

A (VERY ZOMBIE) CHRISTMAS CAROL

A one-act horror comedy by
Steph DeFerie

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

BOB CRATCHIT, male.

EBENEZER SCROOGE, male.

FRED, male.

TINY TIM

MRS. (or MR.) RUTLEDGE

MRS. (or MR.) BUTTLE

JACOB MARLEY, male.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

MRS. CRATCHIT, female.

DORA CRATCHIT, female.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME

ASSORTED ZOMBIES, the more the merrier.

Any role without a specific gender assignment above may be played as any gender—just change pronouns as necessary.

Feel free to have actors play multiple roles according to the needs of your production. For example, Fred and Rutledge could play Ghost of Christmas Present or Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come, or they could stay Fred Zombie and Rutledge Zombie. Ghost of Christmas Past and Marley could be played by Mrs. Cratchit or Dora.

SETTING

Christmas Eve. Victorian London: Scrooge's office and the Cratchit home.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This play was originally produced in 2017 in Minneapolis, MN, as part of "World Crime League's F*cked-Up Xmas." The cast and creative team were as follows:

Director: Troy Stolp; Costumes: Chelsea Wren; Stage Manager: Gaea Dill-D'Ascoli; Lighting Designer: Mary "Poff" Southern

BOB CRATCHIT.....Varghese Alexander
SCROOGE.....James Miskimen
FRED.....Andy Rakerd
TINY TIM.....Evan Slack
RUTLEDGE.....Christine Pietz
BUTTLE CAYLA.....Marie Wolpers
MARLEY.....Alexander Wolfe
GHOST OF PAST.....Haley Hubbard
GHOST OF PRESENT.....Chelsea Wren
MRS. CRATCHIT.....Haley Hubbard
DORA.....Kya Fischer
GHOST OF FUTURE.....Al Fiene
ZOMBIE.....Leigh Weber

DEDICATION

For "The Inimitable" – with apologies.

And to Bobbi – many thanks for her generosity.

(Victorian London. Christmas Eve. Scrooge's office.)

(There is a door to the street and an open doorway to the inner office which is a simple curtained opening. The curtains are drawn back.)

(There is a fireplace with a coal scuttle containing a lump of coal, a poker and a pair of tongs. There is a stool and a desk with a candle, ledger, inkwell and pen. There is a coat-tree with two hats, two scarves and an umbrella.)

(BOB CRATCHIT sits on the stool at the desk, shivering and writing. He warms his hands over his candle, teeth chattering loudly.)

SCROOGE: *(Off:)* Bob Cratchit! Will you stop making that infernal racket! I can't hear myself foreclosing on widows and orphans!

(SCROOGE enters through the curtained doorway.)

BOB: Sorry, Mr. Scrooge, only it's rather colder than usual in here today. *(He holds up a hand – his fingers are black and missing:)* I've lost two fingers to frostbite already and the day's not even over yet. Might I add a small lump of coal to the fire?

SCROOGE: Certainly...

(Bob, happily surprised, gets off his stool, picks up a lump of coal from the scuttle with the tongs and prepares to put it in the fireplace.)

...so long as you understand that the cost will come out of your salary...

(Bob wavers, looking at his maimed hand.)

...and each piece of coal is worth six months of your wages.

BOB: But the ink has frozen solid! I cannot write!

SCROOGE: There's plenty of liquid in your veins, is there not?

BOB: Mr. Scrooge!

SCROOGE: Get on with your work, man! What am I paying you for?

(Bob, dejected, returns the coal to the scuttle and sits. He looks at the inkwell and considers for a moment, then pricks his finger with the pen and begins writing with blood.)

(A knock at the street door. Enter FRED, plucking at a bloody rip in his coat sleeve.)

FRED: Happy Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE: Bah humbug!

FRED: Christmas a humbug? I'm sure you don't mean that, Uncle. Why, Christmas is the most wonderful time of year! Everything is so merry and jolly and...oh, I say, I appear to be bleeding.

SCROOGE: Then get off me rug, get off me rug!

FRED: Frightfully sorry.

BOB: Oh, dear! Let me help you. Have you had an accident, Mr. Fred?

FRED: Damnedest thing—I stopped to give a coin to a street urchin singing carols about brains and the little bugger bit me!

BOB: How very odd.

SCROOGE: Ah, ha! There, you see? I'm always telling you that Christmas is the most dreadful time of year. People biting one another—typical.

(Fred slowly begins to turn into a zombie throughout the following, but neither Bob nor Scrooge notice.)

FRED: Poor child was merely playing some sort of holiday jest on me, I suppose.

BOB: In which his teeth end up in your arm? I'm not familiar with that one.

FRED: Anyway, Uncle, I've come to invite you to dine with me and my good wife tomorrow. We'd love to have you... (*Ominously:*) ...and your big juicy brain...for dinner...

SCROOGE: I think not. Cratchit and I shall be working tomorrow as usual.

BOB: Oh, but Mr. Scrooge, it's Christmas! You said I could have the whole day off!

SCROOGE: Did I? That doesn't sound like me. Had I been drinking? [*Alt:* Have you lost your tiny mind, Cratchit?] Very well, take the day – but be here all the earlier the morning after.

BOB: Thank you, Mr. Scrooge!

(Fred reaches out menacingly.)

Look, sir, your nephew wishes to embrace you and ask you to reconsider.

(Scrooge grudgingly holds out his hand. Fred grabs it and tries to eat it. Scrooge shakes him off.)

SCROOGE: (*Annoyed:*) What is the matter with you, Nephew?!

FRED: Brains! Brains!

SCROOGE: ...Are exactly what you lack—brains and good common sense, you and everyone else who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on their lips. You should all be boiled with your own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through your heart. Good day, sir!

(Scrooge pushes Fred to the door, opens it and pushes Fred out. Fred stands there a moment, confused. Scrooge slams the door.)

(We hear a clock strike seven.)

BOB: Seven o'clock, Mr. Scrooge. If you'll give me my wages, I'll be off.

(Bob crosses to coat-tree and puts on his hat and scarf.)

(A scream offstage. Bob looks off, mildly concerned. Scrooge doesn't react.)

SCROOGE: *(Giving Bob coins:)* Eager to get home to that saucy wife of yours, eh, Cratchit?

BOB: *(Distracted:)* Hmm?

SCROOGE: I'll wager she knows what a man likes.

BOB: *(Still distracted:)* What?

SCROOGE: Oh, do go on then and leave me in peace.

(Another scream offstage, worse than the first.)

BOB: *(Nervously:)* Uh, perhaps I'll just wait here a bit...

SCROOGE: Get out if you're in such a hurry!

(Scrooge pushes Bob toward the door and opens it. TINY TIM is standing there.)

TINY TIM: Father!

BOB: Tiny Tim! What are you doing here?

TINY TIM: I've come to walk you home.

BOB: *(Bringing Tiny Tim in:)* Is that blood on your hand, Tim? *(Alarmed:)* Are you ill?

TINY TIM: No, some boys chased me and bit me, but I managed to beat them off with my crutch.

BOB: Bit you?! Why, that's what Mr. Fred said happened to him...

TINY TIM: There's ever so much commotion in the streets, Father. I think something's terribly...terribly...

(Tiny Tim begins to turn into a zombie.)

Brains!

SCROOGE: Yes, yes, I'm sure that's all very nice. Don't let me keep you. Good evening!

(Scrooge pushes Bob and Tiny Tim toward the door.)

BOB: But sir, something's wrong with our Tim!

SCROOGE: Of course there is. It's consumption or some such thing, isn't it? Leprosy? Or worms? Anyway, good evening.

(Scrooge opens the door.)

(Two people are standing there – MRS. RUTLEDGE and MRS. BUTTLE.)

Now what?

RUTLEDGE: Have we the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE: Mr. Marley died seven years ago – seven years ago this very night.

(Tiny Tim begins lunging toward Rutledge and Buttle. Bob tries to hold him back.)

BUTTLE: I am Mrs. Buttle, and this is Mrs. Rutledge. We are taking up a collection for the poor to provide them with some food and drink and means of warmth during this holiday season, and we had hoped –

SCROOGE: You may hope all you like, but since I support the prisons and the workhouses with my taxes, I hardly think I shall be wasting any more money on that wretched scum, so if you'll be so kind... *(Indicating the door:)* It's like Victoria Station in here tonight.

BUTTLE: But many people would rather starve than go to such places. Many would rather die –

SCROOGE: Then let them do so and decrease the surplus population.

RUTLEDGE: Oh, surely you don't mean—

(Tiny Tim bites Rutledge's leg.)

Son of a—!

BOB: *(Pulling Tiny Tim away:)* Sorry, sir. I don't know what's gotten into him all of a sudden.

RUTLEDGE: Part of my leg, if I'm not mistaken!

TINY TIM: Brains! Brains!

BUTTLE: If we could have but a moment or two of your time—

SCROOGE: Absolutely not! I've given you my answer, be off.

BUTTLE: Have you no heart, no sympathy, no—

TINY TIM: Brains?

BUTTLE: I'm sure Rutledge here can persuade you—

RUTLEDGE: Actually, I think I should go to hospital—

BUTTLE: This will only take a brief—

RUTLEDGE: I think I should go right now, Buttle! I feel very strange! *(To Tiny Tim:)* Vicious brat!

(Rutledge exits.)

BUTTLE: I say! But we haven't gotten any—

TINY TIM: Brains!

(Tiny Tim lunges at Buttle, and Buttle exits quickly.)

BUTTLE: *(Calling as she exits:)* Merry Christ— *(Screams.)*

BOB: Tim, what is the matter with you?

TINY TIM: Brains!

(Buttle screams offstage.)

SCROOGE: (*Pushing Bob and Tiny Tim to the door:*) Weren't you leaving as well, Cratchit?

BOB: But Mr. Scrooge, I believe that Tim is ill—

SCROOGE: I'm sure it's nothing a sound beating won't cure.

(Scrooge pushes Bob and Tiny Tim out the door and slams it.)

BOB: (*Off, pounding on the door:*) Mr. Scrooge! Mr. Scrooge!

SCROOGE: Useless git.

BOB: (*Off:*) Tim, what're you— Get off me! Tim, no, Tim! Aaaaahhhhhh!

SCROOGE: The most inept clerk in all of England...but his son did have the right idea biting that charity sponger. I must remember that. (*Putting on his hat and scarf with a sigh:*) Might as well go home myself, I suppose...

(Scrooge opens the door. Hands reach in for him, but Scrooge, looking back in his office, doesn't notice.)

ZOMBIES: (*Off:*) Brains! Brains!

SCROOGE: ...Or maybe I'll just stay here and get some work done now that it's peaceful. It'll be nice to be able to concentrate on the evictions without any interruptions for a change. (*As Bob:*) "Oh, Mr. Scrooge, my fingers are falling off! Mr. Scrooge, my feet are frozen to the floor!" Don't know why I even bother employing such a wretched clerk.

(Scrooge shuts the door, takes off his hat and scarf and sits at the desk.)

(MARLEY magically appears, perhaps through the curtained doorway.)

MARLEY: Scrooooooooooge!

SCROOGE: (*Startled:*) What the— Who is...? Jacob Marley?

MARLEY: Scroooooooge, I *had* come from beyond the grave to warn you...

SCROOGE: Warn me?

MARLEY: ...That in order to save your immortal soul, you will be visited tonight by three ghosts...

SCROOGE: Ghosts?!

MARLEY: ...But now I find there is something far more dire happening that I must warn you about instead!

SCROOGE: More dire?! What's more dire than ghosts?!

MARLEY: Never mind the ghosts! Forget the ghosts! Haven't you noticed what's going on out in the streets?!

SCROOGE: Forget ghosts?! How can I forget three ghosts coming for me? Are they all rotted and moist and horrible looking? Do they smell? Will they touch me?

MARLEY: Look, I'll try to cancel the ghosts, but you must listen to me! The city tonight is full of terrible sights...

SCROOGE: ...Which is certainly nothing new. As you yourself used to say many times, it's so depressing to have to trip over the poor everywhere you go.

MARLEY: You don't understand, man! The streets have become overrun with those that want to eat you!

SCROOGE: ...Which is again as usual, but that's out there. I'm going to have three ghosts right here in my office with me, which I'd say is rather worse!

MARLEY: You must go out and raise the alarm! Go forth and warn—

SCROOGE: Why am I even listening to you? You're nothing but a bit of moldy cheese, a rancid blob of gravy, a piece of

underdone potato. Let all those Merry Christmas fools save themselves – I've got my hands full with three ghosts. Begone!

MARLEY: But...but...

(Scrooge chucks the ledger at Marley, who disappears, probably through the curtained doorway.)

SCROOGE: Perhaps if I pretend to be asleep, the ghosts will be polite enough to leave me undisturbed.

(Scrooge exits through the curtained doorway.)

(Enter Bob at a run through the street door. He slams the door shut and blocks it with the table and stool. His clothes are ripped, and his face is scratched.)

BOB: Where is God when the dead walk the streets on Christmas Eve? Where is the constabulary?!

(Enter GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST magically, perhaps through the curtained doorway.)

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Scrooge! I am the Ghost of Christmas Past! Rise and walk with... *(Realizing their mistake:)* Oh, sorry, I thought you were someone else.

BOB: *(Distractedly:)* I'm Bob Cratchit, Mr. Scrooge's clerk.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: *(Grandly:)* I am the Ghost of Christmas Past! Is Mr. Scrooge about?

BOB: Ghost! You're a ghost?! *(Grabbing Ghost of Christmas Past:)* Do you know anything about what's going on out there?!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: *(Hesitantly:)* N...no...

BOB: But you are a supernatural being, and what is happening can only be described as beyond this natural world! Surely, you must know something!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: I'm sorry, only I've been tasked to show Scrooge merry scenes from his past to awaken his cold, dead heart.

BOB: There're plenty of cold, dead hearts walking around out there as it is—take your pick! Can't you do something about them?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: I'm really not supposed to—

BOB: But you're...one of them! Aren't you? Can't you just...I don't know...go out and talk to them or something?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: I don't think so.

BOB: Can you at least tell me what's going on?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Look, I only know about Christmases past—

BOB: Well then, you're pretty bloody useless, aren't you! My son's trying to eat my brains and all you can do is chat on about, "Remember last year's holiday party?"

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: I'll have you know that I'm Scrooge's last chance to save his soul and regain his humanity—

BOB: Piss on that! London is swarming with a host of the undead! I scarcely think Mr. Scrooge's humanity is the most important thing at the moment!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: But—

BOB: Look, if you can't help, then go away!

(Ghost of Christmas Past tries to think of a response but can't come up with one.)

Go away and leave me to think!

(Bob stares at Ghost of Christmas Past, who finally gives up and exits, probably through the curtained doorway.)

(Looking around the office:) There must be something in here I can use as a weapon. *(Lifting the candlestick:)* Perhaps I could make a torch. They seem to instinctively fear fire.

(Bob picks up the poker and enthusiastically whacks the desk.)

This'll give 'em what for!

(Buttle pounds on the door.)

BUTTLE: Help, help! For the love of God, let me in! Save me from these ghastly horrors!

(Bob pushes the table aside and opens the door. Buttle rushes in. The door is shut and the table is pushed back against it.)

Thanks be to Christ! What is happening in our fair London this blessed night?!

(Enter Scrooge in a nightgown and nightcap through the curtained doorway.)

SCROOGE: Who the devil is it now? Bob Cratchit! What are you...? *(Seeing Buttle:)* Look, I told you —

BOB: Mr. Scrooge, something appalling has happened! Animated corpses...zombies...are roaming the streets, attacking any living person they encounter and feasting on their flesh!

(A pause.)

SCROOGE: Are you having a stroke?

BOB: On my life, Mr. Scrooge, it's true!

BUTTLE: Listen to your clerk, man! It's fact! Every word he says is gospel!

BOB: I know it sounds fantastic, but even our own beloved Tiny Tim has succumbed, and only by the grace of God have I managed to escape his dreadful appetites!

SCROOGE: This is your sad idea of a joke, isn't it. You're hoping I'll give you money just to leave me in peace.

BOB: No, no!

BUTTLE: All your money cannot help you now!

SCROOGE: (*Shocked:*) I'll pretend I didn't hear that and not flog you within an inch of your life as I ordinarily would! Why have you blocked my door, sir? Do you mean to keep me prisoner in my own rooms?

(Scrooge pushes the desk from the door.)

BUTTLE: In our Savior's name, don't...!

BOB: Don't!

BOB & BUTTLE: Don't open the door!

(Too late.)

(Immediately, Tiny Tim and Fred enter through the door.)

TINY TIM & FRED: Brains! Brains!

SCROOGE: Nephew! I believe I made it quite clear that—

(Bob and Buttle stand between Tiny Tim and Fred and Scrooge, Bob swinging the poker and Buttle brandishing the candle.)

BOB: Back! Get back, I say!

TINY TIM: But Father, I just want to give you a big hug...and kiss your juicy, delicious brains!

BUTTLE: By the name of our Savior, return to the hell from whence you came!

FRED: Uncle, if you won't come dine at my house, I'll dine on you here!

(Enter GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT magically, possibly through the curtained doorway.)

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: (*Grandly:*) I am the Ghost of Christmas —

(*Fred and Tiny Tim turn their attention to Ghost of Christmas Present and try to eat him.*)

Get off!

(*Fred and Tiny Tim, unable to eat Ghost of Christmas Present, turn their attention back to Scrooge, Bob and Buttle.*)

BOB: Not another one!

BUTTLE: Who is that?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: I am the Ghost of Christmas Present!

BUTTLE: A ghost?! Can he...?

BOB: No, I suspect this one's as bloody useless as the first one.

SCROOGE: There was a first one? (*Happily:*) I missed it!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Come, Scrooge, let us walk the streets to partake of all the festivities. You shall certainly profit by observing the generosity of others.

SCROOGE: Profit, you say? How many pounds are we talking about?

BOB: I wouldn't go out there if I were you.

BUTTLE: Look out there, man! The reanimated dead have risen from their graves and are attacking one and all to eat their living flesh!

SCROOGE: You will not dictate my actions to me, Bob Cratchit. If I want to walk out, I shall. (*To Ghost of Christmas Present:*) Now, you mentioned something about profit...

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: I was speaking metaphorically, of course.

SCROOGE: That's it! I will not stand to have "profit" spoken of metaphorically in this office! Out with you!

(Scrooge pushes Ghost of Christmas Present toward the open door. Buttle tries to pull Scrooge back.)

(Rutledge enters through the open door.)

RUTLEDGE: *(Moaning:)* Aaaagghh...

BUTTLE: Mrs. Rutledge! Go away and leave me alone! Our partnership is over!

RUTLEDGE: Not until you let me...pick your brains!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: I cannot help this poor, pathetic, miserable, wretched pustule of humanity if I cannot show him the goodwill and merriment that he is missing.

SCROOGE: I can hear you, you know.

BOB: I think we should go to my house in Camden Town immediately.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Because it is so full of the Christmas spirit?

BOB: Because it's more easily defended. Mr. Scrooge, you'll want a weapon.

(Scrooge grabs the poker from Bob.)

SCROOGE: This'll work.

(Tiny Tim, Fred and Rutledge surge forward. Bob grabs the umbrella and brandishes it.)

BOB: *(To Zombies:)* Back, get back, I say! *(To Scrooge:)* Stay close and hit anything that comes within range. *(To Ghost of Christmas Present:)* Come on, you too. We need all the defense we can muster.

(Ghost of Christmas Present picks up the tongs.)

Ready?

BUTTLE: Ready!

SCROOGE: But my money...!

BOB: They don't care about your money, sir — they only want your —

ZOMBIES: Brains!

BOB: Come, Mr. Scrooge!

(Bob, Buttle, Scrooge and Ghost of Christmas Present exit through the door, swinging their weapons.)

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Try to take a moment to observe the cheer and glad hearts... *(Swinging the tongs at Zombies:)* Stop it!

(Scrooge, Bob, Buttle and Ghost of Christmas Present make their way to the Cratchit house.)

(Zombies keep at them. Scrooge is particularly enthusiastic about whacking them.)

(Alternately, Scrooge's office is changed to the Cratchit house.)

BOB: What a nightmare, eh, sir?

SCROOGE: On the contrary — it's the best Christmas Eve I can remember!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: You see? This truly is the most magical and wondrous time of — On your left!

(An attack from the left is repelled, but Buttle is taken down by the Zombies. This is as bloody as you like.)

BUTTLE: Ahhhhhhhhh!

BOB: We're losing Buttle!

SCROOGE: She'll only slow us down — keep going!

(The Cratchit house – several pieces of furniture have been pushed up against the door. There is a pan of scones in the fireplace, and a table with several weapons, a bowl of punch and some glasses on it. A sad little Christmas tree stands in the corner, and there are as many festive decorations as possible.)

(MRS. CRATCHIT is mixing something in a bowl, and DORA is working with the weapons.)

(Bob tries the door.)

BOB: Let us in, let us in!

DORA: Mother!

(Mrs. Cratchit and Dora take up arms, move the furniture and stand by the door.)

MRS. CRATCHIT: Ready?

(Dora nods eagerly.)

Open it!

BOB: *(Pounding on the door:)* For the love of God, let us in!

(As Bob shouts and pounds on the door, Dora opens it. Bob, Scrooge and Ghost of Christmas Present fall inside. Dora bashes Bob. Mrs. Cratchit bashes Scrooge.)

Dora, Dora! It's me!

DORA: Father! You're alive!

MRS. CRATCHIT: *(Beating Scrooge:)* Take that! And that!

BOB: Mrs. Cratchit, stop! It's Mr. Scrooge!

MRS. CRATCHIT: *(Beating Scrooge:)* I know!

BOB: But he's not a zombie!

MRS. CRATCHIT: *(Still pounding on Scrooge:)* I know!

DORA: Wait – Father, are you bitten?!

BOB: No, we are unharmed.

SCROOGE: I'm not! Restrain your wife, sir!

(Bob restrains Mrs. Cratchit. Dora closes the door and replaces the furniture, perhaps helped by Ghost of Christmas Present. Zombies claw at the door.)

(Bob hugs Mrs. Cratchit and Dora.)

BOB: Oh, my precious wife and daughter! Are you quite safe?

MRS. CRATCHIT: We are indeed. The little ones are in the parlor making torches and hanging up the holly whilst we are here sharpening the knives and putting the finishing touches on Christmas dinner. I dare say the plum pudding is shaping up to be one of my finest!

BOB: You are a treasure, my dear!

MRS. CRATCHIT: Christmas comes but once a year – I'll not let a few soulless corpses ruin it. Do you like the tree?

SCROOGE: Soulless corpses? I demand an explanation!

MRS. CRATCHIT: There is no explanation, Mr. Scrooge. You must simply accept that London has been taken over by zombies and act accordingly. I would've thought that obvious by now. *(In a loud whisper to Bob:)* Did you have to bring him here?

SCROOGE: Zombies?

BOB: Did you not just now notice anything different in those we saw shambling about the streets attacking us?

SCROOGE: They seemed the usual disgusting wretches I have to put up with every day.

BOB: Then why did you think we were hacking at them?

SCROOGE: Because it's fun?

DORA: (*Indicating Ghost of Christmas Present:*) Who is this, Father?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: I am the Ghost—

BOB: It's a bloody useless prat is what it is.

DORA: Should I kill it, then, just to be on the safe side?

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