

A 1940s Christmas Carol

a new stage/radio play

written by

Page Petrucka, PhD

Note: This play is an adaptation of Charles Dickens'

A Christmas Carol.

A 1940'S CHRISTMAS CAROL

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A 1940'S CHRISTMAS CAROL

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Independence Community College, Independence, Kansas, performed in the William Inge Theatre, October 2020. Directed by Dee Byrd and Paul Molnar. Production design by Kenneth Tate. Stage managed by Mary-Lynn White.

ORIGINAL CAST

Martha Boucher:	Ms. Charlie Studebaker
Paul Molnar:	Hank Jeffries
Mylee Cronin:	Lana Smith
Alyssa Winkleman:	Judy Miller
Kierra Kellum:	Shirley Caldwell
Dylan Waterman:	Ralphie Rogers
Chelsea Jarman:	Patsy Studebaker

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CAST of CHARACTERS

MS CHARLIE STUDEBAKER:	30S to 40s. The station owner and Announcer.
HANK JEFFRIES:	40s. The leading man - considers himself famous.
LANA (LAH-NUH) SMITH:	Early 20s. Over the top, dramatic 40s actress. The ingenue.
JUDY MILLER:	Early 20s. The actress who is cast as in all the children's roles (has a high voice).
SHIRLEY CALDWELL:	30s. The "serious" actress – need I say more?
RALPHIE ROGERS:	20s to 30s. The character actor – can voice anything.
PATSY STUDEBAKER:	18. Charlie's niece, first day at the station.

TIME

The golden age of radio, circa 1940, mid-December.

PLACE

The fictional radio station AM 730 KFLG located in Kansas City, Kansas.

PRODUCTION NOTE

There are four commercial breaks written into the radio play portion of the script. A suggestion is to use local merchants as the subjects of the radio ads. This was done during the original production in Independence, Kansas, and was a hit with audiences.

This play is dedicated to my director, mentor, colleague, palm reader, and friend Christopher "TOPHER" Clark. ALS took you too soon, but I am so blessed to have known you and to have learned from you. Thank you for everything.

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Inside AM 730 KFLG radio station. The stage is divided in half. One side represents the recording room and is set with chairs, music stands, microphones, and a table where the sound effect equipment should go, only it's empty. There is a clearly posted ON AIR sign that lights up whenever actors are recording. On the other side of the stage is a green room with comfortable chairs, end tables, and a couch. Mingling about in the green room are HANK, LANA, and JUDY. They are talking quietly to each other. Enter CHARLIE and PATSY.

CHARLIE. Ah. Hank, Lana, Judy. I want to talk to you all about something. Where are the other two?

JUDY. Warming up, I think.

HANK. CHARLIE, is this about Topher?

CHARLIE. Topher? Why would this be about Topher?

HANK. Well, he's not here yet.

CHARLIE. Oh, you know Topher. He cuts it close sometimes, but he always manages to make it for showtime.

JUDY. Let's hope you're right. That snow out there is pretty bad.

LANA. It's mad, I tell you. MAD! Good thing the rest of us got here when we did.

CHARLIE. Yes, yes. Anyway, I would like to introduce you to my niece, Patsy. She's interested in radio. Plus, she loves *A Christmas Carol*, so I thought today would be the perfect day for her to join us. *(Phone rings off stage.)* Ah. That'll be for me. Would you all introduce yourselves while I take this call? Excuse me. *(Charlie exits.)*

HANK. Patsy, pleasure to meet you. Hank Jeffries. Leading man.

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PATSY. *THE* Hank Jeffries? (*Shaking his hand.*) Well cut off my leg and call me shorty!

LANA. Lana Smith. Pleasure.

PATSY. Hi-de-ho, Miss Smith.

JUDY. Hi, Patsy. I'm Judy Miller.

PATSY. What's buzzin', cousin?

RALPHIE enters the green room. Lana looks at him questioningly, but he doesn't look hopeful.

LANA. (*To Ralphie.*) Well?

RALPHIE. Still no sign of him.

LANA. Oh no. No no no no no. This is dreadful. Absolutely dreadful.

PATSY. What's dreadful?

JUDY. Our sound engineer. He isn't here yet. Oh, Ralphie, this is Charlie's niece Patsy.

RALPHIE. Nice to meet you.

PATSY. I can't tell you how camp happy I am to be here!

LANA. What are we going to do if Topher doesn't make it? We all know that the sound engineer's job is crucial to radio. Those sounds help the audience follow the story. Plus, they create interest and ambiance and depth--

RALPHIE. He's never cut it this close before. I hope he's alright.

JUDY. He must be. Surely.

RALPHIE. Surely.

LANA. (*Agreeing.*) Surely.

At this, SHIRLEY pokes her head in.

SHIRLEY. What? What do you all need? I'm right in the middle of my vocals.

JUDY. No, not you SHIRLEY...

RALPHIE. Surely as in, sure, but with an L-Y at the end.

SHIRLEY. Oh for heaven's sake. How is an actress supposed to warm up properly when she keeps hearing her name over and over? (*Shirley*

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enters the room, exasperated. She sees Patsy and approaches.) Who are you?

PATSY. I'm Patsy. Charlie's niece.

SHIRLEY. And just why are you here?

PATSY. To learn all about the biz. I love radio. And seeing how my aunt runs things ought to be a gas.

SHIRLEY. Hm. Where *is* Charlie?

Just then, Charlie enters with a very worried look on her face. The next few lines are delivered at a rapid pace, on top of each other. During all of this, Patsy watches, taking it all in.

SHIRLEY. There you are. I've been meaning to ask you about my characters. I have a few ideas I want to run by you.

LANA. Have you heard anything? I'm ever so concerned about Topher.

HANK. We've started to worry a bit here, Charlie. Topher isn't usually this late.

JUDY. The show **IS** about to start. I was just saying that I wonder if you've heard anything from Topher. Have you? Because now would be a good time to tell us. Don't you think?

RALPHIE. It's pretty bad out there. That snow is turning to ice and well, you know what ice can do to the roads.

CHARLIE. *(Cutting everyone off.)* QUIET PLEASE!! Now just calm right down, everyone. You don't want to strain your voices before the show. Let's all take some deep breaths. *(Everyone takes a few breaths as a group.)* There. Now, doesn't that feel better? Let's see, what time is it? *(Looking at the clock in the studio.)* Ten minutes to show. Alright. That was Topher on the phone just now. I don't want everyone to get all worked up, but Topher's been in an accident.

LANA. I knew it! I just knew something had to be wrong.

JUDY. Good heavens!

RALPHIE. Is he alright?

CHARLIE. He's fine. A little bump on the head.

HANK. What happened to him?

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CHARLIE. He had a little accident on his way here, but as I said, he's going to be fine.

SHIRLEY. If he's going to be fine, then why isn't he here?

CHARLIE. He called from the hospital. They are going to keep him overnight for observation to be sure he doesn't have a concussion.

LANA. A concussion? Good heavens. A concussion can be VERY serious! It could mean temporary memory loss, headaches, dizziness...

CHARLIE. Yes, yes, we all know about concussions. But you know Topher. He's a trooper and he'll come through this with flying colors.

JUDY. (*Realizing.*) Wait. What does that mean for the show?

CHARLIE. That is a terrific question, Judy. Now, I want everyone to remain calm as I explain what's going to happen. (*All are quiet. Pause.*) You are each going to make your own sound effects! (*At this, the group goes into panic mode.*)

PATSY. (*Excited.*) Killer-diller!

HANK. That is just not possible, Charlie. As your leading man, I believe I speak for the group by saying that will not work.

CHARLIE. Why not?

LANA. Why not? WHY NOT?

CHARLIE. That was my question, yes.

LANA. It's obvious why not...

CHARLIE. Yes? I'm listening.

LANA. Because... because...

RALPHIE. Because we're all going to be rather busy performing. The lines. Of the show.

JUDY. I don't think we know exactly what Topher uses to make the sound effects anyway.

SHIRLEY. Come now. We're professionals. At least, I am anyway. I think we can figure out when to ring a bell.

HANK. There's a little more to it than simply ringing a bell, Shirley.

SHIRLEY. I for one am up for the challenge. The show must go on.

CHARLIE. Thank you, Shirley.

SHIRLEY. Point us to the things Topher uses and we'll get to work.

CHARLIE. (*Shifting uncomfortably.*) That's the other problem. Topher has all the equipment with him.

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LANA. That's it. We're done for. You hear me? Done for!

HANK. Now you've done it, Charlie. You've gone too far. My agent will hear about this.

CHARLIE. (*Checking the clock again as the rest of the group goes into panic mode.*) Six minutes to show time. People. Listen up. I have no doubts that we can do this! What is it that Shirley said just a few moments ago? (*No one speaks. Charlie continues.*) Come on, now. What mantra did Shirley just utter? One that we say repeatedly in show business. And we mean it! Anyone? Judy. What is it?

JUDY. (*Sheepishly.*) The show must go on...?

CHARLIE. That's right. The show **MUST** go on. So, here's what I want you all to do. Go grab anything that makes any kind of sound and put it here on the sound table. Anything! We'll figure it out as we go. When the script calls for a sound, we'll make a sound. Everyone will pitch in.

PATSY. What about me?

CHARLIE. Um. Well. You will help, yes, of course. With. Something. The rest of you, what are you all still standing around for? Go!

The group scatters and complains as they run off-stage to grab sound makers.

PATSY. Wow. It's a real lulu that your sound guy can't make it.

CHARLIE. It is very unfortunate. But, on the bright side, having you here is going to be a big help. I think.

PATSY. So, what's the poop? What do you need me to do?

CHARLIE. I don't think we'll be able to gather enough things by show time, since it's in... (*Charlie and Patsy check the clock.*)

PATSY. Five minutes.

CHARLIE. Yes, five minutes. I'll need you to keep collecting things and bringing them to us. Even when we are on air. Anything you think will work. Bring them in here quietly and place them on this table. Understand?

PATSY. I dig! Um. Where should I look?

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CHARLIE. Anywhere. Everywhere. The more things the better. Even if we don't end up using them. We just need options. Patsy, thank you for your help with this.

PATSY. It's cool. I'll see what I can find with my peepers. Be right back. *(She exits.)*

CHARLIE. I don't understand half of what she says.

HANK. *(Running in with a coffee cup and spoon.)* I think this can work! Listen. *(He clangs the spoon against the cup. They react to the sound.)*

CHARLIE. I like it. Put it here and go find more. Hurry!

Hank puts the items down and runs off. Judy is next to come running. She enters with a small music box.

JUDY. I got this off of your desk. When you close it really hard it sounds a bit like a door! *(She demonstrates.)*

CHARLIE. *(Taking the box.)* Excellent.

JUDY. You know, this is actually kind of fun!

CHARLIE. Yes, yes, now go find more!

JUDY. Of course. Sorry, Charlie! *(She exits.)*

Shirley meanders in casually, no rush. She is holding a big book. Patsy pokes her head in just long enough to say her line and then she is off again.

PATSY. Four minutes!

CHARLIE. Shirley, can't you see we're in a bit of a hurry here?

SHIRLY. I can, but I don't run. I found this. *(Shows Charlie a book.)*

CHARLIE. It's a book.

SHIRLEY. Yes, it's a book. But listen... *(She fans the pages. They listen closely. Shirley continues.)* It sounds like the wind. Or running water. Take your pick.

CHARLIE. That's a stretch.

SHIRLEY. Maybe so, but we're out of time.

CHARLIE. Fine. Take your place for top of the show then.

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As Shirley takes her place, Lana runs in with a pencil sharpener. It looks as though it's been ripped from the wall.)

LANA. This is all I could find but I think it could work for something. Do you want to hear it?

CHARLIE. We don't have time. Put it here and go to places.

Lana does just that. Patsy pops in with a pair of rubber gloves.

PATSY. How about these? *(She flaps them around, excitedly. Then throws them on the table and is off again.)*

CHARLIE. *(Picking up the gloves.)* Rubber gloves. Well. Maybe.

Ralphie runs on carrying a small stool.

RALPHIE. I got it! If you sit on this stool just right, it squeaks! Ladies and gentlemen, we have squeaks.

CHARLIE. Perfect. Ralphie, since you know what to do, will you be the official squeaker for the show?

RALPHIE. Sure!

CHARLIE. Wonderful. Now, go to places.

Ralphie takes the stool with him and crosses to his microphone. Judy and Patsy enter, running.

PATSY. I found some wood! *(She drops the wood on the table and runs off.)*

JUDY. *(Entering, carrying a stapler.)* I got this from your office, too. It's a stapler.

CHARLIE. I can see that.

JUDY. I'm not sure what we can use it for, but it's got to be good for something.

CHARLIE. Did you look anywhere other than my office?

JUDY. Why no, I didn't. Want me to keep looking?

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CHARLIE. No, we don't have time. Have you seen Hank?

JUDY. He was right behind me.

Charlie takes the stapler from Judy and puts it on the table.

CHARLIE. Places, Judy.

JUDY. Yes, ma'am!

Hank and Patsy both enter. Hank is winded, but Patsy has all the energy in the world. Patsy runs to the table and deposits a handheld broom and dustpan. She exits. Hank, out of breath, simply hands Charlie a crinkled paper sack, and takes his place.

CHARLIE. What's this supposed to be?

HANK. *(Breathing heavily.)* This is my dinner.

CHARLIE. And...?

HANK. There must be something in there we can use.

Charlie turns the paper bag over and out falls an apple, a few celery sticks, and a sandwich. She organizes them and keeps the paper bag on the table. Charlie looks at the clock.

CHARLIE. ONE MINUTE! Everyone, final places!

Charlie takes her place too, as the announcer and narrator of the show. Near her is the control for the "ON AIR" sign and a phonograph to play music. She checks the time. The group arranges their scripts, stands and arranges things to their liking. Charlie mouths a countdown from ten to one. At five, she flips on the "ON AIR" sign. At one, she plays introductory music on the record player.

Production Note: At this point in the play, the "Radio Play" begins.

MUSIC.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC. FADE UNDER.

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CHARLIE. AM 730 KFLG radio is proud to present this evening's theatrical production of Charles Dickens' classic tale, *A Christmas Carol*.

MUSIC. CHRISTMAS MUSIC. FADE OUT.

SFX. WIND HOWLING. FADE IN.

There is no one to make the noise. Charlie begins the sound of the howling wind and gestures for everyone else to join her. Ralphie and Lana assist. Charlie fades out and begins.

CHARLIE. Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatsoever about that. Dead as a doornail. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come from the story I am going to relate.

Charlie makes a "cut it out" sign with her hand to Lana and Ralphie. She continues.

In life, Marley was business partners with Ebenezer Scrooge. He was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge. Hard and sharp as a flint. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he.

At this, Hank decides to help out, and starts making a howling wind sound, only it isn't welcome by Charlie.

Our story begins INSIDE. Where there are no sounds of howling wind. None at all. None whatsoever.

Judy crosses to Hank and covers his mouth. This stops him.

It was Christmas Eve and outside Scrooge could hear the sound of carolers passing by.

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SFX. CHRISTMAS CAROL. SUNG.

Charlie gestures to the cast to start singing. The group isn't aware of their volume, however. Plus, they sing different songs. Ralphie sings Jingle Bells, Lana sings Away in a Manger, Judy sings Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, and Shirley sings Good King Wenceslas.

HANK (Scrooge). Bah Humbug! That is loud. You would think carolers outside would sound a bit quieter, wouldn't you? It's like they are right inside my office, where I am currently sitting.

SFX. SONG. FADE OUT.

Charlie gestures for the singers to stop, and so they do. Not at the same time, however. Hank waits until they are all finished.

HANK (Scrooge). Ah. Good. They're done singing. I'm so very glad.

CHARLIE. Scrooge had a clerk named Bob Cratchit. A kind, hard-working man, however currently quite cold because Scrooge used very little coal to warm the office.

HANK (Scrooge). Cratchit! What's the matter with you?

RALPHIE (Cratchit). I'm sorry, sir. It's a bit cold in here, don't you think?

HANK (Scrooge). You're not the one providing the coal are you, Cratchit?

RALPHIE (Cratchit). No, sir.

HANK (Scrooge). I thought so. Cold. Bah. Humbug!

SFX. KNOCKING ON DOOR.

The cast looks around at each other, unsure what to do. No sound comes.

HANK (Scrooge). Cratchit. Did you hear that?

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RALPHIE (Cratchit). Hear what, sir?

HANK (Scrooge). I thought I heard knocking...

Lana jumps into action, grabs one of the small boards on the table and does a cutesy knock.

RALPHIE (Cratchit). Ah! There it is! I'll go check and see who is there.

HANK (Scrooge). Good.

Judy grabs the music box from the table to make the sound of a door opening and closing, only the music from the music box is heard very briefly. Judy slams the box shut. Ralphie changes his voice to be Nephew Fred.

RALPHIE (Fred). Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you.

HANK (Scrooge). Christmas. Bah. Humbug!

RALPHIE (Fred). Christmas, a humbug, Uncle? You don't mean that, I'm sure.

HANK (Scrooge). I do. Merry Christmas. What right have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

RALPHIE (Fred). What right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough.

HANK (Scrooge). If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with a 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.

Patsy comes on stage with a few more noise makers. These include hard candies, Cracker Jacks, an alarm clock, a book or box of matches, and a mason jar with coins or buttons. She approaches the "recording room" carefully, unloads the items, and exits again.

RALPHIE (Fred). Oh, Uncle!

HANK (Scrooge). What good has Christmas ever done you?

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RALPHIE (Fred). Christmas is a kind, forgiving, charitable time. And though it has never put a scrap of gold in my pocket, I believe it has done me good and will do me good, and I say God bless it! Now, come and have Christmas dinner with me and Clara.

HANK (Scrooge). Why ever did you get married?

RALPHIE (Fred). Because I fell in love.

HANK (Scrooge). Love. Humbug. Good afternoon, nephew.

RALPHIE (Fred). But Uncle, surely...

HANK (Scrooge). (*Louder.*) Good afternoon.

RALPHIE (Fred). I am sorry with all my heart to find you so resolute, but I shall keep my Christmas humor till the last. Merry Christmas, Uncle. And a happy new year!

SFX. FOOTSTEPS.

At this, Charlie takes off her shoe and tosses it to Shirley, who hasn't done anything yet. She catches the shoe, picks up one of the boards from the table and makes the sound of footsteps walking.

SFX. DOOR OPENING.

Judy grabs the music box again, but this time she opens and closes it very quickly, so we don't hear the music. Enter the two charity collectors, Shirley and Lana.

SFX. FOOTSTEPS.

Shirley still has Charlie's shoe and uses it to make a walking sound. Lana takes off her shoe and does the same.

SHIRLEY (Collector). Good afternoon. Do I have the pleasure of speaking with Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

HANK (Scrooge). Scrooge. Marley's been dead seven years to the day.

LANA (Collector 2). We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner. At this festive time it is customary

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to make donations to the poor and destitute...

SHIRLEY (Collector). Who suffer greatly during this time of year.

HANK (Scrooge). Ah. But are there not prisons or poor houses?

LANA (Collector 2). Plenty of them.

SHIRLEY (Collector). And they are far too busy.

LANA (Collector 2). I wish I could say they were not.

HANK (Scrooge). I'm very glad to hear of it.

LANA (Collector 2). What shall we put you down for?

HANK (Scrooge). Nothing. I wish to be left alone. I don't make merry myself at Christmas. I support the establishments I have mentioned. The poor must go there.

SHIRLEY (Collector). But some would rather die!

HANK (Scrooge). If they'd rather die, then they better do it and decrease the surplus population. Now, good afternoon.

SHIRLEY (Collector). *(Resigned.)* Then we shall leave you to your misery. Good day, sir.

LANA (Collector 2). Good afternoon, Mr. Scrooge.

SFX. FOOTSTEPS EXITING.

Lana and Shirley make the sounds of footsteps exiting. Judy makes the sound of a door opening and closing. They are starting to get the hang of this!

CHARLIE. The two women left, frustrated with the old man. Just then, a small child was heard behind the door, singing a familiar Christmas carol.

SFX. CHILD CAROLING.

Judy covers her mouth to muffle the sound and sings.

HANK (Scrooge). Singing? What's the meaning of this?

RALPHIE (Cratchit). I do believe it's a caroler, sir.

HANK (Scrooge). Of course it's a caroler, you fool.

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SFX.

FOOTSTEPS CROSSING.

Shirley, still holding the board and shoe, makes the sound, but Lana does the same thing so it sounds like multiple footsteps.

HANK (Scrooge). (*Covering.*) Um, Cratchit, no need to walk to the door with me...

RALPHIE (Cratchit). Sir?

HANK (Scrooge). There's no need to hear your footsteps as well, since you are supposed to be working at your desk.

RALPHIE (Cratchit). Oh, yes, of course.

Lana makes the sound of quick footsteps and then stops. She puts her shoe back on. Shirley is still holding Charlie's shoe.

RALPHIE (Cratchit) cont. There. I'm back in my seat.

HANK (Scrooge). Good. Now. Who is singing on the other side of this door?

SFX.

DOOR OPENING.

Judy opens the box but closes it so we don't hear the music.

JUDY (Child). Now bring us some figgy pudding, Now bring us some figgy pudding, Now bring us some figgy pudding...

HANK (Scrooge). Who are you and what do you want with me?

JUDY (Child). I am spreading Christmas joy, sir. My mother says I have a beautiful voice.

HANK (Scrooge). Your mother is a liar.

JUDY (Child). But she said –

HANK (Scrooge). Child, will you get off my property immediately? I do not wish to hear any more about figgy pudding.

JUDY (Child). (*Crying.*) You're a terrible man! WAAAA!

HANK (Scrooge). Bah. Humbug!

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SFX. DOOR SLAM.

Charlie slams the book down on the table.

HANK (Scrooge). Oh my. That door. I know it didn't sound like it, but that *was* me, slamming the door on that Christmas Caroler.

RALPHIE (Cratchit). Whatever you say, Mr. Scrooge.

HANK (Scrooge). I do say. Humbug.

CHARLIE. At length the hour of shutting the house arrived. Scrooge looked over at Bob Cratchit. He couldn't help himself.

HANK (Scrooge). I suppose you'll be wanting the whole day off tomorrow.

RALPHIE (Cratchit). If it's convenient, sir.

HANK (Scrooge). It is NOT convenient.

RALPHIE (Cratchit). It's only once a year.

HANK (Scrooge). A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December! Be here all the earlier the next morning.

RALPHIE (Cratchit). Yes, sir. Thank you! And a Merry... uh, humbug to you, Mr. Scrooge.

Patsy starts to run across the stage to look for more things, but she becomes enthralled with what's going on in the sound booth. She goes to the doorway and starts to watch.

CHARLIE. Scrooge left his office in a huff. He walked home in the foggy night, his breath visible in the air as he breathed. Still, the piercing cold had little effect on him. As he approached his front door, he noticed the knocker looked rather odd to him.

HANK (Scrooge). What's this?

CHARLIE. Before his very eyes, the knocker transformed to what looked distinctly like Marley's face!

SFX. SPIRIT MOANING. CHAINS.

Ralphie begins to make a muffled, moaning sound. He is used to this.

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Judy grabs the mason jar and shakes it.

HANK (Scrooge). Marley? Is that you? It can't be! What's the meaning of all this?

SFX. MOANING and CHAINS get louder.

HANK (Scrooge). *(Crying out.)* What's happening? I don't understand!

SFX. SFX STOP.

HANK (Scrooge). Marley's face! But it's not there now. I don't hear the chains, either. I must have been imagining it. Humbug.

CHARLIE. What was that terrible sound? Was that indeed Marley's face in place of the door knocker? And what did it all mean? You'll find out after this quick commercial break.

SFX. COMMERCIAL 1.

Actors quickly exit to the green room. Charlie switches the ON AIR light to off. She notices Patsy in the doorway and guides her into the Green Room. While a recorded commercial plays, the following actions occur: Actors argue with each other and Charlie. Charlie approaches Patsy and whispers something to her. Patsy looks very excited. The other actors seem to protest. Shirley tries to give Charlie her shoe back, but she insists she keep it. At commercial end, the actors head back into the studio and take their places. Patsy is "allowed" to sit at the sound table but instructed to keep quiet. Charlie flips on the ON AIR sign.

SFX. CHRISTMAS MUSIC. FADE IN. FADE OUT.

CHARLIE. Welcome back to KFLG and our presentation of A

A 1940'S CHRISTMAS CAROL

Christmas Carol. When last we left Scrooge, he was terrified by what he saw on his front door. What was it, exactly? Was it all his imagination? He simply did not know. Still. He entered his home cautiously. Quietly.

SFX. DOOR. CREAKING OPEN.

Ralphie tries to get his chair to squeak, only it doesn't sound at all like a door. He is forced to make the sound with his mouth.

HANK (Scrooge). Hmph. My front door sounds as bad as my office door.

Hank makes nervous laughter as both Scrooge and himself.

SFX. FOOTSTEPS. SLOW. ESTABLISH.

Shirley grabs the shoe and board but forgets to walk slowly.

HANK (Scrooge). I better slow down since it's so dark in here, and I'm a little nervous about what I think I just saw.

Shirley slows the walking down and tries to make it sound like Scrooge is shuffling about his home.

SFX. SUDDEN WIND. LOUD.

Three people try to be helpful at the same time. Ralphie makes the sound of wind. Judy grabs the rubber gloves and flaps them. Lana takes the big book and flips through the pages.

HANK (Scrooge). Goodness me, what a terrible sound. Or sounds. I wonder what it could be. Wait! It must be an open window and the wind is causing the curtains to flap. I'll quickly go over and close it.

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Shirley is frustrated that she has become the designated shoe person but does the job because she is a professional. She makes the walking sound of crossing to the window.

SFX. WINDOW CLOSING. WIND STOPS.

Ralphie ceases to be the wind. Judy drops the flapping gloves, takes the music box and open and closes it quickly. Lana puts the book back down. Patsy is thoroughly enjoying herself. She takes one of the hard candies, unwraps it, leaves the wrapper on the table, and helps herself. She continues to watch the performers.

HANK (Scrooge). There. That's better. Still. I feel rather uneasy. I better inspect the house to make sure nothing is amiss. First, though, I'm going to light this candle.

SFX. MATCHES STRIKING.

Patsy sees on the table a book of matches. She is thrilled with this. She picks them up and tosses them to Ralphie, who strikes the match into the microphone.

SFX. FOOTSTEPS. VARIED. UNDER DIALOGUE.

Shirley is on it.

CHARLIE. Sitting room, bedroom, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa. A small fire in the grate. Quite satisfied, he closed his door and locked himself in.

SFX. DOOR CLOSING. DOOR LOCK.

Ralphie tries the chair one more time. Again, it doesn't work so he makes the creaking sound with his mouth. Judy takes the cup and spoon

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and clangs them together. It doesn't sound like a door locking, but they go with it anyway.

CHARLIE. Then Scrooge did something he never does. He double locked himself in.

SFX. DOOR LOCK.

Judy clangs the cup twice, but afterwards realizes she only needed to do it once.

CHARLIE. Actually, he triple locked himself in.

Judy goes to clang the spoon on the cup again, but Ralphie stops her by throwing the book of matches at her.

CHARLIE. *(She continues.)* He changed into his dressing gown and sat close to the small fire. He stewed over seeing Marley's face, even though he was seven years dead. Looking around the room, his eyes rested on a small, unused bell. Suddenly without warning, the bell began to ring. Quiet at first but louder with each passing second.

SFX. BELL. QUIET. CRESCENDO.

There is no bell! Everyone panics. Patsy leans into the mic and says "DING." Realizing this isn't going to work, Charlie notices the Christmas tree in the green room. She runs over, grabs a bell from the tree, and runs back on. She rings it. Quiet at first, and then louder.

CHARLIE. Suddenly, without warning, the bell ceased to ring.

SFX. BELL. CUT ABRUPTLY.

Charlie stops and puts the bell down quietly.

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CHARLIE. Just as the bell ceased, there came what sounded distinctly like heavy metal chains dragging across the floor.

SFX. _____ **CHAINS. FADE IN.**

Ralphie grabs the mason jar and shakes it, quietly at first.

CHARLIE. The sound grew louder and louder until it felt as though it was in the very room with Scrooge.

Ralphie shakes the jar a little louder and louder. He is shaking as best he can.

HANK (Scrooge). Chains? Bah. Humbug! I won't believe it!

CHARLIE. And just like the bell, the clanging suddenly stopped.

SFX. _____ **CHAINS. CUT ABRUPTLY.**

Ralphie stops but keeps the jar with him.

CHARLIE. Before him stood the ghost of Jacob Marley.

HANK (Scrooge). How now! What do you want with me?

RALPHIE (Marley). Much.

HANK (Scrooge). Who are you?

RALPHIE (Marley). Ask me who I was.

HANK (Scrooge). Who were you, then?

RALPHIE (Marley). In life, I was your partner. Jacob Marley. *(Pause.)*
You don't believe me.

HANK (Scrooge). I don't.

RALPHIE (Marley). Why do you doubt your senses?

Patsy is still loving what's going on. Without thinking, she reaches out for the box of Cracker Jacks and begins to eat them, like a movie-goer would eat popcorn.

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HANK (Scrooge). Because. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. There's more of gravy than of grave about you.

Charlie has to get Patsy's attention to quiet her down, because the crunching can be heard.

SFX. GHOSTLY MOAN.

This is a sound Ralphie is used to making. He moans a horrible, blood curdling moan.

HANK (Scrooge). Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

RALPHIE (Marley). I am doomed to wander through the world and witness what I might have shared in life to bring about happiness to others but didn't.

SFX. GHOSTLY MOAN. CHAINS.

Ralphie moans and uses the jar for the chain sound.

HANK (Scrooge). You are fettered. Tell me why!

RALPHIE (Marley). I wear the chain I forged in life. Link by link. Yard by yard. And you, Ebenezer. You wear such a chain yourself!

HANK (Scrooge). Jacob! Speak comfort to me!

RALPHIE (Marley). I have none to give. It is at this time of year when I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode?

SFX. CHAINS RATTLING.

Ralphie continues with the mason jar.

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RALPHIE (Marley). Hear me! My time is nearly gone. You will be visited by three spirits. Without their visit you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow when the bell tolls one.

HANK (Scrooge). Couldn't I take them all at once and have it over with?

RALPHIE (Marley). The second on the next night in the same hour. The third, upon the next night when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate.

HANK (Scrooge). But Jacob --

RALPHIE (Marley). Look to see me no more. And look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!

CHARLIE. The spectre moaned a terrible moan and the chains began to rattle again. However, this time Marley's moan seemed to be joined by other apparitions.

SFX. CHAINS. GHOSTLY MOANS.

At this, Ralphie does what he needs to do. Shirley, Lana, and Judy join in, moaning and grabbing various props just to make noises. Patsy joins in too, but without permission. Charlie isn't pleased. After a few moments, she makes the "cut off" sign, and they all stop.

CHARLIE. And with that, the ghost of Jacob Marley was gone. Scrooge sat in silence for only a little while. And with being overcome by emotions, the fatigues of the day, or this glimpse into the Invisible World, went straight to bed and fell asleep upon the instant.

SFX. CHRISTMAS MUSIC. FADE UNDER.
FADE OUT.

CHARLIE. We will return to Scrooge's story after this brief commercial message.

SFX. COMMERCIAL #2.

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Actors move as before. Pre-recorded Commercial 2 plays while Charlie turns the ON AIR sign off. Shirley throws the shoe and board on the sound table. Patsy picks them up and brings them off. She indicates to Charlie that she thinks she can help. Shirley sees what's happening and begins to protest, but then gives in. Charlie grabs a script for Patsy and gives her a pep talk. At commercial end, actors hurry back to places. Patsy sets up her script and tries to organize the sound makers.

SFX. CHRISTMAS MUSIC. FADE IN. FADE OUT.

Christmas music plays and then fades as Charlie turns on the ON AIR sign.

CHARLIE. When last we saw Ebenezer Scrooge, he was so overcome from the other-worldly visitation of Jacob Marley, that he fell fast asleep in his bed. When he finally woke, he was in complete darkness. He heard the chimes of a nearby church bell.

SFX. CHURCH BELL. 12 CHIMES. FADE UNDER.

Lana sees the wind-up alarm clock, grabs it and the spoon, and starts clinking the bell on the clock with the spoon in a slow and steady manner. The chimes continue as Charlie speaks.

CHARLIE. Scrooge began counting the chimes. Seven. Eight. All the way up to twelve. And then, the chimes stopped.

Lana accidentally hits the chime one more time. Oops!

HANK (Scrooge). Twelve? It was past two when I went to bed. The clock's wrong. It has to be. It isn't possible that I've slept through a whole day and far into another night.

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CHARLIE. Scrooge lay in bed and thought and thought and thought it over but could make nothing of it. He resolved to lie awake until the one o'clock hour.

SFX. DING DING.

To make this sound a little different, Shirley picks up the cup and spoon and clangs them.

HANK (Scrooge). Quarter past.

SFX. DING DING.

Shirley repeats.

HANK (Scrooge). Half past.

SFX. DING DING.

Shirley repeats.

HANK (Scrooge). Three quarters past.

SFX. CHURCH BELL CHIME. ONE.

Lana takes the alarm and spoon and clangs it just once, for the striking of one.

CHARLIE. Suddenly, the brightest light filled the room. Scrooge's bed curtains were drawn and there before him was an apparition. It was child-like, wearing a tunic of the purest white. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand, and a shining crown about its head.

HANK (Scrooge). Are you the spirit who's coming was foretold to me?

JUDY (Ghost 1). I am.

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HANK (Scrooge). Who and what are you?

JUDY (Ghost 1). I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

HANK (Scrooge). Long past?

JUDY (Ghost 1). No, your past.

HANK (Scrooge). What business brings you here?

JUDY (Ghost 1). Your welfare!

HANK (Scrooge). A night of unbroken rest would be more conducive to that end.

JUDY (Ghost 1). Your reclamation then. Take heed! Rise and walk with me.

CHARLIE. The spirit began making its way to the bedroom window.

HANK (Scrooge). But spirit, I am mortal and liable to fall.

JUDY (Ghost 1). Bear a touch of my hand and you shall be upheld.

SFX.

GHOSTLY SOUDS. PASSING
THROUGH. FADE UNDER.

Ralphie, not knowing what else to do, grabs the hand broom and dustpan and tries to make some "ghostly sounds." Lana picks up the leftover candy wrapper and crinkles it. Shirley takes the pencil sharpener and goes to work. The sounds continue through Charlie's next line and eventually fade out. Patsy tries to help by popping another candy in her mouth and crinkles the wrapper, like Lana.

CHARLIE. As the words of the ghost were spoken, they passed through the wall and stood out on an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be seen. The darkness had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold winter day.

HANK (Scrooge). Good Heavens! I know this place. I was a boy here.

JUDY (Ghost 1). You recollect the way?

HANK (Scrooge). I could walk it blindfold.

JUDY (Ghost 1). Strange to have forgotten it for so many years.

CHARLIE. They walked until a little market-town appeared with its bridge, tiny church, and a winding river. Several boys were seen in the distance, in great spirits, cheering and laughing with each other.

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JUDY (Ghost 1). These are but the shadows of things that have been. They have no consciousness of us.

CHARLIE. As they approached the boys, Scrooge could recognize them all, as they wished each other a Merry Christmas and entered their carriages which were to carry them home for the holiday.

SFX. HORSES. FADE OUT.

No one is quite sure what to do here, so Ralphie cups his hands and claps them together. Lana and Shirley join. Sound fades as the Ghost speaks again.

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