the NARRATOR does the limbo.

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

Tight lights come up on LELAND. He is holding a large book, not unlike the NARRATOR's. He is completely into his story – from the original A Christmas Carol.

LELAND: “It was a game called ‘Yes and No’, where Scrooge’s nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what; he only answering to their questions yes or no, as the case was. The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn’t made a show of, and wasn’t led by anybody, and didn’t live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every fresh question that was put to him, this nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last the plump sister, falling into a similar state, cried out: “I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!” “What is it?” cried Fred. (*as the sister*) “It’s your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!”

The lights jerk up full. The NARRATOR runs on. The other characters from before intermission are also there; they’ve been listening to LELAND.

NARRATOR: Hey, hey, hey! What do you think you’re doing?

Everyone looks confused at the NARRATOR for interrupting.

LELAND: What do you think you’re doing?

NARRATOR: I see what’s going on. Oh ho I do! You distract me with a little boiled pudding! A little limbo, and whamo jambo bang – you take over!

GRACE: Nan...

NARRATOR: Don’t think I don’t know what you’re doing! And you know I know you know what you’re doing!

BENITA: (*taping her on the shoulder*) Nan...

NARRATOR: (*shaking her off*) I don’t care if we are in the middle of the play! I won’t stand for someone trying to take over my position! I’m the Narrator! Me, me, me!

ALL: Nan!

NARRATOR: What? What?

LELAND: This is in the play. It's my piece for the town hall concert.

NARRATOR: Concert? What concert?

LELAND: In the play.

NARRATOR: Oh. You're in the play. You're doing your bit. In the play. Ha. Isn't that funny. Ha. Ha. (*no one else is laughing*) Hmm. I guess that's all right. Sorry. Won't happen again. Carry on.

She slinks off. Everyone else breaks into applause for LELAND. During all this EDDIE has been off to the side, but not the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT. He now enters on the run, adjusting his robe.

EDDIE: Where have you been?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: The line took forever! Did I miss anything, man?

SUZANNE enters.

SUZANNE: You're supposed to be putting up decorations.

GRACE: We are!

JONATHAN: How many decorations does a dance-a-thon need?

LELAND runs over to SUZANNE and tackles her.

LELAND: Suzanne, Suzanne, you're alive, you came back!

SUZANNE: Let go of me, you nut.

LELAND: I can't believe you made it out alive and you didn't succumb to... the frozen eye. (*he throws garland around his neck like a scarf and imitates EDDIE*) Hall pass. Where's your hall pass?

The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT laughs.

EDDIE: Hey!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: It's a good imitation.

BENITA: I can't believe you're related to that creep.

SUZANNE tries to move forward. LELAND blocks her way.

LELAND: Ah, ah, ah – You can't go any further without your hall pass.

SUZANNE pushes LELAND and he goes sprawling.

LELAND: Detention! Double detention! Triple dog dare detention!

SUZANNE: Mrs. Ashford asked us to put up the tables for the raffle.

During the following they put tables in place, covering them with tablecloths.

GRACE: I'd hate to have Eddie Scrooge as my cousin.

SUZANNE: I hardly see him, let alone talk to him.

LELAND: Then what were you risking life and limb in the hall for?

SUZANNE: I was inviting him to Christmas dinner.

GRACE & BENITA: Ewwwwwwwwwwww.

LELAND: (*grabbing her*) Suzanne, sit down, you must be feeling unwell.

SUZANNE: (*with a laugh*) Let go of me.

JONATHAN: Doctor! Someone call a doctor!

BENITA: Why would you do such a thing?

SUZANNE: Because that's what Christmas is supposed to be about.
Good will to men, even to unlikable men.

GRACE: He is so unlikable.

SUZANNE: I feel sorry for him. The only person he hurts is himself.
Just because he's mean to me doesn't mean I have to act the same way back.

BENITA: He is soooo mean.

LELAND: And never look him in the eye. You'll be cold for a week.

JONATHAN: He doesn't scare me.

LELAND: Oh no? Then you can go get the rest of the decorations all by your lonesome.

GRACE: Alone in the hall without a hall pass.

BENITA: I admire you.

GRACE: Off you go.

BENITA: I couldn't do it.

LELAND: If we haven't heard from you in an hour, we'll send out the dogs.

JONATHAN: I think we have enough decorations, don't you?

Everyone laughs and goes back to their work. EDDIE sighs.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: What's the big sigh for?

EDDIE: I don't know.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: These folks, they look like they're having fun.

EDDIE: I...

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: What?

EDDIE: *(not as sure as before)* I don't have fun.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: That's right, I forgot. Fun is a waste of time. Friends are too.

EDDIE: *(unsure)* I guess.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Why don't you have friends, Eddie?

EDDIE: They let you down. Everyone does.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: And who do you let down man?

EDDIE looks surprised, as if that thought never occurred to him. The focus shifts back to the others. CINDY enters. She's all steamed up.

CINDY: Ooooooooooh I hate him, I hate him, I hate him!

SUZANNE: Who?

LELAND: Wait, wait! Is it an animal?

CINDY: Of course not!

LELAND: A live animal? Rather a disagreeable animal?

CINDY: I just said –

LELAND: A savage animal?

CINDY: Leland!

LELAND: An animal that growled and grunted sometimes?

CINDY: I'm trying to –

LELAND: Is it a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog?

CINDY: If you'd just –

LELAND: Or a pig, or a cat, or a bear?

CINDY: NO! It's –

GRACE & BENITA: We know, we know!

EVERYONE BUT CINDY: It's Eddie Scrooooooge.

CINDY: Do you know what he said? Do you know what he said?

LELAND & JONATHAN: What did he say?

CINDY: He laughed at me when I tried to get a donation for the charity drive. He said people without money have no right to Christmas.

GRACE & BENITA: Ewwwwwww.

BENITA: That's a terrible thing to say.

LELAND: Here, hang some garland. It'll make you feel better.

CINDY: I'll give you some garland.

CINDY begins to chase LELAND around the stage.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Did you say that Eddie?

EDDIE: Well. Maybe. Something like that. I guess. But I didn't mean it.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: You should always say what you mean.

EDDIE: It sounds bad coming from her.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Who are you, Eddie, to pass judgment on people, poor or no?

All the girls gang up on LELAND and tackle him to the ground. They start tickling him.

LELAND: Not the tickling! Not the tickling! That's not fair! Johnny! Save me!

JONATHAN: No way man. I'm too ticklish.

The girls all stop what they're doing and slowly turn toward JONATHAN.

CINDY: Oh you are, are you?

GRACE: Slowly we turn.

BENITA: Step by step.

SUZANNE: Inch by inch.

EDDIE: Oh oh. He's gonna get it.

JONATHAN: Uh, actually I'm not. Not ticklish at all. Nope.

LELAND: Run Johnny! Run!

The GIRLS chase JONATHAN around the stage.

EDDIE: (*calling out*) Watch out Jonathan! Benita's coming up behind you!
Go left! Go left! Oh! They got him!

Everyone collapses in a heap on top of JONATHAN.

JONATHAN: Get off me! Agh! No fair! Uncle! Uncle!

SUZANNE: Girls win!

The GIRLS cheer. Everyone gets up and goes back to work.

EDDIE: Ha ha! (*to the GHOST, who is staring at him*) What?

BENITA: You guys are still coming over on the 26th, right?

JONATHAN: Tobogganing party!

CINDY: I was hoping for a sip-apple-cider-by-the-fire party.

SUZANNE: Sounds great.

EDDIE: Tobogganing! I haven't done that in years. When I was a kid I had this awesome sled and we used to make a bump at the bottom of the hill so that when we went down ... what?

The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT is staring at EDDIE.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: (*with a big grin*) Nothing.

JONATHAN: Looks like we're done huh?

SUZANNE: There's more decorations in Mrs. Ashford's room.

LELAND & JONATHAN: MORE??

JONATHAN: How many decorations does a dance-a-thon need?

SUZANNE: What does it matter? You're getting out of class, aren't you?

LELAND: Oh yeah. More decorations! There must be more!

They start to exit.

GRACE: (to SUZANNE) Did you decide what carol you're doing for the concert yet?

LELAND: You're singing?

SUZANNE: Yes, me and Cindy. What of it?

LELAND: Nothing, nothing.

CINDY: You're not the only one with some talent mister.

LELAND: So let's hear it.

CINDY: Now? Oh, no, no, no, no.

SUZANNE: Maybe we should. It'll be good practice.

CINDY: Are you insane? In front of him? (*pointing at LELAND*)

LELAND: So unjustly accused.

CINDY: Ha!

SUZANNE: We'll have to do it at the concert anyway.

CINDY: Oh, fine. But you (*pointing at LELAND*) better not make fun.

LELAND: My lips are sealed.

SUZANNE and CINDY sing In the Bleak Midwinter. Feel free to change the carol so long as it goes with the lines about hope afterwards. EDDIE should really enjoy the singing.

SUZANNE & CINDY:

In the bleak midwinter, frost wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our god, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;

But his mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshiped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

EDDIE: That was nice. I've never heard that carol before.

GRACE: It sounds so sad.

SUZANNE: It's not sad. It's about hope. No matter how bleak things are, there's always a glimmer of light. There's always hope; something to believe in.

LELAND: Aww Suzanne you're gonna make me cry.

SUZANNE pushes LELAND and everyone laughs. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT looks at EDDIE.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: What's the matter, man?

EDDIE: Nothing. I just got something in my eye.

SUZANNE: Let's get the rest of the decorations.

JONATHAN: How about you guys get the decorations and I'll supervise the room.

CINDY: Move, or we'll tickle you again.

JONATHAN: I'm moving, I'm moving.

They exit.

EDDIE: I wish...

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: What?

EDDIE: I wish I had... I never thought... a little hope, a little light wouldn't be so bad.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: It's time for us to go.

EDDIE: What? Already? But they might sing again! And they went to get more decorations. I could help put up decorations.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Onward we go Eddie. Our night is not yet through.

EDDIE: There's more? What else is there to see?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Hold my robe.

EDDIE grabs the GHOST's robe and the GHOST makes a gesture. The lights change and the two cross the stage. The NARRATOR enters at the side and turns a page in her book.

NARRATOR: By this time it was getting dark and snowing pretty heavily. But as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the street, the brightness of roaring fires from inside the houses along the way was wonderful.

For each of the following images, a group enters to create a tableau.

NARRATOR: Here, preparations for a cosy dinner. There, the children of the house were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts. Here, the shadows of guests assembling. There, a group of girls all talking at once, off to some near neighbour's house. Much they saw and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end.

Each group changes their tableau to reflect the following images. As each picture is formed, the GHOST and EDDIE pause at each group. At each group the GHOST leaves his blessing.

NARRATOR: The Spirit stood by sick beds and they were cheerful; on foreign lands and they were close at home; by struggling men and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty and it was rich; In Misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority had not made fast the door and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing and taught Scrooge what it means to carry Christmas in his heart.

The lights change and the groups exit. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT and EDDIE find themselves back in EDDIE's bedroom. EDDIE is very excited, the GHOST seems quite tired. He collapses into a chair.

EDDIE: That was incredible! I've never been to so many places and seen so many things! Madge was all wrong about traveling, it's great! I guess not everyone gets to travel by ghost. How long did that take? I don't think it can even be December anymore. *(he suddenly turns to the GHOST)* What's the matter? You look completely worn out.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: My time is almost done, man.

EDDIE: Your time? Oh, with me you mean.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: My time on this earth. It ends tonight.

EDDIE: Tonight? That's it? That's terrible, that's – Spirit, um, if you don't mind me asking, there is something under your robe. It looks like an extra foot? Or a claw.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Look closely, Eddie. Look.

The GHOST stands and opens up his robe. Two meagre figures dressed in rags — a boy and a girl — scramble out from underneath the robe. They sit at the GHOST's feet and look up at EDDIE with malice. They should be as savage and animal-like as possible. EDDIE scrambles backwards at the sight of them.

EDDIE: Who are they? What are they? Are they yours?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: *(all previous humour is gone)* They are man's. And they cling to me appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. The girl is Want. Beware them both, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased.

EDDIE: Have they nowhere to go? Is there no refuge for them?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: They are getting what they deserve. People who work hard get what they deserve, people who don't work hard get what they deserve as well.

EDDIE: No, no! I didn't mean it!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Beware Ignorance, Eddie. It will spell your doom.

Chanting VOICES are heard from all around.

OFFSTAGE VOICES: Ignorance is your doom. Ignorance is your doom.
(continuing)

The lights dim. Smoke begins to eddy about the stage. The clock tower begins to chime, leading up to three GONGS signifying three am. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT exits.

Once the three gongs have rung, the chanting voices stop. EDDIE is left alone.



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