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Middle and Lower Grades

## Christmas for Carol

by Lynnette Little

All Christmas means to Carol is lots of presents, until she learns better — from Dickens. . . .

### Characters

MOTHER

CAROL

1ST GHOST, *Ghost of Christmas Presents Past*

2ND GHOST, *Ghost of Christmas Presents Present*

3RD GHOST, *Ghost of Christmas Presents Future*

TIME: *Christmas Eve.*

SETTING: *A divided stage, showing bedroom, left, and living room, right. Bedroom has a chair beside a bed. Living room has small sofa, armchair, small table holding sewing machine, and another chair. There is also a decorated Christmas tree, about five feet tall.*

AT RISE: CAROL is sitting up in bed. She is wearing long-sleeved nightgown. MOTHER, wearing a stylish dress, is sitting in chair by the

bed, and reads to CAROL from a book. *Lights in living room are dim.*  
MOTHER (*Reading*): "A merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"  
CAROL: There's one thing about that story I don't like. It's just too sweet.  
MOTHER: Too sweet?  
CAROL: Yes. It's so sweet it makes my teeth ache. (*Mimics*) "God bless us, every one." That's kind of drippy, if you ask me.

MOTHER: I thought you liked it.  
CAROL: I do like most of it. I guess I'm just tired of it. I'm ten years old now and I'll bet I've heard it or seen it acted out ten times every Christmas. That makes 100 times! Why do people get excited year after year about three ghosts dropping in on a selfish old goat like Ebenezer Scrooge?

MOTHER: Maybe people imagine themselves in the story.

CAROL: If I had to imagine myself in the story, I'd be Scrooge's niece. You know, his nephew's wife.

MOTHER: In Christmas present?

CAROL: Yes. What a fantastic party that must have been. I love parties. Remember when we used to have parties, before Daddy died?

MOTHER: Oh, yes. I remember them well.

CAROL: Will this be a good Christmas, Mother?

MOTHER: How good something seems depends on what you measure it by. We don't have much money, but at least we are better off than the Christmas after your father died. My dressmaking business has picked up a little lately. If I didn't know how to sew, things would be a lot worse!

CAROL: Will I get the presents on my list?

MOTHER (*Sadly*): You'll have to wait till morning to see.

CAROL (*Yawning*): I'm so sleepy, Mother. Just read the end, O.K.?

MOTHER (*Reading*): "... it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And

so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!" (*She closes the book*) I've always liked that story.

CAROL (*Yawning*): Well, the movie was pretty good. (*She stretches; puts head on the pillow.*) I only liked it because it was a musical. (*Starts to get drowsy*) Three ghosts. How silly. Ebenezer . . . three ghosts . . . (*She falls asleep.*)

MOTHER (*Pulling up covers*): Good night, Carol. Merry Christmas. I hope I can make it merry for you. (*She exits left. After a moment, THREE GHOSTS enter bedroom from left. Each wears tights and long-sleeved shirt under large cardboard box, which extends from shoulders to hips, with holes for the arms. Each box is covered with bright Christmas wrapping paper and ribbon. Ghosts also wear headdresses of ribbon and holly.*)

1ST GHOST: Carol! Wake up! It's Christmas Eve.

CAROL (*With her eyes closed*): Leave me alone. I'm sleeping.

2ND GHOST: Of course you're sleeping. We had to wait for you to fall asleep so we could visit you.

CAROL: Go away! You're bothering me.

3RD GHOST: That is precisely what we had in mind. To bother you.

CAROL: Can't you see I'm sleeping?

1ST GHOST: That's why we're here.

CAROL: Who are you?

2ND GHOST: We're ghosts.

CAROL (*Slowly sitting up and rubbing her eyes*): What did you say?

2ND GHOST: I said we're ghosts.

GHOSTS (*Together*): We are the Ghosts of Christmas Presents.

r GHOST: I am the Ghost of Christmas Presents Past. I know about the presents you received last Christmas and all your Christmases before that.

CAROL: I don't believe you.

1ST GHOST: Try me.

CAROL: O.K. What did I get for Christmas last year?

1ST GHOST: A pink nightgown with strawberries on the collar.

CAROL (*Surprised*): How did you know that?

1ST GHOST: I'm funny that way. Ask me something else.

CAROL: What did I get when I was six?

1ST GHOST: A monkey made out of socks, with buttons for eyes.

CAROL: You really do know about my past Christmas presents!

1ST GHOST (*Proudly*): Of course I do. I do my job well. Now I'll ask you a question. What did you get for your very first Christmas — when you were just a baby?

CAROL: I don't remember that. It's too long ago. What was it?

1ST GHOST: Your mother made you a little brown gingerbread doll with yarn hair and a polka dot vest.

CAROL: What happened to that doll?

1ST GHOST: When you were four years old you traded it to a little boy for a piece of bubblegum.

CAROL: Oh. I don't remember that either. (*Pointing to 2ND and 3RD GHOSTS*) Who are your two friends?

2ND GHOST: I'm the Ghost of Christmas Presents Present. I know what you're getting this year.

CAROL: You do? Really? What is it?

2ND GHOST: I'm saving that for later.

3RD GHOST: And I'm the Ghost of

Christmas Presents Future. I can tell you what you will be getting for all your Christmases in the future.

CAROL: Wow! That's neat! You're just like the three ghosts in "A Christmas Carol."

1ST GHOST: Right, Carol. Now I want to take you back to a Christmas in your past. I'll take you to any Christmas you choose.

CAROL (*Excited*): Really? Can you do that? (*Pauses, thinking*) How about the Christmas when I was seven?

1ST GHOST: You've got it. Let's go into the living room. When we get there, you'll see what Christmas was like when you were seven years old. Are you ready?

CAROL: Sure, let's go!

2ND GHOST: We'll wait here.

3RD GHOST: We have some things to show you, too. (*Lights go out in bedroom and up in living room as CAROL and 1ST GHOST enter living room. 1ST GHOST moves tree offstage as MOTHER, wearing old bathrobe, enters, carrying small, scrawny tree with one string of popcorn and a few paper snowflakes on it. She also carries a small handful of tinsel and small, wrapped package containing rag doll. She puts tree and package on table, and starts putting tinsel on tree, unaware at first of CAROL's presence. GHOST re-enters to watch the action, but remains unseen by MOTHER. MOTHER sees CAROL.*)

MOTHER: Carol! Merry Christmas, dear. (*She hugs CAROL.*) Here is your present. (*MOTHER hands present to CAROL.*) I wish there were more.

CAROL: I made a list. It had more than just one thing on it.

MOTHER: Dear, I tried to tell you not to get your hopes up. I haven't had any extra money — there have been so many bills to pay.

CAROL (*Disappointed*): But it's Christmas!

MOTHER: I know, darling. Carol, I know how hard it is for you to understand why we have to do without a lot of things.

CAROL: We do without things all year. I thought Christmas would be different.

MOTHER: I'd like to give you a beautiful tree with shiny decorations and lots of presents, and a big turkey with all the fixings, but. . .

CAROL (*Interrupting*): Do you mean we're not even going to have turkey?

MOTHER: I couldn't afford a turkey this year.

CAROL: What are we having for Christmas dinner?

MOTHER: I'm going to make tuna casserole.

CAROL: Tuna casserole? Oh, no. I don't believe it!

MOTHER: I'm sorry, Carol. (*Pause*) Aren't you going to open your present?

CAROL: I guess so. (*Unwrapping it*) I hope it's a Barbie doll. That was on the top of my list. If I get that, this Christmas won't be so bad. (*MOTHER looks sad, sits in armchair. CAROL takes out handmade rag doll and shows her disappointment.*) It's not a Barbie doll. I don't know why I even bothered to make a list this year. I didn't get one single thing that was on it.

MOTHER: I'm sorry, Carol, I just don't have enough money to be able to give

you all the gifts you'd like. Making dresses for a living is all I know how to do, and I just haven't had much business lately. Maybe things will pick up, but for now we'll just have to get along on what we have. (*Brightening; pointing to tree*) I did get a tree last night, though. How do you like it? The man at the corner lot said that since it was Christmas Eve he'd let me have it for fifty cents.

CAROL: It's O.K., I guess. I'm going over to Tammy's house to see all her presents. They have a big tree and shiny lights and there is a music box at the bottom that plays "Jingle Bells." (*She starts out.*)

MOTHER: Aren't you going to take your doll?

CAROL: No. Tammy has a Barbie doll and a Ken doll. We'll play with them. (*CAROL exits. MOTHER stands up, puts the last of the tinsel on the tree, then starts to cry. She does not notice as CAROL re-enters and watches, surprised. MOTHER sadly exits. 1ST GHOST picks up rag doll. CAROL joins GHOST, speaks in amazement.*) I didn't know my mother cried!

1ST GHOST: She just never let you see her cry.

CAROL: Whatever happened to that rag doll?

1ST GHOST: You took it outside one day and lost it in the orchard. Do you want to see more Christmas presents from your past?

CAROL: No, I don't think so. That made me sad.

1ST GHOST: Then there's someone else who wants to talk to you. (*2ND GHOST enters from bedroom.*)

2ND GHOST: I will show you what is

happening right now, while you're asleep, Carol. (*1ST GHOST takes small tree offstage right, and 2ND GHOST brings back original tree. MOTHER enters, wearing dress as before, and carrying some presents, which she puts under tree, and an old doll.*)

CAROL (*Aside, to 2ND GHOST*): Can my mother see me?

2ND GHOST (*Aside*): No, don't worry. She can't see you now. Just watch.

MOTHER (*To doll*): Here it is Christmas Eve again, Melinda. How many have we shared? Let me see. I got you when I was ten years old. Now my own daughter is ten, but she doesn't want a second-hand doll. No, she wants one of those T.V. star dolls. How times have changed! Thank goodness my luck is changing, too. Since I opened my own dressmaking shop this year I've made enough money to pay off our debts and buy Carol the kind of doll she wants. And we'll have turkey this year. (*Sighs*) But Carol still wants everything. This year she asked for a T.V., a stereo, her own phone, and a Charlie's Angels doll with lots of clothes! All I could afford was the doll. (*She lovingly picks up doll.*) No, Carol wouldn't want you, Melinda. I guess you and I will just have to grow old together. (*She exits, right, hugging doll.*)

2ND GHOST (*To CAROL*): What are your plans for tomorrow, Carol?

CAROL: I'm having dinner at Tammy's.

2ND GHOST: What about your mother?

CAROL: How was I to know Mom was fixing a turkey? A turkey isn't such a big deal, anyway. It's more fun to be at Tammy's house.

2ND GHOST: I see. You'd rather spend Christmas at someone else's house.

CAROL: I can't help it if it's boring here! My mother's idea of a party is drinking cocoa and stringing popcorn. I want to have fun. After all, Christmas is special. Now if you don't mind, I'd like to get some sleep. (*She goes into bedroom, where lights go up. 2ND GHOST exits. CAROL addresses 3RD GHOST, who sits in bedroom*) What are you still doing here? You'll have to leave. I have to go to sleep now.

3RD GHOST: Wait just a minute. You need a little more Christmas spirit. And that's just what I am — a Christmas spirit.

CAROL: I hope this isn't going to take long.

3RD GHOST: If you remember, I am the Ghost of Christmas Presents in your future. Those you will receive, those you will give, and some that may or may not be yours.

CAROL: What Christmas are you going to show me?

3RD GHOST: Shall I show you Christmas when you're fifty?

CAROL: No.

3RD GHOST: How about Forty? Thirty? Twenty?

CAROL: Make it seventeen and I'll watch.

3RD GHOST: Very well. The Christmas when you will be seventeen years old. (*1ST and 2ND GHOSTS enter living room from right, remove Christmas tree and sewing machine, as MOTHER enters in skiing outfit, goggles propped up on her forehead. She carries skis and leans them on the*

wall while she puts on furry ski hat.)  
MOTHER (Calling): Carol!  
CAROL (To 3RD GHOST): Who's that?  
3RD GHOST: Don't you recognize your mother?  
CAROL: But she's dressed to go skiing. My mother doesn't ski. She runs a dressmaking shop and all she does is sew.  
3RD GHOST: Remember, seven years have gone by. Your mother has dressmaking shops in four cities and she finally has plenty of money. Dresses with her name on the label are at all the best stores. You must be very proud of her.  
CAROL (Puzzled): Well, I am. I mean, I will be . . . I guess.  
MOTHER: Carol!  
CAROL (Entering living room): Yes, Mom? (3RD GHOST enters to watch action.)  
MOTHER: I'm sorry to have to wake you up so early this morning, but I have to leave for the slopes right away. The lift lines are beastly on holidays. And I'm sure Christmas is the most crowded. By the way, Merry Christmas, Carol. (MOTHER gives her a quick hug.)  
CAROL: Merry Christmas.  
MOTHER: I arranged to have your presents delivered at 11:00, so do stay here till then. After 11:00 you can go over to Tammy's or wherever you want to go.  
CAROL: My presents will be delivered? I don't understand.  
MOTHER: When you gave me your list I just gave it to the department store. They have a service that's such a timesaver. They pick out the gifts, wrap them and deliver them. If

something isn't quite right, just exchange it, dear. Well, I must be off. (Starts to exit)  
CAROL: What about dinner? Aren't we having turkey?  
MOTHER: Well, I'm not fixing anything here, of course. A turkey isn't such a big deal, anyway. (Takes money from pocket) Here's some money. You can have whatever you like at a restaurant. Or pop something from the freezer into the microwave. I won't be back until late. The traffic, you know.  
CAROL: Aren't we going to have a tree?  
MOTHER: No, Christmas trees are such a bother. I hate getting tinsel all over the place. Why don't you drop over to Tammy's later on? You always tell me what wonderful Christmas trees they have.  
CAROL: But, Mom — it's plastic. Their tree this year is plastic. It's not real.  
MOTHER: Didn't you notice that before? Their trees have always been plastic. They were so perfectly fan-shaped and perfectly green, and nothing about them was real. But it was what you always wanted. Well, I really must be off. I'll see you sometime tonight. Don't wait up for me. Bye, now. (She kisses CAROL on the cheek, picks up her skis, and exits right. CAROL stands silently for a moment, then runs to exit.)  
CAROL: Mom! Mom! (There is no answer. Quietly) Merry Christmas, Mom. (To 3RD GHOST) Will I have to spend that Christmas alone?  
3RD GHOST: That Christmas and others. Unless you change — and soon. (CAROL and 3RD GHOST go into bedroom. 1ST and 2ND GHOSTS bring original Christmas tree and sewing machine into living room, then go into bedroom. MOTHER enters living room from right, wearing original dress, and carrying the old doll, some wrapped presents, and tinsel. She props doll up on table. 3RD GHOST speaks to 1ST and 2ND GHOSTS.) It's time for us to go. (To CAROL) Goodbye, Carol. Merry Christmas. (GHOSTS exit left.)  
MOTHER (To doll): How many Christmases have we shared, Melinda? Let me see, I got you when I was 10 . . . (CAROL enters from bedroom, walking slowly, and carrying book. MOTHER sees her.) Carol! I thought you were asleep.  
CAROL: I was. At least I think I was. (Sits and puts down book)  
MOTHER: Were you reading more of "A Christmas Carol"??  
CAROL: Yes, and I imagined myself in the story, just as you said. But it was all really more like a dream.  
MOTHER: A little Christmas Eve fantasy, that's all.  
CAROL: Is it Christmas yet?  
MOTHER (Looking at watch): Almost. Just a few minutes more and it will be Christmas Day.  
CAROL: May I stay up until then?  
MOTHER: Sure, as long as you're awake.  
CAROL: Shall I put some tinsel on the tree?  
MOTHER: That would be nice. (CAROL starts doing so.)  
CAROL: Do you know what, Mother? I feel like having some cocoa. Do we have any?  
MOTHER: Yes, we do. (Concerned) Are you feeling all right, Carol?

CAROL: I feel fine.  
MOTHER: O.K. I'll fix us some cocoa  
CAROL: How about some popcorn? We could string it and put it on the tree  
MOTHER (Concerned): Carol, are you sure you're really awake?  
CAROL: Yes, Mother, I'm wide awake. I think it would be fun to string popcorn. That's such a pretty tree.  
MOTHER: It's not very big, of course. (Pause) Do you really think it's pretty?  
CAROL: Yes, I really do, Mom. (She puts the last of the tinsel on tree and stands back to admire it.)  
MOTHER: It is a nice tree.  
CAROL: All it needs is a string of popcorn. Let's pop some.  
MOTHER: All right. And I'll make cocoa.  
CAROL: Could I invite Tammy over tomorrow to see our tree?  
MOTHER: You want to invite Tammy over here?  
CAROL: Yes. I want her to see our tree.  
MOTHER: That would be fine, Carol.  
CAROL: I can tell her to bring her dolls and we could have a party. Another thing, Mom —  
MOTHER: Yes?  
CAROL: I know that Melinda is your doll and that she's very special to you, but if I'm very careful with her, could I play with her tomorrow? I'm sure Tammy would like to see her, too.  
MOTHER (Happily): Melinda would like that very much. And so would I. (She hugs CAROL.) I'll go fix some cocoa. (She exits right.)  
CAROL (Picking up doll): Melinda, how would you like to hear what Mr. Dickens has to say about Christmas? (She sits, props doll up on her lap, and opens the book.) I'll read you

For your Holiday programs . . .

# ON STAGE for CHRISTMAS

edited by  
Sylvia E. Kamerman



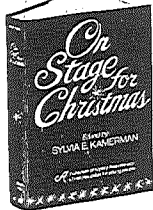
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the part where Scrooge's nephew goes to see Scrooge and invites him to have Christmas dinner with him and his wife. (*Reading*)

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!" . . .

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough." (*Lights dim and CAROL continues reading, and curtain slowly closes.*)

## THE END

### PRODUCTION NOTES

#### CHRISTMAS FOR CAROL

*Characters:* 2 female; 3 male or female for Ghosts.

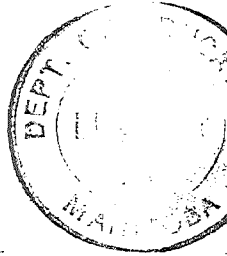
*Playing Time:* 20 minutes.

*Costumes:* Carol wears long-sleeved nightgown. Mother wears stylish dress and watch, then changes into bathrobe, then ski outfit with goggles and furry ski hat. Ghosts wear tights and long-sleeved shirts under large cardboard boxes, which extend from their shoulders to hips, with holes for the arms. Each box is covered with bright Christmas wrapping paper and ribbon. Ghosts also wear headdresses of ribbon and holly.

*Properties:* Book; small, table-size Christmas tree with string of popcorn and a few paper snowflakes on it; tinsel; several wrapped packages, one containing a handmade rag doll; an old doll; skis.

*Setting:* A divided stage, with bedroom left, and living room right. Bedroom has a chair and a bed. Living room has small sofa, armchair, small table holding sewing machine, and another chair. There is also a decorated Christmas tree, about five feet tall. As indicated in text, tree and sewing machine are removed and replaced with small, table-size tree.

*Lighting:* Lights are dimmed when there is no action in one area of the stage, as indicated.



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