

The Miscreants' Christmas

A Comic Dinner Mystery

By Bill Hand

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Father Christmas has been kidnapped! And it's only a week 'til Christmas! Facing disaster, Mother Christmas calls the Council of Fictional Christmas Characters (who since their stories have developed some humorous quirks) to solve the crime in this comical Yuletide mystery spoof. With bright dialogue, plot twists and comic confrontations, this show is for everyone! Mother Christmas, Scrooge, Tiny Tim, Jack Frost, the heroes of O. Henry's "Gift of the Magi" and the strange little girl Want from "A Christmas Carol" join forces to bring their Victorian-style Santa home again.

Comedy ensues, complete with some acting opportunities for members of the audience, in this bright, colorful, comic Christmas whodunnit without a corpse!

In between its five short scenes the characters wander the audience, answering questions about the crime. And of course, the audience gets to take a crack at solving just what happened to Father Christmas.

Approximate running time of about an hour (or two hours if a dinner show in which the actors mix with the audience between acts).

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 2 w, 1 girl)

MOTHER CHRISTMAS: Strong-willed, occasionally short-tempered, determined to save her man.

EBENEZER SCROOGE: Clutching his teddy bear and his desperation to remain reformed in a Dickensian world, Scrooge leads the gang in analyzing the clues.

TINY TIM: Now a quite large man, walking fine on a new hip fashioned from Pinocchio's nose, Tiny Tim has grown a bit less naïve as he's battled to keep Ebenezer on the up-and-up.

JACK FROST: The devil's advocate of the show, charming and witty and sly, though a bit clumsy with his freeze-you-with-a-touch magic wand. (Also plays FATHER CHRISTMAS.)

DELLA: A loving, naïve, and slightly daft wife from the world of O. Henry.

JAMES: A loving, naïve, and slightly daft husband from the world of O. Henry.

WANT: The strange little girl who desires everything but, because her very existence requires it, can never have anything.

SETTING

The set consists of a couple of columns draped in garland, a small throne, benches, or chairs to seat six, three on each side, and an altar-like stand at center stage on which there is a crimson cloth.

Beside the throne is a small table holding a platter on which sets a bowl or chalice of the Milk of Human Kindness covered with a larger silver bowl.

On another small table are three books: one is open, two are closed.

A ceremonial staff leans against the column.

Scene 1

(SFX: CHRISTMAS MUSIC which fades out as an announcer comes on.)

ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* This just in! Malls around the world are in a panic at the disappearance of Santa -- old Father Christmas himself! Known to use his elfin magic to appear at hundreds of places at the same time, although he fluctuates wildly in the cheapness of his clothes and the fatness of his belly, Santa has gone completely missing. With just three days 'til Christmas, many families fear the only surprises under the tree this Christmas will be a steamy little Tootsie Roll left by the family dog!

(AT RISE: JAMES and DELLA enter. They are dressed in something just a little more than rags, wearing gloves with the fingers cut out. He has a guitar. Della has a tambourine. DELLA is hauling WANT along by the ear. Want is dressed, perhaps, even more poorly than they.)

WANT: Ow! Ow! Ow!

JAMES: Alright, everybody! A little caroling entertainment for you! Tis the season! All of that! *(HE plays, DELLA joins with the tambourine.)*

CHRIS'MUS IS COMING! THE GOOSE IS GETTING FAT!
PLEASE TO PUT A PENNY IN THE OLD MAN'S HAT!

DELLA: *(As HE sings--and not too well.)* Come along, then, dance, it gets more pennies!

(Reluctantly, WANT dances, a kind of Russian dance.)

JAMES:

CHRIS'MUS IS COMING! THE GOOSE IS GETTING FAT!
PLEASE TO PUT A PENNY IN THE OLD MAN'S HAT!

DELLA: *(Into the Russian angle.)* HEY! HEY! HEY! HEY!

JAMES: *(Taking off his hat.)* And 'ere's the hat! Hey? Hey?

DELLA: *(Encouraging the audience.)* Oh, come on, just a penny!

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JAMES: *(Singing right at someone, rather loudly and imploringly.)*

IF YOU 'AVEN'T GOT A PENNY THEN A HALF A PENCE'LL
DO! IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A HALF A PENCE THEN GOD
BLESS YOU!

DELLA: It's Chris'mus you know... He won't stop singin' until
you do, an' 'e don't know no other song.

JAMES: I know a little "Yankee Doodle."

WANT: I'm too hungry to dance anymore.

DELLA: Oh, have it your way.

(MOTHER CHRISTMAS enters. Our Mother Christmas is not the fat, plump old lady in red we often see today; she is, rather, in a more elegant and regal style, with fur collar and cuffs, and a fancy garland crown in her hair. She is a to-the-point, no-nonsense kind of lady.)

MOTHER CHRISTMAS: Who are you, and what are you
doing?

DELLA: Mother Christmas!

JAMES: Mother Christmas?

WANT: Jimminy Christmas!

DELLA: Just... just warming up the audience, m'um!

MOTHER: What? They haven't coats to fight the chill?

JAMES: Nicely put, Mother Christmas.

(MOTHER notices the books and goes to the open one, glancing at the cover.)

MOTHER: O. Henry. You're from "Gift of the Magi," aren't
you?

DELLA: *(Curtsyng.)* That we are!

MOTHER: So, who opened the book and let you out? *(THEY shrug.)* Oh, never mind. I don't remember you playing a
guitar in the story.

JAMES: *(Embarrassed.)* Oh, no, m'um!

DELLA: It was written so long ago, m'um, we've had time to
pick up a few talents since then.

JAMES: I found the guitar sitting in the hall.

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DELLA: No geese though.

JAMES: We wouldn't mind a goose.

MOTHER: What are your names again?

(Smiling, JAMES hands MOTHER a card.)

MOTHER: *(Cont'd.)* What, you can't just tell me?

DELLA: He can't just remember!

JAMES: No one ever can!

DELLA: The watch. The comb. The story's silly-nilly name.

JAMES: There's not a single Magi in it!

DELLA: But never silly-nilly us!

(JAMES giggles.)

MOTHER: *(Reading.)* "James and Della, purveyors of sacrificial love." Well, take your seats. *(To WANT.)* And you... I don't remember a little girl in that story. Who are you?

WANT: Want!

MOTHER: Want! In O. Henry?

WANT: *(Curtsying.)* Oh no! I'm Dickensian.

MOTHER: "The Christmas Carol," then? Why, that book's still closed. How did you get out?

WANT: I WANTED out. *(Muttering to herself.)* Living all the time under that smelly old Ghost of Christmas Present's robes, with that snotty little boy Ignorance pulling my hair...

MOTHER: Take your seat, Want.

(WANT pulls a bowl out from under her dress and holds it out to someone in the audience.)

WANT: More gruel, sir?

MOTHER: Want!

WANT: *(Stamping DELLA'S foot.)* Well, it worked for Oliver Twist!

(THEY are all seated now. They look about. Nothing is happening.)

End of Freeview

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