

A Rare Collection - 3rd Edition

<u>Characters</u>	<u>Proposed Player</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Boy 1 (also "scene shifters")	Aaron	
Girl 1	Sandra	
Baker Henry, jolly but businesslike	Edonald	
Gertie, quick & gossipy	Krista	
Robert Reed, thin	Philip	
Jerry Green, fat	Terrence	
Narrator	Dorothea K.	
Barmaid	*Nicole	
Owner of 2nd hand clothes store	*Anetta	
Old Lady	Judith	
Policeman	Andrew	
Captain Merriman	Jonathan R.	
Bartender	Stephen B.	
Wife	Christiana	
Grandpa Block	Uli	
Mrs King	Rose	
Walter, drunk & aggressive	Bernie	
Mrs. Walter, browbeaten	*Edith	
Child 1	*Tobias	
Child 2	*Nancy	
Captain Merriman's wife	Angelica	
Passers By + *also and Customers at Bakers	(Mayor) Christoph Bl. Christopher R.	
	Allen	
	Rebekah	
	Barney	
	Joyce Ann	
	Lisa	
5 Property Man + set up		

A RARE COLLECTION

Play Adapted from Story by John van Zeeland

Audience Sing well known Carol

(A bleak street corner, (without backdrops) no props.
Lights down.

Enter boy, announces loudly

Dear friends, welcome. Christmas comes every year. To some it comes in one way, to others in another. Tonight you will see how it came into the hearts of two men, penniless and desperate, in the North Side of Pittsburgh.

SCENE ONE

(Enter poorly clad boy and girl carrying one table and two chairs.)

GIRL Coc, it's nice & warm in here.

BOY Yea, but she won't let us stay.

(Enter barmaid with drinks.)

BARMAID [Gives them a coin.] Run along, you two now. Get out of here.

(Enter Robert and Jerry in 'civilian clothes'.)

(Children run out, nearly bump into Robert and Jerry who curse mildly.)

GIRL You know those two?

BOY Yea, they're always hanging around the taverns (Bars?)

GIRL Come on, let's see if the old lady at the clothes store needs help. [Exit]

(Jerry and Robert sit down at table, empty their pockets and count the contents.)

BARMAID What can I bring you?

JERRY A beer between us.

BARMAID We don't usually take orders like that.

JERRY (disgustedly) Not enough for two of the cheapest drinks. ~~What~~ a fix. Christmas coming and I'll be happy enough if I can pay for my bed.

ROBERT Happy enough! I would be happy if I had anything at all. I say, let's order a meal, nothing fancy, steak, french fries, doughnuts, waffle cherries and cream, two cups of coffee, a couple of beers and a cigar. When the meal is gone, well who cares?

JERRY Oh yes, who cares? My left ear is still sore from the last time. The curb and I met at close quarters when they pitched me out. No thank you. (Silence).

BARMAID Anything else?

ROBERT (gives her a stony look). Well, we could, er, work?

(Jerry regards him with deepest pity. Gloomy silence.)

ROBERT Then let's go to the Salvation Army and at least get a Christmas dinner. They don't stand on the street corners for nothing with their Christmas kettle.

(Jerry gives long, low whistle.)

JERRY You've said it. Christmas kettle! Mar, that's not a bad idea.

ROBERT Oh, come on! Don't think I'm going to go along with that! Rob the Christmas kettle! That's against my sense of honour.

JERRY Not rob it! Not rob it, but do it ourselves. If they can do it so can we. Only we will collect for ourselves.

(Lights down, exit, excitedly planning)

BARMAID Well, what have those two got to be so pleased about?

SCENE TWO

[Enter boy and girl with table and old clothes piled on. Also Lady Store Owner.]

[Enter Jerry and Robert, carrying "newish" winter jacket.]

STORE OWNER What can I do for you, gentlemen?

JERRY We-er-would like to exchange-er, this jacket for some-er articles of clothing.

OWNER [Examines winter jacket] This is good quality, and almost new.

ROBERT Yes-er-it was given me for my birthday.

OWNER Oh yes? Well, pick out what you need.

Robert & Jerry pick out, under some discussion dark trousers with stripe, black jacket, sailors cap for Jerry (fat) and blue pants, short sailors jacket and scarf, sailor cap.

ROBERT We'll take these.

OWNER Alright, and you'd better get out of here quick, before the Police come after you...

ROBERT (as they leave the store) Now we'll just fix these clothes up and then we find a part of town which the Salvation Army doesn't work and we'll set up our kettle there... [Exit]

AUDIENCE SING: (Deck the Hall - page 275, during which Jerry & Robert enter, set up kettle, adjust notice and themselves.)

SCENE THREE

(Enter Chris R. [R] - reads notice -- puts in coin - exit [L])

(Anetta & Lisa - [L] - "Mommy can I put some pennies in?"... exit [R])

(Enter Baker and Gertie, start setting up.

(Enter Edith, Tobias, Nancy - [L]. They look at kettle. Edith: "Come on. We've got nothing to give away.")

(Enter Christoph B [L] to Bakers Shop - Buys Cake & pays for it - exit behind kettle [R].)

(Enter Allen [R] to [L] puts coins in (quietly)

(Enter Aaron & Sandra [R] to [L] behind kettle to Bakers.

HENRY THE BAKER Look, the Salvation Army people are there, with their Christmas kettle. That is the first time I've seen them on this street. It does do my heart good, (pats heart) to see such signs of neighbourly love set up, even here, just opposite my, er, little shop.

AARON & SANDRA Could we have some donuts? -- we've got 6 pennies.

HENRY Pennies - Get out of here! ...Neighborly love, that is, after all, what Christmas is all about. (Calls to Gertie). (Enter Angelica [R] behind kettle to store to purchase food, while Henry says,) Gertie. Gertie. When the coffee is ready, take a cup to those two Salvation Army men and a slice of that honey cake, do you understand? (Exit Angelica to [R] behind kettle eyeing men, while Barney [R] to [L] and Nicole & Joyce Ann [L] to [R] put money in.)
Rebekah [R] to [L].
Christiana [R] to [L].

(Gertie looks over to the men. Stephen [R] to [L] drops in donation. Mothers with children, shoppers, gentlemen, young and old.) ad lib dialog as per story p.1+2)-"Thank you, ma'am, Bless you, sir" etc.

GERTIE My, they are doing a fine business, yes, excellent indeed. But hard earned; it is terribly cold out there.

(The two men pace to and fro, stamping and clapping. They touch their hats to donors and then plunge hands into pockets again. Gertie hurries over with coffee and cake.)

ROBERT Lady, you are an angel.

JERRY May the Lord reward you.

(Gertie returns.)

HENRY And so, did you remember our Salvation Army people?

GERTIE Yes, indeed, I took them coffee and cake.

HENRY Excellent, my dear girl, you have done your good deed for the day. Are they nice fellows?

GERTIE Oh, yes. If you ask me, I think there must be quite a bit in that kettle of theirs. Hardly anyone goes past without giving something. (Enter Allen & Chris (new hats) [L] to [R].) And, you know, they are not collecting for themselves. I could see that right away. The poor fellows weren't dressed in very warm clothes though.

HENRY That does not matter. Modesty is a good Christian virtue. (Rubs his hands and goes back to counting his wares.)

(Enter Anetta & Joyce Ann [R] to [L].)

OLD LADY (After dropping \$5 bill into pot) Good day brothers. Which corps do you belong to?

JERRY Oh, the, Central Corps, ma'am.

(Stephen walks across [L] to [R] behind kettle to set up bar.)

OLD LADY You can call me sister. You know, I was in the Salvation Army for thirty years, but since my husband died I live out side of town. So you come from the Central Corps. Who is the Commandant there now? It used to be Major Becker. Did you know him?

ROBERT Major Becker? Why, who wouldn't know him. A noble, generous-hearted man, isn't he, Jerry?

OLD LADY Ah, yes. Well I must be on my way now, it is very cold. When I was younger, I used to stand kettle myself, but it is too cold for me now. Hallelujah, brothers.

JERRY Hallelujah.

ROBERT (to Jerry) I'll be back in a minute. (Crosses to bar)

BARTENDER What do you want to drink?

ROBERT (selfrighteously) You know we Salvation Army men don't touch drink. I just want to get warmed up.

(Enter Nicole & Lisa [R] to [L].)

BARTENDER Oh, alright. But you know there's nothing like a double whisky to fend off the cold.

ROBERT (with back to Bartender takes a swig of brandy) (In whisper) Too true. (Loud) Ah, I feel warmer already. Thank you. I'll have another go out there.

(Police Officer approaches. Jerry and Robert eye him with growing anxiety.)

POLICEMAN How's business?

ROBERT (Controlling impulse to run.) There are good people around here, Officer.

JERRY People with a heart.

POLICEMAN And where is the money headed for?

(Jerry points to notice they lettered out and fixed to the pot saying "For the Poor").

POLICEMAN (Reads) For the poor.

ROBERT (Very stilted). There are still a lot of poor folk around, for whom Christmas is the worst time of year.

(Policeman tucks hand into breast pocket. Robert and Jerry become apprehensive. Police pulls out \$5 bill and drops it into collecting pot.)

POLICEMAN There you are then, that's for the poor fellows. There should be more people like you, ready to stand in the cold for those in need. Then we police would have less to do.

JERRY Very many thanks, Officer.

(Robert sinks on to a stool. Stream of donations continues. Everyone friendly. One gentleman gives \$20 bill. Christopher: "I always give to the poor at Christmas time.")

JERRY I will eat my hat if that isn't the Mayor.

(A little later Bertie brings more coffee and cake.)

(Christiana [L] to [R] puts in donation.)

JERRY Now, what did I tell you.

ROBERT Correct.

(At that moment they see a Salvation Army officer approaching. Instinctively they realize he is a real one. Captain Merryman observes the two men from a distance, registers surprise then comes up to them apparently quite trustingly.)

CAPTAIN Well, Brothers. I'm Captain Merryman.

ROBERT And I am Brother Reed.

JERRY And I am Brother Green.

CAPTAIN And are you doing well here?

JERRY We can't complain.

CAPTAIN And who set you up here?

JERRY Set us up? Well, ah,--actually we did it ourselves.

ROBERT Yes, yee, we wanted so to speak to surprise our officers.

CAPTAIN Oh yes? And who is your officer?

JERRY Our officer? He, he is, he, he is Major Becker.

CAPTAIN (Having difficulty in remaining serious) Oh, if you want to surprise him, you've come a bit late on the scene. He died almost five years ago.

ROBERT Oh, That is a pity, he was such a good man.

CAPTAIN May I see your Salvation Army Permit?

JERRY Um, I have to think, no, I left it at home, Captain.

ROBERT To tell you the truth, I lost mine a couple of years ago.

CAPTAIN So you do not even know that there is not such a thing as a Salvation Army Permit. You are fine Salvation Army soldiers. Shall I tell you something? You are swindlers. You are standing here just to line your own pockets, that is what you're doing.

ROBERT But, Captain, what do you take us for. Do you think I am going to get rich on money intended for a lot of poor guys? What do you take us for?

CAPTAIN I have already told you what I take you for and now I'm going to ask someone to call the police. Then we can see what next.

JERRY (Suddenly shaken out of state of helplessness). You are right, Captain, we are swindlers. We were trying to pull the wool over people's eyes (and if you had not come along, we would have managed. --whisper)

CAPTAIN Aha. I knew it. I guessed as much. You were going to earn a few dollars for yourselves with your sham Christmas kettle.

ROBERT Yes, that is it. But I swear, Captain, we did not mean anything bad by it. I mean, who is the worse off for it? Not you; not the people who put something in; nobody, and we are flat broke. We might at least have had a nice Christmas celebration.

CAPTAIN Yes, that I can well believe, I can already smell the brandy on you. But you don't need to worry any more about your Christmas celebration. You will have board and lodging and a roof over your head in jail and even a Christmas dinner. Thank you lady. (The last words are addressed to a lady who has just put a handful of small change into the pot, for people are still giving.) (Anetta [L] to [R].)

JERRY Captain, can't we work this thing out man to man. What will you get out of it if we have to go to prison?

ROBERT And how will you square that with your Christian conscience? Putting us in jail for Christmas!

CAPTAIN You mind your own conscience. (After short pause he says) I'll make a proposal. You stay here until the evening, until the businesses close. Then I will come to fetch you and we will count up together how much is in the pot. Your punishment is to give that money to people who are worse off than you in this section of town. (Lights down, all exit).

NARRATOR At six o'clock the Captain came with a small delivery van to pick them up. They were pretty well frozen through and could scarcely feel their feet any more. The Captain had made a note of their names earlier. He had taken them home and they had been given a splendid hot supper. Now they were sitting round the table in the Captains living room.

SCENE FOUR

(Two boys enter with table and three chairs, exit. Enter Captain, Jerry and Robert, pour money on table and start counting.)

MRS MERRIMAN More Coffee, Gentlemen?

CAPTAIN One hundred and six, one hundred and seven, one hundred and eight, one hundred nine dollars, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, one, two, three, four, 44 cents. One hundred and nine dollars, forty four pennies, two peppermints and three buttons. Now let us do the job properly. I have here your admission, that you wanted to cheat the Salvation Army. Are you ready to sign that statement for me.

(Robert and Jerry protest, but sign.)

CAPTAIN No protesting please. If you do not do as I tell you I shall take this to the police. Now, here are the one hundred and nine dollars and forty four pennies. Tomorrow, you are to go back with it to the place where you stood today, then look around till you find a couple of people who are in a worse state than you are. You are to help them with this money, and when you have done it you can report back to me. If the job is well done, I will tear up this paper. Now, off to bed.

MRS MERRIMAN I've put a couple of camp beds on the floor downstairs.

MERRIMAN Good, come this way.

(Lights down, exit).

Audience Song "If ye would hear" page 245.

NARRATOR The next day then sees the two penitent soldiers setting out on their task.

(Enter Jerry and Robert in civilian clothes and walk along in low spirits).

JERRY I do not know how to begin. I cannot stand at the street corner with a sign hanging round my neck: "Is there anyone here worse off than me?" Can I?

ROBERT Let us go to that bar where I was yesterday. A bartender like that knows everything.

(Bar set, one counter. Robert and Jerry walk up to bartender. Bartender regards them suspiciously.)

JERRY We are here to give away the money we collected yesterday.

BARTENDER Oh yes, wonderful, hand it over then.

ROBERT Oh no, it's not for you.

(Bartender nods.)

BARTENDER So what do you want to drink?

JERRY (Gloomily) Coffee.

BARTENDER Well, I suppose you know what you want.

JERRY (continues) You know everyone in this area. You must know if there are any who are so badly off you would say something must be done for them. Because, you see, we might be able to help.

BARTENDER People who are having a rough time of it, I don't know. I will have to call my wife for that one. (Calls wife, wife appears). These fellows want to help someone who is in a bad way. Is there anyone like that around here?

WIFE (After consideration) Let me see now. There is that lame old man at number 4 Frederick Street. Grandpa Block is his name. And then there is Mrs. King, the blind widow, at 156A Wood Street. There's Walter's family on Maple Street. That man drinks like a barrel without a bottom to it. I do not let him in here anymore, but he manages to get his daily dose nevertheless. And his wife leads a dog's life. Yes, those people are certainly in a bad way.

(Jerry and Robert thank bartender and wife and leave the bar. The stage is set with three doorframes, right, centre and left stage. The inn is in the far right. They meet a boy & girl on the street.)

JERRY Where does Mr Block live?

BOY Down there, 1st door on the right.

ROBERT Here's a peppermint for you -- and for your friend too.

BOY & GIRL Och, thanks.

(They walk up to the first doorframe and knock loudly. They continue to knock and call out until Grandpa Block limps to the door.)

GRANDPA B What is it? What is it? There'll be no door left in the frame if you keep hammering away like that.

JERRY We have come from the Salvation Army and wonder if we can do anything for you.

GRANDPA Do something for me? I am sure I do not know what.

ROBERT (Looks around with sharp eyes and finds several things which need improvement.) It smells in here. Can't you tidy things up? Isn't there anyone to help you?

GRANDPA I look after myself best I can, but my health is a problem.

JERRY And who cooks your meals?

GRANDPA Oh, I open a tin of soup when I am really hungry.

JERRY Soup. Tin of Soup!

GRANDPA My three children, they seldom come.

ROBERT And what about your neighbors?

GRANDPA They have enough to do with their own troubles. Anyway, sometimes I have too much pain. Then I can only sit in my armchair.

(Robert and Jerry consult briefly together.)

JERRY You can be sure you will hear from us again. Good-bye, Sir.

GRANDPA Good-bye.

NARRATOR With new eyes Jerry and Robert begin to see the plight of others. Now they move on to the house of Mrs. King.

(Jerry and Robert make their way to the next door. Knock loudly.)

MRS KING Yes, yes what is it?

ROBERT We are from the Salvation Army. Is there anything we can do for you?

MRS KING Oh, you come from the Salvation Army. That is just right. Come in. You can certainly do something for me.

JERRY Shall we bring up coal for you?

ROBERT Or empty the trash?

MRS KING Perhaps you could read to me from the Bible? My eyesight is so poor I can't read anymore myself.

ROBERT Pardon me, it just happens I've left my reading glasses at home. (Passes Bible to Jerry.)

JERRY (hesitantly opens Bible to Matthew I.) (reads) Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;... (stumbles over names, gives up and turns to Luke 21 verses 1-4-reads) He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury; and he saw a poor widow put in two copper coins. And he said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had." (Robert and Jerry look at each other in astonishment and beginning recognition at these words.) Look at this here: "I have come to call not the just, but sinners."

MRS KING Thank you, dear Sir, thank you. You know what I miss most--

ROBERT No Ma'am, but perhaps we can help...

MRS KING What I miss most, is not going to Church... I just don't manage anymore...

JERRY We'll see what can be done ma'am. You'll be hearing from us.

MRS KING Bless you, brothers.

J & R Good-bye.

(Jerry and Robert stand up, still visibly struck and promise that she will hear from them again. Make their way to the third doorframe. Knock loudly.)

TORIAS & (open door.)
NANCY

TORIAS Och - Cops!

NANCY Mum, there's 2 gentlemen at the door!

JERRY Can we speak with your husband?

WIFE Are you from the police? (Children peeping from behind skirts)

JERRY Heavens, No!

WIFE Are you tax collectors?

ROBERT Certainly not. We come from the Salvation Army.

WIFE Walter, here are two brothers from the Salvation Army.

WALTER (Offstage) Brothers? Aren't we all brothers.

JERRY (To the wife) Good lady, here are \$20 from the Salvation Army.

TORIAS Och, \$20!

JERRY Go and do a bit of shopping and take the children with you. In the meantime we will talk to your husband. If it is alright with you, we can drink a cup of coffee together afterwards. (Exit wife.)

WIFE Come on, you two.

NANCY Coming Mum!

TOBIAS Sure am!

(Walter appears, obviously tipsy. Jerry and Robert hastily grab him, peel off jacket and one holds his head down while the other pours cold water over him until he can scarcely draw another breath. At the last moment they release him).

JERRY You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

WALTER (Blubbering and weeping, tries to excuse himself.) I won't touch another drop, honest I won't.

JERRY You don't care a hang! If I drink myself blotto that's my affair. I am alone in the world anyway, except of course for Robert. But you have your wife and children to look after. If you can't manage to give it up by yourself, we'll give you a helping hand. (Lights fade out, all exit).

SCENE SIX

NARRATOR And so on the last evening before Christmas, Jerry Green and Robert Reed give their report to the Salvation Army captain on the events of the day, and how they have used their talents, and the 100 dollars and the few pennies entrusted to them.

(Two boys enter with two chairs, an armchair and a table. Exit. Enter Captain Merryman, Jerry and Robert.)

CAPTAIN Now, brothers, tell me; how have you managed?

JERRY Well we got a cleaning lady to put Grandpa Block's room in good order. She wants \$20

ROBERT (Standing.)
We spoke with Grandpa's neighbor and asked her how much she needs to see that Grandpa gets a hot meal once a day. She said for one month \$30, paid in advance.

JERRY We promised Grandpa to visit him once a week to play game of cards with him. And we'll bring Walter as fourth man.

ROBERT We've bought a transistor radio for Mrs. King, so in future she can listen to Church services. It cost \$20.

JERRY We gave 25 extra dollars to Walter's wife. I told Walter we will look in on him twice a week. And wee to him if he's found drunk.

ROBERT With the remainder we bought cakes and cookies at Henry the baker's and divided them among the three above addresses.

(Enter Angelica)

CAPTAIN Well, and how do you feel now?

J & R Wonderful!

CAPTAIN (Tears up confession of guilt before their eyes and says.) Oh yes, before I forget, my wife thinks you should spend the Christmas days with us.

ANGELICA Yes, we would be very happy to have you for Christmas - Come now.

(Captain & wife greet Robert & Jerry, walk nicely off to seats in front row while a well-known American Christmas Carol ^{Angels from Realms of Glory} ~~is~~ (hummed)

NARRATOR (while humming is going on reads) And so it came about that on Christmas morning Jerry & Robert were sitting in the front of Church singing with gusto. ^{Sung} (Carol swells to verse sung with gusto, then back to hum---)

ROBERT (On the way home comments) You know, I really didn't think there was anyone worse off than us were.

(Exeunt. Song swells again...) (and fades to hum)

NARRATOR Christmas passes by. But that was not the end. Robert & Jerry faithfully continued their visits (All to be mined) to Mrs. King. And once a week they would fetch Walter over to play cards with Grandpa Block.

HENRY (Would point them out to Bertie) Bertie, look, there are these THE BAKER two fellows from the Salvation Army. Fine guys they are.

NARRATOR Men would take off their hats when they met them on the streets and the Police Officer even saluted them. And why not? Haven't you ever heard that God can write straight even on crooked lines?

(Song)

