

SCROOGE MACBETH

By David MacGregor

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SCROOGE MACBETH

By David MacGregor

SYNOPSIS: *Scrooge Macbeth* takes the meaning of “the show must go on” to a whole new level. Bob, Sylvia, Victor, and Renee are the last four actors standing when a food poisoning outbreak sidelines most of the cast on the opening night of the Hartland Community Theatre’s holiday production, Shakespeare’s classic, *The Winter’s Tale*. But that’s not the only setback: Sylvia has just discovered a boatload of red ink in the theatre group’s ledger. With impending financial ruin, a shortage of cast members, and an expectant audience just outside the doors, can these four amateur thespians concoct some kind of holiday entertainment in time to save their theatre? Thanks to the ensuing violent collision between everything Christmas and everything Shakespeare, you will never think of Shakespeare or Christmas in quite the same way again.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 males, 3 females)

- BOB (m)30s-50s; Co-executive director of the Hartland Community Theatre, plumber, and husband of SYLVIA. (194 lines)
- SYLVIA (f).....30s-50s; Co-executive director of the Hartland Community Theatre, intellectual property attorney, and wife of BOB. (225 lines)
- VICTOR (m).....30s-50s; Co-artistic director of the Hartland Community Theatre, English professor, and husband of RENEE. (146 lines)
- RENEE (f).....30s-50s; Co-artistic director of the Hartland Community Theatre, kindergarten teacher, and wife of VICTOR. (163 lines)
- STAGE MANAGER (f).....A middle-aged to elderly woman of difficult temperament who apparently came with the building. (28 lines)

(ALL LINE COUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE)

DURATION: 85 minutes

SETTING: A community theatre

TIME: Now and then

PROPS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apron | <input type="checkbox"/> Quill Pen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bear Costume | <input type="checkbox"/> Rack of <i>A Christmas Carol</i> Costumes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cape | <input type="checkbox"/> Rack of Shakespearean Costumes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cell Phone | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio City Rockette Costumes (2) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chair | <input type="checkbox"/> Rubber Snake |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas Presents | <input type="checkbox"/> Santa Claus Costume |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas Tree | <input type="checkbox"/> Scimitar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas Wreath | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Crutch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dagger | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Plastic Cauldron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Head of Macbeth | <input type="checkbox"/> Turban |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Skull | <input type="checkbox"/> Typewriter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ladder | <input type="checkbox"/> Vial of Poison |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop Computer | <input type="checkbox"/> Wristwatch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laurel or Garland | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter in Envelope | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mistletoe | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quad Cane (a walking cane with four feet) | |

SYNOPSIS OF SONGS

The following songs used in *Scrooge Macbeth* were arranged by Colin Holter.

The scores for these pieces can be found at the end of the script.

- SONG 1: The Twelve Days of Christmas
SONG 2: Hamlet the Danish Prince
SONG 3: Prospero is Coming To Town
SONG 4: I'm Getting Nothing for Christmas
SONG 5: All I Want For Christmas (Is a Deadly Asp)
SONG 6: I Want to Get a Pound of Flesh for Christmas
SONG 7: Santa Baby

SCROOGE MACBETH

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The following acknowledgement must appear on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play:

Scrooge Macbeth received its world premiere at Theatre B in Fargo, North Dakota (David Wintersteen, Artistic Director; Carrie Wintersteen, Executive Director).

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Scrooge Macbeth premiered at Theatre B in Fargo, North Dakota on November 28, 2013, with the following cast and crew:

BOB.....Scott Horvik
SYLVIACarrie Wintersteen
VICTORBlaine Edwards
RENEEAnna Pieri
STAGE MANAGER Mary Cochran

Director..... David Wintersteen
Scenic Designer.....David Ahumada
Properties Designer Mary Cochran
Costume DesignerTerrance Nelson
Lighting Designer.....Michael Sunram
Sound DesignerMissy Teeters
Production ManagerBlaine Edwards
Music Director..... Colin Holter
Dramaturge.....Patrick Carriere
Stage Manager..... Alexandra Farren

NOTE: The word "goddamned" is used twice in the play. If this is considered objectionable, it can be dropped if so desired.

AT RISE:

SYLVIA sits with a laptop and BOB is on his phone nearby, both half-dressed for tonight's show. Behind them is a painted backdrop of empty seats to give the impression that the audience is looking out into the auditorium. Perhaps some footlights at the back wall add to this effect. These footlights are twinned at the actual front of the stage. There are two open curtains, one against the back wall which will be used to cover up the backdrop, and one hung at half-stage. When closed, this curtain will separate "onstage" from "backstage." Characters will simply go through the curtain then turn around and reappear to move between these two spaces. Off the "backstage" space is an exit that leads to an unseen green-room/storeroom/dressing room area from which characters can enter or exit. SYLVIA types numbers into a spreadsheet and shakes her head at what she sees. She puts her hand through her hair and runs the numbers again. As she does all this, BOB talks on his phone, just far enough away from SYLVIA to make it plausible that she can't hear him.

BOB: Oh no... oh my gosh... I'm so sorry. In the car? Well...that'll clean up... they've got, what do you call them, solvents and special detergents for that kind of thing, I'm pretty sure... yeah... and the smell should go away eventually... projectile, huh?... Right into the air vents...that's not good. Jerry, are you...? *(He winces as he listens to horrible retching sounds.)* I'm gonna let you go. You take care now.

BOB hangs up just as the STAGE MANAGER shuffles past him, aided by her quad cane [a walking cane with four feet]. Her voice is the bored monotone of someone for whom death cannot come soon enough.

STAGE MANAGER: Fifteen minutes to places.

BOB brightens up reflexively and SYLVIA looks up as well.

BOB/SYLVIA: Thank you, fifteen minutes!

The STAGE MANAGER doesn't pause or look back as she exits.

STAGE MANAGER: It's what I live for.

SCROOGE MACBETH

BOB approaches SYLVIA.

BOB: I think we might have a little problem.

SYLVIA: What now?

BOB: I just talked to Jerry.

SYLVIA: Good! He finally showed up?

BOB: No. He...I guess he and Theresa went out to dinner last night with Carl and Diane. And the Bernsteins went too. They went to that new buffet place out on Highland Road. [*Or preferably, the name of a local road.*]

SYLVIA: Okay. Why are you telling me this?

BOB: Well, I guess the food maybe wasn't quite as fresh as it could have been. Yeah. So, he was calling me from the hospital. They're all in there with food poisoning.

SYLVIA: All six of them?

BOB: Pretty much. But Victor and Renee are here! They're getting into costume.

SYLVIA: Let me get this straight. It's just going to be you and me and Victor and Renee tonight?

BOB: That's what it's looking like.

VICTOR and RENEE enter in Shakespearean attire, each pushing a rack full of costumes. They are glowing with happiness and in character.

VICTOR: A sad tale's best for winter: I have one of sprites and goblins.

RENEE: Let's have that, good sir.

Come on, sit down: come on, and do your best
To fright me with your sprites; you're powerful at it.

VICTOR and RENEE laugh and kiss.

VICTOR: Come on you two! (*Indicating the two racks.*) Into costume!
We've got a play to do! *The Winter's Tale* awaits!

SYLVIA: Actually—

VICTOR: Do you know what tonight is? This night, tonight, will be the pinnacle of my career. To perform Shakespeare in my own community, surrounded by my best friends in the world. This is the best Christmas present I could have ever asked for!

SYLVIA: Yeah, well, Christmas is going to have to wait. Apparently, the rest of the cast has it coming out both ends at St. Mary's. [*Or preferably, the name of a local hospital.*]

RENEE: Coming out both ends?

For RENEE's benefit, BOB mimes projectile vomiting and violent diarrhea. RENEE's features twist in horror as understanding dawns.

SYLVIA: So, that's that.

BOB: Wait, what are you saying? We're still doing the show.

SYLVIA: Bob, we can't do *The Winter's Tale* with four people!

BOB: Well, it might not be quite like we rehearsed it, but couldn't we just double up on some of the parts?

SYLVIA: We were already doubling parts! The original play has over twenty characters in it! We were trying to do it with ten, and now you think we can do it with four?

RENEE: But we can't cancel the show! Tonight's our big holiday premiere!

VICTOR: We've already sold thirty-two tickets!

SYLVIA: That's not exactly a sell-out, Victor! And ten of those are comps. That's why, when I checked out our presale numbers, I thought I'd better take a look at our budget.

RENEE: And?

SYLVIA: Okay, I'm a lawyer not an accountant, but we didn't exactly help ourselves by opening our "season of classics" with *Waiting for Godot*...

BOB and RENEE shake their heads at the unpleasant memory.

BOB: What was that even about?

RENEE: Godot was just being rude to those nice men.

SYLVIA: ...and I know we all thought that doing some Shakespeare during the holidays would be a good idea, but based on our projected ticket sales...

She turns the laptop and the others crowd around to see. They react like they're looking at a dead puppy.

RENEE: It wasn't such a good idea.

VICTOR: So, how bad is it?

SCROOGE MACBETH

SYLVIA: This theatre's been on life-support for the past three years. With these ticket sales and only half a cast...let's face it. It's time to pull the plug.

VICTOR: But Sylvia, we're opening tonight! People are coming to see the Hartland Community Theatre's presentation of a Shakespearean classic!

SYLVIA: It's just not going to happen. We'll refund whatever money we can and—

BOB: You can't be serious! There must be something we can do!

SYLVIA: Sure. All we need is our best-selling show ever and we can stay in business. But do any of you honestly think that's going to happen with *The Winter's Tale*?

The others open their mouths to reply, then pause, cold reality sinking in.

VICTOR: So, you're saying we're done.

BOB: I can't believe this.

RENEE: But Sylvia, you can't just...Victor and I happen to be the artistic directors of this theatre!

SYLVIA: And Bob and I are the executive directors. What difference does it make? If we're out of money, we're out of money. And we're out of money.

VICTOR: But Sylvia, the show must go on!

SYLVIA: Not this show.

The STAGE MANAGER shuffles through on her way to the booth. At the sound of her cane clumping on the floor, all of the characters jump into their individual warm-up routines.

STAGE MANAGER: I'm opening the house. Ten minutes to places.

ALL: *(Reflexively.)* Thank you, ten minutes!

STAGE MANAGER: Ah, what the hell...

The cast pull the half-stage curtain closed. The STAGE MANAGER exits, grumbling indecipherably. At this point [or when practical], the second curtain should be closed to cover up the painted backdrop of seats, which is not seen again.

BOB: You know what our problem is? I've said this all along. Marketing! We needed a better way to sell *The Winter's Tale*. It's not one of Shakespeare's big guns, heck, for all we know, it's one of the plays he didn't actually write!

VICTOR: Oh my God...William Shakespeare wrote his own plays! All of them!

BOB: That's not what I've heard. Anyway, my point is, we should have been out there at the senior center and the gas stations with, you know, marketing stuff.

VICTOR: And with a more popular play, thank you very much! Didn't I say that? I did! I said all along we should do *Othello*.

BOB: And why did you keep saying we should do *Othello*?

VICTOR: Because I would be a kick-ass *Othello*!

NOTE: By all means skip the next five lines if the actor playing Victor happens to be African American.

SYLVIA: Victor, you're not black!

VICTOR: What is that supposed to mean?

SYLVIA: (*Fighting speechlessness.*) It means you're not black! And *Othello* is a black character!

VICTOR: Technically, he's a Moor, you know, a North African. Conceivably, a very light-skinned Moor, or a Moor with a skin condition...like Michael Jackson!

SYLVIA: We are not doing *Othello* with a skin condition! And we can't do *The Winter's Tale* with four people!

BOB: Then how about this? Let's put *The Winter's Tale* on the back burner, yes? And tonight, we'll go out there and do...*A Christmas Carol*, just like we always have! Word will get out, we'll finish our season, then take a look at our marketing plan.

RENEE: Could we do that?

BOB: Of course! Look, we've done *A Christmas Carol* the past six years! We all know the lines well enough, and—

SYLVIA: —and the reason we're not doing it this year is because people didn't come last year. They're sick to death of it.

SCROOGE MACBETH

BOB: Then let's mix it up a little! I know! Let's make Scrooge a woman! Or gay! There you go! We'll make Scrooge a lesbian! A lesbian who learns the true meaning of Christmas! That's very progressive! Who's with me?

BOB and RENEE shoot their hands in the air.

VICTOR: Let me tell you something, amigo. I categorically refuse to do *A Christmas Carol* again. Not now, not ever. I don't care if we make Scrooge a lesbian, an astronaut, or a transvestite pirate.

RENEE makes a little sound of excitement and nods enthusiastically at this idea, but VICTOR ignores her and plows on.

VICTOR: I have played Ebenezer Scrooge. And Bob Cratchit. And Marley's Ghost. And every single one of the freaking Christmas Spirits! In fact, if I think about it, the only character I have never played is Goose Boy.

BOB: Goose Boy?

VICTOR: At the end. You know, the street urchin that goes to buy the goose for Scrooge. So, no. I am not doing *A Christmas Carol* again. Not in this lifetime or in my next ten lifetimes! It's Shakespeare or nothing!

SYLVIA: Then we just have to face the fact that—

RENEE: Why don't we do both?

SYLVIA: Both what?

RENEE: Let's do both! A Christmasy Shakespeare. Or a Shakespearean Christmas. We'll call it...

She looks at the others hopefully.

BOB: *Scrooge Macbeth?*

RENEE: Yes! *Scrooge Macbeth!* Who wouldn't want to see a play called *Scrooge Macbeth?*

VICTOR: Sweetheart, I know you mean well, but Shakespeare and Christmas do not mix. They have never mixed. Christmas was not a big deal in Shakespeare's day, which is why he never wrote about it.

BOB: Hang on...a Christmasy Shakespeare. I like it. Sylvia?

SYLVIA: If it brings in a paying audience, I love it.

VICTOR: Listen to you three! Is that what we've come to? Is that how low we are willing to stoop? A Shakespearean Christmas? It's asinine! It's a travesty! We would be making a mockery of the greatest writer in the history of the English language.

RENEE: Are you positive Shakespeare never wrote about Christmas? I seem to remember something—

VICTOR: No, you don't. I have taught Shakespeare classes at the university for thirteen years and trust me, there is no North Pole in *Twelfth Night* and no toy-making elves in *As You Like It*. You're mistaken.

BOB: What if she's not mistaken? It's a great combination! Shakespeare and Christmas...

RENEE: It's like peanut butter and jelly!

SYLVIA: Or gin and vermouth.

RENEE: Exactly! Let's put them together for one night and see what happens!

BOB: We've already got the Shakespeare costumes— (*Rifling through one of the racks of costumes.*)—king, nobleman, lady...bear. (*Pulls out the bear costume.*) Everybody loves bears! (*Swinging a paw.*) RAWWWRR!

RENEE: (*Rifling through the other rack.*) And we still have the *Christmas Carol* costumes we've used every year, not to mention the Santa outfit from last year's fund-raiser! What else? Sylvia?

SYLVIA: I suppose we've got the holiday decorations in the lobby we could drag in here—

RENEE: (*Clapping her hands excitedly.*) Yes! Some tinsel, some twinkly lights, it will be wonderful! Victor? What do you say?

VICTOR hesitates, looking dubious.

BOB: Hey, I'm in! And I'll let you in on a little secret. I'm a plumber. I'm not real strong on Shakespeare.

VICTOR: That's not exactly a secret.

RENEE: Victor, don't be a bucket-dipper.

VICTOR: I am not a bucket-dipper!

RENEE: You're acting like a bucket-dipper.

SCROOGE MACBETH

VICTOR: And I am not one of your kindergarten students! I just think this whole Shakespearean Christmas idea is...it's...

RENEE: Victor, what happens tomorrow morning? You go back to teaching illiterate freshmen, Bob unclogs toilets, Sylvia looks for contract loopholes, and I take Kyle Duckworth down to the school nurse because he ate another jar of Play-Doh and has it coming out both ends.

VICTOR: Okay...so?

RENEE: So, that's why we need this theatre! Because without it, we're just...we're just us.

VICTOR: You know what? Fine. If you can prove that Shakespeare ever wrote about Christmas, then fine. But he didn't. And that's that.

BOB: I say we Google it.

VICTOR: Google away! Google to your heart's content! But you're wasting your time.

SYLVIA taps rapidly at the keys on her laptop. BOB and RENEE huddle around her as VICTOR stands aloof.

SYLVIA: Shakespeare...Christmas...here it is! Apparently, he only mentions Christmas once, in all of his plays, but here it is!

VICTOR: Here what is?

RENEE: *(Reading.)*

At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled mirth;
But like of each thing that in season grows.

VICTOR: Where's that from?

BOB: *Love's Labour's Lost.*

VICTOR: *(Reading from the laptop.)* At Christmas, I no more desire a rose... *(Looking around at the others.)* Well, you know, to be perfectly honest, I'm not sure I ever actually read *Love's Labour's Lost*.

RENEE: Or you might have forgot it.

VICTOR: I might have! That's true. That's probably it! But here it is...Shakespeare does mention Christmas...

The STAGE MANAGER walks through.

STAGE MANAGER: Five minutes to places.

ALL: Thank you, five minutes!

STAGE MANAGER: Whatever.

SYLVIA, BOB, and RENEE look at VICTOR expectantly.

VICTOR: You know, I think Renee's onto something. I do. A Shakespearean Christmas! It makes perfect sense. Why has no one ever thought of this before?

BOB: It was too obvious?

VICTOR: That's it! Here it is, it's been staring people in the face for hundreds of years, and we're the first ones to actually see it! Do you know what we're experiencing right here, right now? (*As the others shrug or shake their heads.*) The perfect post-modern moment! We are about to create a pastiche, a collage, a blending and bringing together of humanity's two greatest narratives—Shakespeare and Christmas! Tonight marks a turning point in theatrical history! The stage will never be the same!

BOB: Great! So we're all on board?

SYLVIA: On board with what, exactly?

RENEE: What we've been talking about. A Shakespearean Christmas!

BOB: A Christmasy Shakespeare!

VICTOR: (*Singing to the tune of "Frosty the Snowman".*)

SHAKESPEARE, THE PLAYWRIGHT, WAS A JOLLY HAPPY SOUL.

WITH AN OLDER WIFE AND A DARK MISTRESS,

IN THE HAY WITH WHOM HE'D ROLL...

RENEE: Yes! That's my little bucket-filler!

RENEE kisses VICTOR on the cheek and rushes offstage.

VICTOR: Now, since Renee and I are the more experienced Shakespearean actors, we'll handle the Shakespearean scenes with a Christmas flavor. You two do the Christmas scenes with a Shakespearean flavor.

SYLVIA: Hang on just one second. What's the quid pro quo here, exactly? Okay, we do this show and—

RENEE rushes back on carrying a box that is marked "Shakespearean Props."

SCROOGE MACBETH

RENEE: We save our theatre!

SYLVIA: But how will a Christmasy Shakespeare—

RENEE: If people like it, if they really like it, we can make enough money to stay open, right?

BOB: Right! You just said the same thing, Sylvia. All we need is a hit!

RENEE: So if tonight's audience likes this show and word gets out, then we have a chance!

VICTOR: We're leaving our fate up to the audience?

RENEE: Why not?

SYLVIA: Because every audience is different, that's why not! Is it a matinee or an evening show? Are the Red Hat Ladies here or are the Red Hat Ladies not here? Are they drunk or not drunk? Audiences are like pet chimpanzees. One night they're sweet and cuddly and the next night they rip your face off. How do we know what kind of audience is out there?

VICTOR: That's a good point. Remember that Friday night show after Thanksgiving last year?

They all shudder at a particularly vivid memory and BOB bursts into tears.

SYLVIA: Oh, Bob, honey...it's over.

VICTOR gives BOB a reassuring pat on the back as BOB struggles to compose himself.

RENEE: All right, then if we don't trust the whole audience, we do the show for...Mrs. Kringle!

SYLVIA: Who?

She points to the curtain.

RENEE: Mrs. Kringle!

BOB: (*Heading for the curtain to peek through it.*) You know someone named Mrs. Kringle?

RENEE: No! And maybe Mrs. Kringle isn't out there. Maybe tonight, it's Mr. Kringle.

VICTOR: Sweetheart, you're not making any sense.

RENEE: Mrs. Kringle is out there. She's always out there. Practical yet idealistic, cynical yet romantic, week after week she watches play after play, hoping to be moved, to be inspired, wanting nothing more than to feel that sense of communion you can only receive from live theatre. Yes, life may have worn her down, but beneath her exterior lies a smoldering sensuality that roars through her body like the Niagara River pouring over the Falls. She *is* theatre. *She* is our audience. And she's out there...somewhere.

BOB: Okay, I get what you're saying. But how will we know if this Mrs. Kringle likes our play?

VICTOR: Simple. She gives us a standing ovation.

RENEE: Not necessarily. But if we touch her...we'll know. That's part of the magic of what we do here, the relationship between us and the audience. I don't know how we'll know...but we'll know.

BOB, VICTOR, and SYLVIA mull this over, until...

VICTOR: Works for me!

BOB: I am in!

RENEE: Yay! Here you go, Bob!

RENEE hands BOB the box of props.

BOB: What's this?

RENEE: Our entire collection of Shakespearean props!

As VICTOR enthuses, he and RENEE start clearing the stage. They grab SYLVIA's chair and laptop, then push the two racks of costumes towards the exit.

VICTOR: This is wonderful! My God, I can feel my adrenaline flowing. This is why we do theatre! The sheer life, the spontaneity of it! The pure act of inspired creation in front of a live audience! I've never felt so alive! Anyway...break a leg you two!

VICTOR and RENEE exit.

BOB: Isn't this exciting?

SCROOGE MACBETH

SYLVIA: Bob, we have no idea what we're doing.

BOB: Well, let's try and stay positive.

SYLVIA: Oh my God...

SYLVIA crosses herself.

BOB: You're not Catholic, Sylvia.

SYLVIA: I am now.

BOB: You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to focus on a happy thought. And that's what you need to do. Find a happy thought. (*SYLVIA shakes her head.*) You can do it. (*SYLVIA is still coming up empty.*) Sylvia...you're not trying. (*SYLVIA still has nothing and BOB snaps at her.*) Sylvia, find a goddamned happy thought!

SYLVIA: Got one!

BOB: Good! What is it?

SYLVIA: I probably don't have a brain tumor.

BOB: Fine. Run with that. Just remember that our job, our only job, is to make Mrs. Kringle happy. (*Checking his watch.*) Thirty seconds to curtain.

They adjust their positions slightly as they face the curtain, waiting for the show's opening announcement as if it's their execution.

BOB: Maybe we should sing a Christmas carol like Victor did.

SYLVIA: I can't sing, Bob.

BOB: You could try.

SYLVIA: Not gonna happen.

BOB: But this is a special situation.

SYLVIA: You're a special situation.

BOB: I really think you need to expand your horizons.

SYLVIA: I'm going to expand something else if you don't—

There is a squeal of microphone feedback and the STAGE MANAGER's voice comes over the P.A. system.

STAGE MANAGER: (*Offstage.*) Good afternoon or evening. Welcome to the Hartland Community Theatre's presentation of *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare. Turn off your phones. Enjoy the show.

Another squeal of feedback. BOB and SYLVIA disappear through the curtain and then quickly come back through the curtain as lights shift and they are now “onstage.” They both take two brisk steps forward, smiling broadly and trying to appear at ease. The action that follows is, as August Strindberg’s second wife described their marriage, “a death ride over crackling ice and bottomless depths.” It should feel and appear as if the characters are simply making everything up as they go along. Sometimes, the Muses are with them and the words flow effortlessly. At other moments, they are caught like reindeer in headlights as they navigate the artistic high-wire act of their lives.

SYLVIA: Good evening! Thanks so much for coming! We have a small announcement to make...a slight adjustment in this evening’s program. We...um...Bob?

BOB: As it turns out, we’re having a small problem securing the performance rights to Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, but we’re happy to inform you that tonight, on this very stage, you will be witnessing theatrical history. Won’t they, Sylvia?

SYLVIA: Yes! A beautiful and timeless production in which we join together Christmas and Shakespeare in an unforgettable evening of magic and joy. In fact, I’ve just had a wonderful idea, Bob!

BOB: Thank God.

SYLVIA: (*Shielding her eyes from the lights as she looks up at the booth and waves at the Stage Manager.*) Do you think you could whip us up a quick Christmas medley?

STAGE MANAGER: (*Offstage.*) I hate Christmas medleys.

SYLVIA: But if you could just find—

STAGE MANAGER: (*Offstage.*) Everyone hates Christmas medleys.

SYLVIA: Well, we have some Christmas music, right?

STAGE MANAGER: (*Offstage.*) No.

SYLVIA: But you haven’t even—

STAGE MANAGER: (*Offstage.*) There’s nothing. I looked everywhere.

SYLVIA’s face twitches slightly. It’s everything she can do not to rush to the booth to strangle the Stage Manager.

SYLVIA: (*Through clenched teeth.*) Why do we put up with her?

SCROOGE MACBETH

BOB: (*Trying not to move his lips.*) She's the only one who knows how to run the computerized sound and light board. She's a total techno-geek!

SYLVIA: (*Snapping on a smile.*) All right then! Bob?

BOB: What?

SYLVIA: Why don't you start us off with a little *amuse bouche*, if you will, a hint, a tantalizing fragment of what's to come.

BOB: Well, I thought I would kick things off with a...Christmasy Shakespeare riddle!

SYLVIA: A riddle? How fun! I can't wait to hear it!

BOB: Why...why did King Lear cross the road on Christmas Eve?

SYLVIA: I don't know! Why?

BOB: To get his ungrateful kids some Christmas presents...which they really didn't deserve...but he felt obliged to get them something...which is why he crossed the road...because the store was on the other side of the road...

SYLVIA's look is one of consternation and dismay as BOB shrugs his shoulders.

SYLVIA: Which brings us to our first Shakespearean Christmas carol! "The Twelve Days of Christmas" à la Shakespeare!

BOB: (*In an urgent whisper.*) We can't do that!

SYLVIA: (*Whispering through gritted teeth.*) Why not?

BOB: (*Whispering.*) Aren't songs protected by copyright or something?

SYLVIA: (*Smiling at the audience and trying not to move her lips.*) Campbell vs. Acuff-Rose Music, 1994 Supreme Court Decision, established that commercial parodies qualify as fair use. We're good. Ready?

BOB nods slowly, horror in his eyes.

SYLVIA: Then here we go! "The Twelve Days of Christmas" à la Shakespeare!

NOTE: There is no avoiding the Bataan Death March feel to this song, but that's part of the fun, as BOB and SYLVIA plunge blindly through it, pulling props from the box and miming the action of various gifts [e.g., stirring witches' brews, stabbing with daggers, drinking poison, etc.] as they go. Every time they reach the chorus, they repeat the action or gesture for each gift as it is mentioned.

SYLVIA: And a one, and a two... (*Singing as best she can.*)

ON THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

She turns to BOB, who plunges his arm into the Shakespeare box and pulls out the first thing he grabs—a human skull.

BOB: (*Singing.*)

THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER.

SYLVIA: Seriously?

BOB: It was the first thing I grabbed.

SYLVIA: How is that Christmasy?

BOB: It could be.

SYLVIA: No, it couldn't!

BOB: (*Addressing skull.*) Alas poor Tiny Tim. I knew him well.

SYLVIA: I can't believe you just said that.

BOB: Said what?

SYLVIA: The skull of Tiny Tim? You're saying that at the end of *A Christmas Carol*, Tiny Tim dies.

BOB: Well, he's dead by now! The story was written a 150 years ago! What do you want me to say? It's the skull of Santa Claus?

SYLVIA: Oh my God! (*To audience.*) It isn't! No, no, no! That's not the skull of Santa Claus! (*Back to BOB.*) Are you demented?

BOB: Okay then, it's the skull of...Yukon Cornelius! There! He was licking his pick-axe like always, you know, tasting for silver and gold, and his tongue slipped and the pick-axe went right into his brain.

SYLVIA: (*To audience.*) He's kidding! He's a kidder! It isn't the skull of Yukon Cornelius. It's the skull of Yorick, the court jester in *Hamlet*.

BOB: That's what I said in the first place!

SYLVIA stares at BOB for a long beat.

SCROOGE MACBETH

SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

ON THE SECOND DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

BOB: *(Singing.)*

TWO...GENTLEMEN OF VERONA?

SYLVIA: *(Whispering.)* Much better!

BOB/SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

ON THE THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

BOB reaches into the box and pulls out the kind of small, black plastic cauldron used for treats at Halloween.

BOB: *(Singing.)*

THREE WITCHES' BREWS...

BOB/SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA,
AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

ON THE FOURTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

BOB reaches into the box again for inspiration and pulls out a dagger.

BOB: *(Singing.)*

FOUR BLOODY DAGGERS!

BOB/SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

THREE WITCHES' BREWS,
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA,
AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

ON THE FIFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

BOB: *(Singing.)*

FIVE SHREWISH WIVES!

SYLVIA: (*Suspicious that BOB has her in mind.*) What? Who in their right mind would want five shrewish wives for Christmas?

BOB: I don't know. Some guys might.

SYLVIA: Like who?

BOB: Masochistic polygamists?

SYLVIA: This is supposed to be a Christmas song!

BOB: So what are you saying? Masochistic polygamists can't celebrate Christmas?

SYLVIA: (*Singing.*)

FOUR BLOODY DAGGERS...

BOB/SYLVIA: (*Singing.*)

...THREE WITCHES' BREWS,
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA,
AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

SYLVIA: (*Singing.*)

ON THE SIXTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

BOB: (*Singing as he emulates a hunchbacked king.*)

SIX HUNCHBACKED KINGS...

BOB/SYLVIA: (*Singing.*)

FIVE SHREWISH WIVES!
FOUR BLOODY DAGGERS,
THREE WITCHES' BREWS,
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA,
AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

SYLVIA: (*Singing.*) ON THE—

BOB: (*Whispering.*) I don't think I can keep doing this!

SYLVIA: (*Whispering.*) Halfway there!

BOB: (*Turning the tables and singing.*)

ON THE SEVENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

BOB is quite pleased with himself, while SYLVIA has murder in her eyes.

SYLVIA: (*Singing.*)

SEVEN...JEALOUS HUSBANDS...

SCROOGE MACBETH

BOB/SYLVAIA: *(Singing.)*

SIX HUNCHBACKED KINGS,
FIVE SHREWISH WIVES!
FOUR BLOODY DAGGERS,
THREE WITCHES' BREWS,
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA,
AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

SYLVIA: *(Jumping in before BOB and singing.)*

ON THE EIGHTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

BOB reaches into the box and pulls out a small vial.

BOB: *(Singing.)*

EIGHT VIALS OF POISON...

BOB attempts to drink the poison and SYLVIA slaps his arm.

BOB/SYLVAIA: *(Singing.)*

SEVEN JEALOUS HUSBANDS,
SIX HUNCHBACKED KINGS,
FIVE SHREWISH WIVES!
FOUR BLOODY DAGGERS,
THREE WITCHES' BREWS,
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA,
AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

BOB: *(Singing.)*

ON THE NINTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

SYLVIA reaches into the box, grabs an apron or some other article of feminine clothing, and puts it on BOB.

SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

NINE CROSS-DRESSERS...

BOB/SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

EIGHT VIALS OF POISON,
SEVEN JEALOUS HUSBANDS,
SIX HUNCHBACKED KINGS,
FIVE SHREWISH WIVES!
FOUR BLOODY DAGGERS,
THREE WITCHES' BREWS,
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA,
AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

ON THE TENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

BOB: *(Singing.)*

TEN DOOMED LOVERS...

BOB/SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

NINE CROSS-DRESSERS,
EIGHT VIALS OF POISON,
SEVEN JEALOUS HUSBANDS,
SIX HUNCHBACKED KINGS,
FIVE SHREWISH WIVES!
FOUR BLOODY DAGGERS,
THREE WITCHES' BREWS,
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA,
AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

BOB: *(Singing.)*

ON THE ELEVENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

SYLVIA reaches into the box and pulls out a laurel or garland that she places on BOB's head.

SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

ELEVEN...FOREST FAIRIES...

BOB whips up the audience like a carnival barker.

BOB: Everybody! Come on! Sing along! You know the words!

SCROOGE MACBETH

BOB/SYLVAIA: *(Singing.)*

TEN DOOMED LOVERS,
NINE CROSS-DRESSERS,
EIGHT VIALS OF POISON,
SEVEN JEALOUS HUSBANDS,
SIX HUNCHBACKED KINGS,
FIVE SHREWISH WIVES!
FOUR BLOODY DAGGERS,
THREE WITCHES' BREWS,
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA,
AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

SYLVIA: *(Singing.)*

ON THE TWELFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

BOB reaches into the box and triumphantly pulls out a truly horrific severed head of Macbeth.

BOB: *(Singing.)*

TWELVE SEVERED HEADS!

SYLVIA: Bring it home, people!

BOB/SYLVAIA: *(Singing.)*

ELEVEN FOREST FAIRIES,
TEN DOOMED LOVERS,
NINE CROSSDRESSERS,
EIGHT VIALS OF POISON,
SEVEN JEALOUS HUSBANDS,
SIX HUNCHBACKED KINGS,
FIVE SHREWISH WIVES!
FOUR BLOODY DAGGERS,
THREE WITCHES' BREWS,
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA,
AND THE SKULL OF A COURT JESTER!

BOB and SYLVIA applaud themselves and the efforts of the audience.

BOB: That's some Christmas, all right!

SYLVIA: Sounds a lot like my family's Christmas, to tell you the truth.

BOB: And now, without further ado, we proudly present the first staging ever...

SYLVIA: Anywhere!

BOB: ...of a classic Shakespearean scene, seasoned lightly with a merry sprig or two of festive Christmas cheer!

BOB and SYLVIA exit as VICTOR and RENEE enter as Romeo and Juliet to enact the famous balcony scene. RENEE brings out a ladder decorated with a wreath [ideally festooned with twinkly lights] and climbs atop it. Unfortunately, she finds herself right beneath a powerful light, which practically blinds her.

VICTOR: But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou her maid art far more fair than she.
It is my lady, O, it is my love!
O that she knew she were!

RENEE: *(Shielding her eyes.)*

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

VICTOR: *(Aside.)* Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

Mercifully, the light above RENEE dims and she plunges through her next lines with renewed vigor.

RENEE: 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy:

Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name.
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet—

SCROOGE MACBETH

BOB pops his head through the curtain then enters as an ecstatically happy Ebenezer Scrooge. He climbs up behind RENEE on the ladder and gives it his best English accent.

BOB: Hello there! Whoop! Hello! I don't know what to do! I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man! A Merry Christmas to everybody! A Happy New Year to all the world! (*Looks down at VICTOR.*) You there, boy! What's today?

VICTOR: What?

BOB: What's today, my fine fellow?

SYLVIA enters as a street urchin, dragging a fully trimmed Christmas tree with her. She speaks with a heavy Cockney accent.

SYLVIA: Today? Why, it's Christmas Day, Mr. Scrooge! I was just delivering this 'ere tree to the Cratchits, I was!

BOB: (*Turns to RENEE.*) Did you hear that, Juliet? It's Christmas Day! And a very Merry Christmas to you!

BOB shakes a discombobulated RENEE's hand vigorously.

RENEE: Forsooth...a Merry Christmas to you too, Mr. Scrooge.

BOB: I say, is that your young man down there? Hasn't he brought you a Christmas present? Most miserly! Most tightfisted and ungenerous! I used to be just like you, my fine fellow, but I have learned my lesson and intend to mend my ways forthwith!

VICTOR: But I have brought her a present!

VICTOR holds up a sprig of mistletoe as BOB feels RENEE up and down her arms.

BOB: Skin and bones! All skin and bones! You know what this young lady needs for Christmas?

SYLVIA: (*Setting up the Christmas tree.*) A Christmas goose!

BOB: Precisely! (*To VICTOR.*) Now you, Goose Boy, go and fetch me a goose!

VICTOR: Have you lost your mind?

BOB: Intelligent boy! Remarkable boy! I want the biggest goose you can find! Bring it here and I shall give you a shilling. Come back in less than five minutes and I'll give you half-a-crown!

VICTOR: I am not getting Juliet a goose for Christmas!

BOB: No? Wouldn't you like a goose, Juliet?

RENEE: Why...yes! Yes, I would!

VICTOR: No, you wouldn't!

BOB: Well, if you won't give her a goose, I will!

BOB goeses RENEE in her behind and she jumps and squeals, blushing furiously.

RENEE: Goodness! Season's greetings to you too, Mr. Scrooge!

BOB: There we are! A Christmas goose!

VICTOR: Oh really? That's how you want to play? Well, as it happens, I did have a Christmas present for Juliet. But since she enjoyed her Christmas goose so much, perhaps I had better give my gift to someone else.

VICTOR twirls the mistletoe between his fingers

BOB: What's that?

VICTOR: Mistletoe! Quite a pretty little plant with a very charming tradition associated with it. Are you familiar?

BOB: Well, I—

VICTOR: Then perhaps a demonstration is in order. I had planned on demonstrating this with my one true love, but since my one true love has developed such a healthy appetite for Christmas geese... (*He turns to SYLVIA.*) I say there, street urchin. Would you be so kind as to hold this sprig of mistletoe over your head?

SYLVIA takes the mistletoe and holds it over her head coquettishly, just as anxious as VICTOR to even the score.

SYLVIA: Like this, squire?

VICTOR: Just so. Intelligent street urchin. Remarkable street urchin!

BOB: Hang on now—

SCROOGE MACBETH

VICTOR: And observe, good fellow, when you see a fair maiden beneath the mistletoe thusly, it gives you free rein to do this thusly.

VICTOR grabs SYLVIA and bends her over backwards in a long, passionate kiss. When he releases her, she staggers a little, dazed and breathless.

VICTOR: And that, Mr. Scrooge, is a very Merry Christmas!

VICTOR stalks offstage. SYLVIA struggles to locate BOB, then finally sees him and smiles.

SYLVIA: Hi...what?

BOB: You...get thee to a nunnery, while I give Romeo a good dose of Christmas cheer.

BOB exits in search of VICTOR. SYLVIA and RENEE stare helplessly at one another. Quickly gathering her wits, SYLVIA turns to the audience.

SYLVIA: Which brings us to our intermission!

RENEE: What intermission?

SYLVIA: This intermission. The one we're having right now.

RENEE: I didn't know we were having an intermission.

SYLVIA: Well, we are.

RENEE: But it's only been ten minutes—

SYLVIA: Which is as good a time as any for an intermission. So, we'll be right back with the second half of our Shakespearean Christmas celebration. Please chat, mingle, and feel free to visit the bar and drink heavily. (*To herself.*) I know I will.

SYLVIA grabs the Christmas tree and RENEE gets the ladder. They both go through the curtain and then instantly reappear, now "backstage." As they talk, they stow away the ladder and Christmas tree.

RENEE: Why are you doing this?

SYLVIA: To give us a few minutes to try and figure out a way to save this catastrophe from getting any worse.

RENEE: I think things are going rather well.

SYLVIA: Oh really? We are just pulling things out of our butts, we have no idea what we're doing next, and our husbands are trying to kill one another! Is that your definition of things going well, Miss I Want A Christmas Goose?

RENEE: That...I did not expect that. That was a complete surprise. But you and Victor, you didn't look surprised at all!

SYLVIA: What do you mean?

RENEE: You looked like you wanted more.

SYLVIA: I...I was acting!

RENEE: You were acting?

SYLVIA: Yes! That's what I typically do when I'm on stage. I act.

RENEE: Sylvia, I have seen you on stage many, many times, and I think that is the best acting you have ever done. I mean, Meryl Streep should come in here just so she could learn a few things from you.

SYLVIA: She's welcome to buy a ticket whenever she likes.

RENEE: I'd like to buy you a ticket.

The STAGE MANAGER walks past and they instinctively quiet down. The STAGE MANAGER pauses and looks at them.

STAGE MANAGER: Intermission? Seriously?

The STAGE MANAGER shakes her head, and exits.

SYLVIA: Renee, I do not want to fight about this.

RENEE: Then don't feed me a line about acting. Victor kissed you and you liked it.

SYLVIA: He's a good kisser!

RENEE: Aha! (*Rethinking her indignation.*) Wait...that's true. He is a good kisser.

SYLVIA: But since we're being honest here, you be honest too. That goose from Bob got your blood going.

RENEE: It did not! No! It didn't!

SYLVIA: Methinks the lady doth protest too much.

RENEE: Sylvia, it was a physical reaction, okay?

SYLVIA: Oh, I could see that.

RENEE: You could?

SYLVIA: Renee, you lit up like a goddamned Christmas tree!

SCROOGE MACBETH

RENEE: Well, Victor's not spontaneous like that!

We hear VICTOR and BOB arguing heatedly.

VICTOR: *(Offstage.)* Listen to me, plumber boy! You keep your snake out of my wife's drain!

SYLVIA: He's sounding spontaneous right now.

RENEE: We have a show to finish! You're the executive director! Do something!

SYLVIA exits at speed, followed closely by RENEE.

SYLVIA: *(Offstage.)* BOB!!!

RENEE: *(Offstage.)* VICTOR!!!

BOB and VICTOR are propelled into the "backstage" area by SYLVIA and RENEE.

SYLVIA: This is no time to fight.

RENEE: You can fight after the show.

BOB: Oh, we are fighting after the show.

VICTOR: It is on! Because I have never been so humiliated in my life. *(Catching himself and looking around.)* Wait. If we're all back here, what is the audience watching?

SYLVIA: We took an intermission...

RENEE: ...to try and figure out what we're doing next.

VICTOR: Oh, that's rich. That is rich. I think what you mean to say is what abomination we're going to inflict on the unsuspecting public next. Unbelievable. I didn't think anything or anyone could ruin the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. And then along came Bob...

BOB and VICTOR zero in on one another like a pair of rutting stags, kept apart only through the efforts of SYLVIA and RENEE.

BOB: If you ask me, I did you a favor.

VICTOR: Favor? I was in the middle of one of Shakespeare's greatest scenes and then you showed up shouting about geese and ass-grabbing my wife!

BOB: That wasn't me.

VICTOR: What? What do you mean it wasn't you?

BOB: It was Scrooge. The new, full-of-life Scrooge. I was simply staying in character. You should try it sometime!

VICTOR: Oh, I will! I most definitely will. In fact, if we ever do another play together, let's make it *Julius Caesar*. You can be Caesar, I'll be Brutus, and I promise to stay totally in character.

BOB: That would be a refreshing change, Mr. I-Teach-Shakespeare!

VICTOR: Only there won't be a next time! Because I am done! We're closing up shop? Good! I'm glad. I do not need this. I have acting opportunities galore!

BOB: Where?

VICTOR: You don't think that community theatres in Saginaw or Pinckney [*Insert names of local cities.*] haven't been after me? Let me tell you something, I can play Daddy Warbucks in *Annie* [*Or insert a more suitable role for the actor playing VICTOR.*] any time I want!

BOB: He's lost it.

RENEE: Honey, you're overreacting.

VICTOR: Amateurs! Amateurs, amateurs, amateurs.

SYLVIA: We're all amateurs, Victor!

VICTOR: Some more than others. And I'm not going to say who, I'm just going to look at that person and waggle my fingers in my ears.

VICTOR looks at BOB and waggles his fingers in his ears.

RENEE: Victor, stop that! You need a time out!

VICTOR: I'm taking a permanent time out, okay? I'll be happy to sit on the sidelines and watch this particular theatrical Hindenburg crash and burn in a festive Christmasy way. You're on your own.

VICTOR walks away from the others.

RENEE: Victor, you can't do this!

VICTOR: "Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow." *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 2.

RENEE: Victor—

VICTOR: "So again good night. I must be cruel only to be kind." *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 4.

SCROOGE MACBETH

VICTOR sits on the floor, possibly with his back against a wall, and perhaps, as the ultimate insult, pulling out his phone and fiddling with it.

RENEE: So, that's it, then? You're just going to sit there feeling sorry for yourself?

VICTOR: "More sinned against than sinning." *King Lear*, Act 3, Scene 2.

RENEE: Victor, please—

VICTOR: "Good riddance." *Troilus and Cressida*, Act 2, Scene 1.

RENEE: *(To SYLVIA and BOB.)* He gets like this when he's upset.

SYLVIA: How long can he keep that up?

RENEE: *(To VICTOR.)* "Until the crack of doom!" *Macbeth*, Act 4, Scene 1!

VICTOR rockets to his feet.

VICTOR: Renee! What are you...you can't...you just said the name of the...the Scottish play! In our theatre! You know you're not supposed to say that name! It's bad luck! You're just making things worse!

RENEE: Worse? How can I possibly make things worse? *(Getting right into VICTOR's face.)* Macbeth! Macbeth! MACBETH!!!

VICTOR backs away in horror as the STAGE MANAGER enters.

STAGE MANAGER: What the hell are you doing?

BOB: We're...brainstorming?

SYLVIA: We've just hit a little snag.

RENEE: And Victor just quit on us.

The STAGE MANAGER turns to VICTOR, who squirms under her gaze.

VICTOR: I'm done...finished...not going back out there...no how, no way.

The STAGE MANAGER turns to the others.

STAGE MANAGER: Are you sure you want him back?

RENEE: Well, of course! We can't do this without him.

STAGE MANAGER: Then let him play Othello.

VICTOR perks up immediately as the STAGE MANAGER heads for the booth.

VICTOR: Othello? Did you hear that? She just said I could play Othello!
Well, in that case, the show must go on!

VICTOR exits at speed.

SYLVIA: *(To the Stage Manager's retreating back.)* But it's supposed to be Christmasy!

The STAGE MANAGER stops and sighs.

STAGE MANAGER: Then make it Christmasy.

BOB: Oh, like maybe another carol? I know, let's do "Othello Got Run Over by a Reindeer!" Or "Othello the Snowman"? *(Wilting under the Stage Manager's gaze.)* I'm just spit-balling here.

STAGE MANAGER: Would it kill you to try and class it up a little? Do a poem. A Christmas poem.

The STAGE MANAGER heads off again.

SYLVIA: *(To the Stage Manager's retreating back.)* Like "A Visit from St. Nicholas"?

The STAGE MANAGER exits.

RENEE: But one of us would have to know that poem.

RENEE looks from SYLVIA, who is lost in thought, to BOB.

RENEE: Do you know it, Bob?

BOB: Nope. Not really a poem guy. You?

RENEE: *(Shaking her head, then...)* But I know "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe! *(Hopefully.)* Quoth the reindeer... *(Making antlers with her hands.)* ...nevermore?

SCROOGE MACBETH

BOB diplomatically pretends he hasn't seen or heard anything.

BOB: Hey, here's an idea! Maybe the audience won't come back!

They both rush to the curtain and peek through.

RENEE: They're still here!

BOB: Maybe it's raining or something. Or sleeting. That's probably it. The roads must be covered in ice and everyone's stuck here.

RENEE: That means Mrs. Kringle is still out there! We have to do something for her!

There is a squeal of feedback and the STAGE MANAGER comes over the P.A.

STAGE MANAGER: *(Offstage.)* One minute to places.

BOB/RENEE/SYLVIA: Thank you, one minute!

BOB, RENEE, and SYLVIA look at one another, the sword above their heads hanging by a frayed thread.

SYLVIA: I know the poem.

BOB: "A Visit from St. Nicholas"?

SYLVIA: *(Nodding.)* I had to memorize it in high school.

RENEE: Seriously? The whole thing?

SYLVIA: I swear!

VICTOR bounds back in as Othello, now wearing a turban and cape, with a scimitar stuffed into the colorful sash around his waist. He strikes a dramatic pose.

VICTOR: "She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange..."

SYLVIA: And apparently we have our Othello. Bob, will you be the evil and treacherous Iago?

BOB: Hey, if Hot Lips is in, I'm in.

VICTOR brandishes the scimitar.

VICTOR: “Then must you speak of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought perplexed in the extreme.”

VICTOR makes a lunge at BOB, who darts out of the way.

BOB: Hey, hey, hey! Watch that! You’ll poke your eye out!

BOB exits to costume himself.

SYLVIA: *(Turning to RENEE.)* And Renee, of course you’ll be the beautiful and unfortunate Desdemona.

RENEE: Of course!

RENEE exits on the heels of BOB. SYLVIA addresses her next lines to VICTOR, but loud enough for BOB and RENEE to hear.

SYLVIA: But here’s the thing. Not a word from any of you!

VICTOR: What? But I—

SYLVIA pushes VICTOR in the direction BOB and RENEE just exited.

SYLVIA: Shh! Use your eyes, your hands, use your bodies however you wish, but not one word!

VICTOR exits. SYLVIA takes a breath to compose herself, then steps through the curtain and immediately reappears through the curtain, now “onstage.” She addresses the audience.

SYLVIA: Thank you so much for your patience! What we would like to share with you now is a Christmasy Shakespeare poem based on Clement Clarke Moore’s “A Visit from St. Nicholas.” Our version is simply called, “A Visit from Othello.” Are my pantomimists ready?

SCROOGE MACBETH

BOB, RENEE, and VICTOR come through the curtain, all suitably, but hastily costumed. They strike a pose which encapsulates the play—VICTOR's hands around RENEE's throat as BOB whispers in VICTOR's ear. Once SYLVIA begins reciting, they do their best to play the action of the poem. Ideally, through an ingenious combination of acting and lighting effects, their performance has a sepia-toned, silent film feel to it.

SYLVIA: Excellent! Then let's begin, shall we? "A Visit from Othello."

Twas soon after his wedding, when all through the house,
Othello was creeping, as quiet as a mouse.
He searched all the rooms with considerable care,
In hopes Desdemona soon would be there.
He was sure he would find, in one of the beds,
His wife and young Cassio, and cut off their heads.
Iago had tricked him, the poor Moorish sap,
Into actions that led to a permanent nap.
It took place in Cyprus, but that doesn't matter,
Othello's own fears made him mad as a hatter.
And so when Iago spouted all kinds of trash,
It drove our doomed hero to do something rash.
It is one thing to think, quite another to know,
If the secrets you're told, are most definitely so.
Rumors of scandal you happen to hear,
Do not mean that things are quite as they appear.
With a tongue that was ever so lively and quick,
Iago's dark tales made Othello feel sick.
Was it true that his wife had dishonored her name?
Was she really that bad, and had she no shame?
Was she truly a cold and insatiable vixen?
If she was then Othello would take care of the fixin'.
Alas, he had swallowed a tale that was tall,
And answered the jealous green-eyed monster's call.
The skill that Iago put into his lie,
Meant only one thing—Desdemona must die.
Othello was clear on what he must do,
He would kill her himself, with no need of his crew.
Iago stood by, quite amused and aloof,
For Othello believed him, with no concrete proof.

The thoughts in his mind spun around and around,
Till he fell in a fit and his head hit the ground.
He awoke and at once there was trouble afoot,
In his eyes Desdemona was covered in soot.
Iago persisted, "She cuckolded you, Jack."
"Your wife and your friend made the beast with two backs."
The Moor's eyes didn't twinkle, his dimples weren't merry,
He was sure that young Cassio had popped his wife's cherry.
His features were hard, and his eyes they did glow,
As he looked at his bride, and then whispered, "I know!"
Had Cassio implanted his sword in her sheath?
Desdemona cried, "No!"—the Moor gritted his teeth.
He ran his dark hand o'er her soft rounded belly,
And saw that it shook, like a bowlful of jelly.
He wasn't exactly a jolly old elf,
And no laugh escaped him, I saw it myself.
But the look in his eye and the turn of his head,
Told poor Desdemona, she had something to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And smothered her quickly, till she died with a jerk.
It was over that fast, and up her soul rose,
Othello was guilty, from his head to his toes.
When the truth finally hit him, it came like a missile,
This wasn't a graveyard past which he could whistle.
So he pulled out his sword, and he held it quite tight,
As he ended his life on this dark fateful night.

SYLVIA bows as RENEE, BOB, and VICTOR applaud. BOB sidles over to SYLVIA.

BOB: How did you do that?

SYLVIA: Full bore linear panic.

Something clicks inside BOB.

SCROOGE MACBETH

BOB: Well, if Victor gets to play the part he's always wanted to play, then so do I. (*Approaching the audience and spreading his arms wide.*) Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your patience and consideration. If you'll give me a moment, I now propose to set the stage alight with my very own special brand of theatrical genius.

SYLVIA: Bob...Bob, honey...can I have a word? (*Pulling him by the arm back to the group.*) What is that going to entail exactly?

BOB: What else? A Shakespearean silliquy. A Christmasy Shakespearean silliquy.

RENEE: Good for you!

VICTOR: No! No no no no no. Bad idea.

BOB: Let it not be said, when the final curtain comes down, that I failed my fellow thespians on the hallowed boards of the Hartland Community Theatre.

VICTOR: Bob, I'm the... (*With emphasis.*) ...soliloquy guy.

BOB: You're saying I can't do a silliquy?

VICTOR: It's soliloquy! Not three syllables! Four syllables! So-lil-o-guy! You can't do one if you can't say the word.

BOB: How is that fair?

VICTOR: Shakespeare is not fair! Shakespeare is the Olympics of acting! It separates the elite from the herd!

RENEE: Victor, you know the rule—you can't say you can't play.

BOB: Exactly! You can't say I can't play. And I'm tired of always understudying you. Tonight, the understudy gets his moment in the limelight.

VICTOR: But—

SYLVIA: Victor, let it go. Bob, the hallowed boards are all yours.

RENEE: This is so exciting!

VICTOR: And what "silliquy" will you be gracing us with?

BOB: I have one in mind. But I'm going to need a minute.

VICTOR: A minute for what?

BOB: To think. To compose. (*Starts to exit.*) Which will give you just enough time for another Shakespearean Christmas carol! (*BOB exits, then pokes his head back through the curtain.*) And make it about Amlet-hay!

With a broad wink, BOB disappears.

SYLVIA: Well, I guess we know what soliloquy Bob's doing.

VICTOR: Oh my God...

RENEE: Victor, it will be fun!

VICTOR: No...no, it won't.

SYLVIA: Christmas carol ideas?

VICTOR: "I Saw Mommy Shooting Santa Claus in the Face."

SYLVIA: That's not helpful.

RENEE: Oh, I know! I have the perfect song! (*Waving and looking up at the booth.*) Some music would be nice!

STAGE MANAGER: (*Offstage.*) It would be.

SYLVIA has had enough. She makes a move to go up to the booth.

SYLVIA: Wait here a second—

RENEE grabs SYLVIA, holding her back like she's a rabid Doberman.

RENEE: No, don't go up there! Sylvia, calm down...

SYLVIA: I'm just gonna give her a fruitcake...

RENEE: Sylvia—

SYLVIA: (*Shouting up at the booth.*) ...where the sun don't shine!

RENEE: We don't need music! Really we don't. It will be more fun this way! Now, this song is for all three of us. Ready? Here we go! (*Singing to the tune of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer."*)

YOU KNOW FALSTAFF AND KING LEAR AND HENRY THE FIFTH...

RENEE gestures to SYLVIA to take over.

SYLVIA: (*Singing.*)

...ROMEO AND JULIET AND LADY MACBETH.

VICTOR: (*Singing reluctantly.*)

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