

A CHRISTMAS CAROL WITH APOLOGIES TO DICKENS

A Skit

By
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ABIGAIL SCROOGE: She is the epitome of the School “Marm.” She wears horn-rim glasses, carries an oversized briefcase and umbrella (*mainly used as a weapon*), and is dressed in outlandishly outmoded apparel. She is stout, uppity and rather domineering.

JOSEPHINE MARLEY: Abigail’s old teacher friend, dead now these seven years. She should be nearly a carbon copy of Abigail, except that she is made up as a ghost.

ASSIGNMENTS PAST: This spirit is in clothing literally made out of graded homework, from head to foot. She wears a dunce cap, walks a bit stoop-shouldered.

ASSIGNMENTS PRESENT: This spirit is made up as a Christmas present, carries a wand, has a sickeningly melodic Southern drawl, and in general prevades the set with sweetness and light.

ASSIGNMENTS FUTURE: This spirit is all in a robe, says nothing, and reveals nothing except one hand, in which is carried a huge red pencil.

STUDENT (S): Wearing everyday school clothes.

SHADOW BOX CHARACTERS: Costuming of these characters merely needs to suggest in outline form the character portrayed. These are seen only in shadow and they, like the props they use, are important only in outline.

SCENE and TIME: The time is the day before Christmas break, as the play begins, until 7 a.m. the next morning – the last day of school before Christmas. The scene on stage is Scrooge’s bedroom – lamp, bed, night stand, rug, etc.

A Christmas Carol with Apologies to Dickens

INTRODUCTION: Over a hundred years ago, in 1838, Charles Dickens wrote his now-classic tale, "A Christmas Carol." Since that time many thousands of people have read or listened to his ghostly yule-tide tale. In what you are about to see, we have tried to up-date, just a little, that story, in order to make it meaningful and relevant to this century and this school. Here, then, with apologies to Dickens, is our version of "A Christmas Carol."

(AT RISE: ABIGAIL SCROOGE saunters down the aisle toward the stage, mumbling all the way, waving her umbrella. She is interrupted by two STUDENTS who immediately fall to their knees and begin begging for no school assignment over the Christmas break.)

STUDENTS: Miss Scrooge, Miss Scrooge, please don't give us an assignment over the Christmas break this year ... it's only once you could let us off, huh, Miss Scrooge, huh? Please?

MISS SCROOGE: What do you mean no assignment? I always give assignments. What do I care about your stupid Christmas? All that matters is that I give my assignment. I just got through telling my last class that tomorrow, when class lets out for Christmas ... don't expect to go without an assignment. Now let me alone. I've got better things to do than talk to you.

STUDENTS: But Miss Scrooge, please ... please.

(SCROOGE shrugs away and continues toward the stage as the STUDENTS hang their heads and exit. Just at the exit one turns and makes a face at Scrooge. Mounting the stage, Scrooge disappears momentarily and re-appears in long robe, night cap, and prepares for bed, muttering about Christmas being a humbug anyway, and who cares what the Students want or don't want. A FIGURE appears just as Scrooge has settled herself in bed.)

JOSEPHINE MARLEY: (*Eerily.*) Abigail Scrooge ... Abigail Scrooge ...

SCROOGE: Now who is that? Some stupid kid, I suppose. Well, what do you want, you dummy?

MARLEY: Abigail Scrooge, turn and face your one-time colleague at school, Josephine Marley - dead now these seven years.

SCROOGE: Well, uh, Josey, old girl, how are you? You don't look too bad, for a ghost, I mean. I mean, um, well, how have you been?

MARLEY: Not very well, Abigail. Do you see the armload of books and papers I am carrying?

SCROOGE: Yes, what about them?

MARLEY: In death, to all eternity, I must grade the papers I assigned in life, Abigail. For every assignment for a weekend, another set of papers. For every paper due at the end of a holiday ... another armload to do in death. Would you know the number of papers I have to grade before I can go to my rest?

SCROOGE: You say, "Papers to grade for all eternity"?

MARLEY: Yes, to all eternity. And you had at least as many papers awaiting you to be graded seven years ago when I passed on, if *passed* is the word. And you have been assigning papers ever since that time, including holidays.

SCROOGE: (*A little shaken.*) Speak kindly to me, Josephine.

MARLEY: I have nothing kind to say to you, Abigail. For you have assigned yourself to an eternity of grading. But I have come this night before Christmas Break in order that you might yet shun the path I must tread, to escape the curse of the red pencil ... you shall be haunted by three assignments!

SCROOGE: Haunted? I don't think I'd like to be haunted, Josephine.

JOSEPHINE: You will be haunted by three assignments. Expect the first at the stroke of one this morning. Expect the other, each at successive hours.

JOSEPHINE: *(Cont'd.)* Look to see me no more, Abigail, and see that you profit by your experiences *(Begins backing slowly offstage.)* if you wish to avoid writer's cramp, squinty eyes, and varicose veins, not to mention an everlasting assignment for all eternity. Good-bye, Abigail ... Good-bye, Good-bye. *(Disappears at last line offstage.)*

(SCROOGE, badly shaken, again prepares for bed, with general business of checking tile clock, adjusting the covers, and mumbling a little, hardly considering the possibility. At last size settles herself, turning and mumbling, into bed. After a pause the stroke of one is heard in the distance. At that point, enter the ghost of ASSIGNMENTS PAST. Scrooge rises up in bed as the ghost approaches.)

SCROOGE: Are you the spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

ASSIGNMENTS PAST: I am the Ghost of Assignments Past.

SCROOGE: I didn't ask for you to come here, bother my sleep and all, but I had no choice. If you can show me something, go on and do it.

PAST: Rise, then, and view your past assignments.

(SCROOGE does so and at the SPIRIT'S beckoning, turns to face the shadow box.)

SHADOW BOX SCENE 1

(A classroom. One LITTLE GIRL is seen carrying books out. But a kind TEACHER, in an overly pleasant voice, stops her and says, "There; there, Abigail. No more homework for you now. This is Christmas and we're going to have a wonderful party. Forget about homework, just this once, dear." Shadow box fades.)

SCROOGE: Is that ... is that me? I mean "I"?

PAST: It WAS you. And here are some former students of yours.

SHADOW BOX SCENE 2

(Here we have a YOUNG MAN facing another PERSON over a table.)

YOUNG MAN: Duh ... I want to go to college, man.

MAN: Well, fill out this questionnaire. What's your name?

YOUNG MAN: Uh ... now, don't tell me. Never could think under pressure. Gee, if I hadn't of had a teacher, long time ago, name of Scrooge, maybe I could remember things better. All I ever did was homework, homework, homework, homework.

MAN: Yes, of course. I see. Well, then, what's your address?

YOUNG MAN: I'll get that. Now just a minute, don't tell me ...

MAN: Young man, maybe you'd better come back when you can pass our entrance examination. Maybe if you did some homework you'd ...

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