

SCENE 1 — NATALIE'S SLEEPOVER

MUSIC CUE: OPENING

[OFFSTAGE CHORUS]

CHRISTMAS!

Lights up on NATALIE'S Bedroom. There is a bed, an easy chair, shelves full of toys, costumes, etc.

(We hear giggling from somewhere.
GRANDFATHER and JESSICA enter. She is holding a small gift.)

GRANDFATHER:

This is Natalie's bedroom. I don't know where she and the other girls have gotten to—it's a big house.

JESSICA:

I'd get lost in it, for sure!

GRANDFATHER:

You're welcome to wait here for them. I'm sure they'll be back in just a moment.

JESSICA:

Yes, please.

(short pause)

I brought her a birthday present. I hope that's OK.

GRANDFATHER:

My granddaughter likes presents. Because she was born on Christmas Day she's always suspected that she gets fewer than other little girls.

(short pause)

She's a little spoiled in that regard. Your mother works for Natalie's mother?

JESSICA:

Yes, sir. She's Mrs. Fairgood's personal assistant. I'm not sure what that means.

GRANDFATHER:

(laughs)

It means she's very helpful to my daughter in many ways. I'll leave you here. I think I can hear Natalie and the other girls on their way back. Have fun!

JESSICA:

Thank you, Mr. Fairgood.

(She sits in the armchair and waits patiently for a moment. NATALIE and the girls burst in, still laughing and chattering. They stop when they see JESSICA.)

NATALIE:

Oh. It's you.

(The other girls flock around NATALIE, looking at JESSICA with a mixture of dislike and wariness, waiting to see what NATALIE will do.)

JESSICA:

I... I brought you a present.

NATALIE:

Oh goody.

(She opens it. It's an inexpensive bracelet.)

Wow. A bracelet. Like I don't already have a hundred of those. Where'd you buy it, Ross Dress for Less?

(The girls laugh.)

JESSICA:

I thought you might like it.

(NATALIE snorts.)

GRACIE:

I think it's pretty.

NATALIE:

Well, you can have it then.

(Tosses bracelet to GRACIE, moves to the bed with other girls.)

Come see what Roxanne gave me! At least she knows where to shop...

GRACIE:
(To JESSICA)

Is that OK with you?

JESSICA:
If you like it, I guess it's yours now.

GRACIE:
I think it's pretty.

NATALIE:
(moving forward)
I got to surf with this *really* cute Hawaiian surfing coach, and there were actually dolphins out there with us and everything. We were in Hawaii for a whole week, including Christmas Day...

JESSICA:
That's your birthday, right?

NATALIE:
Ugh, don't remind me. Girls, it *sucks* to be born on Christmas. You never get any real presents. That's why I celebrate mine the week after.

ROXANNE:
(meanly)
So, Jessica, where did you go for Christmas break?

NATALIE:
Yeah, Jessica, I'd love to hear about *your* vacation.

JESSICA:
We didn't really go anywhere. But we're saving up to go to the beach this summer.

NATALIE:
The beach, huh? Bo-ring! But I guess your mom can't afford anything better. My dad takes us *everywhere*.

JESSICA:
You are lucky. I'd love to travel like that.

NATALIE:
Yeah, like *that's* going to happen. Come on, girls, I'll show you a photo of that cute Hawaiian boy on my new iPad.

(Moves to the bed with some of the girls.)

SAMANTHA:

(coming forward with a doll)

I don't know why Natalie is always so mean to you.

JESSICA:

(takes doll, almost without thinking about it.)

It's OK. She's mean to everybody.

SAMANTHA:

That's true! I don't even know why I come to her sleepovers.

JESSICA:

Her mother invited me.

SAMANTHA:

Her mom is nice. Why Natalie is not as nice, I don't know.

NATALIE:

(coming forward)

Hey, who said you could hold my doll?

JESSICA:

(confused)

I'm sorry, I was just...

NATALIE:

Give it back!

JESSICA:

Sure, I just...

NATALIE:

(pitching a fit)

You think just because my mother made me invite you to my sleepover that you're my friend? You're not my friend. You're just some poor girl whose mother works for my mother and I wouldn't have invited you at all. No one likes you and you cannot touch my toys! Give me my doll!

(grabs for doll—JESSICA reflexively holds onto it)

I said give me my doll! You can't have it! You can't touch it! Give it back to me! Give it back to me now!

(lots of sound and fury)

GRANDFATHER:

(entering)

All right, what's going on in here?

NATALIE:

Jessica took my doll and won't give it back to me!

GRANDFATHER:

(assessing the situation and understanding
it perfectly)

Is this true, Jessica?

JESSICA:

(quietly)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to take her doll.

(gives it to GRANDFATHER)

GRANDFATHER:

Thank you, Jessica. Natalie, here's your doll.

(gives doll to NATALIE)

I think after that excitement we need a little change of pace. What do you girls say to a little story time?

(The girls eagerly agree. GRANDFATHER sits in
the armchair as the girls sit in front of him.)

NATALIE:

But make it a ghost story!

(The other girls agree.)

GRANDFATHER:

(smiling)

I have just the story, right here in my pocket. I read it every year, and I'm reading it now.
I'll read it to you.

(pulls copy of 'Christmas Carol' from his
pocket and begins to read:)

SCENE 2: OPENING

GRANDFATHER:

Scrooge and Marley!

MUSIC CUE: OPENING, PART 2

GRANDFATHER:

Marley was dead, dead as a door-nail. Of this indisputable fact, you must be quite certain. Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years.

(From the shadows, a group of Players/Narrators emerges.)

NARRATOR:

Scrooge was his sole executor...

NARRATOR:

...his sole administrator...

NARRATOR:

...his sole friend...

NARRATOR:

...and sole mourner.

GRANDFATHER:

There can be no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate.

NARRATOR:

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name.

NARRATOR:

There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door...

ALL:

...Scrooge and Marley.

GRANDFATHER

Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!

(The Players have separated, revealing Scrooge.)

SCROOGE:

He carried his own low temperature always about with him. He iced his office in the dog days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

(Scrooge growls and enters his office, where Cratchit is already at work.)