



The 31st Annual
A CHRISTMAS CAROL
WRITING CONTEST
2019



**GREAT
LAKES
THEATER**

The Thirty-First Annual “A Christmas Carol” Writing Contest

Every year since 1989, Great Lakes Theater has partnered with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District in producing our annual “A Christmas Carol” writing contest. Over two thousand CMSD students per year, in grades six, seven, and eight compose original stories inspired by the universal themes in Charles Dickens’ timeless classic. Then, each school selects one winner per grade level to submit to Great Lakes Theater for judging. Of these submissions, a panel of judges vote for the top six grand prize-winning entries.

Grand prize-winning student writers attend a reception attended by GLT staff, their teachers and CMSD representatives, where their achievement is celebrated and they receive awards of recognition.

The 2019 grand prize stories are:

“BREAKING Scrooge Alert!” by Lily Pennington – page 2

Grade 6, Newton D. Baker School for Arts, Teacher: Christine Campion & Jacquelyn Vance

“Dear Ghosts of Christmas Present, Past and Yet To Come” by Christaun Ware – page 4

Grade 6, Walton Pre-K School, Teacher: Martha Moore

“Shiloh’s Story” by Sakai Dork – page 5

Grade 7, Robinson G. Jones School, Teacher: Bethany Lutwin

“Jessi’s Life” by Darnasia Wilson – page 8

Grade 7, Douglas MacArthur Girls’ Leadership Academy, Teacher: Veronica Wessel

“Lily’s Story” by Lana Keosingharath – page 11

Grade 8, Douglas MacArthur Girls’ Leadership Academy, Teacher: Veronica Wessel

“Stories Left Untold” by Tianna Triggs – page 16

Grade 8, Riverside School, Teacher: Joe Gilbert

*Great Lakes Theater
“A Christmas Carol”
production photography by
Roger Mastroianni.*



The company of Great Lakes Theater’s *A Christmas Carol*.

BREAKING SCROOGE ALERT!

By LILY PENNINGTON

Lester Holt: My name is Lester Holt. This just in, Mr. Scrooge has just left with Ms. Christmas Past! Let's take a look with Connie Chung.

Location shot with Connie Chung.

Connie Chung: Thanks, Lester. We are seeing right now some light coming from Mr. Scrooge's house. (Connie Chung whispering) Let's listen in to what they are talking about.

(Scrooge is heard saying) "I loved her, and she left, that is why I got so angry."

(Ms. Christmas Past says) "Well the past is the past, but you can change for the future."

Well that was surprising! This is Connie Chung, signing off and sending you to Elizabeth Vargas for the Weather.

Elizabeth Vargas: Thanks, Connie. Right now we are looking at five inches of snow this weekend. Wait a minute ... what are we looking at right now? There is a brilliant almost blinding light?

Cameras pan the area of the brightness and are unable to determine what is causing the light.

Tamron Hall: This is Tamron Hall. Just in: Mr. Scrooge is traveling with Ms. Christmas Present.

I have to say Ms. Christmas Present is a glorious sight with her long green velvet robe.

She looks like Mrs. Claus. Is this robe a new fashion statement? Oh my ... under the robe are two children who look neglected and malnourished. I can see Scrooge is visibly upset by the children's presence. I also can see that Ms. Christmas Present is speaking intently to Scrooge.

Sorry I can't get much more from this meeting.

Back to you, Elizabeth, and the Weather.

Elizabeth Vargas: The snow dusting continues all day.



Laura Welsh Berg (center) as Mother Cleaveland in the Great Lakes Theater production of *A Christmas Carol*.

Lester Holt: Thank you, Elizabeth. This is Lester Holt. Breaking right now: we can see in the distance Ms. Christmas Future. But it is difficult for us to see Ms. Christmas Future and Scrooge clearly. We are trying to get our cameras closer. Oh my, Ms. Christmas Future looks like a shadowy figure. From here it looks like Mr. Scrooge is extremely frightened.

Not getting much new information so we will leave this eerie scene for now. We will break regular programming if there are any new updates.

Following Morning.

Lester Holt: Following up on yesterday's news report about the eerie meeting with Scrooge and Ms. Christmas Future. At dawn I was able to interview Mr. Scrooge. This is what he told me: Ms. Christmas Future was wearing a dark robe, she didn't have a face, and showed Mr. Scrooge a grave where no one was mourning the poor soul's demise. "It was me," said Scrooge. Ms. Christmas Future explained to Scrooge if he continued his miserly and selfish ways, he would be that poor soul. So, Scrooge, with the help of the three Ghosts, looked inside his heart and chose to open it.

Tamron, I hear you are on location at Scrooge's nephew's house on Christmas Day.

Tamron Hall: Yes, I am, Lester. The party at his nephew's is festive and jubilant. Mr. Scrooge has indeed changed his outlook on Christmas! His family and community are thrilled to have an open-hearted Scrooge. Scrooge would like to say something to you and our audience.

Scrooge: Merry Christmas, and God Bless you all.

~ End ~



Great Lakes Theater's *A Christmas Carol* company members David Anthony Smith (center) and Lynn Robert Berg (far right) join student winners as they show off their T-shirt awards on the stage of the Ohio Theatre, Playhouse Square at the first of two *A Christmas Carol* Writing Contest student matinees, on Tuesday, November 27, 2018.

DEAR GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT, PAST AND YET TO COME
BY CHRISTAUN WARE

Dear Ghosts of Christmas Present, Past and Yet to Come:

Thank you for showing me that I had really made a name for myself as a terrible and miserly Grinch. If none of you had shown up, I would have been a mean, stingy old man for the rest of my life. I would have let children die, when I had the opportunity to save lives by giving to the poor. I would have let them starve. You have changed my heart.

Ghost of Christmas Past, you reminded me how I felt when I had no one to care about me. What you showed me made me feel like changing. My sister brought so much joy to my life. When she died, I guess I just forgot what love was all about. I was so sad that I grew up into a mean old man.

I never understood that people could be happy without money. It seems that I owe you a lot also, Ghost of Christmas Present. When I saw how happy Bob Cratchit was at Christmas, I couldn't believe it! He barely has a dime to his name, but he is much happier than I am. Who would have believed. And my nephew... unbelievable!

As for the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, I think I owe you most of all. When you showed me that Tiny Tim died because his family could not afford a doctor, it really tore me apart. Then you showed me what everybody thought about me. They were so happy when I was gone. Didn't I mean anything to anyone? Don't be ridiculous. How could I? I was so mean.



D.A. Smith as the Ghost of Jacob Marley in the Great Lakes Theater production of *A Christmas Carol*.

When you see my old friend, Jacob Marley, please tell him how grateful I am. If he hadn't come, I wouldn't have stood a chance. I would have shrugged off everything. Let him know that, although I did a lot of bad things in life, meeting him was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Thanks to all of you, I have changed my life. I hope I have also changed what will happen when I die. Most of all, I was able to help Tiny Tim by giving his father a raise. Now Tiny Tim can grow up to be the man he is meant to be. I hope to do more good things in the future.

Forever Grateful,

Ebenezer Scrooge

SHILOH'S STORY
BY SAKAI DORK

Slam! "I'm done with you!" Bethany said as she was packing her things. She grabbed her suitcase and packed a towel, three pairs of clothes, a toothbrush, and fifty dollars.

Shiloh felt like he had lost everything that day. As Bethany headed out, she said her last words to him, "Farewell and goodbye!" Shiloh picked up his phone and said to his boss that he couldn't come in. He hung up, then fell asleep.

Five years later, Shiloh was the boss of *Comput:Inc.*, which was a computer shop that was always busy. He was talking to a co-worker that night, because his friend asked him if he felt like spending Thanksgiving with his family. Shiloh said "No, I have other things to do. Even if I don't have anything to do, I don't want to spend it with you!" Shiloh's friend said, "Okay," and walked away.

Around nine PM, Shiloh was cleaning his desk and went to the back where they make the computers. As he was going to turn the power off, he heard something fall in the back. "THUMP!"

Shiloh ran to the back to see what it was. But first he grabbed scissors, then saw a co-worker's desk flipped. Shiloh screamed, "WHO'S THERE?" And that's when a black mass came running up to him and knocked Shiloh out.

Shiloh opened his eyes and saw himself strapped to a chair. Around him, he saw a lamp above him, table next to him and a black window in front of him. Shiloh yelled,



Lynn Robert Berg as Ebenezer Scrooge in the Great Lakes Theater production of *A Christmas Carol*.

"LET ME OUT!" and "WHO ARE YOU?" and Shiloh will never forget the deep voices that responded. "I am Betrayed. I have been here all your life." And two more voices responded, "My name is Overwrought. I've been a part of your life for a short time." "And I am Composed. I will cleanse your soul if you cooperate with us."

Shiloh was confused. He said, "Why did you kidnap me?" They all said together, "Together, we will show you your past, present, and future. And also try to change how you are living your life." Shiloh said, "How?" And then all of them started chanting: "Future, present, past. WE WANT TO SEE AT LAST! Future, present, past. WE WANT TO SEE AT LAST!"

After they had said it one more time, Shiloh and the Three Feelings warped through time and eventually stopped. Shiloh opened his eyes and saw his old house. Shiloh couldn't believe it. He asked one of the spirits, "Why are we here?" Composed said, "Betrayed will tell you why."

Betrayed came out of the shadows and said, "This is when I first met you. We are going to go inside and see the first problem you faced." As they got closer to the door, they heard yelling. Shiloh couldn't believe it. Bethany was there. She was sitting down, arguing with Shiloh.

"I'm tired of your bull. You're arguing with your boss, not bringing food on the table and you're LAZY!"

"Excuse me? I bring money home all the time. And me arguing with my boss is NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!"

"When you mean you bring money home all the time, you mean once a MONTH!" Bethany slammed the door and stormed out of the room. Betrayed looked at Shiloh and said, "Let's go in." Shiloh agreed and took a deep breath and walked in.

Shiloh walked in the room Bethany stormed into and saw her packing up. Present Shiloh tried talking to her and she couldn't hear him. Bethany walked up to past Shiloh and said, "I'm done with you. Farewell and goodbye." Present Shiloh tried to stop her. He tried grabbing her hand, but his hand went through hers. Shiloh fell to the ground and started crying. He looked back at Betrayed and said, "WHY DID YOU BRING ME HERE!?"

All around Shiloh the area changed into the present. Shiloh was now with Overwrought. Overwrought said, "Now all of us are going to see your present life. As they were walking, they got into a shady neighborhood. Shiloh wondered where they were going. He said, "What does this have to do with me?" Overwrought stopped on a house that was dark, garbage bags over broken windows, and small. Overwrought said, "Let's head in."

Shiloh opened the door and saw his co-worker Mason. Shiloh was baffled. He felt sorrowful. He didn't know that his friend was in need of help.

"Dad, what are we eating tonight?" Mason's son Billy said. "I'm sorry, Bill. We have to eat leftovers." Mason's wife Lana walked into the room and sat down to eat with them. Lana said, "I'm getting my fifty dollar pay check this Friday." Mason said, "OK. I hope Shiloh gives me a raise, 'cause we don't have enough for rent."

Overwrought and Shiloh sat there listening to them talk for a little while. Then eventually left. Shiloh said, "Now where?" Composed came out of the shadows and said, "The future." As Composed said that, the world sped up until the sky and buildings were grey. Shiloh asked, "What happened?" "The City went dark." Shiloh sadly looked down. He said, "Why is there no one in the city?"

"Your friend's family died," Overwrought said. "They helped people a lot when Mason's family needed it the most. They stayed quiet and never asked. Billy died of starvation. Lana, Mason's wife, was hit by a car, and your friend committed suicide. After they were dead, people left the city

because the city grew poor. There were riots, fights and murders in the city. The city eventually became abandoned.”

“Please, please can you take me back? I’ll change my ways!” Shiloh said as he was crying. Composed walked up to him and told him to close his eyes and then started to cast a spell. The spell sounded like a different language. All three spirits snapped their fingers. Then Shiloh blacked out.

And woke up to his alarm ringing. He woke up in a sweat and panicking. He dressed up in his work clothes and went to work. He saw his friend Mason. Shiloh went up to him to hug him. Shiloh told him, “I’m going to give you a raise. Now you make twenty-five dollars an hour. Every computer you make will give you ten dollars. And I’ll be happy to spend Thanksgiving with your family.” Mason was astonished. He said thank you and the two friends hugged. They were working and talking for years on end until it was time to close.

Shiloh felt hungry, so he asked Mason if he wanted to grab a bite. Mason agreed. As they were walking. Shiloh felt a weird feeling, like déjà vu. He looked to his right and saw Overwrought. Overwrought waved bye and started to disappear. They went up to a food truck and talked for a bit. Then Shiloh couldn’t believe it. He saw Bethany! She walked up to the food truck and ordered a water. Mason told his friend that it’s now or never. Shiloh said, “OK.” He took a deep breath, then walked over to her. Started a conversation. Which lasted for hours. The next few days they spent together. On Thanksgiving, Shiloh, Bethany and Mason’s family were all together. And two years later, they were married. One night, as Shiloh was laying down, he saw Betrayed. Betrayed said, “Goodbye.” and disappeared. Shiloh and Bethany fell asleep. Then next morning, Mason and his family bought a new house. And eventually everyone lived happily ever after.

~ End ~

JESSI'S LIFE
BY DARNASIA WILSON

In 1997, the year the amazing movie Titanic came out, but also the year Jessi was brought into this world, on August 3rd to be precise. Fast forward sixteen years and the sound of police sirens behind her as Jessi was on the run and she didn't stop until she knew she was safe.

Her destination was to find her brother and sister in the abandoned warehouse where they lived. Once she arrived, Jessi handed them the items she stole from a grocery store a couple blocks down. Her brother and sister were very thankful for what she was doing for the food, even though they knew it was wrong. They didn't know any other way to survive.

Her sister being only twelve and her brother nine, they were all alone with no other support financially or emotionally. During the very late hours of the night, she would think about the things she had to sacrifice, as well as illegal acts she committed that could have terrible consequences for her and her family. Jessi also knew that wasn't right, but she thought there were not any other options. Until one night when her life changed forever.

She was called upon by Dallia, her imaginary friend she had when she was younger. Jessi thought she was dreaming. Dallia appeared as if coming from the gates of heaven and when she spoke, she made it very clear that she was disappointed in Jessi. Her voice echoed through her ear canal and touched her soul. The message was loud and painfully clear that Jessi needed to change her ways. Dallia told her



Alex Syek as the Ghost of Christmas Present in the Great Lakes Theater production of *A Christmas Carol*.

that she will be back in two weeks to see if Jessi had adapted to a new lifestyle, a good lifestyle.

That night, Jessi couldn't sleep, thinking about what happened the previous night. To avoid what she neglected all those years, she told herself it was a dream and put it to the back of her head. The following two weeks, she followed her normal routine, which involved stealing as many items as possible to survive. In the following two weeks, something strange was occurring with her brother. Jessi's brother was violently vomiting, in and out of consciousness. When she went to touch his

head, it felt as if someone poured lava onto him.

Jessi knew that she couldn't take him to the hospital because of her numerous arrest warrants. As a result of her actions, she felt the guilt of not being able to give him the help that he needed to get better. She felt as if she was stuck at the bottom of a hole and water was filling up inside. Jessi could only assume that if she didn't do all of those illegal things, her brother would be happy and healthy at that moment. But she did what she could by stealing medicine to make him feel better.

At 3:00 AM, just two weeks later, Jessi was approached again by Dallia. By this time, she began to believe that she wasn't dreaming and that what she experienced was real. Dallia told her once again, with a more serious tone that sent shivers down Jessi's spine, how disappointed she was in her decisions. Jessi felt remorse and shame because she neglected to listen to the previous advice Dallia gave her. With a slick snap of her fingers, blue smoke began to surround Jessi and Dallia. They were met with Jessi's past, and this placement was the date exactly two years ago.

Dallia presented her with images of her past and how her negative choices affect other people's lives. They went back to where Jessi committed her first crime. She stole a bike from her local park so she could use it as her source of transportation. Jessi may have thought it was convenient for her. However, the boy she stole the bike from cried bodies of water with his tears because he cherished that bike. This bike was not just a form of transportation for him, but was a cherished treasure because it was the last thing his deceased grandfather gave

him. Experiencing this brought tears to Jessi's eyes as well, knowing that she was the cause of what grief and sadness the boy felt deep in his heart.

With another swift movement of Dallia's fingers, the blue smoke began to surround them once more. Still with tears in her eyes, Jessi was unaware of what to expect because this all seemed so surreal to her. Dallia took her all the way back to the place where Jessi first learned about the news of her parents' death and what events took place after. As everything was coming to her, she felt a wave of emotions, she felt like she couldn't breathe, that her heart was being torn out of her chest. Jessi felt the weight of the world on her shoulders when her parents' death was announced to her. Jessi was in denial of the whole situation. She began doing negative things to forget and cope with the pain.

Just days after their deaths, Jessi ran away with her siblings to live in an empty abandoned warehouse. Dallia appeared again with another memory from her past. As the smoke faded, Jessi was met with another experience to convey her negative choices. The guilt started to consume her. She felt like she was being suffocated by what she was reliving. This occurred when Jessi took her sister to the nail salon for her birthday. After she was finished getting her new polish on her colorful nails, the money that Jessi was using to pay for the services was fake! Before the nail tech realized the money was counterfeit, Jessi grabbed her sister and they ran out of the salon and down the street. Hearing the nail tech screaming, her voice was piercing though Jessi's and her sister's ears as they ran from her down the street.

Dallia allowed Jessi to experience this situation from the nail tech's point of view. Jessi witnessed what occurred after they left the salon. It was the nail tech's first day on the job. After this incident, all her hard work to get employment was thrown down the drain because she was fired for having accepted counterfeit money. Jessi was so overwhelmed, tears began to fill her eyes, knowing that she was the cause of this financial struggle the nail tech faced. As she watched this, she was very disappointed in herself and knew it was time for a change.

Another snap of Dallia's fingers, once again blue smoke began to surround all around them. The final destination that Dallia decided to take Jessi happened just one week ago. As the fog began to dissolve, she saw the sight of her sick brother lying on a pallet made of ragged, torn old covers. She immediately began to tear up at the sight of her very ill little brother. Dallia explained the importance of these memories. If Jessi hadn't done such terrible things, her ill brother could have received proper treatment he needed. Dallia told her that

this was their final location and she hoped she learned a valuable lesson that she will remember for the rest of her life. With another snap of Dallia's fingers the blue smoke reappeared and she was back where she began.

Staring into the dark emptiness that surrounded her in the abandoned warehouse that she called home, she once more thought about all her decisions. Her choices negatively affected the people that surrounded her. Jessi became aware that she could change her choices that would have different outcomes not just for her, but for the people around her. She took responsibility for her past, her present, and reflected on her future. She wanted to start a new life, a life that she would be proud of herself and her choices. So she turned herself in to the police and contact her grandparents to return her siblings back home to them. After she was done being retained, she changed her life choices for the better, apologized to all the people she did things to, and went to live with her siblings and her grandparents.

~ End ~

LILY'S STORY
BY LANA KEOSINGHARATH

Jayden Schmoeir sits quietly on his porch, staring at the dark, dim and gloomy sky. He hears the sounds of laughter and play coming from inside the house, which he rolls his eyes at. He rethinks the decision he made last August, and regrets his final choice, and wished he went to go live with his dad.

A lot of time must have passed, because when Jayden finally decided to go inside the house, it was very quiet and filled with snores. Jayden stepped into his room, shutting the door forcefully, making the posters and pictures on his wall fall off. He starts picking them up and scrunching them into balls. Items were being thrown around, and many things were breaking. Tears were streaming down his face, and after he was finished, his room seemed like the aftermath of a tornado.

He slumped onto the wall, sliding until he was seated on the floor. His mom knocked carefully on the door, and she opened it. "Go away mom." Jayden said quietly. "I knew I heard some ruckus. What's going on with you?" she asked. Jayden's seven year old sister Lily peaks her head through the door, hair messy from her sleep. "Nothing. Nothing is going on. Leave me alone," Jayden said, standing up. His mom was puzzled, confusion written all over her face. "I said go away mom!" he yelled. He was clearly angry, and his mom wanted to know what it was about. She turned to leave the room, looked back at him one more time, and led Lily out the door with her.



Jayden wakes up to the smell of delicious turkey and mashed potatoes. He peeks his head out, and sees all the fantastic meals set onto the table. Lily spots him, and waves to Jayden. Jayden ignores her, and rolls his eyes. Many of his family members were coming to his house, and he realizes that his dad is here too. Jayden rushes to the bathroom, slamming the door. He cracks open the window, and gets a good whiff of the warm breeze.

Nick Steen as Bob Cratchit and Ian McLaughlin as Tiny Tim in the Great Lakes Theater production of *A Christmas Carol*.

There was a very silent knock, but it was loud enough for Jayden to hear. "Well, who is it?" he asked. "It's me." Lily said, "It's me Jayden! Can you open the door?" Jayden shuts the window and opens the door. "Lily, leave me alone. I don't like you. Stop," Jayden says to her. She looks at him with a frown. "Will you please play with me? Please?" Lily says with a pouting face. "Will you please play with me? Please Jayden? Pretty please?" Jayden says, mocking her with pouty lips. "Get out!" Jayden screams.

The whole house must have heard because it was so silent that you could hear a pin drop. Their father walks over with an angry expression on his face. Lily's face was wet with tears and was red as a tomato. "Jayden, why do you talk to your sister this way?" his dad asks, picking Lily up over his shoulder. Jayden was surprisingly red and had no words. His dad and Lily leave from Jayden's sight, then Jayden quietly says, "I don't speak to her in any way dad. I was just telling her I don't want to play with her." It was about ten seconds of awkward silence, until uneven footsteps were being made back toward Jayden. "I'm afraid that's not true. I've been here all night, Jayden. Your mother and Lily have told me everything," Jayden's dad said, with a disappointed look on his face. Words attempt to escape from Jayden's mouth, but it was inaudible. Jayden's dad shook his head, then walked down the hallway once again.

All day, Jayden has been avoiding all of his family members. He would either stay and hide out in his room, or keep his head down whenever he was in other parts of the house. It was 5 PM and all of the family members sat down at the big giant dinner table, including Jayden. Everyone had to go around the table saying what they were

thankful for. Jayden found it very boring, as everyone took about five minutes explaining every single thing they were thankful for.

When it came to Lily's turn, she made a brief explanation of what she was thankful for. "I'm thankful for my family and especially my brother," she said with a smile. Everyone applauded, and then it fell silent as it was Jayden's turn. He tapped his foot and started fidgeting with his fork, looking down at his empty plate, avoiding all of the empty stares. This went on for about five minutes, just silence, and everyone staring Jayden down or looking toward his direction. "Fine. I'm not thankful for anything. I also hate the fact that you all baby Lily so much," Jayden spat out. Everyone looked around, wondering what should be said next. His mom looked back at everyone nervously, and gave sharp looks to Jayden. Jayden looked down again and then they continued sharing around the table once again.

After everyone left the Schmoer house, Jayden's parents were speaking in the kitchen while Jayden and Lily were sitting in the living room. Jayden was watching a cartoon on the TV and Lily was playing with her dolls. "Hey Jay? Can you play kitchen with me?" Lily asked, holding up pots and pans in front of him. He took the pots and pans with a smile, then threw them across the room. Lily looked at him in frustration. "Why do you always do this? You never want to play with me!" she said, arms crossed. "You never want to play with me!" Jayden mocked, "Boo, hoo, hoo!" he said, getting closer to Lily's face. Lily backed away, wiping away her frustration off her face. "Well, okay then. Can we at least play family with my stuffed animals?" she asked

and collapsed to the ground. Jayden then went to his room, slamming the door as always.

A few hours passed and Jayden is just scrolling through his social media. He looks up at the picture his dad put back up on the wall, the last picture Jayden took with his other classmates last year from 8th grade. Then, there was an abrupt knock on the door. It was very loud. And for the first time in a long time, Jayden was afraid. The door flew open and his very heated dad entered the room. "I'm sick and tired of your games, Schmoer! What is wrong with you?" his dad yells. "I didn't do anything..." Jayden stutters. "Didn't do anything? Come with me," his dad says firmly.

His dad leads him out of the room and they end up outside. There is high pitched loud sirens, police and an ambulance. It took Jayden a minute to realize what he had done. "You see this?" his dad turns to him, "this is your mess! You did this to her!" he yells. Jayden looks over to the ambulance, seeing Lily inside of it, and his mom comforting her. She is crying and it seems like she isn't going to stop. "Are you even listening? I'm done with you! We're all done with you. If you're so ungrateful, I want you to get out. Now!" he yelled.

Jayden stares into blank space for a minute. "You mean ... actually leave?" he asks, fear in his voice. "Out, right now!" his dad screams even harder. Jayden runs into the distance, running away from his house. He looks back at his dad, hoping that he was just messing around and would tell him to come back. But nothing came out of his dad. He still had that angry, disappointed expression on his face. Jayden then keeps sprinting straight out of the neighborhood.



Laura Welsh Berg as Mother Cleaveland and Avery Pyo as Master William in the Great Lakes Theater production of *A Christmas Carol*.

His legs are burning and his vision becomes blurry. The road becomes dark with no streetlights and it is very quiet. Jayden is shivering and crying. He cries so loud with no cares in the world. The first destination that comes to mind is his grandma's house.

He knocks on the door, expecting an answer. But no one showed up to open the door. As he turned to leave the house, his mind thinks about the times he disrespected his grandma and turned down all her valuable and precious gifts she was willing to give him. Next, he tried going to his aunt's house. Another knock on the door and no one opened the door. He heard the dog barking and all the cars were there, but no answer. Jayden keeps knocking on the door out of frustration, tears still streaming down his face. Again, no answer.

The next place he decided to try was his old best friend's house. He stepped onto the mat carefully and knocked on the door specifically three times. No answer. "Gary? Gary! Gary, please, I need you to open up! I'm in serious trouble here!" Jayden screams. Rain starts pouring down, making it difficult to see anything out in far distance. "Please, Gary. I'm cold, I'm wet, and I have nowhere to go!" he yelled. He threw himself to the ground and hugged himself with his knees pressing against his chest.

After he calmed himself down for a bit after a while, he starts to think. Then, it hits him hard. There is no answer at the door because that isn't Gary's house anymore. Gary isn't there. Gary isn't even here. Jayden's mind was so clouded, he had forgotten that his old best friend committed suicide last year. The rain was still pouring down and Jayden cried. He screamed in anger, fear and sorrow. All he wanted was for somebody to answer the door.

A week went by, and Jayden surviving on his own was very difficult. He was dirty, he detected a very foul odor and soon realized it was his own, and he was hungry. He fed himself by hunting, creating a fire, and cooking the animals he had got. He learned all of this hunting knowledge from his dad and his uncle, the two people he enjoyed the most. Most of Jayden's week was just him crying and trying to survive on his own. Lots of flashbacks were flashing in his head. Like the time when Lily was born. Jayden was so happy and he was the person who named her Lily. He remembered the first time she had fallen asleep in his arms and it was right next to the Christmas tree and the fireplace. They were so happy. A smile flashed across his face, until he forgot that

Lily could be dead. He continued to feel dreadful.

Jayden turned back to the direction he had come from, going back to his house. He knew it was pointless, he knew that his entire family hated him, but he had to try. He ran, and he ran so fast. He reached his home and the lights were off. The sky was dark, dim and gloomy. The way he always liked. There weren't any cars and all he heard were the crickets.

He knocked on his next door neighbor's door. For the first time in two weeks, somebody finally answered. "If you are here to yell at me, I am not in the mood," the old lady said. Jayden looked at her, but he looked at her in a way that he hadn't before. The old lady was very puzzled, as she would never expect Jayden Schmoer to be standing in front of her door on the front porch, pleading for help.

"I cannot help you, Jayden. Not after all you did. You are indeed in lots of trouble," she said. "It's okay, I understand. I just need to know where my family is," he asked. She looked him up and down, realizing that he has not been with his family at all. "What happened to you, child?" she asked. "My dad made me leave the house. I know, I've been so bad. But I know things can change. I need to change things. Please help me," Jayden pleaded. The old lady smiled and then grabbed her keys and led Jayden to the car.

She dropped him off at the hospital and Jayden rushed to the room that the front desk assistant gave him: 2104. "2101 ... 2102 ... 2103 ... 2104!" Jayden whispered silently to himself. He peeked into the door and there they were. His parents and his

beloved sister Lily, who was laying in the hospital bed. His mother looked up at him with narrowed eyes. You could tell she wanted to give him a hug, but his dad put his arm in front of her, preventing her from doing so.

“Before you say anything, I’m really sorry for how I’ve acted this whole year. I realized that I am grateful for everything I have, including my sister. I know this won’t make it right, and I know that it’ll take a whole lifetime to make up for my bad choices. But it’s worth it to me. I’ll take the full responsibility and deal with what I’ve done for the rest of my life.” Jayden explained this to his parents. His parents looked at each other, impressed, and his dad sighed. “Okay, kiddo. I’m not exactly perfect either. I shouldn’t have kicked you out of the house like that,” he admitted.

Jayden smiled. “So ... what’s wrong with Lily?” Jayden asked. “Jayden ...” his mom said softly. He looked at her with a confused look on his face. “Your little incident wasn’t as bad as we thought. She already recovered from that. But ...” her voice

trailing off. “But?” Jayden asked, worried. “Lily has cancer, Jayden. She was diagnosed with cancer about a month and a half ago.” his dad said, firmly. Jayden couldn’t speak. He had no words to say. He looked over to his sister. Poor Lily, he thought.

For the next few weeks, Jayden started coming to the hospital every day after school. He would bring all her favorite toys and play games with her. He was there for her comfort, and she was happy. It was the first time that the whole Schmoeir family was happy together.

Jayden would also wait in the waiting room while Lily was receiving treatment and he would make conversation and bond with the rest of his family members. Jayden’s life was starting to piece back together, bit by bit. He knew that his past choices wouldn’t leave him, but the way he decided to change afterwards mattered. Jayden made sure that his choices corrected his past mistakes, and that he wanted to do it because it made him happy. In the end, he learned from his mistakes and was very grateful for everything that he was given.

~ End ~

STORIES LEFT UNTOLD
BY TIANNA TRIGGS

Scrooge

*The Scrooge but not “The Scrooge.”
A man who was peaceful and had glee that
could shock a crowd from miles away. But is
this man truly the one we wholeheartedly
know?*

*For this is just an opening, you still
won’t know, but for a few minutes I’ll open
another world that was hidden from view. And
it’s starting with Scrooge...*

Reset?

[Yes] no

...

“I want to be moss. Growing on the side of a tree, seeing the world from an unseen view. A perspective always new. But as the years fly, the tree starts to grow, slowly changing your perspective, making your view change. And soon you won’t be at the forest bottom, no, you’ll be at the top of the trees, flying the wind blowing the leaves. The cool breeze and soon you’ll look up and see the stars above. And you can finally breathe even though you were happy below the trees. You’re still happy and ready for death, so let’s take one more breath.”

“I let out my last breath and die for I have lived a great life. So this is goodbye.”

This is one timeline that I gave you permission to explore. Scrooge was Moss that could fathom reality, profound really. But I have one more story to share. Do you want to continue?

[Yes] no

“Dust, Dusk the world we must trust. The shadows creep closer as the past is distorted and disappeared without a trace. Sweet god please come down, for this is a war you aren’t in. My house is being used for safety for the town to stay. Children with no parents, and parents with children missing. This is destruction. For the money I once held is gone, but I surely don’t care. The war I once thought we would win isn’t with the human race, it’s with the devils and angels. So we hide like the defenseless humans we are. Now we wait and pray. Hopefully, we live another day.”



Lynn Robert Berg as Ebenezer Scrooge in the Great Lakes Theater production of *A Christmas Carol*.

He starts to fall, into the darkness for his thoughts.

“The life I built in the darkness, when words meant nothing as they do now. What did I bring upon this barren land? I can scream “I’m sorry!” as much as I can. But I can’t bring back the man that my words killed. How? How was I supposed to know that my words were the ones of gods? My mistake is the one that was deadly. So for the ones that had fallen, I’m giving you all that I have left. My words. I’m sorry, and I’m living my punishment.”

The thoughts of a man in guilt. A man whose words killed thousands and caused war between angels and demons. Who is to say there isn’t more to discover in that world, interesting truly. I need to visit that timeline more.

...

~ End ~



Mr. Fezziwig (Aled Davies, center) dances with his employees in the Great Lakes Theater production of *A Christmas Carol*.

ABOUT GREAT LAKES THEATER



Charles Fee, Producing Artistic Director

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

Since the company's inception in 1962, programming has been rooted in Shakespeare, but the company's commitment to great plays spans the breadth of all cultures, forms of theater and time periods including the 20th century, and provides for the occasional mounting of new works that complement the classical repertoire.

Classic theater holds the capacity to illuminate truth and enduring values, celebrate and challenge human nature and actions, revel in eloquent language, preserve the traditions of diverse cultures and generate communal spirit. On its mainstage and through its education program, the company seeks to create visceral, immediate experiences for participants, asserting theater's historic role as a vehicle for advancing the common good, and helping people make the most joyful and meaningful connections between classic plays and their own lives. This Cleveland theater company wishes to share such vibrant experiences with people across all age groups, creeds, racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

The company's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. Great Lakes Theater has a strong presence in area schools, offering an annual series of student matinees and, for over 30 years, an acclaimed school residency program led by teams of specially trained actor-teachers.

1501 Euclid Avenue, Suite 300 • Cleveland, Ohio 44115 • Tel. (216) 241-5490

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