A MODERN Christmas Carol

By Ruth Ann Pattee

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Pioneer Drama Service, Inc.
A MODERN CHRISTMAS CAROL
by RUTH ANN PATTEE
Based on the classic Dickens tale "A Christmas Carol"

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In Order of Appearance)

EBENEZER ......................................also known as Ed, a bully
LAURA ..............................................friend of Ed’s
DAVE .............................................another
NICK .............................................another
BETH ..............................................another
ROBBIE ............................................a kid Ed picks on
MRS. STONE .....................................Ed’s mother
KAITLIN .............................................a friend of Ed’s who has moved
..................out of town
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST ..........female
YOUNG ED ......................................three or four years younger than
..............................Ed
YOUNG NICK .....................................same
YOUNG KAITLIN ................................same
YOUNG BETH .....................................same
YOUNG DAVE .....................................same
YOUNG LAURA .....................................same
MRS. O’HARA .....................................Kaitlin’s mother
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT .. a boy or girl
MRS. LOUDIN .....................................Beth’s mother
EVE ................................................Robbie’s little sister
MEGAN ............................................another
MRS. HOFFMAN .................................Robbie’s mother
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE .. a female hooded figure
SETTING

Present day.

This play takes advantage of area staging. Scenes are designated by shifts in stage lighting. Action should stay fluid and continuous. All areas should be capable of being lit separately. EXTREME DOWN RIGHT is ED’S bedroom, which can be suggested simply with a bed and an end table with a lamp, phone and an alarm clock. EXTREME DOWN LEFT represents a school hallway, which may be designated by a painted backdrop of lockers. Areas CENTER, STAGE RIGHT and STAGE LEFT alternate as various living rooms complete with sofa, Christmas tree and a few small props. STAGE RIGHT also serves as a “nightmare classroom,” indicated by a school desk piled high with papers and books.
Center living room set will move stage left and stage right to represent different living rooms.

Desk is brought on for later scene.

For preview only
LIGHTS UP DOWN LEFT: A hallway in Hidden Valley School. DAVE, NICK, LAURA and ED ENTER THROUGH AUDIENCE, or from RIGHT to LEFT, along the APRON.

ED: So, Laura, you did that English paper for me, right? I need it. It's my next class.

LAURA: (Turns to him.) Yeah, I did it. Although I don't know why. (Looks through her binder for the paper.)

DAVE: Ed, when are you going to start doing your own homework?

ED: Come on, you guys know I stink at English. You wouldn't want me to fail and have to go to summer school, would ya? Think of all the cool things we wouldn't be able to do.

NICK: No, think of all the cool things you wouldn't be able to do.

LAURA: (Gives him the report.) Here it is. Now stop bugging me, and do your own work!

ED: Thanks, Laura, I'm sure it's a great paper. Hey, wait a minute!


ED: That's it! That's what I mean!

DAVE: What's wrong with it?

ED: You know, the part after "book report" and before "Stone."

NICK: Ohhh, you mean Ebenez—

ED: Don't say it!

NICK: Why not, man? That's your name.

ED: No, it's not. I changed my name and you know it.

NICK: Where did you get such a weird name, anyway?

ED: Some old relative of my dad's. Came from England a hundred years ago or something.

DAVE: Well, maybe you changed your name, but the school didn't. It still says "Ebenezer Stone" on the attendance report.

ED: I'm trying to retrain them. (Looks at his watch.) It's too late for this paper. But try to remember for next time, okay?

LAURA: Don't worry. There won't be a next time. (BETH ENTERS from RIGHT.)

For preview only
ED: Hey, Beth. How’re ya doin’?
BETH: Okay. What’s up?
ED: I’m having a little trouble in math, and I know you’re real good at it.
BETH: I do okay.
ED: I was hoping you could help me out. I have some missing assignments to make up.
BETH: Do you want me to help you with the assignments?
ED: Actually, I was hoping you’d just do them for me.
BETH: Forget it, Ed. But I’ll help you do it yourself if you want me to. Laura, you’re coming over tomorrow night, right?
LAURA: I wouldn’t miss it.
DAVE: What’s going on?
BETH: We’re going caroling around my neighborhood. It will be Christmas Eve, after all. And we’re going to ask people to give a can of food or something for the food bank in town.
LAURA: With all the food we collect, we’ll help families who don’t have a lot have a great Christmas dinner.
DAVE: That sounds cool. Can I come?
NICK: Yeah, me too.
BETH: How about you, Ed?
ED: Caroling? You mean croaking like a bunch of toads out in the freezing cold? No thanks.
LAURA: Come on, we used to do fun things like this all the time.
ED: Yeah, when I was, like, five years old.
BETH: Remember when we all used to get together every Christmas at Kaitlin’s house? That was so great.
ED: That wasn’t so great. We only ever got one present apiece.
LAURA: Presents? Is that all you remember?
ED: Well, now my parents get me all the presents I want. They’ll get me anything.
DAVE: (Aside. To NICK.) Too bad they won’t hang out with him.
ED: What did you say?
NICK: Everyone knows your parents are too busy making money to spend Christmas with you.
ED: So they work on Christmas. At least I get the best presents.
DAVE: Some trade off.
ED: (Threatening.) Are you trying to make something of it?
BETH: Knock it off, you guys. Ed can’t help it if his parents have to work. Ed, do you want to come over to my house Christmas Day for dinner? It’ll be just like Christmas was before Kaitlin moved away. Games, good food, family—
ED: Nah, that’s kids’ stuff. I’m getting a great new computer game I’m gonna play.
DAVE: How do you know you’re getting it?
ED: I peeked!
DAVE: Of course you did. (SCHOOL BELL RINGS.)
NICK: Come on, guys, we’re outta here.
DAVE: See you tomorrow.
LAURA: Yeah. Nick, you can hold the songbook, but don’t sing.
NICK: What? Why not?
LAURA: Because… I’ve heard you sing.
NICK: Awww… (DAVE, NICK and LAURA EXIT RIGHT.)
BETH: You’re sure you don’t want to come with us tomorrow?
ED: No way.
BETH: And you won’t come over for Christmas dinner?
ED: I’ll think about it.
BETH: Good. (EXIT RIGHT.)
ED: Not. (ROBBIE ENTERS through AUDIENCE or RIGHT along apron.) Hey, Robbie.
ROBBIE: Uh-oh. (Turns to EXIT.)
ED: (Grabs ROBBIE’S arm.) Hey, pal, where’re ya goin’?
ROBBIE: Down the hall. To class.
ED: Down the hall, hrm? Guess that means you owe me some money.
ROBBIE: Come on, Ed. I’ve already given you five bucks this week.
ED: Yeah, and I’d like to get five more out of you today. I’ve gotta do my Christmas shopping.
ROBBIE: I don’t have five dollars.
ED: Yeah? You always have money. I think you’re rich. You can afford to give me five bucks.
ROBBIE: (Suddenly brave.) And what are you gonna do if I don’t?
ED: (Makes a fist.) I’m gonna give you a Christmas present. A black eye!
ROBBIE: All right, all right. I’ve got three-fifty. Does that make you happy?
ED: Yes! (ROBBIE digs the money out of his pocket, gives it to ED and runs OFF RIGHT. Looks OFF after ROBBIE.) Aww, he can afford it.
(BLACKOUT. ED moves DOWN RIGHT, picks up a comic book and lies on his bed. LIGHTS COME UP on ED after a few beats.)
MRS. STONE: (From OFF RIGHT.) Ebbie! It’s Christmas Eve. Don’t you want to help decorate the tree?
ED: Huh! What for?
MRS. STONE: ENTERS UP RIGHT.) Your friend Beth called. She invited all of us to her house for Christmas dinner.
ED: I thought you were working all day.
MRS. STONE: Well, yes. I’m sorry about that, but you know the hotel is very busy on the holidays. Dad and I can’t let them down.
ED: I know. So forget it. I’ll be okay.
MRS. STONE: We can still go to Beth’s house when we get home.
ED: Yeah, well, whatever.
MRS. STONE: Okay, then. Good night. Merry Christmas. (EXITS UP RIGHT.)
ED: Humph! (Reaches over and turns off his lamp. LIGHTS GO DOWN. A GOLDEN LIGHT COMES UP on CENTER STAGE, revealing KAITLIN, who is dressed in white.)
KAITLIN: Ebbie! Ebbie!
ED: Huh? What? Mom?
KAITLIN: No, you dope! It’s me, Kaitlin.
ED: Kaitlin! How can you be here? Oh my gosh, you’re not… I mean… are you—
KAITLIN: No, I’m not dead! Gross! No, I’m appearing to you in a dream. I need to tell you something.
ED: You couldn’t have just called on the phone? Don’t you have e-mail?
KAITLIN: You wouldn’t have listened if I tried to talk to you that way. This is really important. Ed, you’ve messed up.
ED: Messed up? How?
KAITLIN: If you don’t know, you are really messed up. When are you going to start doing your own homework? Why don’t you leave that poor kid Robbie alone? Why don’t you want to celebrate Christmas?

ED: Oh, man, you sound just like my friends. They’re such a drag.

KAITLIN: You’re lucky you still have friends at the rate you’re going.

ED: If you came to me in a dream to lecture me, you might as well leave.

KAITLIN: Hey, it’s all the same to me if you want to be a bully and blow off Christmas, but you’ve got to know the consequences.

ED: Which are?

KAITLIN: If you keep on going this way, you’re going to be transferred. You’ll have to leave your friends and family and go to the loneliest school in the universe!

ED: School stinks already. How can it get worse?

KAITLIN: You would be the only student. Just you and 30 teachers.

ED: (Screams.) Aaahh!

KAITLIN: Oh, good, I got your attention.

ED: That’s impossible. There’s no such school.

KAITLIN: Yes, there is. I know. I’ve seen it.

ED: You? But you’re a great student.

KAITLIN: Was. I messed up, too. I couldn’t forgive my parents for making me move. I quit doing homework and turned away from all my friends. I lost my Christmas spirit. I even stopped calling you.

ED: I noticed.

KAITLIN: One night I went to bed and woke up in school. The loneliest school in the universe. I was the only student.

ED: Nasty!

KAITLIN: But I got out! And there’s hope for you, too.

ED: How did you get out?

KAITLIN: I became a tutor for younger students. And a junior Brownie Scout leader.

ED: Nooooo! Anything but that.

KAITLIN: I get the feeling that you’re not taking this seriously.

ED: Well, gee, Kait, you already admitted this is a dream. So why should I believe it’s real?
KAITLIN: Okay, you asked for it. I’m told I can bring out the big guns.

ED: What, you’re going to throw math books at me?

KAITLIN: No. Ghosts.

ED: (Bursts out laughing.) Yeah, right.

KAITLIN: (In a booming voice.) Three spirits will visit you. Expect the Ghost of Christmas Past at midnight tonight, followed by the Ghost of Christmas Present and the Ghost of Christmas Future. (Resuming normal voice.) Since you don’t care about Christmas, I figured you wouldn’t mind missing a little sleep on Christmas Eve.

ED: Okay… sounds like you believe this. I’m going back to sleep. (Rolls over.)

KAITLIN: (As golden light starts to fade on her.) Just remember, you can change your fate… (The lights fade to black. A few moments later a golden light comes up again in ED’s room. GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST ENTERS RIGHT. She is a young girl dressed in a Christmas party dress. She tiptoes around ED’s bed, picks up the alarm clock and puts it up to ED’s ear. ALARM CLOCK BUZZES.)

PAST: Hey, kid! Wake up!

ED: Aaahh! What? (Sits up in bed.) Give me that! (Takes the clock and puts it back.) Who are you?

PAST: (Sweet.) Hello. I am the Ghost of Christmas Past. Are you ready to go?

ED: Go where? (Gets out of bed.)

PAST: To your past, of course.

ED: Wow! Cool dream.

PAST: Oh, it’s not a dream, Ebenezer. We’re going back in time to when you knew what the Christmas spirit was all about.

ED: This would make a really great movie! Traveling back through years of time…

PAST: Your past is closer than you think. Let’s go! (They walk CENTER as the lights go down at DOWN RIGHT and come up at CENTER STAGE in KAITLIN’S house in the past, where a living room is set with a sofa, a decorated Christmas tree with presents underneath, etc. YOUNG BETH, YOUNG DAVE, YOUNG NICK, YOUNG LAURA and YOUNG ED ENTER with a board game and sit on the living room rug, setting up the game. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST and ED stand to the LEFT of the action.)
ED: Hey, that’s me! (YOUNG ED looks up at the AUDIENCE.)

PAST: Yes, look how nicely you’re all playing together.

YOUNG ED: Nick! You cheated.

YOUNG NICK: Did not!

YOUNG ED: Did, too!

YOUNG KAITLIN: (ENTERS RIGHT with a bowl of popcorn.) Cut it out, you guys. It’s Christmas! (Puts down the popcorn. YOUNG ED takes a handful.)

YOUNG BETH: Ed! That’s to string around the tree!

YOUNG ED: That’s a waste of popcorn, if you ask me.

YOUNG DAVE: I agree! (Takes some popcorn.)

YOUNG LAURA: There’s not going to be much left!

YOUNG NICK: Oh, well! (Grabs popcorn.)

YOUNG KAITLIN: Come on, girls! If you can’t beat ’em… (Also grabs popcorn. EVERYONE eats popcorn and laughs.)

PAST: You sure had a good time with them.

ED: Yeah, it was great to be with them on Christmas. My parents had to work.

PAST: But you don’t spend Christmas with them anymore. What happened?

ED: Kaitlin moved away. It wasn’t as fun after that.

MRS. O’HARA: (ENTERS RIGHT.) Okay, everybody, it’s time to open your presents!

KIDS: (Ad-lib.) All right! Yeah! Great!

MRS. O’HARA: (Hands out presents.) This one is for you, Beth. And this one has your name on it, Nick. Here, Dave, here’s yours. And Laura. And here’s one for you, Ebenezer!

KIDS: (Ad-lib.) Oh, boy, look what I got! Just what I always wanted! Thanks, Mrs. O’Hara!

YOUNG ED: (Unwrapping his gift, a stuffed dog.) Oh, uh, thanks.

YOUNG KAITLIN: Do you like it?

YOUNG ED: (Thoughtfully.) Yes, I do. And listen, everybody, I have presents for you, too! (Takes small, wrapped gifts out of his pockets and hands them out. ALL ad-lib thanks.)

YOUNG KAITLIN: Ed, this bracelet is so pretty! Where did you get it?

End of script preview.
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

ONSTAGE: Row of lockers (real or a painted flat) (school hallway, EXTREME DOWN LEFT); bed, bedside table with alarm clock, phone and lamp (ED’S room, EXTREME DOWN RIGHT); sofa, pillows, Christmas tree with wrapped gifts underneath (KAITLIN’S living room, CENTER); same sofa with different throws and pillows, coffee table, Christmas tree with wrapped gifts underneath (BETH’S living room, STAGE RIGHT); same sofa with different pillows and throws, miniature Christmas tree with 3 small wrapped gifts underneath, small table (ROBBIE’S living room, STAGE LEFT); student desk piled high with papers (classroom, STAGE RIGHT).

BROUGHT ON: Schoolbooks, backpacks, notebooks, etc. (DAVE, NICK, LAURA, ED, BETH, ROBBIE); typed book report (LAURA); money (ROBBIE); comic book (ED); board game, dice (YOUNG ED, YOUNG NICK); bowl of popcorn (YOUNG KAITLIN); four wrapped Christmas presents, one wrapped stuffed dog (MRS. O’HARA); a wrapped box containing bracelet, a wrapped candle (YOUNG ED); two shopping bags containing canned goods (BETH, NICK); tray with four mugs, platter with dome cover (MRS. LOUDIN); silverware, plates, napkins (DAVE, NICK, LAURA, BETH, MRS. STONE); four chairs (ED, NICK, DAVE).

SOUND EFFECTS

School bell, alarm clock, doorbell.
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