

THE DICKENS YOU SAY

Written by

ONE MORE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS

OVER BLACK

The SOUND of a DOOR creaking open and then a SLAM as it shuts.

A LIGHT switches on to reveal...

INT. SMALL KITCHEN - NIGHT

POV: KEYS thrown on a counter top, followed by a HOSPITAL ID tossed atop them. CLOSE on the ID: "CLARE FAIRCHILD RN" "ST. THOMAS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL".

CLARE (30S), dressed in SCRUBS, hair pulled into a messy bun, wears the expression of stressed exhaustion. She plops onto her sofa and glances at a scraggly Christmas tree leaning precariously on a nearby table top. Its lights, only half the bulbs lit, sputter for a moment and then completely go dark. Clare rolls her eyes and then lays her head back against the sofa.

CLARE
(deflated)
Perfect. Merry Christmas to me.

She lays against the sofa for a moment, gives another sigh of defeat, then reaches for the TV remote and flicks it on. She rises, takes a lighter from a drawer and lights a fire in the fireplace. The TV flickers to life. A Christmas parade complete with garish Santa Claus clowns blares from the screen. She wrinkles her nose and switches channels. Now a sketchy Christmas movie with a stripper in a Santa Claus hat plays. Nope. She switches again and finally something suitable appears. Ebenezer Scrooge receiving his comeuppance from the Ghost of Christmas Past. She pulls a blanket around her and settles in to watch. Minutes have passed and now Clare, eyes closed sleeps fitfully, the TV still playing. Suddenly the fireplace BLAZES to life. The TV screen turns to static. Clare wakes with a start. In front of her stands an OLDER MAN (70s) dressed in Victorian garb. Clare pulls the blanket close around her, frightened.

CLARE (CONT'D)
Who are you? What are you doing here?

OLDER MAN
(British Accent)
Who am I? I rather think the question is who are you? And what is this place?

His attention is drawn to the static producing television screen.

OLDER MAN (CONT'D)
And what in God's name is that
contraption?

The man looks about, confused.

OLDER MAN (CONT'D)
Spirit? Are you here? Where have
you brought me now? I demand your
presence.

Clare is truly frightened now. Not only has a stranger
somehow broken into her home, he's apparently not mentally
well.

CLARE
Look, I don't know who you are, but
there are no ghosts here. This is
my home. You need to leave now or
I'm calling the police.

OLDER MAN
The authorities? On what count?

CLARE
Trespassing, breaking and entering.
If you stay one second longer, I'll
think of more.

The Older Man quietens as if he's listening to something.

OLDER MAN
(to someone unseen)
I see. So this is part of it then?
But what is my purpose?

He listens to some unheard response, then nods his head and
sighs.

OLDER MAN (CONT'D)
Very well. You will return for me
when I have done your bidding?

Again the unheard response.

OLDER MAN (CONT'D)
At midnight then. I will be ready
when you return.

Clare continues to stare at him with wide eyes, now looking
past him for a way of escape.

OLDER MAN (CONT'D)
Have no fear young woman, I mean
you no harm. I am neither a vagrant
nor a ne'er do well.

CLARE
Well, who are you then?

OLDER MAN
I am a writer and a teller of
stories. And as it seems, the
bearer of a curse of my own making,
destined to forever be transported
on each Christmas Eve to a place
and time unknown to me.

CLARE
For what reason?

OLDER MAN
To show someone who has lost the
meaning of Christmas, what the
world would be like without them in
it.

Clare chuckles at the absurdity of what he has just divulged.

CLARE
So you're some sort of Ghost of
Christmas Past?

OLDER MAN
You know the tale then?

CLARE
Of course, everyone knows that
story.

OLDER MAN
Indeed. It's one of my finest.

CLARE
YOUR finest? Hardly. "A Christmas
Carol" was written in the mid
eighteen hundreds by Charles
Dickens.

The Older Man nods knowingly.

OLDER MAN
At your service, madam.

Clare stares at him, still in disbelief, but curious now.

CLARE

So why have you come to me?

We now know the Older Man as DICKENS.

DICKENS

Why don't you tell me.

Clare looks downward, self conscious.

CLARE

You don't know what Christmas has become. It means nothing to me but Christmas sales hype, stupid movies, porch pirates stealing packages and of course...my work.

DICKENS

(intrigued)

I'd like to hear more about these so-called "porch pirates", but first, what is the work you speak of?

CLARE

I'm a nurse. I work with children. The really sick ones. Christmas is hard there.

DICKENS

I'd like to see this place you do your work.

CLARE

Oh no you wouldn't. There's no magic of Christmas there, no Santa Claus, just the sick and unfortunate children. And I'm exhausted. I have nothing left to give...

In that instant, they are transported to a PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL UNIT.

CLARE (CONT'D)

What just happened?

DICKENS

I know just the thing for you. You need to see your world here without you in it.

CLARE

Like Scrooge? Is that the only story line you know?

DICKENS

If it worked for Ebenezer it will work for anyone.

Clare is distracted by the sounds of sobbing. She begins to walk toward it. As she approaches a room, her eyes widen in shock. There are a number of men and women crying and holding each other. Clare obviously recognizes them and begins to call to them.

CLARE

Mrs. Wilson. Mr. Turner. Susan, Maria...

The people in the room do not notice her presence but continue in their grief.

DICKENS

You know these people then?

CLARE

Yes, they're the parents of some of the children I've taken care of. They became like family to me. I'm always happy when the kids go home but it's hard to lose those friendships.

DICKENS

Their children did not go home.

CLARE

What? Of course they did. They got well and went home. I took care of them myself.

DICKENS

No dear. You see, you were never here. Those children didn't survive.

Clare is dumbstruck.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

Though you said there was no magic, nor Santa Claus here, you Clare, were the magic of Christmas for these children. Your caring, your heart, your love. You were the heart of their Christmas.

(MORE)

DICKENS (CONT'D)

Because, you see my dear, Christmas
lives in the hearts of those who
care.

Clare wipes a tear.

CLARE

I've acted like a real Grinch,
haven't I?

DICKENS

Grinch? What is this Grinch?

Clare smiles at him.

CLARE

After your time. The work of
another great writer.

Dickens nods.

DICKENS

I shall have to visit him some
time.

Clare nods and smiles. Suddenly the SOUND of a CLOCK
tolling. Dickens looks up and nods to an unseen entity.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

I must go. So long, dear Clare. I
wish you the merriest Christmas...

FADE TO:

INT. CLARE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Clare is suddenly back on her sofa where she lay previously.
The TV comes back to life, now playing "Silent Night" to
Christmas themed photos. Clare bolts up, looks around, then
throws her arms in the air.

CLARE

If it worked for Ebenezer, it works
for me. Merry Christmas!!!

FADE OUT.