

# **The Christmas Carol Murders**

**An interactive Murder Mystery**

**by Bill Scurato**

## **Preview**

**This is a partial script to provide an idea of what the play is about, prior to licensing.**

**This is intended for reading and perusing only.**

**Performance of this preview is a violation of copyright.**

**All Rights Reserved  
© Bill Scurato, December 5, 2002**

## **The Christmas Carol Murders**

*Prior to the show, the company members should engage in “table-talk” with the audience members. They may introduce themselves, discuss the personality conflicts that exist in the cast and endeavor to create a rapport. It is suggested that character descriptions be included in the program in order to compliment this process.*

### Act I, Scene 1

Host: Good Evening. Welcome to tonight’s festivities. During your cocktail hour, you may have had the opportunity to meet members of the Curtainsville, Pennsylvania Community Theatre company; on the surface, a jovial group. They may have told you that they are preparing a production of the Dickens’ classic, *A Christmas Carol*. They may have also indicated, that some discord exists among company members. If you have not already done so, please refer to your resolution form for a clue, and note space. Later, you will have the opportunity to question these company members and demonstrate your investigative skills. At this joyous time of year, all is not as it seems. Pay close attention, for it is a night of mystery, mayhem, and maybe even murder. Thank you so much for coming...and enjoy the show.

Music (*Two women enter... address Scrooge*)  
(*Music continues under scene*)

Gloria: (somewhat ditzy) Have we the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

Charles as SCROOGE: (*melodramatically*) Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago, this very night.

(*The first woman hands her credentials to Scrooge.*)

Sissy: (*somewhat tipsy*) We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving (trouble saying “surviving”) partner.

Gloria: At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE: (*Imitating*) “In want of common comforts, sir!” (Dropping character) Good grief, Herman, is this very best we can do in this part? I know we don’t get much to choose from, but I don’t want to be laughed off the stage!

Gloria: I’m sorry Mr. *Hiney*, but I’m doing my best. I really, really, really want to be an actress.

Charles: (*Correcting the pronunciation of his name*) It's Heinay (emphasizing second syllable)

Gloria: I'm sorry Mr. Hienay, but I'm doing my best. I really, really, really want to be an actress.

Charles: Look, it's not personal. I'm sure you have some very fine attributes (lecherous), (*shouting*) but acting isn't one of them.

Gloria: (*exits crying.*)

Herman: (*Pulls Charles aside*) Look, I know she's limited, but I think she's trying.

Charles: "Trying" is the correct description.

Hermann: Okay, Okay.... I'll see if I can find a replacement.

Charles: At the very least, fix her dress. The audience will be so busy looking at her frontage, they won't be able to concentrate on the play at all.

Hermann: Really? (*glances in Gloria's direction*) I hadn't noticed. All right, all right. (*Calling*) Pricilla.

Pricilla: Yes, Hermann.

Hermann: See if you can do something with Gloria's costume to make her less distracting.

Pricilla: Huh? (*Hermann gestures his chest*) (*To Charles*) How are your pants fitting honey? Not too tight are they?

Charles: No, they're fine Pricilla, just fine.

Pricilla: You are such a weasel. Have I ever told you that?

Charles: Only about 10,000 times.

Hermann: Okay, Okay, everybody out front. (*cast assembles*) Now listen. You people have got to get into the spirit of this production. We only have a few days left, before we play in front of a real audience!!!! I'm sensing that some of you are still don't even know your lines! And let me tell you.... our show will only be as good as our weakest link. I will not have my reputation blemished because of lazy actors. I don't want to be embarrassed. Okay, one more thing. Pricilla, would you bring in Miss Starr.

(*Brenda Starr enters*)

Ladies and gentleman, this is Brenda Starr from the Gazette. She is going to provide us some much needed publicity. Please cooperate with her.

*(Several cast members step forward smiling at the prospect of being interviewed)*

I suppose you should start with our *star*... have you met?

*(Cast members retreat, some showing resentment)*

Brenda: No, but I've heard so much about you, Mr. Heinay. *(She mispronounces)*

Charles: That's Hienay. *(Kisses her hand.)*

Hermann: And this is Charles's wife, Sissy Heinay.

Sissy: How do you do.

Hermann: All right everybody. Let's take ten.

## **Scene 2**

*(Art, Rebecca, Jonathan, and Gloria watch them go off)*

Art: How do you like that? It's like the rest of us don't exist!

Jonathan: Why are you surprised? Is it me? Or is he just about the most obnoxious ass to ever step on a stage?

Art: I just don't get it. I mean, he's got the looks I guess, but I don't even think he's that good of an actor.

Jonathan: *(Emphatically)* He stinks!

Gloria: And he's not a very nice person, either.

Art: I've lost every part I've ever been up for against him.

Gloria: Well, Hermann must see something in him.

Jonathan: Oh, yes, I'm sure *Hermann* see something in him!

Rebecca: I think he's wonderful. So handsome, such a marvelous voice, and there's something about him that makes me tingle.

Gloria: Honey, you can get a cream for that .

Rebecca: You're all just jealous! *(She exits)*

Jonathan: What can she possibly see in that old man!

Gloria: She just told ya.

Jonathan: But Rebecca is so delicate, and sensitive. Agh!!! Why do I keep wasting my time with all these amateurs? (*exits*)

Art: Gloria, what's your opinion of me?

Gloria: Huh?

Art: I mean, do I appeal to you at all?

Gloria: Are you serious?

Art: Yeah.

Gloria: Gee, I mean, you're a nice guy Art, but , if you want the truth, not really. (He looks hurt) I mean, you're just not my type. I like guys who ride motorcycles, and have lots of tattoos. Like my last boyfriend, Arnold. What a rebel. You don't have any tattoos do you, Art?

Art: No. Actually, Gloria, I was more interested if you thought Rebecca could ever be attracted to me?

Gloria: Rebecca? I don't know. She seems pretty smitten with Charles. Don't you think? (*She exits*)

Art: We'll see about that! **Sound FX**

### **Music**

### **Scene 3**

*(Brenda is seated opposite Charles and Sissy.)*

Brenda: So how did you two meet?

Sissy: In high school actually.

Brenda: Were you high school sweethearts?

Charles: No, no. We traveled in different circles then.

Sissy: Yes, even then Charles was somewhat elite. He was very popular and very bright. I did okay in school, but in those days women were expected to be secretaries or nurses

Brenda: You're an attorney Charles?

Charles: Yes, a divorce lawyer. But lately I've been bored with the law. Acting is my real passion. Do you know about passion, Miss Starr?

Brenda: Why, yes. I think without passion, one's life can be pretty empty.

Sissy: I was Charles' secretary when he first opened his practice. And when he got involved with the theatre, I decided to join him. I thought it would be nice to work together again.

Charles: Sissy, Miss Starr might find my scrapbook interesting. Would you be a dear and run home for it.

Sissy: But what about the interview?

Charles: I'm sure I can provide Miss Star with everything she needs. *(To Sissy)* Would you be a dear?

Sissy: Certainly darling. *(Kisses him and exits)*

Brenda: You're a fascinating man, Charles.

Charles: Do you think so? Why don't we finish this in my dressing room? I'd like to show you something.

Brenda: What ?

Charles: *(Handsy)* It's a surprise. Come with me.

Brenda: I do like surprises. *(They exit)*

**(Sound FX)** *Sissy steps in from shadows, having seen the indiscretion. She drinks from her flask.)*

*(FX continues into next scene)*

#### **Scene 4**

*(Pricilla & Gloria)*

Pricilla: Gloria, honey, hold on a minute. I need to talk to you. Let me see you. Charles is insisting that we do something to make you less distracting.

Gloria: Are you serious?

Pricilla: Oh, yes. Charles doesn't like anyone or anything taking attention away from him when he's onstage.

Gloria: What's wrong with the way I look.

Pricilla: Nothing at all Gloria. You look wonderful. That's the problem. You look a bit better than Charles.

Gloria: He is really jackass!

Pricilla: Oh, you have no idea. Charles and I go way back. And I'll tell you something else. He's got Hermann looking for a replacement for you.

Gloria: What?

Pricilla: I just thought you should know. Listen, I think I've got a cloak you can wear over your dress. That should flatten you out enough for that jerk.

Gloria: You know, I hope something bad happens to him. (*She starts to exit*) Something really bad!!!! **Sound FX**

*Art enters:*

Art : (modeling his costume) Pricilla does this look all right.

Pricilla: Hmmmm, it looks good to me, but let me check out a couple of things. (*Turns him upstage, "checks his inseam"*)

Art: Aghhhh!

Pricilla: Oh, yes...everything is just fine.

## **Music**

### **Scene 5**

(*From A Christmas Carol, music continues under scene*)

(Both Charles and Jonathan are emoting...way over the top!)

Jonathan: A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!

Charles: Bah! Humbug!

Jonathan: Christmas a humbug, uncle? You don't mean that, I am sure.

Charles: I do. Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

Jonathan: Come, then. What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough.

Charles : Bah! Humbug.

Jonathan: Don't be cross, uncle.

Charles: (Dropping character) All right! All right! I've heard about enough of this. Hermann this guy is out of control.

Jonathan: Out of control! You think I'm out of control. You are an absolute cartoon!

Hermann: All right both of you. You are both way over-the-top. You have to make these characters real people. You two are frighteningly alike. *Frighteningly!*  
(*Both Charles and Jonathan cringe*)

Charles: How dare you talk to me like that. Why I've been acting since you were in knickers.

Jonathan : Well, if you'd keep it in your knickers more often, maybe you could better concentrate on your acting. (*They tangle*)

[*Gloria jumps between Jonathan and Charles, then slaps Charles. Hermann separates Gloria from Charles and Brenda slaps Charles. Sissy breaks up Brenda and Charles, then slaps Charles*]

Rebecca: Stop it. Stop it . All of you. How can you so disrespect him?

Jonathan: Rebecca...

Rebecca: This is a great man. This is a brilliant, wonderful man. (*She walks Charles offstage*)

Brenda: That girl has got a lot to learn.

Gloria: And I hope she never learns it.

**Sound FX**



## Scene 6

Rebecca: Oh, they hurt you. Charles, you're bleeding!

Charles: It's nothing. I'm all right. What I don't understand is their disdain for me. I only want what's best for the play. I just want to help them be as good as they can be. I want them to be as good as me. (Thinks) *Well, maybe that's a stretch...*but I want the production to be as good as it can possibly be. And they seem to hate me for it.

Rebecca: They're just jealous. They know they can never be as good as you, so they try to tear you down every chance they get.

Charles: I guess you may be right. Oh, Rebecca. Why does no one understand me? My wife, my associates.... I have no one that I can bare my soul to.

Rebecca: *I understand you Charles. You can talk to me. I think you're brilliant.*

Charles: My dear, I've felt a connection with you for so long. Oww! (*He touches the laceration on his face*)

Rebecca: You poor dear. Let me kiss it.

Charles: Do you want to kiss it?

Pricilla: Careful how you answer that question sweetie.

Charles: What the heck do you want.

Pricilla: Herman wants me to make some alterations on your costume. He says he'd like to see the trousers a bit tighter.

Charles : I'll bet he would. Rebecca, dear, would you excuse us for a moment. Meet me in my dressing room in ten minutes.... I want to go over our scene.

(*Pricilla kneels downstage of Charles, taking measurements....Sissy enters, sees, swigs, exits*)

Charles: You know, Pricilla, seeing you down there reminds me of old times.

Pricilla: Don't flatter yourself. You may have Miss GaGa-Eyes swooning, but I'm long past those days.

Charles: C'mon, Pricilla. (*Bringing her to her feet*) You don't hate me do you?

Pricilla: I was foolish. Poor Sissy. How does she put up with it?

Charles: Sissy is too stupid to know any better. Now, c'mon what do you say, for old time's sake?

Pricilla: Don't touch me! You know Charles. There's one thing I never told you. Do you remember what happened after Sissy found out about us?

Charles: Yes, we broke it off.

Pricilla: *You!* You broke it off! Remember anything else?

Charles: Didn't you go out to visit your aunt in Minnesota?

Pricilla: That's what I said at the time. I went away, but not to visit my aunt. And the reason I went away has everything to do with *you!*

Charles: What the heck are you talking about?

Pricilla: Just think about it Charles. And eventually you'll figure it out. (*She starts off*) Oh.... and when you've figured it out, take careful notice of who's standing over your shoulder.

## **Sound FX**

### **Scene 7**

Brenda: And what draws you to working with this company?

Art: It gets me out of the house. My job at Big Depot isn't very exciting, and this allows me to be somebody other than Art Sure. I've particularly enjoyed this show, because I've gotten to meet Rebecca. We've become close.

Brenda: How long have you been with the troupe?

Art: Eight years.

Brenda: What's been your favorite role?

Art: Well, Herman usually casts me where he most needs me. I've never gotten the part I wanted, because *somebody else* (bitter) is always chosen over me.

Brenda: You sound a bit resentful.

Art: Me? No, never. I just want to help out wherever I can. Listen I hope you don't mind, but I've got to get into wardrobe. (*He exits*)

(*Sissy enters with scrapbook. As usual, she's been drinking*)

Sissy: Oh, Miss Starr, I've been looking for you. I brought you the scrapbook that Charles sent me home for.

Brenda: (*Thumbing through book*) It seems Charles has played many roles.

Sissy: Oh, yes, Miss Starr. He's played and played and played. But I guess you've already found that out. (*She draws a knife*)

Brenda: Hey, hey, ...take it easy.

Sissy: I'm tired of being treated like crap. I'm a person. And, damn it, I deserve to be treated like one!

Brenda: All right...I'll admit it... he's very charismatic....it happened...so fast...I'm sorry. Trust me, it won't happen again.

(*Sissy holds the knife to Brenda's throat*)

Sissy: It better not! Because if it does, trust *me*, I promise I will kill both of you!

## **Sound FX**

### **Music**

## **Scene 8**

(*Music continues under scene*)

Rehearsal for a scene from *A Christmas Carol*

Rebecca:(as Belle) That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

Charles:(As Scrooge) No more! No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!

Hermann: (*Enter applauding....others too*) Cut ! Rebecca sweetie. That was absolutely fabulous. All right everybody, let's take a dinner break. I'll see you all back here in one hour. Don't be late. Bon Appetite! Really! Terrific! They really smacked it. Don't you think Artie.(*He smacks Art's butt*)

Art: (*after a reaction to Hermann*) Oh, yes it was wonderful. Rebecca do you want to get something to eat?

Rebecca: (*Looking for Charles*) Umm. I'm not sure what I'm doing. But thanks anyway.  
(*Art glares at Charles and exits*)

Gloria: Oh, Rebecca. You were very good. (*For Charles' benefit*) I'll bet your really going to steal that scene. (*exits*)

Sissy: Darling, I showed your reporter friend your scrap book. (*exits*)

Brenda: He's no friend of mine. (*exits*)

Jonathan: Nice scene Rebecca. You are very good.

Rebecca: Oh, thank you Jonathan. That's a real compliment coming from a wonderful actor like you.

Jonathan: Listen, I wondered if you might want to get together later. I've got Olivier's Lear on DVD. I think you'd really like it.

[*Hermann ad lib "Olivier's rear?"*]

Rebecca: Well, I'm sure I would. But I think I already have plans. (*She looks at Charles*)  
But thank you.

Jonathan: Sure. (*exits*)

(*Charles approaches Rebecca*)

(*Pricilla sees this, shakes her head, and exits*)

Charles: Darling, you've created quite a stir.

Rebecca: (*laughs*) I guess. But what did you think? Your opinion is most important to me.

Charles: I thought you were wonderful.

Rebecca: Really. Do you have any suggestions.

Charles: Oh, yes. I think I'd like to go over your entire performance inch by inch. (He embraces her)

Rebecca: Oh, Charles! What about Sissy?

Charles: Don't worry about her. Meet me out in the parking lot .

Rebecca: Are you sure?

Charles: Absolutely. (Rebecca exits)  
=====

*So, there you have an introduction and initial interaction of the main characters.*

*Here is a summary of what takes place in the remainder of the first act:*

*—As Charles prepares to meet Rebecca, someone in the Christmas Future costume approaches him. Charles thinks it's a joke and exchanges glib comments. Suddenly the costumed figure raises a gun and shoots Charles dead.*

*—Rebecca re-enters having heard the shot, discovers Charles' body and screams. The company returns.*

*—Suddenly what appear to be Santa and his Elf, burst into the room. In actuality they are two police detectives who had been posing for the PBA Christmas Party on the ground floor. Tim Baylis (Santa) announces that he is taking over the investigation into the murder of Charles Hienay.*

***Dinner is served.***

### **Music**

**Scene 9** *(Gradually during dinner, Hermann and other company members enter and mingle with audience) As dinner winds down cast members return to engage in table-talk with the audience. Baylis announces he will be interrogating the following suspects:*

*Sissy, Art, Jonathan, Hermann, Gloria, Rebecca, Brenda, and Pricilla.*

*Baylis leaves to make some phone calls and the Players discuss the future of the production. It's decided to hold an audition to replace Charles, since both Art and Jonathan want to play Scrooge. Ultimately, Roger (an audience plant) is selected, which angers Art and Jonathan. Pricilla and Gloria are pleased with the selection and become flirty.*

*Baylis returns to begin the questioning of the suspects.*

*Here's how a typical interrogation looks:*

Baylis: Gloria Gazongas, please come forward. Now, Miss Gozangas, what is your role in this production?

Gloria: Well, I have a few. I'm the "poor house solicitor" in the first act. And I portray the dual role of street urchin and Tiny Tim in the second act.

Baylis: Well, you must be very talented.

Gloria: Thank you very much, I'm sure. I've always, always, always wanted to be an actress.

Baylis: How do you get along with the other actors in the company.

Gloria: Just fine. Everyone is very nice.

Baylis: How did you get along with Mr. Heinay?

Gloria: Well, I didn't really have a problem with him, but he didn't like me very much. He was very mean to me. He insulted me and humiliated me.

Baylis: How did he humiliate you?

Gloria: I'd rather not say.

Baylis: I'm sorry Miss. I'm afraid you'll have to answer the question.

Gloria: He told Hermann that the audience would be distracted by a certain area of my anatomy.

Baylis: I see.

Gloria: Of course you see. Everybody sees. But these (indicating) are not who I am. I absolutely hated him. I'm an actress damn it. I'm not an object. And neither are these.

Baylis: (In a trance) They're very nice, however.

Gloria: Thank you.

Baylis: You're welcome (Snapping out of it) So because you hated him, you killed him. Isn't that so?

Gloria: No. He was not a nice person...but I would never kill anybody.

Baylis: Miss Gozongas. Exactly where were you when Mr. Heinay was shot?

Gloria: I was in the lobby, eating my yogurt.

Baylis: Was anyone with you?

Gloria: Yes, my ex-boyfriend, Arnold. He was having his Harley serviced across the street, and decided to surprise me. When we heard the shots, Arnold thought it was his Harley backfiring, and headed over to the garage. I ran up here to see what had happened.

Baylis: Thank you Miss Gozongas. Does anyone in the audience have any questions for the suspect?

*Audience members question Gloria.*

Baylis: Thank you Miss Gozongas. You are excused for the moment.

*After being questioned by Baylis, the audience may question each of the suspects. This is where the improvisational skills of your actors will come into play. I recommend that during the rehearsal period, you suggest possible audience questions to provide practice for your cast. I also suggest you have Baylis repeat each question from the audience, so all can hear.*

*After interrogation section Hermann rehearses with Gloria and Roger. A gunshot is heard and Hermann is now dead.*

*Baylis announces that he will return shortly with his resolution of the crimes.*

*Following this section of the play, the “Host” instructs the audience regarding the resolution form. We suggest you ask audience members to suggest the murderer(s) — motive, method and opportunity. “Winner” chosen from all correct solutions. It’s also fun to provide a prize for the most creative solution. You’ll usually get some additional good laughs from this.*

*Dessert is then served as the audience members fill out their forms. Have someone collect the forms as they are completed. They should be delivered to whomever will determine the winners. (We have the cast decide the winners)*

## **Intermission—dessert?**

## **Act III**

### **Scene 12 The resolution**

*Act three is the resolution of the play and the crime. The detective (Baylis) eliminates each suspect, until the murderer is finally revealed. Here’s an example of how this goes.*

Baylis: No you wouldn’t Ms. Gozangas. And though, your moral fiber may be intact, we can’t say that for everyone here. Can we Ms. Starr?

Brenda: Whatever are you talking about?

Baylis: You admit to having a sexual liaison with Mr. Hienay, fifteen minutes after meeting him.

Brenda: As I said, he had a very magnetic personality. I'm certainly not proud of what I did.

Baylis: In fact, you hated the fact that this total stranger had lured you into such a compromising position, didn't you Ms. Starr?

Brenda: Well, I wasn't happy about it.

Baylis: Would you say you felt scorned?

Brenda: Yes. You could say that.

Baylis: Aha! No wrath like a woman scorned?

Brenda: Oh, c'mon. I may be a hack, but I'm way beyond that cliché. Besides I have a solid alibi. I was having dinner with my editor at the time Charles.... Mr. Hienay..... was shot.

Baylis: Yes, that does check out. As opposed to Mrs. Hienay, who claims she was alone in a prop room at the time, with no witnesses at all. Isn't that correct Mrs. Hienay?

Sissy: (She's looped) You bet your sweet patuti it's right baby. I hated the creep. He humiliated me for years. (She cries) But.... I really miss him. Don't ask me why.... I could never kill him. I loved him.

Baylis: I believe you did. You loved him too, didn't you Miss Rose?

*Following the resolution, the Players do a final scene from A Christmas Carol, which is followed by the singing of a public domain carol.*

*Following Act Three and your curtain call, your director, or perhaps a cast member, announces the winners and awards.*

### **The Christmas Carol Murders Characters**

**Charles Hienay** -- Self-centered, self-absorbed, self-indulgent community theatre actor. Conceited beyond belief, a pseudo-intellectual who is totally narcissistic. He is performing the role of Scrooge in this production of A Christmas Carol. In real life he is a divorce attorney.



**Sissy Hienay**-- Charles' oft-cheated-on wife. A drinking problem. Low self esteem. Does theatre for "quality time" with Charles. A taken-for-granted dishrag to Charles, but not stupid.

**Herman Buttz**- Flamboyant director of A Christmas Carol. Often lets his feminine side take over. Speaks with a pronounced lisp. Appreciates Charles' physical demeanor and presence, but despises his laziness, arrogance, and lack of inspiration.

**Pricilla Puttmuncher**---Costume mistress at the theatre . Flirtatious, personality plus. Divorced. Enjoys the creative opportunities she finds at the theatre. Also, enjoys the creative opportunities in measuring inseams. Has had a past relationship with Charles.

**Art Shure**-- Actor playing Cratchit in A Christmas Carol . Lacks all of Charles' charismatic qualities..... but a hard worker. Is employed at Big Depot by day. Has lost out on many roles to Charles over the years. Single. Lives alone. Sees himself as a martyr. Lots of self-pity. Secretly in love with Rebecca.

**Rebecca Rose**-- Innocent ingenue totally smitten with Charles. She plays Belle in A Christmas Carol.

**Jonathon Avery**- Serious minded actor. Particularly contentious toward Charles. He plays Fred in A Christmas Carol. . Also in love with Rebecca .

**Gloria Gazongas**- Beautiful to look at and a very nice person. Legally blond. Charles wants her replaced, because she's distracting. "Really, really, really wants to be actress." She plays many roles in A Christmas Carol..

**Roger Ross** - An audience member who is enticed into auditioning, when one of the cast members becomes suddenly indisposed. (He can either be a plant or an actual audience member. If the latter, he'll just need a little pre-show coaching.)

**Brenda Starr**- Local reporter out to do a story on the upcoming production and particularly its star, with whom she is enchanted.

**Tim Baylis**- a state police homicide detective, playing Santa Claus at a PBA Christmas Party

**Elf**- Baylis' partner. Doesn't say much. Flirts with Hermann.

**Host**- A jovial connection between the reality of the audience and the fantasy of the show.