

A MID WINTER-NIGHT'S DREAM

Dramatis Personae

Whalen Jennings

Mayor of Nyalba, a city in the Northeast

Christina Jennings

Whalen Jennings' only daughter, a labor lawyer

Willamena ("Billie") Gates

President and owner of Ohsosoft, Inc.

Phil Gates

Billie Gates' only son,
General Counsel of Ohsosoft, Inc.

Revs. Glenna and Mercer Oldleup

Co-Pastors at Nyalba Presbyterian

Felicity Jennings

Teenage niece of Whalen Jennings and
cousin of Christina Jennings

Wayne Oldleup

The Oldleups teenage son

Carmen McRay

Youth group member playing Mrs. Cratchet

Ernest Lee Trize

Billie Gates' executive secretary

Billie Gates' Inner Voice

Whalen Jennings' Inner Voice

Laura Gates

Teenage niece of Billie Gates

Odd Scene Opening Reciter

Reciting verse to open the odd numbered scenes

Even Scene Opening Reciter

Reciting verse to open the even numbered scenes

SCENE: Nyalba

TIME: November/December 2006

SCENE ONE

(Rev. Mercer Oldleup's office)

(Mid-November 2006)

CAST REQUIRED – Glenna Oldleup, Mercer Oldleup, Christina Jennings and Phil Gates

SCENE TWO

(Nyalba Presbyterian Assembly Hall, Youth Group Play rehearsal)

(Saturday Eight Days Before Showtime.)

CAST REQUIRED – Felicity Jennings, Wayne Oldleup, Ernest Lee Trize, Carmen Gates, Christina Jennings, Phil Gates

SCENE THREE

(Whalen Jennings' office and Billie Gates home) (Three days later)

CAST REQUIRED – Billie Gates, Phil Gates, Whalen Jennings and Christina Jennings

SCENE FOUR

(A Nyalba McDonalds)(Friday, December 10, 2006, Two Nights Before A Christmas Carol)

CAST REQUIRED – Christina Jennings and Phil Gates

SCENE FIVE

(Nyalba Presbyterian Assembly Hall; Saturday, one day before the production; Dress Rehearsal)

CAST REQUIRED – Laura Gates, Ernest Lee Trize, Felicity Jennings, Phil Gates and Christina Jennings

SCENE SIX

(Nyalba Presbyterian; the following Sunday morning)

CAST REQUIRED – Whalen Jennings, Jennings Inner Voice, Billie Gates, Billie Gates Inner Voice, Mercer Oldleup, and Glenna Oldleup.

SCENE SEVEN

(Nyalba Presbyterian Assembly Hall; Youth group play)

CAST REQUIRED – Billie Gates, Billie Gates Inner Voice, Whalen Jennings, Whalen Jennings Inner Voice, Felicity Jennings, Laura Gates, Glenna Oldleup, Mercer Oldleup, Ernest Lee Trize, Phil Gates, Christina Jennings

SCENE ONE

(Rev. Mercer Oldleup's office)

(Mid-November 2006)

CAST REQUIRED – Glenna Oldleup, Mercer Oldleup, Christina Jennings and Phil Gates

ODD SCENE RECITER: *(Bows and then recites deliberately:)*

You are known to be kind-hearted;

So we're eager to get started.

We'll set off with a gimerick,

In the form of a limerick --

The curtain -- not seen -- is now parted. *(ODD SCENE RECITER bows and exits, center.)*

(ENTER Revs. Glenna and Mercer Oldleup. She leans against her desk. He paces. The set is just a table as the desk; a desk chair and the blue sofa. There are some papers and some books on the desk.)

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: *(Looking at her calendar.)* Let's see; six weeks until Christmas. Thanksgiving is next week. Hmm. *(Obviously deep in thought.)* Let's see. Ah. *(The light goes on.)* I feel called Yes, for the Sunday after Thanksgiving I feel called to use my 1994 post-Thanksgiving sermon, last revived in 1999, and always well received.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: Perfect! *(High fives GLENNA. Pause; and looking directly at GLENNA)* As we always say, . . .

REVS. OLDLEUP, IN UNISON: "No sense reinventing the schpiel." *(They laugh and MERCER joins GLENNA in studying the calendar)*

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Now, the Sunday after that is a combined service with the other downtown churches. Good time to get our shopping done. And the Sunday after that -- ah-ha -- the 15th annual youth group play is that Sunday.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: Did I hear Wayne say they're doing Dicken's Christmas Carol – AGAIN!!! I don't know why they couldn't do something with a HINT of a religious theme. *(CHRISTINA JENNINGS and PHIL GATES enter left)*

Ah. A welcome surprise. Welcome, welcome you two.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Welcome indeed.

PHIL: Hello, Glenna. Hey, Mercer.

CHRISTINA: Hi, Glenna. Hi, Mercer.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: Please sit down. We were just meditating about the youth group, and it's great to see two of our favorite youth group advisors. *(Pause)* So, pray tell, what can we do for you today? *(PHIL and CHRISTINA look nervously at each other and start talking at once)*

PHIL: Well, we . . .

CHRISTINA: We're going to . . .

(They both stop)

PHIL: They don't need both of us to tell them the story at the same time. You go ahead.

CHRISTINA: Okay. *(Pause, takes a deep breath)* First, we're sorry to drop this on you right before the holidays . . .

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Oh, don't be silly. Delighted to see you.

CHRISTINA: Okay, thanks *(Pauses, another deep breath)* Well, we'd like to make plans to get married . . .

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: Hey -- that's great.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: I couldn't be happier . . . And gee, we must be one of the first to know or I'm sure I would have seen something in the papers -- "Mayor's Daughter and Prominent Baker's Son to Wed."

CHRISTINA: Besides us, you're the only ones that know. And it is great *(CHRISTINA pauses, squeezes PHIL's hand and gives him a loving look)* but there is a problem. You see, my father got very upset when Phil and I became friends while working together with the youth group here in church, and . . .

PHIL: My mother didn't like it that either.

CHRISTINA: . . . and Dad was even more upset when we started dating.

PHIL: Mom, too.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: Whhhhyyy we're they upset?

REV. GLENNA POLDEU: Yeah, why??

CHRISTINA: Oh, it's a lot of things with Dad. It's politics for one -- Phil's a Republican and, you know my Dad, Mr. Democratic Mayor and stubborn as a Democratic mule. Phil's mother has been a big Republican supporter for years.

PHIL: And it's not just a political thing. Over the years they've come to think they really don't like each other.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Do they know each other?

CHRISTINA: It's a small enough town -- they bump into each other. It's the labor union thing, too.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: Yes, I've heard about that. Phil, am I right that your Mom fought the baker's union at Ohsosoft for years?

PHIL: Yeah, and she still resents the union.

CHRISTINA: And Dad, he's pro-labor, and he said some regrettably nasty things about Phil's mother in campaign speeches.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: Phil, someone told me your Mother once threatened to move Ohsosoft out of town because of the “dysfunctional local government”.

CHRISTINA: Dad certainly took that personally.

PHIL: And my mother was sure offended by his statements that she was “a rich baker who's just like her products – plenty of dough, but no substance” and “crusty, but with lot of hot air”.

CHRISTINA: Did you know I represent the baker's union?

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: No!?! The union that unionized Ohsosoft?

CHRISTINA: One and the same.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Ouch.

PHIL: And, compounding all of this is Mom's state of mind these days. She'd deny this -- but she's been more and more depressed of late. As they say, its lonely at the top, and she's been too alone since the divorce.

CHRISTINA: And Dad thought getting re-elected would help him move on with his life. But, despite reelection, since my mother died he's really cut himself off from a lot of people. He's a pro and in public he puts on a game face, but these days he's pretty withdrawn in private.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: WOW -- tough situation!!

PHIL: *(After a pause.)* About the only thing we think our parents agree on is the affordable housing project in the Fairlawn neighborhood, near Ohsosoft. We think they will both join the neighborhood in opposing that project.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: Ah, too bad. As you know, the downtown churches joined together to support the project. Your union is also opposed isn't it, Christina?

CHRISTINA: They are claiming to be worried about kids and vandalism in the employee parking lot. And I'm afraid Dad is simply looking to curry favor with the older voters in the area who are worried that property values might be hurt.

PHIL: Just between us, Mom is worried that the union will use the project to demand more security – and that will cost her money.

CHRISTINA: Actually, the project is another part of our problem.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: How so?

CHRISTINA: Well, through our involvement here at church we've come to think that the project deserves wide-based support. It's a social justice issue. We're going public with our stand.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: That's great!

CHRISTINA: And what we really want is for our parents' to join us in announcing support. We're concerned that if we tell them we want to get married they'll continue to oppose the project out of anger with us. We don't want that to happen.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: That's very thoughtful and unselfish . . . but what a mess . . . What can I do to help?

CHRISTINA: Well, what we really want is some advice, . . . advice as to . . .

PHIL: Whether we should temporarily stop seeing each other and keep our wedding plans private so they don't complicate the project discussions with our parents.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Stop seeing each other? I can't imagine you're crazy about that idea.

PHIL: No.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Or . . . (*Thinking*) you could announce wedding plans despite your parents' feelings. Take up the housing issue later. They'll accept the idea you're going to get married in a couple of weeks.

CHRISTINA: Or months.

PHIL: Or years.

CHRISTINA: Besides, Glenna, we don't want to hurt them, if we can help it.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Or . . . (*Thinking*) try to win them over on the housing issue quickly and then . . . let them know of your wedding plans.

PHIL: That's what we we're thinking.

CHRISTINA: We'd like to try.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Would you like us to speak with them about the housing issue?

CHRISTINA: Phil, what do you think?

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: We wouldn't mention you two -- at least not your plans. We're both on the Presbytery's "justice in housing" committee. We'll just call on them to lobby.

PHIL: Well -- okay -- good luck.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: We'll need your help preparing to speak with them. What do you say we do that over a cup of coffee. I'll buy; the Pastors' Discrepancy fund will never know the difference. (*Rev. Mercer Oldleup rises, and then the others*) (*They exit left. The lights dim.*)

SCENE TWO

*(Nyalba Presbyterian Assembly Hall, Youth Group Play rehearsal)
(Saturday Eight Days Before Showtime.)
(Set consists of the desk, now centered and one chair behind it)*

CAST REQUIRED – Felicity Jennings, Wayne Oldleup, Ernest Lee Trize, Carmen McRay, Christina Jennings, Phil Gates

EVEN SCENE RECITER: *(Enters while lights are dim; then lights come up)*

Thus, our tale is off and running.
Will our lovers with some cunning
Each convert their parents dear
And make a path to altar clear?
Anon, we'll know the answer true,
But now it's time for our Scene Two. *(Bows and exits center.)*

(FELICITY and WAYNE enter left)

FELICITY: *(Pointing to a place in the script each of them is carrying.)* Okay, we're gonna start from the "Merry Christmas and God Bless you" line. Got it?

WAYNE: Got it. *(assuming a pose, as Fred):* Well, again Merry Christmas and God bless you, Auntie Scrooge.

FELICITY *(as Scrooge):* Fred, what reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

WAYNE *(as Fred):* What reason have you to be sad? Your worth millions.

FELICITY *(as Scrooge, taking a big cigar from her desk):* For one, I have to deal with feel-good fools like you.

WAYNE *(as Fred): (Coaxingly)* Don't be cross, Auntie. And Auntie, you know you should give up those cigars.

FELICITY *(as Scrooge):* The cigars are no concern of yours, Fred; it's my life. And what else can I be but cross when I live in a world of such fools? To hell with your Merry Christmas! To hell *(pounding the table)* with it. *(Trize enters center.)* To hell with it I say!

TRIZE: Easy Felicity, easy. I know you're into being the first female scrooge, and I know it's great fun as to say "Hell" on the church stage. But I'm not writing it in more than once just so you can shock the audience.

WAYNE: To hell with 'em *(he says with a big smile).*

TRIZE: *(Sternly)* Wayne.

WAYNE: Just kidding. And besides, I think my parents would like more religious concepts in this play. (*TRIZE looks at him shaking his head.*) No sale, huh?

TRIZE: (*Ignoring Wayne's words.*) Okay, Wayne and Felicity, we'll continue working on that next week. (*Wayne and Felicity depart.*) Where'd Carmen go? Carmen! (*Carmen, runs in*)

CARMEN: Coming.

TRIZE: We need to run through your song while we still have a pianist. Remember this is Mrs. Cratchet thinking about Tiny Tim in happier times. Okay, from the top

CARMEN: (*Sings*) Love to me is like a summer day,
Silent, 'cause there's just so much to say.
Still and warm and peaceful
Even clouds that may drift by
Can't disturb our summer sky.
I'll take summer, that's my time of year.
Winter shadows seem to disappear.
Gayest, warmest season!
That's the reason I can say
That I love a summer day.

I hear laughter from the swimmin' hole,
Kids out fishin' with a willow pole.
Boats come driftin' 'round the bend,
Why must summer ever end?
Love to me is like a summer day.
If it ends, the memories will stay
Still and warm and peaceful.
Now the days are getting long,
I can sing my summer song.

(*Music by Dave Brubeck; lyrics by Dave & Iola Brubeck*)

TRIZE: Great job, Carmen.

CARMEN: Can I go now?

TRIZE: Sure . . . (*Carmen runs off*) but just one more thing -- (*looking up*) – that we'll worry about later. (*PHIL and CHRISTINA enter*)

CHRISTINA: Hi, Ernie.

PHIL: Hey, Ernie. How's it going?

TRIZE: Hello, you two. How's it going? Well . . . eight days from now A Christmas Carol in Song and Dance will have been performed . . . one way or another.

CHRISTINA: Oh, I'm sure it will be great. We're excited. Can't wait. Will you save us two front and center seats?

TRIZE: I personally won't put that on any list of things to remember, but why don't you speak to your cousins, stars Felicity and Laura -- they will both be ushering before the show. Have them save you two seats. (*Packing to leave*)

PHIL: It's a deal. Anything we can do help?

TRIZE: No, I think I'm in good shape.

CHRISTINA: Got all your props together?

TRIZE: (*Slapping his forehead*) Props -- right. I will have to do something about props. (*Writes on a list.*)

Say, Phil, can you get your mother out for this? She'd enjoy it. It would be a good change of pace for her.

PHIL: Hey, what about you, she always tell me you control her calendar -- so put it on her calendar. Seriously, I'll do what I can do, but Christmas -- regrettably -- hasn't been her thing for a few years now.

TRIZE: (*Shaking his head.*) Yeah. To busy making dough.

PHIL: Ho Ho Ho.

CHRISTINA: Oh, a funny punny.

PHIL: As I said, I'll try, but I have other fish to fry with her right now.

TRIZE: Try if you can. And you (*to CHRISTINA*) should work on getting your Dad out. It's not every uncle who gets to see his niece play Scrooge.

CHRISTINA: Good thought, Ernie. I'll give it a go. But politics is a never-ending season.

TRIZE: Based on past attendance, I won't hold my breath for either of them. I'll just hope. (*ALL exit, stage right; lights dim*)

SCENE THREE

*(Whalen Jennings' office and Billie Gates home)
(Three days later)*

**CAST REQUIRED – Billie Gates, Phil Gates, Whalen Jennings
and Christina Jennings**

(Set: The desk, a desk chair and one other chair are on the left half of the stage; two upholstered chairs are to the right)

ODD SCENE RECITER: *(Enters while lights are dim.)*

And now it's time to meet Phil's mum,
Whom more we'll see in scenes to come.
So too we'll meet yet one other
Chris's one and only father.

Scene Three is really two in one
We split the stage for twice the fun.
To Chris and Dad this half we give *(Sweeping gesture to left)*
While Phil and Mom o'er here *(Gesture to right)* do live.

(Reciter steps to left center and gestures toward right, holding the pose until the action shifts to the other side.)

BILLIE: It is very nice that your dear Rev. Old Loop . . .

PHIL: No, Mom, not Old Loop, its pronounced “oddle like “coddle”. And it’s not “oop” its “up” – Oldle-up. Oldle-up. Got it.

BILLIE: *(Looking at PHIL as though he just said something nonsensical)* Okay, Oldle-up, but it looks like Old Loop. In any event, it's fine that Rev. Glenna believes that the housing project is a fine addition to the Fairlawn neighborhood. But she doesn't have to hire workers to work there. I don't want it in Ohsosoft's back yard.

PHIL: Mom, you're not giving the project a fair hearing. *(Action stops)*

(Reciter steps to right center and gestures toward left, holding the pose until the action shifts to the other side.)

WHALEN JENNINGS: You're right – affordable housing needs to be somewhere -- but Fairlawn is not the place. The political realities are that people in the neighborhood don't want it.

CHRISTINA: Dad, some don't want it! Not all! Dad, this is an opportunity for leadership.

WHALEN JENNINGS: You sound like one of your preachers -- Rev. . . . What's his name!

CHRISTINA: Mercer Oldle-up.

WHALEN JENNINGS: Right, Oldle-up. I remember now. Did I tell you he gave me a private sermon today on my leadership role?

CHRISTINA: No.

WHALEN JENNINGS: Yes. He's calling on the "historically responsible community leaders" -- as he put it -- to lead public opinion in support of the project.

CHRISTINA: And . . .

WHALEN JENNINGS: I told him this historically responsible community leader doesn't intend to lose his bully pulpit in the next election on account of a politically sensitive project that can go to another site -- almost as good.

CHRISTINA: Dad, you used to believe doing right was more important than getting elected.
(Action stops)

(Reciter steps to left center and gestures toward right, holding the pose until the action shifts to the other side.)

BILLIE: Fair has nothing to do with it. Nor does social justice. The simple fact is that our workers -- including management staff -- don't want the project so close to our employee parking lot. They're afraid of crime.

PHIL: But that's an irrational fear and you know it.

BILLIE: It's not my job to change their perceptions. It's simple; it's not good for employee morale, and that's not good for Ohsosoft's bottom line -- therefore I oppose it -- regardless of what Glenna Oldleup has to say. *(Action stops)*

(Reciter steps to right center and gestures toward left, holding the pose until the action shifts to the other side.)

WHALEN JENNINGS: Yeah, doing right for the people who live in this city.

CHRISTINA: The people who live in the project will live in the City.

WHALEN JENNINGS: But they won't be city residents or voters in the next election, if ever. *(Pause)* Boy *(Getting angry)*, one thing Oldleup said really got to me. Were you aware that Billie Gates and I see eye-to-eye on this project? That's the one thing that made me think I might be missing the boat. *(Action stops)*

(Reciter steps to left center and gestures toward right, holding the pose until the action shifts to the other side.)

PHIL: I only ask that you be open-minded; make it a public relations coup for Ohsosoft. Make it part of your “strength in diversity” campaign. You know this is right -- trust the right to prevail and get behind it. Use Ohsosoft dollars to help make the project a community asset and a model of affordable housing done right.

BILLIE: You might be getting a little carried away – affordable housing isn’t one of our corporate missions or even one of our community service initiatives.

PHIL: Why couldn't it be one of those initiatives?

BILLIE: Well -- *(Sarcastically)* it's hard to get people to volunteer to help something they feel threatened by. *(Pause)* But, you know there was one thing Rev. Oldleup said that bothers me -- both the Mayor and I are opposed to the project. How I hate the thought of being on the same side of any issue with that political hack -- enough to make me think twice.

PHIL: While you're thinking -- why don't you think about coming to the play your nephew is in at church. I'll meet you there.

BILLIE: I'll think about it; but I won't go if you'll be sitting with Christina. I can't wait for the end of that infatuation of impossible opposites. *(Action stops)*

(Reciter steps to right center and gestures toward left, holding the pose until the action shifts to the other side.)

WHALEN JENNINGS: The good Reverend also asked me to see my niece perform in the church's Christmas youth play. When is that again?

CHRISTINA: This coming Sunday. I'll sit with you. It'll be fun. The kids are really great. *(The Reciter motions to indicate his/her agreement)*

WHALEN JENNINGS; Yes, I bet they surely are. I bet those kids are just super. *(Again the Reciter breaks his pose to indicate his agreement)* I'll see if I can make it, provided you and Phil have broken off? I haven't heard you mention him the last few days. Is that finally over?

(Lights dim. All EXIT.)

SCENE FOUR

*(A Nyalba McDonalds)
(Friday, December 10, 2006, Two Nights
Before A Christmas Carol)*

CAST REQUIRED – Christina Jennings and Phil Gates

EVEN SCENE RECITER: *(Enters when lights are dim.)*

Alas, poor Chris and Phil seem meant
To confront parental wills unbent.
But can the sources of their blues
Each be induced to change their views.
To answer these questions and more,
We'll move ahead with our Scene Four. *(Exits Center)*

SCENE: Nyalba McDonald's

CHRISTINA: There is no better place to eat out without a hint of romance than McDonald's.

PHIL: *(with great affectation)* I'm McHurt; Doest not the McAmbience suit your fancy, McLove.

CHRISTINA: Stop. Your McKilling me -- besides, let's get back to the business at hand. How do we change their minds on the project?

PHIL: How can we work with the one thing that bothers them both -- that they're both on the same side.

CHRISTINA: You know what we really need to do is figure out a reason for both of them to publicly announce support for the project at the same time. Once they publicly announced, they'd never withdraw support -- even if not withdrawing meant being on the same side again.

PHIL: Okay, but what's the reason, and how do we get them to do it at the same time?

CHRISTINA: Well . . . *(Thinking)* Hey, try this on for size. We each tell our parents we're going to be married, and . . . *(Thinking)* . . . we're going to have Rev. Oldleup do a private ceremony next week because there is no use waiting for a big wedding with our parents dead set against the idea.

PHIL: I don't see what this has to do with the project.

CHRISTINA: Then we'll each say we weren't supposed to tell them about the wedding plans, and the other parent won't know, but we know our parent is reasonable and will understand and be supportive, unlike the other parent.

PHIL: Okay, so with luck we get them to go along with the wedding idea, but how does that lead to a public statement of support for the project?

CHRISTINA: Well, how's this. I'll tell my Dad that I'll try to convince you to put off the wedding if he wants us to, provided he joins us in announcing our wedding plans in church Sunday. You do the same thing with your Mom.

PHIL: I see why each parent would want to delay for a big public wedding to irritate the other, but why the public announcement now?

CHRISTINA: Of course, you understand, neither will know the other is getting the same pitch. We'll say we need an announcement right now so there won't be any lingering uncertainty in light of the other parents' opposition and so we can plan for the big event publicly.

PHIL: Good. But, if this works, both will come.

CHRISTINA: Exactly.

PHIL: And where's the public announcement of support for the project?

CHRISTINA: I'm getting to that. With both parents there, we'll call both of them up front and make two announcements at once -- our wedding plans and our parents' support for the project.

PHIL: They'll flip out. They won't stand for being boxed in like that.

CHRISTINA: What are they going to do? They are not going to act like dopes in the middle of a wedding announcement in front of the whole congregation.

PHIL: I think they'll disown us right there on the altar.

CHRISTINA: No they won't!! At least I hope they won't. They might try to back pedal some on the project later. But our congregation is supportive of the project; the announcement will get applause. They're not going to shout that down.

PHIL: *(Pause)* Hey, it sounds crazy -- but let's try. *(Pause)* But what should we do about Glenna and Mercer? We need to tell them something about this.

CHRISTINA: Yes, they need to know something is going to happen.

PHIL: We should tell them that they were very persuasive and our parents have changed their positions on the project.

CHRISTINA: Right, and they're going to announce it at church Sunday.

PHIL: Okay. But we'll have to tell them they have to keep it secret. And I think they'll do that. They won't want to lose our parents support by stealing their thunder. *(Pause)* They might gossip about wedding plans, so we won't tell them about that.

CHRISTINA: All in all, I'd say it's one heck of an idea.

PHIL: C'mon McLove, let's go talk through this McPlan once more before we attempt to work our McMagic.

(EXIT, stage left; lights dim)

SCENE FIVE

*(Nyabla Presbyterian Assembly Hall;
Saturday, one day before the production; Dress Rehearsal)*

CAST REQUIRED – Laura Gates, Ernest Lee Trize, Felicity Jennings, Phil Gates and Christina Jennings

ODD SCENE RECITER: *(Enters when lights are dim.)*

A plan so deft to reach the altar
Is still at risk that it may falter.
Do you think that it will work?
Are Mom and Dad each such a jerk
That such a scheme they each will fall for. *(Exits center)*

(Felicity and Laura enter right; each carries a script.)

LAURA: Alright, I'll start right after I present my card to Scrooge. *(as Collector goes through the motion of presenting his card)* Ms. Scrooge, at this holiday season of the year, we all want to make some slight provision for those with special needs. *(moves to imaginary window upstage center)* In that great city out there, many thousands are in need. This year we are appealing especially for funds for decent, affordable housing for those of modest means. As you are surely aware . . .

TRIZE: *(Entering center)* Hold it! Hold it right there! Where did all that come from? There's nothing about housing in the script.

LAURA: Well, I thought I'd update it a bit. Make it more – you know -- relevant. You said we could suggest changes. I didn't change the cue line.

FELICITY: *(Peevishly)* It would be nice to know when to expect the cue line.

TRIZE: Tell you what. Notwithstanding that the idea of dress rehearsal is to run all the way from end of the play to the other -- non-stop, let's break here and do the finale since we can't rehearse that in the morning and many of you have to go soon to other events. Who's got the tape? Twyla, take it away.

DANCE Routine

(PHIL and CHRIS enter center during the number; Kids exit when done)

PHIL: Hey we saw that last bit. Pretty neat.

TRIZE: Speaking of neat -- Phil, it's pretty neat your Mom has decided to come not only to the play -- but also to church. What's gotten into her?

PHIL: I told her it was going to be a great show.

CHRISTINA: Ernie, don't breathe a word -- but I think my Dad may come as well.

TRIZE: I'll believe that when I see it. Next you'll be telling me they're backing the project.

PHIL: Now that would really be something.

CHRISTINA: In any event, we're looking forward to the show. We've spoken with the kids and have choice seats reserved.

TRIZE: Great. Hey, look, I'd love to chat, but I've got to get through this rehearsal.

PHIL: No problem. Have at it.

CHRISTINA: So, got all your props?

TRIZE: Props. *(Slaps his head)* Darn. Let me write that down. Now where are those kids? *(He exits left)*

PHIL: Well, the performance is scheduled.

CHRISTINA: The actors will be here.

PHIL: But will they know their lines?

CHRISTINA: Don't worry, they will bring down the house.

PHIL: Or will we bring down the house upon us?

CHRISTINA: It'll be fine. Whoever heard of a plan conceived by a lawyer not working well.

PHIL: I only hope Mother Nature cooperates. It's supposed to be one heck of a snow storm in the morning. I hope they get here.

CHRISTINA: Don't worry. You get your Mom here. I'll take care of Dad. *(They exit left; lights dim)*

SCENE SIX

(Nyalba Presbyterian; the following Sunday morning)
(The stage is set with eight chairs, in two rows, facing forward but, slanting away from the audience from right to left. The lectern is left front)

CAST REQUIRED – Whalen Jennings, Jennings Inner Voice, Billie Gates, Billie Gates Inner Voice, Mercer Oldleup, and Glenna Oldleup.

EVEN SCENE RECITER: *(Enters when lights are dim)*

Now clouds grow thicker; soon snow is falling.
Now roads are slicker, it's just appalling.
Chris is snowbound; her dad is not.
Phil is snowbound; his Mom is not.
The plot it thickens;
My pulse it quickens;
Our folks in a fine fix;
On now to our Scene Six. *(Exits center)*

(Whalen Jennings, his Inner Voice and an usher enter left, with Jennings greeting imaginary people as they move to the stage)

WHALEN JENNINGS: Hello, Joe. Gooood to see you. *(Pause, as though someone is speaking to him)* Yes, it's great to be back; ought to get here more often.

JENNINGS' INNER VOICE: Ought to -- but don't count on it.

WHALEN JENNINGS: *(Shaking imaginary hands)* Hello. Great to see you. *(Kissing an imaginary woman on the cheek)* Helen, thank you. It's so good to see you also. Yes, of course I remember.

JENNINGS' INNER VOICE: Actually, take away the name tag and I don't have a clue. And where is Chris. There will be no wedding announcement without her and that's why I'm here.

WHALEN JENNINGS: Yes. You know my niece is starring in the play today. *(Pause)* I'm looking forward to it, too. *(Pause; Moving to his seat)* Great to see you. *(Jennings takes a bulletin from the usher and sits down)*

JENNINGS' INNER VOICE: Where is Chris. This will be a long morning if she doesn't make it. It'll be especially long since I'll be trapped way up front where Chris assured me she'd meet me.

(Billie enters right, with her Inner Voice, and lead by an usher)

BILLIE: *(Moving toward the stage)* So good to see you, Irene. *(Pause)* Yes, thank you. I'm looking forward to seeing Laura and all the kids. *(Pause, but still moving forward)* Thank you, but I'm sitting up front where there are always seats; Phil's meeting me there.

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: At least I hope he is. God forbid that he couldn't be here. No Phil and no announcement. *(Pause)* Oh my gosh, there's the Mayor. Did he show up for the play or to prevent the announcement? What a disgusting turn of events!

BILLIE: What a pleasant surprise!

WHALEN JENNINGS: The pleasure is all mine.

JENNINGS INNER VOICE: Not.

WHALEN JENNINGS: Please sit down. We can squeeze together . . .

JENNINGS INNER VOICE: A most unpleasant thought.

WHALEN JENNINGS: . . . if Chris and Phil show up.

BILLIE: That would be fine.

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: Not.

(Lights dim; lights go up and Even Scene Reciter holds up a sign saying "Twenty Minutes Later")

JENNINGS' INNER VOICE: Strange power, these Christmas hymns. I remember them so well. Singing them as a kid; singing them with Chris's mom years ago. I'm surprised they touch me so. *(Glancing at Billie, as does Jennings)* She knew them too, and not an unpleasant voice. Too bad she is so set against the kids getting together that Phil can't even talk to her about it. Hmmm. I wonder, did she get wind of the announcement or is she here because of the play?

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: This is very strange. Singing Christmas songs with this selfish man who so little remembers being young that his daughter can't tell her she wants to get married. Is he here for the play, or could it be that the Mayor has learned of the announcement and he has shown up to somehow attempt to prevent it. What could he do? Grab the mike. Or just try to sit here and make his daughter uncomfortable? *(Pause)* Funny how the hymns seemed to move him. *(Pause)* Alright, enough daydreaming. Sounds like the sermon is winding down. Let's try to tune in.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: *(Concluding his sermon)* . . . And so, as we prepare for the coming of Christ into the world, we have been confronted with the question of how we welcome people – all people – into our community, to live, to work, to raise and educate their children and to enjoy the fullness of life as part of our community.

This question has been posed for us by the affordable housing initiative in Woodlawn. By all accounts, the Woodlawn site has benefits that no other site in the City can match. Other sites have some of those benefits – but no other site has them all.

Social justice issues such as this are complex. They involve questions on which reasonable men – and women – can disagree.

But as the birth of Jesus brought God’s love to ALL people, rich and poor, Jew and gentile, and as Jesus’ life and words proclaimed a love that broke all human barriers between people, are we not called to welcome and embrace in our community all people, regardless of such human distinctions as race, ethnicity, gender and, yes, economic means and social standing?

Are we not called to resist living only in proximity to those like us in income, and education and social class?

Are we not called to lead – to lead our families, to lead our neighborhoods, to lead our businesses, and to lead our communities in a world where our isolating human barriers fall before the inclusive power of God’s love?

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: Now I know how Phil got to think the way he does about the project hanging around here. I've got to give that issue some more thought.

JENNINGS' INNER VOICE: Ouch! I used to find little in sermons that made me uncomfortable. Is Chris right on the project? Should I be helping to educate the neighborhood; not pandering to their fears.

(Lights dim; Even Scene Reciter holds up sign saying "Ten Minutes Later")

JENNINGS' INNER VOICE: Here we are at announcements. This would have been a tense moment if Chris and Phil were here, as we would all wonder what his mother was going to do. She hardly seems like the sort to make a row, but you never know.

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: Without Chris and Phil here we may never know why he came today. I certainly hope it wasn't to try to prevent an announcement; if you don't want the kids to get married, don't show up.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: . . . I have one special announcement to make. I take that back. We have two people up front here, with a special announcement to make. Mayor and Billie, take it away.

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: What is he doing? Whoa, I better make sure that his honor doesn't get control of the mike.

JENNINGS' INNER VOICE: What the hell is going on here. Hey, I better get part of that mike before she says something regrettable.

WHALEN JENNINGS: *(Taking the mike and trying to ward off Billie, who puts her arm around him and pulls the mike in so they both can talk)* I hardly know what to say, . . .

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: That doesn't happen very often.

WHALEN JENNINGS: Well, I . . .

BILLIE: I'm Billie Gates, and I think what the Mayor is trying to say is that an announcement was planned for this morning, but my son and his daughter were supposed to be here for it, but the snow apparently kept them away, so we are going to postpone. Don't you think that's a good idea, Whalen?

WHALEN JENNINGS: Why, yes, I do. Uh, so, Rev. Oldleup, Billie and I will just celebrate being here, and hearing your fine message, and look forward to being back real soon with Chris and Phil to fill you all in. Thank you.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: I'll tell you what. I'm going to hope that Phil and Chris make it for the play, and that we -- you can do your announcement right after the play. And I'm going to plan on that.

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: What else could he say. You can't object to wedding plans that haven't been announced yet. Then again, he might not know about those plans. He seemed surprised when I mentioned an announcement.

JENNINGS' INNER VOICE: What else could she say. She's trying to delay an announcement and hopes it never happens. And she's right the kids have to be here. Well, at least I know now she's just not here for the play. And, boy, in her eagerness to make sure I didn't announce the wedding she was all over me up there. Folks will think we're getting married. Not that I minded her immediate presence. Surprisingly, nice perfume.

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: I wonder what he would have done if I hadn't jumped in? *(Pause)* You know, for a guy his age, he seems pretty well preserved. Smelled nice too. *(Lights dim. All exit left.)*

SCENE SEVEN

(Nyalba Presbyterian Assembly Hall; Youth group play)

CAST REQUIRED – *Billie Gates, Billie Gates Inner Voice, Whalen Jennings, Whalen Jennings Inner Voice, Felicity Jennings, Laura Gates, Glenna Oldleup, Mercer Oldleup, Ernest Lee Trize, Phil Gates, Christina Jennings*

(Odd Scene Reciter and Even Scene Reciter enter when lights are dim)

ODD SCENE RECITER:

If now your thoughts to Chris and Phil wander,
I'll tell you all they're still far off yonder.

EVEN SCENE RECITER:

They're stuck in the snow, still trying to go;
But progress is slow -- For them all is woe.

ODD SCENE RECITER:

But we're happy to say,
Ere we go on our way,

EVEN SCENE RECITER:

That the state of this verse
Will not get any worse;

ODD SCENE RECITER:

Because up next is Scene Seven,

EVEN SCENE RECITER:

Which the play ends, Thank Heaven. *(Both exit center)*

(The stage is clear except for four chairs on the far right facing the audience and angling for the rear of the stage, and a table a chair on the left. Jennings and Billie, and their respective Inner Voices, enter and sit in the four chairs, with Jennings and Billie in the middle two seats and their Inner Voices to their sides. Then Felicity as Scrooge enters.)

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: This play has been very good. But I see a little too much of Scrooge in me. I'll have to speak to Phil about changing our position on that project. Christmas would be a good time to announce the change. Maybe I can bring the union around.

JENNINGS' INNER VOICE: Proud of my niece. She's done a fine job. Ah, now we're getting to the finale.

FELICITY (*as Scrooge*): (*Bouncing joyously across the stage*) Merry Christmas! (*Laura, as collector enters*) Merry Christmas!

LAURA (*as collector*): Are you speaking to me, madam?

FELICITY (*as Scrooge*): Of course I'm speaking to you. Merry Christmas. Hey, I remember you. You came and asked me for money for that housing project. (*Scrooge hugs the collector*) How are you? I hope you were successful collecting. I'm afraid you don't remember me with pleasure. Please forgive me. (*She reaches into her purse and pulls out a roll of bills*) Will you accept this until I can write a more meaningful check tomorrow.

LAURA (*as collector*): Are you serious, Ms. Scrooge? (*action by Scrooge and collector stops and collector walks off*)

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: Yes I'm serious. Time for some changes.

JENNINGS INNER VOICE: Strange tug on the old heartstrings, this old story. (*Pause*) Ah, yes, and now Scrooge's famous parting words.

FELICITY (*as Scrooge*): I promise you from this day forth, I will be as good a friend, as good an employer, and as good a woman as this city will ever know. May it be said that if any man or woman alive know how to keep Christmas it was Elizabeth Scrooge.

EVEN SCENE RECITER: And may the same be said of all of us, Ms. Scrooge. God Bless You. And as Tiny Tim always says: God bless us, everyone.

(*Jennings and Billie stand and clap politely; the Inner Voices hoot and whistle and stamp their feet and yell bravo. After a minute of this Rev. Oldleup comes onto the stage.*)

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Wasn't that great. (*More clapping from Billie and Jennings, and hooting etc. from the Inner Voices*) I'd like all the kids and Ernie to come up here for a moment. (*Felicity, Wayne, Laura, Trize and others come to the stage behind Rev. Oldleup*) Now I want to use this time for a special announcement. I know earlier that the Mayor and Ms. Gates said they wanted to have the Mayor's daughter, Chris, and Ms. Gates son, Phil, here for this, but I'm moved by the specialness of this moment to make the announcement myself. That way, Phil and Chris won't have anyone to blame but me. Billie, Mayor come on up here. (*Billie, Jennings and their Inner Voices move to Oldleup, during which movement, the Inner Voices speak*)

JENNINGS INNER VOICE: What is she doing? And what will SHE do. I'd better get a handle on her.

BILLIE'S INNER VOICE: Oh boy, here we go. Does he have any idea what is going on here? I'd better stick close to him to keep him in line if he doesn't react well to this. Actually it might be best if Chris and Phil aren't here if the Mayor here doesn't react well.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: As many of you know, the Mayor and Billie Gates have been long-time friends of this church. But they always haven't seen eye to eye on a variety of issues. And I am happy to report that this church has been instrumental in bringing them together on a matter of true significance in the live of this community.

JENNINGS INNER VOICE: Strange prelude to a wedding announcement.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Today, I have the pleasure of announcing that Phil Gates, and Chris Jennings, together with their parents, Mayor Whalen Jennings and Ohsosoft's Billie Gates, are publicly announcing their support for the affordable housing project in Fairlawn. (*Clapping by Rev. Oldleup, Trize, the kids*)

WHALEN JENNINGS: (*After a minute*) But I thought you were going to announce the wedding.

BILLIE: Yes, the wedding.

WAYNE: Hey, they're getting married. (*applause from Trize and the Kids; the Inner Voices start off shocked, but warm to the idea*)

BILLIE: No, no, not us.

WHALEN JENNINGS: No, not us. Chris and Phil.

BILLIE: Did you know that?

WHALEN JENNINGS: Yes, and I know how you think about it, and I'm sorry you feel that way. They're both good bright young people, and our problems shouldn't stand in the way of their happiness.

BILLIE: But I think we shouldn't stand in the way of their wedding.

WHALEN JENNINGS: You don't oppose the marriage?

BILLIE: No. Neither do you?

WHALEN JENNINGS: No. (*They move back together*)

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: Then you didn't intend to announce your support for the project?

BILLIE: I'm not saying I don't support the project.

WHALEN JENNINGS: Nor am I.

BILLIE: But I thought you were opposed.

WHALEN JENNINGS: I was leaning that way. But I understood so were you.

BILLIE: I was, but things change.

WHALEN JENNINGS: They sure do.

REV. GLENNA OLDLEUP: Then the announcement was okay.

BILLIE: It was fine.

WHALEN JENNINGS: Fine job, Reverend.

(Billie and Jennings confer quietly)

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: And now, with that settled, I'd like to invite everyone for cookies and punch in the big room with sofas and chairs down the hall.

BILLIE: But, excuse me Rev. Oldleup. The Mayor and I have a further announcement.

WHALEN JENNINGS: Yes, since Chris and Phil aren't here today on account of the inclement weather, we'd like to invite everyone to a public reception next Sunday afternoon – right here if the room is available. The reception will be in celebration of both Christmas and Chris and Phil's wedding plans, with donations being taken to support the development of the housing project.

REV. MERCER OLDLEUP: Well, that's great, and now its on to the cookies. Hold on, here come Chris and Phil. *(Chris and Phil come running in).*

PHIL: Oh, it looks like we missed the whole thing. How'd it go?

CHRIS: Yeah, how'd it go.

TRIZE: It went well, phew, and congratulations.

PHIL: On what?

TRIZE: Oh yeah, you weren't here. Your wedding, of course.

CHRIS: Our wedding? There was an announcement about our wedding?

TRIZE: Yeah, Glenna Oldleup wanted to put it off because you weren't here. No that was the announcement about your parent's support for the housing project.

PHIL: They announced they're supporting the housing project?

TRIZE: Yeah, and the Mayor and your mom are hosting an engagement and Christmas celebration here next Sunday, with proceeds going to the Housing Action Coalition. Neat, huh. Hey, I'm gonna grab a cookie. Merry Christmas.

PHIL and CHRIS: *(To Trize)* Merry Christmas. *(To each other)* Merry Christmas. *(They embrace and the lights dim).*

(Reprise of dance routine)

THE END