

A DICKENS OF A CHRISTMAS

by Douglas Kotwica



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A Dickens of a Christmas

A dinner theatre sequel to
A Christmas Carol

by Douglas Kotwica

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

MR. NELL: A man whose world is formed by the papers.

MRS. CUMBERTON: Bustling about, making ready for Christmas.

MISS COOKENS: An optimistic young lady, enjoying it all.

LAMPLIGHTER: Passes through the play, bringing light at the appropriate times.

CAROLER 1: The omniscient narrator and confidant of the audience.

CAROLER 2: Looking out for the poor.

CAROLER 3: The hopeful.

CAROLER 4: Playful and a bit of a troublemaker.

OTHER CAROLERS: Contribute to the singing throughout the play.

FASWIGGIT: An understanding collector for the London charities.

CHARLES DICKENS: In the year of his greatest success, a great trouble awaits him.

HUPPENSE: The conniving newspaper editor. The enemy of Dickens.

THE STREET KIDS:

BOBBY: A rough-and-tumble streetboy.

ELIZABETH: A quick-thinking street girl.

MARY: Wishing for simple things.

NATE: A perceptive street kid.

ANNIE: A little naive.

NESSA: A little bit tougher, the doubter.

KAREY: The quiet one.

DWIGHT: Makin' a list.

NEWSIE: Proudly proclaiming the awful work of Huppense.

GUITARIST: To play and introduce “Silent Night.”

SCROOGE: He’s back to dispense sage advice, or at least to create confusion.

EXTRAS: To mill about the stage. Should include a small child.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play tells the true story of Christmas as conveyed to Charles Dickens by Ebenezer Scrooge. It stands as a sort of sequel to Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. That may be a bit presumptuous on my part, but it sure makes for a fun play.

It was originally presented in two ways: straight through the first night and then as dinner theater the second night. The dinner production lasted approximately two hours. This included a thirty-minute break between Act I and Act II for serving dinner (to nearly 300 guests), and a fifteen-minute break between Act II and Act III for serving dessert. The play worked well in either format. It could also be performed as a dessert theatre.

MUSIC

There is a great deal of music throughout the play. Our music director found nineteenth-century arrangements of the songs. Some of the harmonies were truly wonderful, and it seemed to add a "jolly olde" feel to the proceedings. The traditional arrangements will work well also.

All the carols are familiar and should be found in most church hymnals with the possible exception of "He Is Born." Four arrangements of this traditional French carol are copyrighted and available through New Spring Publishing/ASCAP, Brentwood Music, Inc., P.O. Box 1028, Brentwood, TN 37024. (615) 261-6500.

SET AND STAGING

There is only one scene needed for the majority of the production — a London street in wintertime. We painted buildings on cardboard fronts and attached them to wooden frames. We used cotton batting (with glitter) on the ground and on building fronts to look like snow. We never had it snowing during the production — that becomes expensive. We had operating doors with knockers on Dickens' house, Huppense's house and an inn, but the inn is optional. In the original production carolers were staged inside it. For some of the carols they would swing open the inn windows and join in, or come out onto the street as the singing started. This way the songs could be built from few voices to many voices naturally.

The only other scene is Dickens' bedroom. One of the building fronts may swing out or be removed to reveal a bed behind it. I would recommend keeping Dickens' bedroom near Center Stage since much of the play's action takes place there — especially the last scene. We borrowed a Victorian bed from a church member. We also borrowed a couple of furniture pieces to finish the scene from a high school drama department. Your local high school may have various period pieces that they'd consent to loaning out.

LIGHTING

Although theatrical lighting is not essential, it can help to establish the mood or setting of the scenes. We used white light for the daytime scenes, and blue lights and spots for nighttime.

We also had lampposts set up along the front of the stage for the lamplighter to light. We constructed the posts out of four-foot cardboard tubes. The tube in the center of a carpet roll is just the right size. Ask your local carpet store to set some aside for you. Paint the tubes black and mount them to bases. Inexpensive plastic coach lights bought from a home improvement store may be mounted on top. We also attached microphones to the lampposts to mic the scene.

Our production department was fairly energetic and ran a wire up the tubes and installed flickery bulbs. As the Lamplighter made the motions of lighting each lamp, the light man simultaneously turned on an Off-stage rheostat, making the lamp appear lit. With each lamp that was lit, the light man would bring up another light, so each scene was lit from one side to the other and downlit the same way. It was very effective. The effect, however, is captured if stage lighting just comes up as each lamp is lit. No actual light needs to come on from inside the lamp if you prefer easier preparations.

The Lamplighter carried a brass candle lighter (convenient in any church) and a small stepladder. He climbed up the stepladder, pretended to light the lamp, and then came back down and went on to the next one.

BLOCKING

Since this is a street play, we had characters walking across the scene throughout. We even included some extras, such as a

chimney sweep, a woodcutter and shoppers just passing through the scene to keep it interesting.

Since the group of carolers have many songs to sing, it's important that they don't appear wooden; otherwise it gets boring very quickly. They need to be staged in different places in the scene, and perhaps to sing to passing extras, or characters passing through. They should come from different points on the stage as some of the songs start so they don't appear like a little clump traveling to and fro. (They can travel as a pack once in a while, but be careful not to overdo.)

COSTUMES

Most of the costumes were people's winter outerwear: coats, scarves, mittens and such. A few capes were made for men and women. Derby hats, top hats and caps are all acceptable. The main characters had rented costumes to play up the fashions of that era. Thrift stores are a great source for clothing that would fit this style. The kids can wear some ratty winter stuff — the older and holey-er the better. There are also some great books on Victorian costumes if you wish to have them made.

PROPS

Newspapers. There are lots of newspapers in this play. Make sure the newsies have them to sell to customers. You can make newspapers to look like the time, or you can use pages from the *Wall Street Journal*, since it has only text and few pictures. Color pictures on the newspapers ruin the mood.

Snowballs. We used styrofoam balls (from a hobby store) with some fishing weights pushed inside and then glued — make sure they are secure so no one gets nailed with the weight. The styrofoam can be molded a little to look like snowballs.

You can have numerous incidental props as desired to dress up the scene. For example, in our production Mrs. Cumberton carried a shopping basket with breads and vegetables, and the woodcutter carried a bundle of sticks. The director can determine how elaborate the props should be.

SONGS

ACT I, Scene 1

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

"Good Christian Men, Rejoice"

"God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen"

ACT I, Scene 2

"The First Noel"

"Silent Night"

ACT II, Scene 1

"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" (2 verses)

"He Is Born"

ACT II, Scene 2

"What Child Is This?"

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

ACT III

"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day"

(First verse)

"We Wish You a Merry Christmas"

"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day"

(Remaining verses)

"Joy to the World"

ACT I

Scene 1

(The stage is medium dark. Various people, including MRS. CUMBERTON and MISS COOKENS, stroll about.)

MR. NELL: *(Enters carrying a newspaper, reading it and commenting aloud as he walks.)* Ah, they've struck gold in California. Well, jolly good. Here in England we've struck ... *(Looks around)* we've struck soot. Let's see, what else have we here? Oh, what's this? Dear me, surely the world will come to an end.

MRS. CUMBERTON: *(Stopping as she passes him)* Mr. Nell, what would possess you to say such a thing?

MR. NELL: We have crossed the farthest boundary; our race has gone too far. We are but a short walk to the edge of eternity and shall be pushed off. I tell you, Mrs. Cumberton, we have surely gone too far.

MRS. CUMBERTON: How can you say such a thing? I am going no farther tonight than I ever have. The same distance, really.

MR. NELL: Not you or I, but all of us. Our race of humanity. Look at this paper. It tells of a fellow who has invented a most diabolical thing. He's an American, I might add. We never should have let them go on their own.

MISS COOKENS: *(Passing by, she stops.)* What is all the commotion, Mr. Nell?

MRS. CUMBERTON: The end of our race. We're about to be pushed off.

MR. NELL: You must be able to see it, Miss Cookens. It's that fool bloke Samuel Morse. He has invented something to send sound through wires. Surely this is the end of us all.

MISS COOKENS: I read it in the paper. What a wonderful thing. It's called a telegraph, and it's the newest thing. It will change our world.

MR. NELL: It is a terrible thing to always be inventin' new

- 1 **things. The world doesn't need new things.**
- 2 **MISS COOKENS:** I also read that the American President
- 3 **Tyler has married again.**
- 4 **MRS. CUMBERTON:** *(She begins talking to MISS COOKENS*
- 5 *and they leave together.)* Oh, do tell. I so enjoy the stories
- 6 of faraway places. Is it getting dark already? The days
- 7 seem so short.
- 8 **MR. NELL:** *(Shouting after them)* That's not news. *(To himself)*
- 9 They wouldn't know news if it bit them. They have no
- 10 idea of the danger this telegraph is ... *(The LAMPLIGHTER*
- 11 *enters from the side of the stage that is at MR. NELL's back. He*
- 12 *will light the first lamp. This is done by turning up additional*
- 13 *lights as each lamp is lit as MR. NELL complains about his*
- 14 *absence.)* Where are the lamplighters? Surely they
- 15 should be about. It's dark enough. The public
- 16 department in this town is growing ever worse. *(Exits.)*
- 17 **LAMPLIGHTER:** Six o'clock, and all is well. *(Continues*
- 18 *lighting lamps and then exits. CAROLER 1 enters and walks to*
- 19 *the first lamp.)*
- 20 **CAROLER 1:** *(To audience)* All is well. You'll notice the papers
- 21 tell of a changin' world. It's a bit frightenin'. It almost
- 22 feels like we're movin' too fast. But tonight, all is well.
- 23 At least for a while. *(As many CAROLERS as you desire in*
- 24 *addition to the production-minimum four enter and converge*
- 25 *under the streetlamps.)* Here we have carolers dressed in
- 26 the clothing of the day, bundled for winter. They huddle
- 27 under a gas lamp and usher in the season with joyous
- 28 strains of a favorite carol. Singing to no one and singing
- 29 to everyone. We issue an invitation to all of you good
- 30 people to join us in our quest.
- 31
- 32 **SONG: "O Come All Ye Faithful"**
- 33
- 34 **CAROLER 2:** We hope that the weather hasn't hindered your
- 35 season. This is a time when all that is good shines above

1 the darkness.

2 **CAROLER 3:** Oh, and what darkness we 'ave. Not just the
3 darkness of this cold night, but the darkness of a most
4 dreary time. Aye, we welcome the shine of Christmas.

5 **CAROLER 1:** Indeed we do, and it's at that point in the
6 season that we invite ye all to join us in a story most
7 odd. This is the one time a year when people are usually
8 drawn toward each other and toward our Creator, but
9 alas, it's not to be. *(They begin to walk, and as they do, other*
10 *people appear on the street, walking both directions, in a flurry*
11 *of activity.)* Our story unfolds here in London, the year of
12 1844. It's a cold winter ...

13 **CAROLER 4:** Yer bloomin' right it's cold. Me words are freezin'
14 in me mouth, an I 'ave to spit 'em out like ice cubes.

15 **CAROLER 1:** *(Dirty look, then continues.)* It's a cold winter, and
16 the shoppers are bundled against the cold. They have
17 their treasures to find.

18 **CAROLER 2:** And the poor and homeless?

19 **CAROLER 1:** Are huddled in the dark against the chimneys,
20 hopin' for a glimmer of warmth.

21 **CAROLER 4:** Are we gonna be outside this 'ole bloomin' play,
22 or can we wait it out in a nice pub somewhere?

23 **CAROLER 3:** I've forgotten the point.

24 **CAROLER 1:** My friends here can create confusion in three-
25 part harmony.

26 **CAROLER 4:** Well, I know me part in doin' that.

27 **CAROLER 1:** The point is this: A trouble is brewing in our
28 story, and as we take our next step, we shall be right in
29 the midst of it. Let us watch. *(FASWIGGIT approaches*
30 *DICKENS' door and bangs the knocker.)* The address is
31 nothing special, yet the resident is indeed. This is the
32 home of one Charles Dickens, master storyteller,
33 journalist, speaker of world renown. This year has been
34 a most exciting one in his world, as he has fallen into
35 the lap of blessing. You can see that he has a visitor. *(The*

1 *door slowly opens and DICKENS steps onto the doorstep.)*
 2 **DICKENS:** Good day, my friend. How can I be of service?
 3 **FASWIGGIT:** I would be Mr. Faswiggitt, and I represent the
 4 London charities. I have come to present you with a
 5 request for aid, but first we should stop our business,
 6 for carolers have come to prescribe a song for you, Mr.
 7 Dickens.
 8 **CAROLER 4:** 'Ey, what's up with that? We don't work for 'im.
 9 **CAROLER 1:** We would be honored to sing for you both. We
 10 sing of a time when good Christian men rejoice, so that
 11 shall be our song.
 12
 13 **SONG:** "Good Christian Men, Rejoice"
 14
 15 **DICKENS:** Jolly good. Indeed, such singing will find favor in
 16 God's eyes. Thank you. Now, Mr. Faswiggitt, you have
 17 come seeking a gift.
 18 **FASWIGGIT:** Much like last year, and the years before that.
 19 And I must say that you have never disappointed, Mr.
 20 Dickens. Your generosity has been the delight of many.
 21 *(DICKENS puts his arm around FASWIGGIT's shoulder and*
 22 *talks to him quietly.)*
 23 **CAROLER 1:** This year will be different. And such a surprise,
 24 for this was the greatest time of Mr. Dickens' career. He
 25 had published his most popular work, entitled *A*
 26 *Christmas Carol*, and had spent the year at the peak of
 27 fame, adoration and wealth. He had spent the year in
 28 generous giving and, without as much thought as was
 29 needed, had given away all that he had! Now in the
 30 season of expected giving, he has nothing left!
 31 **CAROLER 2:** He's a right decent fellow, Dickens is. He just
 32 got carried away with it all.
 33 **CAROLER 3:** I'm sure it's not a problem. There are lots of
 34 people with nothin' ta give.
 35 **DICKENS:** And that, Mr. Faswiggitt, is my most embarrassing

1 plight. I have nothing to give.

2 **FASWIGGIT:** You have nothing to apologize for. Your
3 kindness has spoken in the past. You have a Merry
4 Christmas, Mr. Dickens, even if you're not able to
5 contribute to the charities. *(Exits.)*

6 **DICKENS:** You are a kindness, Mr. Faswiggitt. A Merry
7 Christmas to you. *(DICKENS smiles halfheartedly, waves*
8 *and closes his door.)*

9 **CAROLER 1:** And over there is our problem. *(Points across the*
10 *stage to a darkened corner.)* That sad little man is none
11 other than Alistair Huppense, the editor of the
12 newspaper that Dickens doesn't work for. He has
13 pursued Dickens for years and has always fallen on
14 disappointment. His jealousy is fueled by a cold heart,
15 made all the colder by the harsh reality of a cold winter
16 as well as a cold reception from his audience. He is
17 looking for one special story to save his dying paper.
18 *(HUPPENSE emerges from the shadows, speaking to himself.)*

19 **HUPPENSE:** Nothing to give? The great Charles Dickens
20 has nothing to give? My, ain't that a ripe one. He has
21 more shillings than England has cobblestones. And
22 what a hypocrite he is. Tha's the great reformer, the
23 keeper of the poor, the defender of the downtrodden.
24 Right! He makes a fortune selling his story of Scrooge,
25 and 'e ain't no better 'imself. I wonder how the masses
26 that worship his pen would care to read about his
27 selfish condition. I think I have the next feature page.

28 **CAROLER 1:** And there are the very foundations of a
29 dangerous plot.

30 **CAROLER 2:** A plot that would intentionally bring harm
31 upon Mr. Dickens.

32 **HUPPENSE:** Oh, it's a joyous season indeed. I can do a great
33 service to the populous, I can. It's me journalistic duty
34 to blow the whistle on the blighter. And I'll be singin' an
35 'appy song as I sell a bundle of papers in the process.

1 *(Exits.)*

2 **CAROLER 1:** It's a hardened heart that draws joy from
3 another's trials.

4 **CAROLER 3:** But no one will believe it. It will fall upon deaf
5 ears. Especially at this time of the year, when people are
6 basking in the light of our Lord and the love he sent at
7 Christmastide.

8 **CAROLER 4:** And what pint have you been sippin'? The only
9 thing people hate more than a good scandal is no
10 scandal at all. Why, the populous of this or any other
11 city would elbow Christmas aside in a pauper's minute
12 in favor of some mud throwin'.

13 **CAROLER 3:** Such an outlook is a sad and sorry
14 commentary, if yer askin' for my opinion.

15 **CAROLER 2:** I won't have any of that. I'm here to sing
16 glorious songs of old, carols of praise. We need to do our
17 part to spread rest and comfort in the words of the
18 season. Come, let us earn our carolers' keep.

19
20 **SONG:** "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen"

21
22
23 **ACT I**
24 **Scene 2**
25

26 *(CAROLER 4 enters half-running, chased by a gaggle of*
27 *STREET KIDS: BOBBY, ELIZABETH, MARY, NATE, ANNIE,*
28 *NESSA, KAREY and DWIGHT. They pelt him with snowballs.)*

29 **CAROLER 4:** 'Old it right there. Ya don't know who it is yer
30 fussin' with. I've got right powerful connections with
31 Father Christmas. One word from me, and it's nothin'
32 for the lot of you.

33 **BOBBY:** Well, it's gonna be nothin' anyway. Let 'im 'ave it.

34 **ELIZABETH:** If you know Father Christmas, you can get us
35 some nice things.

- 1 **BOBBY:** Even some rotten things would be a nice change.
2 I'm used ta gettin' nothin'.
- 3 **CAROLER 4:** I'll do my best to make sure you get the same
4 this year.
- 5 **MARY:** Do you think he really knows Father Christmas?
6 **NATE:** What if he does? We shouldn't take any chances.
- 7 **ANNIE:** Yeah, he could be an angel or somethin'!
- 8 **CAROLER 4:** Well, I ain't no angel — at least not as I've
9 heard 'em described. But if ya want to be peltin' me with
10 snowballs, I'll have Father Christmas pass ya by, I will.
- 11 **ANNIE:** See, he does know 'im. I knew it was true.
- 12 **NESSA:** I think he's just pullin' our leg. Funnin' us.
- 13 **DWIGHT:** He is kinda funny-lookin'.
- 14 **CAROLER 4:** Oh, right. Look 'oo's talkin'. That's not what
15 she meant.
- 16 **NESSA:** It ain't nice to tell made-up stories.
- 17 **KAREY:** If he knows Father Christmas, he can get us some
18 things.
- 19 **BOBBY:** A drum is what I would be lookin' for. A real one
20 that I could play for parades. I get a drum, or you get a
21 snowball.
- 22 **CAROLER 4:** That ain't showin' much Christian charity.
- 23 **ANNIE:** Do we just tell you what we want?
- 24 **CAROLER 4:** Well, I'm not sure that he really listens to me.
- 25 **ELIZABETH:** I'd like a fancy doll with an angel's face.
- 26 **NATE:** And a pair of leather boots.
- 27 **DWIGHT:** I'd need ta get a boat ... that floats.
- 28 **CAROLER 4:** (*Pleading*) I ain't got no pull to get ya any gifts.
- 29 **NESSA:** He's all big talk and not much more. A fat lot a'
30 stories.
- 31 **KAREY:** You stop that, Nessa. That ain't very nice.
- 32 **DWIGHT:** A red boat. I like red.
- 33 **MARY:** And a rich wool coat. And it can have a few holes in
34 it. Just none in the front.
- 35 **CAROLER 4:** (*Frustrated and louder*) I ain't makin' a list here.

1 **BOBBY:** I'd go for a great Christmas ham. Size of a wagon.
 2 Set on a table, with silver to eat with.
 3 **NATE:** And a plum pudding.
 4 **CAROLER 4:** I ain't givin' you any bloomin' pudding.
 5 (*CAROLER 1 walks up behind him and stands with arms*
 6 *folded as he rants.*) I ain't givin' you a coat, a boot, a ham,
 7 or anything else. And especially no drum; this
 8 neighborhood don't need no drum.
 9 **ANNIE:** But what about Father Christmas?
 10 **CAROLER 4:** I don't know Father Christmas, and I wouldn't
 11 talk to 'im about you if I did.
 12 **NESSA:** Told ya so.
 13 **CAROLER 1:** Well, isn't that a nice dose of Christmas cheer?
 14 And you saved it for the children, too.
 15 **CAROLER 4:** These aren't children, they're short little
 16 monsters all dressed up to look like children. It's a
 17 disguise.
 18 **CAROLER 1:** I see little angels, with a joy and a light that
 19 will brighten the day.
 20 **CAROLER 4:** Well, I ain't seein' that. I've known 'em for a
 21 great long while, and joy ain't the word that springs to
 22 mind.
 23 **CAROLER 1:** Children, a song for our doubting friend.
 24 **BOBBY:** I don't know as we should. He hasn't been very nice
 25 to us.
 26 **CAROLER 1:** Then you shall be the fine example. Do you
 27 know "The First Noel"?
 28 **ELIZABETH:** That and many others. Let's do sing it.
 29
 30 **SONG:** "The First Noel"
 31
 32 **CAROLER 1:** Now what do you have to say for yourself?
 33 **CAROLER 4:** I'm right ashamed, I am. (*A newspaper hawker,*
 34 *the NEWSIE, enters from the other side, shouting attention to*
 35 *himself and waving the front page. MR. NELL, MRS.*

- 1 **CUMBERTON** and **MISS COOKENS** also enter from various
2 points.)
- 3 **NEWSIE:** Extra, extra! Christmas shocker! Charles Dickens
4 is a Scrooge!
- 5 **MR. NELL:** Hey there. I'll take a copy. Let me see that story.
6 *(Reads out loud.)* Author Charles Dickens has tarnished
7 this joyous season with his selfish desire to hoard his
8 vast wealth.
- 9 **NEWSIE:** Dickens hoards his wealth!
- 10 **MRS. CUMBERTON:** I'll take a copy. I have always liked his
11 works. But I had no idea what a terrible creature he
12 really is.
- 13 **NEWSIE:** Dickens is a terrible creature! Get your copy.
- 14 **MR. NELL:** *(Continues to read the paper.)* He has turned a deaf
15 ear on the most needy, as he snatched his farthings out
16 of the mouths of the most poor and the most
17 downtrodden. His selfishness ...
- 18 **MRS. CUMBERTON:** *(Also reading the paper, picking up the*
19 *sentence that MR. NELL was reading)* ... is only exceeded by
20 his fortune, which was given him by common
21 Londoners everywhere, and now ...
- 22 **MR. NELL:** ... at the time when he should give a small part
23 back, he turns away. This man is truly a Scrooge for our
24 age.
- 25 **NEWSIE:** A Scrooge for our age! Get your copy.
- 26 **MISS COOKENS:** I'll have a copy. *(Takes a paper from the*
27 *NEWSIE, who then exits.)* It's right here in print. Listen to
28 this: The great Charles Dickens, when asked for a
29 donation ...
- 30 **MRS. CUMBERTON:** ... refused to yield even a farthing ...
- 31 **MR. NELL:** ... to help the poor and destitute of this city. He
32 laughed in the face ...
- 33 **MRS. CUMBERTON:** ... of adversity, and instead chose to sit
34 in his fine estate and count his riches, as the poor ...
- 35 **MISS COOKENS:** ... lay huddled in the streets, dying under

1 the weight of a brutal Christmas season. With heavy
2 hearts, we look for answers. But there is one thing we
3 know for sure ...

4 **MR. NELL, MRS. CUMBERTON, MISS COOKENS:** *(Together)*
5 We have all been betrayed by Charles Dickens!
6 *(DICKENS enters and hears the last line.)*

7 **DICKENS:** What is all the commotion about? *(They all three*
8 *turn and pelt him with their newspapers, shouting at him and*
9 *hurrying Off-stage. DICKENS picks up a paper and reads the*
10 *headline. His head drops, the paper falls from his hand and he*
11 *slowly walks to his door and exits.)*

12 **CAROLER 4:** That ain't right. He knows it ain't right.

13 **CAROLER 1:** But it's in print, so it must be true.

14 **MARY:** That's a mean thing what happened.

15 **ELIZABETH:** Should we sing 'im a song?

16 **CAROLER 4:** I say it can't hurt. The bloke got a right bit a'
17 bad news. What song do you kids like?

18 **KAREY:** Somethin' soft to make him smile. *(In the background*
19 *a guitarist begins to play "Silent Night." He can be on a street*
20 *corner or sitting in a café or pub.)*

21 **BOBBY:** Hold on, there's our song for 'im. *(Shouts at guitarist.)*
22 'Ey, mister, come and play over here.

23 **GUITARIST:** This song is from my home in Germany. I play
24 it as it was first written. *(After he plays a few bars, a few*
25 *KIDS start, then the rest of the KIDS join. CAROLER 4 joins*
26 *in, and then CAROLER 1.)*

27

28 **SONG:** "Silent Night"

29

30 **CAROLER 1:** I think that probably helped. Come on, let's go
31 inside. It's getting late.

32 **LAMPLIGHTER:** *(Enters and puts out lamps, shouting as he*
33 *does.)* It's the hour of curfew. The little ones need to be
34 home. All is calm. Time to move on. *(All exit.)*

35

ACT II

Scene 1

(The stage is dark. LAMPLIGHTER enters and proceeds from lamp to lamp as he talks. As he "lights" each lamp, the stage gets a little brighter.)

LAMPLIGHTER: Fair day is done. Be not afraid. All is well.

(CAROLER 1 enters.)

CAROLER 1: The dark weighs heavy in the souls of people.

It seems to make the cold colder and the heart heavier.

Darkness is such a breeding ground for fear. Ah, but a bright little spark from the lamplighter can vanquish doubts and push back the night.

LAMPLIGHTER: The night descends and all is well. *(Finishes lighting and exits.)*

CAROLER 1: It does sort of warm ya, doesn't it? *(Singing begins Off-stage with one of the CAROLERS, who then walks on. Then the rest of the CAROLERS begin singing from different places in the room and join together On-stage to finish the song.)*

SONG: "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

CAROLER 2: I do so love that song. It takes me in me mind's eye to that time when Jesus was born. I almost feel like I'm there, lookin' into the face of our Savior. That's a jolly great carol.

CAROLER 3: It moves me too. I think of the prophet Isaiah calling for the Savior's birth hundreds of years before the time. Tha's too big for me to understand.

CAROLER 4: I guess it's pretty good ... if ya like slow songs.

CAROLER 3: You don't judge the value of the song by its pace.

CAROLER 4: I sure do. The song's gotta 'ave a little pep to it. It's a might bit chilly out, and a slow song allows the

- 1 **opportunity for me to freeze up right solid.**
- 2 **CAROLER 1:** *(Exasperated)* **And what would your solution be?**
- 3 **CAROLER 4:** **I think somethin' with a bit a' spunk to it would**
- 4 **work. 'Ow about "Don't Drop Me in the Snow Bank o'**
- 5 **Life, O Lord"?**
- 6 **CAROLER 2:** **That ain't a Christmas carol. Ya gotta pick a**
- 7 **Christmas carol.**
- 8 **CAROLER 3:** **How about "He Is Born"? That's a right fine**
- 9 **tune, with tidings of the season.**
- 10 **CAROLER 4:** *(With disgust)* **That would work ... if ya like**
- 11 **French songs.**
- 12 **CAROLER 1:** **And "Silent Night" is a German song. You**
- 13 **appear to be arguing for no reason. The nation of origin**
- 14 **makes no difference if the truth is in the song.**
- 15 **CAROLER 4:** **Oh, all right. Let's sing "He Is Born" ... written**
- 16 **by some French guy.**
- 17
- 18 **SONG: "He Is Born"**
- 19
- 20 **CAROLER 1:** **Let's pause our singing, for this is the very**
- 21 **moment that a most peculiar visitor is waking a**
- 22 **sleeping Dickens who had retired early, hoping to avoid**
- 23 **his troubles. *(Two of the CAROLERS open the building front***
- 24 ***to reveal a bed with DICKENS sleeping and SCROOGE sitting***
- 25 ***on his bed with a rolled-up newspaper.)***
- 26 **SCROOGE:** *(Whacks DICKENS with the newspaper.)* **Wake up!**
- 27 **It's early. The night's a-wastin'.**
- 28 **DICKENS:** *(Wakes with fright.)* **What! What's going on? Who**
- 29 **are you?! What are you doing in my room? *(Jumps up and***
- 30 ***stands on the bed.)* Get out! Get out of my house, you**
- 31 **burglar. You thief! You ruffian!**
- 32 **SCROOGE:** *(Aghast)* **You think me a burglar? How many**
- 33 **burglars awaken their prey?**
- 34 **DICKENS:** **I don't know. I've never been burgled. All right. A**
- 35 **murderer, then. You are here for a foul purpose.**

- 1 SCROOGE: Again, the same answer. I wouldn't have
2 awakened you. I would've trundled you up and pitched
3 you out the window into the river, all the while asleep.
- 4 DICKENS: Who are you to awaken me so rudely in my own
5 home?
- 6 SCROOGE: I am hurt that you don't recognize me. After all
7 that you and I have been through this year. I made you
8 famous. It *was* a story about me, you know.
- 9 DICKENS: (*Hesitantly, leaning to look closely*) Scrooge?
- 10 SCROOGE: (*Whacks him again on the head with the paper.*) Exactly.
11 Who did you expect? The Ghost of Christmas Past?
- 12 DICKENS: I didn't expect anyone. Certainly not you! You
13 don't exist. This is all a dream.
- 14 SCROOGE: Then you won't feel this. (*He whacks him again*
15 *with the newspaper.*)
- 16 DICKENS: Stop whacking me with that newspaper.
- 17 SCROOGE: (*Unfolds paper.*) The whacking has already been
18 done with this newspaper. According to the leading
19 page, you are quite a lowly fellow. Quite a tyrant.
- 20 DICKENS: It's an awful thing.
- 21 SCROOGE: And to make it all worse, you've brought down
22 my good name. The editor keeps referring to you as a
23 Scrooge. I resent that. Didn't he read the end of the
24 book? I saw the error of my ways and changed. I am
25 well respected and much loved.
- 26 DICKENS: You don't have to tell me. I wrote it, remember?
27 This whole incident has soured me on people. They
28 have turned so quickly. The snow that falls on London
29 is turned ever black, not by the soot of the chimneys,
30 but by the hatred of people's hearts. It's all a humbug.
- 31 SCROOGE: (*Startled by DICKENS using his phrase, he corrects*
32 *him.*) Bah, humbug.
- 33 DICKENS: Bah, humbug!
- 34 SCROOGE: Nope, it just doesn't sound right on you. (*Pause*)
35 Let's go. Get dressed. Or better yet, don't get dressed.

1 You had me sally forth all over London in my
2 nightclothes. (*Pauses, remembering.*) Either way, I don't
3 care. Just be quick about you.

4 **DICKENS:** Where are we going?

5 **SCROOGE:** We're going out.

6

7

ACT II

8

Scene 2

9

10 (*CAROLERS enter and stand under a streetlamp.*)

11 **CAROLER 1:** The great mystery of Christmas is how a small
12 child could be born into the world and yet be so much
13 more than a child. How could this babe be the Savior of
14 the world?

15

16 **SONG:** "What Child Is This?"

17

18 (*During the last few lines of the song, DICKENS and SCROOGE*
19 *enter and pass in front of the CAROLERS. DICKENS stops to*
20 *listen. SCROOGE continues walking and after a bit, realizes he*
21 *has lost DICKENS. He then goes back to get him.*)

22 **SCROOGE:** (*As the song ends, SCROOGE grabs his coat and drags*
23 *him away.*) Come on, Dickens. (*They stop at the front of*
24 *HUPPENSE's house. SCROOGE points to the front door.*) We
25 have business here.

26 **DICKENS:** But I don't know who lives here.

27 **SCROOGE:** He knows you. It's all right. He's expecting you.
28 Go ahead — knock. (*DICKENS hesitantly knocks. The door*
29 *is answered by HUPPENSE.*)

30 **HUPPENSE:** Uh, yes, who is it? Oh, my word. It's you. What
31 ... what are you doing 'ere? Don't hurt me.

32 **DICKENS:** (*To SCROOGE*) It doesn't look like he was
33 expecting me.

34 **SCROOGE:** Maybe I was wrong on that count. But he does
35 know who you are.

1 **DICKENS:** Who are you?

2 **HUPPENSE:** What do you mean, 'oo am I? You are standing
3 at me door. Do you mean to tell me that you don't know
4 'oo I am? Then good day. I have other pursuits.

5 **SCROOGE:** It's Huppense. Huppense, the nasty editor.

6 **DICKENS:** (*Looking back and forth from SCROOGE to*
7 *HUPPENSE*) Wait! It's Huppense? Yes. It's Huppense. Of
8 course it is.

9 **HUPPENSE:** 'Oo are you talking to?

10 **DICKENS:** You can't see him?

11 **SCROOGE:** He probably can't. The lighting is bad.

12 **DICKENS:** I am so confused by events.

13 **HUPPENSE:** Be confused elsewhere, and remove yourself
14 from me doorstep.

15 **SCROOGE:** Go on. Clear this matter up.

16 **DICKENS:** I need to speak to you about the rather
17 destructive article you put forth.

18 **HUPPENSE:** It's all true. Prove otherwise, and I write a
19 retraction.

20 **DICKENS:** Can't we speak of this over a cup of tea and a
21 cordial tone?

22 **HUPPENSE:** You ain't workin' your wiles on me, Dickens.
23 You've 'ad your chance to work with me and refused it.
24 I've offered you opportunities at me paper numerous
25 times, and it was you that refused.

26 **DICKENS:** Those were your letters? My apologies for not
27 responding. But I have no desire to work for your
28 paper. And this episode is just such a reason why. You
29 have forfeited the truth for the sake of scandal.

30 **SCROOGE:** Get to the part about Scrooge's reputation.

31 **DICKENS:** (*To SCROOGE*) If he doesn't care about the truth,
32 do you think he will concern himself with the
33 reputation of a fictional character?

34 **HUPPENSE:** And now you're talking to empty air.

35 **SCROOGE:** That hurt.

- 1 **HUPPENSE:** I'm quite done, Mr. Dickens. And me next issue
2 will tell how you've lost your bloomin' mind! *(He slams*
3 *the door.)*
- 4 **SCROOGE:** *(He turns and begins walking back to DICKENS' home.)*
5 That didn't go at all as I had planned. Bah, humbug.
- 6 **DICKENS:** Yes, humbug. Now you've gone and made it
7 worse.
- 8 **SCROOGE:** What do you mean, I've made it worse? You have
9 free will, Mr. Dickens, and chose to participate. I can't
10 force you to act a certain way or do a certain thing. You
11 are, after all, responsible for your own actions.
12 *(Sarcastic)* This isn't a story where a certain author can
13 make his characters do as he desires.
- 14 **DICKENS:** And now I have you quarreling with me. A jolly
15 great season this is.
- 16 **SCROOGE:** Perhaps one of the ghosts of Christmas such-
17 and-such could have done it better.
- 18 **DICKENS:** Oh, never mind that. *(As they pass the Inn,*
19 *DICKENS stops to look in.)* Scrooge, look here. They are
20 celebrating the flaming of the pudding. What a
21 wonderful memory that brings, even as young as last
22 Christmastide, when friends and family would gather
23 around the copper pot dancing on the fire of the hearth,
24 each taking turns stirring the plum pudding.
- 25 **SCROOGE:** *(Interrupting)* Why don't they call it beef pudding
26 or fruit pudding? It's a great concoction of many things.
- 27 **DICKENS:** Exactly, Scrooge, just like this earth is. We are all a
28 great concoction of people the Lord has stirred together.
- 29 **SCROOGE:** Wouldn't that be more of a fruitcake?
- 30 **DICKENS:** Nonetheless. We would stir it so precisely, using
31 only a great wooden spoon; for the wood represented
32 the manger of the Christ child. And only in a clockwise
33 turn, to signal the passing of every year till the Lord
34 comes again.
- 35 **SCROOGE:** And then the spirits are applied and ignited.

1 **Probably to burn off the taste.**
2 **DICKENS:** Not so. It represents the light of the Lord, shining
3 **brightly at this time of year.**
4 **SCROOGE:** It is a heartwarming scene for those among it.
5 But it must be a melancholy one indeed for one such as
6 yourself who stands here on the outside looking in. Who
7 feels that the tide of the world has turned against him.
8 *(He begins to elaborate grandly.)* Who feels that all is lost,
9 that all is black. That there isn't a hope to be found ...
10 **DICKENS:** *(Harshly)* That's enough, Scrooge! I can find my
11 own misery without the benefit of your guidance.
12 **SCROOGE:** I'm just trying to help.
13 **DICKENS:** *(Sarcastic)* Just trying to help. Wait, there is a way
14 you can help. Loan me some money. I'll donate it to the
15 charities, and this will all go away.
16 **SCROOGE:** Do you hear yourself? Here's a little clue for you,
17 my friend; they won't be able to see my money any more
18 than they can see me. Besides, money won't solve your
19 problem. That's not what Christmas is all about. Or do
20 you need to read the book again? *(They arrive at*
21 *DICKENS' home. SCROOGE goes in first.)* Are you coming?
22 **DICKENS:** I'll be in after a bit. I'm going to sit out here and
23 listen to the carolers. *(He dusts the snow off a corner of his*
24 *step and sits down. CAROLERS enter from Off-stage.)*
25 **CAROLER 1:** *(Looks skyward, almost in prayer.)* A song of hope
26 springs from the past as we look back at that time so
27 long ago to a place where the hopes and fears of
28 humanity through all the years are met in thee tonight.
29
30 **SONG:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem"
31
32
33
34
35



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